

The Textual History of and Interpretively Significant Variants in Donne's "The Sunne Rising"

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Collation of thirty-five of the forty-three, seventeenth-century manuscript and print artifacts that contain full texts in English of "The Sunne Rising" (including representatives of all except the single-manuscript Group IV of the five traditional manuscript textual groups identified by Beal:¹ Group I [B32, C2, O20, and SP1], Group II [B7, B40, DT1, H4, TT1, and WN1], Group III [B46, H5, and H6], and those associated with Group III [H3, H7, HH5, NY1, O21, VA2, Y2, and Y3]) shows that the manuscript transmission divides into two lines of transmission, a likely (based on our previous work on the Elegies) earlier line reading "which" in line nineteen composed mainly of Group III manuscripts or those associated with Group III (see the Schema of Textual Relationships) and a likely later line reading "whome" in line nineteen composed entirely of Group I and II manuscripts and all seven of the seventeenth-century printed editions of Donne's *Poems* (see the Schema of Textual Relationships). The earlier line of transmission has four families, each with at least one subfamily (see Schema of Textual Relationships). This large variation in the texts of the Group III and Associated manuscripts is normal—their manuscript transmission is not as tight as those in Groups I and II—and their families and subfamilies are as one usually finds them. Interestingly, and as we have often seen in other poems,

¹Peter Beal, comp., *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, Vol. I, Part I (London: Mansell, 1980): 250-54. The noncollated manuscripts are: B13, C1, C8, C9, CT1, HH1, SA1, and OJ1. Sigla throughout this essay are those of the Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne.

the editor of the 1635 *Poems* (B) likely compared his 1633 *Poems* (A) second line of transmission text which he was using as a copy-text against that of the first line of transmission O'Flahertie manuscript (H6) to get the "Dost thou not" reading instead of "Why shouldst thou." The reading remains "Dost thou not" in all the subsequent seventeenth-century editions.

The second line of transmission consists largely of Group I and II manuscripts, and, indeed, its two families are pretty much these two traditional groups (see Schema of Textual Relationships). All members of the B7 family (reading "doth" in line 7) are traditional Group II members, and all members of the B32 family (reading "will" in line 7) are traditional Group I members except SN4 (which Beal does not classify) and WN1 (classified as a traditional Group II manuscript by Beal [I, i, p. 251], but often reading—as it does here—with the Group I manuscripts). The prints are often, but not always, found (as here) with Group I. Essentially, the most unusual thing about the textual history of "The Sunne Rising" is its consistency with what we know of other poems—there are no surprises, though there are quite a few variants.

Since H. J. C. Grierson's text of "The Sunne Rising"² is not only generally received as the standard text of the poem, but is also based on the text of John Donne's 1633 *POEMS, By J. D.*, the copy-text for the poem in all twentieth-century editions of Donne's poems, we will use it as the basis of comparison for the early print and manuscript texts for which we are examining textual variants that pose interpretive problems. Grierson made four emendations, all involving punctuation, to the text of A: in line 8, he substituted a semicolon for a comma after "offices"; in line 23, a semicolon for the comma after "us"; in line 24, a period for the semicolon after "alchimie"; and in line 26, a semicolon for the period after "thus."

Grierson's text follows with significant/interesting seventeenth-century verbal variants below in brackets followed by the sigla of the artifacts that contain them.

²Herbert J. C. Grierson, ed., *The Poems of John Donne* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1912), I: 11-12.

The Sunne Rising.

[To the Sunne] C2 H3 HH5

[Ad Solem] B32 B46 B47 H5 H6 H7 HH7 NY1 O20

SP1 VA3 WA1 Y2

[To the Sunne that rise too early to call him and his
love from bedd] F4 NP1

BU sie old foole, unruly Sunne,
 Why dost thou thus,
 Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?
 Must to thy motions lovers seasons run?
 Sawcy pedantique wretch, goe chide 5
 Late schoole boyes, and sowre prentices,
 [slow] H3 HH7 O21 VA2 Y3

 Goe tell Court-huntsmen, that the King will ride,
 [doth] B7 B40 DT1 H4 TT1
 Call countrey ants to harvest offices;
 Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,
 Nor houres, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time. 10

Thy beames, so reverend, and strong
 Why shouldst thou thinke?
 [Dost thou not thinke] H6 B-G
 I could eclipse and cloud them with a winke,
 But that I would not lose her sight so long:
 If her eyes have not blinded thine, 15
 Looke, and to morrow late, tell mee,
 Whether both the'India's of spice and Myne
 Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with mee.
 [by] H5
 [be] B47 H3 H7 NY1 O21 SN4 Y2 Y3
 [lay] NP1

Aske for those Kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
 [**which**] B46 B47 F4 H3 H5 H6 H7 NP1 NY1
 O21 VA2 VA3 WA1 Y3
 And thou shalt heare, All here in one bed lay. 20

 She'is all States, and all Princes, I,
 [**Princes**] [**States**] B46 B47 F4 H5 H7 HH7 NP1
 Y2
 Nothing else is.
 Princes doe but play us; compar'd to this,
 All honor's mimique; All wealth alchimie.
 Thou sunne art halfe as happy'as wee, 25
 In that the world's contracted thus;
 Thine age askes ease, and since thy duties bee
 To warme the world, that's done in warming us.
 Shine here to us, and thou art every where;
 This bed thy center is, these walls, thy spheare. 30

Schema of Textual Relationships³

1st line of transmission:
 B46 B47 F4 H3 H5 H6 H7 HH5 HH7 NP1 NY1 O21 VA2 VA3 WA1
 Y2 Y3

19 Aske for those Kings **which** thou sawest yesterday
 Family: H6 B-G
 12 dost thou not thinke
 Subfamily: H6
 23 Princes do but play us, compard **with** this
 Subfamily: G
 3 Through windows, and through curtains **look** on us?
 6 Late School-boyes, **or** sowre prentices

³Pointed brackets indicate omitted words.

Family: B46 B47 F4 H5 H7 HH7 NP1 Y2

21 She is all **Princes** and all **States**, I

Subfamily: B46 H7 Y2

21 She is all Princes and <all> States, I

Subfamily: F4 HH5 NP1

30 This bedd thy Center is, **this wall** thy Spheare

Sub-subfamily: F4 NP1

19 **Looke** for those kings which thou sawest yesterday

Family: H3 O21 Y3

24 All **houres**, **minuites**, all wealth alchemy

Subfamily: O21 Y3

27 **Thy** age askes ease and since thy duties bee

Sub-subfamily: Y3

27 Thy age askes ease <and> since thy duties bee

Family: NY1 VA2 WA1

23 Princes <doe> but plaie us compared to this

Subfamily: VA2

23 Princes but **players** <us> compared to this

2nd line of transmission:

B7 B32 B40 C2 DT1 H4 O20 SN4 SP1 TT1 WN1 A-G

19 Aske for those kinges **whome** thou saw'st yesterdaie

Family: B7 B40 DT1 H4 TT1

7 Goe tell Court huntsmen that the king **doth** ride

Family: B32 C2 O20 SN4 SP1 WN1 A-G

7 Goe tell Court Huntsmen that the king **will** ride

The four manuscript readings that would seem to be candidates for points of crux that might affect the choice of copy-text have problems with textual authority or the sense of the poem. The readings of "slow" (for "sowre" in line 6) and "doth" (for "will" in line 7) both focus the narrator's concern with time and its rapid passage, and, taken together, might suggest an authorial revision; however, the two

readings are from different lines of transmission and thus never occur together in the transmission of the texts, making these readings likely of scribal origin. The reading “Dost thou not thinke” (for “Why shouldst thou thinke?” in line 12), though it seems an effort to improve the sense of an awkward construction actually makes less sense—why would the sun which considers its beams “reverend, and strong” think the narrator could “eclipse and cloud them with a winke”? Finally, declaring the beloved “all Princes” (instead of “all States” and himself “all States” instead of “all Princes” in line 21) might appeal to fans of the movie *Woman on Top*, but would be inconsistent with the narrator’s reference in line 17 to the beloved as “the’ India’s of spice and Myne.”

One interesting result of the collation is HH7’s relatively close adherence to the B46 family until lines 19-25 where the text suddenly looks like a very inept memorial reconstruction. Why this text went haywire in the last two lines of the second stanza and the first five of the last but then got back on track is puzzling:

Aske for y^c whole worlds choisest rarities
 And see how all in one bed treasured lyes.
 All princes states all empyr
 But, us two is
 Whom Princes doe but play compared to this
 All honors Mimiques are, wealth Alchimy
 thou happy halfe art sunne as wee.

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