

Editor's Note: M. Thomas Hester, Donne Scholar Par Excellence

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The present volume marks a new phase in the history of the *John Donne Journal*, in that it is the first to be edited and published after the retirement of founding editor, M. Thomas Hester. Changings of the guard, regardless of where they occur, naturally invite reflection, as the newcomers recall the accomplishments of their predecessors, a prelude to thoughts about the future. For more than thirty years, since the first issue found its way into the hands of subscribers and libraries in 1982 (Fig. 1), the journal energized the field of Donne studies by promoting a forum for the latest developments in the ongoing investigation of the life and works of Donne, his contemporaries, and his successors, including those modern poets who have found inspiration in Donne's words. By becoming the one place most likely to attract the notice of those most interested in Donne scholarship, the journal, along with the annotated bibliographies of John R. Roberts and *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, has centered the field and generated decades of conversation, both in print and at any gatherings where Donne scholars happen to congregate.¹

¹Roberts, *John Donne: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism, 1912–1967* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973), 323 pp.; *John Donne: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism, 1968–1978* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1982), 434 pp.; *John Donne: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism, 1979–1995* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004), 605 pp.; *John Donne: An Annotated Bibliography of Modern Criticism, 1996–2008* (*DigitalDonne: the Online Variorum* [<http://donnevariorum.tamu.edu>], 2013), 551

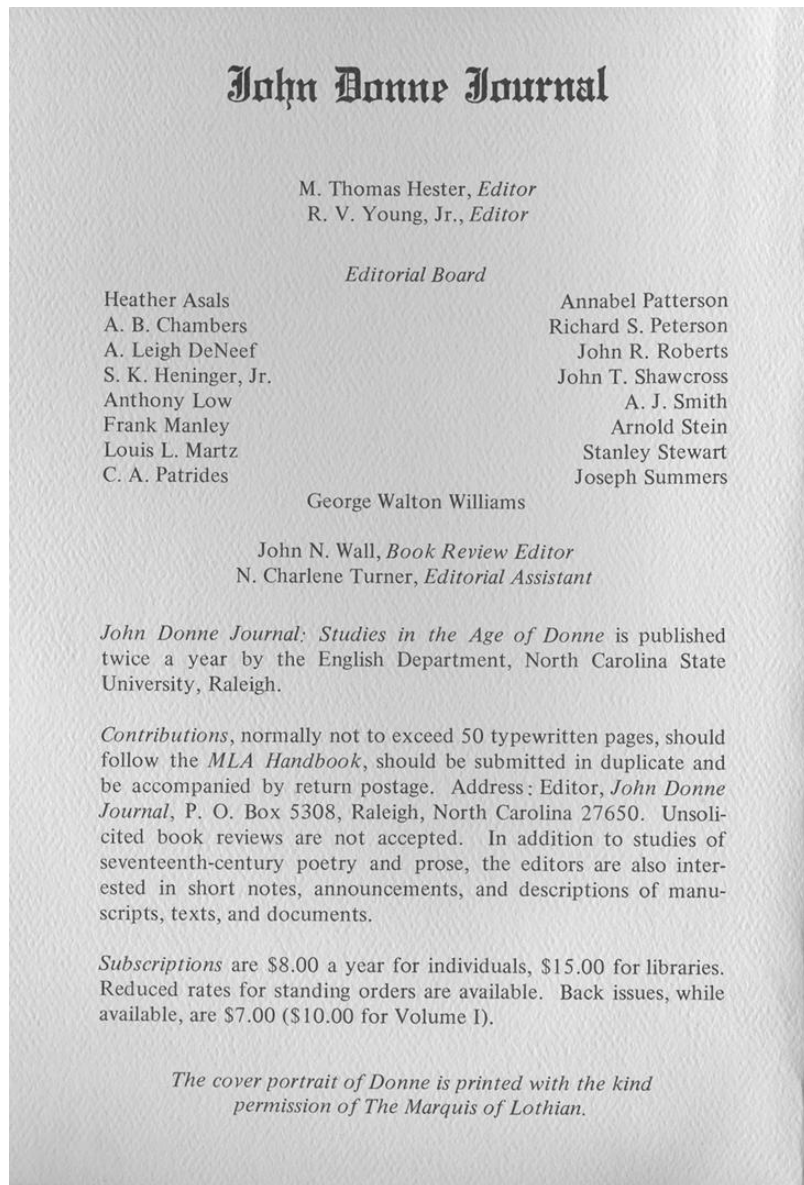


Fig. 1. Vol. 1 Masthead (1982).

pp.; *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, gen. ed. Gary A. Stringer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995—).

Indeed, the journal has been a key contributor to the sense of community at the heart of the John Donne Society, the international scholarly organization sired by the Donne Variorum project and responsible for hosting an annual Donne conference (now in its 32nd year) as well as annual sessions at the MLA Convention and the Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting.² More than a few scholars around the world have in their closets, dressers or wardrobes one or more of the T-shirts the journal editors distributed at the annual conference over the years. Many scholarly journals, especially those dedicated primarily to single authors, similarly stand at the center of their fields. But the same cannot be said of every journal's involvement in community.

Still, the most lasting contribution of this journal will be the scholarship it has published and will continue to publish. *John Donne Journal* began in the early 1980s as an editorial partnership of M. Thomas Hester and R. V. Young, longtime colleagues at North Carolina State University. They co-edited it from 1982 until 2007, when Young assumed the editorship of *Modern Age*. But they did not work on the journal alone. A variety of others also have contributed to its successes over the years, sometimes behind-the-scenes. Two other N. C. State colleagues played key roles at different points during its history. From 1982–89, John N. Wall served as book review editor, and from 1993–2013, Brian Blackley, whose good humor is well-known among annual Donne conference attendees, served in a variety of variously named capacities, including “Assistant Editor” (1993), “Business Manager and Associate Editor” (1994), “Associate Editor” (1995–97), and “Managing Editor” (1998–2013). Meanwhile, a host of other people served as editorial assistants, beginning with N. Charlene Turner (1982–92), who provided invaluable technical assistance during the journal's first decade. Many worked on the journal as graduate students, including research assistants Fred Parry (1989), Stephen Brandon (1989–92), Jill Elswick (1990–91), and Thomas Orange (1992), as well as Maria Kingery (1995–98); Tracy McLawhorn (1988–2002), who happily now rejoins the journal as Production

²For a history of the John Donne Society, see Gary A. Stringer, “A Brief History of the John Donne Society” (<http://johndonnesociety.org/background.html>).

Editor; Lara Massey (now Crowley, 2001–02), a valued member of our editorial board; Laura Edwards (2003–04); Matthew Lynch (2003–04); and Gene Melton (2004–13), who was awarded a Distinguished Service Award by the John Donne Society in 2016 for his essential work in maintaining the journal during its brief hiatus and his invaluable assistance during our recent editorial transition. Many of these graduate students learned about the world of scholarship from the inside, through their work on the journal. The partnership of Hester and Young thus directly influenced the careers of several Donne scholars, who entered the field inspired by their example.

Any publication with a history as long as this one cannot help but bear the marks of its editors' personalities and interests. From the beginning, the *John Donne Journal* benefited from its editors' dedication to scholarly excellence, whether in the form of archival research, contextual recovery, or keen-eyed literary interpretation capable of knowing the literary text more clearly and with deeper awareness. In issue after issue, volume after volume, the journal has published influential scholarship that has received international recognition. In 1989, the John Donne Society began offering annual "Distinguished Publication Awards" for the best work published in the field of Donne studies.³ Seven of these have gone to work published in the journal, including the 1993 award given to vol. 9.1 as a whole. That volume, a special issue guest edited by Achsah Guibbory on "Interpreting 'Aire and Angels,'" attests to how adroitly the editors were responsive to developments in the field. In 1998, the annual Donne conference began to feature Colloquia on individual Donne works to further discussion of these works and to promote classroom teaching. Vol. 9.1 emerged from the lively panel discussion on "Aire and Angels" at the 1990 conference, a discussion marked by divergent opinions, energetic debate, and a desire to further the conversation long after the official session time lapsed. It gathered the original panelists' papers along with additional essays and became the first installment of a series of published Colloquia that become one of the journal's most popular offerings. So far, the journal has published Colloquia on "Satire III" (vol. 10, 1991); "A Valediction forbidding

³For a complete list of award recipients, see <http://johndonnesociety.org/awards.html>.

mourning" (vol. 13, 1994); "Farewell to Love" (vol. 18, 1999); "The Sun Rising" (vol. 20, 2001); "The Good-morrow" (vol. 22, 2003); *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (vol. 26, 2007); "Upon the translation of the Psalmes by Sir *Philip Sydney*, and the Countesse of Pembroke his Sister" (vol. 27, 2008); "A Valediction of the Booke" (vol. 28, 2009); and "Resurrection. Imperfect." (vol. 29, 2010). In addition, individual article-length versions of Colloquia essays have graced these pages, as in the case of Annabel Patterson's and Dayton Haskin's essays on "A Litanie" (vol. 21, 2002), the Colloquium subject at the 17th annual conference, and Ilona Bell's award-winning essay on "Loues Progress" (vol. 29, 2010), the Colloquium focus at the 24th annual conference.

The special issue on "Interpreting 'Aire and Angels'" also takes its place within a history of special issues, as Hester and Young invited other guest editors from time to time to explore topics of interest to journal readers, often timely topics. So far, we have published nine special issues: "The Metaphysical Poets in the Nineteenth Century," ed. Antony H. Harrison (vol. 4.2, 1985); "Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts," ed. Richard S. Peterson (vol. 5.1–2, 1986); "Interpreting 'Aire and Angels,'" ed. Achsah Guibbory (vol. 9.1, 1990); "Reading Donne's Sermons," ed. Jeanne Shami (vol. 11, 1992); "New Uses of Biographical and Historical Evidence," ed. Dennis Flynn (vol. 14, 1995); "Donne Returns to Loseley," ed. M. Thomas Hester and R. V. Young (vol. 19, 2000); "In Memoriam: Louis Lohr Martz, 1913–2001," ed. Jonathan F. S. Post and R. V. Young (vol. 21, 2002); "A Special Issue Devoted to Richard Crashaw," ed. John R. Roberts and R. V. Young (vol. 24, 2005); and "Literature and Music," ed. Richard S. Peterson (vol. 25, 2006). "Reading Donne's Sermons" attended to the renewed interest in Donne's sermons, his largest overall body of work, as essential to understanding Donne's thought and his responses to his times. In some ways, it foreshadowed what would become an important area of Donne studies today. "Donne Returns to Loseley" is the proceedings volume of the landmark 18–20 May 2000 conference that Hester and Dennis Flynn organized at Loseley Park, near Guildford, Surrey, the historic ancestral home of Donne's beloved wife, Anne. The "In Memoriam" volume of 2002 paid special tribute to one of the luminaries in the study of the seventeenth-century religious imagination. In such cases, the journal responded directly to

important shifts in the field and events worthy of being marked and remembered.

Furthermore, the first special issue, “The Metaphysical Poets in the Nineteenth Century,” prefigured what would become another recurring focus of the journal—an interest in Donne’s afterlife, his timeless influence and presence in the work of other poets subsequent to his death. In 2007, the year after Young stepped down from his role as co-editor (though he remains a valued reviewer and contributor to this day, as his review in the present volume attests), Hester implemented a new category of essay clusters: “More Signs of Donne,” a cluster of essays on the Donnean presence or influence in the work of more modern poets. Here is how he first described it in 2007:

Signs, voiceprints, echoes. . . . Donne persists, turning up sometimes as bidden guest in direct address or as a character in a fiction, sometimes as line or phrase in poem or prose. Whether as quotation or provocation, as iconic figure signifying soul stress or more carnal matters, Donne remains an ongoing presence in the literary imagination. We hope to highlight such sightings and soundings—like those discussed in the following essays—in future volumes of *John Donne Journal*.

[Editor]

To date, in four separate volumes, “More Signs of Donne” has featured essays by Judith Scherer Herz, Jonathan F. S. Post, Raymond-Jean Frontain, Kui Yan, Helen B. Brooks, Margaret Maurer, Paul A. Parrish, Ann Hurley, Jebah Baum, Allison Knight, Sean H. McDowell, and Kalyan Chatterjee on such figures as Paul Muldoon, Mark Jarman, Michael Symmons Roberts, Carl Phillips, Anthony Hecht, Rudyard Kipling, Tennessee Williams, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Allen Ginsberg, Rabindranath Tagore, Adrienne Rich, Mary Novik, Benjamin Britten, June Wayne, Jonathan Holmes, John Adams, and Seamus Heaney. The journal has continued to evolve right up until the present and will continue to do so during this new phase of its existence.

But before all thoughts bend toward the future, we would be remiss if we did not take time to reflect on the other accomplishments of the last of its founding editors to retire. While his tireless work on

the journal has been notable for all of the reasons so far suggested, to call it Prof. Hester's signature contribution to Donne studies would be to miss a large part of the story. He is noteworthy also for his other collaborations and his own substantial individual contributions to Donne scholarship. Even if the *John Donne Journal* had never existed, Hester's would still have been one of the more significant voices in Donne studies over the past century. And so it seems fitting in these few remaining pages to take stock of his other Donne contributions, to give utterance, even if in summary fashion, to the range of his scholarly achievement in a broader sense, drawing special attention, perhaps, to those contributions not as immediately obvious as others. At the end of this note is a chronological bibliography of Hester's work in seventeenth-century studies, so that readers can trace his scholarly trajectory more fully. For now, the following narrative account will have to suffice.

Throughout his career, Hester has sought to draw attention to the genres of Donne's writing that received too little attention at the height of Donne's reputation during the hegemony of New Criticism. He also has worked to sharpen our collective focus on the significant contexts and biographical associations that inspired Donne and shaped the poet's work and development. Both of these interests found expression in his archival publishing, the focus of which has been to make more widely available key source texts for a greater comprehension of Donne's life and artistry, particularly the poet's associations with fellow coterie members, friends, patrons, and Anne Donne (née More).⁴ Hester, along with others, has undertaken a sustained investigation of Donne's letters and habits of letter-writing. One of his earliest publications was his facsimile edition of the 1651

⁴Hester's fascination with Anne especially has been a recurring focus of his publishing endeavors, manifesting most notably in the edited collection, *John Donne's "desire of more": The Subject of Anne More Donne in His Poetry* (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1996), the Loseley Hall conference (and the volume devoted to it), the co-edited edition (with Dennis Flynn and Robert Parker Sorlien) of *John Donne's Marriage Letters in The Folger Shakespeare Library* (Washington: The Folger Shakespeare Library, 2005), and his work on Donne's Latin Epitaph for Anne.

*Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*⁵. These letters are important, Hester demonstrates, because they “provide not only biographical and bibliographical data useful to a better understanding of Donne’s poetry and prose, but also sketches, often very detailed observations, of the national and international conflicts that were in coming years to inaugurate tremendous changes in the political and religious map of Europe.”⁶ Yet his introduction to the edition goes further than simply stressing the letters’ significance by conjecturing a chronological order of the correspondence that identifies and in some cases corrects the names of the recipients. It thereby undoes the misleading arrangement and attributions of John Donne the Younger for the furtherance of biographical accuracy, as it was then understood in the late 1970s.

Two subsequent editions continued the work of making more widely available resources by which Donne’s identity as a letter-writer can be better known. In the 1990s, Hester and Young collaborated on editing and translating the *Epistolica Institutio* of Justus Lipsius, the Belgian humanist whose thoughts about style and letter-writing influenced the members of Donne’s earliest coteries.⁷ Lipsius had great currency at the Inns of Court in the 1590s. Indeed, John Hoskyns, one of the most vibrant Inns of Court figures at this time, borrowed freely from the *Epistolica Institutio* in his *Directions for Speech and Style* (circa 1599). So, too, did Ben Jonson in his *Timber, Or Discoveries* (1641). The bilingual edition of Hester and Young, which presents the Latin original and English translation on facing pages, allows for the recovery of Lipsius’ stylistic precepts first-hand. It therefore is an essential resource for anyone who wishes to understand the artistry of Donne’s letters—as well as that of other seventeenth-century figures.

Most recently, Hester collaborated with Dennis Flynn and the late Robert Parker Sorlien on a beautifully executed facsimile edition of

⁵Delmar, NY: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1977.

⁶Ibid., p. xv.

⁷Justus Lipsius, *Principles of Letter-Writing: A Bilingual Text of Justus Lipsius Epistolica Institutio*, ed. and trans. R. V. Young and M. Thomas Hester, The Library of Renaissance Humanism (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996).

John Donne's Marriage Letters in the Folger Shakespeare Library.⁸ This edition, which won the John Donne Society Distinguished Publication Award in 2005, is remarkable in several respects. As an artifact, its full-size, high-resolution color images of the marriage letters make it a pleasure to read. The volume groups all the images into a single section, so that one can read the archival witnesses without editorial interruption. But also it arranges the letters chronologically, so that the love story of Donne's clandestine marriage (one of the greatest behind-the-scenes love stories in English literature) can be experienced *as a story*. The informed, informing, witty introduction explains this story in full, carefully adding all the context one needs for it to come alive, and the transcriptions of individual letters include brief notes framing each piece. Of such a volume, one can only say, "John Donne, Anne Donne, well-done!"

Of course, Hester the Donne scholar is perhaps even more well-known for his recovery of another of Donne's genres: the Satyres. When it was published in 1982, *Kind Pitty and Brave Scorn: John Donne's Satyres*⁹ was the first book-length study on Donne's five Satyres. It remains one of the most important sources for anyone who wishes to understand how the Satyres function as verse satire. Hester's argument, that these poems can be read as a sequence in which Donne defines his identity as a moral satirist as well as what should be the scope of satire in the perilous 1590s, continues to be a must-read for those interested in these poems as commentary on Donne's time, windows into Donne's biography, and an intriguing chapter in the development of verse satire. Hester followed this monograph with additional essays on the Satyres as his thoughts about these poems continued to develop over time.

His recovery effort extended to other poetic genres as well. He was one of the first to take seriously Donne's epigrams as a poetic genre, worthy of substantial critical analysis, and he has published repeatedly on these poems, unpacking the significance of their titles and their adherence to and departures from generic precedents. His essay, "The epigram," published in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, which he co-

⁸Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2005.

⁹Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982, ix, 178 pp.

edited with Jeanne Shami and Dennis Flynn,¹⁰ is a *tour-de-force* in the art of encapsulating both the boundaries of a genre as well as an individual's work within that genre. While sketching the importance of Donne's reputation as epigrammatist, this essay demonstrates that the epigram became an attractive choice for Donne because of its prominence in the work of Donne's famous literary ancestors, Thomas More (Donne's great grand uncle) and John Heywood (Donne's grandfather),¹¹ and because its generic prescription of compression naturally suited Donne's temperament. Hester shows how epigrammatic tendencies extend beyond Donne's epigrams as well. "In his Epigrams (as frequently in his lyrics) the movement is towards the compression of the speaker's utterance into as small a space as possible, almost to reduce the poem to a phrase or even a word," he explains. "In most cases, the Donne Epigram (or lyric) does just the opposite of 'elaborating' on a motif or metaphor."¹² This compression often allows Donne to invoke multiple frames of discursive reference simultaneously. In this way, "Donne seems always to be testing the power or potentiality of words to signify, for the compression of signs into a single phrase or word both satisfies and at the same time destroys the dialectical movement towards clarity or closure."¹³ Donne's earliest poems, the epigrams have, until recently, received only scant attention.¹⁴ Hester's essay and his most recent book, *A Close Reading of John Donne's Epigrams*¹⁵ show why they merit a closer look, especially for anyone concerned with Donne's development as a poet. With a similar seriousness, Hester has investigated Donne's elegies, religious poems, and Latin epitaph for Anne.

¹⁰*The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 105–21.

¹¹Hester contends that Donne may well have learned the form—and by extension, *The Greek Anthology* and the Latin epigrams of Martial, Catullus, and Maximus Planudes—through the work of his famous relatives (pp. 107, 115).

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴One notable exception, which Hester also credits, is Theresa M. DiPasquale's masterful essay, "Donne's Epigrams: A Sequential Reading," *Modern Philology* 104.3 (Feb. 2007): 328–78.

¹⁵Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2016.

Lest one think he has devoted his attention exclusively to publishing on the lesser-taught genres, however, Hester also has been one of our best, most adroit readers of Donne's love poems. He shared his insights into how to read Donne in his award-winning essay, "'This cannot be said': A Preface to the Reader of Donne's Lyrics,"¹⁶ which offers an explanation for why Donne's language, in particular, the ways in which his verse refuses to be completely pinned down, continues to fascinate readers nearly four centuries after the poet's death. Foregrounding Donne within the perilous predicament of Catholic recusancy during the height of Catholic persecution in the 1590s, Hester connects Donne's engagements with Jesuit equivocation as a survival strategy. He finds that in Donne's "strategy of denial—or stratagem of deniability—in the love lyrics" he can "offer a 'preface' to a reading of how and why those works tell us how and why they *will not tell*."¹⁷ Citing Donne's remarks in the preface to *Pseudo-Martyr*, Hester contends that "any reading of Donne's love lyrics" must consider carefully the implications of "(Counter)Reformation" vocabulary at the center of the "late Elizabethan controversy about how to read the 'body' of Scripture and the 'body' of Christ in the Eucharist,"¹⁸ a vocabulary that paradoxically allows "what cannot be said" to be both said and not, suggested and also deferred. As he further explains,

The "lesson" of love which Donne's outrageous lover reads and explicates is not just Spenser's Easter defense by which we love "*like as we ought*" (*Amoretti* 68), but it is blasphemously analogous to the canon of the Catholic Mass by which "For Gods sake" we engage in the "reverend," "substantial," "daily" descent of the real body's "dying"—the "small change" of sexual exchange that "parents grudge," authorities "deny," and no one but the lovers would "impute" to be more than the adulterous idolatry of the body.¹⁹

¹⁶*Christianity and Literature* 39 (1990): 365–85. This essay received the Distinguished Publication Award in 1991. It has been reprinted subsequently in Donald R. Dickson's *John Donne's Poetry*, Norton Critical Edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), pp. 338–49.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 368.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 369.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 374.

Through his appropriations of the lexicon of religious controversy, Donne forces his readers to confront the terms themselves and the ways in which they are employed in other contexts, a pattern that repeats throughout his poetry, not just in the *Songs and Sonnets*. In this fashion, Donne “could use the ‘art of Equivocation’ to ‘hide’ a Recusant reading of the ‘currant’ religious war in the ‘blest lies’ of his witty texts without becoming a casualty himself.”²⁰

As the above quotations illustrate, readers of Hester’s critical writings cannot help but note his own witty allusiveness. So deep is his immersion in Donne’s language that it peppers his prose at strategic moments. Indeed, he seems to take pleasure in verbal relish, the same verbal relish that characterizes English Renaissance literary expression and that harkens to a venerable linkage between true understanding and speaking well. Even in collaborative writings, essays he co-wrote with others, Hesterian passages of verbal relish stand out, as in the following explication of Donne’s “understandably cruciform” Latin epitaph for his deceased wife:

After this solemn vow of eventual reunion, to be inscribed in stone, Donne expresses the vow again in the Latin spelling of his name: “*Iohannes Donne / Sac: Theolog: profess.*,” where *Anne* is literally inscribed in the body of his name. The name that is “cut into” the tomb/stone/poetic body of the woman pierced through by childbed fever in her thirty-third year, the name that is generated in the last rite of the epitaph by the poet’s submission of his will to that of God, in imitation of Anne’s own indulgent, self-sacrificing submission to the laws of love and marriage, in “*Iohannes Donne*”: John *and* Anne Donne, John and Anne *done* or dead, John and Anne un-done by their mortal (or his manly—“*Immani*”) passion—but also John *and* Anne conjoined in “*Iohannes*”—“*hoc loco sociandos*,” re-named or re-deemed *as one* once again by the husband’s epithalamic pledge renewed in imitation of the “*Nouo matrimonio*,” the new marriage of the Resurrection. And this covenantal union and spiritual oneness is immediately embodied in the verb arriving at the

²⁰Ibid., p. 382

end of the long sentence of this epitaph: "*Secessit*," which in Latin can mean both "she withdrew" and "he withdrew."²¹

Here Hester's voice is unmistakable. In this intricate, oratorical passage, with its puns and its *energia* of wonder, is an attitude toward language (and a genuine enthusiasm for his subject) akin to the Renaissance view of language Hester describes so well in the second chapter of *Kind Pitty and Brave Scorn*—that "words are the means and sustenance of civilization, the artifex of order, and the mirror of an individual's degree of sanity."²² Hester in his praxis honors Donne's memory through his own wordplay. As a result, reading Hester's prose can be positive pleasure, even as learning from it is a must.

By continuing the *John Donne Journal*, we hope to honor the achievements of Prof. Hester, Prof. Young, and others who, for more than three decades, have devoted their energies to fostering a better understanding of the lives and work of Donne and his contemporaries. We will continue to publish the best in Donne scholarship and we will offer more Colloquia, more "Signs of Donne," more review essays, and more special issues, beginning with vol. 34, a special issue on "Donne and the Bible," guest edited by Chanita Goodblatt. There is no fitter way to honor Prof. Hester's achievements than to continue this work. But we will not leave the work alone as the sole reminder. Henceforth the journal will list on its masthead Prof. Hester as "Founding Editor," a reminder of the proud history of this publication and of the hand that guided it for so many years.

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²¹*John Donne's Marriage Letters in The Folger Shakespeare Library*, p. 24.

²²p. 36.

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