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The Evolution of the Concept of "The Progress of the Soul" in John Donne's
Poetical and Homiletic Works

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Preface

As Ramie Targoff points out in her essay "*John Donne, Body and Soul*", the great quantity and variety of volumes upon the soul, that have been found in John Donne's library bear witness of the fact that the topic of the journey of the soul through life and after death was particularly meaningful and urgent to him¹. The nature and the fate of the soul after its departure from the material world was in fact a topic that we can retrace in each and every phase of Donne's production, both in poetry and prose.

I have tried to the theme of the journey of the soul within John Donne's works in its different phases, starting from his 1601 *Metempsychosis*, to his *Anniversaries*. In order to have a better understanding of these developments, I took into consideration three sermons on Light in the Gospel of John. The idea of light is fundamental to clarify the theme of *Logos* and *Sapientia* in the analyzed poems.

The first chapter deals with the neo-platonic and Augustinian roots of John Donne's idea of the progress of the soul, which can be found in Porphyry's concepts of *progressus* and *regressus animae*. In the second chapter I analyzed Donne's *Metempsychosis*, in which the journey of the soul is presented as a circular movement and is related it to an unavoidable decadence of the fallen humanity in sin. The third

¹ See Ramie Targoff, *John Donne, Body and Soul*, University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 7.

chapter concerns Donne's reading of John 1.8 and focuses on the biblical metaphor of light as a source of the divine Wisdom which is the starting point of the spiritual journey towards God. In the fourth and fifth chapter I analyzed Donne's Anniversaries as an example of his mature view of the concept of *Progressus Animae* as a *straight* journey from the earth to the sky.

I

*Regressus Animae to Progressus Animae: the
Neoplatonic origin of the concept of the journey of
the soul.*

That of the journey of the soul through life in the material world and onto the afterlife has been a recurring *topos* in literature since ancient times. During the centuries, it was declined in numerous ways both by the Western and the Eastern tradition², but it was probably starting from the *corpus* of works of Augustine, which has been widely recognized as playing a role second to nothing in the construction of Donne's theological thought, that Donne began elaborating his particular concept of *progressus animae*, the journey of the soul. Augustine himself in his conception of *progressus* refers to Plotinus and to the Neoplatonic tradition, and in his *De Ordine* he writes:

Nam ut progressus animae usque ad mortalia lapsus est, ita regressus esse in rationem debet.³

With clear reference to Plotinus's *Enneads*⁴, Augustine here identifies the *progressus* of the soul as a fall of the spirit into the material reality of the world, whereas *regressus* identifies a process of purification, elevation, deliverance from all material bonds, which is aimed to lead the soul back to its divine source.

² For example, consider the Egyptian afterlife journey: *The Book of the Dead*, ed. by E. A. Wallis Budge, 1895, Random House, New York 1999.

³ Augustine of Hippo, *De Ordine*, II 11,31. "In fact, as the departure of the soul lowered itself to what is mortal, so its return must be towards reason.", in *Patrologia Latina cursus completus, Series Latina*, 1-222, ed. by J. P. Migne, Garnier, Paris 1844-1864, vol. 32, 977-1020.

⁴ Plotinus, *Enneads*, I-VII, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Ma), 1988.

The term *regressus* referring to the journey of the soul from the material prison of the world back to its spiritual origin also appears in another one of Augustine's works, the *City of God*⁵, once again in relation to the Neoplatonic tradition. This time the *regressus* of the soul is a direct reference to Plotinus' follower, Porphyry, and to his *De Regressu Animae*⁶, which we know about only through the mediation of Augustine's reflections, critiques and quotations in his *De Civitate Dei*. In this text Porphyry describes the condition of the soul in the body and the different means through which it can be released from its earthly existence.

Many studies have underlined the role of Porphyry in the shaping of Augustine's own philosophy⁷, yet the *City of God* allows us not only to reach a better understanding of the latter's thoughts and ideas, but also to reconstruct, along with a text that would have otherwise been lost forever, the way in which Augustine's Christian conception of the journey of the soul emerged as a theological discourse, out of the confrontation and, more often than not, the contrast with the Platonic and Neoplatonic perspectives. Although the majority of the sections devoted to Porphyry in the *City of God* are a sharp critique of his

⁵ Saint Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei*, in *Patrologia Latina cursus completus, Series Latina*, 1-222, ed. by J. P. Migne, Garnier, Paris 1844-1864, vol. 41, 13-804; *The City of God*, Digireads.com Publishing, 2009.

⁶ Jacques Bidet, *Vie de Porphyre, le philosophe néoplatonicien*, Gand-Leipzig, 1913, p. 158.

⁷ See for example: Luis Grandgeorge, *Saint Augustin et le néo.platonisme*, Bibliothèque de l'école des hautes études, Sciences religieuses, VIII, Paris, 1896.

pagan beliefs and practices, derived from the Pitagorical/Platonic views on the fate of the soul after death, the *Regressus Animae* is used by Augustine as a point of departure in his philosophical deconstruction of said views and apology of the Christian faith.

As a matter of fact, in the *Regressus*, Augustine tells us, Porphyry distances himself from many fundamental ideas of his predecessors, bringing his idea of the journey of the soul somewhat closer to that of Christianity. Augustine's argumentation on the matter is substantially a strong re-affirmation of the rectilinear, eschatological conception of time of the Christian faith -presupposing a direct, straight and irreversible journey of the soul from its creation to its regeneration in the afterlife- against the circular paradigm of the Pythagorean/Platonic view, which was deeply rooted in the doctrine of metempsychosis. In book X of the *City of God*, Augustine begins his attack on this paradigm through a series of references to Porphyry's *Regressus*:

Si post Platonem aliquid emendare existimatur indignum, cur ipse Porphyrius nonnulla et non parva emendavit? Nam Platonem animas hominum post mortem revolvi usque ad corpora bestiarum scripsisse certissimum est. Hanc sententiam Porphyrii doctor tenuit et Plotinus; Porphyrio tamen iure displicuit. In hominum sane non sua quae dimiserant, sed alia nova corpora redire humanas animas arbitratus est. Pudit scilicet illud credere, ne mater fortasse filium in mulam revoluta vectaret; et non pudit hoc credere, ubi revoluta mater in puellam filio forsitan nuberet. Quanto creditur honestius, quod sancti et veraces Angeli docuerunt, quod Prophetae Dei Spiritu acti locuti sunt, quod ipse quem venturum Salvatorem praemissi nuntii

praedixerunt, quod missi Apostoli qui orbem terrarum Evangelio repleverunt, quanto, inquam, honestius creditur reverti animas semel ad corpora propria quam reverti totiens ad diversa! Verum tamen, ut dixi, ex magna parte correctus est in hac opinione Porphyrius, ut saltem in solos homines humanas animas praecipitari posse sentiret, beluinos autem carceres evertere minime dubitaret. Dicit etiam ad hoc Deum animam mundo dedisse, ut materiae cognoscens mala ad Patrem recurreret nec aliquando iam talium polluta contagione teneretur. Ubi etsi aliquid inconvenienter sapit (magis enim data est corpori, ut bona faceret; non enim mala disceret, si non faceret), in eo tamen aliorum Platoniorum opinionem et non in re parva emendavit, quod mundatam ab omnibus malis animam et cum Patre constitutam numquam iam mala mundi huius passuram esse confessus est. Qua sententia profecto abstulit, quod esse Platonium maxime perhibetur, ut mortuos ex vivis, ita vivos ex mortuis semper fieri [...].⁸

⁸ Augustine, *The City of God*, Book X cit., Chapter 30. “If it is considered unseemly to emend anything which Plato has touched, why did Porphyry himself make emendations, and these not a few? For it is very certain that Plato wrote that the souls of men return after death to the bodies of beasts. Plotinus also, Porphyry's teacher, held this opinion; yet Porphyry justly rejected it. He was of opinion that human souls return indeed into human bodies, but not into the bodies they had left, but other new bodies. He shrank from the other opinion, lest a woman who had returned into a mule might possibly carry her own son on her back. He did not shrink, however, from a theory which admitted the possibility of a mother coming back into a girl and marrying her own son. How much more honorable a creed is that which was taught by the holy and truthful angels, uttered by the prophets who were moved by God's Spirit, preached by Him who was foretold as the coming Saviour by His forerunning heralds, and by the apostles whom He sent forth, and who filled the whole world with the gospel,— how much more honorable, I say, is the belief that souls return once for all to their own bodies, than that they return again and again to various bodies? Nevertheless Porphyry, as I have said, did considerably improve upon this opinion, in so far, at least, as he maintained that human souls could transmigrate only into human bodies, and made no scruple about demolishing the bestial prisons into which Plato had wished to cast them. He says, too, that God put the soul into the world that it might recognize the evils of matter, and return to the Father, and be for ever emancipated from the polluting contact of matter. And although here is some inappropriate thinking (for the soul is rather given to the body that it may do good; for it would not learn evil unless it did it), yet he corrects the opinion of other Platonists, and that on a point of no small importance, inasmuch as he avows that the soul, which is purged from all evil and received to the Father's presence, shall never again suffer the ills of this life. By this opinion he quite subverted the favorite Platonic dogma, that as dead men are made out of living ones, so living men are made out of dead ones”.

Though he never entirely denied the doctrine of metempsychosis, Augustine writes, Porphyry felt the need to rectify many points of the ancient Pythagorean views upon the soul: for example he rejected the idea that, after death, the soul of a human being could reincarnate into the body of a non-human one. But the most interesting and relevant of Porphyry's emendations is that concerning the meaning he attributes to the incarnation of the soul. In the *Regressus*, we are told, it is Porphyry's opinion that "God put the soul into the world that it might recognize the evils of matter, and return to the Father": the idea of a definitive *regressus* of the soul to its spiritual homeland is here affirmed against the Platonic belief in a never ending cycle of incarnation of the souls, presented by Augustine in the following lines:

[F]alsumque esse ostendit, quod platonice videtur dixisse Vergilius, in campos Elysios purgatas animas missas (quo nomine tamquam per fabulam videntur significari gaudia beatorum) ad fluvium Letheum evocari, hoc est ad oblivionem praeteritorum:

*Scilicet immemores supera ut connexa revisant
Rursus et incipiant in corpora velle reverti.*

Merito displicuit hoc Porphyrio quoniam re vera credere stultum est ex illa vita, quae beatissima esse non poterit nisi de sua fuerit aeternitate certissima, desiderare animas corruptibilium corporum labem et inde ad ista remeare, tamquam hoc agat summa purgatio, ut inquinatio requiratur. Si enim quod perfecte mundantur hoc efficit, ut omnium obliviscantur malorum, malorum autem oblivio facit corporum desiderium, ubi rursus implicantur malis: profecto erit

infelicitatis causa summa felicitas et stultitiae causa perfectio sapientiae et immunditiae causa summa mundatio. Nec veritate ibi beata erit anima, quamdiucumque erit, ubi oportet fallatur, ut beata sit. Non enim beata erit nisi segura; ut autem segura sit, falso putabit semper se beatam fore, quoniam aliquando erit et misera. Cui ergo gaudendi causa falsitas erit, quo modo de veritate gaudebit? Vidit hoc Porphyrius purgatamque animam ob hoc reverti dixit ad Patrem, ne aliquando iam malorum polluta contagione teneatur. Falso igitur a quibusdam est Platonicis creditus quasi necessarius orbis ille ab eisdem abeundi et ad eadem revertendi. Quod etiamsi verum esset, quid hoc scire prodesset, nisi forte inde se nobis auderent praeferre Platonicis, quia id nos in hac vita iam nesciremus, quod ipsi in alia meliore vita purgatissimi et sapientissimi fuerant nescituri et falsum credendo beati futuri? Quod si absurdissimum et stultissimum est dicere, Porphyrii profecto est praeferenda sententia his, qui animarum circulos alternante semper beatitate et miseria suspicati sunt. Quod si ita est, ecce Platonius in melius a Platone dissentit; ecce vidit, quod ille non vidit, nec post talem ac tantum magistrum refugit correctionem, sed homini praeponit veritatem.⁹

⁹ *Ibidem*, “[A]nd he exploded the idea which Virgil seems to have adopted from Plato, that the purified souls which have been sent into the Elysian fields (the poetic name for the joys of the blessed) are summoned to the river Lethe, that is, to the oblivion of the past,

*That earthward they may pass once more,
Remembering not the things before,
And with a blind propension yearn
To fleshly bodies to return.*

This found no favor with Porphyry, and very justly; for it is indeed foolish to believe that souls should desire to return from that life, which cannot be very blessed unless by the assurance of its permanence, and to come back into this life, and to the pollution of corruptible bodies, as if the result of perfect purification were only to make defilement desirable. For if perfect purification effects the oblivion of all evils, and the oblivion of evils creates a desire for a body in which the soul may again be entangled with evils, then the supreme felicity will be the cause of infelicity, and the perfection of wisdom the cause of foolishness, and the purest cleansing the cause of defilement. And, however long the blessedness of the soul last, it cannot be founded on truth, if, in order to be blessed, it must be deceived. For it cannot be blessed unless it be free from fear. But, to be free from fear, it must be under the false impression that it shall be always blessed,— the false impression, for it is destined to be also at some time miserable. How, then, shall the soul rejoice in truth, whose joy is founded on falsehood? Porphyry saw this, and therefore said that the purified soul returns to the Father, that it may never more be entangled in the polluting contact with evil. The opinion, therefore, of some Platonists, that there is a necessary

According to the ancient Pythagorean doctrine, and to the Platonic one as well, as exposed in the *Phaedo*¹⁰, the souls of those who lead a righteous life, thus avoiding lesser incarnations and elevating themselves to the peaks of the spiritual realm, were nonetheless bound to go back to the material world: as a matter of fact, in order for the purification process to be complete, the souls were to forget all the evils that concerned their lives in the body, therefore generating in the souls themselves a desire to go back to it and inevitably to a condition of corruption, pain and imperfection. Both Porphyry and Augustine point out the inconsistency of this belief: here it is impossible to avoid the paradox according to which the ultimate happiness becomes the source of unhappiness, purification the cause of corruption, good the root of evil, wisdom the condition generating foolishness and unawareness. In contrast to all this, Porphyry asserts that the soul is incarnate in the body only to emancipate itself from the body and the evils linked to the material existence: once this is realized the soul

revolution carrying souls away and bringing them round again to the same things, is false. But, were it true, what were the advantage of knowing it? Would the Platonists presume to allege their superiority to us, because we were in this life ignorant of what they themselves were doomed to be ignorant of when perfected in purity and wisdom in another and better life, and which they must be ignorant of if they are to be blessed? If it were most absurd and foolish to say so, then certainly we must prefer Porphyry's opinion to the idea of a circulation of souls through constantly alternating happiness and misery. And if this is just, here is a Platonist emending Plato, here is a man who saw what Plato did not see, and who did not shrink from correcting so illustrious a master, but preferred truth to Plato.”

¹⁰¹⁰ Plato, *Euthyphro. Apology. Crito. Phaedo. Phaedrus*, Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Ma) 1999.

ascends to the heavens, never to come back to the world and forever dwelling with the Father.

In Book XII, Augustine continues and completes his deconstruction of the pagan doctrine of the cycles:

Sed quoniam haec falsa sunt clamante pietate, convincente veritate (illa enim nobis veraciter promittitur vera felicitas, cuius erit semper retinenda et nulla infelicitate rumpenda certa securitas): viam rectam sequentes, quod nobis est Christus, eo duce ac salvatore a vano et inepto impiorum circuitu iter fidei mentemque avertamus. Si enim de istis circuitibus et sine cessatione alternantibus itionibus et reditionibus animarum Porphyrius Platonius suorum opinionem sequi noluit, sive ipsius rei vanitate permotus sive iam tempora Christiana reveritus, et, quod in libro decimo commemoravi, dicere maluit animam propter cognoscenda mala traditam mundo, ut ab eis liberata atque purgata, cum ad Patrem redierit, nihil ulterius tale patiatur: quanto magis nos istam inimicam Christianae fidei falsitatem detestari ac devitare debemus! His autem circuitibus evacuatis atque frustratis nulla necessitas nos compellit ideo putare non habere initium temporis ex quo esse coeperit genus humanum, quia per nescio quos circuitus nihil sit in rebus novi, quod non et antea certis intervallis temporum fuerit et postea sit futurum.¹¹

¹¹ *Ibidem*, Book XII, Chapter 20, "But these things are declared to be false by the loud testimony of religion and truth; for religion truthfully promises a true blessedness, of which we shall be eternally assured, and which cannot be interrupted by any disaster. Let us therefore keep to the straight path, which is Christ, and, with Him as our Guide and Saviour, let us turn away in heart and mind from the unreal and futile cycles of the godless. Porphyry, Platonist though he was, abjured the opinion of his school, that in these cycles souls are ceaselessly passing away and returning, either being struck with the extravagance of the idea, or sobered by his knowledge of Christianity. As I mentioned in the tenth book, he preferred saying that the soul, as it had been sent into the world that it might know evil, and be purged and delivered from it, was never again exposed to such an experience after it had once returned to the Father. And if he abjured the tenets of his school, how much more ought we Christians to abominate and avoid an opinion so unfounded and hostile to our faith? But having disposed of these cycles and escaped out of them, no necessity compels us to suppose that the human race had no beginning in time, on the ground that there is nothing new in nature which, by I know not what cycles, has not at some previous period existed, and is not hereafter to exist again."

In this passage the Christian faith is once more exalted by Augustine as the straight path - to which now *progressus* makes reference - leading to eternal salvation, whereas the doctrine of metempsychosis is portrayed as a deceiving one, leading nowhere in its circles and falling into numerous contradictions to the point that even pagan philosophers such as Porphyry were brought to consider it to be false.

Augustine's considerations on the soul and on Porphyry's *Regressus Animae* have constituted without doubt a significant point of departure in Donne's considerations upon the journey of the soul in this world, whose influence soon emerged in his poetry. Most certainly the concept of metempsychosis intrigued and fascinated Donne, but never to the extent to distance him from the Christian perspective. This is true for what concerns his early production, where the journey of the soul is portrayed through satire in *Metempsychosis*, also known as the *Infinitati Sacrum*, whose main part is entitled *Of the Progresse of the Soule*, and becomes strikingly evident in the *Anniversaries* and particularly the second, *Of the Progress of the Soule*, dated 1612. It is even more so in the theological thought expressed in his sermons, where, in the days of his maturity, he will once again affirm the Augustinian pattern of the fall from Grace, the cathartic journey through this world, and the return to the Heavens for all eternity through resurrection:

GOD MADE the first Marriage, and man made the first Divorce; God married the Body and Soule in the Creation, and man divorced the Body and Soule by death through sinne, and his fall. God doth not admit, nor justifie, not authorize such Super-inductions upon Divorces, as some have imagined; That the soule departing from one body, should become the soule of another body, in a perpetuall revolution and transmigration of soules through bodies, which hath been the giddinesse of some Philosophers to think; [...] God allows no Super-inductions, no such second Marriages upon such divorces by death. But because God hath made the band of Marriage indissoluble but by death, farther than man, this divorce cannot fall upon man; As farre as man is immortall, man is a married man still, still in possession of a soule, and a body too; And man is for ever immortall in both; Immortall in his soule by Preservation, and immortall in his body by Reparation in the Resurrection. For, though they be separated à *Thoro & Mensa*, from Bed and Board, they are not divorced; Though the soule be at the *Table of the Lambe*, in Glory, and the body but at the table of *the Serpent, in dust*; Though the soule be *in lecto florido*, in that bed which is always green, in an everlasting spring, in *Abrahame's bosome*; And the body but in a green-bed, whose covering is but a yard and a halfe of Turfe, and a Ruge of grasse, and the sheet but a windling sheet, yet they are not divorced; they shall return to one another againe, in an inseparable re-union in the Resurrection.¹²

¹² John Donne, *Sermon preached at the Funerals of Sir William Cokayne Knight, Alderman of London, December 12, 1626.*), in *The Sermons of John Donne*, edited by Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, Berkley and Los Angeles, 1953-62.

II

The Progress of the Soul in Donne's
Metempsychosis.

If the *Anniversaries*, and the *Second Anniversary* in particular, have been recognized by T.S. Eliot as the authentic peak of Donne's religious poetry¹³, his *Metempsychosis* has been defined as "the nearest that Donne came to atheism"¹⁴. Though I will disagree with this statement further on, the poem, which was composed by Donne in 1601, a decade before the *Second Anniversary*, does in fact present itself as a witty mock-epic of the journey of the soul that turns upside down the traditional concept of the soul's journey from corruption to beatitude, from its material bonds to the freedom of the spirit, portraying it in an evolution, which at the same time is an involution, from innocence to deeper and deeper perdition with no hope of release.

Metempsychosis can be considered Donne's own original elaboration of both the circular conception of the progress of the soul that belonged to the pagan tradition and the rectilinear one of Christianity¹⁵. The soul is presented in the poem as journeying

¹³ T.S. Eliot, *The Varieties of Metaphysical Poetry*, Harcourt Brace, 1994, p. 157.

¹⁴ David L. Edwards, *John Donne, Man of Flesh and Spirit*, Eerdmans, Cambridge, 2001.

¹⁵ The notion of "Progress" as a straight, moral evolution is a product of XVII century culture. In particular it is linked to the importance of the imaginary of the straight line in this period, as opposed to the importance of the image of the circle during the Middle Ages. This happened also as a consequence of the Lutheran Reformation, which had a great impact, especially in England, and more specifically of Luther's exaltation of "rectitude" (*Rechtfertigung*) and on his association of *curvitas* to sin and to the fallen world. Of course, the idea of "rectitude" was present in the medieval world (as the circle is present in the XVII century), as a matter of

through countless incarnations, where each and every one of them marks an augmentation in knowledge, intelligence and power, in a pattern that could very well match the Pythagorean one described by Porphyry, in which souls gradually purify themselves at every incarnation, eventually reaching their release from all material bonds. In contrast with these systems of thought and belief, however, Donne's 1601 Progress is a journey from purity to corruption, in which each incarnation, instead of being an elevation towards the spiritual world and an augmentation of virtue and wisdom, is but an augmentation of *metis*, of violence, of unawareness of the divine, and of cruelty. The progress of the soul from less complex to more complex beings is not an index of acquired virtue and inner evolution, but, on the contrary, an index of ever greater spiritual and moral depravation: those that the common understanding considers as "lesser" beings, such as plants and fish, appear here as the most innocent and untainted ones whereas the beings that are commonly exalted for their extraordinary physical and intellectual qualities, are portrayed as great but in sin. In this sense, though after the fall all levels of creation were tainted by sin, the autonomous "evolution" of

fact Luther derived it from Augustine, but it is evident comparing Augustine to Luther that the Reformation brought this idea to its extremes and gave it a central importance. The image of the straight line is extremely frequent and evident in Donne's 1612 *Progress of the Soul*. For a connection of Luther's ideas with modern science, see Enrico Giannetto, *Un fisico delle origini. Heidegger, la scienza e la Natura*, Donzelli, Roma 2010, pp. 157-237.

beings in the world is considered negatively, as an evolution in corruption, where the knowledge of past lives is that of treachery, violence and death.

When he began writing it, it was Donne's intent of describing the journey of a soul from its creation and existence in the garden of Eden to its incarnation in man and then from primordial mankind to modern man. The poem, however, remained unfinished and it was abandoned at stanza LII with the incarnation of the soul in Themech, "sister and wife to Cain".

Several studies on Donne's *Metempsychosis* have tried to identify the "hee" which, according to the original design the poet exposed in his prefatory comment to his work, should have been the final incarnation of the journeying soul, somewhat marking the completion of its mastery of this evil and most of them have agreed on the figure of the religious reformer John Calvin. In his conversations with William Drummond, Ben Jonson affirmed that Donne's *Progresse* should have ended precisely with an attack against Calvin:

The conceit of Done's Transformation, or *Metempsychosis*, was, that he sought the soul of that apple which Eve pulled, and thereafter made it the soul of a bitch, then of a she-wolf, and so of a woman: his general purposes was to have brought in all the bodies of the Heetics from the soul of Cain, and at last left it in the body of Calvin. Of this

he never wrote but one sheet, and now, since he was made Doctor, repenteth highly, and seeketh to destroy all his poems.¹⁶

Along these lines, in his 2001 biography of John Donne, David Edwards pointed out a number of historic, theological and personal reasons that show how Calvin could have very well been the probable target of his criticism, having supposedly realized in himself the ultimate corruption of the intellect and of the heart, consisting in the dissimulation of the Truth of God and having led astray a massive amount of people with his false *Logos*:

It was safe to insult the Reformer: he was a foreigner and (since 1564) he was dead. It would be understandable if Donne wanted to express forcibly his strong disapproval of Calvinist influence over the Church of England. He was still enough of a Catholic to refer contemptuously to 'arguing' as 'heretiques' game' and to 'Luther and Mahomet' as evil figures in the part of the poem which he did finish, and Calvin would have seemed even more deplorable: Donne must have hated the destruction of order and beauty in church life and the cruelty of the doctrine that the great majority of the human race had been predestined by God to hell. [...] Five years later after the Lambeth Articles Donne may well have feared that the Church to which he was obliged to conform was being tied to this repulsively cruel doctrine. [...] Around 1600 he may well have thought that the 'great soule' of Calvin was gaining power over the mind of England, as a climax in the history of evil.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Notes of Ben Jonson's Conversations with William Drummond of Hawthornden*, Printed for the Shakespeare society, London 1842, p. 9.

¹⁷ David L. Edwards, *John Donne, Man of Flesh and Spirit*, cit., pp. 57-59. See also p. 152.

As previously stated, *Metempsychosis* is an original blending of both the patristic tradition, that looked upon the doctrine of reincarnation with horror, pointing out its fallacies and the paradoxical and morally unacceptable situations that such a belief implied, and a more playful and curious approach to the matter, that saw in the very same paradoxes that it produced a fruitful resource, a conceit, that made it possible to evoke before the reader the despondent and hopeless condition of the fallen world. In the *Epistle* introducing *The Progresse of the Soule*, Donne explains to the reader the modalities of the journey of the soul he is about to present:

All which I bid you remember, (for I will have no such Readers as I can teach) is, that the Pithagorian doctrine doth not onely carry one soule from man to man, nor man to beast, but indifferently to plants also: and therefore you must not grudge to finde the same soule in an Emperour, in a Post-horse, and in a Mucheron, since no unreadinesse in the soule, but an indisposition in the organs workes this. And therefore though this soule could not move when it was a Melon, yet it may remember, and now tell mee, at what lascivious banquet it was serv'd. And though it could not speake, when it was a spider, yet it can remember, and now tell me, who used it for poison to attaine dignitie. How ever the bodies have dull'd her other faculties, her memory hath ever been her owne, which makes me so seriously deliver you by her relation all her passages from her first making when shee was that apple which Eve eate, to this time when shee is hee, whose life you shall finde in the end of this booke.¹⁸

¹⁸ John Donne, *Metempsychosis*, in C. A. Patrides, *Complete English Poems of John Donne*, Dent, 1985.

In this introduction to the poem the author begins to illustrate the principles upon which his narration is based: along with reminding his readers about the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis, Donne speaks about a “memory” of sin which is common to all beings - vegetative, sensitive and rational- a memory which, as will be shown, constitutes in the poem the very foundation of the evolution and multiplication of the original sin of mankind¹⁹.

In the first stanzas of *The Progresse of the Soule*, the poet immediately presents the qualities of the soul he is going to write about:

I sing of the progresse of a deathlesse soule,
Whom Fate, which God made, but doth not controule,
Plac'd in most shapes; all times before the law
Yoak'd us, and when, and since, in this I sing.
And the great world to his aged evening;
From infant morne, through manly noone I draw.
What the gold Chaldee, or silver Persian saw,
Greeke brasse, or Roman iron, is in this one;
A worke t'outweare *Seths* pillars, bricke and stone,
And (holy writt excepted) made to yeeld to none.

Thee, eye of heaven, this greate Soule envies not,
By thy male force, is all wee have, begot,
In the first East, thou now beginst to shine,
Suck'st early balme, and Iland spices there,
And wilt anon in thy loose-rein'd careere
At Tagus, Po, Sene, Thames, and Danow dine.
And see at night thy Westerne land of Myne,

¹⁹ George Williamson, *Donne's Satyirical Progresse of the Soule*, ELH, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp. 250-264.

Yet hast thou not more nations seene then shee,
That before thee, one day beganne to bee,
And thy fraile light being quenched, shall long, long out live thee.

Nor, holy *Janus*, in whose soveraigne boate
The Church, and all the Monarchies did floate:
That swimming Colledge, and free Hospitall
Of all mankinde, that cage and vivarie
Of fowles, and beastes, in whose wombe, Destinie
us, and our latest nephewes did install
(From thence are all deriv'd, that fills this All,)
Did'st thou in that great stewardship embarke
So diverse shapes into that floating parke,
As have beene moved, and inform'd by this heavenly sparke.²⁰

The main character of the poem is "a deathlesse soule", which is described as created by God, but not controlled by God. This opening remark can be read as an initial attack against Calvin and to his soul who, as has been said, in the original design of the author, was to attain the highest degree of evil through its journey. In the opening stanzas, the soul is said to have lived all time, before and after the Mosaic law, the gold, silver, brass and iron ages and that it is bound to outlive Seth's pillars and to yield to nothing but the Word of the Scriptures. It does not envy the sun, being older than the sun and being destined to continue living after its "fraile light being quenched". Janus himself, the god of time, of beginnings and endings, ignores the potentialities of this soul, whose "diverse shapes" are evenmore than those of all the progenitors of the world, embarked in Noah'Ark.

²⁰ John Donne, *Metempsychosis*, op. cit, stanzas I-III .

The journey of the soul begins in Paradise where it has "a low, but fatall roome", being an apple on the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil:

Prince of the orchard, faire as dawning morne,
Fenc'd with the law, and ripe as soone as borne
That apple grew, which this Soule did enlive
Till the then climing serpent, that now creeps
For that offence, for which all mankinde weepes,
Tooke it, and t'her whom the first man did wive
(Whom and her race, only forbiddings drive)
He gave it, she, t'her husband, both did eate;
So perished the eaters, and the meate:

And wee (for treason taints the blood) thence die and sweat.

By them. The mother poison'd the well-head,
The daughters here corrupt us, Rivolets,
No smalnesse scapes, no greatnesse breaks their nets,
She thrust us out, and by them we are led
Astray, from turning, to whence we are fled.
Were prisoners Judges, 'twould seeme rigorous,
Shee sinn'd, we beare; part of our paine is, thus
To love them, whose fault to this painfull love yoak'd us.²¹

In the Garden of Heaven the soul finds its primordial housing in a fruit which is pure and untainted by all sin and corruption, "Fenc'd with the law, and ripe as soone as borne". Its first experience of evil is the serpent in the Tree of Knowledge, who, in the text, takes the apple inhabited by the soul and offers it to Eve. Adam and Eve's eating of the fruit causes their fall from their state of Grace and with them, the

²¹ *Ibidem*, stanzas IX-X.

whole of the world: the verses at the beginning of the X stanza, describing the first woman's responsibility in the lapse into sin, are of particular interest here, as they will reappear almost as they are in the more harmonious and mature form of the *Anniversaries*²². The fate of the eaten apple, and above all that of the soul within it, is also represented in the text: once one with divine Knowledge, now it is dragged in a state of corruption, in which death enters the picture. Both "the eaters and the meat" die and the soul leaves its mortal remains and heads to its next incarnation:

As lightning, which one scarce dares say, he saw,
'Tis so soone gone, (and better prooffe the law
Of sense, then faith requires) swiftly she flew
To a darke and foggie Plot; Her, her fates threw
 There through th'earths pores, and in a Plant hous'd her anew.

[...]

A mouth, but dumbe, he hath; blinde eyes, deafe eares,
And to his shoulders dangle subtile haire;
A young *Colusus* there hee stands upright,
And as that ground by him were conquered
A leafe garland weares he on his head
Enchas'd with little fruits, so red and bright
That for them you would call your Loves lips white;
So, of a lone un haunted place possesst,
Did this soules second Inne, built by the guest
 This living buried man, this quiet mandrake, rest.

²² See in Frank Manley, *John Donne: the Anniversaries*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1963, p 70: "One woman at one blow, then kill'd us all./And singly, one by one, they kill us now./We do delightfully our selves allow/To that consumption; and profusely blind,/We kill our selves to propagate our kind."

His right arme he thrust out towards the East,
West-ward his left; th'ends did themselves digest
Into ten lesser strings, these fingers were:
And as a slumberer stretching on his bed,
This way he this, and that way scattered
His other legge, which feet with toes upbeare;
Grew on his middle parts, the first day, haire,
To show, that in loves businesse hee should still
A dealer bee, and be us'd well, or ill:
His apples kindle, his leaves, force of conception kill.²³

Once “Prince of the orchard, faire as dawning morne”, the soul falls into a sudden darkness and finds itself housed in a mandrake root. The mandrake is presented by Donne in anthropomorphic terms, as a living *homunculus*, a figure that somewhat embodies the condition of the fallen humanity, a humanity which is now bound to and imprisoned in a material, literally earthly, existence. This “young Colossus” is a “buried man”, dead in sin and yet still living. In striking contrast with the prelapsarian archetype of Adam, this man bares in its features the signs of the complete annihilation brought about by sin. Its senses are annulled: he has “A mouth, but dumbe”, “blinde eyes, deafe eares”. He has limbs, yet he cannot move, he is portrayed as a “slumberer”, and his body is “this and that way scattered”. Allusions to the aphrodisiac powers and evil traits of the mandrake also emphasize the carnal and dark state of this new incarnation. Yet after

²³ John Donne, *Metempsychosis*, op. cit, stanzas XIII-XV.

listing all the negative and sinful attributes of the mandrake root, the poem shifts our attention on its medicinal qualities:

No lustfull woman came this plant to grieve,
But 'twas because there was none yet but Eve:
And she (with other purpose) kill'd it quite;
Her sinne had now brought in infirmitie,
And so her cradled child, the moist red eyes
Had never shut, nor slept since it saw light,
Poppie she knew, she knew the mandrakes might;
And tore up both, and so coold her child's blood;
Unvirtuous weeds might long unvex'd have stood;
But hee's short liv'd, that with his death can doe most good.²⁴

The XVII stanza presents the immediate effects of the fall of the world through sin: illness and death. In this following section, the mandrake root is no longer described as the living image of the decay of mankind and the focus moves onto its sacrifice in order to cure Eve's son from his fever. Although its intrinsic condition is that of an "unvirtuous weed", the soul maintains, in its existence as a plant, the natural virtue that pushes it to surrendering its life to feed another's. While showing the reader the corrupted condition of the fall, these verses disclose that, in spite of the corruption, it is still possible for the soul, at this state, to do good through self-sacrifice.

²⁴ John Donne, *Metempsychosis*, op. cit, stanzas XVI.

The next incarnation presented to us in the text is that of a sparrow:²⁵

Outcrept a sparrow, this soules moving Inne,
On whose raw armes stiffe feathers now begin,
As childrens teeth through gummes, to breake with paine,
His flesh is jelly yet, and his bones threds,
All a new downy mantle overspreads,
A mouth he opes, which would as much containe
As his late house, and the first houre speaks plaine,
And chirps alowd for meat. Meat fit for men
His father steales for him, and so feeds then
 One, that within a moneth, will beate him from his hen.

[...] So jolly, that it can move, this soule is,
The body so free of his kindnesses,
That selfe preserving it hath now forgot,
And slackneth so the soules, and bodies knot,
Which temperance streightens; freely on his she friends
He blood, and spirit, pith, and marrow spends,
 Ill steward of himself, himselfe in three years ends.

Else might he long have liv'd; man did not know
Of gummie blood, which doth in holly grow,
How to make bird-lime, nor how to deceive
With faind calls, hid nets, or enwrapping snare
The free inhabitants of the Plyant aire.
Man to beget, and woman to conceive
Askt not of rootes, nor of cock-sparrowes, leave:
Yet chuseth hee, though none of these he feares,
Pleasantly three, than streightned twenty yeares
 To live, and to encrease his race, himselfe outweares.²⁶

²⁵ It is also interesting to consider the possible influence of the medieval Christian symbolism related to these beings: L. Charbonneau-Lassay, *Le Bestiaire du Christ*, De Brouwer, Paris 1940.

²⁶ John Donne, *Metempsychosis*, op. cit, stanzas XIX-XXII.

The incarnation of the sparrow represents the phase of the journey in which the soul is “educated” to incontinence.²⁷ The experience of self-sacrifice of its previous incarnation, far from being a positive example to pursue in its current one, only pushes the soul to a consuming lust for life. Now able to move and interact with the world, the soul uses this freedom but to indulge in immoderate sensual pleasures, thus inevitably outwearing himself and provoking his premature death after three years, when, as stated in the poem, through temperance he could have lived up to twenty. In this episode, as in all those that will follow it, the evolution of the soul’s incarnations, in this case from plant to animal, is linked to an evolution in the ability and in the possibility to sin. If the corruption of the soul in the mandrake root was but the intrinsic corruption caused by the fall from grace, through the incarnation in the sparrow the soul experience sin not only in its essence, but also in its actions. The soul “evolves” from self-sacrifice, the passive condition of allowing good to happen, to self-destruction, the active and destructive performing of evil. However, at this phase of the soul’s evolution, sin is still something which is related to incontinence, something which is self-inflicted and only damages the soul itself. Sin as a violence towards the lives of other beings will be

²⁷ Contenance or temperance, *enkrateia*, corresponding to abstinence from flesh eating and from sexual activities, was one of the central virtues in ancient and primitive Christianity: *La tradizione dell'enkrateia. Motivazioni ontologiche e protologiche. Atti del Colloquio Internazionale di Milano, 20-23 Aprile 1982*, ed. by Ugo Bianchi, edizioni dell'Ateneo, Roma 1985.

the lesson learned by the soul in its following incarnations in three different kinds of fish.

The image of the fish emerges in the text as a clear allusion of the Christian allegoric tradition, in which the fish itself is a symbol referring to Christ²⁸, of the Innocent *par excellence*, who suffers and bares on himself the violence of the world:

Is any kinde subject to rape like fish?
Ill unto man, they neither doe, nor wish:
Fishers they kill not, nor with noise awake,
They doe not hunt, nor strive to make a prey
Of beasts, nor their yong sonnes to beare away;
Foules they pursue not, nor do undertake
To spoile the nests industrious birds do make;
Yet them all these unkinde kinds feed upon,
To kill them is an occupation,
And lawes make fasts, and lents for their destruction.²⁹

Fish are presented as essentially innocent and harmless beings. They do not commit evil deeds, nor do they answer with evil the evil they receive. They do not feed on the lives of others, they do not kill the offspring of other creatures, nor do they destroy their homes. Here fish seem to embody the archetype of the perfect Christian, leading a life according to the principles of compassion and respect and yet, as Christ himself and many Christians in history, in turn they receive but

²⁸ For a deep understanding of the fish as a symbol for Christ and Christianity, see: Robert Eisler, *Orpheus the Fisher. Comparative Studies in Orphic and Early Christian Symbolism*, I-II, Watkins, London 1921.

²⁹ John Donne, *Metempsychosis*, op. cit, stanza XXIX.

violence and abuse from all. All creatures, explains the poem, feed upon their bodies. They are considered worthless to the point that to deprive them of their lives is a common habit, to the point that even religious institutions contribute to their massacre, by allowing their consumption as food even during lent and fasts.

The image of the fish as an emblem of the sacrifice of the innocent to the violent's greed is portrayed in the first two episodes in which the soul is incarnated in the body of a fish:

When goodly, like a ship in her full trim,
A swan, so white that you may unto him
Compare all whitenesse, but himselfe to none,
Glided along, and as he glided watch'd,
And with his arched necke this poore fish catch'd.
It mov'd with state, as if to looke upon
Low things it scorn'd, and yet before that one
Could thinke he sought it, he had swallowed cleare
This, and much such, and unblam'd devour'd there
All, but who too swift, too great, or well arm'd were.

Now swome a prison in a prison put,
And now this Soule in double walls was shut,
Till melted with the Swans digestive fire,
She left her house the fish, and vapour'd forth;
Fate not affording bodies of more worth
For her as yet, bids her againe retire
T'another fish, to any new desire
Made a new prey; For, he that can to none
Resistance make, nor complaint, sure is gone.
Weaknesse invites, but silence feasts oppression.³⁰

³⁰ *Ibidem*, stanzas XXIV-XXV.

In the episode presented in these stanzas, a new born fish is devoured by “A swan so white that you may unto him compare all whitenesse”, quite probably the symbol of hypocritical religion devouring and destroying authentic and original Christianity, symbolized by the small fish itself. In the incarnation following this one, the soul migrates, once more, in a fish: it still hasn’t marred by the experience and learned the lesson of violence, so it must live through an analogous experience in order to move onwards in its progress. Its new housing is a fish swimming in a stream towards the sea. The fish manages to escape a predator and being captured in a net, but, after reaching the sea, he is seized and devoured by a sea-pie. It is only the third fish incarnation which marks an actual evolution in its ability to sin:

Into an embrion fish, our Soule is throwne,
And in due time throwne out againe, and growne
To such vastnesse, as if unmanacled
From Greece, Morea were, and that by some
Earthquake unrooted, loose Morea swome,
Or seas from Africks body had severed
And torne the hopefull Promontories head,
This fish would seeme these, and, when all hopes faile,
A great ship overset, or without saile
Hulling, might (when this was a whelp) be like this whale.

At every stroake his brazen finnes do take,
More circles in the broken sea they make
Then cannons voices, when the aire they teare:
His ribs are pillars, and his high arch’d roofe

Of barke that blunts best steele, is thunder-prooffe:
Swimme in him swallowed Dolphins, without feare,
And feele no sides, as if his vast wombe were
Some inland sea, and ever as hee went
He spouted rivers up, as if he ment
 To joyne our seas, with seas above the firmament.

He hunts not fish, but as an officer,
Stayes in his court, at his owne net, and there
All suitors of all sorts themselves enthrall;
So on his backe lyes this whale wantoning,
And in his gulfe-like throat, sucks every thing
That passeth neare. Fish chaseth fish, and all,
Flyer and follower, in this whirlepoole fall;
O might not states of more equality
Consist? and is it of necessity
 That thousand guiltlesse smals, to make one great, must die?

Now drinkes he up seas, and he eates up flocks,
He justles Ilands, and he shakes firme rockes.
Now in a roomefull house this Soule doth float,
And like a Prince she sends her faculties
To all her limbes, distant as Provinces.
The Sunne hath twenty times both crab and goate
Parched, since first lanch'd forth this living boate,
'Tis greatest now, and to destruction
Nearest; There's no pause at perfection,
 Greatnesse a period hath, but hath no station.³¹

In its incarnation as a whale, the soul seems to have learned from what it had experienced in its previous lives. Far from being small and vulnerable, it is now dwelling in a body which is so vast as to be in itself presented in the poem as a small world, as a kingdom. It can now enjoy a condition of safety in its current body, but most of all of

³¹ *Ibidem*, stanzas XXXI-XXXIV.

power, the power to impose its will to others rather than suffering others' tyranny. The soul has learned from the negative examples it was exposed to. In the text, in his "gulfe-like throat" the whale "sucks every thing that passeth neare", he "drinckes he up seas, and he eateth up flocks": now the soul too has been corrupted by the sin of harming and killing for one's own material benefit, for one's own subsistence. The poet does not hesitate to underline with awe this key episode of the soul's journey, its fall into active sin and violence, its irreparable loss of the capability of feeling compassion. "O might not states of more equality/ Consist? and is it of necessity/ That thousand guiltlesse smals, to make one great, must die?" he asks the reader, while he starts questioning the goodness of the soul's evolution and to make his point that all greatness in this world is achieved but through the sacrifice of the weak and innocent and, most of all, through the utter perdition of one's own soul.

The soul has become that of a predator, yet this doesn't prevent that it may become once more a prey and victim of yet greater sin:

Two little fishes whom hee never harm'd,
Nor fed on their kinde, two not thoroughly arm'd
With hope that they could kill him, nor could doe
Good to themselves by his death (they did not eate
His flesh, nor suck those oyles, which thence outstreat)
Conspir'd against him, and it might undoe
The plot of all, that the plotters were two,
But that they fishes were, and could not speake.

How shall a Tyran wise strong projects breake,
If wreches can on them the common anger wreake?

The flaile-finn'd Thresher, and steel-beak'd Sword-fish
Onely attempt to doe, what all doe wish.
The Thresher backs him, and to beate begins;
The sluggard Whale yeelds to oppression,
And t'hide himselfe from shame and danger, downe
Begins to sinke; the Swordfish upward spins,
And gores him with his beake; his staffe-like finnes,
So well the one, his sword the other plyes,
That now a scoffe, and prey, this tyran dyes,
And (his owne dole) feeds with himselfe all companies.³²

The thresher and the swordfish were never harmed by the whale, nor would they benefit in any way from his death, yet they “Conspir'd against him”, eventually managing to kill him. Once more, the journeying soul is deeply affected by this:

This Soule, now free from prison, and passion,
Hath yet a little indignation
That so small hammers should so soone downe beat
So great a castle. And having for her house
Got the streight cloyster of a wreched mouse
(As basest men that have not what to eate,
Nor enjoy ought, doe farre more hate the great
Then they, who good repos'd estates possesse)
This Soule, late taught that great things might by lesse
Be slaine, to gallant mischiefe doth herself addresse.³³

³² *Ibidem*, stanzas XXXV-XXXVI.

³³ *Ibidem*, stanza XXXVIII.

The new lesson learned by the soul is that “great things might by lesse be slaine” and hastens to duplicate and enact on others the sin it has suffered. It’s next incarnation is in the body of a mouse:

Natures great master-peece, an Elephant,
The onely harmlesse great thing; the giant
Of beasts; who thought, no more had gone, to make one wise
But to be just, and thankfull, loth to offend,
(Yet nature hath given him no knees to bend)
Himselfe he up-props, on himselfe relies,
And foe to none, suspects no enemies,
Still sleeping stood; vex’t not his fantasie
Blacke dreames, like and unbent bow, carelessly
His sinewy Proboscis did remisly lie.

In which as in a gallery this mouse
Walk’d, and surveid the roomes of this vast house,
And to the braine, the soules bedchamber, went,
And gnaw’d the life cords there; Like a whole towne
Cleane undermin’d, the slaine beast tumbled downe,
With him the murtherer dies whom envy sent
To kill, not scape, (for, only hee that ment
To die, did ever kill a man of better roome,)
And thus he made his foe, his prey, and tombe:
Who cares not to turn back, may any whither come.³⁴

In the XXXIX stanza the poem presents the character of the elephant, which is completely analogous to that of the whale both in size and in excellence. Apart from being presented as “the giant of beasts”, the elephant is also described as an example of virtue and wisdom: he is a harmless being, he has no enemies among the other

³⁴ *Ibidem*, stanzas XXXIX-XL.

creatures and can't even conceive the evilness of the soul who has already planned his destruction for the mere sake of it. This soul, in the body of a mouse, enters the elephant's trunk and getting to his brain "gnaws the life cords there", causing the premature death of both.

Having cultivated in itself and mastered the sin of killing, the soul's next incarnation is in the body of a predator, a wolf:³⁵

Next, hous'd this Soule a Wolves yet unborne whelp,
Till the best midwife, Nature, gave it helpe,
To issue. It could kill, as soon as goe:
Abel, as white, and milde as his sheepe were,
(Who in that trade, of Church, and kingdomes, there
Was the first type) was still infested soe,
With this wolfe, that it bred his losse and woe;
And yet his bitch, his sentinell attends
The flocke so neere, so well warnes and defends,
That the wolfe, (hopelesse else) to corrupt her, intends.³⁶

The body hosting the soul reflects its lethal characteristics: it can "kill as soon as goe" and it is presented as Abel's greatest problem, "infesting" his flock. However, against the journeying soul's design, Abels' bitch "Attends / The flocke so neere, so well warnes and defends" that the soul is forced to reach yet higher levels of sin in order to fulfill its desires. The new sin sprouting in the soul's

³⁵ For the wolf symbolism, see: R. Eisler, *Man Into Wolf – An Anthropological Interpretation of Sadism, Masochism, And Lycanthropy*, Routledge, London 1951.

³⁶ John Donne, *Metempsychosis*, op. cit, stanza XLI.

evolution is that which pushes it to corrupt another being through lust,
in this case Abel's bitch herself:

Hee hath engag'd her; his, she wholly bides;
Who not her owne, none others secrets hides,
If to the flocke he come, and Abell there,
She faines hoarse barkings, but she biteth not,
Her faith is quite, but not her love forgot.
At last a trap, of which some every where
Abell had plac'd, ends all his losse, and feare,
By the Wolves death; and now just time it was
That a quick soule should give life to that masse
Of blood in Abels bitch, and thither this did passe.

Some have their wives, their sisters some begot,
But in the lives of Emperours you shall not
Reade of a lust the which may equall this;
This wolfe begot himselfe, and finished
What he began alive, when hee was dead,
Sonne to himselfe, and father too, hee is
A ridling lust, for which Schoolemen would misse
A proper name. The whelpe of both these lay
In Abels tent, and with soft Moaba,
His sister, being yong, it us'd to sport and play.

Hee soone for her too harsh, and churlish grew,
And Abell (the dam dead) would use this new
For the field, being of two kindes thus made,
He, as his dam, from sheepe drove wolves away,
And as his Sire, he made them his ownes prey.
Five years he liv'd, and cosened with his trade,
Then hopeless that his faults were hid, betraid
Himselfe by flight, and by all followed,
From dogges, a wolfe; from wolves, a dogge he fled;
And, like a spie to both sides false, he perished.³⁷

³⁷ *Ibidem*, stanzas XLIII-XLV.

The wolf manages to corrupt the bitch and to have her in his power, yet he falls into one of Abel's traps and dies. The soul then incarnates in the whelp itself it conceived while in the body of the wolf and enjoys the advantages of being half dog and half wolf, deceiving his master by making him think he will serve him only to prey the sheep himself, but soon enough becomes victim of its own deceiving nature and leaves this incarnation only few years after.

After leaving the body of the dog, the soul finds itself into that of a "toyfull Ape", living and playing with the children in Adam's camp:

It quickened next a toyfull Ape, and so
Gamesome it was, that it might freely goe
From tent to tent, and with the children play,
His organs now so like theirs hee doth finde,
That why he cannot laugh, and speake his minde,
He wonders. Much with all, most he doth stay
With Adams fift daughter *Siphatecia*
Doth gaze on her, and, where she passeth, passe,
Gathers her fruits, and tumbles on the grasse,
And wisest of that kinde, the first true lover was.

He was the first that more desir'd to have
One then another; first that ere did crave
Love by mute signes, and had no power to speake;
First that could make love faces, or could doe
The valters sombersalts, or us'd to wooe
With hoiting gambolls, his owne bones to breake
To make his mistresse merry; or to wreake
Her anger on himselfe. Sinnes against kinde
They easily doe, that can let feed their minde
With outward beauty, beauty they in boyes and beasts do find.

By this misled, too low things men have prov'd,
And too high; beasts and angels have beene lov'd;

This Ape, though else through-vaine, in this was wise,
He reach'd at things too high, but open way
There was, and he knew not she would say nay;
His toyes prevaile not, likelier meanes he tries,
He gazeth on her face with teare-shot eyes,
And up lifts subtly with his russet pawe
Her kidskinne apron without feare or awe
Of Nature; Nature hath no gaole, though she hath law.

First she was silly and knew not what he ment,
That vertue, by his touches, chaft and spent,
Succeeds an itchie warmth, that melts her quite,
She knew not first, now cares not what he doth,
And willing halfe and more, more then halfe loth,
She neither puls nor pushes, but outright
Now cries, and now repents; when *Tethlemite*
Her brother, enterd, and a great stone threw
After the Ape, who thus prevented, flew,
This house thus batter'd downe, the Soule possesst a new.³⁸

The similarity of the bodily features of the ape to those of humans make him wonder about the differences between human beings and himself and the reasons why, though so alike them in many ways, he cannot laugh or speak. Yet in the text he is presented as "the first true lover", who, though unable to express it, lives in his very body the passions of desire and lust, passions whose object is Siphatecia, Adam's fifth daughter. In the attempt to enact this desire upon her, being that "Nature hath no gaole, though she hath law", the soul goes against natural laws³⁹ themselves and aims at "things to high", with the result of being killed by Siphatecia's brother.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, stanzas XLVI-XLIX.

³⁹ For Donne's concept of law, see also: J. Donne, *Biathanatos*, Garland, London 1962.

After a long journey, the soul finally incarnates in a human form. This incarnation alone, among all the incarnations throughout the text, is presented in detail in the poem: each phase of the process of incarnation itself is described minutely:

And whether by this change she lose or win,
She comes out next, where the Ape would have gone in,
Adam and *Eve* had mingled bloods, and now
Like *Chimiques* equall fires, her temperate wombe
Had stew'd and form'd it: and part did become
A spungie liver, that did richly allow,
Like a free conduit, on a high hills brow,
Life keeping moisture unto every part;
Part hardned it selfe to a thicker heart,
Whose busie furnaces lifes spirits do impart.

Another part became the well of sense,
The tender well-arm'd feeling braine, from whence,
Those sinowie strings which do our bodies tie,
Are raveld out; and fast there by one end,
Did this Soule limbes, these limbes a soule attend;
And now they joyn'd; keeping some quality
Of every past shape, she knew treachery,
Rapine, deceit, and lust, and illis enow
To be a woman. *Themech* she is now,
Sister and wife to *Caine*, *Caine* that first did plow.⁴⁰

In this final incarnation the gradual blending of the soul with its new body is described: Adam and Eve's blood mingles and Eve's body becomes an alchemy laboratory in which the elements of the human tripartite soul are created. First the blood condenses to form the liver,

⁴⁰ John Donne, *Metempsychosis*, op. cit, stanzas L-LI.

which, according to Galenus and to all ancient traditions, is the seat of the vegetative soul, which is common to all growing things.⁴¹ It then condenses in the heart, centre of the sensitive soul and in the end it forms the brain, housing the rational soul. The soul is finally one with its human incarnation which, explains the poem, keeps “some quality of every past shape”, by quality meaning all the corruption it has learned during its journey. The incarnation into a human being, into a woman, Themech, “sister and wife to Cain”, represents the peak of the soul’s evolution, an evolution which, as has been previously stated is a paradoxical evolution in sin, cruelty and moral degradation.

The emphasis in Donne’s 1601 *Metempsychosis* is still on the dimension of the *contemptu mundi*, on the contempt towards a corrupted, cruel and meaningless world: the religious dimension, that of faith, bringing hope and salvation into the picture, is still absent or reduced to the dimension of a *conceit*, of a mere literary topos. Donne’s contemplation of life and reality in this first *Progress of the Soul*, though witty and ironic, is still a disenchanting one, which leaves no space for redemption. Still, though this work portrays a journey from purity to corruption and not from corruption to liberation, as

⁴¹ *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, compiled by Barbara Forryan and Janet M. Glover, Routledge, London 2003: volume XII and XIII are specifically related to alchemy, IX part 2 is relevant for the fish symbolism, whereas blood symbolism and the platonic idea of a tripartite soul is discussed through all the works.

happened in the traditional *Progressus Animae*, this work shows that Donne was already exploring the idea of a *Progressus*, of a rectilinear journey of the soul. It also shows the beginning of Donne's poetical reflections upon the fall and decay of the world, which will culminate with his 1611-12 *Anniversaries*.

III

Symbol, Word, Image.

Light, Wisdom and the Logos in Donne's reading of
John 1.8

It is a fact that theology in the premodern frame of mind -a frame of mind which was also Donne's, despite his clear and disenchanted awareness of the unstoppable rise of modernity- was, to all intents and purposes, considered the "queen of the sciences", the knowledge to which all other sciences aimed at and that none of them could disregard. Not long before the Scientific Revolution, what we now know as "natural science" was then closely linked to natural theology,⁴² a discipline through which scholars inquired about God by studying the world He created and viceversa. This paradigm was so strong that not even XVII century modern scientists were able to exclude God from their systems of thought: a complete emancipation of science and philosophy from the theological realm will only occur in the XVIII century, with Enlightenment.⁴³ These premises given, it may be fruitful to consider and analyze the outlook on the trope of light of one of the most eclectic authors in XVII century England, one whose interests ranged from alchemy to the new trends of modern science, from theology to philosophy to, of course, literature. I will consider three sermons in which Donne exposes his views, thoughts

⁴² Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination - from the middle ages to the seventeenth century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1986.

⁴³ See also: Enrico R. A. Giannetto, *Saggi di storie del pensiero scientifico*, Sestante for Bergamo University Press, Bergamo 2005; Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990; P. Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998.

and ideas on the theme of light while commenting John 1.8: *He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light.*⁴⁴

In this verse of St John's Gospel, Donne explains in the first of the three sermons, *is condensed the whole of divinity*, in particular the mystery concerning the true nature of the divine Light, which is the main subject of the first of the three sermons. Donne's initial commentary of John 1.8 was composed in 1621 and preached on Christmas day of the same year: this festivity, representing since archaic times the *darke time of the yeer* during which new light is born, but also, in the Christian tradition, *the great Epiphany*, the manifestation of Christ in the flesh, was for these reasons chosen as the fittest occasion in which to begin his inquiry upon light. The explicit goal of the sermon is that of finding out *what this light is, (what thing) and who this light is (what person) which John Baptist is denied to be.*⁴⁵

Considering the multiplicity of connotations that are evoked in this verse by the trope of light, most of which had been accepted in

⁴⁴ See John Donne, John 1.8 (1621), in *The Sermons of John Donne*, edited by Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953-62. For a contemporary review of the status of the exegesis on John's Gospel, see: R. E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. by F. J. Moloney, Doubleday, New York 2003. See also: Audrey Taschini, *He Was Not that Light, but Was sent to Bear Witness of That Light: the Language of vision and Illumination in John Donne's Commentary of John 1.8*, in Elena Agazzi, Enrico Giannetto, Franco Giudice eds., *Representing Light across Arts and Sciences: Theories and Practices* (Interfacing Science, Literature, and the Humanities / ACUME 2 Vol. 2), V&R unipress, Goettingen 2010, 57-67.

⁴⁵ For a contemporary perspective on John the Baptist's problem, see: Edmondo Lupieri, *Giovanni Battista fra storia e leggenda*, Paideia, Brescia 1988.

interpretations previous to his, Donne's first step in his exegesis is that of identifying and bringing to the attention of his hearers the true, unique referent of the term "light" in the passage he has chosen to expound:

Though most expositors, as well ancient, as modern agree with one general and unanimous consent that *light* in this *verse* is intended and meant of *Christ*, *Christ* is this *light*, yet in some precedent and subsequent passages in this Chapter I see other senses have been admitted of this word, *light* [...]. So far, in wresting in *divers* senses into a word, which needs but *one*, and is of it selfe clear enough, that is *light*, and yet reaches not [...] to the *essential light*, which is *Christ Jesus*, nor to the *supernatural light*, which is *Faith* and *Grace*, which seems to have been the Evangelists principall scope, to declare the coming of *Christ* (who is the *essentiall light*) and his purpose in coming, to raise and establish a Church, by *Faith* and *Grace*, which is the *supernatural light* [...].⁴⁶

Here Donne is referring to the multitude of coexisting meanings which emerge in the exegesis of the Scriptures. During the Middle Ages the interpretation of the Bible was based in the so-called fourfold method which identified a literal meaning and three spiritual ones, namely the allegorical meaning, the moral meaning and the

⁴⁶ John Donne, *Sermon preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmasse day, 1621*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

anagogical meaning.⁴⁷ In addition to this, there was the doctrine of typology which in the Christian tradition, consisted in the fact of “recognizing the Old Testament in the New”:⁴⁸ events and characters in the Old Testament were therefore considered as prophetic allegories foreshadowing what is narrated in the Gospels, according to a pattern in which both became revelations of the future glory of the Kingdom of God. This passage of the sermon shows Donne’s intention to take a distance from these main-stream medieval hermeneutical precepts, in particular from the common tendency among Catholic exegetes to accept different, coexistent levels of meaning in their interpretations of various figurative elements of the Bible. Instead, he followed the Protestant principle of the “one sense of Scripture”, elaborated from Augustinian hermeneutics⁴⁹, which attributed authority to the literal sense only. By “literal sense” we mustn’t however think of an interpretation that confines itself to the merely denotative level of the text: in Augustinian/Lutheran hermeneutics, which deeply influenced Donne as well as Anglicanism in general, the literal sense included the three spiritual ones, so that the totality of the four senses constituted

⁴⁷ Henri De Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale. Les quatre sens de l’écriture I-IV*, Montaigne, Paris 1959-1965; Engl. tr. by E. M. Macierowski, *Medieval Exegesis. The Four Senses of the Scriptures*, I-IV, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (MI) 2000.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*

⁴⁹ See John S. Pendergast, *Religion, Allegory, and Literacy in Early Modern England, 1560-1640*, Ashgate, 2006, in particular the Introduction and Chapter 2.

the “letter”, the “Spirit” of the text⁵⁰. This modality of interpreting the Scriptures, far from being direct and unmediated, presupposed a great deal of in-depth knowledge of history, grammar, rhetoric and, of course, theology in order to ascertain the exact meaning of the different passages of the Bible, *the principall intention of the Holy Ghost in that place*. As well as many Protestant scholars and theologians of his time, Donne thought that the words of the Scriptures, if correctly interpreted, after a long and laborious struggle with the text, could lead to one, sound sense, a sense that alone had the power to guide the soul to Truth and salvation. For this precise reason, proceeds Donne,

though it be ever lawfull, and often times very usefull, for the raising and exaltation of our devotion, and to present the plenty, and abundance of the *holy Ghost* in the *Scriptures*, who satisfies us as with marrow, and with fatnesse, to induce the *diverse senses* that the Scriptures doe admit, yet this may not be admitted, if there may be danger thereby to neglect or weaken the *literal sense* it selfe. For there is no necessity of that *spiritual wantonnesse* of finding more then

⁵⁰ As Donne exposes in his Easter sermon of 1624, commenting Apocalypse 20.6, the literal sense is often rendered through the use of metaphors and figures of speech: “The literall sense is alwayes to be preserved; but the literall sense is not alwayes to be discerned: for the literall sense is not alwayes that which the very Letter and Grammer of the place presents [...]: the literall sense [...] is the principall intention of the Holy Ghost, in that place: And his principall intention in many places, is to expresse things by allegories, by figures; so in many places of Scripture, a figurative sense is the literall sense, and more in this book than in any other”.

necessary senses; for the more *lights* there are, the more *shadows* are also cast by those many lights.⁵¹

The main purpose of biblical exegesis being, according to John Donne, that of discerning the *principall scope* of the text, all lesser senses, as lower lights, obscure the true light of the Scripture. If men disperse themselves in minor matters they are bound to forget the core and heart of their faith, which is to be found in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

Light therefore, is in all this Chapter fitliest understood as Christ, but once this has been ascertained we are still to face the question of *how* to interpret the assertion that "Christ is that Light". As for this matter, Donne explains:

Christ is not called *Light*, as he is called a *Rock*, or a *Cornerstone*; not by a metaphore, but truly, and properly. It is true that the Apostles are said to be *light*, and that with an article, *the light*; but yet with a limitation and restriction, *the light* of the world, that is, set up to convey light to the world. It is true that *John Baptist himself* was called *light*, and with large additions, *Lucerna ardens*, a *burning*, and a *shining lampe*, to denote both his owne *burning zeale*, and the *communicating* of this his light to others. It is true, that all the *faithfull* are said to be *light in the Lord*; but all this is but to signifie that they had been in darknesse before; they had been beclouded, but were now

⁵¹ John Donne, *Sermon preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmasse day, 1621*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

illustrated; they were light, but light by *reflection*, by illumination of a greater light.⁵²

Implicitly quoting Augustin's interpretation of John's passage⁵³, Donne shows how the term "Light" must here be taken in its literal sense: Christ is truly,⁵⁴ and not allegorically, the light of love and life which the text refers to, a supernatural light that shines through the transparent and receptive souls of those who believe in Him. The Apostles as well, Donne points out, are said to be lights, yet, although the presence of the divine light is real and actual in their case also, they still are not the *fons lucis*, the source of all light, but *weake lights*, lower emanations of the celestial splendour. It is by *illumination* that God communicates Himself to the world, both physically and spiritually. The whole of all the faithful are *illustrated* by the supernatural Light of God and are transfigured by this light into living

⁵² *Ibidem*

⁵³ See, Augustinus, *In Evangelium Ioannis Tractatus CXXIV*, in *Patrologia Latina cursus completus, Series Latina*, 1-222, ed. by Jean Paul Migne, Garnier, Paris 1844-1864, vol. 35, 1379-1976; *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 1-124, n. 2, Engl. tr. by John Gibb, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Vol. 7.*, ed. by Philip Schaff. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888.).

⁵⁴ About light symbolism, see: Rudolf Bultmann, *Zur Geschichte der Lichtsymbolik in Altertum*, in *Philologus* 97 (1948), pp. 1-36, poi ristampato in *Exegetica*, Mohr, Tübingen 1967; Hans Blumenberg, *Licht als Metapher der Wahrheit. Im Vorfeld der philosophischen Begriffsbildung*, in: Hans Blumenberg, *Ästhetische und metaphorologische Schriften*. Auswahl und Nachwort von Anselm Haverkamp, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 2001, pp. 139-171; Engl. tr., *Light as a Metaphor for Truth. At the preliminary stage of philosophical concept formation*, in David Michael Levin (ed.), *Modernity and the Hegemony of Vision*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, (1993), pp. 30-61. Contemporary exegesis has been influenced by Bultmann's thesis about light as metaphor in respect to I John 1.5 (*God is Light*): Rudolf Bultmann, *Die drei Johannesbriefe*, in *Kritisch-Exgetischer Kommentar ueber das N. T. 14* begründet von H. W. A. Meyer, V. & R., Goettingen 1967.

images of His luminescence. By reflecting in their own image this unimaginable splendour, their function becomes that of actual symbols, linking the earth to the heavens, *illustrating* the light of Christ and of the Gospel, giving flesh to God's ineffable language of truth and goodness. This openness to God's universal *Logos* of light is the first step towards regeneration, even though for mankind obscurity is inevitable as it is consubstantial to all creation after the fall. It is precisely this obscurity that prevents all creatures from fully and completely embodying the divine Light, making it impossible for them to convey it in its absolute brightness. As a matter of fact,

[...] Christ was [...] the fountaine of their light; light as no body else was so [...] neither the *Apostles*, nor *John Baptist*, nor the *Elect*, no nor the *virgin Mary* [...] were so light, as they were nothing but light. *Moses* himselfe who received and delivered the law, was not so [...]. Nay, *Christ Jesus* himselfe, who fulfilled the law, *as a man*, was not so [...] but he suffered his Divine nature to appeare and shine through his flesh, and not to swallow, or annihilate that flesh. Christ admitted some *shadowes*, some such degrees of *humane infirmity*, as by them, he was willing to show, that the nature of man, in the best perfection thereof, is not *vera lux, tota lux*, true light, all light [...].⁵⁵

In this passage Donne shows how, compared to the uncorrupted symbol that is Christ incarnate, all righteous men and women are but

⁵⁵ John Donne, *Sermon preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmasse day, 1621*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

faint allusions, emanations of the universal meaning, whereas Christ is the very origin of the Light/Logos of God, shining through his human features. His perfection is overshadowed only by the veil of the flesh through which his divine nature must necessarily manifest itself to mankind. Christ accepted some darkness in his incarnation, explains Donne, not only to render himself intelligible to men, but also to show them how absolute and total light is an attribute of God alone. Mankind cannot be a source of pure light in itself, for obscurity is constitutive of its very nature: in the world of man to every spark corresponds a shadow, every light that shines produces some degree of darkness. But there's another type of darkness, continues Donne, even more insidious, opposing and threatening the communication between humanity and God, that of sin:

All other men, by occasion of this flesh, have darke *clouds*, yea *nights*, yea long and frozen nights of *sinne*, and of the *works of darknesse*.⁵⁶

If Christ's light wasn't obscured in his incarnation by anything but the veils of the flesh that made him visible to the eyes and minds of all creatures, the fallen humanity has a greater darkness upon it, that of original sin, which keeps the splendour, the inner warmth and vitality of the Light of God from penetrating and regenerating the souls of

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*

men. They are therefore far from being in complete communion with this Light: as a matter of fact they often fail and never fully succeed in opening their hearts and spirits to it, in truly receiving and diffusing it in the world:

[N]ot only no man, [...] but *no one act*, of the most perfect, and religious man in the world [...] can be bee *vera lux*, true light, all light, so perfect light, as that it may serve another, or thuselfe, for a lanthorne to his, or thy feet, or a light to his, or thy steps so that hee or thou may thinke it enough to doe so still. [...] No man hath *veram lucem*, true light, thorough light; no man hath *meridiem*, *Augem*, that high point that casts no shadow [...]. Slacker men have a declination even in their *mornings*; a *West* even in their *East*; coolings, and faintness and after-noones, as soon as they have any dawnsings, any breake of day, any inchoation of any spirituall action or purpose. [T]hey have not their noon, their *south point*, no such heighth, as that they might not have a higher, by that grace they have received.⁵⁷

In the human condition is primordially instilled the seed of sin, which spreads to every aspect of our earthly existence, from our very being to our actions. The influence of Luther's doctrine of the *sola gratia*,⁵⁸ based on the idea that mankind is irreparably corrupted after its primeval fall and that, therefore, all goodness in being, words,

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*

⁵⁸ See for example: Martin Luther (1525), *De servo arbitrio*, in *Doctor Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*, apparato critico a cura di J. FICKER, Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, Weimar 1883 e ss., e poi Akademische Druck, Graz 1964 e ss., vol.18, pp. 600-787.

thought and action, pertains to God alone, emerges distinctly in Donne's text. Although God ceaselessly showers His Grace upon the whole of humanity, most do not open their hearts to it and even those who do cannot fully reverberate and vibrate to the heavenly splendour which they are granted. As already stated, every one of their lights contains a shadow so that even at their peak they are in a state of decline, deficiency and incompleteness which is wholly extraneous to the *vera lux*.

The nature of light is, as we have seen, something that goes way beyond man's possibility of fulfilling it in himself, that transcends his very understanding of it. This is true not only for what concerns the supernatural Light of God, but also for the visible light, the light we can perceive through our sense of sight:

In all Philosophy there is not a darker thing as *light*; As the sunne, which is *fons lucis naturalis*, the beginning of all naturall light, is the most evident thing to be seen, and yet the hardest to be looked upon, so is naturall light to our reason and understanding. Nothing clearer, for it is *clearnesse* it selfe, nothing darker, it is enwrapped in so many scruples. Nothing nearer, for it is round about us, nothing more remote, for wee know neither the entrance, nor limits of it. Nothing more *easie*, for a child discerns it, nothing more hard, for no man understands it. It is apprehensible by *sense*, and not comprehensible by reason. If wee winke, wee cannot chuse but see it, if we stare, wee know it never the better. No man is *yet* got so neare to the knowledge

of the qualities of *light*, as to know whether light itself be a *quality*, or a *substance*.⁵⁹

Light is at once the most evident thing before our eyes and the most impenetrable mystery that confronts our intellect, the thing that makes the very act of vision possible and that which cannot be seen in itself. In manifesting his own incapacity, as well as that of the whole of humanity, of defining the authentic nature of light, Donne is certainly bearing in mind the numerous philosophers, from Aristotle to Ficino, that attempted to determine it, reaching incompatible conclusions⁶⁰. Light is apprehensible by sense, not comprehensible by reason, and Donne is therefore persuaded of the fact that the language elaborated by man's natural reason is totally inadequate in order to speak about it. As Ficino stated in his *De Sole*, it is impossible to express precisely what light is through our limited means: we know light in the same way that we know God, through a *via negativa*, by describing what it is not instead of what it actually is.⁶¹ As a matter of fact, explains Donne, to bring this light to the common light of reason,

⁵⁹ John Donne, *Sermon preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmase day, 1621*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

⁶⁰ Donne here alludes to the controversy, dating back to the Middle Ages, as to whether light was to be considered a quality, a mere accident of material bodies, or the form of all things. The former position referred to the Aristotelic tradition, while the latter was carried out by the Neoplatonics up to Marsilio Ficino. For further reference, see David C. Lindberg, *The Genesis of Kepler's Theory of Light: Light Metaphysics from Plotinus to Kepler*, in *Osiris*, 2nd Series, Vol. 2, (1986), pp. 4-42.

⁶¹ See also: David Park, *The Fire Within the Eye*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1997.

to our inferences and consequences, it may be in danger to *vanish it selfe, and perchance extinguish our reason too*. We shouldn't, concludes therefore Donne, imprison the universal Light within the boundaries of our concepts, theories and speculation, but rather forget all these spiritual and intellectual burdens and open our intellect to the elevate and infinitely brighter Reason of the Logos. The faculty of human reason, described by Donne as a lesser light which is common to all men, should be considered, in his perspective, but a point of departure for the acquisition of true knowledge, the first and most superficial level of comprehension of the world, thought it is commonly used for egoistic ends, to gain power, fame or to accumulate wealth and worldly goods:

[...] the common light of reason illumines us all; but one employes this light upon the searchings of impertinent vanities, another by a better use of the same light, finds out the Mysteries of Religion [...]. All the ways, both of *Wisdom*, and of *Craft* lie open to this light, this light of natural reason; But when they have gone all these ways by the benefit of this light, they have got no further, then to have walked by a tempestuous Sea, and to have gathered peblesm and speckled cockle shells.⁶²

⁶² John Donne, *Sermon preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmasse day, 1621*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

What is described in this passage is a faculty of reason which has been impaired by sin and that, far from seeking true knowledge, has reduced itself to mere *metis*⁶³. An intellect which attempts to comprehend all things according to its limited parameters, which is used but to dominate over nature and other men to one's own personal profit is bound to miss the sight and the illumination of the only true knowledge, that of the *Logos*/Light of God. As a matter of fact, the conception of light that emerges from Donne's sermons is that of a divine essence, that cannot be reduced to mere materiality or known objectively, as the new science had set itself to do during the Seventeenth century.⁶⁴ According to Donne's premodern perspective, no system of thought can possibly explain the ultimate mystery of light or force it into any language, for it is incomprehensible to the human intellect and unutterable by any speech. The only way men can possibly acquire any knowledge of the divine Light is by spiritual participation, by opening their hearts and spirits to it, letting it shine in

⁶³ Marcel Detienne & Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Les ruses de l'intelligence – Les mètis des Grecs*, Flammarion, Paris 1974.

⁶⁴ Marjorie H. Nicholson (1950), *The breaking of the circle: Studies in the effect of the "new science" upon seventeenth-century poetry*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1960; Charles Monroe Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, The Humanities Press, New York 1958; William Empson, *Essays on Renaissance Literature*, Vol I: *Donne and the New Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993; Robert K. Merton, *Science, Technology and Society in Seventeenth Century England*, in *Osiris* 4, part II (1938), pp. 360-632, rpt. Harper & Row, New York 1970; Enrico R. A. Giannetto, *Saggi di storie del pensiero scientifico*, cit.

their thoughts and actions, so that, in this state of illumination, they may adhere to its divine purpose.

Though, as we have seen, Donne's argumentation is aimed at manifesting the numerous limitations of man's faculty of reason and the vital importance of Grace for what concerns the attainment of true knowledge a further passage is dedicated to the Light of Nature as the first step of the ascent to the divine, as a symbol of it:

[A]s by the quantitie in the light of the *Moone*, we know the position and the distance of the *Sunne*, how far, or how neare the Sunne is to her, so by the working of the light of *Nature* in us, we may discern, (by the measure and virtue and heat of that) how near to the other greater light, the light of *Faith*, we stand. [...] *John Baptist was not the light*, he was not Christ, but he bore witness of him. The light of *faith*, in the highest exaltation that can be had, in the *Elect*, here, is not that very *beatificall vision*, which we shall have in heaven, but it beares witness of that light. The light of *nature*, in the highest exaltation is not faith, but it *bears witness* of it. The lights of *faith*, and of *nature* are subordinate *John Baptists*: *faith* beares me witness that I have *Christ*, and the light of nature, that is the *exalting of my naturall faculties* towards *religious uses*, beares me witness that I have *faith*.⁶⁵

In this passage Donne shows how the entire cosmos is bound together by a complex system of correspondences: the light of Nature

⁶⁵ John Donne, *Sermon preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmasse day, 1621*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

-i.e. both the visible light and the light of reason- leads to that of faith and faith, in its turn, leads to the *vera Lux*, the divine and complete light that is Christ. But as John the Baptist *was not that Light* but a mere *symbol*, a reference to the Light, so the light of nature is something different from that of faith, but bears witness and may lead to faith:

[w]e make a great difference between the treasure in the chest, and the *key* that opens it, yet we are glad to have the key in our hands. The *bell* that calls me to *Church*, does not catechise me, nor preach to me, yet I observe the sound of that bell, because it brings me to *him* that does those offices to me. The light of *nature* is far from being enough; but as a *candle* may kindle a *torch*, so into the faculties of nature, well employed, God infuses *faith*.⁶⁶

The ascent from reason to faith and from faith to illumination is portrayed by Donne as a symbolic passage: it is through its mystical language of correspondences that the supernatural light permeates different levels of being, producing clarity, awareness and knowledge of the Truth. The grace of illumination, is a divine gift that completely transfigures the life of whoever receives it, generating what Donne defines as a

⁶⁶ John Donne, *Sermon preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmasse day, 1621*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

Divine *Supererogation* [...]; not from *Man*, or his *Merit*, but from *God*; when our good works shall not onely profit *us*, that *do* them, but *others* that *see them* done; and when we by this light of *Repercussion*, of *Reflection*, shall be made *specula divinae gloriae, quae accipiunt & reddunt*, such looking glasses as *receive* Gods face upon our selves, and *cast it upon others by a holy life, and exemplary conversation*.⁶⁷

As it is in the nature of visible light to propagate itself and be reflected by material bodies, so the authentic presence of the essential Light of God manifests itself by *repercussion*, by the fact that each creature experiencing it becomes on its turn a new source of light, kindled by the celestial splendour. Though *we have no light in ourselves*, though in ourselves we are but darkness, we may, through the light of grace, reach a communion, partake of the divine Light, become *Light in the Lord*, living ideograms conveying the universal *Logos* to the world. In the final section of this sermon, we can find *in nuce* what Donne conceived as the fundamental theme of his third commentary of John 1.8, that concerning testimony. Here the concept is expounded further, through a reference to Augustine's homely of John:

Therefore, lest John the Baptist might be overvalued, and their devotions be fixed and determined on him, S. Augustine enlarges this consideration, *Erat Mons illustratus, non ipse Sol*; John Baptist was a

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*

hill, and a hill gloriously illustrated by the sun, but he was not that Sun; *Mirare, mirare, sed tanquam montem*; John Baptist deserves a respect and a regard; but regard him, and respect him but as a hill, which though high, is but the same earth; and *mons in tenebris est, nisi luce vestiatur*, A hill hath no more light in it self, then the valley, till the light invests it; *Si montem esse lucem putas, in montem naufragium facies*; If you take the hill, because it shines, to be the light it self, you shipwreck upon the top of a hill.⁶⁸

Here John the Baptist is portrayed as a mountain, that is as one of the *great souls* who was able to receive the invisible rays of the divine light and make them intelligible to the *smaller souls*. For this reason he is certainly deserving of *admiration*. However Donne reminds us of the fact that *a mountain is in darkness, unless it is clothed with light* and that even the greatest among prophets is but darkness if he is considered in himself and not in his testimony.

Both Donne's third comment of John 1.8 and his second, composed in 1622, aimed at portraying John the Baptist as a fit example of testimony, the example of a man who, though *he was not that light*, was nonetheless *something towards it*, someone whose words and actions communicated God's message to mankind. Though in these two sermons the trope of light seems far less central than in the first, it is still the major image used by Donne to speak about the *Logos* and

⁶⁸ John Donne, *Sermon preached at Saint Pauls upon Christmase day, 1621*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

its action in the world, reinforcing his identification of God with a divine, creative Light. This is particularly evident in Donne's second sermon, which was composed in, in occasion of Midsummer day, the day on which the Church celebrates and remembers the figure of John the Baptist.

For, by Saint *Pauls* rule, *How can they preach except they be sent?* Preach they may; but *how?* With what successe, what effect, what blessing? So that the good successe of *John the Baptists* preaching, [...] this his working upon all sorts of men, the blessing that accompanied his labours, was a subsequent argument of his Mission, that he was sent by God. [...] *John Baptist* had, and thou must have a third citation; which was in him, *from the desert into the publique,* into the *world,* for *contemplation* to *practice.* He that undertakes no course, no vocation, he is no part, no member, no limbe of the body of this world; no eye, to give light to others [...].⁶⁹

Referring to John the Baptist's testimony Donne speaks about a divine *citation*, a calling from God -which is always a calling of light, an illumination- that generates and is answered by the vocation of man to *bear witness*, to spread the divine splendour and knowledge. This passage further stresses the importance of grace as the necessary origin of all goodness, meaning, value and wisdom. Once again, Donne makes it clear to us that no man can be light in himself and

⁶⁹ John Donne, *Sermon preached at St. Pauls on Midsommer day, 1622*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

that, on the contrary, the chief quality of a good witness is precisely that of selflessness. The capability of forgetting one's pride, one's own will and personal aims is what makes it possible to respond to light with light: following John the Baptist's example, he who bears witness of the glory of God should communicate freely the light that freely he had received, without recognising any merit in his works or any worth in himself. By denying that he was *that light* John the Baptist affirmed Christ, by making his soul a transparent vessel of the Light he realised the perfect testimony of its message which was not his own although he experienced in his very flesh, in a total surrender to the Word of God; his greatness was that of abandoning the dark body of his self and becoming a clear mirror through which the invisible brilliance of God could be perceived by the corrupted eyes of the fallen humanity. Each and every man is called by God to take part in His proclamation, and yet, explains Donne in his third sermon, the whole of mankind, as the Evangelist wrote, *does not know Him, does not receive Him*:

[I]f at any time, we put our selves in such a position and distance from this light, as that we suffer dark thick bodies to interpose, and eclipse it, that is, *sadnesse* and *dejection* of spirit, for worldly losses; nay if we admit inordinate *sadnesse* for sinne it selfe, to eclipse this light of comfort from us, or if we suffer such other lights, as by the corrupt estimation of the world, have a greater splendour to come in; (As the

light of *Knowledge* and *Learning*, the light of *Honour* and *Glory*, of popular *Applause* and *Acclamation*) so that this light which we speake of, [...] be darkened by the the accesse of other lights, worldly light, then also you shall finde that you need more and more Testimony of this light. [...] God is light in the Creature, in nature; yet the *naturall Man* stumbles and falls, and lies in that ignorance. [W]e deprave even the fiery, the *cloven tongues* of the Holy Ghost: Our tongues are *fiery* onely to the consuming of another, and they are *cloven*, onely in speaking things contrary to one another.⁷⁰

Though the Light of God is present in every aspect of creation, the postlapsarian world is still the theatre of a perpetual fight between good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, light and obscurity, truth and illusion. The whole earthly existence of humanity is a constant struggle against the gravity of sin, of despair, of doubt, of dejection, and man's weakness is such that he often falls in these shadows, unable to release himself from them. Imprisoned in the boundaries of the ego, blinded by the vane lights of the world, numbed by life's endless trials, the soul of man severs itself from the Soul of the world, from the universal *Logos* of the divine Light binding all things in a celestial harmony, and becomes in itself a source of contrast and discordance. We are at all times in danger of falling among those who *know him not*, among those who *receive him not*, in the dimension of spiritual obscurity that is identified by Donne, once again in

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*

Augustinian terms, not only with the obscuration of the intellect and of the heart, but also of life itself, as he writes:

We in our corrupt nature are dead [...], we cannot hear the voice, we cannot see the light. [...] ⁷¹

The *vera Lux* that is Christ is the only source of true life, because only through this light can man find the authentic meaning and dignity of his existence, becoming in his turn a source of the divine splendour for the world. This presence of the light of God in the life of man, concludes Donne in the final part of this third sermon, manifests itself more than in anything else in the dimension of the gift of the light we received to others:

Our thoughts, our words, our doings, our sufferings, if they bring *but ourselves* to Heaven, they are not *Witnesses*; our example brings *others*; and that is the purpose, and the end of all we have said, *John Baptist* was a witness to *us*, we are so to *you*, be you so to *one another*.⁷²

A light that remains closed in itself and is not shared with others goes against its very nature and betrays the essence of that higher

⁷¹ John Donne, *Sermon preached at Saint Pauls 13 October, 1622*, in *The Sermons of John Donne*, cit.

⁷² *Ibidem*

Light that kindled it, a light which diffuses itself in all directions and that is multiplied the more it is shared.

Though it is mainly on a theological ground, Donne's reflection on light is not simply metaphorical and fully takes into consideration the realm of scientific thought, in a frame of mind that doesn't separate the dimension of the divine from the experience of man in the world, his life, his every action.

IV.

Corruption and redemption in Donne's *First Anniversary*

The image of reality emerging from Donne's *Anatomy of the World*⁷³ is completely opposite to that which was dominant, only a decade before, in Elizabethan England. In the time span of only few years, the vision of a cosmos which was harmonic in the correspondence of its constitutive parts and mirroring a transcendent order was shattered and substituted with that of a corrupted and decaying universe⁷⁴, a dismembered universe without hope and without meaning, because a meaning, the Meaning, the Medieval (and Renaissance) *Anima Mundi*, was no longer contemplated in the frame of mind of the new, modern ideology⁷⁵. In an age in which the great symbolic order that had characterized the Middle Ages and the Renaissance irreparably crumbled into pieces, this dark threnody was much more than a poetic composition to lament the death of a young girl⁷⁶ who, with her virtue, seemed to confer significance to every aspect of existence: it was most of all a powerful literary account of the death of an entire way of thinking, of a whole world.

⁷³ Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, John Hopkins, Baltimore 1963.

⁷⁴ See also: Marjorie H. Nicholson (1950), *The breaking of the circle: Studies in the effect of the "new science" upon seventeenth-century poetry*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1960.

⁷⁵ Tullio Gregory, *Anima Mundi - La filosofia di Guglielmo di Conches e la scuola di Chartres*, Sansoni, Firenze 1955; Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature. Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1980.

⁷⁶ Elizabeth Drury, who died prematurely in 1610 at the age of fourteen.

The state of mind linked to the death of the ancient world and the shift to the modern paradigm was linked to very intense feelings and artistic expressions during the first half of the XVII century. In this period, in the visual arts as well as in literature, we can assist to an authentic obsession upon the *meditatio mori*⁷⁷, the meditation upon death, but also a great presence of a general feeling of loss, of mourning and, in contrast with the previous tradition, a great interest for melancholy, that was chosen as the subject for numerous essays and treatises. The advent of the Protestant Reformation in Europe and its gradual penetration of it deeper and deeper in British culture contributed to create a different conception of the world, of mankind, of sin, of salvation and radically changed the concept of melancholy, which had already become the illness of a whole collectivity⁷⁸. In the Middle Ages, a period in which an ideology linked to the Christian/Catholic frame of mind deeply and indistinctly permeated all layers of society.

Although it was almost ignored by critics during the centuries - possibly for its complex, at times even cryptic stile, or for the gloomy subject it is devoted to- Donne's *Anatomy of the World* can be listed among the XVI century literary works illustrating with most

⁷⁷ See Michel Vovelle, *La mort et l'Occident de 1300 a nous jours*, Gallimard, Paris 1983.

⁷⁸ Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky & Franz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art*, Nelson, Edinburgh 1964.

vividness, energy and effectiveness the fall of an age, of the entire world that was part of it, under the destructive influence of the scientific and philosophical revolutions of the XVII century⁷⁹. Trapped in a cosmos which has been shattered into pieces, Donne's funereal lamentation is a homage to a shattered harmony which will play an important role in his following works; the reflection upon death is, as a matter of fact, a recurrent element in both his poetry and his prose.

The threnody begins with a vivid image, evoking the fall of the world -presented through an antropomorphic metaphor, which expresses the parallel between microcosm and geocosm- in a fatal illness:

This, world, in that great earthquake languished;
For in a common Bath of teares it bled,
Which drew the strongest vitall spirits out:
But succour'd then with a perplexed doubt,
Whether the world did loose or gaine in this [...]
And so the world had fits; it ioy'd, it mournd,
And, as men thinke, that Agues Physicke are,
And the Ague being spent, giue ouer care,
So thou sicke world, mistak'st thy selfe to bee
Well, when alas, thou'rt in a Letargee.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Marjorie H. Nicholson (1950), *The breaking of the circle: Studies in the effect of the "new science" upon seventeenth-century poetry*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1960; Charles Monroe Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, The Humanities Press, New York 1958; William Empson, *Essays on Renaissance Literature*, Vol I: *Donne and the New Philosophy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1993.

⁸⁰ Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

Far worse than the destruction presented in these initial verses of *the Anatomy of the World* is the *letargie* of oblivion, of the complete lack of awareness of a world that "succour'd witha perplexed *doubt*" (a cognitive approach that reminds us more than any other of the new epistemology) and by the vane comforts of the modern ideology, is no longer capable of recognizing the visible and devastating signals of its illness. This symbolic confusion culminates in the following passage with the description of the state of utter loss of the world of its truest and deepest essence:

That wound was deepe, but 'tis more misery,
That thou hast lost thy sense and memory.
T'was heauy then to heare thy voice of mone,
But this is worse, that thou art speechlesse growne.
Thou hast forgot thy name, thou hadst; thou wast
Nothing but she, and her thou hast o'repast.
For as a child kept from the Fount, vntill
A Prince, expected long, come to fulfill
The Cermonies, thou vnnam'd hadst laid,
Had not her comming, thee her Palace made:
Her name defin'd thee, gaue thee forme and frame,
And thou forget'st to celebrate thy name.⁸¹

Here the illness that is initially attributed to the body of the world appears to have sunk deep into its soul and mind, dragging it in a sense of alienation that forces it and confines it into silence: it has become *speech-lesse*, deprived of the language through which to take

⁸¹ Ibidem

part to the universal articulation, to tune itself with the vital and unifying dimension of the *Logos*. The whole cosmos is presented as deprived of its *vitall spirits*,⁸² as matter without soul, as an undead being surviving past the dissolution of that Name that characterised it, that literally defined it, that made it what it was. This Name does not follow but precedes the object that it denotes: the original world is described as a child before his christening, *name-less*, existing in the waiting of that Name, as if he wasn't yet born, whereas the world in which the Name has already come is rendered *her Palace*, it is dignified and exalted by its presence, which confers dignity, meaning and beauty. By forgetting this sacred dimension, the *cermonies*, by forgetting to celebrate the *Logos*, the world loses its identity; losing its Name it loses itself.

The decadence of the world due to its separation from the universal soul is evoked and exemplified in various ways throughout the text. The great variety and nature of themes and images that can be found in the *Anatomy of the World* can however be linked to that massive process of fragmentation of the wholeness of the Spirit of the world (*The Cyment which did faithfully compact/And glue all vertues, now resolu'd, and slack'd*) symbolizing at the same time the fall of mankind into sin and the passage from the Mediavel/Renaissance

⁸² See: Daniel P. Walker, *The Concept of Spirit or Soul in Henry More and Ralph Cudworth*; tr. it. a cura di S. Ricci, *Il concetto di spirito o anima in Henry More e Ralph Cudworth*, Bibliopolis, Napoli 1986.

culture to the modern one. Disjointed from *Logos*, the body of the world falls into a complete disorder and in an internal anarchy of its parts:

[...] so is the worlds whole frame
Quite out of ioynt, almost created lame:
For, before God had made vp all the rest,
Corruption entred, and deprauid the best:
It seisd the Angels, and then first of all
The world did in her Cradle take a fall,
And turn'd her brains, and tooke a generall maim
Wronging each ioynt of th'vniuersall frame.
The noblest part, man, felt it first; and than
Both beasts and plants, curst in the curse of man.⁸³

This passage describes with extraordinary intensity the strong bond, characterizing the ancient frame of mind, between the articulation of the *Logos*, of the universal Word that was recognized as the ordering principle of the cosmos, and the articulation of the body of the world. If originally the "syntax" of this body mirrored that of the Word, starting from the instant in which *the world did in her Cradle take a fall*, from the fall of humanity into original sin, dragging along with it the whole of Nature, the world is heavily damaged and maimed in its very physical frame. Its features are described *out of joint*⁸⁴, disjointed, disconnected, its mind is *turn'd*, twisted: the whole of the

⁸³ Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

⁸⁴ This conception, common to Shakespeare's Hamlet, has to be related to the ancient myth of the cosmos: Giorgio de Santillana & Herta von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill. An essay on myth and the frame of time*, Gambit, Boston 1969.

material universe is *wronged, cursed*, lost with no apparent hope of redemption.

This vivid image of the downfall of the world, following the structure of the threnody, alternating descriptive/narrative sections and more lyrical sections, is followed by a long lamentation that celebrates the memory of all that was lost forever after the decess of the girl/*Logos*:

Shee that was best, and first originall
Of all faire copies and the generall
Steward to Fate; shee whose rich eyes, and brest:
Guilt the West-Indies, and perfum'd the East;
Whose hauing breath'd in this world, did bestow
Spice on those Isles, and bad them still smell so,
And that rich Indie which doth gold interre,
Is but as single money, coyn'd from her:
She to whom this world must it selfe refer,
As Suburbs, or the Microcosme of her,
Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowest this,
Thou knowst how lame a cripple this world is.
And learnst thus much by our Anatomy,
That this worlds generall sicknesse doth not lie
In any humour, or one certaine part;
But as thou sawest it rotten at the heart [...].
And, Oh, it can no more be questioned,
That beauties best, proportion, is dead,
Since euen grieffe it selfe, which now alone
Is left vs, is without proportion.
Shee by whose lines proportion should bee
Examin'd measure of all Symmetree,
Whom had the Ancient seene, who thought soules made
Of Harmony, he would at next haue said

That Harmony was shee, and thence infer.
That soules were but Resultances from her [...].
Shee, shee is dead, she's dead; when thou knowest this,
Thou knowst how vgly a monster this world is:
And learnest thus much by our Anatomee,
That here is nothing to enamour thee [...].⁸⁵

Shee, the universal *Logos*, which, through the image of Elisabeth Drury, is identified with a feminine principle⁸⁶, is the generating entity of all things good and beautiful, which are but its copies, as money coined from its mould, souls resulting from its Great Soul. In this perspective, according to which all is but *the Microcosme of Her* and all exists in the reference to she who is measure of all things, right and wonderful proportion, harmony, classical perfection in form mirroring that of the spirit, her death and the dissolution of her *Logos* brings but corruption, disproportion, pain and decay, turning the world into an *ugly monster*, a being whose deformity is at once physical and moral, in exact contrast with the beauty/truth/goodness of love (*here is nothing to enamour thee*).

Another denial of the universal Love/Soul, perhaps the most important of all, is that which is narrated in the book of the *Genesis*, describing the mythical origin of mankind's separation from God. It is

⁸⁵ Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

⁸⁶ This was common within Renaissance's perspective and has been only very recently rediscovered by feminist epistemology and theology: Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature. Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1980; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her. A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, Crossroad, New York 1988.

identified with mankind's questioning of the universal order, with the desire of humanity of imposing its own order, its own law, its own limited will, shattering the harmony of the original pre-lapsarian state. As previously stated, in the *Anatomy* the narration of the decadence of the world is at once the metaphor of the fall of humainty in sin -of the *lapse* that caused the ruin of the whole of the cosmos- and with the gradual but unstoppable affirmation of the new modern *episteme*. This new philosophical frame of mind concentrated all its energies in the aggressive attempt of dismembering the old symbolic paradigm of the Renaissance in which all things were part of one united whole to falsify it, to impose a new habit of mind. The main purpose of the emerging ideology was to destroy the ancient beliefs, the wisdom and faith of the heart on which were based on all aspects of life in the Middle Ages until the end of the XVI century, to replaced it with a doubting intellect, in complete and radical rejection of the, once essential, dimension of feeling. The mere wit of the intellect imposed itself in modern times as the one and only way to know the objective (or what was thought to be the objective) reality of things. In stark contrast with the "scientific" certainties proclaimed by the New Philosophy, Donne's *Anatomy* shows that the new *episteme*, rather than bringing rigor, clarity and order, was only able to create confusion, uncertainty and awe:

And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The Sunne is lost, and th'earth, and no mans wit
Can well direct him where to looke for it.
And freely men confesse that this world's spent,
When in the Planets, and the Firmament
They seeke so many new; they see that this
Is crumbled out againe to his Atomis.
'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
All iust supply, and all Relation [...].⁸⁷

The Cartesian doubt⁸⁸, which quickly influenced all intellectual cycles in Europe during the the first half of the XVII century, is what is represented in these verses: the general attitude of questioning of all things has shattered all the certitudes of the previous ideology, throwing the whole of humanity into chaos. Donne, whose mind was still deeply rooted in the Renaissance world view, considered that of human reason to be a limited power, nothing if compared to the divine intelligence of the heart; as a matter of fact, the rational mind is presented in the text as utterly inadequate and unable to make sense of a direction to the world. As a result of this, the universal world frame collapses, the world is destroyed and considered merely in its ruins, its

⁸⁷ Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

⁸⁸ Considered the first thinker to have given a philosophical foundation to modern science at its beginnings, Descartes' principal aim was that of determining the fundamental principles which can be known with absolute certainty. In order to do so, he gave birth to methodological scepticism, an approach that consists in refusing as false any idea that can be susceptible of doubt. See also: Enrico Giannetto, *Un fisico delle origini. Heidegger, la scienza e la Natura*, Donzelli, Roma 2010, pp. 157-237.

pieces. The disjointed limbs of the body of the ancient cosmos are considered in themselves alone: all consistency, every link between them is lost in this modern dissection, in an anatomy which dismembers and reassembles bodies according to its own logic.

The *Anatomy of the World* configures itself as a lamentation for a universal order that is no more, that is lost forever, and whose disappearance has caused the fall of the universe⁸⁹. In the greater part of the threnody as a matter of fact, in its tone and statements, in the matters it addresses, there seems to be very little hope about the fate of the world. However, it is necessary to move beyond this first level of reading in order to grasp the hidden, still vital heart of the poem. Though a universe of despair is placed before our eyes, it is worth noting that Donne's verses always value and celebrate the greatness of the Logos, even if this greatness is affirmed in a sort of indirect and apophatic way, by presenting the destruction and desolation that follow its departure from this world. In the *Anatomy* the feelings of sadness, melancholy, the sense of absence never become despair, never force us to read the signs of corruption and misery of the world as a prophecy of complete, total, irredeemable doom. Here and there, the poem shows glimmers of hope that not all is lost, that the bases to create -or rather, as we shall see, to re-create a new world- still exist:

⁸⁹ See also: Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe*, The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore 1957.

For there's a kind of world remaining still,
Though shee which did inanimate and fill
The world, begone, yet in this last long night,
Her Ghost doth walke, that is, a glimmering light,
A faint weake loue of vertue and of good
Reflects from her, on them which vnderstood
Her worth; And though she haue shut in all day,
The twi-light of her memory doth stay;
Which, from the carkasse of the old world, free
Creates a new world; and new creatures bee
Produc'd: The matter and the stuffe of this,
Her vertue, and the form our practise is.

In the long, dark night in which the world has fallen, a *Ghost* of the vanished *Logos* still walks, a glimmer of the universal spirit, an echo of the Word that animated all things. This irradiation of Light and Love -coming from the celestial spheres that make up the new home of the Soul- is gathered and reflected in the dark by *them which vnderstood Her worth*, by those who have awareness of the inestimable value and importance of it and that, consequently, wish to "translate" the transcendent Logos, offering and conveying it to the world through the form of the poetic language (*The matter and the stuff of this, her virtue, and the form our Practise is*). These are perhaps the images that, through a subtle *mise en abîme* (the process that Donne describes in these verses is the same that he himself enacts in his poem), better convey Donne's conception regarding the function of poetry and the role of the poet. Poetry is presented here as a form of

partial redemption of the corrupted reality of the world, a means of bringing back to the world at least a fraction of that great *Signatum* that was lost⁹⁰. That described by Donne is not the restoration of a primordial, pre-lapsarian condition, of the *Logos*, (but rather of a *weak faint of Vertue and Loue of good*), or the reappearance of a new day of complete and perfect light (but rather of a *twi-light*); for this, according to Christian doctrine, the cosmos will have to await the second coming of the Messiah, the re-generation of a new heaven and a new earth⁹¹. Nonetheless, the role of poetry emerging from the poem is portrayed by Donne as a decisive factor as regards on the one hand, the resistance to the dissolution of the spiritual world and, on the other, the resistance to the modern ideology, based on the anatomical cipher. If these disruptive forces tear the body of the cosmos and reduce his corpse to pieces, poetry opposes them through the power of memory (*the twi-light of her memory*), a memory that is no mere recollection or a mere tribute, but rather a literal (and literary) *re-membrance*, a recomposition of the broken fragments, of the disjointed limbs of the world. As Donne continues:

[...] And, blessed maid,
Of whom is meant what euer hath beene said,
Or shall be spoken well by any tongue,

⁹⁰ Umberto Eco, *Semiotica*, Isedi, Milano 1973, pp. 94-97; Omar Calabrese, *Breve storia della semiotica. Dai Presocratici a Hegel*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2001, pp.66-71.

⁹¹ *Isaiah* 65.17; *II Peter* 3.13; *Revelation* 21.1.

Whose name refines course lines, and makes prose song,
 Accept this tribute, and his first yeeres rent,
 Who till his darke short tapers end be spent,
 As oft as thy feast sees this widowed earth,
 Will yeerely celebrate thy second birth,
 That is, thy death. For though the soule of man
 Be got when man is made, 'tis borne but than
 When man doth die, Our bodi's as the wombe,
 And as a Mid-wife death directs it home.
 And you her creatures, whom she workes vpon
 And haue your last, and best concoction
 From her example, and her vertue, if you
 In reuerence to her, doe thinke it due,
 That no one should her praises thus rehearse,
 As matter fit for Chronicle, not verse,
 Vouchsafe to call to minde, that God did make
 A last, and lastingst peece, a song. He spake
 To *Moses*, to deliuer vnto all,
 That song: because he knew they would let fall,
 The Law, the Prophets, and the History,
 But keepe the song still in their memory.
 Such an opinion (in due measure) made
 Me this great Office boldly to inuade.
 Nor could incomprehensiblenesse deterre
 Me, from thus trying to emprison her.
 Which when I saw that a strict graue could doe,
 I saw not why verse might not doe so too.
 Verse hath a middle nature: Heauen keepes soules,
 The Graue keepes bodies, Verse the fame enroules.⁹²

This passage, the ending of the *Anatomy*, is its true climax. Addressing the *Logos*, the soul of the world, the poet dedicates his work to it, along with the totality of all the words that, in any place and at any time, past and future, are united by the fact that they have

⁹² Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

been refined, purified, transformed, transfigured in their contact with the living and creative Word. In the following verse, the meta-linguistic reflection is taken up even more explicitly through the association in the text of the theme of memory to the very poem we are reading. The poem itself becomes a tribute to celebrate the *Logos*, a symbol leading to it as the the small, flickering lights of candles are a symbol of the infinite Light of God. Donne shows how it is precisely this commemoration which makes it possible for anyone, while still in this life, to find the way to the ancient *Signatum* that seemed lost forever. The threnody up to this point is a succession doomsday scenarios in which none of the grim details of the death of the world is spared to our attention, yet in this passage a new, different view of death is disclosed to the awareness of the reader, who is led by the poet through a path from darkness to light. If earlier death coincided with the supreme destroyer, with the conclusion of all, considered as the tragically inevitable path towards nothingness, now it is described as a second birth, as the return home after a long and difficult journey, a passage to real life.

The second part of the ending, addressed to *her creatures, whom she workes vpon*, to poets, who identified here as the means through which the Word is to be revealed to the world, is an exhortation to make heard the inaudible breath of the *Logos*, to shine its light, that

shines beyond the vision of men. To do this, Donne continues, to convey the *Signatum*, it is necessary and indispensable to use the language of poetry, not only in *reverence to her*, for the fact that the genre of poetry is always the most appropriate to celebrate a subject so sublime, but also and mostly because only poetry (here again identified with a song), as Donne shows, is able to establish itself firmly in the hearts and minds of men (where, on the contrary, stories, laws and even the speeches of the prophets fade over time). Also, only poetry is able to translate, to reflect in human words the most sublime vision of the transcendent Word. The choice of poetic language is in the first place motivated by the complexity that characterizes it, although it sets out to many risks of *incomprehensibleness*, because only through its complexity of articulation, this often enigmatic its unfathomable depths of expression, it is the authentic transmission of the Word given.

To the last four lines of the anatomy is entrusted the image that, perhaps better than any other, illustrates the important mediating role of poetry, which serves as a bridge between life and death, between temporality and eternity, immanence and transcendence. Verse is what allows the *Logos* to manifest itself and, at the same time, that which elevates, draws the material dimension into the cosmic participation with it. Reaffirming it, preserving the spirit of the Word in the body of

words, poetry opens a gap between the earth and the heavens, and reunites them at a symbolic level, the body of the world with its universal spirit, re-membering the harmony and the unity of the whole in the spirits of those who cherish its memory. *Never may thy Name be in our songs forgotten.*

V

From *Vanitas* to *Veritas*: the Journey of the Soul in
Donne's Second Anniversary

The *Second Anniversary, Of the Progresse of the Soul*, is the completion of the path of spiritual regeneration and liberation started in the *Anatomy of the World*. As Frank Manley points out in his introduction to the *Anniversaries*

In the first [Anniversary] Donne realizes imagistically, through the death of a girl he never saw, the grace of the indwelling wisdom of God, sapientia create, that was lost in the fall; and the entire movement downward to decay. In the second, however, he has found his direction; through the realization of his souls's loss he has regained the wisdom that orients him toward God, and the entire poem surges upward towards eternal life.

If the first part of the journey can be identified with a movement downward, as an acknowledgment of the decadence and dissolution of the world, this second part constitutes an upward movement towards its divine home. After contemplating the miseries of the world, here the soul has released itself from its physical and spiritual chains and, resting all its thoughts and desires in God alone, opens itself to the light of truth and Wisdom, which will both transfigure it and lead it in its journey.

A clear idea of Donne's conception of divine Wisdom can be found in the sermon he preached on Candlemas day in 1627, commenting Matthew 5.8 -Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God- where he inquires upon the matters of knowledge and truth:

What is Wisdome? We may content our selves, with that old definition of Wisdome, that it is *Rerum humanarum, & divinarum scientia*; The Wisdome that accomplishes this cleannesse, is the knowledge, the right valuation of this world, and of the next; To be able to compare the joyes of heaven, and the pleasures of the world, and the gaine of the one, with the losse of the other, this is the way to this cleannesse of the heart; because that heart that considers, and examines, what it takes in, will take in no foule, no infectious thing.⁹³

In this passage the pure of heart are identified as the purveyors of the spiritual cleanliness that leads to the vision of God. Donne is referring here to the ancient and medieval concept of *Sapientia* and, implicitly, to its traditional opposite, *Scientia*.⁹⁴ *Sapientia* is infact presented by Donne as a spiritual knowledge, as a supernatural understanding through which it is possible to reach a profound comprehension of this world and of the other, whereas *Scientia* is the knowledge of the natural man, that which limits itself to the senses and to the intellect. *Scientia* is a partial and necessarily imperfect knowledge, as imperfect are the faculties through which it is acquired, and takes into consideration the realm of this world only. *Sapientia* on the other hand is a perfect knowledge, its perfection deriving from its divine origin in grace, through which one may recognise and avoid the false paths of material existence. Naturally, both of Donne's

⁹³ John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, Edited by Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter. Berkley and Los Angeles, 1953-62.

⁹⁴ Audrey Taschini, "The right valuation of this world and of the next": *The Progress from Vanitas to Veritas in John Donne's Second Anniversary*, in *La conoscenza della letteratura/The Knowledge of Literature*, v. VIII, ed. by Angela Locatelli, Sestante for Bergamo University Press, Bergamo 2009, pp. 67-80.

Anniversaries are concerned with the knowledge of *Sapientia*: *An Anatomy of the World* is almost entirely devoted to the theme of the world's vanity and decadent condition after the Fall and so is a great part *Of the Progress of the Soul*. However, as Donne expounds further on in the sermon, *Sapientia* is much more than merely the awareness of the vanity of all things and requires a further step:

Now to taste this morall Wisedome aright, to make the right use of that, is to direct all that knowledge upon heavenly things. To understand the wrechednesse of this world, is to be wise, but to make this wisdome apprehend a happinesse in the next world, that is to be blessed. If I can digest the want of Riches, the want of Health, the want of Reputation, out of this consideration, that good men want these, as well as bad, this is morall Wisedome, and a naturall man may be as wise, herein, as I. But if I can make this Wisedome carry me to a higher contemplation, That God hath cast these wants upon me, to draw me the more easily to him, and to see, that in all likelihood, my disposition being considered, more wealth, more health, more preferment would have retarded me, and slackned my pace in his service, then this Wisdome, that is, this use of this morall Wisdome, hath made me blessed; and to this Blessednesse, a naturall man cannot come.⁹⁵

True Wisdom does not abandon mankind to the melancholy contemplation of *Vanitas* but goes beyond that, and makes it possible for mankind, in this life already, to partake of the joy and profound meaning of heaven in the experience of *Veritas*. In this sense *Of the Progresse of the Soule* can be truly considered the necessary sequel of

⁹⁵ John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, Edited by Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter. Berkley and Los Angeles, 1953-62.

the great meditation upon existence, death, the fall of the world and the hope of faith, that Donne inaugurated in *An Anatomy of the World*. If the *First Anniversary* is focused upon the first step in the spiritual journey towards wisdom, upon the aspect of *Vanitas*, the second is devoted to the second step, to the quest for *Veritas* in this life and the next one in heaven. The two *Anniversaries*, as have been said, seem to move in the opposite and complementary directions and it is precisely the grace of the divine knowledge of *Sapientia* that initiates the progress from doubt to belief, from despair to hope and faith, from humiliation to exaltation, from death to rebirth. The general movement of *An Anatomy of the World* is downwards, in a grim contemplation of the decay of the world. That of the *Second Anniversary* is upwards and shows how, through grace, the soul may regain a clear perspective upon the fallen reality, and a wisdom that eventually shall lead her to God and to authentic knowledge and realisation.

The initial part of the *Second Anniversary* is devoted to a reprise of the main themes of the first. The meditation starts from the point at which the *Anatomy of the World* had ended and, once again, Donne lingers upon various considerations on the hopeless state of the world, the death and the decadence of the fallen Cosmos and the loss of the *Logos*, the universal wisdom that animated all things. To the

disintegration of the universe, explains Donne further, corresponds an equal deterioration of man's intellectual faculties:

Yet a new Deluge, and of Lethe flood,
Hath drown'vs all, All haue forgot all good,
Forgetting her, the main Reserve of all.⁹⁶

The illness of sin has taken over human existence to the point that the mind is completely enslaved by it: the individual is no longer capable of true discernment of good and evil or even of the necessary insight that would make him recognize his own corrupted nature. Man's separation from the universal intelligence of the *Logos*, symbolized by the death of Elizabeth Drury, caused his higher faculties to drown in an abyss of oblivion, an oblivion that only leads him into an ever deeper condition of corruption, illusion and vacuity. It is against this very state in which humanity has irreparably fallen that Donne's poetry explicitly sets itself from the beginning of the composition:

These Hymnes may worke on future wits, and so
May great Grand-children of thy praises grow.
And so, though not Reuiue, enbalme, and spice
The world, which else would putrify with vice.⁹⁷

It is evident from these lines that the declared aim of Donne's poetry, if not to resurrect the old world from its ashes, is that of

⁹⁶ Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

⁹⁷ Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

recreating, re-membering, its memory through the vivid, symbolic, evocative language of verse. In this sense, poetry becomes the means through which mankind may on one side partially regain and put back together the broken pieces of what has been forgotten and on the other forget what is passing and vane in this world because, as the evangelical story tells us, you cannot patch an old garment with a piece of new cloth or put new wine into old wineskins;⁹⁸ it is impossible to infuse new knowledge in a mind which is still burdened by the old. The first step to regain true knowledge and awareness must therefore necessarily be that of letting old concepts and notions go: only after doing so can one hope to acquire the right valuation of this world and of the next. As Donne puts it in his *Anniversary*:

Forget this rotten world; And vnto thee,
Let thine owne times as an old story be,
Be not concern'd: study not why, nor whan;
Doe not so much, as not beleeeue a man.
For though to erre, be worst, to try truths forth,
Is far more busines, then this world is worth.
[...] Forget this world, and scarce thinke of it so,
As of old cloaths, cast off a yeere agoe.
To be thus stupid is Alacrity;
Men thus lethargique haue best Memory.⁹⁹

These lines bring about the *Anniversary*'s first attacks to the knowledge of *Scientia*. The poem invites its readers to recognise the

⁹⁸ *Matthew* 9.16-17; *Marc* 2.21-22; *Luke* 5.36-39.

⁹⁹ Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

nothingness and complete vanity of human learning and experience. The knowledge that springs from mankind's efforts is presented here as a useless burden, as a veil which not only prevents us from gaining a correct perspective on things, but also confines us in a dimension of intellectual, emotional and spiritual detachment from the world and from our fellow beings. The human knowledge of *Scientia* founds itself upon doubt as the only possible cognitive method to reach objective truths in which to believe, whereas the knowledge of *Sapientia* turns this logic upside down by basing itself on faith and love alone; it is the augustinian *credo ut intelligam*, I believe in order to understand. In this horizon of ideas alone it is possible to access the profound meaning of Donne's paradox, according to which to be lethargic is the best alacrity and to recognise one's own stupidity and ignorance the best way to truly open oneself to the Wisdom of the World. This passage of the poem echoes of course Paul's *First Letter to the Corinthians*, chapter 3, verses 18-20:

18 Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.

19 For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.

20 And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain.

To some extent, Donne's paradox is also in itself the application to the realm of the intellect of the Lutheran concept of *noluntas*:¹⁰⁰ all knowledge that mankind may gain with its own efforts and means can only be deceptive and incomplete, because human understanding has irreparably lost all its soundness and its direction towards good. For this reason, the best action is that which springs from non-action and the best knowledge is that of the man who, aware of his own miserable state, is receptive of a Wisdom which lies beyond himself.

In this context Donne collocates his *meditatio mori*, which is functional to the reaching of a greater, profounder knowledge, the knowledge which allows us to see things not only from the limited, partial and deceptive points of view of this world, but also from the wider perspective of the next. The sense of impasse and the apparent hopelessness brought about by the meditation on *Vanitas* can only be overcome through the knowledge that springs from faith, which, in Donne's view, illuminates the intellect and the spirit and leads man through the different phases of understanding. As Donne explains in his sermon:

First they come to a true valuation of this world, in S. Pauls Omnia stercora, i count all things but Dung, but losse, for the excellency of

¹⁰⁰ See for example: Martin Luther (1515-1516), *B. Lutheri Commentarius in Epistulam ad Romanos, Der Brief an die Römer*, in *Doctor Martin Luthers Werke. Kritische Ausgabe*, ed. by J. FICKER, Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, Weimar 1883 e ff., & Akademische Druck, Graz 1964 e ff., vol. 56.

the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; When they have found the true value of wordly things, they will come to something worth the getting, they will come to S. Pauls way of Gain. Mors Lucrum, that to die is gain and advantage: When they know that, they will conceive a religious covetousnesse of that, and so come to S. Pauls Cupio dissolve, to desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ: When they have entertained that Desire, they will declare it, make a petition, a suite for it, with a Veni Domine Iesu, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly [...]. [B]y this acquainting themselves, and accustoming themselves to his presence, in all their actions, and meditations in this life, they shall see him, and be glad to see him, even in Judgement, in the next.¹⁰¹

Faith alone, according to Donne, has the power to completely turn around our false perspective, showing us how what we normally would perceive as good and desirable is not so and viceversa.

Thinke then, My soule, that death is but a Groome,
Which brings a Taper to the outward roome,
Whence thou spiest first a little glimmering light,
And after brings it nearer to thy sight:
For such approaches doth Heauen make in death.
[...] Thinke thee laid on thy death-bed, loose and slacke;
And thinke that but vnbinding of a packe,
To take one precious thing, thy soule, from thence.
Thinke thy selfe parch'd with feuers violence,
Anger thine Ague more, by calling it
Thy Physicke; chide the slacknes of the fit.
[...] Thinke thy friends weeping round, and thinke that thay
Weepe but because they goe not yet thy way.
Thinke they confesse much in the world, amisse
Who dare not trust a dead mans eye with that,
Which they from God, and Angels couer not.
[...] Thinke further on thy selfe, my soule, and thinke;
How thou at first wast made but in a sinke;

¹⁰¹ John Donne, *The Sermons of John Donne*, Edited by Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter. Berkley and Los Angeles, 1953-62.

Thinke that it argued some infermitee,
 That those two soules, which then thou foundst in mee,
 Thou fedst upon, and drewst into thee, both
 My second soule of sence, and first of growth.
 Thinke but how poore thou wast, how obnoxious;
 Whom a small lumpe of flesh could poyson thus.
 This curded milke, this poore vnlettered whelp
 My body, could, beyond escape, or helpe,
 Infect thee with originall sinne, and thou
 Couldst neither then refuse, nor leaue it now.
 Thinke that no stubborne sullen Anchorit,
 Which fixt to'a Pillar, or a Graue doth sit
 Bedded and Bath'd in all his Ordures, dwels
 So fowly as our soules, in their first-built Cels.
 Thinke in how poore a prison thou didst lie
 After, enabled but to sucke, and crie.
 Thinke, when t'was growne to most, t'was a poore Inne,
 A Prouince Pack'd vp in two yards of skinne.
 And that vsurped, or threatned with the rage
 Of sicknesses, or their true mother, Age.
 But thinke that Death hath now enfranchis'd thee,
 Thou hast thy'expansion now and libertee;
 Thinke that a rusty Peece, discharg'd, is flowen
 In peeces, and the bullet is his owne,
 And freely flies: This to thy soule allow,
 Thinke thy sheell broke, thinke thy Soule hatch'd but now.¹⁰²

In this passage, Donne reverses the common conception of death as a tragic and painful event, to be expected with dread and fear, portraying it on the contrary as something positive, as a liberation both from the burden of the corrupted body and the miseries of earthly existence. The perspective is turned upside down: the fever and the sufferance of the fatal illness are portrayed as the definitive antidote to

¹⁰² Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

the much greater sufferance of life, the people gathered around the deathbed aren't crying for the one who is dying, but for themselves, who are still to remain in the valley of tears of the world. The condition of the soul within the body is compared to that of a prisoner within a filthy, narrow cell. First among all, the foul cell of the womb, in which we literally dwell as an anacorete, bedded and bath'd in all his ordures, and in which we cannot avoid being infected with original sin. Then once we are enabled but to sucke, and crie, we are still to deal with the incommodities and limitation (physical, mental and spiritual) of the body, which is but a Prouince Pack'd vp in two yards of skinned, perpetually threatened by illnesses, passions, sins and above all age and decadence.

The meditation on the endless miseries of life sheds new light on death, which now appears as a bearer of peace and liberation, a rebirth to a life of spiritual plenitude and freedom. Reuniting the existential level to that of knowledge, Donne's considerations on the knowledge of *Scientia* are resumed further on in the poem and made somewhat more concrete:

Poore soule in this thy flesh what do'st thou know.
Thou know'st thy selfe so little, as thou know'st not,
How thou didst die, nor how thou wast begot.
Thou neither knowst, how thou at first camest in,
Nor how thou took'st the poyson of mans sin.
[...] Thou art too narrow, wretch, to comprehend

Euen thy selfe: yea though thou wouldst but bend
To know thy body. Haue not all soules thought
For many ages, that our body'is wrought
Of Ayre, and Fire, and other Elements?
And now they thinke of new ingredients.
And one soule thinkes one, and another way
Another thinkes, and ty's an euen lay.¹⁰³

The conversation with the soul proceeds here with a meditation upon the state of almost utter ignorance to which the spirit is necessarily confined during its temporary permanence within the body. In this section, Donne closely follows the ancient Christian theme of the *contemptus mundi*, of the contempt towards a world which is presented in the *Anniversary* as our prison's prison and towards the body, which is analogously spoken of as a living tombe oppress'd by ignorance. While in the flesh, the soul cannot have access to an authentic and full knowledge of the reality around her or even of herself. She does not know her origins or what awaits her in the afterlife, she cannot even figure out the lesser mystery of the physical body in which she dwells. All human knowledge is, at best, a battle between partial ideas and arguments and every fresh attempt to go beyond this, to penetrate the authentic essence of things, is but a wholly new start and a different kind of failure. In spite of this, explains Donne further, mankind is not at all eager to let go of its ways and false notions:

¹⁰³ *Ibidem*

We see in Authors, too stiffe to recant,
 A hundred controuersies of an Ant.
 And yet one watches, starues, freeses, and sweats,
 To know but Catechismes and Alphabets
 Of vnconcerning things, matters of fact;
 How others on our stage their parts did Act;
 What Cæsar did, yea, and what Cicero said.
 Why grasse is greene, or why our blood is red,
 Are mysteries which none haue reach'd vnto.
 In this low forme, poore soule what wilt thou doe?
 When wilt thou shake off this Pedantry,
 Of being taught by sense, and Fantasy?
 Thou look'st through spectacles; small things seeme great,
 Below; But vp vnto the watch-towre get,
 And see all things despoild of fallacies:
 Thou shalt not peepe though lattices of eies,
 Nor heare through Laberinth of eares, nor learne
 By circuit, or collections to discern.
 In heauen thou straight know'st all, concerning it,
 And what concerns it not, shall straight forget.¹⁰⁴

This passage presents a conception of knowledge which contrasts dramatically with the new trends of modern thought -founded on the Cartesian doubt, experiment and mathematical reason- which were gradually imposing themselves in the intellectual scene of the XVII century. Once more, Donne portrays the human knowledge of *Scientia* as something which on one side occupies itself with matters that are irrelevant and useless if considered from a spiritual perspective, and on the other can never reach the deep truth of things. We rely upon the knowledge we derive from our senses and yet our senses, though our

¹⁰⁴ *Ibidem*

only window upon the world, are in themselves but filters that alter and distort our perception, and therefore our conception, of the reality around us. Due to these consubstantial gnoseological limitations, the human mind is trapped in misleading thought, in fallacy and in sterile circular reasoning that produces no new knowledge, but can only rehearse its false premises. To the labyrinths and endless circles of the knowledge of *Scientia* Donne opposes here the straight knowledge of heaven, which is an instant, direct and profound knowledge of the world. As an illumination, this knowledge has the power to instantly dissolve the obscurity of ignorance and unawareness and to burn away the phantoms of false wisdom.

In a reprise of the themes and motives of the *First Anniversary*, the initial part of *The Progress of the Soule* unveils the vanity of all worldly achievements: what appeared to be the higher and most desirable things -wealth, power, even culture- in a transcendent perspective reveal themselves to be but the lower and the least desirable things if they somewhat get in the way, instead of encouraging and assisting it, of one's path towards spiritual enlightenment. For this reason the progress towards *Sapientia* must necessarily start with the feeling of the *Vanitas* of all earthly matters.

Death, commonly considered as the ultimate de-semanticising event, as that which annihilates all things and to which all things appear to be

enslaved,¹⁰⁵ is re-semanticised by Donne in the poem and presented, on the contrary, as the experience through which the true meaning of life can be in some measure grasped. During our existence on earth, the contemplation of the mystery of death and of the ephemeral nature of all that surrounds us in the world makes it so that we may turn our attention to the permanent truths of the spirit. This is precisely what Donne is aiming at when he repeatedly exhorts his readers to *thinke*, addressing by this very word their higher, rational soul and inviting them to release themselves from the illusions and false knowledge that are generated by our second *soule of sence* and first of growth. The *meditatio mori* is the key that allows us, to some extent in this world also, to move from a mortal perspective to a re-ligious perspective, from the limited point of view of human experience and reason to a spiritual point of view and to the boundless horizons of divine vision. However, it is only after death that the soul may experience what Donne describes in the *Anniversary* as its third birth (the first being physical birth and the second the spiritual birth of baptism), through which it is released from the limitations of the body:

And think this slow-pac'd soule, which late did cleaue,
To a'body, and went but by the bodies leaue,
Twenty, perchance, or thirty mile a day,
Dispatches in a minute all the way,

¹⁰⁵ Michel Vovelle, *La mort et l'Occident de 1300 a nous jours*, Gallimard, Paris 1983.

Twixt Heauen, and Earth: shee staies not in the Ayre,
 To looke what Meteors there themselues prepare;
 Shee carries no desire to know, nor sense,
 Whether th'Ayrs middle Region be intense,
 For th'Element of fire, shee doth not know,
 Whether shee past by such a place or no;
 Shee baits not at the Moone, nor cares to trie,
 Whether in that new world, men liue, and die.
 Venus recards her not, to'enquire, now shee
 Can, (being one Star) Hesper, and Vesper bee,
 Hee that charm'd Argus eyes, sweet Mercury,
 Workes not on her, who now is growen al Ey [...].
 As doth the Pith, which, least our Bodies slacke,
 Strings fast the little bones of necke, and backe;
 So by the soule doth death string Heauen and Earth.
 For when our soule enioyes this her third birth,
 (Creation gaue her one, a second, grace,)
 Heauen is as neare, and present to her face,
 As colours are, and obiects, in a roome
 Where darkenesse was before, when Tapers come.¹⁰⁶

By death the soul is freed from the prison of the material world and through death itself, Donne shows us, the soul has access to a true understanding of the world. This knowledge is identified by the poet as that of vision and ecstasy, a knowledge that is not based on impressions, sensations, concepts or speculation, a knowledge that springs not from mere curiosity or from the will to explain reality. Not a knowledge that, to use an expression by William Wordsworth, murders to dissect, but a knowledge that, on the contrary, founds itself on a profoundly vital communion with the universal spirit. No longer

¹⁰⁶ Frank Manley (ed.), *John Donne: The Anniversaries*, cit.

immured in the body, in the perceptions of the senses and the limitations of the mind, the soul after death is transfigured by its journey and is said to have become all *Ey* , to have reached a straight, direct, immediate knowledge of the world; in a word to have become all intelligence in the all-pervading intelligence of the divine *Logos*. On the contrary, Donne explains in the last section of the *Anniversary*,

They who did labour Babels tower to' erect,
Might haue considered, that for that effect,
All this whole solid Earth could not allow
Nor furnish forth Materials enow;
And that his Center, to raise such a place
Was farre too little, to haue beene the Base;
No more affords this worlds, foundatione
To erect true ioye, were all the meanes in one.
[...] Then, soule, to thy first pitch worke vpon againe;
Know that all lines which circles doe containe,
For once that they the Center touch, doe touch
Twice the circumference; and be thou such.
Double on heauen, thy thoughts on earth emploid;
All will not serue; Onely who haue enioyd
The sight of God, in fulnesse, can thinke it;
For it is both the obiect, and the wit.¹⁰⁷

In these final considerations on human and divine knowledge, Donne aims at showing how only in the divine wisdom of *Sapientia* can a solid foundation, a source of authentic meaning and a treasure of everlasting happiness be found. All human attempts to reach these things through their own means are bound to fail, to be insufficient, to

¹⁰⁷ *Ibidem*

collapse upon themselves or to be effaced by decay and death. The quest for Truth, explains Donne, cannot be separated from our life experience and to embrace Truth in its wholeness means to become one, in mind but also in heart and spirit, with the universal *Logos* of God. For this reason, to realize *Sapientia* in this world means to double each thought in heaven, to think about heaven twice as much as we think about earth and to seek to consider each one of our thoughts and actions, as much as it is possible to us, from a supernatural perspective, while expecting the day in which the direct sight of God will finally reveal to us the Truth of all things.

Apart from being one of Donne's most suggestive, complex and rich religious poems, *Of the Progresse of the Soule* configures itself as a profound poetic reflection upon the role and the essence of knowledge and upon the status of Truth, in an epoch during which the ancient concept of Truth was facing its crisis with the rise of the new *episteme* of modern rationalism, which was already beginning to threaten the symbolic paradigm that characterized Medieval and Renaissance Europe. The illusion of an objective knowledge of science as opposed to a false and fanciful knowledge of literature and religion was the paradigm that eventually prevailed upon premodern thought: as the analytic and anatomic perspective of modernity rapidly acquired

importance and authority, the synthetic, symbolic knowledge of spirituality, mysticism and poetry was denied all gnoseological value and was relegated to the realm of idle and worthless fables. In contrast with the ideology of the new science, Donne here exalts the wisdom of religion, which in the eyes of human reason - as Paul said - is pure foolishness and folly, as the only knowledge that, subverting and transcending human logic, can disclose new horizons of meaning. It is this knowledge that Donne invites his readers to follow, a supernatural knowledge which places itself in a dialectic dimension with the divine, a supernatural knowledge made intelligible by the symbolic language of poetry, which through its language of images and correspondences, is able mirror and illustrate the *Logos*, the universal language that is the fundament of all that is. The way of *Sapientia*, leading up to the supreme knowledge of *Veritas*, is the only one whose meaning cannot be destroyed but only exalted by death, the only in which Vanitas is not despair, not the end but the beginning of the journey of awareness and of a new experience of the world.

Conclusions

The theme of the journey of the soul in John Donne's poetry, from *Metempsychosis* to the *Anniversaries*, is one with the theme of life and poetry as a journey, acquiring both meta-linguistic and extra-linguistic meanings. It 'the same journey characterizing the life of John Donne, and his arrival to the peak of his poetry and of his Christian experience, beyond the pagan conception of a circular existence. After the deconstruction of anthropocentrism *Metempsychosis*, in which, through the trope of the transmigration of souls, he shows the involution in the chain of being that leads to the abyss of the fallen humanity, John Donne identifies the his "Progress" as a process of ascension of the human soul towards God. The journey is a metaphor for knowledge, which must go through the whole sensible world in its moral and physical corruption, linked to original sin, and the corresponding reality unveiled by modern science which unfolds a universe in which direction and a living and intelligible unity are lost.

The true *Sapientia* that can be reached aquired at the end of this journey that of the divine *Logos* and it can be attained only through the guidance of the supernatural light that is God. Through an analysis of some relevant poetry and prose of metempsychosis unity of poetry, I tried to bring forth the meaning of the journey in Donne's science and theology which alone can bring about the divine *Sapientia* which modernity and our contemporary world no longer recognize.

V.

Traduzioni

- ❖ Premessa alla traduzione
- ❖ L'anatomia del mondo
- ❖ Un'elegia funebre
- ❖ Del viaggio dell'anima

Premessa al testo e alla traduzione

La traduzione degli *Anniversari* qui presentata è la prima traduzione completa in lingua italiana: ad oggi solo il primo dei due *Anniversari*, l'*Anatomia del Mondo*, è stata tradotta in lingua italiana¹⁰⁸. Il testo critico inglese di riferimento per la mia traduzione è stato in massima parte quello stabilito nell'edizione di Frank Manley¹⁰⁹. Non si è trattato semplicemente di trasmettere il senso globale di questi componimenti al lettore italiano, o di rendergli accessibile un'opera, che, scritta in *late-middle English*, presenta delle notevoli difficoltà di lettura, ma la traduzione è stata per il mio lavoro anche una tappa fondamentale del processo di comprensione di un'opera così varia e complessa come quella presa in esame. Solo nel tradurre, infatti, si possono far emergere pienamente tutte le sfumature di senso e di pensiero, di sonorità e di immagini che sono implicite in un testo, ricco di tutti questi aspetti che caratterizzano un'opera poetica come quella di John Donne.

Ogni traduzione è un'interpretazione, ma allo stesso tempo anche ogni interpretazione è una traduzione: anche nell'ambito di una

¹⁰⁸ Ho sottoposto questa mia traduzione per una pubblicazione, che è in corso di stampa. Per una precedente traduzione dell'*Anatomy of the World*, si veda: J. Donne, *Poesie*, a cura di A. Serpieri e S. Bigliuzzi, Rizzoli, Milano 2007.

¹⁰⁹ J. Donne, *The Anniversaries*, ed. by F. Manley, John Hopkins Press, Baltimore 1963.

medesima lingua, comprendere significa esprimere in altri termini da quelli già noti i significati del testo, al fine di farne emergere di nuovi.

Pur riconoscendo l'impossibilità di rendere completamente una lingua in un'altra, come di rendere tutte le sfumature semantiche e pragmatiche di alcune parole in altre, si deve evidenziare in ogni caso la necessità della traduzione, in quanto la traduzione, inter-linguistica come intra-linguistica, permette di far emergere, nella sua potenziale pluralità, le sfumature semantiche e pragmatiche che non possono mai essere tutte evidenti nell'unicità del testo di partenza.

In questo specifico caso della lingua inglese storicamente connotata di John Donne, non si tratta solamente di un passaggio dallo spazio di un certo universo linguistico a un altro, ma anche di un'ermeneutica storica, di un'interpretazione di una dimensione temporale altra.

La prospettiva poetica e di pensiero di John Donne è permeata dall'ermeneutica biblica, dall'interpretazione e dalla traduzione; la sua poesia può essere considerata dunque, soprattutto per quanto riguarda gli *Anniversari*, poesia del *Logos*. Secondo Donne, lo stesso viaggio dell'anima, attraverso il passaggio della morte, è un processo di traduzione del libro della vita da una temporalità finita e caduca alla temporalità dell'eternità: per Donne, la traduzione è la metafora

assoluta, nel senso di Hans Blumenberg¹¹⁰, per poter comprendere lo stesso mistero della vita¹¹¹.

Questa traduzione aspira dunque a non appiattare la verità del percorso poetico di Donne, ma anzi a farne spiccare la complessità, a renderne più profonda la comprensione, rintracciando e in qualche modo rianimando, il suo singolare viaggio dell'anima.

¹¹⁰ H. Blumenberg, *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie*, in *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, vol. VI, Bouvier, Bonn 1960; tr. it. di M. V. SERRA HATSBERG, introduzione e cura di E. MELANDRI, *Paradigmi per una metaforologia*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1969.

¹¹¹ John Donne, *XVII Nunc Lento Sonitu Dicunt, Morieris*, in *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, tr. it., *Ora, questa campana suonando dolcemente per un altro, mi dice: Tu devi morire*, XVII Meditazione.

The First Anniversary.

AN
ANATOMY

of the World.

Wherein,

BY OCCASION OF
the vntimely death of Mistris
ELIZABETH DRVRY,
the frailtie and the decay of
this whole World is
represented.

Il Primo Anniversario.

UN'ANATOMIA

del Mondo.

In cui,

IN OCCASIONE
della morte prematura della fanciulla
ELIZABETH DRVRY,
la fragilità e la decadenza di
questo intero mondo è
rappresentata.

When that rich soule which to her heauen is gone,
Whom all doe celebrate, who know they haue one
(For who is sure he hath a soule, vnlesse
It see, and Iudge, and follow worthinesse,
And by Deedes praise it; Hee who doth not this,
May lodge an Inmate soule, but tis not his.)
When that Queene ended here her progresse time.
And, as t'her standing house, to heauen did clymbe,
Where loath to make the Saints attend her long,
Shee's now a part both of the Quire, and Song.
This, world, in that great earthquake languished;
For in a common Bath of teares it bled,
Which drew the strongest vitall spirits out:
But succour'd then with a perplexed doubt,
Whether the world did loose or gaine in this,
(Because since now no other way there is,
But goodnesse, to see her, whom all would see,
All must endeauour to bee good as shee.)
This great consumption to a feuer turn'd,
And so the world had fits; it ioy'd, it mournd,
And, as men thinke, that Agues Physicke are,
And the Ague being spent, giue ouer care,
So thou sicke world, mistak'st thy selfe to bee
Well, when alas, thou'rt in a Letargee.

The entry
unto the
work

Quando quella ricca anima che al suo Cielo è andata,
Celebrata da tutti coloro che sanno di averne una,
(Poiché chi è certo di avere un'anima, a meno che
Essa non veda, e Giudichi, e segua ciò che è degno,
E con le Opere lo onori? Colui che non fa questo
Potrà alloggiare un'anima ospite, ma essa non è sua.)
Quando quella Regina finì qui il tempo del suo viaggio
E, come alla sua dimora permanente, salì al cielo,
Dove, restia a farsi attendere a lungo dai Santi,
E' ora parte sia del Coro che del Canto,
Questo mondo ha languito in quel grande terremoto;
Poiché ha sanguinato in un comune Bagno di lacrime
Che ne ha spillato i più forti spiriti vitali:
Ma poi, soccorso da un dubbio perplesso,
Se il mondo da questo ne avesse perso o guadagnato,
(Perché non essendoci ora altra via
Se non la bontà per vedere colei che tutti vogliono vedere,
Tutti devono sforzarsi di essere buoni come lei,)
Questa grande consunzione si tramutò in una febbre,
E così il mondo ebbe attacchi; gioì, si addolorò.
E, come gli uomini pensano che le Febbri siano medicina,
E che sfogata la Febbre passi l'affanno,
Così tu, mondo malato, ti inganni di essere
Sano, quando, ahimè, sei in un Letargo.

L'entrata
nell'opera.

Her death did wound and tame thee than, and than
Thou might'st haue better spar'd the Sunne, or Man.
That wound was deepe, but 'tis more misery,
That thou hast lost thy sense and memory.
T'was heauy then to heare thy voice of mone,
But this is worse, that thou art speechlesse growne.
Thou hast forgot thy name, thou hadst; thou wast
Nothing but she, and her thou hast o'repast.
For as a child kept from the Fount, vntill
A Prince, expected long, come to fulfill
The Cermonies, thou vnnam'd hadst laid,
Had not her comming, thee her Palace made:
Her name defin'd thee, gaue thee forme and frame,
And thou forget'st to celebrate thy name.
Some moneths shee hath bene dead (but being dead,
Measures of times are all determined)
But long shee'ath beene away, long, long, yet none
Offers to tell vs who it is that's gone.
But as in states doubtfull of future heyres,
When sicknesse without remedy, empayres
The present Prince, they're loth it should be said,
The Prince doth languish, or the Prince is dead:
So mankinde feeling now a generall thaw,
A strong example gone equall to law.
The Cyment which did faithfully compact
And glue all vertues, now resolu'd, and slack'd,

La sua morte ti ha ferito e trafitto allora, e allora
Avresti fatto meglio a rinunciare al Sole o all'Uomo;
Quella ferita fu profonda, ma è più grande miseria
Che tu abbia perso senso e memoria.
Fu pesante dunque sentire la tua voce di gemito,
Ma questo è peggio, che tu sia diventato senza parola.
Hai dimenticato il nome che avevi; non eri
Altro che lei, e a lei sei sopravvissuto.
Poiché come un bimbo tenuto lontano dal Fonte, finché
Un Principe, lungamente atteso, non giunga a compiere
Le Cerimonie, saresti rimasto innominato,
Non avesse la sua venuta reso te il suo Palazzo:
Il suo nome ti definì, ti diede forma e struttura,
E tu dimentichi di celebrare il tuo nome.
E' morta da qualche mese (ma, essendo morta,
Le misure dei tempi sono tutte determinate)
Ma da lungo, lungo tempo è ormai stata via, eppure nessuno
Si offre di dirci chi è che è andato via.
Ma come in stati in dubbio sui futuri eredi,
Quando una malattia senza rimedio compromette
L'attuale Principe, tutti sono riluttanti a dire
Che il principe langue o che il Principe è morto:
Così l'umanità, sentendo ora un generale disgelo,
Scomparso un forte esemplare, eguale a legge,
Il Cemento che fedelmente compattava
E saldava tutte le virtù, ora dissolto e allentato,

Thought it was some blasphemy to say sh' was dead;
Or that our weakness was discovered
In that confession; therefore spoke no more
Then tongues, the soule being gonne, the losse deplore.
But though it be too late to succour thee,
Sicke world, yea dead, yea putrified, since shee
Thy'ntrinsique Balme, and thy preseruatiue,
Can neuer be renew'd, thou neuer liue,
I (since no man can make thee liue) will trie,
What we may gaine by thy Anatomy.
Her death hath taught vs dearely, that thou art
Corrupt and mortall in thy purest part.
Let no man say, the world it selfe being dead,
Tis labour lost to haue discovered.
The worlds infirmities, since there is none
Aliue to study this dissection;
For there's a kind of world remaining still,
Though shee which did inanimate and fill
The world, begone, yet in this last long night,
Her Ghost doth walke, that is, a glimmering light,
A faint weake loue of vertue and of good
Reflects from her, on them which vnderstood
Her worth; And though she haue shut in all day,
The twi-light of her memory doth stay;
Which, from the carkasse of the old world, free
Creates a new world; and new creatures bee

What life
the world
hath still

Pensò fosse blasfemia dire che lei era morta
O che la nostra debolezza sarebbe stata scoperta
In quella confessione; e perciò non disse più
Di quanto le lingue, scomparsa l'anima, ne deplorino la perdita.
Ma sebbene sia troppo tardi per soccorrerti,
Mondo malato, anzi morto, anzi putrefatto, poiché lei,
Tuo intrinseco Balsamo e tuo preservante,
Non potrà mai essere risorta, e tu mai vivere,
Io (giacché nessun uomo potrà farti vivere) saggerò,
Cosa possiamo guadagnare dalla tua anatomia.
La sua morte ci ha insegnato a caro prezzo che tu sei
Corrotto e mortale nella tua più pura parte.
Che nessuno dica, essendo morto il mondo,
Che è fatica sprecata aver scoperto
le infermità del mondo, poiché non c'è nessuno
Vivo per studiare questa dissezione;
Poiché c'è una specie di mondo che ancora rimane,
Benché lei che animava e riempiva
Il mondo sia sparita, tuttavia in questa ultima lunga notte
Il suo Spirito si aggira; ossia, una luce brillante,
Un fievole debole amore di virtù e bene
Da lei si riflette su quelli che compresero
Il suo valore; e benché lei abbia serrato in sé tutto il giorno,
Il crepuscolo della sua memoria resta,
E dalla carcassa del vecchio mondo, libero,
Crea un nuovo mondo; e nuove creature sono

Quale vita
ha ancora
il mondo.

Produc'd: The matter and the stuffe of this,
 Her vertue, and the forme our practise is.
 And thought to be thus Elemented, arme
 These creatures, from hom-borne intrinsique harme,
 (For all assumed vnto this Dignitee,
 So many weedlesse Paradises bee,
 Which of themselues produce no venemous sinne,
 Except some forraine Serpent bring it in)
 Yet, because outward stormes the strongest breake,
 And strength it selfe by confidence growes weake,
 This new world may be safer, being told.
 The dangers and diseases of the old:
 For with due temper men doe then forgoe,
 Or couet things, when they their true worth know.
 There is no health; Phisitians say that we
 At best, enioy, but a neutralitee.
 And can there be worse sicknes, then to know
 That we are neuer well, nor can be so?
 We are borne ruinous: poore mothers cry,
 That children come not right, nor orderly:
 Except they headlong come and fall vpon
 An ominous precipitation.
 How witty's ruine? how impotunate
 Vpon mankinde? It labour'd to frustrate
 Euen Gods purpose; and made woman, sent

The sicknesse
 of the world

Impossibility
 of health

Prodotte: La materia e la sostanza di questo
è la virtù di lei, e la forma è la nostra esecuzione.
E benché l'essere composte di tale elemento armi
Queste creature contro l'intrinseco male nativo,
(Poiché tutti quelli assunti a questa Dignità
Sono altrettanti Paradisi senza erbaccia,
Che da loro stessi non producono velenoso peccato,
A meno che non ve lo porti qualche Serpente straniero),
Tuttavia, perché le tempeste esterne spezzano anche i più forti,
E la forza stessa con la confidenza diventa debole,
Questo nuovo mondo potrà essere più sicuro se gli si raccontano
I pericoli e le malattie del vecchio:
Poiché con il giusto animo gli uomini dunque rinunciano
O bramano le cose, quando ne conoscono il vero valore.
Non c'è salute; i Medici dicono che noi,
Al meglio, godiamo di una neutralità.
E può esserci peggiore malattia del sapere
Che non siamo mai bene, né lo possiamo stare?
Nasciamo rovinosi: le povere madri piangono
Perché i figli non giungono correttamente, né in modo regolare,
A meno che non giungano a capofitto e cadano
In una presaga precipitazione.
Quanto è ingegnosa la rovina? quanto importuna
Per l'umanità? Ha faticato per frustrare
Persino l'intenzione di Dio; e ha reso la donna, mandata

La malattia
del mondo.

Impossibilità
della salute.

For mans reliefe, cause of his languishment.
They were to good ends, and they are so still,
But accessory, and principall in ill.
For that first mariage was our funerall:
One woman at one blow, then kill'd vs all,
And singly, one by one, they kill vs now.
We doe delightfully our selues allow
To that consumption; and profusely blinde,
We kill ourselues, to propagate our kinde.
And yet we doe not that; we are not men:
There is not now that mankinde, which was then
When as the Sun, and man, did seeme to striue,
(Ioynt tenants of the world) who should suruiue.
When *Stag*, and *Rauen*, and the long liu'd tree,
Compar'd with man, dy'de in minoritee.
When, if a slow-pac'd starre had stolne away
From the obseruers marking, he might stay
Two or three hundred yeeres to see't againe,
And then make vp his obseruation plaine;
When, as the age was long, the sise was great:
Mans growth conf[e]ss'd, and recompenc'd the meat:
So spacious and large, that euery soule
Did a faire Kingdome, and large Realme controule:
And when the very stature thus erect,
Did that soule a good way towards Heauen direct.
Where is this mankind now? who liues to age,

Shortnesse
of life.

Per il sollievo dell'uomo, la causa del suo languire.
Esse erano per i buoni fini, e ancora lo sono,
Solamente accessorie, e al principio del male.
Poiché quel primo matrimonio fu il nostro funerale:
Una donna in un sol colpo ci uccise allora tutti,
E singolarmente, uno a uno, ci uccidono ora.
Noi con diletto concediamo noi stessi
A quella consunzione, e profusamente ciechi
Uccidiamo noi stessi per propagare la nostra specie.
E tuttavia ciò non facciamo; non siamo uomini:
Non c'è adesso quell'umanità che c'era allora
Quando il Sole e l'uomo parevano battersi
(Congiunti inquilini del mondo) su chi dovesse sopravvivere.
Quando il Cervo e il Corvo e l'albero dalla lunga vita,
Paragonati all'uomo, morirono in minorità.
Quando, se una stella dal passo lento si era sottratta
All'identificazione dell'osservatore, quello poteva restare
Due o trecento anni per vederla ancora
E quindi portare a compimento la sua osservazione;
Quando, poiché l'età era lunga, le dimensioni erano grandi:
Lo sviluppo dell'uomo professava e ricompensava il cibo,
Così spazioso e vasto che ogni anima
Governava un bel Regno e un ampio Reame:
E quando la statura stessa così eretta
Dirigeva quell'anima per un buon tratto verso il Cielo,
Dov'è ora questa umanità? Chi arriva a un'età

Brevità
della vita

Fit to be made *Methusalem* his page?
Alas, we scarce liue long enough to trie;
Whether a true made clocke run right, or lie.
Old Grandsires talke of yesterday with sorrow,
And for our children we reserue to morrow.
So short is life, that euery peasant striues,
In a torne house, or field, to haue three liues,
And as in lasting, so in length is man.
Contracted to an inch, who was a span,
For had a man at first, in Forrests stray'd,
Or shipwrack'd in the Sea, one would haue laid
A wager that an Elephant, or Whale
That met him, would not hastily assaile
A th[in]g so equall to him: now alasse.
The Fayries, and the Pigmies well may passe
As credible; mankind decayes so soone,
We're s[c]arse our Fathers shadowes cast at noone.
Onely death addes t'our length: nor are we growne
In stature to be men, till we are none.
But this were light, did our lesse volumes hold
All the old Text; or had we chang'd to gold
Their siluer or dispos'd into lesse glas,
Spirits of vertue, which then scattred was.
But 'tis not so: w'are not retir'd, but damp't?
And as our bodies, so our minds are cramp't:

Smalenesse of
stature

Adatta a rendere *Matusalemme* il suo paggio?
Ahimè, viviamo a malapena il tempo per saggiare
Se un orologio appena costruito funzioni correttamente o menta.
I vecchi Nonni parlano di ieri con tristezza,
E per i nostri figli riserviamo il domani.
Così breve è la vita che ogni contadino lotta,
In una casa lacerata o in un campo, per avere tre vite¹.
E, come per la durata, così per la lunghezza l'uomo
Si è contratto a un pollice, quando era una spanna. Piccolezza
Poiché se l'uomo si fosse inizialmente smarrito in Foreste della statura
O fosse naufragato nel Mare, uno avrebbe
Scommesso che un Elefante o una Balena
Che l'avessero incontrato non avrebbero assalito senza indugio
Una cosa così eguale a loro: ora, ahimè,
I Folletti e i Pigmei possono ben passare
Come credibili; l'umanità decade così velocemente,
Che dei nostri padri siamo a malapena le ombre gettate a mezzogiorno.
Solo la morte aggiunge alla nostra lunghezza: non cresciamo
A una statura di uomini, finché non lo siamo affatto.
Ma ciò sarebbe poca cosa se il nostro minor volume contenesse
Tutto l'antico Testamento, o se avessimo mutato in oro
Il loro argento, o trasferito in una fiala più piccola
Gli spiriti della virtù, che allora era sparsa.
Ma non è così: non ci siamo ritirati, ma bagnati;
E come i nostri corpi, così le nostre menti si sono rattrappite:

¹ Espressione utilizzata per indicare la durata di un affitto, che era di novantanove anni.

Tis shrinking, not close weaning that hath thus,
In minde and body both be-dwarfed vs.
We seeme ambitious, Gods whole worke t'vndoe;
Of nothing he made vs, and we striue too,
To bring our selues to nothing backe; and we
Doe what we can, to do't so soone as he.
With new diseases on our selues we warre,
And with new Physicke, a worse Engin farre.
Thus man, this worlds Vice-Emperor, in whom
All faculties, all graces are at home;
And if in other creatures they appeare,
They're but mans Ministers, and Legats ther[e],
To worke on their rebellions, and reduce
Them to Ciuility, and to mans vse.
This man, whom God did woo, and loth t'attend
Till man came vp, did downe to man descend,
This man so great, that all that is, is his,
Oh what a trifle, and poore thing he is?
If man were any thing; he's nothing now:
Helpe, or at least some time to wast, allow
T'his other wants, yet when he did depart
With her whom we lament, he lost his heart.
She, of whom th'Ancients seem'd to prophesie,
When they call'd vertues by the name of shee,
She in whom vertue was so much refin'd,
That for Allay vnto so pure a minde

E' un restringersi, non un tattersi più fitti, che ci ha così
Resi nani sia nella mente che nel corpo.
Sembriamo ambiziosi di disfare l'intera opera di Dio;
Dal nulla egli ci fece, e a nostra volta noi lottiamo
Per riportare indietro noi stessi al nulla;
E facciamo ciò che possiamo per farlo velocemente quanto lui.
Con nuove malattie a noi stessi facciamo guerra,
E con nuove medicine, armi ancor peggiori.
Così l'uomo, Vice-Imperatore di questo mondo, nel quale
Tutte le facoltà, tutte le grazie sono di casa,
E se in altre Creature appaiono,
Non sono là che ministri e Legati dell'uomo,
Ad operare sulle loro ribellioni e a ridurre
Esse alla Civiltà, e all'uso dell'uomo,
Quest'uomo, che Dio corteggiò, e, restio ad attendere
Che l'uomo salisse, discese giù all'uomo,
Quest'uomo, così grande che tutto ciò che è, è suo,
Oh che inezia, e povera cosa è!
Se l'uomo fu mai qualcosa, egli ora è nulla:
Aiuto, o almeno un po' di tempo da sprecare, concedi
Alle sue altre mancanze, ma quando si separò
Da lei, che noi lamentiamo, egli perse il suo cuore.
Lei, di cui gli Antichi sembravano profetare
Quando chiamarono le virtù con nomi femminili,
Lei in cui la virtù era così raffinata,
Che come Lega ad una così pura mente

She tooke the weaker Sex, she that could driue
The poysonous tincture, and the stayne of *Eue*,
Out of her thought, and deedes, and purifie
All, by a true religious Alchemy;
See, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowest this,
Thou knowest how poore a trifling thing man is.
And learn'st thus much by our Anatomie,
The heart being perish'd, [no] part can be free.
And that except thou feed (not banquet) on
The supernaturall food, Religion.
Thy better growth growes whithered, and scant;
Be more than man, or thou'rt lesse then an Ant.
Then, as mankinde, so is the worlds whole frame
Quite out of ioynt, almost created lame:
For, before God had made vp all the rest,
Corruption entred, and deprau'd the best:
It seis'd the Angels, and then first of all
The world did in her Cradle take a fall,
And turn'd her brains, and tooke a generall maim
Wronging each ioynt of th'vniuersall frame.
The noblest part, man, felt it first; and than
Both beasts and plants, curst in the curse of man.
So did the world from the first houre decay,
That euening was beginning of the day,
And now the Springs and Sommers which we see,

Decay of Nature

in other parts.

Scelse il Sesso più debole, lei che poté cacciare
La velenosa tintura e la macchia di *Eva*,
Dai suoi pensieri e atti, e purificare
Tutto con una vera religiosa Alchimia;
Lei, lei è morta; lei è morta: quando sai questo,
Sai che povera cosa insignificante è l'uomo.
E questo è quanto apprendi dalla nostra Anatomia,
Perito il cuore, nessuna parte può essere libera.
E che eccetto che tu ti nutra (non banchetti) di
Cibo sovranaturale, la Religione,
La tua miglior Crescita cresce appassita e scarsa;
Sii più che l'uomo, o sei meno di una Formica.
Dunque, come l'umanità, così l'intera struttura del mondo
E' completamente slogata, quasi creata zoppa:
Poiché, prima che Dio avesse fatto tutto il resto,
La Corruzione entrò e depravò i migliori:
Afferrò gli Angeli, e allora prima di tutto
Il mondo² nella sua Culla subì una caduta,
E il cervello gli si stravolse, e subì una storpiatura generale
Distorcendo ogni giuntura della struttura universale.
La parte più nobile, l'uomo, la senti per primo; e poi
Sia le bestie che le piante, maledette nella maledizione dell'uomo.
Così il mondo dalla prima ora decadde,
La sera fu inizio del giorno,
E ora le primavere e le Estati che vediamo

Decadenza della
natura in
altre parti.

² Femminile nell'originale.

Like sonnes of women after fifty bee.
And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The Sunne is lost, and th'earth, and no mans wit
Can well direct him where to looke for it.
And freely men confesse that this world's spent,
When in the Planets, and the Firmament
They seeke so many new; they see that this
Is crumbled out againe to his Atomis.
'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone;
All iust supply, and all Relation:
Prince, Subiect, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
For euery man alone thinkes he hath got
To be a Phoenix, and that then can be
None of that kinde, of which he is, but he.
This is the worlds condition now, and now
She that should all parts to reunion bow,
She that had all Magnetique force alone,
To draw, and fasten sundred parts in one;
She whom wise nature had in[u]ented then
When she obseru'd that euery sort of men
Did in their voyage in this worlds Sea stray,
And needed a new compasse for their way;
Shee that was best, and first originall
Of all faire copies and the generall
Steward to Fate; shee whose rich eyes, and brest:

Sono come figli di donne dopo i cinquant'anni.
E la nuova Filosofia mette tutto in dubbio,
L'Elemento del fuoco è del tutto spento;
Il Sole è perso, e la terra e nessun ingegno umano
Può bene indicargli dove cercarlo.
E liberamente gli uomini confessano che questo mondo è esausto,
Quando nei Pianeti, e nel Firmamento,
Ne cercano così tanti nuovi; essi vedono che questo
Si è sgretolato, tornando ai suoi Atomi.
E' tutto in pezzi, sparita ogni coerenza,
Ogni giustizia, e ogni Relazione:
Principe, Suddito, Padre, Figlio, sono cose dimenticate,
Poiché ogni uomo per suo conto pensa di dover
Essere una Fenice, e che non ci possa essere
Nessun altro che lui di quella specie della quale lui è.
Questa la condizione del mondo ora, e ora
Lei che doveva piegare tutte le parti alla riunione,
Lei che sola aveva tutta la forza Magnetica
Per attrarre e legare parti disgiunte in unità;
Lei che la saggia natura aveva allora inventato
Quando osservò che ogni sorta di uomini
Nel loro viaggio nel Mare di questo mondo si smarrivano,
E necessitavano di una nuova bussola per la loro via;
Lei che era migliore e primo originale
Di tutte le belle copie; e la generale
Dispensiera del Fato; lei i cui ricchi occhi, e petto,

Guilt the West-Indies, and perfum'd the East;
Whose hauing breath'd in this world, did bestow
Spice on those Isles, and bad them still smell so,
And that rich Indie which doth gold interre,
Is but as single money, coyn'd from her:
She to whom this world must it selfe refer,
As Suburbs, or the Microcosme of her,
Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowest this,
Thou knowst how lame a cripple this world is.
And learnst thus much by our Anatomy,
That this worlds generall sicknesse doth not lie
In any humour, or one certaine part;
But as thou sawest it rotten at the heart,
Thou seest a Hectique feuer hath got hold
Of the whole substance, not to be contrould.
And that thou hast but one way, not t'admit
The worlds infection, to be none of it.
For the worlds subtill immaterial parts
Feele this consuming wound, and ages darts.
[F]or the worlds beauty is decayd, or gone,
Beauty, that's colour, and proportion.
We thinke the heauens enioy their Sphericall
Their round proportion embracing all.
But yet their various and perplexed course,
Obseru'd in diuerse ages doth enforce

Disformity of
parts.

Doravano le Indie Occidentali, e profumavano le Orientali;
Il cui aver respirato in questo mondo aveva conferito
Spezie a quelle isole, e le invitò a profumare ancora così,
E quella ricca India che l'oro interra
Non è che una singola moneta conosciuta su di lei:
Lei a cui questo mondo deve riferirsi
Come Suburbio, o il Microcosmo di lei,
Lei, lei è morta; lei è morta: quando sai questo,
Sai che zoppo storpio è questo mondo.
E questo è quanto apprendi dalla nostra Anatomia,
Che la generale malattia di questo mondo non sta
In nessun umore, o in una certa parte;
Ma, come lo vedesti marcio al cuore,
Vedi che una febbre Etica si è impadronita
Della sostanza intera ed è incontrollabile,
E che c'è un solo modo per non ammettere
L'infezione del mondo, non esserne parte.
Poiché le più sottili e immateriali parti del mondo
Sentono questa ferita che consuma, e i dardi dell'età.
Poiché la bellezza del mondo è decaduta, o svanita,
Bellezza, che è colore e proporzione.
Noi pensiamo che i cieli godano della loro Sferica,
Della loro circolare proporzione che tutto abbraccia.
E tuttavia il loro vario e perplesso corso,
Osservato in epoche diverse, costringe

Difformità
delle parti.

Men to find out so many Eccentrique parts,
Such diuers downe-right lines, such ouerthwarts,
As disproportion that pure forme. It teares
The Firmament in eight and forty sheeres,
And in these constillations then arise
New starres, and old doe vanish from our eyes:
As though heau[']n suffered earth quakes, peace or war,
When new Towers rise, and old demolish't are.
They haue impayld within a Zodiake
The free-borne Sun, and keepe twelue signes awake
To watch his stepps; the Goat and Crabbe controule,
And fright him backe, who els to either Pole,
(Did not these Tropiques fetter him) might runne:
For his course is not round; nor can the Sunne
Perfit a Circle, or maintaine his way
One inche direct; but where he rose to day
He comes no more, but with a cousening line,
Steales by that point, and so is Serpentine:
And seeming weary with his reeling thus,
He meanes to sleepe, being now falne nearer vs.
So, of the Starres which boast that they doe runne.
In Circle still, none ends where he begunne.
All their proportion's lame, it sinckes, it swels.
For of Meridians, and Parallels,
Man hath weaued out a net, and this net throwne

Gli uomini a scoprire così tante Eccentriche parti,
Tali diversi assi ortogonali, tali obliqui,
Da sproporzionare quella pura forma. Ciò lacera
Il Firmamento in quarantotto parti,
E in quelle costellazioni sorgono
Nuove stelle, e le vecchie svaniscono dai nostri occhi:
Come se il cielo soffrisse terremoti, pace o guerra,
Quando sorgono nuove città e le vecchie sono demolite.
Hanno recintato all'interno di uno Zodiaco
Il Sole nato libero e tengono svegli dodici segni
A sorvegliare i suoi passi; il Capricorno e il Cancro controllano,
E spaventano affinché si ritiri, colui che altrimenti all'uno o all'altro Polo
(Se questi Tropici non lo incatenassero) potrebbe correre:
Poiché il suo corso non è circolare; né può il Sole
Compiere un cerchio perfetto o mantenere la sua via
Dritta di un pollice; ma dove è sorto oggi
Egli non torna più, ma con una linea ingannevole
Sfugge da quel punto, ed è dunque Serpentino:
E sembrando esausto per questo suo barcollare,
Egli intende dormire, essendo ora caduto più vicino a noi.
Lo stesso delle stelle che si vantano di correre
Sempre in Cerchio, nessuna finisce dove ha iniziato.
Ogni loro proporzione è zoppa, cala, cresce.
Poiché di Meridiani e Paralleli
L'uomo ha tessuto una rete e questa rete ha gettato

Vpon the Heauens, and now they are his owne.
Loth to goe vp the hill, or labour thus
To goe to heauen, we make heauen come to vs.
We spur, we raigne the stars, and in their race
They're diuersly content t'obey our peace,
But keeps the earth her round proportion still?
Doth not a Tenerif, or higher Hill
Rise so high like a Rocke, that one might thinke
The floating Moone would shipwracke there, and sinke?
Seas are so deepe, that Whales being strooke to day,
Perchance too morrow, scarce at middle way
Of their wish'd iorneye ende, the bottom, die.
And men, to sound depths, so much line vntie,
As one might iustly thinke, that there would rise
At end thereof, one of th'Antipodies:
If vnder all, a Vault infernall be,
(Which sure is spacious, except that we
Invent another torment, that there must
Millions into a strait hot roome be thrust)
Then solidnesse, and roundnesse haue no place.
Are these but warts, and pock-holes in the face
Of th'earth? Thinke so: But yet confesse, in this
The worlds proportion disfigured is,
That those two legges whereon it doth rely,
Reward and punishment are bent awry.
And, Oh, it can no more be questioned,

Disorder in the
world

Sui Cieli, ed ora essi sono i suoi.
Restii a salire sul colle, o ad affannarsi in tal modo
Per andare in cielo, noi facciamo venire il cielo a noi.
Noi sproniamo, imbrigliamo le stelle, e nella loro corsa
Esse sono variamente disposte a obbedire al nostro passo.
Ma mantiene ancora la terra la sua rotonda proporzione?
Una Tenerife, o una più elevata altura non
Si erge così elevata come una Roccia, da far pensare
Che la fluttuante Luna potrebbe farvi naufragio e affondare?
I mari sono così profondi che Balene colpite oggi,
Forse domani, a nemmeno metà strada
Dalla fine desiderata del loro viaggio, il fondo, muoiono.
E gli uomini, per sondare le profondità, svolgono tanta fune
Da far giustamente pensare che potrebbe emergere
Dall'altro capo uno degli Antipodi:
Se sotto a tutto c'è una Volta infernale
(Che certo è spaziosa, a meno che noi
Non inventiamo un altro tormento, che debbano
A Milioni essere gettati in un'angusta stanza rovente)
Allora solidità e rotondità non hanno luogo.
Non sono queste che escrescenze e cicatrici sulla faccia
Della terra? Pensalo: E però confessa, con ciò,
La proporzione del mondo è sfigurata,
Che quelle due gambe su cui esso poggia, Disordine nel
La ricompensa e la punizione, sono curvate storte. mondo
E, Oh, non può più essere messo in dubbio,

That beauties best, proportion, is dead,
Since euen grieffe it selfe, which now alone
Is left vs, is without proportion.
Shee by whose lines proportion should bee
Examin'd measure of all Symmetree,
Whom had the Ancient seene, who thought soules made
Of Harmony, he would at next haue said
That Harmony was shee, and thence infer.
That soules were but Resultances from her,
And did from her into our bodies goe,
As to our eyes, the formes from obiects flow:
Shee, who if those great Doctors truly said
That the Arke to mans proportion was made,
Had beene a type for that, as that might be
A type of her in this, that contrary
Both Elements and Passions liu'd at peace
In her, who cau'd all Ciuill war to cease.
Shee, after whom, what forme soe're we see,
Is discord, and rude incongruitee,
Shee, shee is dead, she's dead; when thou knowest this,
Thou knowst how vgly a monster this world is:
And learnest thus much by our Anatomie,
That here is nothing to enamour thee:
And that, not onely faults in inward parts,
Corruptions in our brains, or in our hearts.
Poysoning the fountaines, whence our actions spring,

Che il meglio della bellezza, la proporzione, è morto,
Poiché persino l'afflizione stessa, che sola ora
Ci è rimasta, è senza proporzione.
Lei sui cui lineamenti la proporzione dovrebbe essere
Esaminata, misura di ogni Simmetria,
Che se l'avesse vista quell'Antico, che pensava le anime fatte
Di Armonia, avrebbe successivamente affermato
Che l'Armonia era lei, e di là inferito
Che le anime non erano che Risultanze da lei,
E da lei venivano nei nostri corpi,
Come ai nostri occhi, le forme dagli oggetti fluiscono:
Lei, che se quei grandi Dottori in verità dissero
Che l'Arca fu fatta a proporzione dell'uomo,
Sarebbe stata a modello di quella, come quella potrebbe essere
Un modello di lei in questo, che contrari
Elementi, e Passioni vivevano in pace
In lei, che mise fine a ogni guerra Civile.
Lei, dopo la quale, qualsiasi forma noi vediamo,
E' discordia e rozza incongruenza,
lei, lei è morta, lei è morta: quando sai questo,
Sai che brutto mostro è questo mondo:
E questo è quanto apprendi dalla nostra Anatomia,
Che non c'è nulla che t'innamori:
E che, non soltanto le pecche in parti interiori,
Le corruzioni nei nostri cervelli, o nei nostri cuori,
Che avvelenano le fonti, da cui scaturiscono le nostre azioni,

Endanger us: but that if euery thing
Be not done fitly'nd in proportion,
To satisfie wise, and good lookers on,
(Since most men be such as most thinke they bee)
They're lothsome too, by this Deformitee.
For good, and well, must in our actions meete;
Wicked is not much worse then indiscreet.
But beauties other second Element,
Colour, and lustre now, is as neere spent.
And had the world his iust proportion,
Were it a ring still, yet the stone is gone.
As a compassionate Turcoyse which doth tell
By looking pale, the wearer is not well,
As gold fals sicke being stung with Mercury,
All the worlds parts of such complexion bee.
When nature was most busie, the first weeke,
Swadling the new borne earth God seemd to like,
That she should sport her selfe sometimes, and play,
To mingle, and vary colours euery day.
And then, as though she could not make inow
Himselfe his various Rainbow did allow,
Sight is the noblest sense of any one,
Yet sight hath onely colour to feede on,
And colour is decayd: summers robe growes
Duskie, and like an oft dyed garment showes.
Our blushing redde, which vs'd in cheekes to spred,

Ci minacciano: ma che se ogni cosa
Non è fatta appropriatamente e in proporzione,
Per soddisfare i saggi, e i buoni spettatori,
(Poiché la gran parte degli uomini è come la gran parte crede che essi siano)
Essa pure sarà ripugnante, per questa Deformità.
Poiché buono, e bene, devono incontrarsi nelle nostre azioni:
Malvagio non è molto peggiore di Indiscreto.
Ma l'altro secondo Elemento della bellezza,
Il colore, e il lustro è ora, è pressoché estinto.
E avesse il mondo la sua giusta proporzione,
Fosse ancora un anello, tuttavia la gemma è scomparsa.
Come un compassionevole Turchese che rivela
Col suo pallore, che chi lo porta non sta bene,
Come l'oro si ammala quando è contaminato col Mercurio,
Tutte le parti del mondo sono di tale aspetto.
Quando la natura era più indaffarata, la prima settimana,
A mettere in fasce la terra appena nata, Dio sembrava gradire,
Che essa a volte si divertisse, e giocasse,
A mescolare e variare ogni giorno i colori;
E poi, come se lei non potesse farne abbastanza,
Egli stesso le concesse il suo vario Arcobaleno.
La vista è il senso più nobile di tutti,
Ma la vista ha solo il colore di cui nutrirsi,
E il colore è decaduto: la veste dell'estate si fa
Oscura, e pare un indumento più volte tinto.
Il rossore, che una volta si spargeva sulle guance,

Is inward sunke and onely our soules are redde.
 Perchance the world might haue recouered,
 If shee whom we lament had not bene dead:
 But she, in whom all white, and red, and blew
 (Beauties ingredients) voluntary grew,
 As in an vnuext Paradise; from whom
 Did all things verdure, and their lustre come,
 Whose composition was miraculous,
 Being all colour, all Diaphanous,
 (For Ayre, and Fire but thinke grosse bodies were,
 And liueliest stones but drowsie, and pale to her,)
 Shee, shee, is dead; she's dead: when thou knowest this,
 Thou knowest how wan a Ghost this our world is:
 And learnst thus much by our Anatomie,
 That it should more affright, then pleasure thee.
 And that, since all faire colour then did sinke,
 'Tis now but wicked vanitie to thinke,
 To colour vicious deeds with good pretence,
 Or with bought colors to illude mens sense.
 Nor in ought more this worlds decay appeares,
 Then that her influence the heau'n forbears,
 Or that the Elements doe not feele this,
 The father, or the mother barren is.
 The clouds conceiue not raine, or doe not powre
 In the due birth-time, down the balmy showre.
 Th' Ayre doth not motherly sit on the earth,

Weakenesse
 in the want of
 correspondence
 of heauen and
 earth.

E' sprofondato all'interno, e solamente le nostre anime sono rosse.

Può darsi che il mondo sarebbe potuto guarire,

Se lei che lamentiamo non fosse morta:

Ma lei, in cui tutto il bianco, e il rosso, e il blu

(Gli ingredienti della bellezza) crescevano spontanei,

Come in un indisturbato Paradiso; da cui

Tutte le cose verdeggiavano, ed acquistavano il loro splendore,

La cui composizione era miracolosa,

Essendo tutta colore, tutta Diafanità,

(Poiché l'Aria, e il Fuoco non erano che spessi corpi grezzi,

e le pietre più vivaci sonnolente e pallide al suo confronto)

Lei, lei è morta; lei è morta: quando sai questo,

Sai che pallido Fantasma è questo mondo:

E questo è quanto apprendi dalla nostra Anatomia,

Che dovrebbe più atterirti, che dilettrarti.

E che, essendo ogni bel colore allora sprofondato,

Non è ora che malvagia vanità pensare,

Di colorare opere viziose con buoni pretesti,

O di ingannare i sensi umani con colori artificiali.

Né in altro più appare la decadenza del mondo,

Che nel fatto che il cielo si astiene dall'influenza di lei,

O che gli Elementi non la sentono,

Il padre, o la madre è sterile.

Le nuvole non concepiscono pioggia, o non versano

Nel giusto tempo della nascita, balsamici rovesci.

L'Aria non siede più maternamente sulla terra,

Debolezza

nella mancanza di

corrispondenza

tra cielo

e terra

To hatch her seasons, and giue all things birth.
Spring-times were common cradles, but are toombes,
And false conceptions fill the generall wombes.
Th'ayre shows such Meteors, as none can see,
Not onely what they meane, but what they bee.
Earth such new wormes, as would haue troubled much,
Th'Egyptian *Mages* to haue made more such.
What Artist now dares boast that he can bring
Heauen hither, or constellate any thing,
So as the influence of those starres may bee
Imprisoned in an Hearbe, or Charme, or Tree.
And doe by touch, all which those starres could doe?
The art is lost, and correspondence too.
For heauen giues little, and the earth takes lesse,
And man least knowes their trades and purposes.
If this commerce twixt heauen and earth were not
Embarr'd, and all this trafique quite forgot,
Shee, for whose losse we haue lamented thus,
Would worke more fully and pow'rfully on vs.
Since herbes and roots by dying, lose not all,
But they, yea Ashes too, are medicinall,
Death could not quench her vertue so, but that
It would be (if not follow'd) wondred at:
And all the world would be one dying Swan,
To sing her generall praise, and vanish than.
But as some Serpents poyson hurteth not,

Per covare le sue stagioni, e far nascere tutte le cose.
Le primavere erano culle universali, ma sono tombe;
E false concezioni riempiono tutti i grembi.
L'Aria mostra tali meteore, che nessuno riesce a capire,
Non solo cosa significhino, ma cosa siano.
La terra tali nuove serpi, che molta pena avrebbero dato,
Ai Maghi Egizi per produrne di simili.
Quale Artista osa ora vantarsi di poter portare
Il cielo quaggiù, o di evocare qualcosa da una costellazione,
Cosicché l'influenza di quelle stelle possa essere
Imprigionata in un'Erba, o un Amuleto, o un Albero,
E fare col tocco, tutto quello che le stelle possono fare?
L'arte è perduta, e anche la corrispondenza.
Poiché il cielo dà poco, e la terra prende ancor meno,
E meno di tutti l'uomo conosce i loro scambi e scopi.
Se questo commercio tra cielo e terra non fosse,
Sbarrato, e tutto questo traffico del tutto dimenticato,
Lei, la cui perdita abbiamo così lamentato,
Opererebbe più pienamente e potentemente su di noi.
Poiché le erbe, e le radici, morendo, non perdono tutto,
Ma esse, persino le Ceneri, sono medicinali,
Così la morte non poté estinguere la sua virtù al punto
Che essa potesse essere (se non seguita) almeno ammirata:
E tutto il mondo potesse essere un Cigno morente,
Per cantare il suo elogio funebre, e poi svanire.
Ma come il veleno di alcuni Serpenti non fa male,

Except it be from the liue Serpent shot,
So doth her vertue need her here, to fit
That unto vs; she working more then it.
But she, in whom, to such maturity,
Verue was grown, past gtrowth, that it must die,
She from whose influence all Impresion came,
But by receiuers impotencies, lame,
Who, though she could not transubstantiate
All states to gold, yet guilded euery state,
So that some Princes haue some temperance;
Some Counsellors some purpose to aduance
The common profite; and some people haue
Some stay, no more then Kings should giue, to craue;
Some women haue some taciturnity,
Some Nunneries, some graines of chastity.
She that did thus much, & much more could doe,
But that our age was Iron, and rusty too,
Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowest this,
Thou knowest how drie a Cinder this world is.
And learnst thus much by our Anatomy,
That 'tis in vaine to dew, or mollifie
It with thy Teares, or Sweat, or Blood: no thing
Is worth our trauaile, grieffe, or perishing,
But those rich ioyes, which did possesse her heart,
Of which shee's now partaker, and a part.

Eccetto che sia iniettato dal Serpente vivo,
Così la sua virtù ha bisogno di lei qui, ad amministrare
Quella a noi; lei operando più che essa.
Ma lei, in cui, a tale maturità,
La virtù era cresciuta, oltre la crescita, da dover morire,
Lei dalla quale influenza vennero tutte le Impressioni,
Ma, per l'impotenza dei Ricettori, zoppe,
Lei che, seppure non poté transustanziare
Tutti gli stati in oro, ogni stato tuttavia dorò,
Cosicché alcuni Principi hanno una qualche temperanza;
Alcuni Consiglieri un qualche intento di promuovere
Il comune profitto; e alcuni sudditi hanno
Un qualche ritegno a bramare più di quanto i Re possano dare;
Alcune donne sanno essere alquanto taciturne;
Alcuni Conventi, qualche granello di castità.
Lei che fece tutto questo, e molto più poteva fare,
Se la nostra età non fosse stata Ferro, e pure arrugginito,
Lei, lei è morta; lei è morta; quando sai questo,
Sai che arida Cenere è questo mondo.
E questo è quanto apprendi dalla nostra Anatomia,
Che è vano intriderlo, o ammollirlo
Con le tue Lacrime, o Sudore, o Sangue: nessuna cosa
Vale la nostra fatica, pena, o decesso,
Se non quelle ricche gioie, che possedevano il suo cuore,
Di cui lei ora è partecipe, e una parte.

But as in cutting vp a man that's dead,
The body will not last out to haue read
On euery part, and therefore men direct
Their speech to parts, that are of most effect;
So the worlds carcasse would not last, if I
Were punctuall in this Anatomy.
Nor smels it well to hearers, if one tell
Them their disease, who faine would thinke they're well.
Here therefore be the end: And, blessed maid,
Of whom is meant what euer hath beene said,
Or shall be spoken well by any tongue,
Whose name refines course lines, and makes prose song,
Accept this tribute, and his first yeeres rent,
Who till his darke short tapers end be spent,
As oft as thy feast sees this widowed earth,
Will yeerely celebrate thy second birth,
That is, thy death. For though the soule of man
Be got when man is made, 'tis borne but than
When man doth die, Our bodi's as the wombe,
And as a Mid-wife death directs it home.
And you her creatures, whom she workes vpon
And haue your last, and best concoction
From her example, and her vertue, if you
In reuerence to her, doe thinke it due,
That no one should her prayes thus reherse,
As matter fit for Chronicle, not verse,

Ma come quando si dissezione un uomo morto,
Il corpo non dura tanto da poter leggere
Ogni parte, e dunque gli uomini dirigono
Il loro discorso sulle parti che sono di maggiore effetto;
Così la carcassa del mondo non durerebbe, se io
Fossi puntuale in questa Anatomia.
Né sa di buono a coloro che ascoltano, se uno dice
Loro la loro malattia, che preferirebbero pensare di stare bene.
Qui perciò sia la conclusione: E, benedetta fanciulla,
Di cui si è inteso tutto ciò che è stato detto,
O che sarà ben espresso da qualunque lingua,
Il cui nome raffina i versi grossolani, e fa della prosa un canto,
Accetta questo tributo, e il suo primo anno di canone,
Che finché questa oscura e breve candela non si sarà estinta,
Ogni volta che la tua festa vedrà questa vedova terra,
Ogni anno celebrerà la tua seconda nascita,
Ossia, la tua morte. Poiché sebbene l'anima dell'uomo
Sia generata quando è fatto l'uomo, essa nasce soltanto
Quando l'uomo muore. Il nostro corpo è come il ventre,
E come una levatrice la morte la dirige a casa.
E voi sue creature, su cui essa opera
E che avete la vostra ultima e migliore mistura
Dall'esempio di lei, e dalla sua virtù, se voi
In ossequio di lei, ritenete dovuto,
Che nessuno debba così recitare le sue lodi,
Essendo argomento consono a Cronaca, non versi,

Vouchsafe to call to minde, that God did make
A last, and lastingst peece, a song. He spake
To *Moses*, to deliuer vnto all,
That song: because he knew they would let fall,
The Law, the Prophets, and the History,
But keepe the song still in their memory.
Such an opinion (in due measure) made
Me this great Office boldly to inuade.
Nor could incomprehensiblenesse deterre
Me, from thus trying to emprison her.
Which when I saw that a strict graue could doe,
I saw not why verse might not doe so too.
Verse hath a middle nature: Heauen keepes soules,
The Graue keepes bodies, Verse the same enroules.

Degnatevi di richiamare alla mente, che Dio fece
Un ultimo ed eterno pezzo, un canto. Egli parlò
A *Mosé* perché consegnasse a tutti,
Quella canzone: perché sapeva che avrebbero fatto cadere
La Legge, i Profeti, e la Storia,
Ma che la canzone l'avrebbero serbata nella memoria.
Questa opinione (in debita misura) fece sì
Che io arditamente mi gettassi in questo grande Ufficio.
Né poté la sua incomprendibilità dissuadermi,
Dal tentare di imprigionarla così.
Quando vidi che una angusta tomba poteva fare ciò,
Non vidi perché la poesia non potesse fare altrettanto.
La poesia ha una natura mediana: il cielo tiene le anime,
La tomba tiene i corpi, la poesia iscrive la fama.

A FUNERALL ELEGIE.

Tis lost, to trust a Toombe with such a guhest,
Or to confine her in a Marble chest.
Alas, what's Marble, Ieat, or Porphiry,
Priz'd with the Chrysolite of either eye,
Or with those Pearles, and Rubies which shee was?
Ioyne the two Indies in one Toombe, 'tis glas;
And so is all to her materials,
Though euery inche were ten'escurials.
Yet shee's demolished: Can we keepe her then
In workes of hands, or of the wits of men?
Can these memorials, ragges of paper, giue
Life to that name, by which name they must liue?
Sickly, alas, short liu'd, aborted bee
Those Carkas verses, whose soule is not shee.
And can shee, who no longer would be shee,
Being such a Tabernacle, stoope to bee
In paper wrapt; Or, when shee would not lie
In such a house, dwell in an Elegie?
But 'tis no matter; we may well allow
Verse to liue so long as the world will now
For her death wounded it. The world containes

UN'ELEGIA FUNEBRE

E' vano, affidare a una Tomba una tale ospite,
O confinarla in uno scrigno di Marmo.
Ahimè, cos'è il Marmo, il Giaietto, o il Porfido,
Paragonato al Crisolito di ciascun occhio,
O a quelle Perle e Rubini di cui era?
Unisci le due Indie in una Tomba, è vetro;
E tale è ogni cosa rispetto ai suoi materiali,
Anche se ogni pollice fosse dieci Escuriali,
Eppure lei è demolita: possiamo conservarla dunque
Nelle opere delle mani, o degli ingegni degli uomini?
Possono questi memoriali, stracci di carta, dare
Vita a quel nome, attraverso il quale nome devono vivere?
Malati, ahimè, di breve vita, abortiti sono
Quei versi Carcassa, la cui anima non è lei.
E può lei, che non volle più essere lei,
Essendo un tale Tabernacolo, abbassarsi ad essere
Avvolta in carta; o quando non volesse giacere
In tale casa, dimorare in un'Elegia?
Ma non importa; possiamo ben concedere
Che la poesia viva quanto vivrà ora il mondo.
Poiché la sua morte lo ha ferito. Il mondo contiene

Princes for armes, and Counsailors for braines,
Lawyers for tongues, Diuines for hearts, and more,
The Rich for stomachs, and for backes the Poore;
The officers for hands, Merchants for feet
By which remote and distant Countries meet.
But those fine spirits which doe tune and set
This Organ, are those peeces which beget
Wonder and loue; And these were shee; and shee
Being spent, the world must needs decrepitate.
For since death will proceed to triumph still,
He can finde nothing, after her, to kill,
Except the world it selfe, so great as shee.
Thus braue and confident may Nature bee,
Death cannot giue her such another blow,
Because shee cannot such another show.
But must we say shee's dead? May't not be said
That as a sundred Clocke is peece-meale laid,
Not to be lost, but by the makers hand
Repolish'd, without error then to stand,
Or as the Affrique Niger streame enwombs
It selfe into the earth, and after comes,
(Hauing first made a naturall bridge, to passe
For many leagues,) farre greater than it was,
May't not be said, that her graue shall restore
Her, greater, purer, firmer, then before?
Heauen may say this, and ioy in't; but can wee

Principi per braccia, e Consiglieri per cervelli,
Avvocati per lingue, Sacerdoti per cuori, e di più,
I Ricchi per stomachi, e per schiene i Poveri;
Gli Ufficiali per mani, Mercanti per piedi
Che la poesia viva quanto vivrà ora il mondo
Poiché la sua morte lo ha ferito. Il mondo contiene
Grazie ai quali remoti e distanti Paesi si incontrano.
Ma gli spiriti sottili, che accordano e regolano
Questo Organo, sono i pezzi che generano
Meraviglia e amore; E questi erano lei; e lei
Essendo estinta, il mondo deve necessariamente essere decrepito.
Poiché se ancora la morte procederà a trionfare,
Non potrà trovare nulla, dopo di lei, da uccidere,
Eccetto il mondo stesso, grande quanto lei.
Dunque audace e fiduciosa può essere la Natura,
La morte non potrà darle un altro colpo tale,
Poiché un'altra tale non potrà esibire.
Ma dobbiamo dire che è morta? Non si potrebbe dire
Che come un orologio smontato giace in pezzi,
Non per venire distrutto, ma dalla mano del creatore
Ripulito, per essere dunque senza errore,
O come il fiume Niger in Africa si inventa
Nella terra, e poi, e poi ne riemerge,
(Avendo prima fatto un ponte naturale, per passare
Per molte leghe,) molto più grande di quanto era,
Non si potrebbe dire, che la sua tomba la restaurerà
Più grande, più pura, più salda di prima?
Può dirlo il cielo, e gioirne; ma possiamo noi

Who liue, and lacke her, here this vantage see?
What is't to vs, alas, if there haue beene
An Angell made a Throne, or Cherubin?
We lose by't: And as aged men are glad
Being tastlesse growne, to ioy in ioyes they had,
So now the sicke staru'd world must feed vpon
This ioy, that we had her, who now is gone.
Reioyce then nature, and this world, that you
Fearing the last fires hastning to subdue
Your force and vigor, ere it were neere gone,
Wisely bestow'd, and laid it all on one.
One, whose cleare body was so pure, and thin,
Because it need disguise no thought within.
T'was but a through-light scarfe; her minde t'enroule,
Or exhalation breath'd out from her soule.
One, whom all men who durst no more, admir'd,
And whom, who ere had worth enough, desir'd;
As when a Temple's built, Saints emulate
To which of them, it shall be consecrate.
But as when Heauen lookes on vs with new eyes,
Those new starres euery Artist exercise,
What place they should assigne to them they doubt.
Argue, and agree not, till those starres goe out:
So the world studied whose this peece should be,
Till she can be no bodies else, nor shee:
But like a Lampe of Balsamum, desir'd

Che viviamo, e a cui lei manca, vedere questo vantaggio quaggiù?
Cosa conta per noi, ahimè, se c'è stato
Un Angelo che è stato fatto Trono o Cherubino?
Noi ci perdiamo; E come i vecchi si contentano
Avendone perso il gusto, di gioire di avute gioie,
Così ora l'inferno e affamato mondo deve nutrirsi
Di questa gioia, di avere avuto lei, che ora è sparita.
Gioite dunque natura, e Mondo terreno, che
Temendo gli ultimi fuochi che si affrettano a sottomettere
La vostra forza e il vostro vigore, prima che fossero pressoché spariti,
Saggiamente li conferiste, e poneste tutti in una.
Una, il cui limpido corpo era così puro, e sottile,
Poiché non aveva in sé nessun pensiero da dissimulare.
Non era che un velo traslucido, che avvolgeva la sua mente,
O l'esalazione alitata dalla sua anima.
Una, che tutti gli uomini che più non osavano, ammiravano;
E che quelli che ancora non avevano abbastanza valore, desideravano;
Come quando si erige un Tempio, i Santi rivaleggiano
A chi di loro debba essere consacrato.
Ma, come quando il Cielo guarda su di noi con nuovi occhi,
Quelle nuove stelle esercitano ogni Artista,
Ed essi dubitano su che posto si debba ad esse assegnare,
Discutono, non concordano, finché quelle stelle si spengono:
Così il mondo studiò di chi dovesse essere questo esemplare,
Finché lei non poté essere di nessun altro, né sé stessa
Ma come una Lampada Balsamica, desiderata

Rather t'adorne, then last, shee soone expir'd;
Cloathed in her Virgin white integrity;
For mariage, though it doe not staine, doth dye.
To scape th'infirmities which waite vpon
Woman, shee went away, before sh'was one.
And the worlds busie noyse to ouercome,
Tooke so much death, as seru'd for opium.
For though she could not, nor could chuse to die,
Shee'ath yeilded to too long an Extasie.
He which not knowing her said History,
Should come to read the booke of Destinie,
How faire and chast, humble and high shee'ad beene,
Much promis'd, much perform'd, at not fifteene,
And measuring future things, by things before,
Should turne the leafe to read, and read no more,
Would thinke that either destinie mistooke,
Or that some leaues were torne out of the booke.
But 'tis not so: Fate did but Vsher her
To yeares of Reasons vse, and then infer
Her destinie to her selfe, which libertie
Shee tooke but for thus much, thus much to die.
Her mosdesty not suffering her to bee
Fellow-Commissioner with destinee,
She did no more but die, if after her
Any shall liue, which dare true good prefer,
Euery such person is her deligate,

Più per adornare, che per durare, lei presto si spense;
Vestita della sua Vergine e bianca integrità;
Poiché il matrimonio, pur non macchiando, tinge.
Per fuggire alle infermità che accompagnano
La donna, lei se ne andò via, prima di diventarne una.
E per sopraffare l'indaffarato rumore del mondo,
Assunse quel tanto di morte, da servire da *oppio*.
Poiché, se non poteva, né poteva scegliere di morire,
Si è abbandonata a una troppo lunga Estasi.
Colui che, non conoscendo la sua nota Storia,
Dovesse trovarsi a leggere il libro del destino,
Quanto bella, e casta, umile ed elevata sia stata,
Quanto promettesse, quanto facesse, nemmeno quindicenne,
E misurando le cose future, con quelle già accadute,
Voltasse pagina per leggere, e leggere oltre non potesse,
Penserebbe che il destino si è sbagliato,
O che qualche pagina è stata strappata dal libro.
Ma così non è: il Fato non fece che introdurla
Negli anni della Ragione, perché ne inferisse
Lei sola il suo destino; la quale libertà
Lei si prese solo per questo, solo per morire.
La sua modestia non le permise d'essere
Sovrintendente insieme al destino,
Lei non fece altro che morire; se dopo di lei
Vivrà qualcuno, che osi promuovere il vero bene,
Ogni tale persona sarà un suo delegato,

T'accomplish that which should haue beene her fate.
They shall make vp that booke, and shall haue thanks
Of fate and her, for filling vp their blankes.
For future vertuous deeds are Legacies.
Which from the gift of her example rise.
And 'tis in heau'n part of spirituall mirth,
To see how well, the good play her, on earth.

A compiere quello che sarebbe dovuto essere il suo fato.
Loro completeranno quel libro, e saranno ringraziati
Dal fato e da lei, per aver colmato i loro vuoti.
Poiché le future opere virtuose sono Lasciti,
Che sorgono dal dono del suo esempio.
E fa parte in cielo della gioia spirituale,
Vedere quanto bene i buoni la rappresentino, sulla terra.

The Second Anniversarie.

OF
THE PROGRES

of the Soule.

Wherein,

BY OCCASION OF
the Religious death of Mistris
ELIZABETH DRURY,
the incommodities of the Soule
in this life, and her exaltation in
the next, are contemplated.

Il Secondo Anniversario.

DEL VIAGGIO

dell'Anima.

In cui,

IN OCCASIONE
della Religiosa morte della fanciulla
ELIZABETH DRVRY,
gli affanni dell'anima
in questa vita e la sua esaltazione
nella prossima sono contemplati.

Nothing could make me sooner to confesse.
That this world had an euerlastingnesse,
Then to consider, that a yeare is runne,
Since both this lower worlds, and the Sunnes, Sunne,
The Lustre, and the vigor of this All,
Did set; t'were Blasphemy, to say, did fall.
But as a ship which hath strooke saile, doth runne,
By force of that force which before, it wonne:
Or as sometimes in a beheaded man,
Though at those two Red seas, which freely ran,
One from the Trunke, another from the Head,
His soule he saild, to her eternall bed,
His eies will twinckle, and his tongue will roll,
As though he beckned, and cal'd backe his Soul,
He graspes his hands, and he puls vp his feet,
And seemes to reach, and to step forth to meet
His soule; when all these motions which we saw,
Are but as Ice, which crackles at a thaw:
Or as a lute, which in moist weather, rings
Her knell alone, by cracking of her strings.
So struggles this dead world, now shee is gone;
For there is motion in corruption.
As some Daies are, at the Creation nam'd,
Before the Sunne, the which fram'd Daies, was fram'd,
So after this Sunnes set some show appeares,
And orderly vicissitude of yeares.

The entrance.

Nulla mi farebbe ammettere più in fretta,
Che questo mondo sia sempiterno,
Quanto il considerare che un anno è trascorso,
Da quando il Sole del Sole e di questo mondo inferiore,
Il Lustrò, e il vigore di questo Tutto,
E' tramontato; sarebbe Blasfemia dire che è caduto.
Ma come una nave che ha ammainato la vela è spinta,
Dalla forza di quella forza che prima dominava,
O come a volte un uomo decapitato,
La cui anima attraverso quei due mari Rossi, che liberamente scorrono,
Uno dal Tronco, un altro dalla Testa,
E' salpata, al suo letto eterno,
Ha gli occhi che sbattono e la lingua che si muove,
Come se gesticolasse e gridasse alla sua Anima di tornare,
Serra i pugni, e solleva i piedi,
E pare protendersi, e avanzare per incontrare
La propria anima; quando tutti questi movimenti che abbiamo visto,
Sono come Ghiaccio, che crepita col disgelo:
O come un Liuto, che con il clima umido, suona
Il suo stesso rintocco funebre, facendo risonare le corde.
Così arranca questo mondo morto, ora che lei è sparita;
Perché c'è movimento nella corruzione.
Come alcuni Giorni sono nominati alla Creazione,
Prima che il sole, che creò i Giorni, venisse creato,
Così dopo questo tramonto, uno spettacolo appare,
Un'ordinata vicissitudine di anni.

L'entrata.

Yet a new Deluge, and of *Lethe* flood,
 Hath drown'vs all, All haue forgot all good,
 Forgetting her, the m[ai]ne Reserue of all,
 Yet in this Deluge, grosse and generall,
 Thou seest me striue for life; my life shall be,
 To bee hereafter prais'd, for praying thee,
 Immortall Maid, who though thou wouldst refuse
 The name of Mother, be vnto my Muse,
 A Father since her chaste ambition is,
 Yearely to bring forth such a child as this.
 These Hymnes may worke on future wits, and so
 May great Grand-children of thy praises grow.
 And so, though not Reuiue, enbalme, and spice
 The world which else would putrifie with vice.
 For thus, Man may extend thy progeny,
 Vntill man doe but vanish, and not die.
 These Hymns they issue, may encrease so long,
 As till Gods great *Venite* change the song.
 Thirst for that time, O my initiate soule,
 And serue thy thirst, with Gods safe-sealing Bowle.
 Bee thirsty still, and drinke still till thou goe;
 To th'onely Health, to be Hydroptique so.
 Forget this rotten world; And vnto thee,
 Let thine owne times as an old story be[.]
 Be not concern'd: study not why, nor whan;

A iust disestimation
 of this world.

Eppure un nuovo Diluvio, e inondazione del Lethe,
Ci ha annegati tutti, tutti hanno dimenticato ogni bene,
Dimenticando lei, la prima Riserva di tutto.
Eppure in questo Diluvio, abbondante e universale,
Mi vedi lottare per la vita; la mia vita sarà,
D'ora innanzi lodata, per aver lodato te,
Immortale Fanciulla, che sebbene rifiutasti
Il nome di Madre, sei stata per la mia Musa,
Un Padre poiché la sua casta Ambizione è,
Ogni anno di generare un figlio come questo.
Questi Inni potranno operare su intelletti futuri, e dunque
Potranno i Pronipoti crescere grazie alle tue lodi.
E dunque, se non Rianimare, potranno imbalsamare e aromatizzare
Il mondo, che altrimenti imputridirebbe nel vizio.
Poiché così, l'Uomo potrà estendere la tua progenie,
Finché l'uomo scomparirà senza morire.
Questi Inni la tua progenie potranno accrescere per così a lungo
Da giungere a quando il grande *Venite* di Dio cambierà la canzone.
Abbi sete di quel tempo, O mia insaziabile anima,
E placa la tua sete, con la Tazza di Dio, sigillo di salvezza.
Abbi ancora sete, e bevi fino a quando te ne andrai;
L'unica Salute è essere in tal modo Idropico.
Dimentica questo marcio mondo; E a te,
Lascia che il tuo tempo sia come una vecchia storia,
Non ti affannare: non studiare il perché, né il quando;
Doe not so much, as not beleeue a man.

Una giusta
disistima
di questo mondo

For though to erre, be worst, to try truths forth,
Is far more busines, then this world is worth.
The world is but a carcasse; thou art fed
By it, but as a worme, that carcas bred;
And why shouldst thou, poore worme, consider more,
When this world will grow better then before,
Then those thy fellow-wormes doe thinke vpon
That carcasses last resurrectione.
Forget this world, and scarce thinke of it so,
As of old cloaths, cast off a yeere agoe.
To be thus stupid as Alacrity;
Men thus lethargique haue best Memory.
Looke vppward; that's towards her, whose happy state
We now lament not, but congratulate.
Shee, to whom all this world twas but a stage,
Where all sat harkning how her youthfull age
Should be emploid, because in all, shee did,
Some Figure of the Golden times, was hid.
Who could not lacke, what ere this world could giue,
Because shee was the forme, that made it liue;
Nor could complaine, that this world was vnfit,
To be staid in, then when shee was in it;
Shee that first tried indifferent desires
By vertue, and vertue by religious fires,
Shee to whose person Paradise adhear'd,

Non fare nulla come non credere ad un uomo.
Poiché se errare è la peggior cosa, mettere alla prova le verità,
E' una fatica ben più grande di quanto non valga la pena questo mondo.
Il mondo non è che una Carcassa; tu sei nutrito
Da essa, ma come un verme che quella carcassa ha generato;
E perché dovresti tu, povero verme, considerare di più,
Il quando questo mondo diverrà meglio di prima,
Di quanto quei tuoi compagni vermi pensino
Alla resurrezione di quella carcassa.
Dimentica questo mondo, e a stento pensaci così,
Come a vecchi stracci smessi un anno fa.
Essere stupidi è dunque Alacrità;
Gli uomini letargici hanno dunque la miglior Memoria.
Guarda in alto; verso di lei, il cui felice stato
Noi ora non lamentiamo, ma del quale ci congratuliamo.
Lei, per la quale tutto questo mondo non era che un palcoscenico,
Dove tutti sedevano ad ascoltare come la sua giovane età
Dovesse essere impiegata, poiché in tutto ciò che lei faceva,
Era nascosta qualche Figura dei tempi d'Oro.
Lei che non poteva mancare di ciò che prima questo mondo poteva dare,
Poiché lei era la forma che lo faceva vivere;
Né poteva lamentarsi che questo mondo fosse indegno;
Di essere abitato, quando allora lei vi era parte;
Lei che prima purificò vaghi desideri
Con la virtù, e la virtù con religiosi fuochi,
Lei alla cui persona il Paradiso aderiva,

As Courts to Princes, she whose eies enspheard
Star-light inough, t'haue made the South controll,
(Had shee beene there) the Starfull Northern Pole,
Shee, shee is gone; shee is gone; when thou knowest this,
What fragmentary rubbidge this world is.

Thou knowest, and that it is not worth a thought;

He honours it too much that thinkes it nought.

Thinke then, My soule, that death is but a Groome,

Which brings a Taper to the outward roome,

Whence thou spiest first a glimmering light,

And after brings it nearer to thy sight:

For such approches doth heauen make it in death.

Thinke thy selfe labouring now with broken breath,

And thinke those broken & soft Notes to bee

Diuision, and thy happiest Harmonie.

Thinke thee laid on thy death-bed, loose and slacke;

And thinke that but vnbinding of a packe,

To take one precious thing, thy soule, from thence.

Thinke thy selfe parch'd with feuers violence,

Anger thine Ague more, by calling it

Thy Physicke; chide the slacknes of the fit.

Thinke that thou hear'st thy knell, and thinke no more,

But that, as Bels cal'd thee to Church before,

So this, to the Triumphant Church, cal's thee.

Thinke Satans Sergeants round about thee bee,

And thinke that but for Legcies they thrust;

Contemplation
of our state
in our death-bed.

Come le corti ai Principi; lei le cui sfere degli occhi
Contenevano abbastanza luce di Stella da far controllare al Sud,
(se lei fosse stata là) il Polo Nord pieno di Stelle,
Lei, lei è sparita; lei è sparita: quando sai questo,
Sai che frammentaria immondizia è questo mondo
Lo sai, e che non è degno di un pensiero;
Lo onora troppo colui che lo pensa uno zero.
Pensa dunque, Mia anima, che la morte è come uno Sposo,
Che porta una candela alla stanza esterna,
Da dove tu scorgi prima un lieve barlume di luce,
E dopo la porta più vicino alla tua vista:
Poiché tali approcci fa il Cielo nella morte.
Pensati a faticare con il fiato corto
E pensa che quelle Note spezzate e leggere siano
Melisma, e la più felice Armonia.
Pensati sdraiato sul tuo letto di morte, molle e fiacco;
E pensa a ciò come allo scartare di un pacco,
Per tirare fuori la cosa preziosa, la tua anima, da esso.
Pensati riarso dalla violenza della febbre,
Manda ancora più in collera i tuoi Brividi, chiamandoli
Il tuo Medico; rimprovera la mollezza dei sani.
Pensa che stai sentendo il tuo rintocco funebre, e non pensare altro
Che quello, come le Campane ti hanno chiamato prima in Chiesa,
Così questa, alla Chiesa Trionfante, ti chiama.
Pensa che i Sergenti di Satana sono tutt'intorno a te,
E pensa che non sono alla ricerca che di Lasciti,

Contemplazione
del nostro stato
sul letto di morte

Giue one thy Pride, to 'another giue thy Lust:
Giue them those sinnes which they gaue before,
And trust th'immaculate blood to wash thy score.
Thinke thy friends weeping round, and thinke that thay
Weepe but because they goe not yet thy way.
Thinke they confesse much in the world, amisse
Who dare not trust a dead mans eye with that,
Which they from God, and Angels couer not.
Thinke that they shourd thee vp, and thinke from thence
They reinuest thee in white innocence.
Thinke that thy body rots, and (if so lowe,
Thy soule exhalted so, thy thoughts can goe.)
Thinke thee a Prince, who of themselues create
Wormes which insensibly deuoure their state.
Thinke that they bury thee, and thinke that right
Laies thee to sleepe but a Saint Lucies night.
Thinke these things cheerfully: and if thou bee
Drowsie or slacke, remember then that shee,
She whose Complexion was so euen made,
That which of her Ingredients should inuade
The other three, no Feare, no Art could guesse:
So farre were all remou'd from more or lesse.
But as in Mithridate, or iust perfumes,
Where all good things being met, no one presumes

Dai a uno il tuo Orgoglio, a un altro dai la tua Lussuria:
Dai loro quei peccati che loro prima ti diedero,
E abbi fiducia nel sangue immacolato per lavar via il tuo debito.
Pensa ai tuoi amici che piangono intorno, e pensa che essi
Piangono solo perché non possono ancora andare sulla tua strada.
Pensa che essi chiudono i tuoi occhi, e pensa in questo,
Che essi confessano che molto è male nel mondo,
Che essi non osano affidare all'occhio di un uomo morto ciò,
Che essi non tengono nascosto a Dio e agli Angeli.
Pensa che essi ti avvolgono in un sudario, e pensa con ciò
Che essi ti rivestono di bianca innocenza.
Pensa che il tuo corpo marcisce, e (se così in basso,
Essendo la tua anima esaltata, possono andare i tuoi pensieri,)
Pensati un Principe, che da sé stesso crea
Vermi che insensibilmente divorano il loro stato.
Pensa che essi ti seppelliscono, e pensa che quel rito
Non ti depone a dormire che una notte di santa Lucia.
Pensa a queste cose gioiosamente: e se sarai
Assopito e fiacco, ricorda dunque che lei,
Lei la cui carnagione era così uniforme
Che quale degli Ingredienti dovesse invadere
Gli altri tre, nessuna Paura, nessun'Arte poterono indovinare:
Tanto erano estranei al più o meno.
Ma come nell'Antidoto, o nei profumi perfettamente miscelati,
Dove tutte le cose buone si corrispondono, nessuna presume

To governe, or to triumph on the rest,
Onely because all were, no part was best.
And as, though all doe know, that quantities
Are made of lines, and lines from Points arise,
None can these lines or quantities vnioynt,
And say this is a line, or this a point,
So though the Elements and Humors were
In her, one could not say, this gouerns there.
Whose euen constitution might haue worne
Any disease to venter on the Sunne,
Rather then her: and make a spirit feare
That he to disuniting subiect were.
To whose proportions if we would compare
Cubes, th'are vnstable, Circles, Angulare,
Shee who was such a Chaine, as Fate emploies
To bring mankind, all Fortunes it enioyes,
So fast, so euen wrought, as one would thinke,
No accident, could threaten any linke,
Shee, shee embrac'd a sicknesse, gaue it meat,
The purest Blood, and Breath, that ere it eat.
And hath taught vs that though a good man hath
Title to Heauen, and plead it by his Faith,
And though he may pretend a conquest, since
Heauen was content to suffer violence,
Yea though he plead a long possession too,

Di governare, o di trionfare sul resto,
Solo perché tutte erano in lei uguali, nessuna parte era migliore.
E come, ma tutti lo sanno, le quantità
Sono fatte di linee, e le linee dai Punti sorgono,
Nessuno può disgiungere queste linee o quantità,
E dire questa è una linea, o questo è un punto,
Così anche se Elementi ed umori erano
In lei, non si poteva dire, quale in lei governasse.
La cui uniforme costituzione avrebbe potuto prevalere
Su ogni malattia che si avventurasse sul Sole,
Piuttosto che su lei: e far temere a uno spirito
Di essere due soggetti disuniti.
Al confronto delle cui proporzioni
I cubi sono instabili; i Cerchi, Angolari;
Lei che era una Catena, come quelle impiegate dal Fato
Per portare all'umanità tutte le Fortune di cui gode,
Così salda, così uniformemente lavorata, che si potrebbe pensare,
Che nessun Accidente possa mai minacciarne un qualsiasi anello,
Lei, lei abbracciò una malattia, le diede nutrimento,
Il più puro Sangue, e Fiato, che avesse mai mangiato.
E ci ha insegnato che anche se un uomo buono ha
Titolo al Cielo, e lo reclama tramite la Fede,
E anche se può reclamare una conquista, dato che
Il Cielo era contento di subire violenza,
Sì anche se egli reclamasse un lungo possesso,

(For they're in heauen on earth, who heauens workes do,)

Though he had right, & power and place before,

Yet Death must vsher, and vnlocke the doore.

Thinke further on thy selfe, my soule, and thinke;

How thou at first was made but in a sinke;

Thinke that it argued some infermitee,

That those two soules, which then thou foundst in mee,

Thou fedst upon, and drewst into thee, both

My second soule of sence, and first of growth.

Thinke but how poore thou wast, how obnoxious;

Whom a small lumpe of flesh could poyson thus.

This curded milke, this poore vnlettered whelpe

My body, could, beyond escape, or helpe,

Infect thee with originall sinne, and thou

Couldst neither then refuse, nor leaue it now.

Thinke that no stubborne sullen Anchorit,

Which fixt to'a Pillar, or a Graue doth sit

Bedded and Bath'd in all his Ordures, dwels

So fowly as our soules, in their first-built Cels.

Thinke in how poore a prison thou didst lie

After, enabled but to sucke, and crie.

Thinke, when t'was growne to most, t'was a poore Inne,

A Prouince Pack'd vp in two yards of skinne.

And that vsurped, or threatned with the rage

Of sicknesses, or their true mother, Age.

Incommodities

of the soule

in the Body

(Poiché sono in Cielo sulla Terra, coloro che fanno le opere del Cielo,)

Anche se avesse già il diritto, il potere e il Luogo,
Comunque la Morte gli deve far strada e aprire la porta.

Pensa più a fondo su te stessa, mia anima, e pensa;

Come tu all'inizio non fosti fatta che in una fogna;

Pensa che questo denota una qualche infermità,

Che quelle due anime, che allora tu trovasti in me,

Le mangiasti, e traesti in te, entrambe

La mia seconda anima sensuale, e prima vegetativa.

Pensa a quanto povero eri, quanto fragile,

Che un piccolo pezzo di carne può avvelenarti così.

Questo latte cagliato³, questo povero, sporco cucciolo⁴

Il mio corpo poteva, senza scampo, o aiuto,

Infettarti col peccato originale, e tu

Non potevi né rifiutare allora, né lasciarlo adesso.

Pensa che nessun testardo, cupo Anacoreta,

Che siede fisso a un Pilastro, o a una Tomba

Coricato e Inondato in tutti i suoi escrementi, abita

Così bestialmente quanto le nostre anime, nelle loro originarie Celle.

Pensa in che povera prigionia tu giacesti

Dopo, in grado solo di succhiare e piangere.

Pensa che, quando era cresciuta al massimo, era una povera Locanda,

Una Provincia Impacchettata in due iarde di pelle,

Usurpata, o minacciata, dalla furia

Delle malattie, o della loro vera madre, l'Età

Affanni
dell'Anima
nel Corpo.

³ Giobbe 10: 9-10

⁴ *Death's Duel*

But thinke that Death hath now enfranchis'd thee,
Thou hast thy'expansion now and libertee;
Thinke that a rusty Peece, discharg'd, is flowen
In peeces, and the bullet is his owne,
And freely flies: This to thy soule allow,
Thinke thy sheell broke, thinke thy Soule hatch'd but now.
And think this slow-pac'd soule, which late did cleaue,
To a'body, and went but by the bodies leaue,
Twenty, perchance, or thirty mile a day,
Dispatches in a minute all the way,
Twixt Heauen, and Earth: shee staies not in the Ayre,
To looke what Meteors there themselues prepare;
Shee carries no desire to know, nor sense,
Whether th'Ayrs middle Region be intense,
For th'Element of fire, shee doth not know,
Whether shee past by such a place or no;
Shee baits not at the Moone, nor cares to trie,
Whether in that new world, men liue, and die.
Venus recards her not, to'enquire, now shee
Can, (being one Star) Hesper, and Vesper bee,
Hee that charm'd Argus eyes, sweet Mercury,
Workes not on her, who now is growen al Ey;
Who, if shee meete the body of the Sunne,
Goes through, not staying till his course be runne;
Who finds in Mars his Campe, no corps of Guard;
Nor is by Ioue, nor by his father bard;

Her liberty by
death.

Ma pensa che la Morte ti ha ora affrancato,
Ora hai espansione e libertà;
Pensa che una vecchia Arma, spara, e va
In pezzi, e la pallottola è padrona di sé,
E liberamente vola: Questo concedi alla tua anima,
Pensa che il tuo guscio si sia rotto, pensa che la tua Anima non si sia schiusa che ora.
E pensa a quest'anima dal passo lento, che prima aderiva,
A un corpo, e alla quale il corpo non consentiva di andare,
Che venti, forse, o trenta miglia al giorno,
Completa in un minuto tutta la via,
Tra Cielo, e Terra: non rimane nell'Aria,
A vedere quali meteore là si stanno formando;
Non ha nessun desiderio di sapere, né percepire,
Se l'Aria della Regione media è densa,
Poiché l'Elemento del fuoco non conosce,
Non abbocca alla Luna, ne le importa di scoprire,
Se in quel nuovo mondo, vivono e muoiono uomini.
Venere non la fa ritardare, per domandare, come essa
Possa, (essendo una Stella) essere Mattutina e Vespertina.
Colui che affascinò gli occhi di Argo, il dolce Mercurio,
Non agisce su di lei, che ora è divenuta tutto Occhio;
Colei che, se incontrasse il corpo del Sole,
Ci passerebbe attraverso, senza soffermarsi finché il suo corso non si sia esaurito;
Colei che nell'Accampamento di Marte, non trova nessun corpo di Guardia;
Né è fermata da Giove, né da suo padre;

La sua libertà
tramite la morte

But ere she can consider how she went,
At once is at, and through the Firmament.
And as these starres were but so many beades
Strunge on one string, speed vndistinguish'd leades
Her through those spheares, as through the beades, a string,
Whose quicke succession makes it still one thing:
As doth the Pith, which, least our Bodies slacke,
Strings fast the little bones of necke, and backe;
So by the soule doth death string Heauen and Earth.
For when our soule enjoyes this her third birth,
(Creation gaue her one, a second, grace,)
Heauen is as neare, and present to her face,
As colours are, and obiects, in a roome
Where darkenesse was before, when Tapers come.
This must, my soule, thy long-short Progresse bee;
To'aduance these thoughts, remember then, that shee
Shee, whose faire body no such prison was,
But that a soule might well be pleas'd to passe
An age in her; she whose rich beauty lent
Mintage to others beauties, for they went
But for so much, as they were like to her;
Shee, in whose body (if we dare prefer
This low world, to so high a marke, as shee,)
The Westerne treasure, Esterne spiceree,
Europe, and Afrique, and the vnknown rest

Ma prima di rendersi conto come vi è arrivata,
E' subito giunta e ha attraversato il Firmamento.
E come queste stelle non erano che tante perline
Infilate in un solo filo, una velocità indistinta la conduce
Attraverso quelle sfere, come un filo attraverso le perline,
La cui veloce successione rende una sola cosa:
Come la colonna vertebrale, che, il nostro Corpo che se no sarebbe molle,
Collegano saldamente le piccole ossa del collo e della schiena;
Così tramite l'anima la morte collega il cielo e la Terra,
Poiché quando la nostra anima godrà di questa sua terza nascita,
(La Creazione gliene diede una, una seconda, la grazia,)
Il Cielo è vicino, e presente al suo volto,
Come lo sono i colori, e gli oggetti, in una stanza
Dove prima era l'oscurità, quando giunge una Candela.
Questo deve essere, mia anima, il tuo lungo-breve Viaggio;
Per portare avanti questi pensieri, ricorda dunque, che lei
Lei, il cui bel corpo non era prigioniera alcuna,
Bensì un'anima sarebbe stata ben lieta di passare
Un'Età in lei; lei la cui ricca bellezza conferiva
Il conio alle bellezze di altri, poiché esse avevano valore
Solo nella misura in cui erano simili a lei;
Lei, nel cui corpo (se osiamo promuovere
Questo basso mondo, ad un così elevata traccia, come lei)
I tesori Occidentali, le spezie Orientali,
L'Europa, l'Africa, e lo sconosciuto resto

Were easily found, or what in them was best;
 And when w'haue made this large Discoueree.
 Of all in her some one part then will bee
 Twenty such patts, whose plenty and riches is
 Inough to make twenty such worlds as this,
 Shee, whom they had knowne who did first betroth
 The Tutelar Angel, and assigned one, both
 To Nations, Cities, and to Companies,
 To Fu[n]ctions, Offices, and Dignities,
 And to each seuerall man, to him, and him,
 They would haue giuen her one for euery limme;
 Shee, of whose soule, if we may say, t'was Gold,
 Her body was th'Electrum, and did hold
 Many degrees of that; (we vnderstood
 Her by the sight, her pure and eloquent blood
 Spoke in her cheekes, and so distinctly wrought,
 That one might almost say, her body thought,
 Shee, shee, thus richly, & largely hous'd, is gone:
 & chides vs slow-pac'd snailes who crawl vpon
 Our prisons prison, earth, nor thinke vs well
 Longer, then whil'st we beare our brittle shell.
 But t'were but little to haue chang'd our roome,
 If, as we were in this our liuing Toombe
 Oppress'd with ignorance, we still were so,
 Poore soule in this thy flesh what do'st thou know.
 Thou know'st thy selfe so little, as thou know'st not,

Her ignorance
 in this life and
 knowvledge in
 the next.

Potevano facilmente essere trovati, o ciò che in essi era il meglio;
E quando avremo fatto questa grande Scoperta,
Di tutto una parte in lei allora diventerà
Venti parti tali, la cui abbondanza e ricchezza è
Sufficiente a comporre venti mondi come questo;
Lei, che se avessero saputo chi per primo fidanzò
Gli Angeli Custodi, e ne assegnò uno
A Nazioni, Città, e a Compagnie,
A Funzionari, Ufficiali e Dignitari,
E ad ogni singolo uomo, a lui, e lui,
A lei ne avrebbero dato uno per ogni arto;
Lei, della cui anima, se possiamo dire che essa fosse d'Oro,
Il corpo era Eletto, e ne conteneva
Alte quantità; noi comprendevamo
Lei attraverso la vista, il suo puro ed eloquente sangue
Parlava nelle sue guance, e così distintamente,
Che uno avrebbe quasi potuto dire che il suo corpo pensava,
Lei, Lei, così riccamente e ampiamente alloggiata è sparita;
E rimprovera noi lumache dal passo lento, che strisciamo
Sulla prigione della nostra prigione, la terra, né di noi più pensa
Bene, fintanto che portiamo il nostro fragile guscio.
Ma sarebbe poca cosa aver cambiato la nostra stanza,
Se, come eravamo nella nostra Tomba vivente
Oppressi dall'ignoranza, lo fossimo ancora.
Povera anima, in questa tua carne che cosa conosci?
Conosci così poco te stessa, come non conosci,

La sua ignoranza
in questa vita e
conoscenza nella
prossima

How thou didst die, nor how thou wast begot.
Thou neither know'st, how thou at first came in,
Nor how thou took'st the poyson of mans sin.
Nor dost thou, (though thou knowst, that thou art so)
By what way thou art made immortall, know.
Thou art too narrow, wretch, to comprehend
Euen thy selfe: yea though thou wouldst but bend
To know thy body. Haue not all soules thought
For many ages, that our body'is wrought
Of Ayre, and Fire, and other Elements?
And now they thinke of new ingredients.
And one soule thinkes one, and another way
Another thinkes, and ty's an euen lay.
Know'st thou but how the stone doth enter in
The bladders Caue, and neuer brake the skin?
Knowst thou how blood, which to the heart doth flow,
Doth from one ventricle to th'other goe?
And for the putrid stuffe, which thou dost spit,
Knowst how thy lungs haue attracted it?
There are no passages so that there is
(For ought thou knowst) piercing of substances.
And of those many opinions which men raise
Of Nayles and Haires, dost thou know which to praise?
What hope haue we to know our selues, when we
Know not the least things, which for our vse be?
We see in Authors, too stiffe to recant.

Come sei morta, né come sei stata generata.
Non sai nemmeno come in principio tu sia entrata,
Né come hai preso il veleno del peccato dell'uomo.
Né tu, (anche se sai di essere tale)
Sai in che modo sei stato creato immortale.
Sei troppo limitato, miserabile, per comprendere
Persino te stesso: anche se tu ti abbassassi
A conoscere il tuo corpo. Non hanno forse tutte le anime pensato
Per molte epoche, che il nostro corpo sia composto
Di Aria, e Fuoco e altri Elementi?
E ora pensano ad altri ingredienti.
E un'anima ne pensa uno, e in un altro modo
La pensa un'altra, e finiscono alla pari.
Sai come il calcolo è entrato nella
Caverna della cistifellea, senza mai lacerare la pelle?
Sai come il sangue, che al cuore scorre,
Passi da un ventricolo all'altro?
E per quanto riguarda la putrida materia che sputi,
Sai come i tuoi polmoni l'hanno attratta?
Non ci sono passaggi così non c'è
(Per quel che ne sai) penetrazione di sostanze.
E delle molte opinioni che gli uomini sollevano
Di Unghie e Peli, sai quale elogiare?
Che speranza abbiamo di conoscere noi stessi, quando noi
Non conosciamo le minime cose che sono per il nostro uso?
Vediamo in Autori, troppo irrigiditi per abiurare,

A hundred controuersies of an Ant.
And yet one watches, starues, freeses, and sweats,
To know but Catechismes and Alphabets
Of vnconcerning things, matters of fact;
How others on our stage their parts did Act;
What *Cæsar* did, yea, and what *Cicero* said.
Why grasse is greene, or why our blood is red,
Are mysteries which none haue reach'd vnto.
In this low forme, poore soule what wilt thou doe?
When wilt thou shake off this Pedantry,
Of being thought by sense, and Fantasy
Thou look'st through spectacles; small things seeme great,
Below; But vp vnto the watch-towre get,
And see all things despoild of fallacies:
Thou shalt not peepe through lattices of eies,
Nor heare through Laberinth of eares, nor learne
By circuit, or collections to discern.
In heauen thou straight know'st all, concerning it,
And what concerns it not, shall straight forget.
There thou (but in no other schoole) maist bee
Perchance, as learned, and as full, as shee,
Shee who all Libraries had throughly red
At home, in her own thoughts, and practised
So much good as would make as many more:
Shee whose example they must all implore,

Le cento controversie di una Formica.
E tuttavia uno osserva, muore di fame, gela e suda,
Per non conoscere che Catechismi ed Alfabeti
Di cose irrilevanti, dati di fatto;
Come altri sul nostro palcoscenico hanno recitato i loro ruoli;
Cosa fece Cesare, sì, e cosa disse Cicerone.
Perché l'erba è verde, o perché il sangue è rosso,
Sono misteri che nessuno è riuscito a raggiungere.
In questa bassa forma, povera anima cosa farai?
Quando ti scrollerai di dosso questa Pedanteria,
Di essere istruito dai sensi, e dalla Fantasia?
Tu guardi attraverso occhiali; le cose piccole paiono grandi,
In basso; Ma sali sulla torre di guardia,
E vedrai tutte le cose private da errori:
Non sbircerai attraverso grate di occhi,
Né ascolterai attraverso Labirinti di orecchie, né imparerai
Discernendo itinerari o raccolte.
In Cielo conoscerai direttamente ciò che lo concerne,
E ciò che non lo concerne, direttamente dimenticherai.
Là tu (e in nessun'altra scuola) potrai essere
Forse, così istruita, e così colma, quanto lei,
Lei che aveva letto tutte le Librerie
A casa, nei suoi stessi pensieri, e praticato
Così tanto bene da crearne altrettante:
Lei il cui esempio devono implorare tutti

Who would or doe, or thinke well, and confesse
That aie the vertuous Actions they expresse,
Are but a new, and worse edition,
Of her some one thought, or one action:
Shee, who in th'Art of knowing Heauen, was growen
Here vpon Earth, to such perfection,
That shee hath, euer since to Heauen shee came,
(In a far fairer point,) but read the same:
Shee, shee, not satisfied withall this waite,
(For so much knowledge, as would ouer-fraite
Another, did but Ballast her) is gone,
As well t'enioy, as get perfectione.
And cals vs after her, in that shee tooke,
(Taking her selfe) our best, and worthiest booke.
Returne not, my soule, from this extasee,
And meditation of what thou shalt bee,
To earthly thoughts, till it to thee appeare,
With whom thy conuersation must be there.
With whom wilt thou Conuerse? what station
Canst thou choose out, free from infection,
That will not giue thee theirs, nor drinke in thine?
Shalt thou not finde a spungy slacke Diuine
Drinke and sucke in th'Instructions of Great men,
And for the word of God, vent them agen?
Are there not some Courts, (And then, no things bee
So like as Courts) which, in this let vs see,

Of our company
in this life
and in the next.

Coloro che direbbero, o penserebbero bene, e confessare
Che sempre le virtuose Azioni che essi esprimono,
Non sono che una nuova, peggiore edizione,
Di un qualche suo pensiero, o azione:
Lei che nell'Arte del conoscere il Cielo, aveva raggiunto
Qui sulla Terra, una tale perfezione,
Che lei è, sin da quando è giunta in Cielo,
(In una più bella stampa,) letta allo stesso modo:
Lei, lei, non soddisfatta di tutto questo peso,
(Poiché tanta conoscenza da sovraccaricare
Un altro, non era per lei che Zavorra) è sparita,
Sia per godere, che per ricevere perfezione.
E ci chiama a lei, in ciò lei prese,
(Prendendosi) il nostro migliore, e più degno libro.
Non ritornare, mia anima, da questa estasi,
E meditazione su cosa tu sarai,
A pensieri terreni, finché a te non apparirà,
Colui col quale dovrai conversare là.
Con chi Converserai? Quale stazione
Puoi scegliere, libera da infezione,
Che non ti darà la sua, ne berrà dalla tua?
Non troverai un tronfio e fiacco Sacerdote
A bere e succhiare le Istruzioni dei Grandi,
E per la parola di Dio, risputarle fuori?
Non ci sono Corti, (E, dopotutto, non ci sono cose
Così simili quanto le Corti) che, in questo ci fanno vedere,

Della nostra compagnia
in questa vita
e nella prossima.

That wits and tongues of Libellars are weake,
 Because they doe more ill, then these can speake?
 The poyson'is gone though all, poysons affect
 Chiefly the cheefest parts, but some effect
 In Nailes, and Haires, yea excrements, will show,
 So wise the poyson of sinne, in the most low.
 Vp vp, my drowsie soule, where thy new eare
 Shall in the Angels songs no discord heare;
 Where thou shalt see the blessed Mother-maid
 Ioy in not being that, which men haue said.
 Where shee is exalted more for being good,
 Then for her interest, of mother-hood.
 Vp to those Patriarckes, which did longer sit
 Expecting Christ, then they haue enioy'd him yet.
 Vp to those Prophets, which now gladly see
 Their Prophetes growen to be Historee.
 Vp to th'Apostles, who did brauely runne,
 All the Suns course, with more light then the Sunne.
 Vp to those Martyrs, who did calmely bleed
 Oyle to th'Apostles lamps, dew to their seed.
 Vp to those Virgins, who thoughts that almost
 They made ioyntnants with the Holy Ghost,
 If they to any should his Temple giue.
 Vp, vp, for in that squadron there doth liue
 Shee, who hath carried thether, new degrees
 (As to their number) to their dignities.

Che le lingue dei Diffamatori sono deboli,
 Perché esse fanno più male di quanto questi non possano parlare?
 Il veleno è penetrato in tutto, il veleno colpisce
 Principalmente le parti principali, ma qualche effetto
 In unghie, e peli, persino escrementi, si mostra;
 Così il veleno del peccato nei più bassi.
 Su, su, mia sonnolenta anima, a quel luogo dove il tuo nuovo orecchio
 Nelle canzoni degli Angeli non sentirà più discordia;
 Dove vedrai la benedetta Madre-vergine
 Gioire nel non essere ciò che gli uomini hanno detto.
 Dove essa è esaltata più per la sua bontà,
 Che per il suo interesse di maternità.
 Su a quei Patriarchi, che sono per più tempo rimasti
 Ad aspettare Cristo, di quanto ancora abbiano di lui goduto.
 Su a quei Profeti, che ora felicemente vedono
 Le loro Profezie divenute Storia.
 Su dagli Apostoli, che coraggiosamente hanno percorso
 Il tragitto del Sole, con più luce del Sole.
 Su a quei Martiri, che calmi sanguinarono
 Olio alle lampade degli Apostoli, rugiada al loro seme.
 Su a quelle Vergini, che pensavano che quasi
 Sarebbero diventate coinquiline dello Spirito Santo,
 Se esse ad alcuno avessero donato il suo Tempio.
 Su, Su, poiché in questo squadrone vive
 Lei, che là ha portato nuovi gradi
 (Per il loro numero) ai loro dignitari.
 Shee, who being to her selfe, a state enioyd
 All royalties which any state emploid,
 For shee made wars, and triumph'd, reason still
 Did not ouerthrow, but rectifie her will:
 And shee made peace, for no peace is like this,
 That beauty and chastity together kisse:
 Shee did high iustice; for shee crucified

Euery first motion of rebellious pride:
And shee gaue pardons, and was liberall,
For, onely her selfe except, shee pardond all:
Shee coynd, in this, that her impressions gaue
To all our actions all the worth they haue:
Shee gaue protections; the thoughts of her brest
Satans rude Officers could nere arrest.
As these prerogatiues being met in one,
Made her a Sovereign State, religion
Made her a Church; and these two made her all.
Shee who was all this All, and could not fall
To worse, by company; (for she was still
More Antidote, then all the world was ill,
Shee, shee doth leaue it, and by Death, suruiue
All this, in Heauen; whether who doth not striue
The more, because shee's there, he doth not know
That accidentall ioyes in Heauen doe grow.
But pause, My soule, and study ere thou fall
On accidentall ioyes, th'essentiall.
Still before Accessories doe abide
A triall, must the principall be tride.
And what essentiall ioy canst thou expect
Here vpon earth? what permanent effect

Of the essentiall
joy in this life
and in the next

Lei, che essendo in sé stessa uno stato, godeva
Di tutte le prerogative reali di cui uno stato gode,
Poiché lei faceva guerre, e trionfava; la ragione ancora
Non la sconfiggeva, ma rettificava la sua volontà:
E lei portò pace, poiché nessuna pace è come questa,
In cui bellezza e castità si baciano l'un l'altra:
Lei portò elevata giustizia; poiché ella crocifisse
Ogni moto iniziale di orgoglio ribelle:
E lei accordò il perdono, e fu generosa,
Poiché, con la sola eccezione di sé stessa, perdonava ogni cosa:
Coniò in questo, che le sue impressioni dessero
A tutte le nostre azioni tutto il valore che hanno:
Lei fornì protezioni; i pensieri del suo petto
I rudi Ufficiali di Satana non poterono mai arrestare.
Tutte queste prerogative soddisfatte in una,
La resero uno stato sovrano, la religione
La resero una Chiesa; e queste due la resero tutto.
Lei che era tutto in questo Tutto, e non poteva cadere
In peggio attraverso la compagnia; (poiché lei era ancora
Più antidoto di quanto tutto il mondo fosse malato,)
Lei, lei lo lascia, e nella morte, sopravvive
Tutto questo in Cielo; dove chi non si sforza
Di più, poiché lei è là, non sa
Che le gioie accidentali crescono in Cielo
Ma fermati, Mia anima, e studia, prima di cadere
Sulle gioie accidentali, le essenziali.
Ancora prima che i Complici debbano sottoporsi
A un processo, il colpevole deve essere processato.
E quali gioie essenziali puoi aspettarti
Qui sulla terra? Quale effetto permanente

Della gioia
essenziale in
questa vita e
nell'altra

Of transitory causes? Dost thou loue
Beauty? (And Beauty worthy'st is to moue)
Poore couse'ned cose'nor, that she, and that thou,
Which did begin to liue, are neither now.
You are both fluid, chang'd since yesterday;
Next day repaires, (but ill) last dayes decay.
Nor are, (Although the riuer keepe the name)
Yesterdayes waters, and to daies the same.
So flowes her face, & thine eies, neither now
That Saint, nor Pilgrime, which your louing row
Concernd, remaines, but whil'st you thinke you bee
Constant, you'are houely in inconstanee.
Honour may haue pretence vnto our loue,
Because that God did liue so long aboue
Without this Honour, and then lou'd it so,
That he at last made Creatures to bestow
Honour on him; not that he needed it,
But that, to his hands, man might grow more fit.
But since all honours from inferiours flow,
(For they doe giue it; Princes doe but show
Whom they would haue so honord) and that this
On such opinions, and capacities

Di cause transitorie? Ami tu
La Bellezza? (E la Bellezza più degna è quella che muove)
Povero ingannatore ingannato, che lei, e che tu,
Che hai cominciato a vivere, non siete né l'uno né l'altra.
Siete entrambi fluidi, cambiati rispetto a ieri;
Il giorno seguente ripara, (solo male) il decadimento del giorno passato.
Né sono, (sebbene il fiume ne conservi il nome)
Le acque di ieri e quelle di oggi le stesse.
Così fluisce la sua faccia, e i tuoi occhi, nessuno ora
Né il santo, né il Pellegrino, che il tuo amorevole voto
Riguardava, resta; ma mentre pensi di essere
Costante, sei ogni ora nell'incostanza.
L'onore può avanzare pretese sul nostro amore,
Poiché Dio a lungo è vissuto così a lungo lassù
Senza questo Onore, e poi così tanto lo amò,
Che egli infine plasmò Creature per conferirgli
Onore; non che egli ne avesse bisogno,
Ma cosicché, per sua mano, l'uomo potesse divenire più degno.
Ma siccome tutti gli onori sgorgano dagli inferiori,
(Poiché loro lo danno; I Principi non fanno che mostrare
Colui che loro tanto onorerebbero) e ciò che
Su opinioni, e capacità

Is built, as rise, and fall, to more and lesse,
Alas, tis but a casuall happinesse.
Hath euer any man to'himselfe assigned
This or that happiness, to'arrest his minde,
But that another man, which takes a worse,
Thinke him a foole for hauing tane that course?
They who did labour Babels tower to'erec,
Might haue considered, that for that effect,
All this whole solid Earth could not allow
Nor furnish forth Materials enow;
And that his Center, to raise such a place
Was farre too little, to haue beene the Base;
No more affords this worlds, foundatione
To erect true ioye, were all the meanes in one.
But as the Heathen made them seuerall gods,
Of all Gods Benefits, and all his Rods,
(For as the Wine, and Corne, and Onions are
Gods vnto them, so Agues bee, and warre)
And as by changing that whole precious Gold
To such small copper coynes, they lost the old,
And lost their onely God, who euer must
Be fought alone, and not in such a thrust,
So much mankind true happinesse mistakes;
No Ioye enioyes that man, that many makes.
Then, soule, to thy first pitch worke vpon againe;
Know that all lines which circles doe containe,

Si fonda, e sale, e cade, passa dal più al meno,
Ahimé, non è che una felicità accidentale.
Ha mai un uomo a sé stesso assegnato
Questa o quella felicità, per fermare la sua mente,
E un altro uomo, che ne ha scelta una peggiore,
Lo crede uno sciocco per aver preso quella via.
Quelli che hanno faticato per erigere la torre di Babele,
Potrebbero aver considerato che per quel fine
Tutta questa solida Terra non potrebbe consentire
Né fornire Materiali sufficienti;
E che questo Centro, per innalzare un tale luogo
Era di gran lunga troppo piccolo per esserne stato la Base;
Non più fornisce questo mondo fondamento
Per erigere la vera gioia, fossero tutti i mezzi in uno.
Ma come i Pagani si crearono diversi dei,
Da tutti i Benefici di Dio, e da tutte le sue Vergate,
(Poiché come il Vino, e il Grano, e le Cipolle sono
Dei per loro, così lo sono le Febbri, e la guerra)
E come cambiando quell'integro e prezioso Oro
In tali piccole monete di bronzo, hanno perso il vecchio
E perso il loro unico Dio, che sempre solo
Deve essere cercato, e non in una tale ressa,
Così molta umanità travisa la vera felicità;
Di nessuna Gioia gode l'uomo che fa molti errori.
Dunque, anima, risali nuovamente al tuo picco originario;
Sappi che tutte le linee che i cerchi contengono

For once that they the Center touch, doe touch
Twice the circumference; and be thou such.
Double on heauen, thy thoughts on earth emploid;
All will not serue; Onely who haue enioyd
The sight of God, in fulnesse, can thinke it;
For it is both the obiect, and the wit.
This is essentiall ioye, where neither hee
Can suffer Diminution, nor wee;
Tis such a full, and such a filling good;
Had th'Angels once look'd on him, they had stood.
To fill the place of one of them, or more,
Shee whom we celebrate, is gone before.
Shee, who had Here so much essentiall ioy.
As no chance could distract, much lesse destroy;
Who with Gods presence was acquainted so,
(Hearing, and speaking to him) as to know
His face, in any naturall Stone, or Tree,
Better then when in Images they bee:
Who kept by diligent deuotion,
Gods Image, in such reparation,
Within her heart, that what decay was growen,
Was her first Parents fault, and not her own:
Who being solicited to any Act,
Still heard God pleading his safe precontract;
Who by a faithfull confidence, was here
Betrothed to God, and now is married there,

Per una volta che toccano il centro, toccano
 Due volte la circonferenza; e sii così.
 Raddoppia sul Cielo, i pensieri che sulla Terra impieghi
 Tutto non servirà; Solo coloro che hanno goduto
 Della visione di Dio, in pienezza, possono pensarla;
 Poiché è al tempo stesso l'oggetto e l'ingegno.
 Questa è la gioia essenziale, dove né lui
 Né noi subiremo Diminuzione;
 E' un così colmo e così ricolmante bene;
 Che se gli angeli lo avessero una volta guardato, sarebbero rimasti in piedi.
 Per prendere il posto di uno di essi, o più,
 Lei che celebriamo, è prematuramente andata.
 Lei, che ebbe Qui così tanta gioia essenziale,
 Che nessun caso poteva distrarre, e men che meno distruggere;
 Lei che era in tale confidenza con la presenza di Dio,
 (Ascoltando e parlando con lui) da riconoscere
 La sua faccia in qualsiasi Pietra naturale, o Albero,
 Meglio di quando essi erano in Immagini:
 Lei che custodì, con diligente devozione,
 L'Immagine di Dio, in tale integrità
 Nel suo cuore, che quanta decadenza vi era cresciuta,
 Era colpa dei suoi primi Genitori, e non sua:
 Che sollecitata ad ogni Azione,
 Ancora sentiva Dio dichiarare il suo preesistente contratto;
 Che da una fedele confidenza, era qui
 Promessa a Dio, e ora là sposata,
 Whose twilights were more cleare, then our mid-day,
 Who dreamt deuoutlier, then most vse to pray;
 Who being here fild with grace, yet stroue to bee,
 Both where more grace, & more capacitee
 At once is giuen: she to Heauen is gone,
 Who made this world in some proportion
 A heauen, and here, became vnto vs all,

Ioye, (as our ioyes admit) essentiall.

But could this low world ioyes essentiall touch,
Heauens accidentall ioies would passe them much.

How poore and lame, must then our casuall bee?

If thy Prince will his subiects to call thee

My Lord, and this doe swell thee, thou art than,

By being a greater, growen to be lesse Man,

When no Physician of Reders can speake,

A ioyfull casuall violence may breake

A dangerous Apostem in thy brest;

And whilst thou ioyest in this, the dangerous rest,

The bag may rise vp, and so strangle thee.

What eye was casuall, may euer bee.

What should the Nature change? Or make the same

Cer[t]a[i]ne, which was but casuall, when it came?

All casuall ioye doth loud and plainly say,

Onely by comming, that it can away.

Onely in Heauen ioies strength is neuer spent;

And accidentall things are permanent.

Of accidental

ioyes in both

places.

I cui crepuscoli erano più chiari del nostro mezzogiorno,
Che sognava più devotamente di quanto molti preghino;
Che essendo qui colma di grazia, tuttavia si sforzò di essere,
Dove più grazia e più capacità
Al contempo sono concesse: è andata al Cielo,
Coei che rese questo mondo in qualche misura
Un cielo, e qui, lo divenne per tutti noi,
Gioia, (per quanto le nostre gioie lo consentano) essenziale.
Ma potessero le gioie di questo basso mondo toccare quelle essenziali,
Le gioie accidentali del Cielo le sorpasserebbero di molto.
Quanto povere e zoppe devono essere dunque le nostre gioie casuali?
Se il tuo Principe ordina ai suoi sudditi di chiamarti
Mio Signore, e ciò ti inorgoglisce, tu dunque
Essendo un Uomo più grande ne divieni uno minore.
Quando nessun Medico di Rimedio può parlare,
Una gioiosa, casuale violenza può rompere
Un pericoloso Ascesso nel tuo petto;
E mentre gioisci in questo, il pericoloso riposo,
La sacca può salire, e dunque strangolarti.
Ciò che dunque era casuale, può essere per sempre.
Cosa dovrebbe cambiare la Natura? O allo stesso modo rendere
Certo, ciò che non era che casuale, quando giunse?
Ogni gioia casuale dice forte e chiaramente,
Solo arrivando, che può andarsene.
Solo in Cielo la forza della gioia mai si estingue;
E le cose accidentali sono permanenti.

Delle gioie
accidentali
in entrambi
i luoghi.

Ioy of a soules arriuall neere decaies;
For that soule euer ioyes & euer staies.
Ioy that their last great Consummation
Approches in the resurrection;
When earthly bodies more celestiall
Shalbe, then Angels were, for they could fall;
This kind of ioy doth euery day admit
Degrees of growth, but none of loosing it.
In this fresh ioy, tis no small part, that shee,
Shee, in whose goodnesse, he that names degree,
Doth iniure her; (Tis losse to be cald best,
There where the stuffe is not such as the rest)
Shee, who left such a body, as euen shee
Onely in Heauen could learne, how it can bee
Made better; for shee rather was two soules,
Or like to full, on both sides written Rols,
Where eies might read vpon the outward skin,
As strong Records for God, as mindes within,
Shee, who by making a full perfection grow,
Peeces a Circle, and still keepes it so,
Long'd for, and longing for'it, to heauen is gon,
Where shee receiues, and giues addition.
Here in a place, where mis-deuotion frames
A thousand praiers to Saints, whose very names
The ancient Church knew not, Heauen knowes not yet,

Conclusion.

La gioia dell'arrivo di un'anima mai decade;
Poiché quell'anima sempre gioisce, e sempre rimane.
La gioia che il loro ultimo, grande Compimento
Si avvicina nella risurrezione;
Quando i corpi terreni più celesti
Saranno degli Angeli, poiché essi potevano cadere;
Questo tipo di gioia ogni giorno ammette
Gradi di crescita, ma nessuno di perdita.
In questa fresca gioia, non è piccola parte, che lei,
Lei, nella cui bontà, colui che nomina i gradi,
La insulta; (E' una svalutazione essere chiamato migliore,
Quando la qualità non è la stessa del resto)
Lei, che lasciò un corpo tale che persino lei
Solo in Cielo poté imparare, come esso possa essere
Migliorato; poiché lei era piuttosto due anime,
O come pieni Rotoli scritti su entrambe le facciate,
Dove gli occhi possono leggere sulla pelle all'esterno,
Testimonianze per Dio forti quanto le menti all'interno.
Lei che facendo crescere la piena perfezione,
Aggiunge al Cerchio, pur mantenendolo tale,
Desiderata da esso ed esso desiderante, lei è andata in Cielo,
Dove riceve e porta aggiunta.
Qui in un luogo dove la devozione sviata plasma
Mille preghiere a santi, i cui nomi
La Chiesa antica non conosceva, il Cielo non conosce ancora,

Conclusione

And where, what lawes of Poetry admit,
Lawes of Religion, haue at least the same,
Immortall Maid, I might in[u]oke thy name.
Could any Saint prouoke that appetit,
Thou here shouldst make mee a french conuertite.
But thou wouldst not; nor wouldst thou be content,
To take this, for my second yeeres true Rent,
Did this Coine beare any other stampe, then his,
That gaue thee power to doe me, to say this.
Since his will is, that to posteritee,
Thou shouldest for life, & death, a patterne bee,
And that the world should notice haue of this,
The purpose, and th'Authority is his;
Thou art the Proclamation, and I ame
The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came.

FINIS.

E dove ciò che le leggi della poesia ammettono,
Le leggi della religione hanno quasi allo stesso modo,
Fanciulla immortale, io potrei invocare il tuo nome.
Potesse qualsiasi Santo provocare questo appetito,
Mi dovresti qui rendere un convertito francese.
Ma non lo faresti; né saresti soddisfatta,
Di accettare questo come mio secondo vero Canone,
Se questa Moneta recasse qualsiasi effigie diversa dalla sua,
Che diede a te il potere di fare, a me di dire, questo.
Poiché è suo volere che per la posterità
Tu sia un modello per la vita e la morte,
E che al mondo sia annunciato questo,
Il fine, e l'Autorità sono suoi;
Tu sei il Proclama; e io sono
La Tromba, alla cui voce il popolo venne.

FINIS

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