

REVISITING JOHN DONNE'S METAPHORICAL LANGUAGE IN "MEDITATION 17": A HERMENEUTIC READING

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Abstract: John Donne (1572-1631) was the leading poet of the metaphysical school of poetry in the 17th century. His mastery of using extended metaphors, also termed "metaphysical conceits," manifests itself not only in his secular and religious poems, but also in his sermons. This paper intends to revisit centuries-long influence of Donne's rich metaphorical language through a close reading of "Meditation 17." The claim of the paper is that the unique stylistic and content based features of Donne's multi-layered metaphors moving from the individual to the communal and conveying the universal themes of life and death and the shared human experience surpass temporal and cultural boundaries. Thus, the ultimate aim of this paper is to draw attention to the enduring quality of the metaphors Donne employs in "Meditation 17" as the aesthetics of the compelling interaction between the individual and the communal appeals to the literary taste of even contemporary readership. The theoretical frame of this paper draws largely on Schleiermacher's theory of modern hermeneutics.

Keywords: John Donne, extended metaphor, "Meditation 17", modern hermeneutics, life and death, unity of humankind

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Introduction

In *A Selection from the Prose of John Donne*, Rivers Scott (1997) presents Donne's *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, or *The Devotions* (1624) as they are often called "one of most peculiar hybrids in English or any other literature, an amalgam of religion, medical reportage and current affairs, given coherence by the power and strangeness of one man's temperament" (p. xvii). Donne's sermon titled "Meditation 17," which is taken from *The Devotions*, mainly focuses on the themes of mortality and unity of human beings and their relations to God and theological matters. In the sermon, Donne's use of extended metaphors often categorised as "metaphysical conceits," allows him to create a unique imagery – the layers of which span a comparison of human existence to a book written by God, the author, individuals to inseparable parts of a continent, rather than isolated islands, and human suffering to buried treasure – addresses such common timeless human concerns that still appeal to contemporary readers. Based on Friedrich Schleiermacher's (2010) theory of modern hermeneutics, this paper revisits the metaphorical language Donne employed in "Meditation 17." Schleiermacher's (2010) hermeneutic theory emphasizes the dual process of textual analysis: understanding a work through its grammatical structure and uncovering the author's psychological intent. By applying this approach, the study attempts to lay bare how Donne's metaphors establish a dialogue between the individual and the collective, emphasising the idea that personal suffering and mortality are directly connected to the broader human experience. The central focus of this study, Donne's "Meditation 17," continues to appeal to modern-day readers due to its stylistic and content-based features capturing universal aspects of even present human existence. Through a close reading of Donne's extended metaphors, this paper presents Donne's timeless insights into the unchanging cycle of human life.

Modern Hermeneutics and Friedrich Schleiermacher

German philosopher, classical philologist, and Protestant theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is regarded as the founder of modern general hermeneutics which the thinker himself called "the art of understanding and interpreting discourse through systematic procedures" (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 520). Schleiermacher's intention was to move hermeneutics further away from the interpretation of biblical or classical text by developing a systematic procedure that is applicable to all texts. His primary aim was to avoid misunderstandings while interpreting a text of any kind. According to the 1959 edition of Schleiermacher's lecture notes titled "Outline of the 1819 Lectures," the first step of textual understanding requires that the interpreter must fully understand the reciprocal relation between the author's thoughts and language that shape and modify each other. It is only after this process of simultaneous comprehension that the interpreter can fulfil the two major tasks

of interpretation properly. Schleiermacher explains the two major requirements of textual interpretation as: “to comprehend the language and historical culture of a text (grammatical interpretation) and to reconstruct the author’s purpose (psychological or technical interpretation)” (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 521). Schleiermacher divides texts into two categories as “objective texts” and “subjective texts.” While objective texts such as histories and epics, require a minimum of psychological interpretation and a maximum of grammatical interpretation, subjective texts like personal letters and lyrics need more psychological than grammatical interpretation (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 522).

Then, the philosopher defines four types of positive hermeneutical reconstruction as the only way to know the author’s purpose; among them, specifically the two types that are relevant to this study: subjective historical reconstruction, which “explores the text as the product of the author’s soul, and subjective divinatory reconstruction that attempts to determine how the process of writing affects the writer’s inner thoughts” (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 522). For Schleiermacher, interpretation is “an art of understanding, and the act of a living intuiting person [interpreter] gifted with foreknowledge [divination] and experience of life as well as linguistic and cultural competence” (Schleiermacher, 2010, p. 522). However, modern hermeneutists like Gadamer and Ricoeur not just expand on Schleiermacher’s theory but also find flaws in it. For instance, Gadamer criticises Schleiermacher for disregarding the historical context and the prejudices of the interpreter (Gjesdal, 2009, p. 148). On the other hand, to Ricoeur (2016), “to interpret is to follow the path of thought opened up by the text, to place oneself *en route* towards the orient of the text” (p. 123). Ricoeur’s theory of interpretation acknowledges the interrelationship between the assumptions made from the interpretation and that which is already known by the interpreter. This thinker asserts that the true object of interpretation is understanding the ideas constituting the content of the work under scrutiny; therefore, less emphasis must be put on its author. Nevertheless, the methodology of textual analysis used in this work is based on a synthesis of Schleiermacher’s (2010) theory on grammatical and psychological interpretation.

John Donne in the Context of Early 17th-Century English Literature

Here lies a king, that ruled as he thought fit

The universal monarchy of wit;

Here lie two flamens, and both those the best:

Apollo’s first, at last the true God’s priest (Carew, 1993, p. 1698).

The 17th-century Cavalier poet Thomas Carew’s elegiac poem titled “An Elegy upon the Death of Paul’s, Dr. John Donne” pays tribute to John Donne’s unmatched place in English poetry. Carew’s ending epitaph, which is given

as an epigraph to this part of the paper, puts particular emphasis on Donne's extraordinary poetic skills by equating him with Apollo, the Greek god of poetry, and implying that Donne is granted a divine gift. The "two flamens" (priests of the Roman religion) in line 3 is a reference to Donne's two vocations, i.e. to his being a poet and a priest. Thus, Carew not only praises the perfection of Donne's wit but also presents him as a true devotee to both of his vocations. Carew claims in the last line of the epitaph that John Donne was the best and true servant of both Apollo and God. According to the first part of Carew's long elegy, poetry was orphaned with the death of Donne, while the English language went bankrupt and lost its tune:

Have we no voice, no tune? Didst thou dispense

Through all our language both the words and sense?

Tis a sad truth. ... (Carew, 1993, p. 1696).

The subsequent lines of the second part of the elegy convey the poet's grief stemming from the loss of such a genius whom Carew associates with mythological figures like Prometheus and Orpheus, as well as with famous Greek lyric poets like Anacreon and Pindar. Carew claims that the Promethean breath allowed Donne to reinvigorate the "Delphic choir," that is the choir of poets inspired by Apollo. This part not only includes the striking metaphysical conceit through which Carew draws an analogy between poetry and Donne's original artistry, but also directs a severe critique to the unskilled poets of the period. At the beginning of the second part, Donne is depicted as the chief landscape artist responsible for maintaining the harmony and tune of the well-trimmed garden of poetry. Hence, Donne cleansed all the "pedantic weeds" that invaded and destroyed the harmony of the "Muses' garden"; the "pedantic weeds" were bad poets whose works were mere imitations of earlier poetry:

The Muses' garden, with pedantic weeds

O'erspread, was purged by thee; the lazy seeds

Of servile imitation thrown away,

And fresh invention planted; thou didst pay

The debts of our penurious bankrupt age – (Carew, 1993, p. 1697).

To Carew, Donne's innovative creativity muted the voice of bad poets and fertilised imaginative powers of the talented ones who were producing in the 17th century. The rest of Carew's lines suggest that Donne's literary craftsmanship was strongly connected to his erudition as well as to the power of his metaphorical language making his audience easily comprehend the most abstract ideas and/or the most complex experiences.

Thomas Carew's poetry is deemed to be combining the classical touch of Ben Jonson, the poetic master of the Cavalier poets, and the influence of John Donne, the leading metaphysical poet. We have selected several lines from Carew's long elegy to open this discussion for it includes intertwined metaphysical conceits worthy of commemorating John Donne's unique mastery of creating extended metaphors – also called “metaphysical conceits” – in his prose work, “Meditation 17.” Concerning the significance and literary merit of these two grand names of the early 17th-century English literature, J.B. Leishman (1965) states that “Both Jonson and Donne were superiors, and both seem to have been well aware of their superiority, but Donne, though far more urbane, was a much more superior person than Jonson, and except superficially, much less imitable” (p. 13). Obviously, for Leishman, Donne's poetic capabilities, his original voice and the inventions of his rich imagination far exceed those of Jonson.

Prior to the analysis of Donne's characteristic use of metaphysical conceits in “Meditation 17,” a brief refresher on definition of the term “metaphysical conceit” might be useful. “Conceit” is defined as “a concept or image [...] which establishes a striking parallel between two very dissimilar things or situations” (Abrams, 1993, p. 32). M. H. Abrams attributes the term “metaphysical conceit” to John Donne and to other metaphysical poets of the 17th century. It is Samuel Johnson who “established the term [metaphysical] in his *Lives of the Poets* (1779-81) more or less permanently as a label” (Cuddon, 1999, p. 508). Abrams (1993) quotes Samuel Johnson's definition, which describes metaphysical conceit, somewhat disapprovingly, as “wit which is a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike [...]. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together” (p. 33) in a conceit. In a broad sense, Johnson's definition of the metaphysical conceit might be interpreted as the harmony of disharmony, which brings together two seemingly incompatible experiences, ideas, or objects to make up a novel and striking image. According to John T. Guthrie (1980), Aristotle's definition of metaphor, which is based on “resemblance between dissimilar things” [falls short] “because it cannot distinguish between literal similarity, metaphorical relation, and nonsense ...” (p. 640). However, it is observed that Samuel Johnson's definition of metaphysical conceit, also called “extended metaphor,” perfectly fits the characteristics of the conceits Donne employs in “Meditation 17.” As Steve Oswald and Alain Rihs (2014) suggest, the ultimate function of “extended metaphors may fulfil the requirements of epistemic vigilance and lead to the stabilisation of a belief” (p. 133). Like many rhetorical figures, Oswald and Rihs (2014) add, “[metaphors] are believed to be particularly effective, sometimes more than literal formulations, when it comes to convincing an audience” (p.134).

“Meditation 17”

The upheavals of the 17th century resonate in John Donne’s turbulent tough life. According to Rivers Scott (1997), “he was a true Renaissance man, paradoxical, thrusting, litigious as was his age” (p. xiii). The following testimonial by one of Donne’s contemporaries portrays the fervent temperament of young Donne is as follows:

[He was] a great visitor of ladies, a great frequenter of plays, a great writer of conceited verses. He had been a soldier, taking part in two military expeditions – one to Cadiz, [the other] to Azores – during which two incidents – a storm and a calm – became the subject of his two poems. He took part in more than one diplomatic mission, probably did a bit of spying, and was twice an MP; all this before James I [...] ordered him into the Anglican church (Scott, 1997, p. xiii).

At the age of 51 and approximately eight years after his ordination into the Anglican priesthood, Donne fell terminally ill. As Patricia Garland Pinka states, Donne’s sickness was diagnosed with “either typhus or relapsing fever and during his sickness, he reflected on the parallels between his physical and spiritual illness” (Pinka, 2025). His reflections culminated in the *Devotions* produced in 1624. The work consists of 23 sections recounting the stages of his disease and recovery; each stage comprises a meditation, a complaint, and a prayer to God. For Joan Faust, (2017) these stages construct a kind of a scaffold for a physical and spiritual autobiography (p. 157). Regarding the links of *The Devotions* to the earlier works, while some claimed that the work echoes the “Spiritual Exercises” of St. Ignatius Loyola; some discover parallels with earlier attempts at spiritual autobiography. What makes the sermon an “astonishingly innovative” one is that it is the forerunner of autobiography based on both secular and religious grounds. As a final remark Scott (1997) states that *The Devotions* appears to be “a piece of both personal and religious self-searching that still ranks as unique” (p. xviii). In the work, Donne discusses religious problems of the soul and then literally talks to God.

In the article titled “Meditation and the Structure of Donne’s ‘Holy Sonnets,’” Martz claims that, “the structure of the *Devotions*, which is based on Ignatian meditations, owes much to “the profound impact of early Jesuit training upon the later career of John Donne” (Martz, as cited in Archer, 1961, p. 139). St. Ignatius, who lived in Spain in the 16th century, was the founder of the Jesuit order of priests. Ignatian meditation is a meditation method that uses visualisation and the imagination and is based on the style of prayer that St. Ignatius used in his spiritual exercises (*Brisbane Catholic Education*, 2020). Hence, it would not be wrong to relate Donne’s Catholic upbringing with his adoption of the Ignatian meditation method in his verse as well as in his prose works. Still from another point of view, Joan Faust’s (2017) approach to the genre of *The*

Devotions appears to be different from that of Louis L. Martz, (1961) though Faust asks the same questions regarding the genre of the work: “*The Devotions* itself is an in-between genre. Critics have long attempted to classify it – is it a spiritual autobiography? An example of the *ars moriendi*? A formal meditation? And if so, in the Ignatian or Protestant vein?” (p. 163). Quoting Kate Frost, Faust comes to the conclusion that the work is produced entirely in the Protestant vein:

...the book [*The Devotions*] seems to fit comfortably or uncomfortably, no easily recognised category of contemporary devotional literature ... Donne’s title page indicates the focus is “*upon our Humane Condition*” but he will relate “severall steps in my Sicknes” and signs his name, identifying himself as “Deane of S. Pauls” (Faust, 2017, p. 163).

In terms of style, the *Devotions* is eloquent and richly metaphorical. Concerning Donne’s authorial skills in prose, Evelyn M. Simpson (1962) notes that Donne, who was essentially a poet, invested his poetic genius in prose after his appointment as the Dean of St. Paul’s, “where he labored in his vocation of preaching, and, in this way he produced his finest prose” (p. 137). Thus, Donne’s originality and musicality began to sparkle in prose because as Simpson observes,

[h]e had the poet’s feelings for color and sound of words, and the instinct for the right word in the right place. He was able to please, or surprise, or shock in prose as he had done in verse. Donne’s prose conveys us the unmistakable flavor of the man’s personality ... (Simpson, 1962, p. 137).

According to Una Nelly (1969), Donne’s preferred themes in his prose are related to “the stark realities of life and death; the insufficiency, the transitoriness, the imperfection of man’s nature and of all temporal things; the certainty of death and the mockery its gruesome details offer to our pretensions” (p. 104). Donne’s sermons have a distinctive, dialectical and convincing power:

The dialectic of Donne’s prose works, and in particular of the sermons, has still the unmistakable Donnean characteristics of syllogistic reasoning, strengthened by analogy, and accompanied by detailed and original analysis. [...] On his lips it comes to life, impregnated by his dynamism, fired with the intensity of his emotion, made comprehensible and compelling by the personal experience from the heart of which Donne always writes and speaks (p. 99).

As C. V. Wedgwood (1969) suggests, the style of the 17th century Anglican sermons delivered in the Puritan period aligns with the nature of Donne’s meditations:

The Anglican sermon had changed in character during the stormy years of Puritan persecution. Mannered and elaborately intellectual preaching was replaced by a clear, forthright, dignified yet colloquial style. The aim was to persuade and to enlighten, not to alarm, impress, and mystify (p. 128).

John Donne's "Meditation 17" is among his most enduring and memorable prose works, displaying the author's unique skills in the production of his metaphysical conceits. "Meditation 17" starts with the following Latin statement which would later inspire the 20th-century American author Ernest Hemingway in that he titled his novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940).

Nunc lento sonitu dicunt, morieris.

Now this bell tolling softly for another, says to me,

Thou must die (Donne, 1993, p. 1123).

Both Donne's "Meditation 17" and Hemingway's novel deal with the agonised human soul suffering in an environment where death looms over everything. Donne penned "Meditation 17" when a plague epidemic was devastating Jacobean London. Likewise, approximately three hundred years later, Hemingway recounts the story of the anguished state of human beings who are trying to survive in the death-ridden Spain during the Second Spanish Civil War. In Christopher Hancock's words: "Written in 1623, ... [Donne's] meditation is an evocative *memento mori* (recollection of death) prompted by Donne's illness at the time. The tolling bell would have been all-too familiar in plague ridden Jacobean London" (Hancock, 2020). Hancock argues that Donne's work warned Londoners about the significance of being selfless and sensitive towards "the cry of corporate, co-suffering humanity (Hancock, 2020). At this point Hancock draws attention to the two authors' different approaches to the theme of death:

Donne writes as a Christian, Hemingway more as a Buddhist humanist. Donne uses (another's) death to prompt reflection on (my) death: Hemingway celebrates heroic deaths to inspire heroic lives. To Hemingway, 'any man's death' does not necessarily 'diminish me': rather, it can challenge and inspire me. To Donne, life's interconnectedness is a God-inspired gift: to Hemingway, our duty to corporate humanity is born of politics, ideology and romantic love (Hancock, 2020).

The central themes of "Meditation 17" are death and the interconnectivity and the wholeness of human beings. The author elaborates on these themes by employing numerous comparisons, and, upon expanding his comparisons into long sentences and paragraphs, he builds his metaphysical conceits. For instance, the church is the first conceit found at the beginning of the work. Donne hears the tolling of a passing bell and reflects that it is intended for him as well: "Now, this bell tolling softly for another says to me, Thou must die" (Donne, 1997, p. 74). The passing bell announcing somebody else's death reminds Donne of the fact that he himself shall also die. The church bell is a reminder about the mortality of human beings and the inevitability of death. Katherine Hunt (2021) sees the bells as

the most prominent object in the Devotions, ringing through the whole text and occupying a privileged space as the focus of three central stations¹, which describe the peak and the break of Donne's fever, and the death of his neighbor (p. 217).

The subsequent lines expand the function of the church conceit by indicating the church's all-encompassing power to unite human beings in birth and death, granting a common roof for all believers, including Donne himself. That is why the author says he is concerned with every birth and every death because they are all parts of the same whole called "humanity."

Donne's next conceit likens God to an author and His creation – humankind – to a book, a volume written by this author. Then he gives a list of possible occurrences leading to death. His list includes old age, sickness, war, and justice. Death is also likened to translation. To Donne, when people die, they do not simply disappear but are carried into a better place. Each human being represents one chapter in the volume which is written by God, and when a person dies, the relevant chapter is not torn out of the book but translated into a better language; and, every chapter must be so translated (Donne, 1997, p. 75). These lines not only suggest the inevitability of death but also declare that God's hand is in every death the way it is in every birth. This extended metaphor including comparisons as author/God, author/book chapters, book pages/human life, translator/God and translation/death, ends up in a final "library" image, which is a reference to the Judgement day: "[God's] hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another" (Donne, 1997, p. 75). Donne's metaphor of life as a book written by God might be interpreted from the perspective of Schleiermacher's (2010) theory of hermeneutics. The grammatical structure suggests a deterministic worldview, wherein individuals are chapters within a divine narrative. Psychologically, Donne's message is one of reassurance – death is not an ending but a translation into a better existence. This reflects Schleiermacher's emphasis on understanding an author's personal and historical circumstances, as Donne's confrontation with illness likely influenced his view of mortality.

Then comes the famous "No man is an island" statement describing the reason why the author feels deep sadness on hearing the passing bell regardless of the identity of the deceased person. Donne writes,

No man is an island entire of himself; everyman is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is less, as well as if a promontory were, [...] Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls: It tolls for thee (Donne, 1997, p. 75).

1. "*The Devotions* is prefaced by twenty-two lines of Latin words, called "Stationes," summarising the twenty-three stages of the disease" (Scott, 1997, p. xviii).

Here, Donne draws a parallel between a grand piece of land like a continent and an isolated island surrounded by the sea, stretching like a lump of earth distant from the mainland. In the case of Donne's extended metaphor, Europe presents the unity and wholeness of humanity: humanity is the tenor, Europe is the vehicle depicting the interconnectedness and the unity of humankind. The island image, on the other hand, implies that the human being is not an isolated entity but a social being who is incapable of existing unless s/he is the part of a larger whole. In Donne's view, humanity as a whole is the mainland, and the sea whose waves are wearing away its shores gradually and perpetually presents death diminishing the size of the mainland – i.e., humanity – incessantly. Since Donne concerns himself with humankind, he feels lessened when he hears the passing bell because it reminds him of human mortality and the inevitability of death. Robert W. Reeder (2016) regards "Meditation 17" as "the philosophical climax of *The Devotions*, containing the immortal lines about mortality and mutuality" (p. 97). With reference to Schleiermacher's hermeneutic theory, Donne's extended metaphors in "Meditation 17" might be examined by applying dual-textual interpretation. For instance, the famous statement, "No man is an island," exemplifies a grammatical structure that conveys both literal and figurative meaning. On a psychological level, Donne's aim is to fortify the idea that human beings are interconnected, depending on one another in times of joy and suffering. By employing hermeneutic analysis, we can see that Donne's multi-layered metaphors embody the aesthetics of his poetics as well as a deliberate theological invitation for communal unity and the existence of divine presence in human experiences.

The last part of "Meditation 17" recounts how Donne achieved spiritual elevation while he was suffering from the serious illness. Donne's extended metaphor draws a paradoxical analogy between agony and material wealth. By "material wealth," Donne refers in particular to gold:

If a man carry treasure in bullion, or in a wedge of gold, and have none coined into current monies, his treasure will not defray him as he travels. Tribulation is treasure in the nature of it, but it is not current money in the use of it except we get nearer and nearer our home, Heaven, by it. Another man may be sick too, and sick to death, and this affliction may lie in his bowels as gold in a mine and be of no use to him. But this bell, that tells me of his affliction, digs out, and applies that gold to me if, by this consideration of another's danger, I take mine own in contemplation, and so secure myself by making my recourse to my God, who is our only security (Donne, 1997, pp. 75-76).

For Robert Jungman (2007), the gold image functions as a vehicle in the layers of this metaphysical conceit:

The death or translation signaled by the tolling of the bell here becomes gold buried in a mine, of no value to anyone unless dug out and applied to someone else who knows how to make proper use of it (p.18).

In a similar vein, it might be claimed that for Donne, affliction resembles a treasure; like gold in the deep recesses of a mine, affliction hidden inside the body contributes to the improvement of man's soul. Affliction is precious because it matures the sufferer. Man learns much through suffering. The author says, "No man hath affliction enough that is not matured and ripened by it, and made fit for God by that affliction" (Donne, 1997, p. 75). Affliction makes the sufferer more pious, virtuous, dignified, and undoubtedly, less ambitious. However, material possessions do not have such power. Thus, the one who is afflicted understands the transience of material gains, and takes shelter in God's grace with a strengthened faith. Here, the tenor is spiritual healing and the operating vehicle is affliction which underlines the significance of having an unshakeable faith to attain spiritual well-being. In the context of hermeneutic interpretation Donne's depiction of affliction as buried treasure suggests that sickness, like gold hidden beneath the earth, holds spiritual value that must be unearthed through faith. In parallel with the hermeneutic notion, understanding a text requires knowledge of both its linguistic structure and the philosophical motivations behind it.

John Donne's concluding remarks in "Meditation 17" emphasise the importance of learning from others' experiences because those experiences, the author claims, bring the believer closer to God. It might be inferred that the serious disease Donne had experienced made him strengthen his belief in spirituality once again. Clearly, Donne finds physical recovery invariably insufficient and incomplete unless it is complemented by faith-based spirituality.

Conclusion

"Meditation 17" emerges as a unique and compelling text in which Donne's extended metaphors function not merely as rhetorical embellishments but also as interpretive portals into the theological and existential concerns that define human experience. Reflecting upon Donne's metaphors in the light of Schleiermacher's (2010) dual hermeneutic process of grammatical and psychological interpretation, his metaphors reveal a continuous movement from the individual to the social, from the temporal to the eternal. The eloquent use of a brilliant, surprising and refined metaphorical language in "Meditation 17" enables Donne to bring together the personal and the communal in a dynamic interrelation; hence, while the author establishes an emphatic bond with his 17th-century English audience, nurturing their existential awareness through both his verse and prose works, it will undoubtedly be also correct to say that

the aesthetics of Donne's metaphorical language still continues to appeal to modern-day readers.

Whether likening humanity to chapters in God's book, continents, or unmined gold awaiting spiritual purification, Donne insists on the interdependence of all human beings and the universal significance of suffering. Since what is more needed in the 21st century is peace on a global scale, Donne's use of the metaphor, "no man is an island," might be interpreted as a warning against discriminations based on race and ethnicity, prompting his idea of the unity of humankind regardless of social, cultural and religious boundaries.

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In memoriam

“My dearest Kuğu, we may no longer be side by side physically, and this may be the last article we wrote together, but you will always remain with me and my studies with the support, inspiration and wisdom you gave me all through your life. As Donne emphasized, your book of life has not come to an end, it has just been translated into another language; you have been taken to a better place. May you be surrounded by light and peace there.” – Rana (2025)