

## Some Further Early Allusions to Donne

John T. Shawcross

References to or citations from the works of John Donne in the eighteenth century, while they are decidedly not so numerous as they are for William Shakespeare, Edmund Spenser, John Milton, or even George Herbert, nonetheless do suggest a presence for him that belies the out-of-date notion that he was generally ignored. The items below, not included in A. J. Smith's *John Donne: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), are interesting additions to our awareness of an underlying influence.

First, there is an appropriation of "Song: Go and Catch a Falling Star" by William Warburton in a letter to Thomas Birch, dated 27 May 1738, in which he turns a stanza of the poem into a consolation for himself against some unspecified criticism or slight:

But as Donne says

‘Teach me to hear the Maremaids singing,  
‘And to keep off envy’s stinging,  
‘And to find,  
‘What wind,  
‘Serves to advance an honest Mind.’

The holograph letter is found in British Library MS Additional 4320, letters to and from Thomas Birch, ff. 120-121v. Smith cites or refers to the important critics Warburton and Birch often; see particularly #85, p. 204, and #87, p. 210.

In *The British Muse, or a Collection of Thoughts Moral, Natural, and Sublime, of Our English Poets* (London: Printed for F. Cogan and J. Nourse, 1738) and its second edition, *The Quintessence of English Poetry* (London: Printed for O. Payne, MDCCXL), three volumes, Thomas Hayward gives an allusion on I, xx; a listing of the 1635 *Poems* (source for the next item); and the quotation of the full poem "Confined Love" (without title) on II, 221. *Quintessence* provides, under various headings, a dictionary of comments from various authors; here the subject heading is "Marriage." The ironic (or satiric) classification of this poem strikes one as most curious.

A third example of Donne's presence lies in Walter Harte's *The Amaranth: Or, Religious Poems* (London: Printed for Robinson and Roberts, and W. Frederick, 1767). (See Smith, #75, p. 194, for an earlier allusion in Harte's "An Essay on Satire, Particularly on the Dunciad," 1730.) There are three different references. Four lines of "The Courtier and Prince: A Fable," p. 126 and note, remark Donne's poetic demise but assumed continuation of his reputation:

Of all the *great* and *harmless* things below,  
Only an ELEPHANT is *truly* so.  
[Thus writes a WIT\*, well-known a cent'ry past;  
Forgotten now; yet still his fame shall last.]

The note reads: "'Dr. Donne's *Letters in Prose*, 12o, Lond. 1591." The date should be 1651, of course, but why this volume rather than a poetic one is cited is unclear. The reference is to "Metempsychosis," Stanza XXXIX: "Natures great masterpiece, an Elephant, / The only harmless great thing; the giant / Of beasts; who thought, no more had gone, to make one wise / But to be just." We might not have expected such facile knowledge of this poem, thinking, perhaps, that only the satires and some of the Songs and Sonnets might offer allusions. But as Smith indicates, Harte presumably had the same poem in mind in his "Essay on Satire" comment.

In "Boetius: or, The Upright Statesman. A supposed Epistle From Boetius to his Wife Rusticana," p. 241 and note, Harte remarks, "This passage was written in imitation of OVID's famous description of *Galatea*, MET. L. XIII. and improved by an hint taken from Dr. DONNE's *Poems*, Page 96, 12mo." Indicated is the "Ecclogue" of the Somerset "Epithalamion," lines 25-38 (in the 1719 edition of the *Poems*); their influence is seen in Harte's "air thy purity / Denotes, thy clearness fire, and earth thy constancy."

Then, in a note on p. 257 he quotes as illustration of a line in this same poem, "'Heav'n, to men well-dispos'd, is EV'RY-WHERE.' Dr. DONNE." Again it is the "Ecclogue" of the Somerset "Epithalamion," with alteration.

Another interesting item appears in *The Barbados Gazette* for 18 July 1733. This, a letter dated 16 July, comments favorably and includes a six-stanza poem "On Reading Dr. Donne's Poems." It is reprinted in Volume I of *Caribbeana. Containing Letters and Dissertations, Together with Poetical Essays, on Various Subjects and Occasions; Chiefly Wrote by Several Hands in the West-Indies* (London, 1741).

Most amusing and at the same time most revealing of subtle influence is the last stanza of a poem that plays with the last stanza of "The Canonization." The anonymous *A Sorrowful Ditty; Or, the Lady's Lamentation For the Death of Her Favourite Cat. A Parody* (London, 1748), p. 12, reads:

She's beast, pleasing thought! so Contented am I  
 But Oh! let her meet me when call'd to the Sky!  
 We'll then mount together, and close by the Bear,  
 In one Constellation each twinkle a Star:  
     As we blaze,  
     In a maze,  
     Men shall gaze;  
 And ever be pointing, "There shine from above,  
 "True Mirrours on Constancy, Patterns of Love."

Perhaps as well there is some influence from the stanzaic form of "Song: 'Goe, and catche a falling starre.'"

Volume II of *State-Worthies: or, The Statesmen and Favourites of England From the Reformation to the Revolution* (London: Printed for J. Robson, M,DCC,LXVI), attributed to David Lloyd and revised by Charles Whitworth, includes "Observations on the Life of Dr. Donne, Dean of Paul's" on pp. 466-77.

Richard Farmer's *An Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare. . . The Second Edition with Large Additions* (Cambridge, M.DCC,LXVII) cites the lines about the swan from *Metempsychosis*, Stanza 24, ll. 231-37, as the source for Milton's lines in *Paradise Lost* IV, 602-4, on pp. 30-31. This section does not appear in Edition 1 (also 1767) but is repeated in Edition 3 (1789). Henry Headley, signing himself C. T. O., repeated the statement of source and again quoted Donne in "Mr. Pennant's *Zoology considered*," *Gentleman's Magazine* 56 (October 1786): 838-40 (on 839).

*Anecdotes of Some Distinguished Persons, Chiefly of the Present and Two Preceding Centuries. Adorned with Sculptures. The Second Edition, with Additions and Corrections. Vol. IV* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, Jun. and W. Davies, Successors to Mr. Cadell, 1796), includes on p. 333 "Dr. Donne, Dean of St. Paul's," presenting the now well-known quip on his marriage as well as comments on his study drawn from Izaak Walton's "Life."

In *The Progress of Satire: An Essay in Verse* (London: Printed for J. Bell, MDCCXCVIII), there are two pertinent lines: "Rough Donne, in homely strains, devoid of art, / Spoke the plain truths that prove an honest heart," emphasizing the cliché about his prosody. (It is the satires, I would argue, that Ben Jonson primarily had in mind in talking about his not keeping accent, although the defective and hypermetric lines in those poems had been produced on purpose for their satiric effect.)

In Volume I of *The Lives of the English Regicides, and Other Commissioners of the Pretended High Court of Justice, Appointed to sit in Judgment upon Their Sovereign, King Charles the First* (London: Printed for John Stockdale, 1798), p. 168, Mark Noble provides the following information in "The Life of Sir John D'Anvers, Knt.": "He married Magdalen, daughter of Sir Richard Newport, afterwards Earl of Bradford, and widow of Sir Richard Herbert, and mother by him of the famous Lord Herbert of Cherbury. Lady D'Anvers was buried at Chelsea, June 8, 1627; Dr. Donne preached her funeral sermon." Noble was the author of a brief life of Donne (1821) in manuscript; see my edition in the *Journal of the Rutgers University Library* 32 (1968): 1-32.

And finally the undated *Liberty Deposed, or the Western Election. A Satirical Poem. In Three Books* (London: Printed for J. Almon, J. Williams, J. Coote, and F. Blyth) revises two lines from Satire 2 (ll. 5-6), which are quoted in a note, p. 26: "That brib'ry is the cursed sin, / Which brought th'excise and famine in" (ll. 164-65). These last two items indicate the way the presence of Donne and his work often exists for the eighteenth century, though hardly in the dominating way that Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton oversee its poetic productions.

*University of Kentucky*