John Donne Journal
Vol. 20 (2001)

Some Unreported Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Allusions to John Donne

Donald W. Rude

The following pages point out a number of early allusions to John Donne which have gone unnoted in previous compilations, and identify the correct source of a derogatory reference to Donne and Cowley that was attributed to John Dunton by Geoffrey Keynes. All of these references bear notice for the additional light they cast on the reputation of Donne in the century following his death.

The earliest of the references occurs in the head-matter for *Fragmenta Poetica: or Miscellanies of Poetical Musings, Moral and Divine* by Nicholas Murford (London: Humphrey Mosely, 1650). There, in a hortatory poem, "To the Author M. Nicholas Murford, Merchant," John Bradford, the draper poet's friend, writes:

> Poetrie is now grown Staple-Merchandize
> Free from Old Custome or the New Exercise.
> Silvester, Spenser, Johnson, Dratton, Donn,
> May see Verse measured by the Last and Tunn,
> While Dutch, French, Spanish, English liquors use
> T'adorn thy house, their learnings grace thy Muse;
> (fol. A7b, ll. 9-14).[1]

[1]The text of Bradford's poem and of the seventeenth century works cited in this note, are those filmed by University Microfilms in *Early English Books: 1641-1700* and *The Eighteenth Century* except where noted in the following notes. Quotations from John Donne's poems are taken from *John Donne: Poetic Works*, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson, 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).

The value of the passage is self-evident, for it finds Donne included in a catalogue of authors who inspire the muse of the merchant poet. During the next 100 years, such references would become increasingly rare.

In the same year, an unreported echo of Donne appears in Sir John Mennes' *Recreation for Ingenious Head-pieces, or A Pleasant Grove for their Wits to Walk In* (London: M. Simmons to be sold by John Hancock, 1650). Keynes noted a poem written in imitation of Donne and a poem on the poet's death which appeared in the first edition of this collection of epigrams, epitaphs, and other ephemeral works, but he failed to notice a borrowing from Donne in the 1650 edition and all later ones. While early editions contained 630 epigrams, the 1650 edition was expanded to include 700 epigrams. Number 548, "Upon Dunmo" is of particular interest:

> I Dunmo ask'd as we at Supper sate,
> How long he had liv'd in the married state,
> Sir, just (quoth Dunmo) with my wife I met
> In the great plague time, I remember yet,
> And sigh, as he would have burst in twain,
> Said, now almost the thirtieth of her raign.
> (fol. H7[a-b])

The line concluding the epigram echoes the final line in the concluding stanza of "The Anniversarie," where Donne's narrator declares:

> True and false feares let us refraine,
> Let us love nobly, and live, and adde againe
> Yeares and yeares unto yeares, till we attaine
> To write threescore: this is the second of our raigne.
> (27-30)

The plight of Mennes' Dunmo (is a pun possible?) seems even more humorous when the echo of Donne is considered, for unlike Donne's lover who anticipates sixty years of happiness, Dunmo reflects on thirty distress-filled years. The final words of the epigram ruefully

echo the conclusion of Donne's poem in a way so as to heighten our awareness of the speaker's unhappiness and thwarted expectations.

Early in the Restoration occurs an intriguing reference to Donne, which finds him cited in an attack upon cosmetics, perhaps to bolster the argument against their use which appears in a polemical pamphlet: R. Smith's *A Wonder of Wonders or A Metamorphosis of Fair Faces Voluntarily into Foul Visages*: *An invectyve against Black-spotted Faces, by a Well-wisher to Modest Matrons and Virgins[,] Miso-Spilus* (London: J. G. for Richard Royston, 1662.) The work attacks the use of beauty patches, which came into vogue in the early years of Charles II's reign. Near the conclusion of the pamphlet, the author comments:

> ... the wonder is the greater how it hath escaped Ecclesiastical censure, since all the Fathers of the Church have strongly inveighed against forced and feigned beauty, and this practice of introducing other hues then the blood naturally affords, &cc. God would not (saith a grave learned Divine) have the face mangled and torne, but then he would not have it varnished with foreign complexions: It is ill when it is not our own blood that appears in our cheeks; it may do some ill office of blood: it may tempt, but it gives over when it should do a good office of blood, it cannot blush; God would not have us disfigure our face with sad countenances in fasting and other Discipline, nor would have us go about to marre his work, or to do is last work (which he hath reserved to himself in heaven) here on earth, that is, to glorifie our bodies with such additions here, as though we would need no glorification there. Thus, Dr. Donne. (p. 28)

Here, a marginal gloss cites "Dr. Donne, Serm. 10." The pamphleteer had in mind a passage in "Sermon X" in Donne's *Fifty Sermons Sermons preached by that learned and Divine, John Donne* (London, printed by Ja. Flesher for M.F. J. Marriott, R. and Royston, MDXLIX. p. 83).

A second passage containing a significant allusion to Donne appears in a satirical poem by Samuel Wesley entitled "To the Laud and Praise of a Shock Bitch," in *Maggots or Poems on Several Subjects Diversely Handled* (London: For John Dunton, 1685). In the satiric poem, the poet-narrator celebrates the kisses of his lapdog and denigrates the

behavior of young fops, theatergoers, and blowsie Poets who sit and chat of money, love, and honor, writing:

> Let Play-house Hero's live or dye,
> Or spew, or stink or swear, or lye,
> To court the Glance of one bright Eye
> From Philly!
> Let the entranced loving Ass
> A Picture wooe, and buss the Glass,
> Covering his Mistresses surpassing Beauty!
> Then steal from Cowley, or from Don,
> (Since none will miss 'em when they're gon)
> Two hundred thousand Stanzas on
> Her shoo-ty! (pp. 78-79)

Keynes erroneously attributed this poem to John Dunton, who included it in *The Athenian Sport* (London, 1707) where it is not attributed to Wesley (*A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne*, 4th ed. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973], p. 303). The passage has greater significance when it is viewed in the correct historical context, for Wesley then becomes the first in a line of Restoration critics who wrote derisively about Donne and the Metaphysical poets whereas, when the poem is dated 1707, it is simply one more bit of abuse reflecting the taste of the early eighteenth century. Paradoxically, even as Wesley suggests that Donne and Cowley are being plagiarized by Restoration dandies who steal their lines to flatter their mistresses, Wesley suggests that Donne and Cowley continued to enjoy the favor of the common reader who borrowed from them, for if their works did not appeal to a large audience, the plagiarists he refers to would have chosen to borrow their words elsewhere. Viewed in the correct historical context, Wesley's comments mark him as a very early detractor of Donne—if not the earliest—in the seventeenth century.

A tempting reference to Donne's *Biathanatos* occurs in 1676 in *Books Printed for and Sold by Peter Parker, at the Legg and Star right against the Royal Exchange in Cornhill.* The two-page catalogue appears on the final leaves of Parker's edition of Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (London, 1676). The announcement describes an edition of Donne's work thus:

> *Biathanatos*, a declaration of the Paradox or Thesis that Self-homicide is not so naturally a sin that it may never be otherwise, wherein the Nature and the Extent of all those Laws which seem to be violated by this act are diligently surveyed, written by *John Donn,* D.D., and Dean of St. *Paul's London, quarto.* (fol. [Rrr4^a])

No edition of Donne's treatise printed in this date was reported in Donald Wing's *Short Title Catalogue* or any of the revisions of that work. This fact may represent an oversight, and it is possible that scholars with access to private libraries might one day locate or recover a copy this edition of *Biathanatos*, or it is also possible that Parker intended to print the volume but never did. It is a tempting ghost.

Turning to the eighteenth century, several references to Donne as a writer of satires have gone unnoticed. The first occurs in Edward Young's *The Universal Passion.* There, in *The Universal Passions: Satire I: to his Grace, the Duke of Dorset*" (London: Printed for J. Roberts, 1725),[2] the poet laments the absence of great satire:

> Why slumbers Pope, who heads the tuneful train,
> Nor hears that virtue, which he loves, complain?
> Donne, Dorset, Dryden, Rochester, are dead,
> And guilt's chief foe in Addison is fled;
> Congreve, who crown'd with laurels fairly won,
> Sits smiling at the goal while others run,
> He will not write; and (more provoking still!
> Yea gods! he will not write, and Mauvius will.) (35-42)

---

[2]Young's first appeared in a separate edition in 1725 as did several other satires. Satire one and five other satires were joined in a single volume entitled *Love of Fame, The Universal Passion*, published in1725. This edition was followed by second and third editions in 1728 in which a seventh poem appears. The text of the separate edition of 1725 and texts of the second and third editions are available in *The Eighteenth Century*: (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms. 1985). My quotation is taken from Volume II of Edward Young's *Poetical Works* in the facsimile edition of The Aldine Edition of the British Poets(Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1970), Vol. II, p. 60, which provides the most readily-accessible version of the poem.

This allusion is interesting because Young includes Donne's name in a list of deceased writers, including his detractor Dryden, whose absence from the scene, he hopes, will provide Alexander Pope and William Congreve with inspiration to resume the composition of satire.

In 1739 and 1740, two references to Donne appear in *The Champion*, a newspaper begun in 1739 by a group of London booksellers opposed to Sir Robert Walpole and published by T. Cooper. Its first issue appeared on 15 November 1739 with Henry Fielding as its editor, assisted by James Ralph. Using the pen name "Captain Horatio Vinegar," after a promoter of prize fights, Fielding continued to serve in this capacity until late June, 1740, when he resigned because of his disapproval of a plan, carried out in London later in 1740, to collect the single numbers of the newspaper in a single volume. In the collected edition, according to modern scholars, pieces by Fielding are signed with a "C" or an "L," while those written by Ralph are signed with a pair of asterisks(**).[3] The first of the references to Donne occurs in a letter to Captain Horatio Vinegar from Captain Timothy Vinegar signed ** in the collected edition, marking it as Ralph's work. It occurs along with references to other major English writers near the end of a critical appraisal of a poem by Richard Glover entitled "London or The Progress of Commerce," then recently published in London and reprinted in *The Champion*, (*No. 6* for 24 November, 1739). Glover's poem praises London as the center of international commerce which is regarded as a civilizing force among nations. Following the poem, Ralph praises the poet, and closes with these words:

---

[3]Martin C. and Ruth R. Battestin. *Henry Fielding: A Life* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 308-309. For additional information on Fielding's role in the *The Champion*, see Battestin, 80-81, 258-259; Donald Thomas, *Henry Fielding* (New York St. Martin's Press, 1990), pp. 146-153; and Joan Williams, *The Criticism of Henry Fielding* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970). My quotations derive from *The Champion*, 2 vols. (London: R. R. Hoggonson, 1740), reproduced in Reel 258, *English Literary Periodicals* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms. N.D.). I have used this edition because it is currently the most readily-accessible version and because its ascriptions permit the identification of the contributors.

> I shall conclude, Sir, with observing, for the Honour of this august Metropolis, that however singular it may seem to see the Man of Business, and the Poet center in the polite Learning as this; and when I mention the great Names of Chaucer, Spencer, Donne, Milton, and Cowley, with those of Mr. Pope, and Mr. Glover, all Natives of London; no Body will presume to treat the Word Citizen, as a term of Reproach anymore.

The second reference to Donne in *The Champion* occurs in "A Literary Article" (No. 24, 24 May 1740.) The column, a regular feature of the paper, is unsigned, and, thus, could be the work of Fielding, Ralph, or another contributor. In the "Literary Article," the author introduces a passage from Alexander Pope's adaptation of Donne's *Satyre IV* to debunk an unidentified poet:

> A Piece has lately stollen upon the Public under the Umbrage of a Great Name, which reminds every Reader of certain Lines, imitated from Dr. Donne, by Mr. Pope[:]
>
> > What Speech esteem you most? The King's Said I
> > But the best Words? O Sir, the Dictionary.
> > You miss my Aim: I mean the most acute
> > And Perfect Speaker, Onslow, past Dispute.
>
> To say all in a Word 'tis the most artificial thing extant; like the Cock off the Balance, it trembles between the Scales of Power and Liberty, Without venturing to be steady for either. . . . (*The Champion* II, 259)

The writer in *The Champion* criticizes the author of the unidentified poem for praising Arthur Onslow, a member of Parliament for thirty-three years, suggesting that he embodies those qualities of sycophantic writing that appalled Donne and Pope, citing lines 68 to 70 of Pope's adaptation of Donne's *Satyre IV* as he does so.

Almost as a coda to this collection of references to Donne is a poem published in 1710 which echoes many of Donne's works. John Dunton published "The Amorous Union" by Mr. F—W as "Frolick XVIII" in a sub-section of *Athenianism or the New Projects of Mr. John Dunton*, entitled "Parnassus Hoa! Or a Frolick in Verse" which contains a group of lyric

poems, many of dubious quality. The work of Mr. F—W has particular interest to John Donne scholars, for it contains a curious synthesis of borrowings from John Donne's "A Valediction forbidding mourning," and "The Canonization," combining these borrowings with an original metaphysical conceit of a most curious nature. "The Amorous Union" reads:

I.

Let dull Philosophers the Ign'rant tell,
That Souls are indivisible;
We find their Rules do not prove always true,
'Tis but one Soul informs us two;
So by one Loadstone touch'd, as we by Love,
Two distant needles to the same Point move.

II.

Go now, and ask thy jealous Kindred, why
They thee to love thy self deny?
For 'tis just so, our Love's a Phoenix grown,
And we are eminently one;
Such Miracles our Sympathy can do,
That I no longer am my Self, but you.

III.

Then let's not talk, But Kindred disagree;
Prithee what's that to thee and me?
Our Love's theWorm, they've tried so oft to kill
By separating us, yet still
Mistaken Fools! We mock your subtile Art,
This, tho' divided, lives in every Part.

In "The Amorous Union," Mr. F—W, whose identity remains a mystery, loosely follows the model provided by many of the dialogues in *Songs and Sonnets*.[4] The speaker is glimpsed in a dramatic situation in

[4]"The Amorous Union—by Mr. F—W," printed as "Frolick XVIII" in "Parnassus Hoa! Or, a Frolick in Verse," in *Athenianism or the New Projects of Mr. John Dunton* (London: Printed by Thomas Darrack, 1710), p. 224. I have been

which he attempts to convince his listener, perhaps his lover, that she should overlook the objections to their union posed by her kindred. He insists that they are one in spirit and as he does so, in the first two stanzas his imagery often seems to have been suggested by Donne. In the first stanza, the speaker disputes the notion which philosophers have set forth that the soul is indivisible, assuring the listener that the two of them have disproved the rules since both are informed by one soul. The passage reflects ideas found in such Donne's lyrics as "The good morrow," "The Canonization, "The Extasie," and "A Valediction forbidding mourning," to name only a few. Here, Mr. F—W supports his point by offering what he tells his listener: "So by one Loadstone touched, as we by Love, / Two distant needles to the same Point move." The poet no doubt has recalled Donne's most famous conceit of the draftsman's compass in the "Valediction," where the motion of its legs suggests the unity of the poet and his lover even when they are separated. Mr. F—W's parallel conceit likens the souls of the lover's to twin arrows on a pair of nautical compasses. Both turn towards the same lodestone, and their concurrent northward motion here symbolizes their spiritual union. The second stanza recalls "The Canonization" both because of the speaker's self-defensive posture and because of common ideas and images linking the poems. The listener is urged to reject her kindred's admonition that the pair part, when borrowing from "The Canonization," he insists that the lovers have become a Phoenix, a bird in which both sexes are perfectly joined. He closes by assuring the listener that the lovers are capable of working miracles because their mutual sympathy has made them one. The promise of miracles, of course, reminds one of the lovers in "The Canonization," who through the perfection of their love become saints to whom future lovers will offer up prayers.

It is only in the third stanza that our new metaphysical poet falters. After suggesting that the complaints of kindred can be ignored, and following Donne by insisting that the spiritually united lovers can

---

unable to find a reference to a poet whose last name begins with "F" and ends in "W" in Albert C. Baugh's A *Literary History of England* (rev. ed., Boston: Appleton, Century, Crofts, 1968). Perhaps some reader with greater expertise in early eighteenth-century poetry will be able to identify the writer whom I take to be the "last Metaphysical poet."

work miracles, he fails to build a pretty room when he characterizes the lovers' unity in what must surely be the most peculiar of metaphysical conceits as he likens their conjoined souls to *a worm* which her kinsmen have often tried to kill. Mr. F—W then mocks the attempts of these mistaken fools to separate the lovers, asserting that they both live on in each of the severed halves of the worm. If we consider the fact that Metaphysical poets made their points by using highly ingenious similes and metaphors, we see that Mr. F—W has attempted to do so. But, when he departs from ideas hinted at by Donne or borrowed directly from him, to his discredit, he uses a metaphor that is so far-fetched as to fail entirely in its effort to suggest the mysterious unity of two people joined by true love. While the riddle of the phoenix in "The Canonization" provides an ingenious but incredible representation of the spiritual unity which Donne describes, the riddle of the worm, as it is developed in "The Amorous Union," while logical, is so far-fetched as to be utterly bizarre and, thus, unable to confer the power to work miracles on Mr. F—W and his beloved. Since the poem appears in a volume which also reprints Wesley's derisive poem on Donne and Cowley, it is hard to know whether the poem offers a serious tribute to the power of perfect love or is an unabashed burlesque; it is interesting, nonetheless, to see this curious attempt to follow Donne, written at a time when metaphysical style was out of favor. Its discovery, however, along with the discovery of the other references cited here indicates the need for further systematic reconsideration of Donne's reputation during the Restoration and the Age of Reason. If such a project could be undertaken, we might well discover that the long-presumed view of the reception of John Donne during this period is erroneous.

Texas Tech University