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"Farewell to Love": "Things" as Artifacts, "thing[s]" as Shifting Signifiers

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John Donne's "Farewell to Love"[1] is by general consent one of his most problematic lyrics, and has even been said to contain passages of unintelligibility unequalled elsewhere "in the whole canon of [his] poetry."[2] The poem presents unusual textual difficulties, as clearly shown in Stringer's crushing account of editorial shortcomings since Grierson. In what follows, I argue that the interpretative difficulties arising out of the poem are enhanced not only by this editorial history but by what all extant forms of the poem contain in the shifting significance of one deceptively simple word: "thing[e][s]" (however spelt).

A problem with which the poem initially presents us, as Stringer's textual account shows, might be described as "canonic." While no one now seriously doubts that "Farewell to Love" is Donne's, it is evident that the poem's absence from the 1633 *editio princeps* (A) and its first appearance in print only in 1635 (B), did for a while earlier in the twentieth century (roughly speaking the period separating Grierson's edition of 1912 and Gardner's edition of 1965) prompt some debate on the point of attribution. (Ironically, as we shall see, that debate may not have been unfounded after all: still, no one seemed willing, prepared, or even competent to collate line 38, or indeed all but a tiny handful of the more than 70 variants noted in Stringer's exercise above, and even that handful inaccurately.) "Farewell to Love" is also among the least anthologized, and therefore arguably least read, of Donne's *Songs and Sonets*. Yet in terms of genre the poem is not unfamiliar: it belongs to the (often but not invariably abrupt) renunciation of sexual love in favor of higher things. In his edition of 1971 Smith gives Sidney's "Certain

Sonnets" 23 ("Leave me O love which reachest but to dust") as one of the best-known examples in early modern English literature,[3] but it might be argued that Donne's tone is extremely difficult to get a fix on. Certainly Donne's is an unusually ironic distortion of the original Petrarchan trope—similar but not identical in mood, it might be thought, to Shakespeare's Sonnet 129. This twist to a twist contributes to the poem's difficulty, although in contrast to Sonnet 129, "Farewell to Love" is neglected, both editorially (one has only to *see* the Stringer collation to have this assertion demonstrated without further question) as well as critically.[4]

As against other, better-known, Donne lyrics there are, as might be expected, relatively few manuscript versions. These are listed above by Stringer. Beal records the four complete extant versions as DnJ 1283, 1284, 1285, 1286.[5] They are, respectively, B46, H6 ("O'Flahertie"), B47 and H8 ("Utterson"). As Stringer notes above, it is Gardner, followed by Smith, who first noted the "M^{r} An: Saintleg.^{er}" attribution that heads H8. From what follows it is evident that although I believe Gardner saw H8, I am doubtful whether Smith ever did. Even if that doubt is unfounded, Stringer devastatingly demonstrates how carelessly even Gardner actually *read* H8. No editor at all has recorded H8's "brightnes" at line 38, a reading that I am more inclined than Stringer to regard as if not authoritative then at least arguably "better" in terms of contributing to the poem's sense and its thought (though see further below). I therefore merely note here the rather disturbing implication of what I argue more fully below: if, as Stringer's thesis leaves open to suggestion, line 38's "brightnes" is a "scribal sophistication", i.e., that it is actually Andrew Saintleger's transcription of what Stringer's collation exercise records as the B46 transcription "greatnes," then I for one accept (see again below) that the Saintleger reading opens up a complete can of bibliographical and critical worms. And finally, for completeness' sake, the Rosenbach fragment, a ms. version of a form of lines 35-40, entitled "Beauty,"[6] should be mentioned but will not detain us here.

Returning to the four mss. of the complete poem, it is true that if, with Stringer, we (i) take B46 as copy-text and collate against B47, H6

and H8, and (ii) accept the substance of Stringer's thesis, substantive variants are to be found only at lines 11, 25 and 34, that is, *if and only if* "substantive" implies that we are indeed speaking of "two distinct textual traditions" (*pace* Stringer). In what follows, I shall occasionally pause over other cruces. I shall prefer particular readings, and regard such cruces as "substantive" in the sense that they involve scribal change that has not manifestly resulted from, or cannot manifestly be regarded as, gibberish.

Bearing in mind the poem's obscurity, a level of difficulty that in my view considerably exceeds (say) "Aire and Angels" (title as in Grierson), I am less reluctant than I might otherwise be to offer here a paraphrase that aims reasonably to reflect the sense of the text or texts that make up what we read as "Farewell to Love." I'm indebted to several commentators, most of all (and despite all the criticisms of the cavalier nature of his textual practice) to Smith, to whose exegesis in his 1972 essay "The Dismissal of Love" (see note 4 above), I refer several times:

> (stz 1) Before testing it by means of experience I thought sexual love might possess some Divine quality, and so I invested it with religious power and worshipped it, like those who do not believe in God but try to have it both ways on their deathbeds. For what they do is call on the name of God, in whom (by definition) they have made it impossible for themselves to believe; in this way that act of naming becomes the equivalent of calling on some unknown power. In just such a way what I desired was in fact what I was incapable of defining: things are characterized by our desires because they are projections of those desires. So as people's desires diminish, those still-to-be defined things diminish with them; just as with the recrudescence of desire, so those incipient things grow.
> (stz 2) Take the example of a "gilt gingerbread effigy of the Pope or Emperor bought or exhibited at a recent [...] Fair" (Smith).[7] After three days it may have grown even staler, but it is no less attractive to children than it was, just as lovers seem to love the idea or "effigy" of sexual love "in itself" (in anticipation rather than after the event) as much, or even more than, the lover they love.[8] Yet once the moment itself has been experienced as full enjoyment, "its pleasure

fades or turns to revulsion" (Smith), whereby the one sense-experience left behind (touch) is experienced as a memory of "sorrowing dulnesse" (reading as in Grierson).

(stz 3) Why can't mankind share the postcoital joys of those animals (roosters or lions) of which Galen tells us? Maybe because—given that it's said (by Aristotle) that each act of sex shortens one's life by a day—Nature in her wisdom laid down "this disillusioning inadequacy of our sexual experience to stop us killing ourselves in repeated sexual acts, as we urgently [and with genuine sexual purpose] seek to overcome the brevity of our own lives by begetting children" (Smith, who thus rightly rejects Grierson's emendation and reads: "but/ Eager, desires"; see, also, "Dismissal," pp. 117-21).

(stz 4) Anyway, if that's the case, I'm not going to remain preoccupied with what no one else seems capable of finding. No more infatuation for me; I'm done with running after things whose fulfilment used to cause me such harm (I read here, with H6 and B, "had indammag'd me" [spelling as in Grierson], and prefer this sense over that variously—or not, as the case may be—to be gleaned from B46, B47 and H8 [see Stringer above].) Whenever I find myself around the kind of beauty that stimulates me sexually, I'll behave like people illumined or irradiated by the enticing power of the summer's sun (I read here, with H8, "brightnes"):[9] while admiring its provocative potency, I'll avoid the desire the sun provokes and look instead for the shade that both shelters and cools. This is my last resort: it'll just be like telling my pecker "down, wanton, down." (Or specifically: "wormseed," with its "death-in-life" connotations, might be thought of as death- or disease-giving sperm applied to "tail" in the sense of female *pudendum* [as in current U.S. slang].[10])

The original Petrarchan conceit is a sudden and unexpected renunciation of Laura, and the earthly love she exemplifies, in favour of God, her true original. Sidney's version is comparably noble in intent. Shakespeare's is a meditation on what Donne's touches on in line 16: indeed Shakespeare's line practically quotes Donne's ("Being had,

enjoying it decayes"). I also think Donne's poem, like Shakespeare's but more than any other example of this subgenre of the erotic elegy that renounces erotic love, is preoccupied with the passing of time in ways that deserve some comment.[11] They have to do with how the poet expresses that passing by being simultaneously concrete and abstract.

This preoccupation with the passing of time is related to an aspect of the tone in the poem that I find it hard to convey in my gloss, which may have sounded unduly jaunty. But I don't think any reader can fail to be struck by the extraordinary mixture (much more greatly intensified in Donne than in Shakespeare) of—on the one hand—deeply felt sexual humiliation and—on the other—abstractness. Indeed, one's initial response to the poem's difficulty is probably to attribute it to that abstractness, coupled with the extraordinarily complicated syntax. This uncertainty of tone, together with the textual instability I've already mentioned (specifically as expressed by the extraordinarily unspecific "thing" or "things"), will be the subject of the remainder of this brief paper.

The speaker uses the word "thing" or "things" in unusually strategic places, and some of these have clearly led to scribal confusion, as the lexicon becomes so specific to the register that textual variants occur. Thus in line 8 we read of "Things not *yet* knowne" (Grierson; emphases added), and this construction goes on to include "them" (line 9) and "they" (line 10). Here any copyist other than the poet himself would have been faced with the contrast between the verbal forms "waxe lesser" and "sise" (or should it be "rise"?), and the phallic play they suggest.[12] The word "sise" is not unique in Donne,[13] and if it is indeed what we should read here, we should I think (given the context) gloss it, following *OED* v4a, as: "To make of a certain size, to give size to, to adjust in respect of size"; but the sense is strained. "Rise" would permit a straightforward play on tumescence, but that reading, together with "grow," does not in my—critical—view, seem quite to reach through to the urgent toughness of thought sensed here. The main context is a meditation on Platonic Ideas: the extent to which things are *first* ideational *before* becoming substantial. The "things" here in line 8—which are, after all, previous affairs or lovers—can't be read as

other than dismissive; there is also a jarring play on "unknowne" (line 5), in the sense of the numinously "not-present," and "knowne" (line 8), in a cruder sexual sense.

Coming to line 14 we find another mention of "thing": "the thing which lovers so/ Blindly admire" (Grierson). This follows the grim play in the gingerbread effigy inversion of the ideational-substantial neo-Platonism at the beginning of the second stanza. In view of the Shakespearean echo of Donne in line 16, it seems fair to suggest that the primary sense of "thing" here in line 14 is obscene ("thing" as *pudendum*); but it is also of course possible to read "the thing which lovers so/ Blindly admire" as either the (other) beloved, and/or love itself. In this way, "thing" comes to stand for a range of possibilities that include the solipsistic. The concept of post-coital tristesse ("Being had, enjoying it decayes" [Grierson]), expressed in the fluid syntax of 15-16,[14] explicitly problematizes time, precisely because "thing" in 14 is such a floating signifier.

In the order in which it occurs in the poem, a second moment that gives us pause occurs at lines 29-30. In his edition, Grierson emended the reading of the early editions of 1635 through 1639. They read: "be[e]/ Eager, desires"; Grierson emended to "be,/ <Eagers desire>."[15] Grierson's "Eagers," though unusual, is attested as his notes demonstrate: its sense is as an active verb: "to make eager." If I have understood Grierson correctly, he would paraphrase the passage something like this: Nature in her wisdom laid down the human experience of postcoital tristesse (to stop us shortening our lives with repeated sexual acts), despising mankind for its sexual preoccupation as much as she despises the preoccupation itself; it is the very fact that we are cursed by the "decay" that follows desire that makes us all the more eager to beget children. Ingenious though this is, I agree (as I have indicated above) with those (including Stringer) who think it is unnecessary, because it seems to me as it does to others to weaken the force of the original. The paraphrase I have adopted from the commentary to Smith's edition is more subtly powerful: "this disillusioning inadequacy of our sexual experience to stop us killing ourselves in repeated sexual acts, as we urgently [and with genuine sexual purpose] seek to

overcome the brevity of our own lives by begetting children." It foregrounds the real problem, which is to reconcile the momentary bliss followed by disgust ("Th'expense of spirit in a waste of shame/ Is lust in action," as the more familiar expression has it), with a particularly striking affirmation. The earlier group of Shakespeare sonnets 1 through 18 affirm that to breed one's likeness is a way of ensuring an immortality that other Donne poems ("The good-morrow," "Aire and Angels"[16]) relate to the Petrarchan compliment in which all previous beloveds *are defined as such* through their resemblance to the present one, the Platonic "real thing."

At line 38 we come to the reading "brightnes," unique to the Utterson ms. (H8; Beal DnJ 1286). It poses what I believe to be an unresolvable conundrum besides which all that has preceded it in this essay pales into insignificance. With Stringer I believe it to be a "scribal sophistication," and that it may be Andrew Saintleger's. I accept Stringer's persuasive reasoning that in the present state of knowledge we would have to postulate that if in a lost artifact Donne did indeed write "brightnes(s)(e)," the only stemma the four existing ms. artifacts permit us to construct would have to imply that Donne had had third thoughts—not an impossibility but representative of an unlikely (and thus logically uneconomical) series of revisions.[17] Yet my critical ear compels me to consider "brightnes" the better reading, my intuition being that mss. and print "greatnes[se]" arose through eyeskip from "great[,]" in the preceding line.[18] Not only is the repetition stylistically clumsy in such a carefully-turned argument. In my paraphrase above, I have found that what Stringer refers to as the "scribal sophistication" of "brightnes," which we seem obliged for want of evidence to the contrary to attribute to Andrew Saintleger, permits a paraphrase ("people illumined or irradiated by the enticing power of the sun") that in my view immeasurably to be forced into confrontation with the disagreeable consequence that in the present state of knowledge one is obliged to read the existing artifacts eclectically. Conventional wisdom has it that to do so is tantamount to poor editorial practice. Moreover, I record at this time (before leaving the matter for others to continue to discuss) that in our most recent communication, Stringer argues with me that

> whoever [...] separat[ed] "greatnes" into the component parts of "brightnes" and "heate" has explicitly contradicted the essential point the poem wants to make [...]: what lovers desire and with such worship woo not only cannot be "named"—it can't be analyzed or broken up into simples, either. (See note 17 above.)

Stringer, attracted by "brightnes" but in the end, it seems, preferring "greatnes(s)(e)," positions himself to argue that the received reading actually *enhances* the poem's syntactic refusal to name the "things" of which it speaks: in so doing it strengthens, according to Stringer, my presentation of the poem's "thing[s]" as not just shifting, but ultimately and indeed absolutely not determinable, signifiers. This insight of Stringer's is (to me, at this time) so powerful that *I simply and in utter bafflement no longer know* whether, reading the poem critically, I should accept it. If I do, I take on board Stringer's conviction that my own critical reading is not just fundamentally sanctioned but actually enhanced; if I do not, I surrender my sense of such graces as "brightnes" had originally, when the variant was drawn to my attention, seemed to me to offer. I record Stringer's intervention here, crediting it unambiguously to him. Let other pens debate this mystery further: the last word has been most decidedly neither said nor written on this quite extraordinary poem.

I want to draw to my own conclusion by confronting another piece of conventional wisdom. I have been implicitly suggesting that we must take due account of the view that Donne was the most widely-read poet of his time in manuscript; and moreover that there are no manuscript *sources* for the *Sonnets* published under Shakespeare's name in 1609.[19] *No one seems really to have asked whether the younger poet might actually have been read by the elder.* Yet to face such a question is surely logically necessary if we argue, as I believe we must: (a) that if Donne was a coterie poet, there is no reason why Shakespeare should not have been a coterie reader; (b) that a coterie poet may precisely be less culturally accustomed than the lay reader to read verse in print (who *are* we as late moderns to have the temerity unquestioningly to import assumptions based on the shared reading habits of a later culture back

into the early modern period?); and (c) that, on the basis of the customary attribution of the period of composition of Donne's secular amatory lyric verse, 1609 does seem to be an extraordinarily late date for the composition of a lyric of this kind. Were one to play *advocatus diaboli,* on the other hand, as Gary Stringer has been encouraging me to do in respect of line 38 of "Farewell to Love," it would be only honest to point out that (d) the 1599 publication *The Passionate Pilgrime. By W Shakespeare,* contains as its opening sonnets what were to appear in the 1609 printing as 138 and 144; and, finally, (e) it is difficult for us today to think of these—let alone 129—fitting Francis Meres' "mouthwatering account"[20] in his 1598 *Palladis Tamia* of Shakespeare's "sugred Sonnets [circulating] among his private friends." Whatever the truth of the matter may have been, or turn out to be, were we to possess that key we cannot find, to rethink questions of this kind is to attempt to question our commonly-held assumptions concerning the dating of both Shakespeare's and Donne's poems.[21] Certainly recent scholarship might suggest that Shakespeare did encounter one or more Donne ms(s). during 1603-04 and/or 1608-09, periods postulated by the Arden 3 editor of the *Sonnets,* Katherine Duncan-Jones, as marked by Shakespeare's unusually intense attention to composing and arranging the only authoritative sequence we have, the one that appeared in print in 1609.[22]

So what *is* "the real thing" of "Farewell to Love"? That troublesome word "thing" recurs in the last moment that I wish to dwell on in the poem, and that is the crux in line 34. As I have indicated, I follow those who here read "things which had indammag'd me" (Grierson), glossing the passage as "things whose fulfilment used to cause me such harm." This is perhaps the most problematic use of "things" in the entire poem, since it completely pushes aside any indication that the earlier "things" might have been about to become made more specific, even personalized, and appears to leave them firmly in the realm of abstraction. The result is that the poem ends on a note of real cynicism. For this last stanza reviews the passage of time far more expansively than any other in the poem. The first stanza has reviewed the past; the second and third have developed the argument based on that view of the past,

and except insofar as they hypothesize ("Unlesse wise/ Nature decreed" [Grierson]) they remain anchored in the present. The final stanza resolves a course of action for the future, while taking on board the past, using the future to circumvent a course of action that has been so painful in the past, and ending with the bitter possibility that, "If all faile" (Grierson) (when all else, i.e., all other remedial action, fails? or: when all these temptations actually move me to repeat my former mistakes, as I the speaker see them?), several courses of action can finally be envisaged. These appear to range through abstention; an envisioning of the application of the anaphrodisiac "worme-seed" (Grierson); or, if we are to accept the "deadly sperm" reading of "wormseed," that is death juxtaposed with life, a truly bitter and disillusioned option.

So I think, in conclusion, that the major complexities of the poem can certainly be expressed with reference to those areas of difficulty that textual collation shows both scribes and editors to have experienced, or, indeed, overlooked. The organizers of the 1998 Gulfport meeting were kind enough to ask me to read "Farewell to Love" with an intensity that has led me to at least two unresolvable problems: (a) the dilemma of whether or not to accept the sophistication of H8's line 38 reading in terms of the way it forces me to read the existing artifacts eclectically in order to make the best critical sense I know how out of those artifacts; (b) to ask and be unable to answer the question: did Shakespeare's Sonnet 129 influence "Farewell to Love," or the other way around, or did neither poet know of the existence of the other's poem? (To the last of these we must reply: Surely not!) But I have become convinced that the unstable significance of "thing[s]," both in the sense of the artifacts that make up the poem we know as "Farewell to Love," and as verbal attributes of those artifacts, is profoundly troubling. I should want to ascribe all the elements I have chosen to discuss to a genuinely agonized anfractuosity of thought that attempts to negotiate, and even syntactically to simulate, the problems the speaking voice of "Farewell to Love" encounters as he reviews his past, present, and indeed future.

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Notes

1. For the form of the title, see Gary Stringer's collation, "The Text of 'Farewell to Love,'" above, pp. 201-214. (Elsewhere in this paper the Donne Variorum notation *Fare* may also be used as deemed appropriate.) Gary Stringer has read various versions of this paper, and I want to say at the outset that parts of it are virtually co-authored by him: these are acknowledged as they appear below. I also acknowledge with thanks several occasions on which Stringer's sharp eye has saved me from error: any that remains is mine alone. This contribution to the 1998 Gulfport panel discussion was substantially rewritten as a result of the events that lead up to the compilation of that collation, initiated specifically by what is acknowledged at note 9 below. While in this cooperative mood, I should wish to acknowledge here with deep gratitude the idyllic yet professional atmosphere of The Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies (NIAS), Wassenaar, near The Hague, where I was able to do the rewriting with a minimum of distraction and a maximum of concentration.

2. John Hayward, ed., *John Donne, Dean of St. Paul's: Complete Poetry and Selected Prose* (1929; London: The Nonesuch Press, 1967), p. 766.

3. A.J. Smith, ed., *John Donne: The Complete English Poems* (1971; London & New York: Penguin, 1973), p. 373.

4. One of those whose editorial malfeasance comes under scrutiny in the present reassessment of the poem, Smith elsewhere offers what may well be the fullest, and is certainly the most sophisticated, *critical* account of the poem hereto. See "The Dismissal of Love: Or, Was Donne a Neo-Platonic Lover?", in A.J. Smith, ed., *John Donne: Essays in Celebration* (London: Methuen, 1982), pp. 89-131, esp. 112-21. Smith notices the analogous nature of Sonnet 129, asserting that "Donne's poem assumes as close to an experience of sexual life as Shakespeare's [...] though its temper is different; and these two poems are singular in their unsentimental plotting of the [sexual] drive itself" (p. 113). See also my note 21 below.

5. See Peter Beal, comp., *Index of English Literary Manuscripts, vol. I (1450-1625), pt.I: Andrews-Donne* (London: Mansell & New York: R.R. Bowker, 1980), pp. 354-55.

6. Beal DnJ 1287, Donne Variorum siglum R9, discussed above by Stringer.

7. The staging of the RSC's recent production of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* (Stratford-upon-Avon 1998) reminded its audience that the gingerbread stall was a standard component of the seventeenth-century fair. The Stage-keeper's Induction (cut from this production) counsels against any political allegorizing of this and other elements of the Fair, warning playgoers not to be "so solemnly ridiculous as to search out who was meant by the gingerbread-woman" (*Bartholomew Fair*, Ind.: 123-4, in Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist and other plays*, ed. with an introduction by Gordon Campbell [Oxford &c: OUP, 1995], World's Classics, p. 333). Joan Trash is nonetheless rebuked by Lanthern Leatherhead for selling inferior produce (2:2:1-25) in what is evidently a standard attempt to spoil her sales-

pitch. This passage influences "staler" in my paraphrase above. See also the Commentary in Vol. II of Grierson's 1912 edition, p. 52. Grierson attributes the "gingerbread effigy" interpretation to E.K. Chambers, where it seems to have originated. See E.K. Chambers, ed., *Poems of John Donne* (London: Routledge & New York: Dutton [1896]), The Muses Library, Vol I, p. 232: "Presumably *his highness* was made of gilt gingerbread." Chambers, unlike Grierson, does not specifically mention *Bartholomew Fair.* However, Smith, "Dismissal," pp. 116-17, does—presumably in deference to Grierson.

8. I should say here that in a private communication (September 3, 1998), Gary Stringer expresses reservations about my "stale gingerbread" interpretation. He prefers to see in B's "not lesse cared for" the expression of an analogy between (i) the rapidity with which, postcoitally, the pleasure that has been experienced in sexual climax (as opposed to the objective recall of that pleasure) rapidly dissipates, and (ii) the commonplace manner in which children lose interest in the novelty of all playthings. My difficulty with this view is not that I doubt that there is an analogy at work (I argue above that there is), but that there seems little point in drawing this particular one: surely the tiresome character trait to which it refers is not, alas, restricted to children.

9. I acknowledge with gratitude a private communication from Simon McDonaugh (August 28, 1998), a graduate student at North Carolina State University, who first drew my attention to this truly fascinating variant, and in so doing changed the substance of this paper from that given at the 1998 Gulfport meeting.

10. I owe this suggestion, offered after a presentation of a yet earlier version of this paper in November 1997, to my Groningen colleague A.A. MacDonald. The lines might call to mind the bitter ending of Shakespeare's Sonnet 146.

11. This aspect to the poem also informs the forensic analysis of the poem's logic in Smith, "Dismissal," p. 114, etc.

12. These verbal forms are quoted as in Grierson. On the principle *difficilior lectio potior,* miscopying "sise" as "rise" would in theory be more likely than the other way around. Yet as Stringer's collation reveals (even though this is not its main aim here) H6, H8 and B actually read "size." Grierson's "sise" first occurs in C (1639), not (as Grierson's collation claims) B. It persists through G (1669). B47's "seize" makes little sense; yet my paraphrase could certainly support B46 "rise." This (in my view) substantive variant ("rise" / "sise" / "size") remains a complete conundrum. One would be tempted to follow H8 (and thus B) without demur were it not for the manifest verbal and punctuation errors evinced elsewhere in H8 and duly listed by Stringer.

13. Like other members of the John Donne Society I possess one of the T-shirts bearing the legend "When, as the age was long, the sise was great." A promotional item for Volume 6 of the Donne Variorum, *The Anniversaries and the Epicedes and Obsequies*, it comes from *The First Anniversary (FirAn)*, line 121, and is annotated on p. 390 of Vol. 6. Other than the "sise"/ "size" at line 10 of *Fare* (respectively the

readings of C through G, and those of H6, H8 and B), John R. Roberts kindly draws my attention to two other occurrences in the canon of "size" (so spelt) in Grierson's edition of *Ecst* at line 38 and *Sat2* at line 54. Roberts has consulted the Donne *Concordance*, ed. Homer Carroll Dombs and Zay Rusk Sullens (Chicago: Packard & Co, 1940); this work notes only these four entries, all under the form "size," using Grierson, despite the fact that in Grierson the *FirAn* and *Fare* readings are clearly "sise." In view of what is in this *Concordance* it will be interesting to note what, in due course, the DVE collations of the various extant *Ecst* and *Sat2* readings present.

14. Stringer's collation of the variants in punctuation is worth consulting in support of any claim of syntactic fluidity.

15. Stringer's collation of B47's garbled "thager" is recorded for the first time here. H8, which it will now be evident that, on the grounds of its line 38 reading, I would in an ideal world prefer, muddies the waters here by missing any punctuation unit after "Eager." This is one of several aspects of H8 that weakens its authority, although the possibility can't be ruled out that someone copying from it might well (almost subconsciously) add a comma for clarity's sake. Yet again, Stringer's account of the bizarre responses of Hayward and Gardner to Grierson's itself bizarre emendation would be incredible were it not, apparently, true.

16. Listed titles here as in Grierson.

17. Stringer, private communication, September 24, 1998.

18. Here cited as in Grierson. B47 reads "greatnes" (see Stringer above).

19. There are, however, twenty-five extant seventeenth-century manuscripts that postdate 1609. All are listed in the relevant volume of Beal. None has any textual authority, as Katherine Duncan-Jones has most recently argued. See Katherine Duncan-Jones, ed., *Shakespeare's Sonnets* (London: Nelson, 1997), The Arden Shakespeare, Third Series, pp. 453-66.

20. The phrase is Katherine Duncan-Jones', *ed. cit.*, p. 1, which also contains a fuller version of the Meres quotation.

21. Despite the fullness of his critical discussion Smith, "Dismissal," p. 113, neither questions the silent conventional assumption that Shakespeare influenced Donne; nor, while hearing the Shakespearean echo (see also my note 4 above) in his description of "the lovers' blind admiration and pursuit of 'the thing', whose enjoyment decays once they have had it," does he attribute the importance I do in the present analysis to the disturbing semiotic instability of "thing."

22. See Duncan-Jones, *ed. cit.*, pp. 1-28, see esp. p. 13.