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Bound to Know, Bound to Love, Bound to Last: Donne's Forms of Containment

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When John Donne famously deprecated *Biathanatos* and its defense of suicide as "a Book written by *Jack Donne* and not by Dr. *Donne*," he articulated, however apologetically and perhaps offhandedly, an early modern sense of a divided or a multiplied self.[1] This language of disunity evidently struck a chord with T.S. Eliot, for whom the poet's supposedly fractured identity manifested itself aesthetically through a poetics of disintegration. In a comprehensive study of Eliot's relationship to the early moderns, Steven Matthews reminds us how and why Donne was such a pivotal figure for Eliot and for the rise of the modernist aesthetic. Influenced by the Scots critic J. M. Robertson, Eliot came to see the early modern text as "a composite of fragments that did not ultimately or necessarily cohere into a consistently vocalized whole."[2] For him, "incomplete-

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[1]John Donne to Sir Robert Ker, April 1619, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* (1651), ed. M. Thomas Hester (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977), p. 22. Hereafter abbreviated *Letters* and cited in the text by page number.

[2]Steven Matthews, *T. S. Eliot and Early Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 58. On Eliot's readings of Donne see also Albert C. Labriola, "Style, Wit, Prosody in Donne's Poetry," *The Oxford Handbook of John*

ness, fragmentariness, and 'dissociation' [were] signifiers of Early Modern work."[3] They were also aesthetic virtues.

The monarch of wit has thus come down to us as a king of shreds and patches; the poems of the "post-Eliotic Donne" perforce reject, critique, or undermine wholeness.[4] In an important essay, Annabel Patterson deemphasizes "the ideal of coherence" in favor of reading Donne's *oeuvre* "as a mass of contradictions . . . warily or wittily expressed as self-division."[5] More recently, Hugh Grady has promoted "modernist" Donne by interpreting *The First Anniversarie* (1611) as "a fragmented poem in a very basic sense."[6] According to Grady, the poem actively resists unification, and the resistance itself "makes this poem an aesthetic success."[7] Fragmentation may be an aspect of aesthetic success for Hugh Grady as it was for T. S. Eliot, but for John Donne, fragmentation was the scientific, textual, and aesthetic problem that the poem was designed to overcome. Throughout his works, he associated fragmentation and dispersion with sin, death, and decay. "'Tis all in peeces, all cohærence gone" is not a viable let alone desirable state for the world to be in.[8] Donne was not a poet of

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Donne, eds. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 704–17, 716; Thomas Docherty, *John Donne, Undone* (New York: Methuen, 1986), pp. 3–4, 40, 89, 148–49; Tilottama Rajan, "'Nothing Sooner Broke': Donne's Songs and Sonets as Self-Consuming Artifact," *ELH* 49.4 (1982): 805–828, 805; Peter L. Rudnystksky, "'The Sight of God': Donne's Poetics of Transcendence," *Texas Studies in Literature & Language* 24.2 (1982): 185–207, 185–86; John Carey, *John Donne: Life, Mind, and Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 192, 261–62.

[3]Matthews, p. 59.

[4]Docherty, p. 3.

[5]Annabel Patterson, "All Donne," *Soliciting Interpretation: Literary Theory and Seventeenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Elizabeth D. Harvey and Katharine Eisaman Maus (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), pp. 37–67; 42.

[6]Hugh Grady, "Donne's *First Anniversary* as Baroque Allegory: Fragmentation, Idealization, and the Resistance to Unity," *John Donne Journal* 32 (2013): 107–129; 113.

[7]Grady, p. 116.

[8]John Donne, *The First Anniversarie. An Anatomie of the World, Wherein, By occasion of the untimely death of Mistris ELIZABETH DRVRY, the frailty and the decay of this whole World is represented. The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, vol. 6, *The Anniversaries and the Epicedes and Obsequies*. ed. Gary A. Stringer

sprezzatura but of *difficultà*; he shows his poetic virtuosity—along with his Mannerist and Baroque sensibilities—precisely by picking up the pieces of a shattered, broken world and ingeniously reassembling the "fragmentary rubbidge" (*SecAn*, l. 82) into a complicated yet coherent whole.

Especially in *The Anniversaries*, the Christian poet imitates the Christian God, who at the General Resurrection shall reassemble the dead particles of human dust that he has scattered and reunite body with soul: "God threatens, *Comminuam in pulverem, I will break the wicked as small as dust, and scatter them with the winde*; For after such a scattering, no power, but of God onely can recollect those grains of dust, and re-compact them into a body, and re-inanimate them into a man."[9] No power is capable of such recollection except, perhaps, that of the maker-poet. "How weak a thing is poetry?" Donne asked at an Easter Day Sermon of 1622 before issuing a Sidneyan apology: "and yet Poetry is a counterfait Creation, and makes things that are not, as though they were" (2:87). In order to demonstrate his own godlike powers of re-creation, the poet first had to scatter the pieces. As a dignified procession of regular heroic couplets, *The Anniversaries* formally counterbalance the thematic representation of disproportion, disorder, and disintegration caused by the untimely death of Elizabeth Drury. Even the title announces an element of order: the inevitable recurrence of an "Anniversary"—from the Latin *anniversarius* meaning "returning yearly"—suggests the comforting predictability of a cyclical pattern in constant motion, as grief is both commemorated and contained by time.

Donne's own distinction between Jack and the Doctor suggests not an Augustinian conversion of the worldly man into the godly man but rather the notion that both Jack and the Doctor are entirely "Donne." As Judith Scherer Herz remarks, "If Donne's letter to Ker proposed a

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et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), l. 213. All quotations of *The Anniversaries* and *A Funerall Elegie* are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically by *Variorum* short form (*FirAn*, *SecAn*, *FunEl*) and line number.

[9]"Preached at S. Pauls, in the Evening, upon Easter-day. 1626." *The Sermons of John Donne*, ed. George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, 10 vol. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958–62), 7:114. All quotations of Donne's sermons are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically by volume and page number.

divided self, it also kept both terms in play . . . Certainly there were distinct Donnes, but they inhabited the one Donne."[10] Fully aware of his own contradictions, he was equally aware that "contraryes meet in one."[11] While my own focus on unity in Donne, or the unity of Donne, has vestiges of the New Criticism, I want to clarify that I do not mourn the passing of New Criticism's ahistorical aesthetic, its tendency to make close reading *closed* reading. May it rest in peace in its well-wrought urn. At the same time, I agree with Caroline Levine that we should guard against a simple politicization of literary form. I understand her impatience with "the assumption that literary forms can be easily mapped onto political communities—that there is an effective homology between the bounded wholeness of the lyric poem, for example, and the bounded wholeness of a nation."[12] While resisting this potentially reductive alignment between the formal and the political domains, I remain invested as a historical formalist in how Donne's formal choices, thematic patterns, and aesthetic preferences respond to and negotiate with destabilizing forces in the wider world of early seventeenth-century England. His poetic privileging of containment was never "merely" formal or aesthetic: it was his metaphysical means of coping with larger problems that preoccupied him—problems of knowledge, of love, of matter, and of mortality.

Donne's poetry and prose are connected by a through-thread of motifs or master tropes, two of which, the circle and the book, will be my focus here. The circle was a geometric means of conceptualizing eternity, which was otherwise inconceivable; the book was a material means of protecting a literary legacy, which might otherwise be eternally lost. For Donne, both figures suggested comprehension,

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[10]Judith Scherer Herz, "'By Parting Have Joyn'd Here': the Story of the Two (or More) Donnes," *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 732–42; 734, 742.

[11]"Holy Sonnet XIX," ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), l. 1. With the exception of *The Anniversaries* and *A Funerall Elegie*, all quotations of Donne's poetry are from this edition. The long *s* has been modernized. Subsequently cited in the text by *Donne Variorum* short form and line numbers.

[12]Caroline Levine, *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, Network* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 25.

coherence, and completeness, and both figure prominently in the *Anniversaries*, which will receive the bulk of my attention. In the first part of this essay, I argue that circles and spheres, and the related motions of circulation and rotation, were forces of order and stability that carried Donne through a rising tide of skepticism, scientific change, and personal loss. When "new Philosophy calls all in doubt" (*FirAn*, l. 205), it damages the connective tissue in the vast network of correspondences, such as that between macrocosm and microcosm, which had long helped the early moderns make sense of their world and their place in it.[13] In *The Breaking of the Circle* (1960), Marjorie Hope Nicolson reaches a suspiciously clear-cut conclusion: "in his response to the 'new Philosophy' Donne . . . was a modern."[14] I argue otherwise in the pages that follow. For Donne, the divisive implications of the "new philosophy" were most troubling in that they extended to "all Relation" (*FirAn*, l. 214), including the interpersonal. The logic of Baconian empiricism, which stressed the discoverability of nature's discrete particulars, left "every man alone" (*FirAn*, l. 216). Quite simply, it was bad for relationships. (Not surprisingly, Bacon was bad *at* relationships, himself something of a discrete particular compared to Donne's lifelong connectedness with family, friends, and patrons.) An emblem of universal togetherness, the circle helped Donne counter this sense of separation and isolation. A symbol of totality, the circle maps onto the microcosm, which Donne regularly imagined as a sphere. From a poststructuralist perspective, which looks askance at unity, bounded wholeness "is created and maintained

[13]The impact of the new astronomy on Donne's poetry has long attracted critical interest while eluding critical consensus. See Charles M. Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy* (New York: Humanities Press, 1937); Docherty, pp. 17–50; William Empson, *Essays on Renaissance Literature, Volume I: Donne and the New Philosophy*, ed. John Haffenden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Victor Harris, *All Coherence Gone* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949); Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *The Breaking of the Circle: Studies in the Effect of the "New Science" Upon Seventeenth-Century Poetry*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960). For a more recent study, see Elizabeth D. Harvey and Timothy M. Harrison, "Embodied Resonances: Early Modern Science and Tropologies of Connection in Donne's *Anniversaries*," *ELH* 80.4 (2013): 981–1008.

[14]Nicolson, p. 169.

by acts of exclusion . . . this is the political danger that always haunts the embrace of unified form."[15] Yet as a metaphysical form of containment, the microcosm escapes this criticism. Its littleness is paradoxically all-inclusive, allowing Donne to have his universality and his intimacy, too—and intimacy fosters understanding. For Donne, the containment value of circles and spheres was less political than epistemological, less about enabling control than enabling comprehension, which in turn enables love.

Shifting metaphors while sustaining the focus on containment, the second part of this essay considers Donne's attraction to the metatextual tropes of gathering and binding. I argue that for Donne, the idea of the book—be it print or manuscript—was crucially bound up with the idea of unity and with the idea of permanence or perpetuity. For all bodies in the Donnean imaginary—whether human, ecclesiastical, political, or cosmological—unity is perpetuity's prerequisite. Donne thought of the book, literally bound to last, as another kind of unified body.[16] However, as most books in the early modern period were sold unbound, printing alone was not enough to ensure a text's preservation. I would venture that for Donne and his contemporaries, a crucial question to ask when predicting the longevity of a text, besides whether it was printed, was whether it was bound. My reading thus subordinates the mode of textual reproduction to the containing idea and bound object of the book itself. In focusing on Donne's metatextual poetics, I share Wendy Wall's "methodological concern with the relationship between the material and the symbolic."[17] Accordingly, the following discussion of

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[15]Levine, p. 31.

[16]On the important body-book correspondence in Donne, see Collins, pp. 15–42; David Scott Kastan, "The Body of the Text," *ELH* 81.2 (2014), 443–467; Felecia Wright McDuffie, *To Our Bodies Turn We Then: Body as Word and Sacrament in the Works of John Donne* (New York: Continuum, 2005); and Elaine Scarry, "Donne: 'But yet the body is his booke,'" *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Scarry (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 70–105.

[17]Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 5. In the same vein, Siobhán Collins explains her methodology as "[illustrating] the importance of how the text's content and the material form of its production, dissemination

the poetry "looks both to its material production and to its encoding of that process" figuratively and thematically.[18] An idealized body in which spirit and matter are mixed equally, the book, "as long-liv'd as the elements / Or as the worlds forme" (*ValBook*, ll. 19–20) occupied a liminal space between the temporal and the eternal, enjoying a special status in Donne's mind and art.

Making the Infinite Intimate

In grappling with the problem of how to conceive the inconceivable—namely, the spatiotemporal endlessness of eternity—Donne returned again and again to the solution of the circle. Since ancient times, the circle has been a symbol not only of eternity but also of perfect knowledge, a sense conveyed by Donne's occasional use of "compass" as a verb meaning "to understand." Judith H. Anderson has suggested that for Donne, "comprehension is in some sense containment."[19] My reading offers a chiastic and expanded version of this claim: for Donne, containment enables comprehension, and comprehension enables love. As he said in a 1629 sermon preached at St. Paul's Crosse, "love presumes knowledge . . . we can love nothing, but that which we do, or think we do understand" (9:128). The connection between comprehension and affection, between intellectual understanding and physical touch, is itself contained by the etymology of the word, which connects the Latin verb *prehendere*, "to grasp, seize, catch," and the prefix *com*, "together."[20] To comprehend is to understand *and* to embrace, just as the verb "to know" blends cognitive and erotic possession. Donne's forms of

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and reception interact with one another to produce meaning" (*Bodies, Politics and Transformations: John Donne's* Metempsychosis [Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013], p. 11).

[18]Wall, p. 6.

[19]Judith H. Anderson, *Words that Matter: Linguistic Perception in Renaissance English* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 225.

[20]Anderson, "Donne's *Anniversaries*: Loss of a Drury and the Time that Remains" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the John Donne Society, Baton Rouge, February 2015). I am grateful to Professor Anderson for sharing with me a copy of this paper ahead of publication.

containment matter because they serve to make something or someone conceivable, embodied, and lovable.

He gravitated toward tropes of containment even in his sermons, their periphrastic style notwithstanding. As Peter McCullough reminds us, Donne liked to figure the sermon itself spatially as a building with various rooms through which he guides his auditors, a device common in classical oratory.[21] But ultimately, his metaphysical thought—all metaphysical thought—finds its most dramatic outlet in verse, where big ideas and big desires are ingeniously housed in small containers, where the immeasurable is measured in meter, the infinite is numbered by syllables, and the eternal is rounded with a rhyme. Responding to Cleanth Brooks's classic analysis of "The Canonization," particularly his famous insistence that "the poem itself is the well-wrought urn which can hold the lovers' ashes," Levine cuts to the chase: "the well-wrought urn is not in the end a particularly fitting figure for the lyric poem" because it implies a distinction between form and content: "quite different from the durable urn's enclosure of a pile of ashes, the poem's capacity to control and unify linguistic materials happens in and through those materials themselves."[22] We might also object to the urn on teleological grounds: it turns the made thing into the dead thing. A better figure is the "pretty room," a space for living things. In "The Canonization," the containment figured in and through domestic architecture—"We'll build in sonnets pretty roomes" (*Canon*, l. 32), punning on *stanza* —is exquisitely realized by the stanzaic form.[23] While "reverend love" has made these lovers "one anothers hermitage," it has not exactly made them partners in exile (*Canon,* ll. 37–38). Rather, love has made a microcosm of the pair, you "Who did the whole worlds soule contract, and drove / Into the glasses of your eyes" (*Canon,* ll. 40–41). Their

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[21]Peter McCullough, "Donne as Preacher," *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Aschah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 167–181; 172.

[22]Cleanth Brooks, *The Well-Wrought Urn* (New York: Harcourt, 1942), p. 17; Levine, pp. 28, 30.

[23]On formal and geometric circularity in *Canon* see Judith H. Anderson, "Working Imagination in the Early Modern Period," *Shakespeare and Donne: Generic Hybrids and the Cultural Imaginary*, ed. Anderson and Jennifer C. Vaught (New York: Fordham, 2013), pp. 185–219; 207.

eyes, the windows to their unified souls, at the same time see the unified soul of the whole *geopolitical* world, "Countries, Townes, Courts," miraculously housed in one another (*Canon*, l. 44).

But formal containment does not a metaphysical poem make. There is nothing metaphysical about an individual's rejection of the wider world in favor of a small space, such as the "scanty plot of ground" staked out by Wordsworth as he nestles all snug in his sonnet: "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room; / And hermits are contented with their cells."[24] By contrast, the small space of Donne's verse is metaphysical because it is microcosmic, not a rejection but an epitome, distillation, or intensification of the wider world and of the love found and lost there. Donne makes reductions not in a quantitative or qualitative sense but rather in a culinary sense: a thickening, a concentration of remarkable intensity. For all its idiosyncrasies, William Empson's classic essay "Donne the Space Man" does convey an essential truth: if we want to understand what makes metaphysical poetry metaphysical, we have to think spatially. Size matters, as Empson asserted when he wrote, "it is the whole point of a microcosm to be small."[25] Except that it is not the whole point of a microcosm to be small. It is the whole point of a microcosm to put the "all" in "small." Donne did not want to get to another planet, as Empson claimed, so much as he wanted to draw all other planets in. Donne evidently saw this move as solely the poet's prerogative. He resented Galileo for encroaching on his cosmic territory by doing with a telescope what he himself was doing with metaphysical conceits. In *Ignatius his Conclave* (1611), he scoffs that Galileo "hath summoned the other worlds, the Stars to come neerer to him, and give him an account of themselves;" he has Kepler insisting "*that no new thing should be done in heaven without his knowledge*;" and he has Copernicus, "this little *Mathematitian*," arguing with Lucifer in hell.[26]

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[24]William Wordsworth, "Nuns Fret Not at Their Convent's Narrow Room," *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, 5th edition, ed. Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, and Jon Stallworthy (New York: Norton, 2005), ll. 11, 1–2.

[25]William Empson, "Donne the Space Man," *The Kenyon Review* 19.3 (1957): 337–399; 361.

[26]*Ignatius His Conclave*, *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne*, ed. Charles M. Coffin (New York: Modern Library, 2001), pp. 330–369; 334, 339. Excluding the letters and sermons, citations of Donne's prose follow this

Yet Donne's speaker commands the sun in "The Sunne Rising," where the bedroom-as-microcosm conceit is vividly wrought and perfectly rounded: "the world's contracted thus . . . Shine here to us, and thou art every where; / This bed thy center is, these walls, thy spheare" (*SunRis*, ll. 26, 29–30).

The special containing power of the circle animates what is arguably Donne's most famous metaphysical conceit. In "A Valediction: forbidding mourning," the closing image of the geometer's compass firmly corrects and contains the prior image of attenuated metal, through which the speaker suggests to his beloved that their impending separation is only or merely physical: "Our two soules therefore, which are one, / Though I must goe, endure not yet / A breach, but an expansion, / Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate" (*ValMourn*, ll. 21–24). A. S. Byatt has called this "one of the most beautiful images of radiant ignition in literature," which it is, but at the same time, the gold's thinness bespeaks its frailty, and its boundlessness bespeaks its evanescence.[27] What we have here, to lift a phrase from "Aire and Angels," is "some lovely glorious nothing" (*Air*, l. 6). Discussing this image in an essay first published in 1934, James Smith pointed to the ontological weakness of the air simile, or as he put it, "For gold, though originally solid enough, falls under suspicion of being likely to vanish away, once it has been compared to air."[28] Tellingly, in a sermon preached before Charles I, Donne himself gives the image a negative valence by associating it with the exegetical niceties of "subtle men" who stretch the Creation story to the breaking point: "Into what wire would they have drawn out this earth? Into what leaf-gold would they have beat out these heavens?" (9:48). Donne's use of the word "subtle" in connection with the leaf-gold image is a brilliant reminder of the word's etymology, as "subtletly" originally meant "thinness of consistency" (*OED* 4a).

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edition and will be cited parenthetically by *Variorum* short form and page number.

[27]A. S. Byatt, "Donne and the Embodied Mind," *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Aschah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 247–57; 252.

[28]James Smith, "On Metaphysical Poetry," *Determinations: Critical Essays*, Introduction by F. R. Leavis (New York: Haskell House, 1970), p. 29.

Such an image of attenuation is not a good note on which to end a love poem, so "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" does not end there. The subtle, airy thinness of the beaten gold begs to be reconstituted and encompassed, "For, nor in nothing, nor in things / Extreme, and scatt'ring bright, can love inhere," to touch on "Aire and Angels" again (*Air*, ll. 21–22). "A Valediction: forbidding mourning" contemplates amorphous spiritual expansion before settling in (not settling for) the measured motion of the stiff compass, the embodied abstraction of the just circle. Collecting and ordering the "ayery thinness" spreading out in the prior stanza, the compass simile that draws this poem to a close is not a breach but an expansion of the gold simile just before it: as several scholars have pointed out, the conceit is a "brilliant pun on the alchemical circled-dot symbol for gold."[29] Yet the real wealth of those last two stanzas hinges on marriage and domesticity, as this circle is a wedding ring writ large, setting limits even while symbolizing eternity. However oblique the speaker's poetic and personal wanderings, he can only go so far; he is and wants to be subject to a spousal centripetal force.

The final two lines of the poem hold in play the possibility of two discrete motions: "Thy firmnes makes my circle just" refers clearly enough to the peripheral path of the roaming leg as it completes the circle, arriving back at its starting point (*ValMourn*, l. 35). "And makes me end, where I begunne" could refer to the same motion, but I think the more compelling reference is to the radial motion of the roaming leg as it returns to the fixed foot, or "comes home" (*ValMourn*, ll. 36, 32). This reading is reinforced by how in the penultimate and final quatrains, the compass-couple analogy follows a line-by-line correspondence in which the centrifugal motion precedes the contractive (and contractual) one: "It leanes, and hearkens after it": "Thy firmnes makes my circle just" :: "And growes erect, as that comes home": "And makes me end, where I begunne" (*ValMourn*, ll. 31,35; 32, 36). When read this way, the ending dynamically resists the familiar argument that the "distinguishing feature" of the love

[29]McCullough, p. 170. See also Collins, p. 36; Rudnystky, p. 193; and W. A. Murray, "Donne's Gold Leaf and His Compasses," *Modern Language Notes* 73 (1958): 329–30.

celebrated in this poem "is its transcendence of the physical realm."[30] While this couple might "Care *lesse*" than do "Dull sublunary lovers" about missing each other's "eyes, lips, and hands," they still care enough to count on their physical reunion (*ValMourn*, ll. 20, 13 [emphasis added]). "Mourning" is "forbidden" not by the completion of the circle, which leaves the speaker hanging "out there" at a distance from his beloved, but by the promise of corporeal touch at the journey's end. The poem closes when the compass does, as physical contact between the two legs—the two embodied souls—is finally restored.

Love's need for physical connection, for literal and literary embodiment, is more pronounced in "The Extasie," where two souls can only come to know and love one another if contained within the "spheare" (*Ecst*, l. 52) of bodies. Paradoxically, it is when souls are freed from bodies, rarified in Neoplatonic suspension, that love "in prison lies" (*Ecst*, l. 68), for then love's power has no means of being perceived, felt, and shared.[31] In her Cavellian reading of this poem, Anita Gilman Sherman argues that Donne "conjure[s] up ceremonies of single intimacy that disarm a skeptical consciousness."[32] As she explains it, the lovers obtain mutual knowledge by sharing a private language made legible through "corporeal translation"; "this private language indulges the fantasy of overcoming the problem of other minds as skepticism dissolves in an orgy of intimacy."[33] Sherman construes intimacy as a challenge to skepticism within the sphere of human relations, but her argument can be fruitfully extended to human relations with the divine. If human and divine love differed at all for Donne, the difference was not in kind but in degree. The Christian doctrine of the Word made flesh invites humankind to seek

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[30]Rudnytsky, p. 189. I obviously disagree with Rudnysky's claim that the poem's last line "can only describe the completion of the circle drawn by the extended foot along the circumference" (p. 192).

[31]For a study that traces Donne's dread of and resistance to the separation of souls and bodies, see Ramie Targoff, *John Donne: Body and Soul* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008).

[32]Anita Gilman Sherman, "Fantasies of Private Language in 'The Phoenix and Turtle' and 'The Ecstasy,'" *Shakespeare and Donne*, ed. Anderson and Vaught, pp. 169–84; p. 173.

[33]Sherman, pp. 181, 180.

an intimate relationship with God, an intimacy designed to combat theological skepticism. As the lovers' souls in "The Extasie" are made knowable to one another in and through their bodies, they follow the pattern of God making himself knowable to humanity in and through Christ, a form that "sense may reach and apprehend . . . so / Weake men on love reveal'd may looke" (*Ecst*, ll. 67, 69–70). The divine Logos is contained in the person of Christ and therefore can be read, known, and loved. Whether he is pontificating or poetizing, the metaphysical Donne circumscribes in order to know, and he seeks to know in order to love.

Donne's intellectual and affective need for roundness kept him stubbornly attached to Ptolemaic astronomy. The earthly center is spectacularly lost, of course, in the *First Anniversarie*, where Donne alludes to the new astronomy with resentment. It is bad enough that astronomers have dislocated the earth and "haue empayld within a Zodiake / The free-borne Sunne" (*FirAn*, ll. 263–64); even worse is that "his course is not round; nor can the Sunne / Perfit a Circle" (*FirAn*, ll. 269–69). This is what seems to have bothered Donne the most about the new astronomy—its warping of the circle:

> We thinke the heauens enioy their Sphericall,
> Their round proportion embracing all.
> But yet their various and perplexed course,
> Obseru'd in diuers ages, doth enforce
> Men to finde out so many Eccentrique parts,
> Such diuers downe-right lines, such ouerthwarts,
> As disproportion that pure forme.
> (*FirAn*, 251–57)

Donne implies that early modern astronomers are not the only ones to blame here; men "in divers ages" have untuned the strings of cosmic harmony whenever they have boasted of discovering "eccentricities" or irregularities in the orbits of the planets, moon, and stars.

Still, the early moderns were causing discord at unprecedented levels.[34] In 1609, Johannes Kepler published his *Astronomia Nova*, in

[34]My account of key developments in early modern astronomy derives mainly from Arthur Koestler, *The Sleepwalkers: A History of Man's Changing Vision of the Universe* (New York: Penguin Books, 1959).

which he made the revolutionary argument that planetary orbits are not circles, as Ptolemy and even Copernicus had maintained, but ovals. As Arthur Koestler puts it, "[n]o philosopher had laid such a monstrous egg before."[35] No less perturbing was Kepler's postulation that planets move around the sun at variable speeds. When Donne complains about the irregular orbit of the *sun*, though, he seems to be conflating Kepler's ellipses with the transitional, hybrid model of Tycho Brahe, which represented a fascinating compromise between Ptolemy and Copernicus: while the sun orbited around the stationary earth, all other planets orbited in epicycles around the sun. King James had visited Brahe on 20 March 1590 and was inspired enough to compose a Latin poem that ended with the following verse:

> What Phaethon dared was by Apollo done,
> Who ruled the fiery horses of the sun.
> More Tycho doth, he rules the stars above,
> And is Urania's favorite, and love.[36]

What James saw as praiseworthy Donne saw as presumptuous, asking in *The First Anniversarie*, "What Artist now dares boast that he can bring / Heauen hither, or constellate any thing" (*FirAn*, ll. 391–92), given that heaven and earth have lost all correspondence? In any case, the notion of an elliptical, irregular orbit deeply offended Donne's spherical metaphysics of divine perfection.

Kepler's findings in *Astronomia Nova* were largely based on his extensive study of the orbit of Mars. In *The First Anniversarie*, Donne arguably makes a cheeky reference to the importance of Mars in early modern astronomical research:

> All their proportion's lame, it sinks, it swels.
> For of Meridians, and Parallels,
> Man hath weau'd out a net, and this net throwne
> Vpon the Heauens, and now they are his owne.
> (*FirAn*, 277–80)

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[35]Koestler, p. 334.

[36]Quoted in John Robert Christianson, *On Tycho's Island: Tycho Brahe and his Assistants, 1570–1601* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 141.

These lines allude to the mythical shaming of Mars and Venus, caught in the adulterous act by Venus's husband, the lame god Vulcan, who, as recounted by Ovid in *Metamorphosis* Book IV, had woven a subtle net expressly for this purpose. The implication of the analogy is clear: creating myths of their own, men of science have adulterated the heavens by projecting their own corrupt, ill-proportioned nature upon it.

But if lines—"meridians and parallels"—are the problem, they are also the solution. Lines are elements of division in *The First Anniversarie*, but they become elements of connection in *The Second Anniversarie*, where a geometric simile solidifies the fluid mixture that constituted Elizabeth Drury's perfectly balanced body:

> And as, though all doe know, that quantities
> Are made of lines, and lines from Points arise,
> None can these lines or quantities vnioynt,
> And say this is a line, or this a point,
> So though the Elements and Humors were
> In her, one could not say, this gouernes there.
> (*SecAn*, 131–36)

Those elements and humors *were*, these lines *are*: what has succumbed to illness, death, and decay is reconstituted in and through "quantities" of poems whose lines arise inseparably from their point of inspiration: her virtuous life. She is a point of departure that is never really left behind. The agent of macrocosmic as well as metapoetic unity, her ascendant soul passes with constant, changeless motion—"speed vndistinguish'd" (*SecAn*, l. 208)—through planetary spheres "as through the beades, a string, / Whose quicke succession makes it still one thing" (*SecAn*, ll. 209–10). Discussing these lines, Marshall Grossman claims, "[o]nly the swiftness of the soul's progress after death preserves the visual image of correspondence."[37] However, equally important is the *constancy* of the soul's speed, which resists Kepler's claim about the planets' variable velocity. Making macrocosm and microcosm still one thing, Donne's imagery moves with quick succession from cosmic necklace to "the little bones of necke, and backe" (*SecAn*, l. 212) strung fast on the spinal cord and back again to

[37]Grossman, p. 178.

the universe, where death, once the great divider of souls from bodies, is now the divine jewelry maker: "So by the soule doth death string Heauen and Earth" (*SecAn*, l. 213).

If "ruine" is "witty" (*FirAn*, l. 99), then reparation is wittier. Restoring "this commerce twixt heauen and earth" (*FirAn*, l. 399) by circumscribing spiritual ascendancy within his Ptolemaic spiritual geometry, Donne finally figures all godly souls as diametrical lines that touch each other at the earthly center of the cosmic circle. He makes us end where we began, at the heavenly circumference, by suggesting that earth is not an endpoint but a waypoint, a point of connection, a busy intersection at the middle of the passage:

> Then, soule, to thy first pitch worke vp againe;
> Know that all lines which circles doe containe,
> For once that they the center touch, do touch
> Twice the circumference; and be thou such.
> (*SecAn*, 435–38)

That "once" signifies not simultaneity but proportionality, a ratio: one touch of earth for every two touches of heaven. Yet those of us still in the center can and should *picture* simultaneously our two points of contact with a God who doubles as Creator and Redeemer: "Double on Heauen, thy thoughts on Earth emploid" (*SecAn*, l. 439). A pie graph of perfectly equal portions, Donne's geocentric cosmology doubles our means of imagining the heavenly trajectory: vertical and radial, above and before, "up" and "out."

As lines that divide the circle also multiply the number of connections along the circumference, so does Elizabeth Drury's soul, in the present tense, paradoxically improve perfection through the poem's final geometric figure:

> Shee, who by making full perfection grow,
> Peeces a Circle, and still keepes it so,
> Long'd for, and longing for'it, to heauen is gone,
> Where shee receiues, and giues addition.
> (*SecAn*, 507–10)

The verb "peeces," meaning "to mend, make whole, or complete" (*OED* 1a), recollects and reverses *The First Anniversarie*'s lament about

the noun—"'Tis all in peeces" (*FirAn*, l. 213)—by reuniting, hence resurrecting, the scattered parts of the dead world previously dissected in "our Anatomy" (*FirAn*, l. 429). Making "full perfection grow," Elizabeth Drury relates to heaven both synecdochically and metonymically: she is part of and stands for the heavenly whole. Donne liked to think of heaven, usually said to be outside time, as a place where perfection gets better all the time. To enfold her soul in this paradox is also to enfold her soul in the mystery of the divine being: he is perfect, all-in-all sufficient, lacking nothing, yet somehow he is improved by receiving human love, for which he ever longs. The addition of souls in heaven "peeces the circle" that is eternity, which makes God's full perfection grow even though "In God there is no change, nor shadow of change" (8:124).

Thus for Donne, the circle was more than an abstract symbol of eternity; it was a dynamic, redemptive, embodied source of theological insight and understanding. It gets him around the cognitive problem of eternity conceived linearly while illustrating the perfect continuity of God and of his love. Although John Carey is usually closely attuned to the nuances of Donne's spatial imagination, he misses the mark when he names eternity as "another imagined corner" for Donne.[38] I leave it to the Doctor, preaching before the king at Whitehall in May of 1627, to make the necessary correction: "God hath made all things in a *Roundnesse*, from the round superficies of this earth, which we tread here, to the round convexity of those heavens . . . God hath wrapped up all things in Circles, and then a Circle hath no *Angles*; there are no *Corners* in a Circle" (7:396–97). That is to say, a circle affords no shadows, no places to hide. A circle gives solace: it is God's embrace in which he has "wrapped up all things." It is eternal yet finite. It is endless yet contained.

Evincing just how nuanced—and materialized—his thinking was about this favorite metaphor, Donne makes the circle's signification depend on its mode of production. In an Easter Day sermon of 1619, he suggested that while the circle of earthly life is drawn, the circle of eternal life is stamped: "This life is a Circle, made with a Compasse, that passes from point to point; That life is a Circle stamped with a print, an endlesse, and perfect Circle, as soone as it begins" (2: 200). A

[38]Carey, p. 274.

draftsman using a geometer's compass falls short of perfection because he must work in time; he has a starting point and an ending point, which he connects progressively in order to complete his circle. Only the seal of the divine "Mathematician" is instantly and perfectly complete, without beginning and without end.

Yet when reflecting on the creation and resurrection of man in a marriage sermon of 1627, Donne does figure God as a draftsman working in time:

> First then, Christ establishes a Resurrection, *A Resurrection there shall be*, for, that makes up *Gods circle*. The *Body* of Man was the first point that the foot of Gods Compasse was upon: First, he created the body of *Adam*: and then he carries his Compasse round, and shuts up where he began, he ends with the *Body of man* againe in the glorification thereof in the Resurrection. God is *Alpha* and *Omega*, first, and last: And his *Alpha* and *Omega*, his first, and last work is the *Body of man* too. (8:97)

Circular in itself, Donne's rhetoric reinforces the circularity of the providential narrative. The repetition of "first" gives the impression that everything is happening simultaneously; Adam's creation and Christ's resurrection are both first and both last. Thus the circle effectively enables Donne to override any real sense of chronology or succession, as divine providence conflates history and prophecy, past and future, birth and death.[39] It has been argued that Donne associated the abstract circle with the soul's transcendence of the body.[40] However, the above quotation suggests something else: the circle is linked to the body, and the completion of God's circle depends on the resurrection of the body. "Christ establishes a Resurrection" *first*: *Consummatum est* conveys not a sense of termination but completion, as God ends where he began, with the body of man. "*Natures nest of Boxes*" are "*Concentrique*" (*Devotions*, p. 434), squares wrapped up in circles, like Leonardo's Vetruvian Man, the measure of all things, whose perfectly proportioned arms are spread as if on the

[39]Terry G. Sherwood, *Fulfilling the Circle: A Study of John Donne's Thought* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 13–14.

[40]Rudnytsky, pp. 193–94.

cross.[41] Suggesting not transcendence but immanence, the circle gives an immediacy and an intimacy to Donne's beatific vision: "I shall have an un-interrupted, an un-intermitted, an un-discontinued sight of God . . . There I shall see God intirely, all God . . . how glorious shall I conceive this light to be . . . when I shall see it, in his owne place. In that Spheare, which though a Spheare, is a Center too; In that place, which, though a place, is all, and every where" (9:128–29). What makes this heavenly sphere an everywhere? The same thing that in "The Good-Morrow" and "The Sunne Rising" makes Donne's bedroom an everywhere: love.

Using the magnitude and constancy of God's love for man as a stabilizing antidote to the vertiginous changes wrought by the new astronomy, Donne ingeniously adapts the decentered earth to his Christian cosmology, which remains spherical and unified, despite competing hypotheses, by a God of love:

> But since we wonder, and justly, that some late Philosophers have removed the whole earth from the Center, and carried it up, and placed it in one of the Spheares of heaven, That this clod of earth, this body of ours should be carried up to the highest heaven, placed in the eye of God, set down at the right hand of God, *Miramini hoc*, wonder at this; That God, all Spirit, served with Spirits, associated with Spirits, should have such an affection, such a love to this body, this earthly body, this deserves this wonder. (6:265–66)

By extraordinary Donnean logic, we can have our new philosophy and our Christian humanism too. According to the Ptolemaic notion of concentric spheres, clearly still in play here, the outer spheres are closer to God and to his unchanging perfection than is the center; what is "wonderful" about this new theory, then, is not the scientific method behind it but the spiritual meaning of it: God so loves the world that he has placed it and us, unworthy as we are, near him in a heavenly sphere.

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[41]On the Vitruvian figure in relation to Donne's imagery see also Collins, p. 31; Scarry, p. 90.

Donne had expressed this same view years earlier in a letter (c. 1609) to Goodere: "methinks the new Astronomie is thus appliable well, that we which are a little earth, should rather move towards God, then that he which is fulfilling, and can come no whither, should move towards us" (*Letters*, p. 53). In cosmic and social spheres alike, it befits the hierarchical proportions of the Chain of Being that the inferior body travel (travail) to seek out the better, not vice-versa. "What Artist now dares boast that he can bring / Heauen hither, or constellate any thing?" (*FirAn*, ll. 391–92), asks the artist who dared disturb the universe by moving earth toward heaven. "The notion of limitlessness or infinity, which the Copernican system implied, was bound to devour the space reserved for God on the medieval astronomer's charts . . . the space-and-spirit continuum would be replaced by a space-time continuum. This meant, among other things, the end of intimacy between man and God."[42] No one in early modern England was better equipped intellectually, emotionally, and aesthetically to combat these implications than Donne, who gave the fearful "Moving of th'earth" (*ValMourn*, l. 9) a positive spin, bringing us closer to a loving God. This metaphysical counterturn is classic Donne: the perfect combination of Jack's audacity and the Doctor's devotion.

Donne Gathering and Binding

As is suggested by his Ptolemaic privileging of the outer sphere, Donne could be flexible in ascribing relative values to outer and inner, above and below. In this respect, he followed Saint Augustine, who in Book X of the *Confessions* reinforces the hierarchy implicit in soul/body dualism: "What is inward is superior."[43] However, in Book XIII, Augustine figures God's word as the skin "in a sublime way 'stretched out' over everything inferior"—in this instance, what is *outward* is superior, what is *outward* is eternal.[44] Donne similarly shifts perspective in light of the rhetorical context. When preaching against

[42]Koestler, p. 222.

[43]Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. and trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 184.

[44]Augustine, ed. Chadwick, p. 282.

human vanity, he distinguishes book from binding, immortal spiritual content from corruptible material cover, in order to privilege what is within and beneath. In a sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn, he warned his audience that their obsession with physical appearance will be subject to divine judgment: "In the outward beauty, These be the Records of velim, these be the parchmins, the endictments, and the evidences that shall condemn many of us, at the last day, *our own skins* . . . we neglect book, and image, and character, and seal, and all for the covering" (3:103–4).

And yet, like Augustine, Donne on occasion privileged the covering.[45] For instance, he described the Thirty-Nine Articles as "a continuity, an intirenesse that goes through the whole Church; a skin that covers the whole body; the whole Church is bound to beleeve all the articles of faith" (10:113). In this image, the skin is sublimated as binding; what covers is what unifies. As in his sermonizing, so in his seducing: in *Elegie* XIX, Donne suggests that only "busie fooles" (*ElBed*, l. 8) prize female clothing and accessories: "Like pictures, or like books gay coverings made / For lay-men, are all women thus array'd; / Themselves are mystick books" (*ElBed*, ll. 39–41). But the volta that ends the poem turns inner superiority outward. With the double entendre, "What needst thou have more covering then a man" (*ElBed*, l. 48), the poet makes himself the mystic book's spectacular covering. Now, the binding is the most precious and privileged part of this erotic codex, the part that gives book form to textual matter. Perhaps you *can* judge a book by its cover.

The rest of this essay traces the pattern of metatextual poetics created by bibliographic images of gathering and binding in *The Anniversaries* and elsewhere. I argue that for Donne, the idea of the book and the process of bookmaking helped counteract the chaotic effects of decay, dispersion, and disintegration represented in the poems themselves. Clearly, "*The First Anniversarie* is structured around an anatomy, a dissection of a decaying body into its constituent

[45]On the Augustinian character of Donne's skin imagery see also Marshall Grossman, *The Story of All Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 80–81, 189–91; and Harvey and Harrison, 996–97. For a far-reaching study of Augustine's influence on Donne, see Katrin Ettenhuber, *Donne's Augustine: Renaissance Cultures of Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

parts."[46] Yet the representation of scientific analysis is balanced by a bibliographic synthesis written into both *Anniversary* poems; the whole bodies of the two books, *An Anatomie of the World* (1611) and *Of the Progresse of the Soule* (1612), are greater than the sum of their parts and compensate for the cosmic dissection thematized in their pages. Lamenting the loss of the girl who "had all Magnetique force alone, / To draw, and fasten svndred parts in one" (*FirAn*, ll. 221–22), the poems balance that loss as textual "parts" are drawn and fastened together bibliographically. Like the *Anniversaries* with which it was printed, *A Funerall Elegie* (1610) is conscious of itself as textual matter that must endure in order to reinforce the "cleare body" (*FunEl*, l. 59) of Elizabeth Drury: "'Twas but a through-light scarfe, her minde t'enroule; / Or exhalation breath'd out from her soule" (*FunEl*, ll. 60–62). Her body *was*: gauzy, diaphanous, obviously not made to last on earth. To keep her among us, a firmer cover is required. Donne has her covered. "Can these memorials, ragges of paper, giue / Life to that name, by which name they must liue?" (*FunEl*, ll. 11–12). They cannot if they remain in a state of "raggedness," which "is opposed to the complete or perfect."[47] But once they are joined and bound, which in fact they were when published with *The First Anniversarie* in 1611, they become something that *can* give life to that name. These pages contain rather than diminish her, a distinction that casts the text-making process in a positive light: "'Tis shrinking, not close-weauing that hath thus, / In minde and body both bedwarfed vs" (*FirAn*, ll. 153–54). Here, the lessening or "bedwarfing" that we have suffered since the loss of Elizabeth Drury is pointedly *unlike* the joining of pages stitched tightly together by "close-weauing," a self-consciously textual phrase ("the Latin *textum* means a weaving or a joining together"), that ties back into *A Funerall Elegie*.[48]

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[46]Harvey and Harrison, p. 981.

[47]Piers Brown, "Donne, Rhapsody, and Textual Order," *Manuscript Miscellanies in Early Modern England*, ed. Joshua Eckhardt and Daniel Starza Smith (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 39–55, 45. Brown's essay offers a highly nuanced exploration of "rhapsody" as a textual process of gathering, ordering, and "stitching" or joining "rags" of poetry in the making of early modern miscellanies.

[48]Jonathan Gil Harris, "Cixous, Cavendish, and the Writing of Dialogic Matter," *The Impact of Feminism in English Renaissance Studies*, ed. Dympna

Moving from textual fragments to bibliographic whole, the elegy begins with the "ragges of paper" that presumed to enwrap her name and ends with "the booke of destiny" (*FunEl*, l. 84) in which her short life is written. Stopping abruptly after a strong first chapter, this page-turner seems inexplicably, frustratingly unfinished, or worse, mutilated; the reader who "Should turne the leafe to reade, and reade no more, / Would thinke that eyther destiny mistooke, / Or that some leafes were torne out of the booke. / But 'tis not so" (*FunEl*, ll. 88–91). Despite the appearance of incompleteness, this book is not a flawed product but a handbook of piety in progress, an ongoing manuscript of virtue. In terms of the material text, the volume represented here compares to an early modern commonplace book or table book in which blank pages were bound.[49] In her modesty and generosity, Elizabeth filled up only the first few pages, leaving the rest for scribes of "true good" (*FunEl*, l. 98) who would copy her example:

> Every such person is her delegate,
> T'accomplish that which should haue beene her fate.
> They shall make vp that booke, and shall haue thankes
> Of fate and her, for filling vp their blanks.
> (*FunEl*, 99–102)

The poem thus answers in the affirmative its own question, "Can we keepe her then / In workes of hands, or of the wits of men?" (*FunEl*, ll. 9–10). For her to dwell in "that booke" is also for her to dwell in *this* elegy, which, based on the internal evidence of the textual imagery just discussed, was probably not written with print publication in mind. Rather, Donne imagined this poem circulating in manuscript form, among similar "workes of hands," in contrast to both *Anniversarie* poems, where the textual imagery points to print.[50]

Just as Donne conflates soul and body, so too does he conflate the mysticism of the book as metaphor and the corporeality of the book as

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Callaghan (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 33–52; 45. See also Brown, p. 44.

[49]I am grateful to Sean McDowell for bringing this to my attention.

[50]Beyond the scope of the present article, this claim is one I am developing in another essay with the working title, "Donne's *Anniversaries* and the Poetics of Print."

matter. The argument that Elizabeth Drury "transcends the fallen materiality of the bibliographical" precludes the possibility that for Donne, the materiality of the bibliographical was always and already transcendent.[51] In Meditation XVII, the bell tolls for us all, we are all a part of the main, and we are all chapters in the same book. Our individual lives are scattered pages; God is not only the author but also the bookbinder whose love joins us to him and to each other: "All *mankinde* is of one *Author*, and is one *volume*; when one Man dies, one *Chapter* is not *torne* out of the *booke*, but *translated* into a better *language* . . . *Gods* hand is in every *translation*; and his hand shall binde up all our scattered leaves againe, for that *Librarie* where every *booke* shall lie open to one another" (*Devotions*, p. 445). In this passage, which represents the General Resurrection as a collation project, Donne anticipates the reunion of souls and bodies at the Last Judgment, just as he does in Holy Sonnet VII: "arise, arise / From death, you numberlesse infinities / Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe" (*HSRound*, ll. 2–4). If all mankind is one volume, then the books that shall lie open to one another in heaven's library must represent a "*pluralitie of worlds*" (*Devotions*, p. 427), different volumes all written by the same author and compiled by the same bookmaker.[52]

As for its religious implications, the metaphor of mankind as one volume effectively eliminates schism within the "*Catholike, universall*" (*Devotions*, p. 445) church, making the oneness of humanity stronger than difference of opinion in matters of religion. *Pseudo-Martyr* was not published, Donne explains in "A Preface to the Priestes and Jesuits," in order to "continue a Booke-warre," but rather to foster "the unity and peace of [Christ's] Church" (*Pseudo-Martyr*, p. 327) and to publicize the author's "disposition to labour for the reconciling of all parts" (*Ignatius His Conclave*, p. 333). Granted, Donne was acting at King James's behest in exhorting English Catholics to take the Oath of Allegiance, but I still think we can believe him when he claims to be one who affords "a sweete and gentle Interpretation, to all professors of Christian Religion, if they shake not the Foundation" (*Pseudo-*

[51]Harvey and Harrison, p. 997.

[52]On Donne's openness to the possibility of other worlds, see Douglas Trevor, "Mapping the Celestial in Shakespeare's *Tempest* and the Writings of John Donne," *Shakespeare and Donne*, ed. Anderson and Vaught, pp. 111–29.

Martyr, p. 326). He suggested as much in a letter to Henry Goodere (c. April 1615), where he supports his friend's "sound true opinion, that in all Christian professions there is way to salvation," however dangerous it may have been to express this view in the wrong company (*Letters*, p. 87).

Even the book of married love, which presumably Donne is instructing his wife to write in "A Valediction: of the booke," acts as a testament to religious tolerance and peaceful Christian coexistence: "There, the faith of any ground / No schismatique will dare to wound" (*ValBook*, ll. 15–16). Before their love can represent such universality, though, "those Myriades / Of letters" (*ValBook*, ll. 10–11) that the lovers have exchanged must be collected, studied, ordered, edited, and copied into one single bound volume. "Love this grace to us affords, / To make, to keep, to use, to be these his Records" (*ValBook*, ll. 17–18) in book form alone. William Kerrigan has suggested that "Donne needs to make love into a contract—a state in the present that enjoins its perpetuation in the future."[53] Capturing the perpetuity of married love in material form, this poem's master trope conflates the legally binding contract of marriage with the literally bound pages of a book. In order for the couple's letters to be turned into a permanent, portable, useful record of love for posterity, the plural must become singular, the many "Annals" (*ValBook*, l. 13) that Anne writes must become one book. Thus unified, it has the power "to anger destiny" (*ValBook*, l. 2) by overcoming the lovers' imminent separation as well as their mortality. For Donne, this book is "How *I* shall stay" (*ValBook*, l. 3; emphasis added)—he means how he shall stay in Anne's presence as a husband after his departure, but the line also may intimate the poet's contemplation of how he shall stay in the world after his death.

The text imagined in "A Valediction: of the booke" is a type of monument, called "this all-graved tome" (*ValBook*, l. 20), with puns on "grave" and "tomb." But unlike stone markers and sepulchers for the dead, this book of love is made for the living. Many of the extant books from Donne's library are still in their original bindings of limp vellum, thus "it seems likely that this was his favourite form of

[53]William Kerrigan, "What Was Donne Doing?" *South Central Review* 4.2 (1987): 2–15, 10.

binding."[54] Relatively inexpensive, practical, and durable, limp vellum was not designed for display but for use.[55] A book thus bound would be supple and flexible—that is, more like a living body than a rigor-mortis hardback. Nor was a book immutable after it was bound; in the early modern era, "texts of all kinds were enlarged by writing, binding, and even sewing in additional material. These compiled volumes were not . . . sealed-off textual artifacts . . . Rather, these were fluid, adaptable objects, always prone to intervention and change."[56] In other words, they were alive and growing, striving toward completeness, perpetually shaped and reshaped by human hands and desires. Similarly, "A Valediction: of the booke" represents a text whose value derives not from a showy binding or gilded edges but from its perpetual openness to different readers' shaping desires.

Tropologically, Donne consistently equated books with human bodies; both were necessarily material means of containing and conveying spiritual truths. In "A Valediction: of the booke," the chronicle of John and Anne's love becomes the Holy Gospel for "Loves Divines" (*ValBook*, l. 28), who

> find all they seeke,
> Whether abstract spirituall love they like,
> Their Soules exhal'd with what they do not see,
> Or, loth so to amuze
> Faiths infirmitie, they chuse
> Something which they may see and use
> (*ValBook*, 29–34).

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[54]Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne*, Fourth Ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 260. Keynes's list of books owned by Donne has been augmented recently by Hugh Adlington, "More Books from the Library of John Donne," *The Book Collector* 61.1 (2012): 55–64.

[55]I am indebted to Hugh Adlington for a conversation about Donne's preference for limp vellum bindings.

[56]Jeffrey Todd Knight, *Bound to Read: Compilations, Collections, and the Making of Renaissance Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1013), p. 4. See also Mary Thomas Crane: "the unsettled conventions of book assembly in the period helped foster an idea of the literary work as flexible and contingent" (*Framing Authority: Sayings, Self and Society in Sixteenth-Century England* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993]), p. 9.

As in "The Extasie," where "Loves mysteries in soules doe grow, / But yet the body is his booke" (*Ecst,* ll. 71–72), we cannot begin to approach and understand things unseen without the help of things seen: "For, though minde be the heaven, where love doth sit, / Beauty a convenient type may be to figure it" (*ValBook*, ll. 35–36).[57] Beauty, body, and book are interchangeable here. So are reading, choosing, and using. Coming to understand love through the "convenient type" of one couple's experience, love's clergy emulate the example of Augustine's studious angels, before whom the face of God is an open book: "They read, they choose, they love. They ever read, and what they read never passes away. By choosing and loving they read the immutability of your design. Their codex is never closed, nor is their book ever folded shut."[58] From Augustine to Donne to Milton, reading is but reasoning, and reason is but choosing. An eternity of choice means the angels are never intellectually bored; they are forever exercising their powers of reason in reading God's will, and the saved will get to do the same thing in heaven. As Donne said in many a sermon, "*There we shall be as the Angels*" (4:128).

One of the metatextually inspired hyperboles that makes Elizabeth Drury like an angel is her intellectual containment of a literary universe: "Shee who all Libraries had throughly read / At home, in her owne thoughts" (*SecAn*, ll. 303–04) had a mind so complete and so comprehensive that she was a microcosm of heaven's library on earth. As she read perfectly in life, she is read perfectly in death as an exemplum of virtue. When she died, "shee tooke, / (Taking her selfe) our best, and worthiest booke" (*SecAn*, ll. 319–20). While the world as readership has lost its most precious volume, the world as book has lost its cover, its heavenly skin, its binding logos: "Her name defin'd thee, gaue thee forme and frame, / And thou forgetst to celebrate thy name" (*FirAn*, ll. 37–38). She was "The Cyment which did faithfully compact / And glue all vertues, now resolu'd, and slack'd" (*FirAn*, ll. 49–50). By figuring Elizabeth Drury as an adhesive that might have been used in the bookbinding process, Donne further materializes the

[57]On this comparison see also Ronald Huebert, "'Study Our Manuscripts': John Donne's Problems with Privacy," *Seventeenth Century* 26.1 (2011): 1–22, 5.

[58]Augustine, *Confessions*, p. 283.

world-as-book metaphor and invokes the actual work done in the bindery. Without her cementing substance, the volume of the world has fallen apart.

Yet our best and worthiest book is re-collected and re-embodied in the form of the 1612 edition of *The Anniversaries*. Donne gives his saintly subject secular immortality as this world's "euerlastingnesse" (*SecAn*, l. 2) is recovered in the new world of the printed text. With the line, "Shee's now a part both of the Quire, and Song" (*FirAn*, l. 10), Donne arguably puns on "quire," invoking both the choral and textual meanings of the word, which during the seventeenth century was spelled the same ("quire," "quyre," or "quere") in either context.[59] The basic unit of the book since manuscript times, "quire" is defined as "a small book or pamphlet, *esp.* one consisting of a set of four sheets of parchment or paper folded in two so as to form eight leaves" (*OED* 1). Transposed to the printed book, the quire becomes the octavo—the format of the editions published in 1611 and 1612. A type of female virtue is set in these pages, "thus richly, and largely hous'd" again in skin (*SecAn*, l. 247).

Taking at face value Donne's disparaging remarks about poetry, especially his words of remorse for having "descended to print any thing in verse" (*Letters*, p. 238), scholars have tended to infer that he did not care about the preservation of his poems as artifacts. However, I read Donne's penchant for bookmaking imagery as symbolic code for his preoccupation with his own literary lifespan. In the Epistle to the Reader of *Metempsychosis*, he sounds uncertain of—but not indifferent to—how posterity would judge his poetry: "How my stocke will hold out I know not; perchance waste, perchance increase in use," he

[59]To my knowledge, only one other Donne scholar has commented in print on this pun: "Donne would have associated the word *quire* with not only a chorus of voices but a gathering of pages" (Matthew Horn, "John Donne, Godly Inscription, and Permanency of Self in *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*," *Renaissance Studies* 24.3 [2010]: 365–380; 380). Horn suggests that the pun is present in Donne's "Hymne to God My God, in my Sickness," in which the dying poet imagines being transposed by God into heavenly music "with thy Quire of Saints for evermore" (2). However, I think the pun is less germane to this poem than to *The First Anniversary*, which, as Donne probably knew when writing it at the Drurys' behest, was destined to *become* a "quire" in the textual sense.

muses (*Metem*, p. 115). Resting on the assumption that posterity will have something to judge, this sentence implicitly links Donne's poetic legacy to the book trade. "Stock" might signify a genealogical tree or progenitive line of descent, a supply of unprinted paper, "unbound printed sheets of a publication which are inventoried by the printer until receipt of a binding order," or all the inventory a bookseller has on hand.[60] "Waste" also resonates as a bookmaking term whose multiple meanings include "the spoiled sheets resulting from errors in printing and binding."[61] "Who knowes thy destiny?" (*MHPaper*, l. 33), Donne asks the "Mad paper" (*MHPaper*, l. 1) on which he wrote a verse letter to Magdalen Herbert. "Perchance her Cabinet may harbour thee" (*MHPaper*, l. 34). The uncertain "destiny" of the poem is tied to the loose-leaf paper on which it is written: at best, it will be stuck in the "nest" (*MHPaper*, l. 36) of letters from other "noble ambitious wits" (*MHPaper*, l. 35), where it will be shuffled around, perhaps ending up on the bottom of the pile, neglected and forgotten while her eyes arouse and her fingers fondle the gifts of others. Donne's place in her coterie, like his letter's place in her cabinet, is perilous, insecure, and disconcertingly mutable. The joint threats of mutability and loss persist so long as the papers lack the organizing principle of a binding, the preservative power of a cover.

The satire "Upon Mr. Thomas Coryat's Crudities" reinforces Donne's consistent subordination of parts to wholes, of scattered pages to bound volumes. [62] He tears this flatulent travelogue apart by representing the book's literal dismemberment and dispersion:

> The bravest Heroes, for publike good,
> Scattered in divers Lands their limbs and blood.
> Worst malefactors, to whom men are prize,

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[60]Matt T. Roberts and Don Etherington, *Bookbinding and the Conservation of Books: A Dictionary of Descriptive Terminology* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1982), 233.

[61]Roberts and Etherington, p. 279.

[62]On this poem as Menippean satire see Anne Lake Prescott, "Menippean Donne," *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 58–79; 172–74.

> Do publike good, cut in Anatomies;
> So will thy booke in peeces.
> (*Coryat*, 51–55)

In other words, this book does not deserve to last, and whoever rips it to shreds is doing the world a favor. Unlike the whole book, the individual leaves can serve some useful purpose no matter where they land; since they can wrap up anything from expensive Eastern spices to homemade English goods, "thy leaves we justly may commend, / That they all kinde of matter comprehend" (*Coryat*, ll. 47–48). A book that went to press aspiring to be merchandise in its own right is richly reduced to all-purpose packaging for a comprehensive array of "real" merchandise from home and abroad.

But the sundered leaves' usefulness does not end there: "Some Leaves may paste strings there in other books, / And so one may, which on another looks, / Pilfer, alas, a little wit from you; / But hardly much" (*Coryat,* ll. 67–70). The pages of Coryate's book, rather than remaining together for posterity, now suffer the indignity of helping to bind the books of others; whatever immortality they manage to achieve is merely by chance association with a worthier text. First published in 1611 among the verses prefacing *Coryat's Crudities*, this mock panegyric can be read as a satiric inversion of *An Anatomy of the World*, published the same year: imaginatively tearing out and dispersing the pages of the edition in which his own poem appears, Donne ironically helped assure Coryate the fame he did not deserve. Even if *Coryat's Crudities* is less than the sum of its parts with respect to its literary merit, the whole nevertheless survives intact by virtue of its boundness; Coyrate himself "[proffered] his *Crudities* in specially bound copies to each of the members of the royal family."[63]

From his December 1614 letter to Henry Goodere, we know that Donne attempted to gather the scattered leaves of his own poems in order to compile a volume for the press. The tone of the letter indicates that the task weighed heavily on him: "By this occasion I am made a Rhapsoder of mine own rags, and that cost me more diligence, to seek them, then it did to make them" (*Letters*, pp. 196–97). Given Donne's dread of the social, political, and moral scrutiny that came

[63]Patterson, p. 38.

with print publication, it is not surprising that despite pressure from his poetry-loving patron Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, Donne never printed the volume.[64] At this time, the publication of these poems, many of which are famously salacious, would have embroiled the newly ordained priest in scandal. Donne wrote to Goodere that the planned verse collection was meant to be "a valediction to the world, before I take Orders" (*Letters*, pp. 196–97), but as Helen Gardner notes, "[a] more unsuitable method of bidding farewell to the world on taking holy orders it would be hard to imagine."[65] According to David Scott Kastan, Donne's avoidance of print in this case also may convey "some sense of ethical responsibility to the circle of his friends to keep the distribution of his verse somewhat contained."[66] Kastan's point lends my argument an important sociocultural dimension, one that neatly unites the circle and the book: manuscript circulation *was* a form of containment. It was at the same time "a form of publication" in its own right, one that evidently was far less contained than Donne would have liked; copies of individual Donne poems circulated in extraordinarily high numbers during his lifetime.[67] Even so, he doubtless preferred these ever-widening circles of readers—like so

[64]On the complexities of Donne's relationship with Somerset, see Jeanne Shami, "Donne's Decision to take Orders," *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 530–33.

[65]Helen Gardner, ed., *The Divine Poems of John Donne*, 2nd Ed. (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), lxiv–lxv. I am grateful to Gary Stringer for a conversation about Donne's reluctance to publish his poetry and for alerting me to Gardner's discussion of the topic.

[66]Kastan, p. 451.

[67]Kastan, 449. On the popularity of Donne's poetry in manuscript during the poet's lifetime see, among others, Peter Beal, "John Donne and the Circulation of Manuscripts," *The Cambridge History of the Book, vol. 4: 1557–1695*, ed. F. J. Barnard and D. F. McKenzie with M. Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 122–261; Collins, 146; Richard B. Wollman, "'The Press and the Fire': Print and Manuscript Culture in Donne's Circle," *SEL* 33 (1993): 85–97; 88; Ernest W. Sullivan, II, "John Donne's Seventeenth-Century Readers," *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 29; and H. R. Woodhuysen, *Sir Philip Sidney and the Circulation of Manuscripts 1558–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 155.

many concentric spheres spreading outward from their authorial center—to the chaotic, unfocused social scattering and "descent" that was print publication.

The fact that Donne never printed a verse collection does not necessarily mean that he never compiled one. Whatever Donne's reasons for not following through with the printed edition, it is not unreasonable to assume that for him, the process of collecting individual poems was important in and of itself. Such an act was not without literary precedent: Petrarch himself had made a point of gathering and binding the poems of the *Canzoniere*, called in Italian *Rime sparse*, scattered rhymes, and in Latin *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, fragments of vernacular poetry. Kerrigan has claimed that "Renaissance Petrarchism . . . is probably the clearest instance in Western literary history of the binding power of tradition as such."[68] I would add that the binding power of Petrarchan tradition included a tradition of binding. As Mark Musa explains, "The poems themselves had been written over many decades, then revised, polished, and gathered by Petrarch from time to time into manuscripts which he sent out to patrons and friends. These were brought together in one final form and recorded in his own hand during the last year of his life."[69] This signed holograph was Petrarch's valediction to the world. For Donne too, collection may have been a kind of self-preservation. He did not want his poems to be "for much publique view" (*Letters*, pp. 196–97), but neither did he want them to perish.[70]

Also working in the interest of aesthetic wholeness, John Donne junior prided himself on gathering and binding his father's scattered leaves. He proclaims in the dedication of the 1650 edition "To the Right Honourable William Lord Craven Baron of Hamsted-Marsham" that "although these poems were formerly written upon severall occasions, and to severall persons, they now unite themselves, and are become one pyramid to set your Lordships statue upon" (ed. Grierson, p. 5). A Royalist army officer and one of the wealthiest men in

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[68]Kerrigan, p. 10.

[69]Mark Musa, ed. and trans., *Petrarch: The Canzoniere or Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), Introduction with Barbara Manfredi, p. xi.

[70]Siobhán Collins arrives at a similar conclusion (146), as does Richard Wollman (88).

England, the Earl of Craven's estate was shrinking in 1650, when parliamentary committees were in the process of sequestering his property. Seemingly conscious of Craven's losses, Donne junior offers a degree of recompense: setting his statue on the "pyramid" of Donne senior's poetry gives the earl a stake in a literary legacy bound to be more solid, stable, and lasting than the Craven estate, subject as it was to the vicissitudes of political history.[71] This was the fifth edition of *Poems, by J.D.*, but it was the only edition to include a dedication, and its title page advertises the addition of "divers Copies under his own hand never before in print." Donne junior's involvement evidently justified the claim to a degree of authority, coherence, and completeness that the prior editions had lacked.

The dedication to Craven replaces the earlier editions' cryptic "Printer to the Understanders." Regarding these editions, the cryptic nature of the title itself, *Poems, by J.D.*, is worth a moment's consideration, since "initials, however much they may point at a particular author, are never completely self-evident." So why did the publisher, John Marriot, put the poet's initials rather than his full name on the title page? Kastan suggests that this choice—and it *was* a choice—may have been "Marriot's respectful acknowledgment of Donne's own ambivalence about poetry in print."[72] Stephen Dobranski assumes that "the publisher did not deem the poet's full identity . . . important enough to have increased sales."[73] I think the initials themselves were meant to increase sales. Evocative of a personal letter, "J.D." was likely a marketing tactic, a means of playing to a potential buyer's social fantasy. Despite "the book's remarkable canniness about itself as a print object and print product," Marriot intended to give the 1633 edition an air of intimacy traditionally associated with manuscript circulation.[74] The title and the prefatory

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[71]I am grateful to Daniel Starza Smith for sharing the biographical information on Craven and for suggesting this interpretive gloss.

[72]Kastan, p. 461.

[73]Stephen B. Dobranksi, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 124.

[74]Kastan, p. 461. Complicating Kastan's claim, Dobranksi argues that the book's format was actually inspired by manuscript conventions: "the printer and publisher used blank spaces in *Poems, By J. D.* [1633] as part of a larger strategy to create an intimate text, evoking a manuscript miscellany" (p.

letter gesture enticingly toward the kind of social containment and social privilege that properly belonged to manuscript culture. The implication is that buying the book will make the average Londoner an "understander": a member of an inner circle of knowing and known readers. In any case, the reader is lucky to have this book and should not hope for a better. The printer coyly declines to promise "more correctnesse, or enlargement in the next Edition" (ed. Grierson, p. 1). Instead, he advises the reader to take the book "as he findes it, in what manner soever" (p. 2). By his own admission, the printer has produced, albeit more than "a scattered limbe of this Author" (p. 2), still less than a whole body.

Presenting his own edition as comparatively complete, Donne junior connects the pursuit of wholeness to the promise of immortality. The poems do not acquire the permanence of a pyramid until they are united in one book to the eternal glory of one poet and one patron (not to mention one son). Donne the younger presented the 1651 edition of *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* in a similar way: "it may be some kinde of Prophecy, of the continuance, and lasting of these Letters, that having been scattered . . . I cannot say into parts, but corners of the World, they have re-collected and united themselves."[75] The poet's eldest son is not widely remembered for his tactfulness, yet in both dedications he tactfully avoids claiming credit as the gatherer of his father's writings. In other words, he does not say, "I have collected them"; he says, "they have collected themselves," like scattered pieces of his father's soul seeking each other out, each knowing that it is not entire of itself but is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.

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119). Erin A. McCarthy draws a similar conclusion from the seemingly haphazard arrangement of the volume: "Marriot creates a sense of strategic miscellaneity that allows him to present [the first edition] as a means for previously excluded readers to gain access to Donne's restricted manuscript texts" ("Poems, by J. D. [1635] and the Creation of John Donne's Literary Biography," *John Donne Journal* 32 [2013]: 57–85, 61).

[75]John Donne the younger, ed. *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour: Written by John Donne, Sometime Deane of St. Pauls London* (London: Printed by J. Flesher for Richard Marriot, 1651), Epistle Dedicatory "To the most virtuous and excellent Lady M^{ris}. Bridget Dunch," A3.

Like blood pumped from the heart, contraction enables expansion, and collection enables distribution. To make me end where I began, with the circle, I want to comment on how the circulation of Donne's poetry is described in the *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts*:

> It is likely that, in the first instance, copies of Donne's poems were made by or for friends or influential people in his circle only for their personal use, that these copies were passed around and further copies made in their circles, and so the web of transmission spread outwards, eventually reaching the miscellanies compiled by people quite unknown to Donne at the universities and Inns of Court.[76]

Despite his frustrated desire to limit the circulation of his poems, Donne would have liked this passage's operative metaphor: a Ptolemaic literary microcosm with him at the center. In a sermon, he used the image of radial expansion as a positive figure for worldly achievement: "there is a liberty given us, nay there is a law, an obligation laid upon us, to endeavour by industry in a lawful calling, to mend and improve, to enlarge ourselves, and spread, even in worldly things" (2:310). Although Donne would not have deemed poetry "a lawful calling," his poems' ever-increasing, ever-multiplying spheres of transcription and dissemination nonetheless effected a positive enlargement of their progenitor's gifts. In the poem "Loves Growth," rings radiate out through water but always refer back to their center, forming yet another Ptolemaic microcosm around an adored soul: "If, as in water stir'd more circles bee / Produc'd by one, love such additions take, / Those like so many spheares, but one heaven make, / For, they are all concentrique unto thee" (*LovGrow*, ll. 21–24). The figure is an apt one for the kind of new formalist reading I hope I have done here. We might call it "concentric" reading, which spreads outward from the text into different spheres of cultural context: literary, rhetorical, biographical, bibliographical, social, economic, political, philosophical, scientific, religious. But no matter how far we

[76]"Introduction: the Manuscripts of Donne's Verse," *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts 1450–1700*, ed. Peter Beal (London: Institute of English Studies, 2015), http://www.celm-ms.org.uk/introductions/DonneJohn.html, *s.v.* "CELM: John Donne."

roam as readers, we always refer back to the center, the stirring point, the fixed foot that keeps our circles just: the poet's language. The circumference is up to us.

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