

John Donne, from "An Anatomie of the World"

Then, as mankinde, so is the worlds whole frame
Quite out of joynt, almost created lame;
For, before God had made up all the rest,
Corruption entred, and deprav'd the best:
It seis'd the Angels, and then first of all
The world did in her cradle take a fall,
And turn'd her braines, and tooke a generall maim,
Wronging each joynt of th'universall frame.
The noblest part, man, felt it first; and then
Both beasts and plants, curst in the curse of man.
So did the world from the first houre decay,
That evening was beginning of the day,
And now Springs and Sommers which we see,
Like sonnes of women after fiftie bee.
And new Philosophy calls all in doubt,
The Element of fire is quite put out;
The Sun is lost, and th'earth, and no mans wit
Can well direct him where to looke for it.
And freely men confesse that this world's spent,
When in the Planets, and the Firmament
They seeke so many new; then see that this
Is crumbled out againe to his Atomies.
'Tis all in peeces, all coherence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation:
Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne, are things forgot,
For every man alone thinkes he hath got
To be a Phoenix, and that then can bee
None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee.
This is the world's condition now, and now
She that should all parts to reunion bow,
She that had all Magnitique force alone,
To draw, and fasten sundred parts in one;
She whom wise nature had invented then
When she observ'd that every sort of men
Did in their voyage in this worlds Sea stray,
And needed a new compasse for their way;
She that was best, and first originall
Of all faire copies, and the generall
Steward to Fate; she whose rich eyes, and breast
Guilt the West Indies, and perfum'd the East;
Whose having breath'd in this world, did bestow
Spice on those Iles, and bad them still smell so,
And that rich Indie which doth gold interre,

Is but as single money, coyn'd from her;
 She to whom this world must it selfe refer,
 As suburbs, or the Microcosme of her,
 Shee, shee is dead; shee's dead: when thou knowst this,
 Thou knowst how lame a cripple this world is.
 And learn'st thus much by our Anatomy,
 That this worlds generall sicknesse doth not lie
 In nay humour, or one certaine part;
 But as thou sawest it rotten at the heart,
 Thou seest a Hectique feaver hath got hold
 Of the whole substance, not to be contrould,
 And that thou hast but one way, not t'admit
 The worlds infection, to be none of it.
 For the worlds subtilst immateriall parts
 Feele this consuming wound, and ages darts,
 For worlds beauty is decai'd, or gone,
 Beauty, that's colour, and proportion.
 We thinke the heavens enjoy their Sphericall,
 Their round proportion embracing all.
 But yet their various and perplexed course,
 Observ'd in divers ages, doth enforce
 Men to finde out so many Eccentrique parts,
 Such divers downe-right lines, such overthwarts,
 As disproportion that pure forme: It teares
 The firmament in eight and forty sheires,
 And in these Constellations then arise
 New starres, and old doe vanish from our eyes:
 As though heavn'd suffered earthquakes, peace or war.