

JOHN DONNE REVISITED: ISLANDS IN A TIME OF GLOBALIZATION

ჯონ დონის ხელახალი გააზრება: კუნძულები გლობალიზაციის პერიოდში

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Abstract

While William Shakespeare (1564-1616) and John Donne (1572-1631) were contemporaries in Elizabethan England, today's students—and teachers—are much more familiar with the former than the latter. Indeed, while we can enumerate the tragedies, comedies, and histories of Shakespeare, and perhaps recite bits of his sonnets, about the only words of Donne that come to mind are what has become a cliché—"No man is an island" (Beer, 1997). But the man and his work deserve more attention in schools and universities, including those where English is not a native language. As there are lessons to be learned from virtually all works of literature, there are lessons to be learned from that simple statement meant to emphasize the interconnectedness of all humanity. One such lesson is made increasingly poignant in a world in which global trade has become a feature of every nation's economy and in which international relations offer attractive opportunities and pose existential threats. This study aims to mine the works of John Donne to gain a clear understanding both of what he intends and what may be drawn from this supposed "cliché." The study tests Donne's assertion and finds that, while some nations and some individuals believe they can be isolated, they find in the end that there is nowhere to hide in a world characterized by interdependency at every level.

Keywords: Globalization, Isolationism, John Donne, No man is an island, Xenophobia

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გორის სახელმწიფო სასწავლო უნივერსიტეტის პროფესორი,
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აბსტრაქტი

მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ უილიამ შექსპირი (1564-1616) და ჯონ დონი (1572-1631) თანამედროვეები იყვნენ ელიზაბეთის ინგლისში, დღევანდელი სტუდენტები და მასწავლებლები ბევრად უფრო იცნობენ პირველს, ვიდრე მეორეს. მართლაც, ჩვენ შეგვიძლია ჩამოვთვალოთ შექსპირის ტრაგედიები, კომედიები და ისტორიები და, შესაძლოა, მისი სონეტების ფრაგმენტები გავიგოთ, თუმცა ჯონ დონის ერთადერთი სიტყვები, რომელიც გვახსენდება, არის ის, რაც გახდა კლიშე - „არავინ არის კუნძული“ (ბიერი, 1997). მაგრამ ადამიანი და მისი წამოშვარი უფრო მეტ ყურადღებას იმსახურებს სკოლებსა და უნივერსიტეტებში, მათ შორის, სადაც ინგლისური მშობლიური ენა არ

არის. იმის გამო, რომ პრაქტიკულად ყველა ლიტერატურული ნაწარმოებიდან უნდა ვისწავლოთ გაკვეთილები, არის გაკვეთილები, რომლებიც უნდა ვისწავლოთ ამ მარტივი განცხადებიდან, რომელიც ხაზს უსვამს მთელი კაცობრიობის ურთიერთდაკავშირებას. ერთ-ერთი ასეთი გაკვეთილი სულ უფრო მწვავე ხდება მსოფლიოში, სადაც გლობალური ვაჭრობა ყველა ერის ეკონომიკის მახასიათებელი გახდა და სადაც საერთაშორისო ურთიერთობები მიმზიდველ შესაძლებლობებს გვთავაზობს და ეგზისტენციალურ საფრთხეებს წარმოადგენს. ეს კვლევა მიზნად ისახავს ჯონ დონის ნამუშევრების გააზრებას, რათა მივიღოთ მკაფიოკასუხი იმის შესახებ, თუ რას აპირებს ის და რა შეიძლება გამოვიდეს ამ სავარაუდო „კლიშედან“. ნაშრომი ამოწმებს დონის მტკიცებას და აღმოაჩენს, რომ მიუხედავად იმისა, რომ ზოგიერთ ერს და ზოგიერთ ინდივიდს სჯერა, რომ მათ შეუძლიათ იზოლირება, ისინი საბოლოოდ აღმოაჩენენ, რომ დასამალი არსად არსებობს სამყაროში, იმ სამყაროში რომელსაც ურთიერთდამოკიდებულება ყველა დონეზე ახასიათებს.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: გლობალიზაცია, იზოლაციონიზმი, ჯონ დონე, არავინ არის კუნძული, ქსენოფობია.

Introduction:

William Shakespeare (1564-1616) and John Donne (1572-1631) were contemporaries in Elizabethan England (Long, 2013). While today's school pupils and university students typically know something of Shakespeare's tragedies, comedies, histories, and sonnets, they tend to know little or nothing of Donne's passionate poetry. If there is anything we know about Donne, it is likely a phrase or two, and probably the metaphorical *No man is an island* or, of Death's bell, *it tolls for thee*, both of which come from his *Meditation XVII*. Structured as a 14-line sonnet by Baldwin (2020), it reads,

No man is an island
Entire of itself;
Each is a piece of the continent,
Apart of the main;
If a clod be washed away by the sea,
Europe is the less,
As well as if a promontory were,
As well as any manner of thine own
Or of thine friend's were
Each man's death diminishes me,
For I am involved in mankind.
Therefore, send no to know
For whom the bell tolls,
It tolls for thee.

The Research Question

Central to the current study is a question that seeks to determine the utility, or even the validity, of Donne's assertion that "No man is an island." The question, if properly formed and persuasively answered, should be one that not only deals with the current issue but can be generalized to other studies of literary argument. As the study developed, the research question became more focused and came to ask, *What is the evidence to support or refute the assertion that no man is an island?*

Methods

This is a study in the area of the humanities. It is particular in its focus on a small bit of poetry, John Donne's Meditation XVII (Coffin, 2001:440-441). The method must consider both the traditional method, principally a review of the relevant literature, and a more modern method, one of "close reading," in which the analysis employs critical thinking of the kind elaborated by Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, and Krathwohl (1956). In that taxonomy, cognitive thinking includes a base of remembering, understanding, and applying material. The higher three levels—analyzing, evaluating, and creating—comprise the kind of critical thinking to which this study aspires. In order to address the research question, the study would need to collect, analyze, and evaluate such evidence as may be available and then create a credible explanation of the findings.

The Traditional Method

The traditional method of research in English philology involves an extensive review of published articles and books. It provides a broad view of the topic, as well as perspectives from scholars with varying methods and conclusions. While this study makes use of many of these materials involving the life and works of John Donne, the method leaves much to be explored, including the words and phrases relating to the interconnectedness of peoples in the modern world of globalized economic, political, and cultural systems.

Close Reading

Because of the limitations of the traditional method of the review of literature, we chose to use a second method, the more modern method of close reading. Burke (2020) defines close reading as "thoughtful, critical analysis of a text that focuses on significant details or patterns in order to develop a deep, precise understanding of the text's form, craft, meanings, etc." It is this latter understanding that is the aim of this current research.

Close reading is not just a forensic examination of the words and phrases of a text. There is a growing consensus, especially among those who teach the skills of foreign language acquisition—reading, listening, speaking, and writing—that there is a discipline, a set of guidelines, to be followed in the process of close reading (Continental, 2016).

Results:

The Life and Times of John Donne

John Donne was the son of a wealthy London family, one of six children. His father, also named John Donne, had been a prosperous ironmonger, a shopkeeper who sold articles for the house and garden such as tools, nails, and pans; he died in 1576, when the young John, or "Jack," was just four years of age. (Jokinen, 2006:1). It was left to his mother, Elizabeth, to raise the children by herself. Elizabeth was well connected. She was the daughter of John Heywood, a famous writer of plays, poems, and proverbs; he was a servant in the courts of the Catholic and Protestant regimes of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I (Shephard, 2010:1).

Donne studied for three years at Hart Hall (now Hertford College), Oxford University, and three years at Cambridge University, but as a Roman Catholic, he was not permitted to be awarded a degree from either institution. He is described as "a great visitor of ladies" (Stubbs, 2007:26).

In 1593, Donne's brother Henry died of a fever while imprisoned for giving sanctuary to a Roman Catholic priest (Jokinen, p.1). Donne fretted about his own health and the prospect of his death. Butzner (2017) notes his "fragility of health," and "Facing his own mortality in the experience of a 'spotted fever,' composed his *Devotions upon emergent occasions* in 1623" (p. 331).

John Donne and His Religions

Born into a family of Roman Catholics, Donne was disadvantaged from birth until his conversion before the age of forty to the Church of England, the church of Henry VIII and his fiercely Protestant daughter, Elizabeth. The death of his brother Henry is thought to have caused Donne to question his faith and led to a series of satirical commentaries on religion (Jokinen, 2006, p. 1).

John Donne's youth was spent, or misspent, in frivolous activity, and his early poetry reflects his libertinism, as in this first line of *The Bait*: "Come live with me, and be my love, /And we will some new pleasures prove" (Coffin, 2001:36). That tendency toward the erotic may even be found in his elegies: "Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defie/Until I labour, I in labour lie...off with that girdle..." (Elegie XIX, Coffin, p. 85). This early predilection toward eroticism seems an unlikely portent of a later life of piety. Like Saul of *The Acts of the Apostles, 9:3* (who would become St. Paul) or Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone (who would become St. Francis of Assisi) or Shakespeare's Prince Hal (who would become England's national hero Henry V), the young Jack Donne was something of a roué, spending his inheritance on pleasures of the flesh. But like Paul, Francis, and Henry, Donne would encounter his own epiphany and become the age's greatest metaphysical poet and dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, London (Jokinen, 2006).

That Donne is considered to have "pioneered what would become known as metaphysical poetry" (Tearle, 2021:1) is something of an anomaly. Or perhaps it may be considered a mark in his transition from a life of sensuality to one of religious contemplation. This transition may be seen most vividly in the movement of his writing from the erotic poetry of his youth (e.g., Elegy XX) to the anti-Roman Catholic rhetoric of his post-epiphany conversion to the Church of England and to a new life of piety.

At this point in the study, the question of metaphysical poetry loomed large. What is it, and why is it relevant to the validity of Donne's assertion that "No man is an island"? Any standard dictionary will provide a definition of the term metaphysical. Oliver Tearle (2021) offers these insights:

Common features of metaphysical poetry include elaborate similes and metaphors, extended poetic conceits and paradoxes, colloquial speech, and an interest in exploring the interplay between the physical and spiritual world (and between the big and the small). Donne is often said to be first metaphysical poet, and Donne's genius for original, intellectually complex poetry certainly helped to set the trend for the poetry that followed him.

The term was first fashioned by Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) perhaps best known by some from his adage, "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel" (Gardner, 1957). Following Donne in the list of metaphysical poets, we might find George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, and John Cleveland. Johnson saw in Donne and the others certain approaches and techniques, as described here:

The Metaphysical Poets are known for their ability to startle the reader and coax new perspective through paradoxical images, subtle argument, inventive syntax, and imagery from art, philosophy, and religion using an extended metaphor known as a conceit. Donne reached beyond the rational and hierarchical structures of the seventeenth century with his exacting and ingenious conceits, advancing the exploratory spirit of his time (Poets.org, 2021)

While the metaphysical poets commonly embrace innovation, they pick their own focal points. For his part, Donne seems to have been obsessed with death and the idea of a new and better life after death. In September 1608, a time of "poverty, illness, and dependency that followed his imprudent elopement," he wrote in a letter to Sir Henry Goodyer that one "of the most precious things which God hath afforded us here" is an "inhiation [craving] after the next life" (Roberts, 1947:958). Roberts finds in this "the confession, only thinly veiled beneath the commonplace euphemism of 'the next life, of a positive wish to die.'" Further, Roberts concludes,

“Certainly there is abundant evidence in the poems, letters, sermons, and other works, that the desire for death was a permanent element in his psychic life” (p. 959).

Guibbory (2017) notes that Donne’s “early libertine amatory poems have religious significance and an important place in Donne’s lifelong concern with religion” (p. 561). Donne’s sermons transition from those early and earthy poems to the sacred (Christianity Today, 2121) and, at the same time, reveal much of the cleric’s angst regarding his health and mortality. For example, one of his most enduring sermons, *Death’s Duel*, is referred to as, “Being His last Sermon, and called by His Majesty’s household, the Doctor’s Own Funeral Sermon” (Donne, 1630:1).

Donne scholars find that his work “includes passionate and explicit love poems and intense religious meditations” (Dickson, 2017). One may sense in Donne’s metaphysical poetry a commonality between the former and the latter. This may be attributed to the duality of the man. Dickson explores Donne’s “many identities, from Catholic child to Protestant adult, from womanizer to devoted husband, and from trainee lawyer, secretary and Member of Parliament to Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral.” Being born into a strongly Roman Catholic family and finding that religion to be a weight around his neck, and given his ambition to rise in social, political, and economic circumstances, he chose the path that led to the Church of England.

McCullough (2006) concludes that at the end of his life, “Donne was popularly famous not as a poet but as a preacher” (p. 167). In 1640, 1649, and 1661, Donne published the 156 sermons that still form the basis of his sermon canon. One can hardly imagine, when one looks at the life of young Jack Donne, that the life of the rowdy pleasure seeker would take such a turn. Shakespeare’s Prince Hal would be known not so much for his barhopping with Sir John Falstaff as for his victory at Agincourt, and Jack Donne would be known as a pious preacher and Dean of St Paul’s Cathedral.

Donne’s Assertion that No man is an island

In 1625, Sir Francis Bacon wrote in his essay, *Of Goodness and Goodness of Nature* (Essays), “If a man be gracious and courteous to strangers, it shows he is a citizen of the world, and that his heart is no island cut off from other lands, but a continent that joins to them” (Bacon, 2007:35). But Donne wrote “No man is an island” a year earlier. Did Bacon plagiarize Donne? Despite the publication dates, did Donne plagiarize Bacon? Did one respond to the other? Or did each create his own metaphor separately? Whatever may be the right answer, it is clear that the metaphor evokes a feeling in the early 17th century, at the onset of the Industrial Revolution, that the closeness of cottage and the village was being challenged by a rush of urbanization and of anonymity. Technology was driving people to live closer but to live more apart. As to the origin of the thought, both Bacon and Donne must have been keenly aware of Paul’s letter to the Romans (14:7): “None of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself” (Revised Standard Version).

The metaphor of man as an island is an appealing one. English satirist William Makepeace Thackeray wrote in the mid-nineteenth century, “You and I are but a pair of infinite isolations with some fellow islands a little more or less near to us.” Later in the same century, Matthew Arnold saw each person as inevitably an island, a solitude surrounded by the “unplumbed, salt, estranging sea” (Beer, 1997:37). Then, of course, there is Hemingway’s *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in 1940, picking up the final line of Donne’s poem.

As to global interconnectedness, Tony Ward (2004) wrote, “The nineteenth century English Corn Laws remain the quintessential example of a trade barrier and of the ability of a powerful interest group to subvert government policy” (p. 244). The prolific essayist Thomas Babington Macaulay, 1st Baron Macaulay, spoke out passionately in Parliament against the Corn Laws: “I have always considered the principle of protection to agriculture as a vicious principle” (Macaulay, 1853:180-181). Macaulay’s cause lost narrowly, and his position in his party was also lost, as he spoke against the party in support of the abolition of the Corn Laws. It was left to Robert Peel to

end the notorious Corn Laws, but it ended his political career, as well (Anderson & Tollison, 1985:201 & 208).

In our own time, following the Brexit referendum June 23, 2016, which resulted in Britain's divorce from the European Union, T. H. Ha (2016) wrote, "...some hear the death bells tolling for the continent of Europe...comparing people to countries, and arguing for the interconnectedness of all people with God," (p. 1). Ha might have gone on to mention Graham Allison's piece published the prior year in *The Atlantic*, which notes that rising nations threaten current nations economically and politically, if not culturally, to the extent that in twelve of sixteen cases studied, Allison finds, the two nations go to war. "The defining question about global order for this generation is whether China and the United States can escape Thucydides's Trap" (Allison, 2015:1).

Donne makes an unqualified assertion. Even acknowledging his fondness for the metaphysical poet's conceits, its extended metaphors, he leaves no doubt about what he believes fervently, with certainty. But the question before us is, does that assertion have merit?

Porter Crow (1973) takes issue with Donne, contending that, "No matter what John Donne says, "Every man IS an island" (p. 77). More will be said about Crow's criticism later in this paper.

Before testing the validity of Donne's assertion, one needs to know exactly what Donne is saying and, in the context of his religions and his poesy, what he means (Baldwin, 2020). Moreover, what are we to make of the volta, the abrupt turn in line 11 from the impersonal "No man" to the first person singular, "For I am involved in mankind." No longer is the narrator a distant observer but one who has a personal stake in the matter.

Keeping in mind the metaphorical structure of the assertion, a close reading of the first two words reveals the metaphysical nature of the work and the man who makes the declaration: "No man" can rarely be taken literally. It is objectively true that "No man" can live to nine hundred years, notwithstanding Hebrew mythology that grants the antediluvian Methuselah an age of 969 years.

But "No man" is or is not something can only be interpreted as a figure of speech. John Dryden said of John Donne and Donne's metaphysical poetry,

He affects the metaphysics, not only in his satires, but in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts, and entertain them with the softnesses of love. (Hales, 1901:1)

On first reading, one may not recognize either the satire or the metaphysical nature of Donne's poems. As to the satire, Dubrow (1979) compares Donne to other, more obvious, satirists, especially to those who follow in the traditions of Horace (65-27 BCE), who wrote, *Pulvis et umbra sumus*. [We are but dust and shadow] (Ferry, 1998) and of Juvenal (55-127 CE), who wrote, *Quis custodiet ipsos custodiet?* [Who will watch the watchers?] and *Panem et circenses da eis, et nunquam deficiet*. [Give them bread and circuses and they will never revolt]. If Donne is somewhere between Juvenal and Horace, he is perhaps closer to the former than to the latter. Both Juvenal and Donne were concerned with corruption, Juvenal with corruption in government and Donne with corruption in the church.

Cutrofello (2017) offers a guide on how to recognize metaphysical poetry when we see it, or, as T. S. Eliot sees it, "Eliot characterized metaphysical poetry as poetry that expressed the experiential force of thought." Eliot goes on to say, "Donne was able to write metaphysical poetry because he experienced his thoughts as objects" (p. 77). After generations of other poets expressing their thoughts, Cutrofello concludes, "Metaphysical poetry lived on because the spirit of Donne still walked abroad."

More than 150 years after John Donne's death in 1631, philosopher and stalwart of the Scottish Enlightenment, Adam Smith wrote what might be considered an echo of the theme that no man is an island,

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him though he derives nothing from it, except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner (Smith, 2011/1759, p. 3).

The urge to trade punctuates Donne’s argument from an economic perspective. Debraj Ray (2015), author of one of the leading textbooks on development economics, provides the fundamental theory at the base of global interdependency, a “concept that is simple and subtle at the same time,” the notion of *comparative advantage* (p. 627). Comparative advantage, a concept that David Ricardo formulated to complement the *absolute advantage* posited by Adam Smith, the ability of one economy to produce a particular good or service at a lower opportunity cost than its trading partners. Entities in one location trade with those in other locations because they can consume more goods and services than they can by isolating themselves from others. Even when one nation is more efficient at producing everything than another country, the first country can benefit by concentrating on those activities that it can do with least *opportunity cost* of producing other goods and services.

Besides the economic argument, Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, provided an added perspective as to why Donne wrote more about illness and death than about the joys he must have experienced domestically and professionally:

Our sympathy with sorrow, though not more real, has been more taken notice of than our sympathy with joy. The word sympathy, in its most proper and primitive signification, denotes our fellow-feeling with the sufferings, not that with the enjoyments, of others (Smith, 2011/1759, p. 41).

Although we cannot find in the writings of Adam Smith any specific reference to John Donne’s *Meditation XVII*, it is clear that the two great thinkers share the idea of human interconnectedness. Even in Smith’s more familiar work, *An Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, we find articulated the theory of the advantage of specialization and of trade among nations:

The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is any where directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour (Smith, 2003/1776, p. 9).

Smith takes this principle to the global stage when he argues against “Restraining, either by high duties or by absolute prohibitions the importation” of goods from other nations (p. 568). No man is an island, Smith might say, and neither is any nation “an island entire of itself,” although there have been attempts by isolationists to be just that. No such position has been successful. Daron Acemoğlu and James Robinson (2003) have provided ample evidence of the failures based on isolationism and flawed government policies. They conclude, somewhat pessimistically, “There is no recipe for building such institutions” as will “kick-start or perhaps just facilitate the process of empowerment and thus the development of inclusive political institutions” that will work to the advantage of all nations (p. 460).

What of the argument that people and nations working together—globalization—has inherent drawbacks, the case of anti-globalizers like The Ruckus Society and French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bhagwati, 2007:3). And what of those who simply take issue with the message or the semantics of Donne’s assertion, like Porter Crow, who plumbs the island metaphor for another metaphor?

NO MATTER JOHN DONNE by Porter Crow (1973)

Every man is an island.

No matter what John Donne says.

Every man IS an island:

Some islands are insecure and often lost in a smothering sea.
 Others are rockbound with reef and ragged ridge; hidden beneath the
 shallow waves, beneath the shattering shoal: coral and weed.
 Violent disturbances, passionate storms have left what marks:
 malice, hate, fear?
 Rain like tears has fallen, wind in whispers has spoken, at times and
 places that are deep, deep within the crust of sand and foam.
 Moonlight, starlight, sun . . . have made of some a simple, serene
 and quiet place . . . after all . . .
 Yet, every man is an island.
 Who knows how to take a ship to shore?

Crow appears to disagree with Donne, but the disagreement is more in style than in substance. There is no credible attack on Donne's central premise of human interconnectedness. The perils of Crow's metaphor qua metaphor come to all of us. We may be insecure, lost, victims of violence, malice, hate, and fear. Think of the victims of random violence, as a child is struck by a stray bullet in a dangerous neighborhood, or the innocent victims of a terrorist attack any place in the world. In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Adam Smith puts this in perspective. When you hurt, I hurt. We are not stones on the footpath. We are sentient beings, and we are connected, one with another. Of course, when we choose to use a metaphor as a stand-in for some reality, we hold ourselves open to criticisms of many sorts (Kövecses, 2008; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Ortony, 1993).

In his sermon on Whitsunday of 1623, Donne said, "In the great Anthill of the whole world, I am an Ant...In the great field of clay, of red earth, that man was made of, and mankind, I am a clod; I am a man, I have my part in the Humanity" (Alford, 1839: 55). Oxford Renaissance Scholar John Stubbs, in the Afterword of his important biography, wrote, "For Donne, every individual is linked to every other on the planet. We are made of the same stuff..." (Stubbs, 2007:475).

And we are linked to Donne. "Rooted in a providential view of history, Donne's works reverberate with the significance of 'emergent occasions'" (Gray & Shami, 1989:337). In this time, when some five million people in the world have died in the Coronavirus pandemic, it is likely that nearly every living person is connected in some way to one or more of the victims.

In the end, what kind of man is this, this libertine who like a phoenix rises from the ashes of rude debauchery to a level of sainthood, who could preach such sermons as would bring tears to the eyes of grown men, who will be remembered for 400 years and beyond if for no other reason but for one simple assertion, that no man is an island? Kenner (1967) remembers the man as "Shakespeare would have known him, and he must have been rather like Hamlet: morose, magnetic, a University man hankering after order in a disjointed time" (p. 3). In that simple assertion, we find the culmination of a life lived for others, a life dedicated to preaching the interconnectedness of all mankind.

Discussion:

The evidence suggests that Donne was on to something when he made his assertion. The truth of the metaphor is in our daily lives, whether at the personal level described by Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* or at the international level of Bhagwati's *In Defense of Globalization*. Those critics, like Crow, who take issue with the metaphor fall short in attacking the reality. We are, all of us connected. This human interconnectedness is all the more apparent, all the more relevant, in a small country like Georgia, where one can hardly walk a half-kilometer without meeting and greeting a family member, a friend, or a student or teacher.

To the extent that there are disagreements with the assertion that "No man is an island," such disagreements tend to reflect a difference of viewpoint or of style. Donne is, in addition to

his other attributes, a frequent contributor to the world of metaphor, a world that lends itself naturally to criticism. Critics appear to give little credit to the idea of metaphor as a simplified model of the underlying reality. One who employs metaphor, or just about any other figure of speech, is vulnerable to the same criticism. No, Donne does not infer that a man can be an island made of rock and sand. Rather, he means that a man cannot remain apart from others. In the increasingly globalized 21st century, Donne is relevant.

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Appendix

*Meditation XVII from
Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions
by John Donne*

Nunc lento sonitu dicunt, morieris.

(Now this bell tolling softly for another, says to me, Thou must die.)

Perchance he for whom this bell¹ tolls may be so ill as that he knows not it tolls for him; and perchance I may think myself so much better than I am, as that they who are about me and see my state may have caused it to toll for me, and I know not that. The church is catholic,² universal, so are all her actions; all that she does belongs to all. When she baptizes a child, that action concerns me; for that child is thereby connected to that head which is my head too, and ingrafted into the body whereof I am a member. And when she buries a man, that action concerns me: all mankind is of one author and is one volume; when one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice; but God's hand is in every translation, and his hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another.

As therefore the bell that rings a sermon calls not upon the preacher only, but upon the congregation to come, so this bell calls us all; but how much more me, who am brought so near the door by this sickness. There was a contention as far as a suit (in which piety and dignity, religion and estimation, were mingled) which of the religious orders should ring to prayers first in the morning; and it was determined that they should ring first that rose earliest. If we understand aright the dignity of this bell that tolls for our evening prayer, we would be glad to make it ours by rising early, in that application, that it might be ours as well as his whose indeed it is. The bell doth toll for him that thinks it doth; and though it intermit³ again, yet from that minute that that occasion wrought upon him, he is united to God. Who casts not up his eye to the sun when it rises? but who takes off his eye from a comet when that breaks out? Who bends not his ear to any bell which upon any occasion rings? but who can remove it from that bell which is passing a piece of himself out of this world? No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own 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.

¹the bell Donne refers to is the death knell.

²embracing all people and things; this is *not* a reference to the Roman Catholic church.

³cease for a period of time.

<https://www.northernhighlands.org/cms/lib5/NJ01000179/Centricity/Domain/106/honorsbritishliterature/Meditation%20XVII.pdf>