John Donne Journal
Vol. 17 (1998)

The Textual Problem of "Twicknam Garden"

D. Audell Shelburne

The text of John Donne's "Twicknam Garden" has presented difficulties to modern editors, who often emend the text as printed in the first printed edition (1633), their universal copy-text. The second stanza, lines 10-18, of the poem in the first edition reads:

> 'Twere wholsomer for mee, that winter did
> Benight the glory of this place,
> And that a grave frost did forbid
> These trees to laugh and mocke mee to my face;
> But that I may not this disgrace
> Indure, nor yet leave loving, Love let mee
> Some senclesse peece of this place bee;
> Make me a mandrake, so I may grow here,
> Or a stone fountaine weeping out my yeare.

Line 15 is sometimes emended to read "nor leave this garden" instead of "nor yet leave loving," although editors have not found compelling reasons to prefer either reading. The present study, involving a collation of the known forty-six manuscript versions of "Twicknam Garden," illustrates the bibliographical evidence for emending "nor yet leave loving" to "nor leave this garden," and it suggests that the corruption of the second stanza of the poem in the 1633 edition is the result of an effort to repair the defective line 15 in "Twicknam Garden" with a phrase from "Love's Deity."[1]

Lacking bibliographic evidence, editors have reached no consensus about the text of "Twicknam Garden."[2] In his monumental and still

often regarded as definitive 1912 edition of Donne's poetry, Herbert J. C. Grierson set the precedent by following the version of "Twicknam Garden" found in the first edition. Grierson notes that he had found four manuscripts that omit the phrase altogether and twelve others that had "nor leave this garden."[3] In contrast, John T. Shawcross emends the line to "nor leave this garden" in his edition of 1968. His appended textual apparatus points out that many manuscripts contain this reading, and he cites only 1633 as a source for "nor yet leave loving."[4] In his 1983 second edition of *The Songs and Sonnets of John Donne*, Theodore Redpath notes that "nor yet leave loving" also appears in the Dolau Cothi manuscript (WN1) and was apparently contained in the unidentified manuscript translated by Constantin Huygens.[5] Redpath agrees with Grierson's remark that "nor leave this garden" seems to make "better sense," but he offers no support for that conclusion.[6]

On the surface, the two readings appear to make little difference to the meaning of the poem. Aside from some conjecture on the possible connection of the poem to Lucy, Countess of Bedford, critics tend to place the poem within a Petrarchan frame.[7] In these readings, the speaker of the poem is identified as an unrequited lover, tormented by his beloved's constancy, which motivates her rejection of his advances.[8] Within the Petrarchan context of the poem, the two phrases seem to mean much the same thing: the speaker's desire to leave the garden would apparently mean leaving love as well. The "garden" reading makes better sense, however, because in lines 15-18 the speaker asks Love to make him part of the garden. In these three lines, the speaker descends the neoplatonic Chain of Being one link at a time, wishing to exchange his human nature for the vegetable nature of the mandrake and then for the mineral nature of the stone fountain. If the speaker wished not to "leave loving"—that is, if he wished to continue loving—it seems unlikely that he would desire to lose his senses.[9] In addition, the "garden" reading advances the poem's religious imagery of the Eucharist, Extreme Unction, and the Fall, whereas "the leave loving" reading does not.[10]

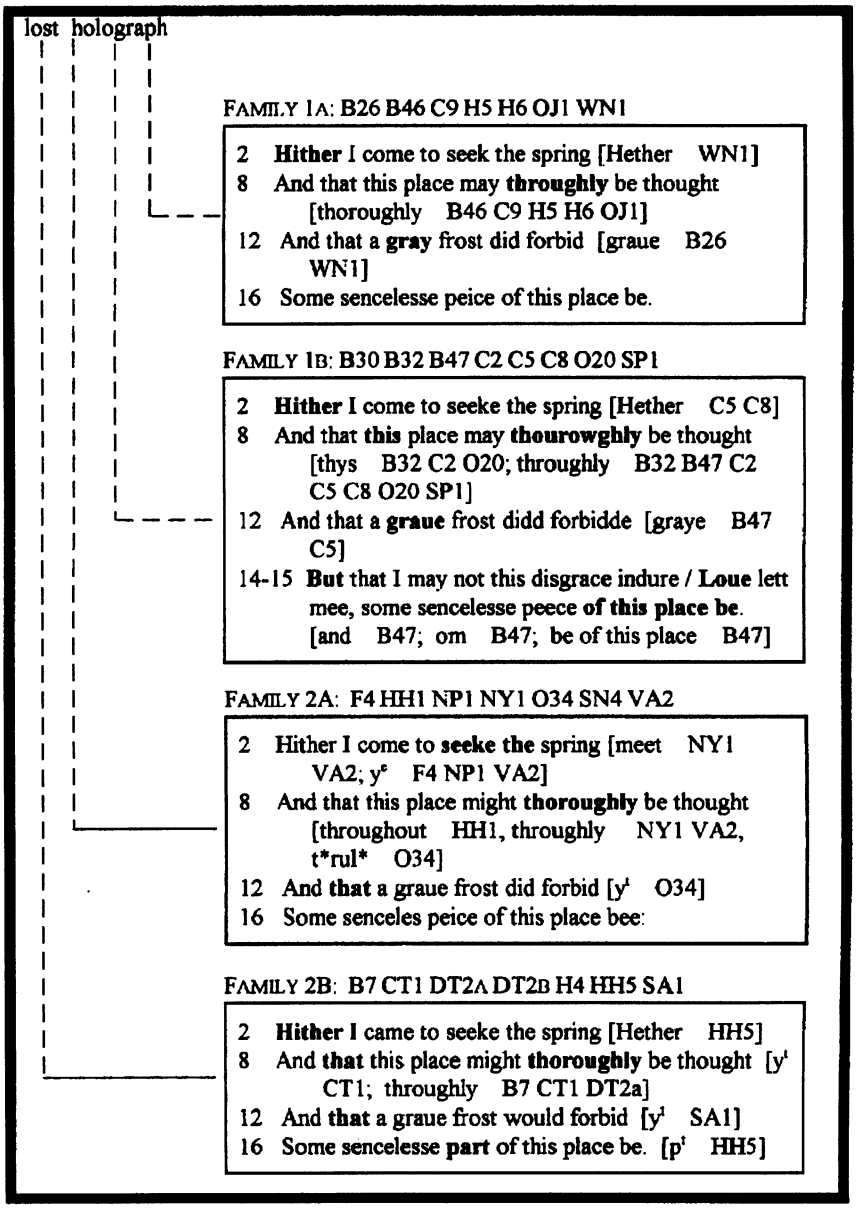
The manuscripts which contain a version of the poem are clearly interrelated, though often in puzzling ways. At present, the current

collation fails to supply a definite itinerary of the textual transmission for all of the manuscripts; however, it does provide some clear patterns that reveal four distinct family groupings of thirty manuscripts and a tentative basis to classify the other sixteen.[11] Stemming from a lost holograph, the four families are distinguished by a correlation of four variants in lines 2, 8, 12, and 16. The four families are here designated Family 1A, 1B, 2A, and 2B in order to indicate the relative closeness or distance between families (see Figure 1).

The crux of the textual history, however, involves the eight manuscripts of Family 1B. These eight manuscripts—the so-called Group I manuscripts (B30, B32, C2, C8, O20, and SP1) plus two unclassified manuscripts (B47 and C5)—truncate lines 14-16 into two lines by moving "Indure" to the end of line 14, omitting four words in line 15 ("nor leave this garden" or "nor yet leave loving"), and joining what remains of line 15 with line 16. Lines 14-15 in the defective texts thus read: "But that I may not this disgrace indure, / Loue lett mee, some sencelesse peece of this place bee." The compression of three lines into two produces a twenty-six line, rather than a twenty-seven line, poem, in which the rhyme scheme, meter, and stanzaic form are flawed.

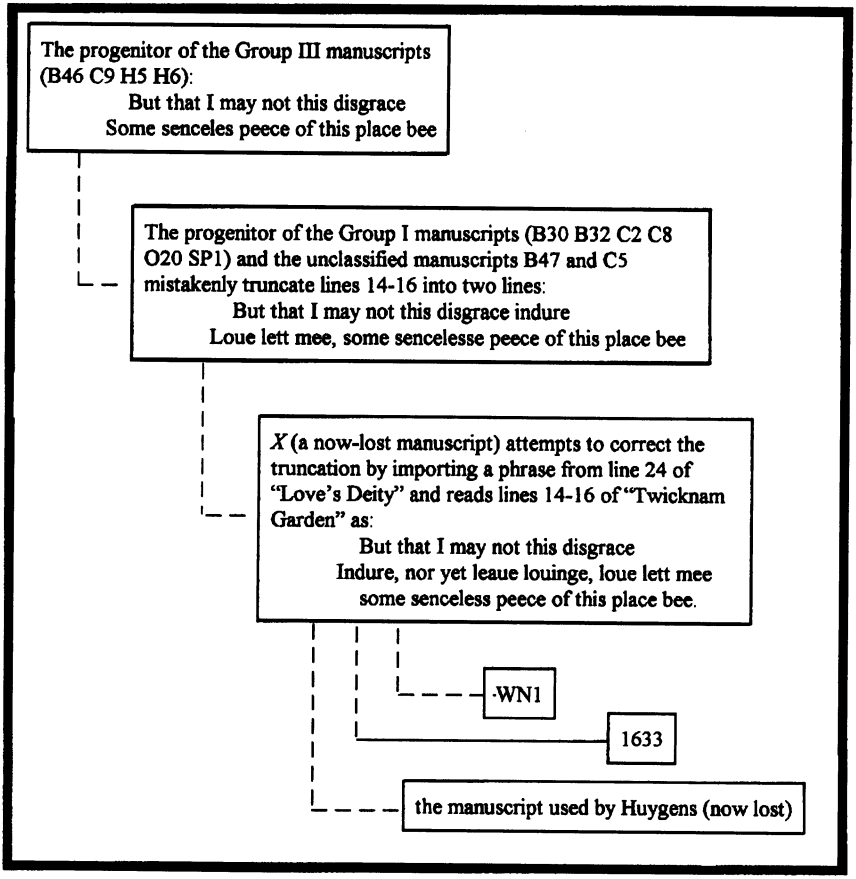
These defective texts of Family 1B are closely related to Family 1A, the so-called Group III manuscripts (B46, C9, H5, and H6) which preserve the least corrupted texts of the poem, the Group II manuscript WN1, and three unclassified manuscripts (B26, C6, and OJ1). Interestingly, WN1 is the only extant manuscript to offer the "nor yet leaue louinge" reading found also in 1633. In fact, WN1 stands very near to 1633. Only one substantive variant occurs: WN1 reads "groane" where 1633 reads "grow" in line 17.[12] The lack of other manuscript versions containing the "nor yet leave loving" variant suggests two possibilities. First, it might be that the copyist of WN1 made an effort to repair the line, which had been garbled earlier in one of the 26-line versions. His version of the repaired 27-line text then passed through an undetermined number of now-lost manuscripts until the 1633 edition was prepared for printing. Second, and more likely, it might be that WN1 and 1633 reproduced independently the repair made earlier by a copyist of a now lost manuscript, which is here designated *X*(Chi).[13]

FIGURE 1: SCHEMA OF TEXTUAL RELATIONSHIPS



In either case, the text in WN1 must come fairly close to that of the copy manuscript for 1633, due to the absence of variants of any weight. Figure 2 shows the proposed schema.

FIGURE 2: PROPOSED SCHEMA OF TEXTUAL CRUX OF "TWICKNAM GARDEN"



Regardless of its itinerary, the repaired line found in WN1 and 1633 is of dubious authority. One possibility of its origin is that the copyist, encountering a version of the poem that was clearly marred metrically and formally by the four omitted words, attempted to complete the poem himself.[14] One way a copyist might do so is to turn to another of Donne's poems, locating something there that fit "Twicknam Garden" both metrically and thematically. The phrase used to repair the defective line in "Twicknam Garden" seems to come from "Love's Deity." In WN1, the repaired lines of "Twicknam Garden" read:

> But that I may not this disgrace
> Indure, nor yet leaue louinge, loue lett mee

some senceless peece of this place bee.
Make me a Mandrake, soe I may groane here. (14-17)

"Love's Deity" reads:

. . . why murmure I,
As though I felt the worst that love could doe?
Love might make me leave loving, or might trie
A deeper plague, to make her love mee too . . . . (22-25)

The two poems share the odd expression, to "leave loving," a structure that does not appear elsewhere in Donne's poetry. Whether or not the copyist was prompted to turn to "Love's Deity" by the imperative "Make me" in line 17 of "Twicknam Garden," the similarity of that formulation in the two poems is also striking. Two other manuscripts, LA1 and H7, in fact, alter line 15 from "loue lett mee" to "loue make me," making the similarity between the two poems even greater.

A copyist's attempt to repair "Twicknam Garden" with a phrase lifted from "Love's Deity" is made possible by the fact that the two poems frequently appear in the same manuscripts. Peter Beal's *Index* of manuscripts reveals that in twenty-eight extant manuscripts "Twicknam Garden" and "Love's Deity" both appear, and in twenty-one cases they do so less than eleven leaves apart.[15] Figure 3 shows the manuscripts containing both poems and their locations in the manuscripts. The close proximity of the two poems suggests two points. First, the two poems were probably circulated together. Second, the likelihood that they circulated together, in turn, seems to suggest that a copyist would have had ample opportunity to have borrowed from the one poem to complete the other. These speculations appear even more reasonable when we note that six of the eight manuscripts which omit part of line 15 in "Twicknam Garden" also contain "Love's Deity" (B30, B32, C2, C8, O20, and SP1).

If we exclude the omitted part of line 15 and differences in punctuation and spelling, a collation of the versions of "Twicknam Garden" in B30, B32, C2, C8, O20, SP1, and WN1 reveals only three substantive variants. B30 reads "spiders" where the other five read

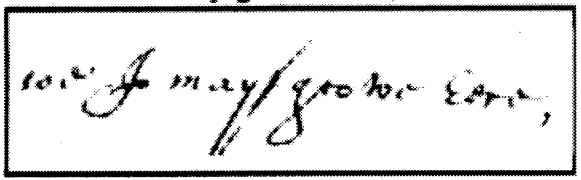
FIGURE 3: MSS. CONTAINING BOTH "TWICKNAM GARDEN" AND "LOVE'S DEITY"

Mss.	"Twicknam Garden"	"Loues Deitie"	Mss.	"Twicknam Garden"	"Loues Deitie"
B7	ff. 14v-15	f. 24v	H5	f. 183v	f. 192v
B13	f. 32	f. 21	H6	f. 128v	f. 134v
B30	f. 259r-v	ff. 295v-96	H7	ff. 160r-v	ff. 152r-v
B32	f. 120r-v	f. 126r-v	HH1	ff. 89v-90	ff. 99v-100
B46	f. 87	ff. 55r-v	HH5	f. 28v	f. 32v
C1	f. 16v	f. 9	NY1	pp. 54-55	pp. 81-82
C2	f. 60v	f. 67v	O21	p. 37	pp. 47-48
C8	ff. 86v-87	ff. 97v-98v	SN4a	f. 24v	f. 46v-47
C9	f. 102v	f. 108	SN4b	f. 31	f. 46v-47
CT1	p. 32	p. 54	SP1	f. 91r-v	f. 102r-v
DT1	f. 41v	f. 52	TT1	f. 45r-v	f. 54v
DT2	ff. 246r-v	ff. 238v-39	VA2	ff. 33v-34	f. 42v
F4	ff. 39v-40	f. 37	WN1	pp. 83-84	pp. 52-53
H3	ff. 20r-21	f. 21	Y2	p. 258	pp. 262-63
H4	ff. 28v-29	f. 39r-v	Y3	p. 56	p. 69

"spider," and both C2 and C8 read "growe" for "grone." As noted earlier, the only substantive difference between WN1 and 1633 is their disagreement on "groane" and "grow." It seems doubtful that two sequences, both of which repair the line by borrowing from "Love's Deity," could occur accidentally or coincidentally. Instead, it seems likely that the defective sequence splits when, at some point later, a copyist misreads "grone" where the manuscript contained "growe."[16]

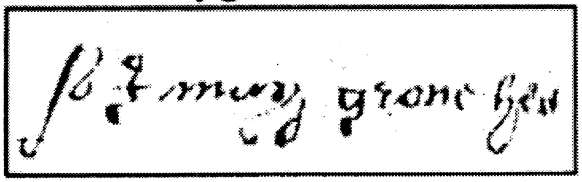
FIGURE 4: MSS. VERSIONS OF "GROW" AND "GROAN" (LINE 17)

C02: "soe I may growe here,"

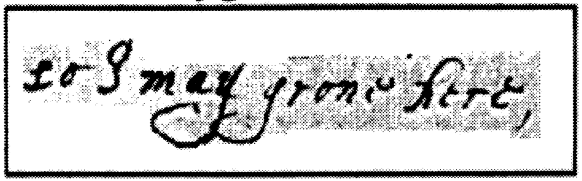


C08: "so I maie growe heere,"

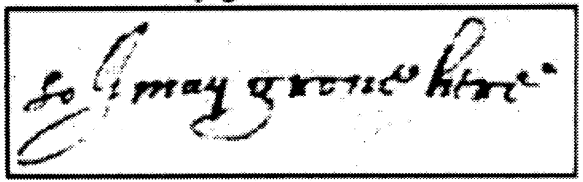
B30: "so I may grone here"



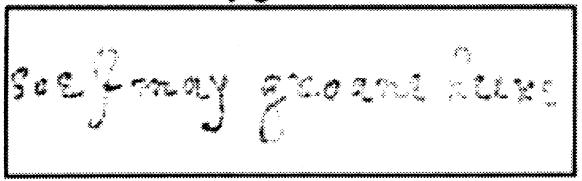
B32: "so I may grone here,"



SP1: "so I may grone here"



WN1: "soe I may groane heere"



SP1 is extremely close to WN1, differing only in punctuation and spelling. Thus, SP1 appears most likely to be the link, or a member of the group that provides the link, between the flawed version of the poem and the repaired version found in the sequence to which WN1 belongs. At the same time, C2 and C8 seem to provide a connection to the sequence that produces 1633, reading "growe" in line 17 and agreeing on virtually all other points. Figure 4 reproduces images of the manuscripts, illustrating how easily one might mistake the two words.

Examining the extant manuscripts of "Twicknam Garden" more closely provides a possible explanation of how the omission of the four words in B30, B32, B47, C02, C08, O20, and SP1 occurs in the first place. In DT2 and Y2, the arrangement of the poems is such that a page-break falls after line 14, "But since I may not this disgrace" and "But I may not this disgrace." In both manuscripts, the copyists provide the catchword, which happens to be "Endure." Figure 5 shows the final two lines of the pages in these two manuscripts. Encountering a version of the poem arranged in this way, a copyist might mistakenly add "endure" to the end of line 14. B13, in fact, contains evidence of such a mistake. In B13, the copyist began to write "endure" at the end of line 14 but stopped after three letters and deleted it (see Figure 6). Mistaking the catchword for part of the line would, of course, lead to the additional problems of absent syllables and the disrupted rhyme scheme in line 15. In the defective versions of the poem, the copyist apparently decided simply to proceed, perhaps not even noticing the error. I do not mean to suggest that DT2 or Y2 served as the copyist's source for the defective versions: both contain numerous readings quite distinct from any of the eight defective manuscripts. I am suggesting, however, that a text similar in its arrangement to the versions in DT2 and Y2 could lead to the defective versions in B30, B32, B47, C2, C5, C8, O20, and SP1. By extension, SP1 or a text similar to it leads to the version found in WN1 and 1633.

Whatever the case for its origin and its transmission, the "nor yet leave loving" reading of WN1 and 1633 has been questioned since the publication of the first printed edition. All editions printed between 1635 and 1669 adopted "nor leave this garden," (1635 almost certainly

FIGURE 5: DT2B AND Y02, "ENDURE" AS CATCHWORD

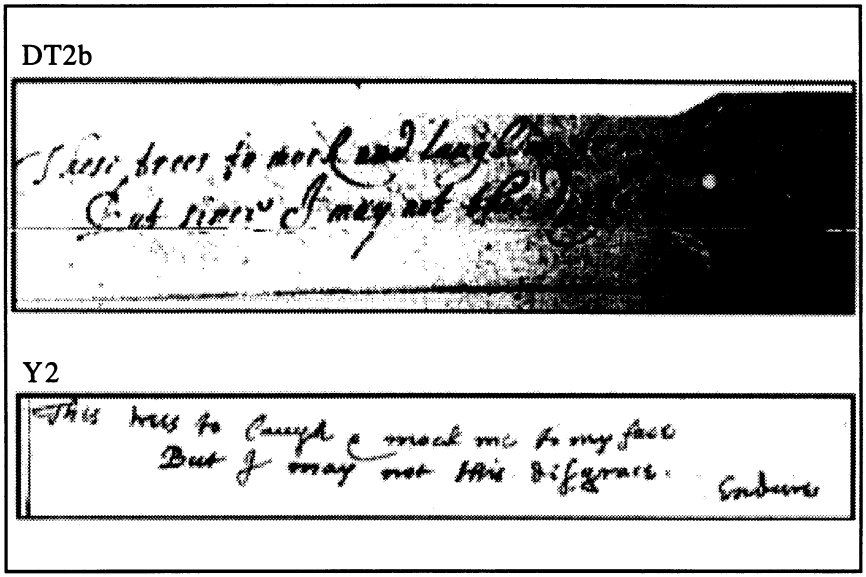
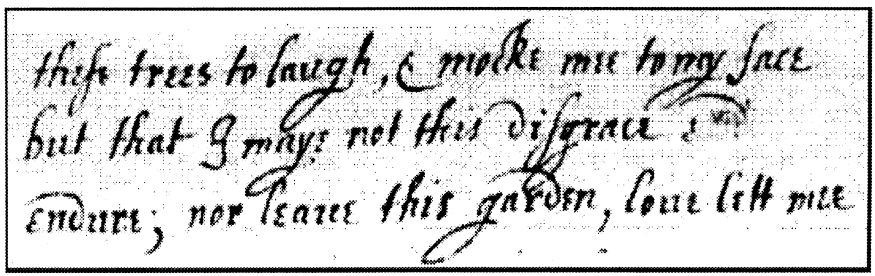


FIGURE 6: DELETION OF "ENDURE" IN B13 (LL. 13-15)



derived the reading from H6, the O' Flahertie ms.), but until now we have had very little bibliographic evidence to support one or the other as a better reading. Grierson and others, due to their adherence to the 1633 edition, chose to reproduce "nor yet leave loving" in line 15 of the poem. In addition to the influence of the 1633 edition and Grierson's choice to follow it, the alliteration of "nor yet leave loving" recommends itself as sounding like something Donne would write. It sounds like Donne because, as we have seen, it is Donne's—only from the wrong poem. The evidence of the manuscipts substantially endorses

"nor leave this garden" as the preferred reading by offering a clear picture of how the need for a new phrase originated, how "Love's Deity" provided the phrase to fill the gap created by the omission of the four words, and how the phrase borrowed from "Love's Deity" entered the printed text of "Twicknam Garden" through a manuscript with a text very much like that of WN1.

University of Mary Hardin-Baylor

Notes

1. Many individuals have helped me to complete this study: Ernest W. Sullivan, II, suggested the project to me in a graduate seminar, offered valuable advice, and supported my efforts to complete it ; Gary A. Stringer and Syd Conner provided photocopies of many of the manuscripts; and Claude J. Summers suggested a refinement of the manuscript affiliations in his response to my paper at the John Donne Society conference (1997). I am also grateful to have been permitted the use of *The Donne Variorum Collation Program*, written by Bill Vilberg and Bruce Dinoff, copyrighted by Stringer (1984). Throughout, the sigla are those of *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne.*

2. Among the editors to follow 1633 are James Russell Lowell (1895), E. K. Chambers (1896), H. J. C. Grierson (1912), John Hayward (1929), H. W. Garrod (1946), Hugh I'Anson Faussett (1958), A. J. Smith (1971), Charles Fowkes (1982), C. A. Patrides (1985), and John Carey (1990). In contrast, John Bell (1779), Robert Anderson (1793), Alexander Chalmers (1810), Henry Alford (1839), James Russell Lowell (1855), Alexander B. Grosart (1872-73), Roger Bennett (1942), Helen Gardner (1965), John T. Shawcross (1967), and Theodore Redpath (1983) follow the manuscripts and the editions printed between 1635 and 1669.

3. Herbert J. C. Grierson, ed., *The Poems of John Donne: Edited from the Old Editions and Numerous Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), 1:29.

4. John T. Shawcross, ed., *The Complete Poetry of John Donne* (New York, New York University Press, 1967), p. 450.

5. Theodore Redpath, ed., *The Songs and Sonets of John Donne*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 275.

6. Redpath, p. 275.

7. A. B. Chatterjee convincingly challenges the soundness of the biographical links in his article, "John Donne's 'Twicknam Garden': An Interpretation," *The Visvabharati Quarterly* 39 (1973): 172-83. Chatterjee objects on these bases: the inability to date the poem, the disparity of tone and subject between "Twicknam Garden" and the verse epistles, and the circularity of arguments concerning the relation of "Twicknam Garden" and "A Nocturnall upon St. Lucy's Day." In addition to Chatterjee's points, we might well add the inability to determine the title or heading of the poem with any certainty.

8. In *John Donne: Conservative Revolutionary*, for instance, N. J. C. Andreason describes the situation in "Twicknam Garden" as a "Petrarchan study in the stubborn strength of habitual sin," or idolatrous love (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 145. See also the discussions of the poem in Silvia Ruffo-Fiore's *Donne's Petrarchism: A Comparative View* (Firenze: Grafica Toscana, 1979) and Donald L. Guss' *John Donne, Petrarchist* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1966).

9. Helen Gardner regards the manuscript version ("nor leave this garden") as "intrinsically superior": she argues, "The speaker could easily spare himself the

disgrace of being mocked by the beauty of the garden by leaving it, which would not entail 'leaving loving'. He prays to become a plant or a stone in order that he may remain in the garden without being conscious of its beauty or his pain:" *John Donne: The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 216.

10. Sallye Sheppeard and Bernard Richards have examined the garden in "Twicknam Garden" as Eden, fallen Eden, and Gethsemene with some (although not complete) success. See Sheppeard's "Eden and Agony in 'Twicknam Garden,'" *John Donne Journal* 7:1 (1988): 65-72, and Richards' "Donne's 'Twicknam Garden' and the *Fons Amatoria*," *The Review of English Studies* 33 (1982): 180-83. The poem refers to the balm of Extreme Unction, the manna (typologically, the body) and wine (blood) of the Eucharist, Paradise, and the serpent that produces the Fall. The dominance of religious imagery suggests that the religious element is central to the poem's meaning, and I would suggest that the dramatic situation places the speaker on his deathbed, fearing his literal "dis-grace" as a result of the double-edged promises of his faith.

11. A complete schema will require further study of the manuscripts. The collation of the manuscripts, however, suggests the following groupings. Manuscripts listed below the line are more speculatively placed than those above the line.

Family 1A	Family 1B	Family 2A	Family 2B
B26 B46 C9 H5 H6 OJ1 WN1	B30 B32 B47 C2 C5 C8 O20 P1	F4 HH1 NP1NY1 O34 SN4a SN4b VA2	B7 CT1 DT1 DT2 H4 HH5 SA1
B28 C6		B13 C1 CE1 O13	B40 EU3 H3 H7 LA1 O21 PM1 TT1 Y2 Y3

Part of the difficulty in constructing a complete schema involves the confusing relationships suggested by readings which appear in what otherwise seem to be unconnected manuscripts. For example, eleven manuscripts (B7 B30 B32 CT1 DT1 H4 O20 O34 PM1 SP1 and WN1) read "groan" in line 17: yet in other instances these eleven manuscripts are quite distinct. In addition, many of the manuscripts show signs of attempts to correct the text, although the authority of the corrections is often in doubt. For example, three texts have the word "place" deleted in line 16; two replace it with "part" (O21 and SA1) and one substitutes "peece" (O34). The research by the *Variorum* editors should help to clarify some of these confusions.

12. A complete collation of 1633 (acting as the copy text) and WN1 follows: Line 1 teares,] ~$_{\wedge}$ 2 Hither] hether spring,] ~$_{\wedge}$ 3 eyes,] ~$_{\wedge}$ eares,] ~$_{\wedge}$ 4 balmes,] ~$_{\wedge}$ thing,] ~$_{\wedge}$ 5 traytor,] traitour$_{\wedge}$ 6 all,] ~$_{\wedge}$ 7 gall,] G*ll$_{\wedge}$ 9 Paradise,] ~$_{\wedge}$ brought.] ~$_{\wedge}$ 10 'Twere] $_{\wedge}$Twere mee,] ~$_{\wedge}$ 11 place,] ~$_{\wedge}$ 13

laugh] ~, face;] ~ʌ 16 bee;] ~. 17 grow] groane here,] ~ʌ 18 fountaine] ~, yeare.] ~: 19 vyals,] ~ʌ come,] ~ʌ 20 wine,] ~ʌ 22 mine;] ~ʌ 23 Alas,] ~ʌ shine,] ~ʌ 24 teares,] ~ʌ 25 weares.] ~ʌ 26 sexe,] ~ʌ shee,] ~ʌ 27 Who's] Whos true,] ~ʌ

13. Ernest W. Sullivan, II, writes:

What seems most likely is that the repair to the line in "Twicknam Garden" occurred first in a manuscript and was made by a copyist.... The version of the poem in that manuscript (likely one shortly before 1633 or the correction would appear in more manuscripts) then got copied into the sequence(s) of manuscripts that lead to the version of the poem in WN1 and 1633. It is possible, of course, that the WN1 copyist made the correction and that the sequence [of mss.] that led to 1633 began there, though unlikely—it is more likely that the correction occurred first in a small group of poems in a single manuscript that was one of several smaller manuscripts used to construct WN1 and 1633. (Letter to the author, 24 August 1995)

14. LA1 contains a clearly inferior and idiosyncratic version of "Twicknam Garden"; however, the version of the poem in this manuscript attempts to correct the omission of the five syllables by inserting the word "perpetually" at the beginning of line 15. Thus, LA1 reads, "And that wee may not this disgrace / Perpetually endure; Loue make mee" (14-15).

15. Peter Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, vol. 1, part 1 (London: Mansell, 1980).

16. Claude Summers speculates that this variant might reflect an authorial revision similar to the ones suggested by the editors of *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne* in the cases of the epithalamia for Princess Elizabeth and for Somerset. Modern editors have preferred the mandrake to "groan" on the basis that it maintains the parallelism with the "sighs" in second line of the poem. A similar parallelism occurs in the "tears" of line 2 and the weeping fountain in line 18. Thus, the later reading of "groan" seems both to satisfy the bibliographic principle of *lectio difficilior* (that the more unusual reading is probably authorial) and to provide an aesthetically pleasing structure. On the other hand, only eleven of the forty-six manuscript versions read "groan" (B7 B30 B32 CT1 DT1 H4 O20 O34 PM1 SP1 WN1). The results of the *Variorum* editors' research should help to clarify this problem.