

British Imperialism in Virginia: John Donne's Humanistic and Prophetic Roles

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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at BRAC University.
2. The thesis does not contain any materials previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain materials which have been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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APPROVAL

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Abstract

This dissertation takes an in-depth look at the work of the famous metaphysical poet John Donne to explore the extent of his physical as well as spiritual engagement with the imperialistic ambitions of the British crown. The study of this paper offers an analysis of a selection of Donne's literary works. As John Donne had some direct involvement with England's imperial ambitions through his association with the Virginia Company, this paper studies Donne's criticism of colonialism despite being a part of that very system. By exposing how evangelization was used as a tool of British imperial aggression, John Donne comes across to the reader as a humanist with prophetic qualities. He argues that the expansion of the Virginia Company should be carried out with the noble, superior and moralistic notions of true spiritual imperialism through spreading the gospel values.

Keywords: Imperialism, Colonisation, Virginia Company, Humanistic and Prophetic.

Chapter I

Introduction

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always, to the end of the age”.

(Mathew 28:18-20, Cf. Mark 16:19-20; John 21: 15-19).

America was one of the worthiest colonies of Britain. Britain began its process of colonising America through establishing a colony in Jamestown, Virginia. Slowly as the colonies of Britain began to spread throughout various parts of America, America slowly went under the colonisation of British Empire. During the middle of the 17th and the whole of 18th century America was, by and large, dominated by Britain, and it was during the 17th century, from the year 1622, when Britain began to use her coercive practices to establish its imperial project upon the then America. Before 1622 many Englishmen sympathised with the then Americans who were dominated by the Spanish colonisers. However, as time progressed Britain realized that without the use of violence it cannot establish its empire in America, and the invaders killed almost 20 million local tribal people of the then America in the year 1622. Tom Cain’s article “John Donne and the Ideology of Colonization.” shows that John Donne was deeply religious in his heart as a human being, and rather than embracing a negative attitude towards the local Americans he stated, “20 millions of poor reasonable creatures, created (as ourselves) after the image of the living God” (Tom Cain 458). This line vividly illustrates the fact that John Donne did not hold a similar view towards the local Americans as his contemporaries held, and this fact is very crucial when one contemplates some of his

metaphysical poems. John Donne acknowledged that like the British, the Native Americans also were human beings made “by the image of the living God”¹. The British Imperial project whose aim was to slowly colonise the then America for its commercial and political purpose was evident to John Donne as he was part of the colonial centre. However, it is due to this very fact that despite being aware of the evils of British Imperialism and having a negative view towards it, John Donne could not directly express his discontents. In many of his sermons, for example in the fourth sermon, as quoted in Tom Cain’s article “John Donne and the Ideology of Colonization” Donne states, “A man is thy Neighbor, by his Humanity, not by his Divinity; by his Nature, not by his Religion: A Virginian is thy Neighbor, as well as a Londoner...” (Tom Cain 464). The quoted lines show the Christian spirit of Donne as he preached that Britain should not advocate violence; rather they should love the people of America and share the humanitarian spirit. However, as history dictates such was not the case and America was totally colonised by Britain as time progressed. What makes John Donne as a poet important in the post-colonial studies is that he, unlike most people of Europe, was well aware of the dissolute nature of British Imperialism driven by the covetous yearning for money and wealth and commercial prosperity. Edward Said in his book *Culture and Imperialism* writes “...European would not or could not see that he or she was an imperialist and, ironically, how it was that the non-European in the same circumstances saw the European only as imperial.” (Said 196). John Donne cannot be categorised within this definition of Said as Donne could see, and through his metaphysical poems he reacted as well, against British Imperialism. For Donne Christian theological cardinal virtues (faith, hope and charity) are meant to practice love, justice, patience and forgiveness, not dominance and subordination through education and hegemony. Donne witnessed, being part of the then British Empire, how it manipulated its ideology to achieve its commercial aim and material

¹The issue of the living God will also be discussed at the conclusion of this thesis. The living God for Donne represents the fact that the teachings of Christianity is still alive within him, and hence it is not part of an institution which is used to promote colonial ideologies

prosperity. As a result, this study aims to trace the criticism presented in John Donne's poems of British Imperialism and her coercive practices upon the local tribal people of the then America. In order to bring forth a post-colonial perspective and understand the intention John Donne's poems, some of his prose works such as his *Sermons* and *Meditations* have also been used, apart from his poems, to contemplate on how he reacted to the political climate of the then Britain which in turn would help to provide a mature understanding of his poems and the hidden intentions existing underneath the complex metaphysical statements. In one of his *Meditations* John Donne writes, "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...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee." (*Meditations XVII*). Here Donne is saying no man or no nation is complete by itself - every individual and nation is part of the whole world. Only by mutual consent, love and harmony, in correspondence with the whole, individual nations and men may achieve the grace of God and live a life of harmony because the bell of God tolls for all. In the article "Donne's 'Devotion' and the Psychology of Assent" written by N. J. C. Andreasen, "God is both immanent and transcendent, but because He is immanent in His creation, men can understand "the invisible things of him" by beginning with the concrete realities of earthly life, "the things that are made." Or, as Donne himself says in Expostulation XIX, God is "a figurative, a metaphorical God" in both His works and His word. And thus continually in religious tradition we observe a movement from concrete realities to their spiritual significance..." (Andreasen 213). As can be noticed it is the spiritual significance which made Donne develop a genuine conscience of humanity through which he was bound to respond to the evils undertaken by the then Britain upon the Native American, for it was solely out of this spiritual presence within Donne's aesthetics that made him, despite being in the center of the most important colonial power of his time, to criticize

Britain's action through his poetry. John Donne's poetics represent a direct counter to the colonial narrative of 17th century Britain which lies within the metaphysical conceits of his poems. John Donne's Britain, and the whole of Europe indulged themselves in colonial activities during the 17th and 18th century, caused many genocides and killings, and Donne's poems, and proses, remain as a testament of an individual's literary creations raging itself against the Imperial forces of its time. John Donne's literary creations can surely open up various new spaces of post-colonial studies through which the process of Western Imperialism can be revisited and the criticism which was coming from the center, for example from Britain, be reevaluated to understand the complex position which poets like Donne had to take politically and socially, and this in turn will help to look into the various angles of Donne's metaphysical poetry as this study endeavored to undertake. The Virginia Company was founded in 1606 to settle lands lying roughly between the modern Washington and New York. It went through several stages of reorganization, of which the most significant were the charters of 1609 and 1612 which incorporated it as a joint stock company run by a Council elected by shareholders, rather than appointed by the King as in 1606 as mentioned in Tom Cain's aforementioned essay. It is also true that many of the investors, probably, encouraged to go to the colony by a mixture of religious and political motives on which Donne was to comment in his sermon because many of the leading figures among the investors and settlers were motivated by the desire to set up a colony free on the political and religious restrictions of Stuart absolutism. Though by the time of the sermon of 1622 Donne's hostility toward the Jesuits in particular was well-established, his interest in colonisation of the New World must have been quickened by its offer of escape for loyal English Catholics, those "men of suppressed and afflicted Religion" by and with whom he had been brought up, and toward whom he remained sympathetic. The true situation of the Native Americans and the Virginia Company was filled with hostility and massacre. The colonisers and settlers in

Virginia regarded and treated the Native American not as humans but savages or Barbarians like “Caliban” in the *Tempest* written by Shakespeare. Everything that Donne writes on colonisation for firms that he shared their views, and that, unlike most of them, he retained his sympathy for the Native Americans in the face of a series of setbacks which culminated in the “massacre” of 1622. Donne involved himself with the Virginia Company for two primary reasons; first, Donne wanted to remain involved with the Virginia Company because of the financial need he required to support himself and his family. The second reason is, as priest it was his compulsory duty to spread the gospel and humanitarian aspect of Christianity amongst the people of the then America. However, despite this when Donne became aware of the atrocities undertaken by Virginia Company he attempted, through his poetry and sermons, to make Britain aware of what evils it has undertaken from the perspective of humanity. Yet, despite all these issues Donne remained uncompromising in his stance with humanity, which he discovered within himself through the means of embracing the core essence of the teachings of Christ, not Christianity as an institution as was used as a device of manipulation by the then England. Tom Cain in his article “John Donne and the Ideology of Colonization” quoting from one of Donne’s Sermons to the Virginia Company, shows that to Donne, all humanity is equal because all are children of God and God is the Author of mankind. Jesus Christ suffered and died for all mankind (C.f. Tom Cain 473-475). Donne’s emphasis here and elsewhere is on a human solidarity embracing all races and classes. The leveling comes after death, it is true, but this message can be added to others in both poems and sermons that recent critics have adduced in evidence that Donne was not the time-serving monarchist that he had often been assumed to be. The most important thing in Donne’s life is having the perception and attitude of equality of all human beings; Donne repeatedly stressed the importance to respect an individual human being as part of the Supreme God, not as a

resource which can be used when needed and thrown off when not required. In the article “John Donne and the Virginia Company” written by Stanley Johnson, it is written:

In the sermon Donne recognizes the blow that the massacre has given to optimism and offers the usual comfort that no great enterprise has been brought to perfection in a brief span of years. “Bee not you discouraged, if the Promises which you haue made to your selues, or to others, be not so soone dis-charg’d; though you see not your money, though you see not your men, though a Flood, a Flood of blood have broken in upon them, be not discouraged.” And he speaks of benefits already derived, though the hope of immediate profit has not yet been realized. But far from suggesting that the future course of the colony can be simplified by the enslavement or extirpation of the Indians, Donne insists that success in the plantation and material prosperity will never result unless the adventurers first become God’s “witnesses” not only to England and Catholic Europe but especially to the heathen in Virginia. “Whom liberty drawes to goe, or present profit drawes to aduenture, are not yet in the right way. O, if you could once bring a Cate- chisme to bee as good ware amongst them as a Bugle, as a knife, as a hatchet: O, if you would be as ready to hearken at the returne of a Ship, how many Indians were conuerted to Christ Jesus, as what Trees, or druggs, or Dyes that Ship had brought, then you were in your right way, and not till then. (Johnson 135)

The aforementioned quote has been taken by this author in order to illustrate John Donne’s position and stance which he took regarding his involvement with the Virginia Company. This article shows the genuine Christian teachings which Donne preached in his sermons to the people of Britain as how to act when interacting with the local people of America, and how their behavior in foreign lands must reflect the genuine teachings of Christianity. Donne directly states that it is not material prosperity but the intention of doing God’s service which

must be the first priority in the actions undertaken by the colonisers of Virginia Company when operating on the lands of the then America. In Johnson's article it is further written that despite the deaths of people Donne did not immediately revolt against the British conquest, as he did later on through the hidden allusions of his poetry. On the contrary Donne, "...despite the massacre...simply reaffirms that the company's first concern must be the salvation of souls" (Johnson 136), which shows Donne remained patient and persisted in his ground to make the then British people realize that it is against God's verdict and against the will of the teachings of Christ to kill people for material gains.

When Donne saw the impossibility of convincing the Virginia Company by other means, he presented some rationale on religious grounds. For example, he preached to the people who were involved with the then Virginia Company to be patient with the local people living in the soil of the then America. Donne has stated that if God is now giving trouble to Britain, then it is important for Britain to remain patient and have faith in God rather than take justice in her own hands and continue with the war which has resulted in a genocide of unimaginable proportion. As Johnson mentions in his aforementioned article, what was permanent inside the conscience of Donne is the sacrifice of Christ for all humanity, and under a Christian institution Donne tried with all he could to convince the officials of the Virginia Company not to kill the men women and children of the then America. There were some rare Europeans like Donne who did not see himself as a child of Britain, but a child of God whose internal anguish remains deep inside his sermons and poetry which carries with it a testament of violence, death and genocide. Due to this revisiting Donne's poetry in the light of his sensitive position is of immense importance both in the context of history as well as literature. Whereas Thomas Brooke and other contemporaries of Donne referred to Americans as beast and Caliban, a symbolic definition of actions related to bestiality, Donne referred to the local Indian people as "men", and in the writings of a man who belonged to

the nation of colonisers, to acknowledge this dignity is of immense import because this opens up new dimension within the binary of the coloniser and colonised. Within the dichotomous relationship between the colonisers and the colonised there were men who struggled to create a space where violence could be decreased and ceased. John Donne can be said to be a forerunner of this category as he initially supported British action for imperialism, however when Donne saw the evils of imperialism related to events of genocide he immediately, within himself, took an opposite stance. This study will show how this issue is directly reflected in his literary creations within the layers of metaphysical conceits. This paper attempts to explore how John Donne, through his poetry and sermons, criticized the actions of the then Britain and the Virginia Company. Furthermore, this paper also attempts to trace the internal silent agony Donne experienced upon his Christ conscience due to the actions of his home country.

Chapter II

Literature Review

This study attempts to analyse the life, poems and prose works of John Donne and put them within the post-colonial interpretative framework. The main element of this study focuses on John Donne's affiliation with the then Virginia Company which undertook violent measures upon the native people living in the land of what is now known as America. John Donne tried to pursue the officials of British Virginia Company as well as the common British people of the attitude they must have and undertake while forming colony in foreign lands where men and women of a different culture and race live. Donne's view of the project of colonisation was entirely different from the general course which Western colonisation took. The Western colonial project was filled with attempts of ethnocide, self-centralism resulting in killing of many innocent natives and representing the native people in a way which would demean and portray them as having nature of bestiality and inhumanness. On the other hand, Donne's attitude of colonisation was primarily filled with the Spirit of Christianity; he advocated that the British people must be humble and loveable in their attitude and action when dwelling on the land of God as per the teachings of Christ. The blow which John Donne faced in his life was when the British officials and the men of Virginia Company killed millions of local Native Americans on the ground of commercial exploitation, takeover of lands and looting of local resources. This devastating action which Donne witnessed, undertaken by his own countrymen, forced him and his religious conscience to produce works of literature which contained counter reaction against the colonial projects of then then Britain and the actions of the Virginia Company. Donne's criticism went to that extent that he criticized the institutional Christianity which Britain embraced as its national religion. As a result, Donne also criticized manifestation of the

institutionalized Christianity which can be seen in the name Virginia, coming from the word 'Virgin' which denotes innocence. This thesis explores the works of Donne which he produced in connection with his experience with the Virginia Company, and this thesis furthermore establishes Donne's literary works as one of the first criticism of colonialism which came out of the center of colonial power.

The paper Tom Cain's article "John Donne and the Ideology of Colonization" discusses on the process of exploit and exploitation where he writes about how America is regarded as a 'virgin woman' and was thoroughly exploited by Virginia Company. In order to illustrate John Donne's position and stance which he took regarding his involvement with the Virginia Company through one of his poems "Sun Rising" and also discusses how the company came into existence. This article shows Donne's sympathy with the unvoiced deaths of the native people of America, caused by the cruel activities of the colonisers, Britain and the Virginia Company. Furthermore, this article also shows the genuine Christian teachings which Donne preached in his sermons to the people of Britain as how to act when interacting with the local people of America, and how their behavior in foreign lands must reflect the genuine teachings of Christianity.

This paper also takes the journal article "John Donne and the Virginia Company" written by Stanley Johnson which is crucial for this study. In this article the author extensively talks about Donne's position in his interaction with the officials of the Virginia Company and this article also shows Donne's persistent efforts to make the Virginia Company aware of its errors and the condemnable actions which they took from a humanitarian perspective. This is one article which lays emphasis on reading Donne from a post-colonial perspective and it helps to understand the vision of Donne clearly in order to assess him not only as a metaphysical poet, but also as one of the first critiques of Britain's colonial exploitation which Donne undertook from a genuine humanistic perspective.

Apart from that this study also uses information from Edward Said's book *Culture and Imperialism* where Said states that Europe only could identify itself as the imperial power and its colonies as the others, who are powerless uncivilized people. Said in the book also shows how Europe used Christianity as a tool for colonisation. However, when accessing the position of Donne what can be noticed, and this is perhaps one of the most significant analytic parts of this study, is that he did not identify himself as part of the evils which Europe displayed to the world during its various projects of colonisation. Tom Cain's aforementioned article highlights that fact that Donne saw all men as creations of one single God, and all his creations must respect each other. When Donne realized that his own people did not respect and follow this particular position, he went against the position which his contemporary took regarding the actions of Virginia Company.

Another article of Tom Cain titled "Donne's Political World" also will be used by this study in order to show excerpts of his letters and sections of his prose work titled *Meditations* where his religious position is expressed. Donne writes that he sees the whole of creation and all its creatures as the children of God, and hence to discriminate upon personal grounds was synonymous with a grave sin. This particular paper discusses how politics and history worked together moved by several religious denominations. Tom Cain continues to write about how God held a superior position in Donne's mind instead of the monarchy. He regarded the Natives as his fellow Christian brothers and sisters while his contemporaries thought of them as nothing but 'sub-human'. According to Donne, as per Cain writing, all human beings are children of God and the other lands are like parishes just like Virginia being a neighboring land.

Furthermore, N. J. C. Andreasen in his article "Donne's 'Devotion' and the Psychology of Assent" also talks about the immanent and transcendent aspect of God and Donne believed that mankind has the ability to understand the immanent aspect of God through which His

transcendental aspects can be realized. This information is significant for this study as this article showed the religious philosophy of Donne, and how the British people, particularly those involved with the Virginia Company, did not acknowledge this aspect through their vicious action of killing millions of native people of the then America.

Furthermore, from the following journal article titled “Donne’s (Re)Annunciation of the Virgin(ia Colony) in “Elegy XIX” written by Thomas Hester certain sections are taken by this study in order to show how in certain sermons and poems John Donne directly propagated towards a genuine spread of Christianity, not as a means of domination but as a means to establish Jesus Christ’s teachings.

In the article titled ““O My America, My New-found Land”: Pornography and Imperial Politics in Donne’s Eligies” written by R V Young Donne’s use of pornographic and sexual situations in his poems have been interpreted as symbolic representation of Britain’s exploitation and lust for power which have resulted in demeaning and horrid acts of violence. Also this study takes a certain portion from Joseph Campbell’s book *The Mask of God: Oriental Mythology* to show the significance, in the field of religion, of myth which is distinct from history. Myth is something which, according to Alan Watts and Joseph Campbell, remains outside the limitations of the field of time and hence outside the conditions of history. For Donne, Britain’s entry into America was a significant part of human history, but the attitude which Donne propagated the British people should have on the native people living in America must be based on the teachings of Christ which are attitudes of faith, hope and charity with sympathy empathy and humbleness. For Britain Christianity was part of history and hence limited to a time frame. However, for Donne, Christ and His teachings were eternal and the God which Christ pointed towards as part of human reality was a living aspect associated with all human existence. This spiritual religious stance made Donne a poet who belonged to the center of Britain, yet criticized the colonial exploitation of its own nation

filled with deep and profound agony which can be realized beneath the deep metaphysical layers of his poems.

As this study progresses to analyze Donne's poetry it will take Alan Watt's book *Myth and Rituals in Christianity* and journal "What is Metaphysical Poetry" Bradford Smith in order to illustrate what is metaphysical literature and furthermore connect this with John Donne's position and relations with the Virginia Company in order to read his poems as a critique of the then Britain's colonial pursuits of America.

The colonial exploitations as part of human history seldom highlight the significance and contemplation it requires, however in the works of poetry and literature the misery and tragic experiences of the colonial exploitation are expressed in a way which promotes a deep contemplation and questions the action of the colonisers on unpretentious humanitarian grounds. If a literary work which holds strong criticism of the colonial exploitation of Britain was produced in the colonial center, within Britain, then its significance in post-colonial context becomes much more relevant. As a result, this paper attempts to interpret Donne's poetry and his *Meditations* and *Sermons* in the light of his relationship with the Virginia Company. Furthermore, this paper also attempts to trace the internal silent agony Donne experienced upon his Christ conscience due to the actions of his home country also resulting in reinforcing Donne's unique stance of being a British and a Christian, and at the same time a man who expressed his voice against institutionalized Christianity and Britain's colonial exploitation.

Chapter III

Life and Poetry of John Donne

In order to understand Donne's political view and world we need to keep in mind the forty years' history before his birth, including Roman Catholicism, moderate Protestantism, Calvinism, and Protestant Church of England that shaped Donne's England. Since politics was inseparable from religion of Christianity in the eras of Donne, he had developed his political view by the influence of both Church and State. Amidst the turmoil in religious-political situation between Rome and England, Donne expressed his political views when he stated in a letter of April 1627 – "My tenets are always, for the preservation of Religion I was born in, and the peace of the State, and the rectifying of the Conscience; in these I shall walke" (*Letters* 306-307)². From this point of political view, Donne always longs libertines in religion and unity among the people of different Churches. Thus he says, "The Church is Catholike, universall, so are all her Actions; All that she does, belongs to all ... All mankind is of one Author, and is one volume." (*Meditation 17*). Since Donne believed that all human beings are children of God, he had also yearned for the unity of humanity. All these issues become of vital importance when assessing the rationale behind a man, who remaining in the center of imperial power during the 17th century, lamented and supported the then local Indian people who were killed and massacred by the then Britain.

John Donne was born in 1572 in England. During the period from 1591 to 1602, Donne carried on an anxious life through his expeditions, theological inquiry, military adventure, career advancement and marriage. In the years at Lincoln's Inn Donne became a student of law, where he not only developed himself but faced a severe anxiety thinking about his Catholic faith and career, amid persecutions of the Protestant that stated against the

² Tom Cain, "Donne's political world", edited by Achsah Guibbory, p. 86.

Catholics. On the other hand, Donne experienced the stress of losing his brother Henry who was imprisoned and died for sheltering a Catholic priest in 1594 under the threat and persecution of the Protestant queen in England. It is due to this Donne wrote regarding his own life, “How *Much shall I be change’d , / before I am chang’d.*” (Walton 79). Jonathan F. S. Post, in *Donne’s Life: A Sketch*, said that Donne spent more than a decade his time in different activities. Though Donne was not interested in Law, he stayed at Lincoln’s Inn as a student from 1592-1594 or longer. This period of time was very important for the development of Donne’s career because he met and “made friends and formed associations” with some important persons who variously helped him for the rest of his life. These persons included Rowland Woodward and his younger brother Thomas, and Christopher Brook who was Donne’s lifelong friends as well as his younger brother Samuel and their cousin John Brook. Most of Donne’s early poetry was written at this time. For example, Donne wrote his poetry in a style consistent with most of his Elegies and Satires. It is true that the period at Lincoln’s Inn was for Donne a “gateway to the great world” where he met and made a good relationship with Thomas and John Egerton, in addition to the sons of the Lord Keeper who always supported Donne in different ways in the rest of his life. In spite of these all relations, friendships and associations, Donne was obliged to go through a discernment process of deciding the matter of the Church because he was facing constantly problems for his Catholic faith. This dilemma situation of Donne described by Bald as follows “The Catholics in England “wished to be loyal to the Catholic Church, but the law of England had established the royal supremacy, had penalized all those who refused to subscribe to the Thirty-nine Articles, or to attend Anglican services, and had branded as traitors all those in Roman orders who entered the king-dom”. (R. C. Bald 66). John Carey in his book *John Donne Life, Mind and Art* described some other reasons for Donne’s mental turmoil in the following ways:

Persecution upon the Catholics of the Protestant State and Henry Donne's "death brought not only grief but peril. Because of his kinship with Henry, his own religious activities were now likely to attract scrutiny. Plainly the time had come for serious thought. Besides, he was now twenty-one, and had collected his share of his father's estate - a sum large enough to make him independent of his mother and her Catholic advisers. The dilemma that faced him was acute. If he remained true to his Faith, his chances of preferment and success in the world would be curtailed. Further, the efforts of the Jesuits, with whom his family were inextricably connected, would make it difficult to remain neutral. Pressure would be brought on him to assist in the mission, and if he complied how long would it be before he shared Henry's fate?" (John Carey 25)

In this situation, Donne, like other Catholics, desired to remain loyal to the Queen though the Pope had excommunicated her from the Church and "absolved her Protestant subjects from their oath of obedience to her" (Bald 66). In this context, Donne knew well what would be the consequence if he would remain in his Catholic faith. Bald very clearly displayed it portraying Donne's mind and his mental stress, "To stay at home meant persecution; to go abroad meant the loss of all landed possessions and all the sufferings of exile. To the logical mind there were only two courses open: either to accept the Anglican settlement and abandon the old faith, or to accept the full consequences of the papal supremacy and work with Elizabeth's enemies for her downfall". (Bald 66). Furthermore, from 1603 to 1615 Donne with his wife and children passed a crucial period since he had no income. At this time, he wrote a good number of letters that depicted Donne's dependence upon his friends and patrons who occasionally helped Donne financially. According to Bald's description Donne underwent the most difficult time of his life from 1606 to 1611 when he was unemployed. During this period Donne lived in London and also with his family in the Mitcham so that he could follow the

court and maintain good relations with his patronesses. When the old Queen Elizabeth died in 1603 and James VI of Scotland ascended to the English throne as James I, Egerton “was raised to the chancellorship and became Baron Ellesmere; Sir George More became Treasurer of the Household to the Prince of Wales, and the gentleman the Privy Chamber to the King” (Bald, p. 141). On the other hand, many of Donne’s friends, like Francis Wolley, Robert More, Sir Francis Bacon, and Robert Cotton, were raised to the honour of Knighthood. During this time, Donne attempted a third time to acquire a position in the Virginia Company since his “friend were all members of the newly constituted Council of the Company” (Bald 162), but failed. Bald said that “on 14 February 1608/9 Chaberbain wrote Dudley Carleton: ‘Newes here is none at all but that John Dun seeks to be preferred to be secretarie of Virginia’ (Bald 162). To overcome his poor financial situation, Donne was looking for employment very desperately besides receiving financial help from his friends until he was not “ordained deacon and priest in January 23, 1615” (Guibbory 10). Hoping to establish a good position in the politics as well as in the Virginia Company, Donne joined twice in expeditions to the continent of Europe “from 1605 to early 1606, to Paris and perhaps Venice, and then again to France as part of the large Sir Robert Drury entourage from 1611 to 1612” (Guibbory 11). After this service with Sir Robert Drury’s diplomatic business, Donne was elected a Member of the Parliament from Taunton in 1614. According to Bald, since Donne had easy access of “being presented to the King at either or both of the houses” (Bald 141) he had an opportunity to renew his old friendships with those who used to come in the court. Donne, through his old friends at the court, was known to James I, and about ‘seven years later’ Donne received an appointment from the King by the help of Lord Hay. But James I had a different plan for Donne and thus, he says: “I know Mr. Donne is a learned man, has the abilities of a learned divine, and will prove a successful preacher,” the King told Robert Carr, the then Earl of Somerset and Donne’s petitioner, “and my desire is to prefer him that way” (Dean 33). At the

age of forty-two Donne was ordained to the priesthood 'in the Church of England to work as a royal chaplain to James I. From 1615 to 1631, this phase of Donne's life can be described as Donne's life in the Church dealing with the matters of divinity and spirituality. In this period, Donne spent most of his life 'in and around' London until his last breath. During this phase, Donne, as a man of God, became the defender of the faith that he had avoided earlier. Donne preached the Word of God and divine virtues through his sermons protesting in different places against the immoral and unjust things amidst the political environment. As a result, tracing the poet's life it can be sensed that his involvement with Virginia Company was due to an inevitableness which could not be avoided, yet what is also important to notice from Donne's biography is the constant violence he witnessed, both within England and in the foreign lands, which made him realize the importance to turn towards spirituality through the Christian faith.

In case of assessing John Donne's poetry, it is very important to understand what the definition of metaphysics is and what purpose it serves to John Donne as a poet. Metaphysics can be defined as, according to the book *Myth and Rituals in Christianity* by Alan W Watts, "Metaphysics (Greek and Western). Highly abstract thought, dealing with such concepts as being, nature, substance, essence matter and form, and treating them as...they were facts on a higher level of objective existence than sensually perceptible things." (*Myth and Rituals* 63). The last line of the aforementioned quote states that any work of art can be rendered as metaphysical if on one hand it has within itself a meaning for the senses, and on the other hand it represents something higher than physical reality, such as "being" or "essence" etc. John Donne used the metaphysical style of writing poetry and his poetry had two level of meaning. The first is the meaning formed by perceiving the content of poems which are "sensually perceptible", and the second level of meaning is formed "on a higher level of objective existence" which are implied by metaphysical conceits, extended metaphors and

wit. Aristotle defined poetry as mimetic, it imitates an actual or real scenery. For Wordsworth poetry was a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions and poetry was more close to the heart in the form of feeling and emotion rather than mere intellectual representation of an actual scenery. Metaphysical poetry, on the contrary of the definition of the two aforementioned poets, has been aptly explained by Bradford Smith in his journal article “What is Metaphysical Poetry” as:

“Metaphysical poetry is concerned with life, love, and death, and it is metaphorical, but...the word also bears the meanings 'having real being or the essential nature of reality' and 'being concerned with the analysis of experience.'....There is, however, no ordered philosophy: complexity, unresolved, is apparent. The eye is too keen to accept an ordered view of a disordered world. Intellect controls this poetry... Metaphors are not high-flown; however ingenious they may be. The metaphysical poet prefers, indeed, a type of common imagery peculiar to himself.” (Bradford Smith 262-263)

In the context of Donne, the aforementioned passage is apt because it deals with reality, or the essential nature of reality through the expression of extended metaphor. Skepticism remains hidden under the guise of eroticism, and the philosophical complexity of the metaphysical poet is hidden under somatic terms which needs contextual deciphering. For example, in the poetry of John Donne, one must take into account his experiences of life, which, as has been shown in this chapter, reveals Donne’s embracement of Christianity as well as his subtle position of writing against the then British Empire by being within the Center. It is very rare for a poet who has written against the exploitation of the British Empire by being at the very center of it. Through using the metaphysical technique Donne’s poetry and his sermons, in a relatively more direct manner, reveal his stance against the British Empire and the lamentation and torrential expression of a man who despite having a deep

Christian faith could not stop his own homeland to undertake genocidal activities resulting in deaths of millions of people.

Chapter IV

Religious Conscience of John Donne and its Significance in Post-Colonial Context

The religious life of John Donne mainly consisted of a profound devotion towards the essential elements of Christianity, which can be briefly expressed as faith, hope and charity. In addition to that, in all the activities which John Donne participated in his life, be it his poetry or his involvement with the political and administrative activities of his time, he never ceased to establish himself as a devotee of God. Therefore, it is important to revisit his intended relations with the Virginia Company before it used dominance as a means to conquer the then America. John Donne constantly preached the Virginia Company to remember the Christian spirit, which was, and still is, the foundation and bed-rock of British morality and ethics. In a journal article titled “Donne’s (Re)Annunciation of the Virgin (ia Colony) in “Elegy XIX” it has been mentioned by author Thomas Hester:

From as early as the fictive adventures with Vespucci by his great grand-uncle's Raphael Hythloday to the actual adventures of the Rastels in Newfoundland, Donne's family contributed to the lore and early history of America....While calling up many of the nationalistic and religious tropes of English imperial propaganda about the New World, the Dean warned that "If you seeke to establish a temporall kingdome there, you are not rectified" (Sermons, IV, 269). The "principall ende" (274) of the American adventure, he urged, must be "to gaine Soules to the glory of GOD" (274), to teach and "inflame" (280) the natives "with your godlinesse, and your Religion" (280), to teach them the "wayes of Civilitie" (280) so that "this Iland, which is but as the Suburbs of the old world" (280), becomes "a Bridge, a Gallery to the new" (280)". (Hester 49-50).

What can be derived from the aforementioned quote is that firstly, Donne's family was, from an early period, part of the British expedition to America. Secondly, in his speech addressed to the people of the Virginia Company in 1622, Donne clearly expressed that the then Britain's movement towards the soil of Virginia establishment of its colony must be with a clear purpose of spreading the message of Christianity and establish the awareness of the glory of God and the Christian quality of godliness amongst the souls of the local people of the then America. Donne warns that "If you seeke to establish a temporall kingdome there, you are not rectified" (Sermons, IV, 269). Here Donne says that his own people are not rectified which means if the Virginia Company aims to establish themselves on the land of the then America for material purposes, it will be the expression "temporall kingdome" instead of establishing the "kingdom of God" where the salvation of the souls can be ensured. Thus, from a pure spiritual Christian perspective, Donne says his own people are not rectified. This heed which Donne makes his own people conscious of has been asserted again when he says that the people of the Virginia Company has been appointed by the "Holy Ghost" to spread the message of Christianity. Through these expressions one can deduce the purpose with which Donne wanted to be involved with the Virginia Company. Yet it is well known to all readers of British colonial history and readers of the poetry and prose of John Donne that after such devotional plea the British Virginia Company heavily exploited the local American people for commercial gains and totally overlooked the religious message which was repeatedly uttered by John Donne. To Donne, alike his contemporaries, "Christianity held an absolute monopoly of Religious truth; it was not merely part of religion, but the whole" (Shell and Hunt 65). Donne was familiar with other religions, such as, Judaism, Islam, for his theological education and for travelling to different countries. He was also familiar with skeptical ideas of his contemporaries and he himself passed a skeptical life regarding his Christian Orthodoxy. It is very difficult to know Donne's religious position as "Christian".

“Catholic”, “Protestant” and “Church of England” these three things are inseparable from Donne’s religious world. Donne himself says to the preface of the Pseudo-Martyr that his conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism had not been an easy one, and that he had “a longer work to do than many other men” in overcoming “certaine impressions of the Romane religion” (Shell and Hunt 13). According to Carey, “Donne may have remained more Catholic than he cared to admit.” (Shell and Hunt 65). One possible interpretation of why Donne left Catholicism and embraced Protestantism might be because of the exploits which people undertook under the name of Catholicism. During Donne’s time Catholicism became more associated with institutionalized structures of state operations and affairs rather than being a center where the essential religious teachings of Christianity can be spread and provided amongst human beings. Donne was well-aware of the political position which the then English Catholic Church took, and the failure of Christianity to influence the English people has been grievously expressed by Donne both in his poems and in his sermons when he saw the horrific violence undertaken by his own people resulting in uncountable and unwitnessed deaths of millions of local people. It is Donne’s religious teachings which has made him aware of human innocence, and unlike his contemporaries, Donne always addressed the local people of America, particularly of Virginia, as innocent souls who contain within them the same potential, as any Western man and woman, to be unified with God by the grace of the Holy Ghost and the teachings of Christ. For Donne, British expansion towards America was not only about monetary opportunities or derivation of economic advantages. On the contrary for Donne Virginia was an opportunity where the teachings of Christ could be established in many new souls, not with the intention of exploitation, as was the case in almost all British expansion of Catholicism during the period of colonisation, but with the intention of charity and love, and the proof of this can easily be realized by the readers of John Donne when in

his prose and poetry there are hidden ciphered cries of anguish and condemnation at the British action of violence and commercial and geographic exploitation resulting in death.

In the *Holy Sonnets* of Donne one can notice that Donne is constantly contemplating himself as a human being who has the thirst to be the instrument of the divine. In the first of the *Holy Sonnets* Donne writes, “THOU hast made me, And shall thy worke decay?/Repaire me now, for now mine end doth haste,/ I runne to death, and death meets me as fast,/ And all my pleasures are like yesterday;” (Lines 1-4), and furthermore he writes, “Onely thou art above, and when towards thee/ By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;/ But our old subtle foe so tempteth me, That not one houre my selfe I can sustaine;/ Thy Grace may wing me to prevent his art,/ And thou like Adamant draw mine iron heart.” (Lines 9-14). What can be noticed in these lines is an attempt of self-purification, firstly through acknowledging one’s own limitation of the self, and then praying to God to help him overcome his “iron soul”, or the egoic chains of being so that he becomes available to the grace of the Divine. In another of his *Holy Sonnets*, Sonnet VII, Donne writes, “AT the round earths imagin’d corners, blow/ Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise/ From death, you numberlesse infinities/ Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe/,... But let them sleepe, Lord, and meemourne a space,/ For, if above all these, my sinnes abound,/ ’Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,/ When wee are there; here on this lowly ground,/ Teach mee how to repent; for that’s as good/ As if thou’hadstseal’d my pardon, with thy blood.” (Lines 1-4 and Lines 9-14)

The significant portion of these lines, in the context of the study of this chapter, is Donne’s announcement that the trumpet of God blows all around the earth and is not limited to a particular area. From this line Donne’s attitude of inclusiveness can be sensed, an attitude which many Westerners lacked though they were involved in the then Britain’s colonial projects. Donne realizes that most human beings of the earth are asleep to the Divine calling of the Supreme Lord of the universes, and Donne pleases the Lord to give him an opportunity

to learn how to repent with his heart so that his forgiveness is accepted by God. If one compares the religious message of these sonnets with the following lines of Donne's sermon to Virginia given on November 30, 1622.

As I speak now principally to them who are concerned in this plantation of Virginia, yet there may be divers in this congregation, who, though they have no interest in this plantation, yet they may have benefit and edification, by that which they hear me say, so Christ spoke the words of this text, principally to the apostles, who were present and questioned him at his ascension, but they are in their just extension, and due accommodation, applicable to our present occasion of meeting here: as Christ himself is alpha, and omega, so first, as that he is last too, so these words which he spoke in the east, belong to us, who are to glorify him in the west; That we having received power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon us, might be witnesses unto him, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. (Donne *Sermon CLVI*)

John Donne quoting from the Bible (the book of Revelation 22:13) says to his fellow people of Virginia Company that Christ as the alpha and omega, as the one who exists before all activities of creation and as the one who will exist after all activities have ended, and Donne further states that being the bearers of the divine message of the chosen one of God, it is the duty of the people involved with the Virginia Company, both who aimed at plantation and those who have other aims regarding settlement, to spread this message to America as once this message was spread from the East to the Western nations. Through this it is clear that the colonial agenda of John Donne, being an associate with the activities of the Virginia Company, was not one of conquest and exploitation but to spread the message of love and charity, repentance and salvation, which are the fundamentals of all Christian teachings. Prior to the inhuman activities undertaken by the then British Virginia Company, and even during

and after their violence filled torturous activities resulting in various forms of exploitation, Donne always presented to pursue and critique the then England and its administration associated with the Virginia Company to stop what they are doing. It was out of a profound religious and spiritual sense that Donne, being positioned in the center, was criticizing the colonial exploitation of the British Empire.

In the above mentioned journal article titled “Donne’s (Re)Annunciation of the Virgin(ia Colony) in “Elegy XIX” author Thomas Hester has further written:

Donne literally re-enacts this process of naming-urging the American native to remove her "gay coverings" in order to be recognized as The Virgin Mary, or as Virgin(ia). The blasphemous analogy of the poem, that is, presents from one perspective another of Donne's oblique, clever thrusts at the religious foundations of England's imperial religion. Here once again is Donne's satirical "spiedSpie" mocking the pretensions and questioning the motives of the New World adventure. (Hester 60)

As can be seen the quoted passage Donne in his Elegies and in his poetries as well, have used apparently blasphemous languages, imageries and erotic descriptions to show, with subtlety and literary sophistication, how the then Christianity in the British Empire was used as a tool of imperialism and colonial conquest. It is due to this that Donne has used profane representations to both challenge the English poetic expression of presenting metaphor, and this can assumedly also imply Donne challenging the established structures of the then Britain, as well as the moral and ethical foundation of the then England which found its presence through genuine and humane Christian teachings. When Donne saw that England, due to its imperial conquest and lust for expansion and obtaining resources, betrayed its own moral and ethical teachings, and used Christianity as a means of colonial conquest, he immediately turned his back on the established form of Christianity in the then Britain and used blasphemy as a means of criticism. In the next chapter John Donne’s criticism through

his poetries will be further elucidated and contemplated in order to assert the significance of these poetry carrying within them unheard voices of anguish and torment of those local people who were mercilessly killed by British imperial forces in order to establish Virginia colony in America. Only a handful of people wrote against the colonial exploitations of the West being in the center during the earlier periods of colonization, and one of them is John Donne, and it is because of his Christian conscience Donne felt a deep internal obligation to write against the actions of the British Empire and the established religion of the then British Empire, Catholic Christianity, in order to assert himself as a true Christian and repent for the sins of his fellow Englishmen and women who in ignorance of lust for power participated in one of the horrid genocides in the history of human civilization.

Chapter V

Britain's colonial project of Virginia in John Donne's poetry

Before moving into the poetry of John Donne it remains very important to revisit the definition of metaphysics. Metaphysics is, as mentioned before in the second chapter of this thesis from the book *Myth and Rituals in Christianity* by Alan W Watts, "Metaphysics (Greek and Western). Highly abstract thought, dealing with such concepts as being, nature, substance, essence matter and form, and treating them as...they were facts on a higher level of objective existence than sensually perceptible things." (*Myth and Rituals* 63). John Donne used the metaphysical style of writing poetry with two distinct level of meanings. The first is the meaning formed by perceiving the content of poems which are "sensually perceptible", and the second level of meaning is formed "on a higher level of objective existence" which are implied by metaphysical conceits, extended metaphors and wit to indicate something which is not apparent yet its existence announces its presence strongly if read by taking into consideration certain historical and psychological context. This chapter attempts to decipher John Donne's poems and bring forth dimensions from underneath the external layer of poetic narrative to highlight John Donne's criticism of colonial expansion and resulting from expansion exploitation and violence done by the then British Empire upon the lands of America.

Donne's following poems *The Sun Rising*, *The Good Morrow*, *To His Mistress Going to Bed* involves a lover, who is the speaker of the poem. The speaker of the poem is shown to be obsessed with his beloved and is very passionate in his participation of love. However, this is one layer of meaning as it would be comprehended by the "senses" only. What makes Donne's poetry metaphysical is the fact that in these poems Donne also has provided for his readers another level of meaning which involves the criticism of British Imperialism and the

banality of its coercive practices upon the then local American people. As the aforementioned definition of metaphysics states, it involves a “higher level of objective existence”, it represents something beyond the normal physical nature of the senses. Furthermore, by speculating deeply what John Donne’s poems represent, in particular the aforementioned poems, the purpose of him using the metaphysical style of poetry becomes gradually evident. As mentioned in the first paragraph, Donne belonged to the colonial center, he was part of the British Empire and for his livelihood he even attempted to take a job in the Virginia Company. However, his intention and his views were very much humanitarian, he constantly advocated in his *Sermons* universal humanism and love, not violence, hegemony and dominance, “Christ was not whip’d to save Begars, and crown’d with Thornes to save Kings: he died, he suffered all, for all; and we whose bearing witness of him, is to doe, as hee did, must conferre our labours upon all...” (Tom Cain 473). This is a section from Donne’s *Virginia Sermon* where he advocated Britain to remember the virtues of Christ, and not practice violence and hatred upon any human beings regardless of his/her race and culture. As a human being having the consciousness of a poet and the love towards humanity, it can be assumed that Donne felt an obligation to express through his poems the evils undertaken by Britain through its Imperial projects of colonization of the the America. As a result, he undertook the metaphysical style of writing poetry and through creating a physical situation in his poems, Donne incorporated within it another reality which is hidden, which is beyond the physical situation mentioned in his poems, but which at the same time acts as a representation of that reality which Donne has originally intended to represent. For example, the three poems *The Sun Rising*, *The Good Morrow*, *To His Mistress Going*, directly makes an allusion of Britain raping the then America without even trying to understand the voice of the then colonized America. In the poem *The Sun Rising* the speaker of the poem hates the sun shedding its light upon him and his beloved which has two levels of implication. Firstly,

it might mean that Britain does not want to shed light and let other nations see the fact that it has used violence and death as a means to expand its Imperial projects and colonized the then America, and on the other hand by calling the sun which makes all things visible as “Busy old fool, unruly sun,/ Why dost thou thus,/ Through windows, and through curtains call on us?” (Lines 1 and 2) it might indicate that Britain does want to keep America to herself and does not want to share the nation with anyone. The latter fact, along with the former, is very much evident as before British colonies established in America, there were Spanish and French colonies upon the land of the “New World” of the British Empire, and Britain had to remove French and Spanish colonies before establishing their sole dominance over America. As the poem progresses the speaker of the poem directly compares the woman with “...both the Indias of spice and mine...” (Line 17) which indicates there is an intricate relationship between the sexual acts presented in Donne’s poems with the then British Imperial conquests, and the fact that the primary purpose of Britain wanting to expand its Empire to America was for the resources available in that land. In the poem *The Good-Morrow* Donne makes similar metaphysical allusions of a lover wanting to own his beloved as Britain’s intention to capture and own the-then America as the lines “Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,/ Let maps to other, worlds on worlds have shown,/ Let us possess one world, each hath one, and is one” (Lines 12- 14) clearly show the British pride of capturing the lands and resources of the then America. In addition to that from a post-colonial perspective this poem is important to a great extent as Donne, in this poem as well as in other poems, makes the voice of the beloved absent, and the beloved represents America. For example, in *The Good-Morrow* the speaker states, “My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears...” (Line 15), and “If our two love be one, or, thou and I...” (Line 20), and as there is no presence of the voice or consent of woman, the beloved, in the poem, these lines might be interpreted as an act of rape rather than love, which is reciprocal with the assertion of the Self (Britain) over the Other

(America). Every process of colonisation creates the Self and Other dichotomy where the colonizers, the Self, asserts its power over the Other whom they consider weak and powerless, as a result subordinate. Due to the fact that without the Other there cannot exist a Self by the intrinsic nature of dualism, by inference, therefore, without the colonised, colonisers like Britain cannot assert its own power. The process of colonisation began when Europe exhausted its limits within its geographical boundaries and in order to assert themselves, to establish themselves as the Self, they went in search for colonies to exercise its power and expand its market, as well as to own resources. John Donne, through his poem, shows the fact that Britain did not bother about the condition of the local people of the then America, did not care about their voices and screams of agony when Britain killed 20 million local tribal people of America in 1622. The absence of the voice of Other, of the woman in Donne's aforementioned poem *The Good-Morrow*, indicates immeasurable suffering and a profound agony as happens when a woman is raped by a man. As mentioned before, Donne could not directly state this being part of the British Empire, and through using the metaphysical technique he not only revolutionised poetry, as many western critics claim, but also showed the suffering and agony Britain caused to the tribal people when it expanded its Empire over the then America. Before proceeding on to Donne's next poem it is again important to mention that Donne was not a passive witness to the British exploitation and genocide of the then America. John Donne attempted to convince the people of Britain, through using various means, for example through appealing to their humanitarian sense, and even convincing them in their own language to stop violence, as is mentioned in the article of an journal article written by Thomas Festa named "The Metaphysics of Labor in John Donne's Sermon to the Virginia Company", "Donne's sermon to the Virginia Company records the contradictory effort of a religious man trying to persuade imperialists that

adopting a humane attitude toward a native population is the best way to foster an economic structure..." (Festa 78)

As can be seen in the aforementioned lines, Donne used the language of having a better economic structure if a humanitarian attitude is undertaken rather than that of violence to convince British Empire to stop its coercive practices. However, as can be seen in history as a fact, Donne's attempt failed and therefore he used his poetic ability to show the evils done by the British Empire during his time, and in his poem *To His Mistress Going to Bed* Donne makes the closest allusion of British imperial domination over the then America. Here again the lover, the speaker of the poem, without the consent of his beloved, urges her in a manner which implies the stroke of force, to participate in a sexual activity. The sexual appeal in this poem might act as an indication of Britain, first sympathizing with the local tribal people of the then America, and then using force to make them submit to the will of Britain. The power of rhetoric of the speaker of the poem to convince the woman to participate in a sexual activity with him in *To His Mistress Going to Bed* is reciprocal to Britain first settling in America and then using violence to make the land part of their Empire. The Self, the speaker of the poem, wants to control the Other by any means, "To teach thee, I am naked first; why then/What needst thou have more covering than a man" (Line 47-48), which indicates that Britain wants its recognition of power (assertion of Self) through conquering the Other, America by any means, and British Empire in Donne's time used treachery and violence to colonize the then America, and labeled it as their "New World". In an article name "'O my America, my new-found-land": Pornography and Imperial Politics in Donne's Elegies" by R. V. Young it is written, "Finally, there is the controversial discussion by John Carey, who sees the "despotic lover" of "Going to Bed," "ordering his submissive girl-victim to strip, and drawing attention to his massive erection," as "a perennial dweller in the shadow- land of pornography." (Young 35). The intent of Donne creating a despotic lover dwelling in the

activities which can be categorized as pornographic and lustful can be realized if the history of Britain's colonization during Donne's period is consulted when interpreting his poems and the purpose of Donne using metaphysical style while writing his poems. In one part of the poem *To His Mistress Going to Bed* Donne makes the closest reference to the lover sexually dominating his beloved as Britain's exercise of power through coercive practices over the then America when the speaker of the poem tells, "Licence my roving hands, and let them go,/ Before, behind, between, above, below./ O my America! my new-found-land" (Lines 25-27). As a result, through analysing the aforementioned poems of John Donne it can be asserted that his use of metaphysics had a particular intention, to criticise the British Imperial projects of colonisation of America during the 17th century which involved violence, genocide and having a wrong attitude towards the local tribal people who lived in America during that time. John Donne's Christian conscience and his humanistic and poetic consciousness made him feel the presence of an inner commitment to somehow, by any means, talk about and prevent the wrong actions of the then British Empire.

The post-colonial context of interpreting Donne's poems opens up new dimension of analysis and this helps readers of Donne to understand the hidden purpose of Donne beneath the ambiguous semantics and extended metaphor filled with metaphysical conceit, yet with a definitive and clear purpose, which becomes comprehensible and evident to one if he/she reads the history of Donne and his keen awareness of the dark politics of the then Elizabethan society. As R V Young in his journal article "'O My America, My New-found Land': Pornography and Imperial Politics in Donne's Eligies",

The effect of this ambiguity is to render altogether problematic the famous persona of the Elegies: we can never really be sure who is speaking these lines, a cynical adulterer or a rapacious conquistador....In "The Sunne Rising"-a poem whose hunting King suggests a time of composition more than two years after Donne's imprudent

marriage-the irony is at once rueful and defiant: If her eyes have not blinded thine, Looke, and tomorrow late, tell mee, Whether both the'India's of spice and Myne Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with mee. (15-18) The lover here is not the parodic shadow of the conqueror; he defines himself in opposition to the brokers of worldly wealth and power: "Princes doe but play us; compar'd to this, / All honor's mimique; All wealth alchimie" (23-24). ...The conclusion is that Donne was very aware of the implications of his figurative language, that he knew exactly what he was doing. (Young 35)

While using the extended metaphors in his poems, Donne's purpose was clear and he "knew what he was doing", which, by and large, was to present a criticism of the vile and evil actions undertaken by the British Empire. The Indies, modern day America, and its local people who were unjustly murdered by British Imperial forces were to Donne the sons of God who died by the hands of a people of a Christian nation and who could not bear within their hearts the core teachings of Christ and was overpowered by desire and lust for colonial expansion and taking over of territories for various reasons. In Donne's poems one of the most significant events of the English Elizabethan era can be noticed in the form of a profound criticism through timeless literary creation, and it is because of this a reader must revisit John Donne's poetry and measure with his/her consciousness the degree of loss humanity as a whole experienced by the violence undertaken by British imperialism under the title of Christianity caused by the expansion of the then British Empire.

Chapter V

Conclusion

John Donne is an important poet not only for his aesthetic metaphysical aspect, but also for his subtle critique of the then Britain and its violent action of conquest of the lands of the then America. Donne was such a person who, being in the center, could psychologically empathize with the native people of the then America due to his deep affiliation with Christianity as a spiritual presence acknowledging and mutually having respect to all humanity. John Donne was a man who truly understood the essence of Christianity because of his profound and deep aesthetic sensibility, and his understanding and living of Christianity and its profound teachings was diametrically opposite to the institutionalized version of Christianity which the British Empire used for colonial exploitation. Beginning from the Middle Age to the Renaissance and continuing to late 16th and early 17th century, England, like most part of Europe, only had the outer shell of Christianity and failed, collectively, to realize the essence of this religion. As Joseph Campbell in his book *The Mask of God: Occidental Mythology* writes quoting Alan Watts, “Christianity has been expounded by an orthodox hierarchy which has consistently degraded the myth to a science and a history...The living God has become the abstract God” (Campbell 151). The word myth in the aforementioned quote does not mean a fable or something which is imaginary, on the contrary the word myth has been used in the above-mentioned quote to show something which is opposite to history, and as a result opposite to the conditionals of time and space. For Donne Christianity was a living reality, the “living God” was present inside the consciousness of Donne. Thus, when he witnessed the corruption and the vile qualities present inside his fellow Englishmen regarding the conquest of Virginia, and the anger of Britain when it decided it would attack the native people of the then Virginia colony, Donne

used poetry as a means to express his internal sadness. Yet due to being in the center Donne's expression experienced a hegemony; the expressions of Donne were subtle and hidden under metaphysical allusions rather than having a direct expression and depiction of the evils which occurred during his lifetime. For John Donne his artistic intellect and his emotions were one in his imaginings of the suffering and hardships experienced by the native people of Native America, experiences which perhaps never will be documented by the documents of history in such a profound manner as it exists beneath the metaphysical layers of Donne's poems. Perhaps the profoundest philosophical vision which Donne expressed through his aesthetic ability of poetry is through the poem *An Anatomy of the World*. In this poem Donne not only expresses the lament he experiences upon the death of Elizabeth Drury; this poem transcends its setting and the poetic voice syntactically transpose the readers into a world view which points towards a reality which the West, and the Western mind, for a long time did not want to oblige and admit. In *An Anatomy of the World* Donne writes, "They seek so many new; they see that this/ Is crumbled out again to his atomies./ 'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone, /All just supply, and all relation.." (Lines 211-214). Furthermore, in this poem Donne writes, "...Did in their voyage in this world's sea astray;/ And needed a new compass for their way;/ She that was best, and first original/ Of all fair copies, and the general/ Steward to faith; She whose rich eyes and breasts/ Gilt the West Indies and Perfumed the East..." (Lines 225- 230). The West has lost all its coherence, not material coherence but the coherence of humanity and one's own conscience, by its blind lust for power. Rather than establishing relation with the world England was on the path of "supplying relation", which can be taken as an indication of domination. For John Donne the phenomenon of Britain colonizing the world and using its power unwisely for psychological cultural and physical oppression was a hard reality already, and in his presentation of the condition of humanity he expressed this fact, however in a subtle manner as he was living in the center of colonial power and hence his expression had

to suffer from self-censorship. In the poem *An Anatomy of the World* Donne did not only present Elizabeth Drury as an archetypal woman who represents the some fundamental human quality, Donne also used Drury as a means to express that the Beauty which the West sought through fairing in the seas reaching West Indies and the East is a journey which has gone astray. The West was overpowered by a blindfold lust to achieve the “best, first and original”, and in this desire nations like England not only undertook one of the most tragic and horrid action, which is colonization, but also silenced many voices and cultures which had within them a genuine voice of God, the same God which Donne worshipped and lamented to through his Christian conscience. As mentioned in the first chapter of this study, in one of his *Meditations* John Donne writes, “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...any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind, and therefore never send to know for whom the bells tolls; it tolls for thee.” (*Meditations XVII*), here Donne directly states that if Europe considers itself to be the powerful nation which can exercise its power over other nations throughout the world, it is in delusion because it is only a clod which can easily be washed by the sea. No man, no nation is complete by itself. Yet the response to this humanistic declaration of Donne was not positively responded by the Then British Empire. As a result of this Donne in his poem titled *Batter my Heart, three-person'd God* has written, But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue. /Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain, /But am betroth'd unto your enemy; ...”(Lines 8-10). These lines show the humanistic conscience of Donne and its depressed state of being as Donne begs to God that he is placed amongst the enemies of God, which is the British Empire itself. This is the most direct affirmation of Donne regarding his stance against the then British Empire. Donne deeply believed that no man or no nation is complete by itself - every individual and nation is part of the whole world. Only by mutual consent, love and harmony, in correspondence with

the whole, individual nations and men may achieve the grace of God and live a life of harmony because the bell of God tolls for every human being. John Donne's Britain, and the whole of Europe indulged themselves in colonial activities during the 17th and 18th century, caused many genocide and killing, and Donne's poems, and proses, remain as a testament of an individual's literary creations raging itself against the Imperial forces of its time. Therefore, John Donne's literary creations can surely open up various new spaces of post-colonial studies through which the process of Western Imperialism can be revisited and the criticism which was coming from the center, for example from Britain, be reevaluated through a broadened analysis, to understand the complex position which poets like Donne had to take politically and socially, and this in turn will help to look into the various angles of Donne's metaphysical poetry as this study has humbly endeavored to undertake.

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