

## *Poems, by J. D. (1635) and the Creation of John Donne's Literary Biography*

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When, in 1619, John Donne urged Sir Robert Ker to remind readers of *Biathanatos* that it was “a Book written by *Jack Donne*, and not by *D. Donne*,” he probably did not expect this brief, personal message to become a fundamental part of his posthumous reputation.<sup>1</sup> At the time, Donne was rising rapidly through the ranks of the Church of England clergy and wanted to ensure that no one mistook it for recent work. There is no evidence that Donne made use of this binary elsewhere; indeed, Donne's sermons reflect a desire to reject extreme dichotomies in favor of a measured, if imperfect, religious and personal *via media*.<sup>2</sup> Although Ben Jonson discussed Donne with William Drummond, neither is recorded as calling him “Jack,” nor does

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<sup>1</sup>Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour Written by John Donne*, Wing D1864 (London: J. Flesher for R. Marriot, 1651), sig. D3v.

<sup>2</sup>H. J. C. Grierson, “John Donne and the ‘Via Media,’” *The Modern Language Review* 43 (1948): 305–314, especially pp. 312–313. See also Jeanne Shami, *John Donne and Conformity in Crisis in the Late Jacobean Pulpit* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), especially pp. 1–35.

Izaak Walton recount the episode, perhaps because he did not know about it.

Donne's contemporary readers were also unlikely to think of Donne as inherently double. As Deborah Aldrich Larson has shown, "many of Donne's contemporaries were able to accept the poet-lover and preacher as a unified (and titillating) whole," and Joshua Eckhardt demonstrates that readers tended to attribute both erotic and religious verse to "Dr. Donne."<sup>3</sup> Surviving manuscript evidence suggests that readers and collectors generally did not find the collocation of Donne's divine and secular poems odd or inappropriate but rather *appealing*, even when the attributions were spurious. Given the opportunistic and accretive way in which most miscellanies were compiled—the vagaries of a compiler's access to texts, as well as the time and circumstances of transcription, inevitably suggested intertextual relationships that may or may not have been intentional—this treatment of Donne's poems was not particularly unusual. But it also shows that readers during and immediately after Donne's lifetime were not yet thinking in terms of the Jack/Doctor binary that would come to define his biography.

Nevertheless, the story of John Donne's transformation from the rake "Jack" into the sober "Doctor" is a familiar theme in Donne criticism. Gradually stripped of their context in the eighteenth century, the terms "Jack" and "the Doctor" became shorthand for two different Donne personae who have survived into the twenty-first century.<sup>4</sup> This essay

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<sup>3</sup>Larson, "Donne's Contemporary Reputation: Evidence from Some Commonplace Books and Manuscript Miscellanies," *John Donne Journal* 12 (1993): 115–130, especially p. 116; and Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and the Politics of Anti-Courtly Love Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 155–161, especially p. 157.

<sup>4</sup>The letter to Ker appears as a footnote in *Biographia Britannica: Or, the Lives of the Most Eminent Persons Who Have Flourished in Great Britain and Ireland, from the Earliest Ages, to the Present Times*, 6 vols. (London: for W. Innys et al, 1750), 3:1729. An entry on Donne in *The Biographical Magazine* (London: for Harrison and Co., 1794) offers a paraphrase: "His Biathanatos . . . he used to say, was 'written by Jack Donne, not Dr. Donne'" (unpaginated). By 1826, the author of a "portrait" of Donne could surmise, "I should conceive that *Jack Donne* had been vain in his person in his youth, from a curious vagary that seized on *Dr. Donne* a few months before his death"; see *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 17 (1826): 221–231, especially p. 229. See also Judith

shows how the 1635 second edition of *Poems, by J. D.* (henceforth *B*) promulgated the tale of Jack Donne's transformation into Doctor Donne and made it the dominant way of understanding Donne's life and work.<sup>5</sup> Although critics have long recognized that the changes in *B* made it more biographically suggestive than the 1633 first edition of *Poems, by J. D. (A)*, they have taken for granted that this version of Donne's life story would have been self-evident in 1635; consequently, they have not acknowledged the heavily revised book's role in fashioning the now-familiar narrative of Donne's life.<sup>6</sup> This is due, at least in part, to confusion about the relationship between *B* and Walton's *The Life and Death of Dr. Donne, Late Dean of St. Pauls London* (first published in the 1640 collection *LXXX Sermons*) that has persisted since Edmund Gosse made the unsubstantiated assertion that "we shall probably not make any serious mistake if we suppose [Walton] to have been the revising editor."<sup>7</sup> While David Novarr refined this claim, arguing that Walton probably had not edited the volume but likely worked with Marriot to devise an arrangement that would support his account of Donne's life, he likewise offered no evidence to support his claim.<sup>8</sup> In any case, *A* more closely resembles the Donne readers would have known from the numerous manuscripts circulating at the time, a Donne who was interesting precisely *because* he was variable, flexible, miscellaneous, and, at times, contradictory. Indeed, the first indication that anyone other

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Scherer Herz, "By Parting Have Joyn'd Here': The Story of the Two (or More) Donnes," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 732–742, especially p. 734.

<sup>5</sup>The first two editions of Donne's poems are *Poems, by J. D., with Elegies on the Authors Death*, STC 7045 (London: M. Flesher for J. Marriot, 1633); and *Poems, by J. D., with Elegies on the Authors Death*, STC 7045 (London: M. Flesher for J. Marriot, 1635). Subsequent references to Donne's poems will be by signature only and will use the standard sigla established in the *Donne Variorum*.

<sup>6</sup>Herz, pp. 735–737. See also Dayton Haskin, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

<sup>7</sup>Gosse, *The Life and Letters of John Donne: Dean of St. Paul's*, 2 vols. (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1899), especially 2:307.

<sup>8</sup>Novarr, *The Making of Walton's Lives* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1958), pp. 31–49.

than Donne was concerned about the way his poems might be read (or worse, misread) comes in the “Elegies on the Authors Death” published at the end of *A*, most of which express anxiety about how the printed collection’s readers would interpret Donne’s life and writing. The extensive revisions that took place between the publication of the first and second editions seem designed to assuage the elegists’ uneasiness by organizing Donne’s poems to conform to an exemplary biographical narrative, but they also reveal the ways in which the details of this narrative remained unsettled in 1635. The second edition of *Poems*, by *J. D.*, therefore, does not resemble or echo or parallel the familiar story of Donne’s transformation, as previous critics have held—rather, as I will argue, the printed book *created* it. In so doing, *B* radically changed the way readers read and understood John Donne, shaped the organization and transmission of the modern Donne canon, and inaugurated a new model for a poetic career, permanently altering English ideas about literary authorship.

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When Donne died on 31 March 1631, countless manuscripts of his verse, numerous printed sermons, and a reading public eager for the late Dean’s writings survived him. Responding to the continued demand for Donne’s poems—their manuscript circulation peaked between 1625 and 1635—publisher John Marriot offered an edition that, as Stephen B. Dobranski has shown, roughly reproduces the experience of reading Donne’s poems in manuscript.<sup>9</sup> *A* neither claims any authority for the volume nor imposes any meaningful order on Donne’s poems. To emphasize this apparent haphazardness, Marriot added a prefatory letter, “The Printer to the Understanders,” midway through the press run. After dismissing a series of conventional disclaimers and apologies, Marriot asserts, “[W]ho so takes not as he findes it, in what manner soever, he is unworthy of it, sith a scattered limbe of this Author, hath more amiableness in it, in the eye of a discerner, then a whole body of some other” (sig. A1v). By addressing himself to the “Understanders” and “discerner[s],” Marriot draws upon the same dichotomy of reading and

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<sup>9</sup>Dobranski, *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 119, 134.

comprehending as Thomas Dekker, George Chapman, and Ben Jonson.<sup>10</sup> The volume's intended readers, Marriot argues, will best be able to appreciate it, and he (somewhat ironically) denies that there will be "more correctnesse, or enlargement in the next Edition."

Marriot's characterization of *A* as "a scattered limbe of [the] Author" both evokes the mythical poet Orpheus, whose severed head continued to sing after his limbs' dispersal and who symbolized the kind of witty obscurity that would require true "Understanders," and accurately describes the way Donne's poems are "scattered" throughout the volume without any apparent organizing principle.<sup>11</sup> By presenting the poems in a volume that more closely resembles a contemporary manuscript compilation than a formal sequence or critical collection, Marriot creates a sense of strategic miscellaneity that allows him to present *A* as a means for previously excluded readers to gain access to Donne's restricted manuscript texts while cautioning that only certain kinds of readers will truly be able to understand them.<sup>12</sup> Marriot also highlights this illusion of access in "Hexastichon Bibliopolae" (literally, "six-line poem from the bookseller"), printed on the verso side of the last page of "The Printer to the Understanders." Playing upon the classical *ars perennis* tradition, Marriot compares the sheets of paper used to print *Deaths Duell* (Donne's "last preach'd, and printed booke"), the sheet of stone used to carve Donne's monument, and the cloth burial sheets Donne was buried

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<sup>10</sup>See Dobranski, pp. 120–122; and Adam Smyth, *"Profit and Delight": Printed Miscellanies in England, 1640–1682* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2004), pp. 34–35.

<sup>11</sup>Richard Rowland, *Thomas Heywood's Theatre, 1599–1639* (Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 354–358.

<sup>12</sup>Richard Newton identifies three primary types of printed poetic collections: sequences, miscellanies, and critical collections. See "Making Book from Leaves: Poets Become Editors," in *Print and Culture in the Renaissance: Essays on the Advent of Printing in Europe*, ed. Gerald P. Tyson and Sylvia S. Wagonheim (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986), pp. 246–264, especially pp. 247–248. Because, as Peter Beal has pointed out, manuscript miscellanies and anthologies traditionally included works by multiple authors, I have chosen the more inclusive "compilation" to describe the similarities between *A* and contemporary manuscript collections. See Beal, *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology, 1450–2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 18, 85, and 255.

in to the printed sheets of *A*, claiming, “these if you buy, / You have him living to Eternity” (sig. A2v). In effect, Marriot offers the book as a way for readers to “buy” and “have” Donne himself.

Marriot’s strategy was a clever response to the burgeoning interest in Donne’s verse, but although manuscript readers would frequently have encountered Donne’s religious poems juxtaposed with secular verse (in configurations ranging from the inoffensive placement of *Cross* among various poems to patrons to the now-shocking apposition of *Sappho* and *Annun*), the thirteen “Elegies on the Authors Death” advertised on *A*’s title page feature many authors fretting about the same intermixing in the printed collection.<sup>13</sup> The elegists’ concerns were not unwarranted. Although there had been many printed collections of secular poems and of religious poems, my examination of 1,045 early modern poetry publications reveals that it was uncommon to see the two kinds mixed in a single volume as they were in *A*. As late as 1684, John Oldham felt compelled to explain why he would allow “two sacred *Odes*” to appear alongside his imitations of Horace’s satires and odes. Claiming that he published his poems only to prevent piracy, Oldham averred, “*Nor is the Printing of such Miscellanies altogether so unpresideded, but that it may be seen in the Editions of Dr. Donne, and Mr. Cowley’s Works.*”<sup>14</sup> In 1633, however, Marriot could only speculate that the quality of Donne’s verse and the discernment of his readers would preempt such concerns. He explains in “The Printer to the Understanders” that he saw no reason to put the commendatory elegies in the front of the book, “as is usuall in other workes, where perhaps there is need of it, to prepare men to digest such stuffe as follows after” (sig. A2r). Instead, he has included them in the back “as an attestation for their sakes that knew not so much before, to let them see how much honour was attributed to this worthy man, by those that are capable to give it”—that is, to assist readers who were not already familiar with Donne or his poetry. Though critics including Sidney Gottlieb, Robert Thomas Fallon, and Kevin Pask have read the elegies for clues about the early reception of Donne, they have tended to focus on the elegies’ corroboration or complication of Walton’s *Life*—

<sup>13</sup>In *A*, “The Crosse” is found on sigs. I4v–K1v; “Sappho to Philaenis” occupies sigs. Y3v–Y4v and “The Annuntiation and Passion” follows.

<sup>14</sup>Oldham, *The Works of Mr. John Oldham, Together with his Remains*, Wing O225 (London: for J. Hindmarsh, 1684), sig. a2v.

what John Stubbs calls the “standard biographical thesis”—rather than exploring the ways in which the contours of Donne’s biography were still being contested.<sup>15</sup> There is, however, no reason to believe that early modern readers would have shared the elegists’ views—they just as easily could have *preferred* to read Donne’s poems as they had been transmitted for years. But at least nine elegies express some concern about *A*’s undifferentiated inclusion of both secular and religious verse by Donne, often drawing directly from the rich stock of images found in Donne’s own writing.

Because a narrative of Donne’s life had not yet been agreed upon in 1633, it was not clear how the elegists should theorize the relationship between the parts of Donne’s life, and the elegists’ approaches can be divided into four groups. A first group, which includes the elegies by Henry King and Edward Hyde initially published without attribution in *Deaths Duell*, praises the poems unequivocally. Because neither King’s poem nor Hyde’s was composed specifically for inclusion in *A*, neither comments directly on the collection at hand. The remaining elegies, however, suggest that the elegists had some idea of the volume’s contents and organization, and they approach the early poems in three ways: as sins to be repented (what I will call the repentance model), as necessary if less worthy preparatory exercises for Donne’s later achievements (the preparation model), and as evidence of the underlying unity of Donne’s habits of mind (the continuity model). Although the repentance and continuity models may seem fundamentally incompatible, all three models overlap insofar as they describe Donne’s career in terms of an Augustinian biographical narrative that, while not entirely novel itself, was not yet a common way of understanding a poetic career and making sense of it for print readers.

Thomas Browne’s vividly titled “To the deceased Author, Upon the *Promiscuous* Printing of his Poems, the *Looser sort*, with the *Religious*” epitomizes the repentance model and frankly describes its author’s

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<sup>15</sup>Gottlieb, “*Elegies Upon the Author*: Defining, Defending, and Surviving Donne,” *John Donne Journal* 2 (1983): 23–38, especially p. 29; Fallon, “Donne’s ‘Strange Fire’ and the ‘Elegies on the Authors Death,’” *John Donne Journal* 7 (1998): 197–212, especially p. 202; Pask, *The Emergence of the English Author* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 113–122; and Stubbs, *John Donne: The Reformed Soul* (New York and London: Norton, 2006), p. 464.

worries regarding the reception of Donne's poems in print. Browne opens by addressing the poet himself and expressing apprehension about uninitiated readers' reactions to Donne's "Loose raptures"; specifically, he fears that when readers with "sharper eyes," or those who would judge Donne's early poems harshly, encounter them, they will be inclined to "circumcise" (censor or redact) them lest anyone imitate the poems' "Example" (sig. 3B4v). Browne draws upon the Pauline ideal of circumcision of the heart, an image Donne had explored in his New Year's sermon of 1624/5, before noting that, for Donne, the poems have since "ceased to be Sin," first because of his reformation and then because of his death.<sup>16</sup> The poem then reassures Donne that "knowing eyes" will read his poems correctly, as they will understand the "Wanton Story" of the secular poems as a confession rather than an admirable tale. These readers will also be able to distinguish between Donne's "Strange Fire," an allusion to Nadab and Abihu's inappropriate sacrifice and subsequent divine immolation, and the proper sacrifice of Donne's religious poems.<sup>17</sup> Browne thus aids readers in distinguishing between the two kinds of poems and helps those who lack "Knowing eyes" avoid potentially deleterious errors.

Izaak Walton, Lucius Cary, and Jasper Mayne share Browne's concerns about the volume's mixture of sacred and profane material but propose a different way of reading the early poems: as preparatory exercises for Donne's later accomplishments, rather than crimes to be confessed and repented. In "An Elegie upon D<sup>r</sup> Donne," Walton admits

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<sup>16</sup>See also Ben Saunders, *Desiring Donne: Poetry, Sexuality, and Interpretation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), especially pp. 38–58. The sermon was first printed in *Fifty Sermons Preached by that Learned and Reverend Divine, John Donne, Dr in Divinity, Late Deane of the Cathedrall Church of S Pauls London*, Wing D1862 (London: J. Flesher for M. F[lesher], J. Marriott, and R. Royston, 1649), sig. 2Q1v–2Q6r.

<sup>17</sup>The sin and its punishment take place in only two verses: "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD" (Leviticus 10:1–2). Although I quote from the 1611 Authorized Version, all early translations describe the offensive kindling as "strange," which has since given way to more precise adjectives like "unauthorized" and "unholy."



that without the later religious writings, he would be reluctant to compliment Donne at all:

I would not praise  
That and his vast wit (which in these vaine dayes  
Make many proud) but as they serv'd to unlock  
That Cabinet, his minde. . . .

(sig. 3C3v)

Walton observes that celebrations of linguistic prowess and wit had become all too common, but Donne's witty poems were praiseworthy because they led to more significant writings and the improvement of all England. Donne, "more martur'd," outgrew writing satires and turned to worthier projects, including "A *Crowne of sacred sonnets*," "a *Litany*," and "*Hymnes*, for piety and wit / Equall to those great grave *Prudentius* writ" (sig. 3C4r). The early writings, according to Walton, are best understood as immature precursors to the later, more important works. Likewise, Cary's "*An Elegie on D<sup>r</sup>. DONNE*" explains that Donne "was a two-fold Priest; in youth, / Apollo's; afterwards, the voice of Truth" (sig. 3D3r). Cary respectfully defers any discussion of Donne's questionable past to the poem's final lines: "Then let his last excuse his first extremes, / His age saw visions, though his youth dream'd dreams" (sig. 3D4v). Expiation of youthful "extremes" was hardly a novel Christian idea, but Cary suggests that the mature Donne's "visions" would have been impossible without the younger Donne's "dreams." Mayne also uses a version of the preparation model in his elegy, "On Dr. *DONNES* death," praising Donne's early work for its wit and persuasive qualities ("Fancies beyond our studies," sig. 3E2r) before correcting himself: "But I do wrong thee, *Donne*, and this low praise / Is written onely for thy yonger dayes" (sig. 3E2r). Mayne then reminds the reader that Donne's poems were superseded by his sermons and other religious works. Walton, Cary, and Mayne each emphasize a teleological narrative of Donne's growth, but only Mayne identifies the sermons (rather than the religious poems) as the culmination of Donne's career.

Thomas Carew offers a third important way of theorizing the relationship between Donne's life and writing in "An Elegie upon the death of the Deane of Pauls, D<sup>r</sup>. Iohn Donne," in which Carew mourns the loss of Donne's wit by highlighting its continuity throughout

Donne's entire corpus. Whereas adherents of the preparation model emphasized Donne's progression from worldly subjects to religious ones, Carew stresses that Donne's basic concerns and rhetorical strategies remained consistent throughout his career. Opening, in conventional elegiac fashion, with a lament for the inability of "widdowed Poetry" to commemorate Donne properly, Carew admits that the church will continue to function even if it is diminished by the loss of Donne. In Donne's absence, preachers will continue to preach ("The pulpit may her plaine, / And sober Christian precepts still retaine"), but poetry will not fare as well:

But the flame  
Of thy brave Soule, that shot such heat and light,  
As burnt our earth, and made our darknesse bright,  
Committed holy Rapes upon our Will,  
Did through the eye the melting heart distill;  
And the deepe knowledge of darke truths so teach,  
As sense might judge, what phansie could not reach;  
Must be desir'd for ever.

(sig. 3D1r-v)

Carew turns from religious prose to verse so quickly and echoes Donne's poems so effectively that his praise for some of Donne's writing seems, at least at first, to apply to all of it. Celebrating Donne's originality and "fresh invention" (sig. 3D1v), Carew bewails the possibility that poetry, having been improved by Donne's contributions, will regress as a result of his death:

Till Verse refin'd by thee, in this last Age,  
Turne ballad rime, Or those old Idolls bee  
Ador'd againe, with new apostasie. . . .

(sig. 3D2r)

"Apostasie" is, of course, a loaded term to use in relation to Donne, whose conversion to Protestantism was a topic of interest and speculation even during his life. Although Carew refers here not to confessional identity but to something akin to poetic idolatry, he (perhaps inadvertently) calls attention to a fundamental aspect of Donne's religious background by using a word that is, as Achsah Guibbory has

shown, “not neutral.”<sup>18</sup> Intentionally or not, Carew links Donne’s artistic influence to his personal history and his verse to his religious vocation.

After lamenting “[t]he death of all the Arts” in the wake of Donne’s death (sig. 3D2r), Carew concludes his elegy with this “epitaph”:

*Here lies a King, that rul’d as hee thought fit  
The universall Monarchy of wit;  
Here lie two Flamens, and both those, the best,  
Apollo’s first, at last, the true Gods priest.*  
(sig. 3D2v)

Like Cary, Carew invokes the image of Donne as a “monarch of wit,” but Carew rejects Cary’s strategy of celebrating Donne’s ecclesiastical achievements by contrasting them with the poems. Instead, he offers one epitaph for the two “Flamens” or priests united in Donne: Apollo’s and “the true Gods.” Carew undoubtedly values Donne’s work after his ordination, but he neither condemns nor attempts to justify the earlier poems—both kinds of writing, according to Carew, are “the best.” The different parts of Donne’s career and the literary value of his work, for Carew, are inextricably bound.

It would be folly to suggest that there was no tension or overlap between these models, as Arthur Wilson’s “*Vpon M<sup>r</sup> J. Donne, and his Poems*” makes clear. Wilson’s elegy seems, until the very end, to espouse Carew’s view that Donne’s wit was essentially unified, but it abruptly shifts toward the repentance model in its final lines. After a long tribute to Donne’s wit, drawing upon such Donnean concerns as alchemy, the elements, gems, and, from *Cross*, “Meridians, or crosse Parallels,” Wilson describes the ways Donne surpasses traditional elegiac language in the *Anniversaries* before praising Donne’s “nimble *Satyres*” and general “nervy strength” (sig. 3E3v). It is only in the last six lines that Wilson acknowledges Donne’s “diviner Poëms (whose cleare fire / Purges all drosse away)” (sig. 3E3r). Like Browne, Wilson invokes sacred fire for its purifying power, and the unexpected change in tone indicates that some of the poems he has just praised might themselves be “drosse.” This shift also alters the poem’s account of Donne’s life. Though Wilson had first said that Donne’s example would “live, for all the World to imitate, / But

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<sup>18</sup>Guibbory, “Donne and Apostasy,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, pp. 664–677, especially p. 664.

come not neer" (sig. 3E3r), he concludes by predicting that angels ("purest Spirits") will adopt Donne's poems verbatim as hymns (sig. 3E4r). Temporal fame is no longer a concern; in fact, right before the turn to Donne's religious poems, Wilson asserts that the secular poems will be less valuable "[i]f they admit of any others praise" (sig. 3E4r), perhaps indicating that such praise would be almost idolatrous when compared with that due to the truly valuable divine poems.

Thus, the miscellaneity that Marriot defended in "The Printer to the Understanders" and "Hexastichon Bibliopolae" was also, at least in the view of the elegists, a problem. Whereas manuscript compilers did not distinguish between, much less fear the juxtaposition of, secular and religious verse, many of Donne's elegists found that mixture troubling in the printed collection and sought to explain it away by assigning the poems to different parts of Donne's life. In articulating their concerns about *A*, Donne's elegists suggested several ways to read his early poems in light of his later achievements: as records of sin to be rejected, as early modern progymnasmata in preparation for better things, or as evidence of Donne's natural talents and lifelong interests. All three of these models were united in their recourse to a biographical narrative that, while novel at the time, offered an appealing paradigm for interpreting Donne's life and work. The elegists differed somewhat in their accounts of Donne's transformation, but they did agree that there was a transformation, if only in the kinds of poems he wrote. Although the story they told was not widely known at that time, it would become the organizing principle of *B* and, later, the dominant way of thinking about Donne's literary biography.

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The 1635 edition of *Poems, by J. D.* looked strikingly different from *A*. Reset not in quarto but in the more prestigious octavo format increasingly associated with poetry collections, *B* bore a new engraved frontispiece by William Marshall based on a 1591 painting of the eighteen-year-old Donne and a brief poem by Walton.<sup>19</sup> The poems were

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<sup>19</sup>On the relative prestige of poetry book formats, see Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), pp. 288–289. I base my assertion about the trend

also rearranged and divided into eight generic groups, organized roughly along a trajectory from profane to sacred: *Songs and Sonets*, *Epigrams*, *Elegies*, *Epithalamions*, *Satyres*, *Letters to Severall Personages of Honour*, *Epicedes and Obsequies*, and *Divine Poems*.<sup>20</sup> Remarkably, no extant manuscript organizes the poems in quite this way. Although the *Donne Variorum* editors have shown that the O'Flahertie manuscript (H6) was an important source for *B*, the printed book does not reproduce the manuscript text; rather, it presents a new text that has been purposefully edited for print readers.<sup>21</sup> The largest surviving collection of Donne's poems, H6 contains 169 poems by Donne along with some of his prose and a handful of poems by other authors. It appears to have been prepared with print publication in mind, but, having been "finishd this 12 of October 1632"—exactly one month after Marriot entered his edition in the Stationers' Register—it was completed too late to be useful in the production of *A*. Its section headings certainly sound familiar: "Diuine Poems," "Satyres," "Elegies," "Epicedes and Obsequyes," "Letters to Seuerall personages," "Songs and Sonnets" (or "Sonnets and Songs," as it appears above the poems themselves), "Epithalamions," and "Epigrams" (fig. 1). However, H6's organization has no coherent narrative logic, much less that imposed on the poems in *B* and subsequent printings, and individual poems are ordered differently within each group. *Flea*, for instance, appears not on the first page but on page 272, twenty-seven pages after the first of the "Sonnets and Songs," *ValMourn*. Even the inversion of H6's classification "Sonnets and Songs" to *B*'s "Songs and Sonnets" seems intentional, alluding, as Dayton Haskin has noted, to Richard Tottel's 1557 printed collection of the

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toward octavo format on my own examination of 1,045 early modern poetry books.

<sup>20</sup>John T. Shawcross notes that *B* is among the first printed English verse collections arranged by genre; see "The Arrangement and Order of John Donne's Poems," in *Poems in Their Place: The Intertextuality and Order of Poetic Collections*, ed. Neil Fraistat (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 119–163, especially pp. 120, 140–146.

<sup>21</sup>See Gary A. Stringer, gen. ed., *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, 8 vols, 4 to date (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 2:lxvii–lxxix.



same name and the miscellany tradition more generally.<sup>22</sup> Marriot may have consulted H6 in preparing *B*, but his deviations from the manuscript text are far more interesting than his adoptions from it.

*B* does not offer a single, straightforward account of Donne's life; instead, all three of the biographical models proposed in *A* appear at different moments. The tension between the three accounts remains evident, complicating Marotti's suggestion that the changes were an effort to ensure that "the love lyrics could be put in a context that did not threaten the esteem in which Donne was held."<sup>23</sup> There was, after all, more at stake for the elegists than mere "esteem"—they sought to control readers' interpretations of and responses to the poems, which, as Browne's allusion to Aaron's unfortunate sons makes clear, could have dire moral consequences. By categorizing the poems generically, drawing together the suspect secular poems, relegating the divine poems to the volume's end, and adding head titles and running titles to help readers locate the material they wanted to find, the rearrangement of *B* simultaneously downplays and highlights both parts of Donne's career. In the short term, *B* foregrounds titillating material while negotiating between multiple ways to present the late Dean's life and to justify the entire canon of his verse. In the longer term, *B* would help to create the dominant narrative of Donne's life and to establish a new career model for his immediate followers.

To that end, Walton's new frontispiece verse attempts to impose a narrative upon Donne's biography that would not only redeem the poems but also make them part of an exemplary life. The poem, however, is not entirely successful, and Walton's account here more closely resembles Browne's repentance model than his own earlier preparation model. The verse also anticipates his *Life*, as Leah Marcus argues, by "interpret[ing] the poet's life as an exemplary pattern of Christian conversion".<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Haskin, "The Love Lyric," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, pp. 180–205, especially p. 183. Richard Todd attributes the title to "Marriot or one of his assistants"; see "In What Sense is John Donne the Author of the 'Songs and Sonnets'?" *Graat* 25 (2002): 105–117, especially p. 107.

<sup>23</sup>Marotti, *Manuscript*, p. 255. See also Gottlieb, especially p. 30.

<sup>24</sup>Marcus, *Unediting the Renaissance: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Milton* (New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 196.

*This was for youth, Strength, Mirth, and wit that Time  
 Most count their golden Age; but t'was not thine.  
 Thine was thy later yeares, so much refind  
 From youths Drosse, Mirth, & wit; as thy pure mind  
 Thought (like the Angels) nothing but the Praise  
 Of thy Creator, in those last, best Dayes.  
 Witnes this Booke, (thy Embleme) which begins  
 With Love; but endes, with Sighes, & Teares for sins.*

Walton here emphasizes Donne's alleged moral trajectory: youth and wit were not his "golden Age," but rather his "last, best Dayes" were. The secular poems were "Drosse," the later poems were "nothing but . . . Praise." The book itself is styled as an "Embleme" of Donne himself, with his youthful portrait and defiant motto, "Antes muerto que mudado" ("Sooner dead than changed"), set in opposition to the conversion narrative the rest of the book will propose.<sup>25</sup>

Though *B* addresses many of the elegists' concerns, a pair of poems to and from the bookseller betrays lingering anxieties about whether Marriot had found the best way to recast Donne's reputation. "Hexastichon Bibliopolae" is reprinted, but it is followed by a new poem, "Hexastichon ad Bibliopolam. Incerti." Novarr attributed this new poem to Walton, but when juxtaposed with the original "Hexastichon Bibliopolae," this unsigned poem calls attention to *B*'s multiple, conflicting ways of reading Donne's life and work.<sup>26</sup> As the title indicates, the poem addresses the bookseller and expresses doubt or uncertainty about the book's value:<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>See also Catherine J. Creswell, "Giving Face to an Author: Reading Donne's Portraits and the 1635 Edition," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 37 (1995): 1–15.

<sup>26</sup>Novarr, *Making*, p. 34.

<sup>27</sup>Unlike "Hexastichon Bibliopolae," "Hexastichon ad Bibliopolam" is not signed, and its author remains unknown. Pask speculates that the "anonymous commendation" might have been written by Marriot's son Richard, who published Donne's sermons in 1640. However, Richard was not freed until 1639, did not begin publishing until 1640, and did not enter the sermons in the Stationers' Register until January 1640; therefore, because he had no legal claim to the sermons in 1635, this attribution may be implausible. Donne's son is another possible candidate as, by 1638, he had at least forty-two of his father's sermons licensed and was negotiating with multiple publishers (which led to



*In thy Impression of Donnes Poems rare,  
 For his Eternitie thou hast ta'ne care;  
 'Twas well, and pious; And for ever may  
 He live: Yet I shew thee a better way;  
 Print but his Sermons, and if those we buy,  
 Hee, We, and Thou shall live t'Eternity.  
 (B, sig. A4v)*

The speaker acknowledges the central claim of “Hexastichon Bibliopolae” (that the book would allow Donne and his poems to live on) and praises Marriot’s efforts but ultimately argues that ensuring Donne’s ongoing life, though admirable, is a relatively unimportant project. “Hexastichon ad Bibliopolam” proposes “a better way” to preserve Donne for “Eternitie”: printing his sermons, which are more important and useful textual memorials. Buying the poems might prolong Donne’s textual afterlife, but buying his sermons would guarantee eternal life for all involved. The poem thus undercuts the book’s value and calls its contents into question, signaling to readers, much earlier than the first edition had, that the posthumous reputation of a revered Dean was at stake.

Although “Hexastichon ad Bibliopolam” echoes many of the 1633 elegists’ concerns, its inclusion nevertheless seems odd. It is, as Gosse observes, “in evident rivalry” with Marriot’s poem, suggesting that readers should purchase a different book containing Donne’s sermons—a book that Marriot himself would never produce.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, by the time a reader reached this poem, he or she was likely to have already seen both Walton’s frontispiece poem and “Hexastichon Bibliopolae.” By the fourth leaf in the volume, then, the reader was presented with three

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some legal trouble, not an altogether unfamiliar experience for Donne *filis*). He eventually settled on the Marriots and may have played some in role *B*, though this would render his 1637 petition to Laud even more disingenuous. Finally, Humphrey Moseley had published *Six Sermons upon Severall Occasions Preached before the King, and Elsewhere* (1634) jointly with Nicholas Fussell, and would eventually acquire all of the Marriots’ Donne titles; it is unclear, though, what if any arrangement they might have had in the mid-1630s. See Pask, p. 162 n; Robert Krueger, “The Publication of John Donne’s Sermons,” *Review of English Studies*, n. s., 15 (1964): 151–160, especially p. 152.

<sup>28</sup>Gosse, 2:308.

different interpretive frameworks: Walton's scheme, in which the early poems are morally questionable and interesting primarily because they helped "unlock" Donne's "minde" (a version of the repentance model, informed by his earlier ideas about Donne's preparation); Marriot's nonjudgmental suggestion that the poems preserve their author's memory (a *de facto* adoption of the continuity model); and the anonymous writer's suggestion that the poems are fine, but the mature poet's sermons are what Marriot should publish and readers should read (the preparation argument). The third model may be the most extreme, because while Walton's poem proposes a model for reading *B* well, the anonymous poet informs the reader that Donne's truly valuable material must be sought elsewhere. What these three paradigms share is an interest in the book's usefulness as an "Embleme" of Donne's life, even if that means imposing a somewhat superficial order on the disorderly Donne canon. The tension between these accounts structures the collection as a whole, and the compromise that emerges from it has shaped the reception of Donne's verse ever since.

Reorganizing the Donne canon furthered *B*'s biographical aims, but the complexity of the task is legible when individual works fail to make it to their new destinations in their entirety. *Metem*, for example, originally had pride of place as the first poem in *A*, but in *B*, the poem was moved further into the book, appearing just before the *Divine Poems* (probably because its alternate title, "The Progresse of the Soule," sounded religious). However, its epistle, "INFINITATI SACRUM," remained in its original location, after the collection's prefatory poems and before the *Songs and Sonets*. Though Marcus has suggested that Marriot may have intentionally "misplaced" the epistle "because of [its] powerful evocation of authorial presence," the errata notice on the final leaf (fig. 2) lists the separation of epistle and poem as the only known error in the book: "*Cvrtuous Reader, know, that that Epistle intituled, Infinitati Sacrum, 16. of August, 1601. which is printed in the beginning of the Booke, is misplaced; it should have beene printed before the Progresse of the Soule, in Page 301. before which it was written by the Author; if any other in the Impression doe fall out, which I know not of, hold me excused, for I have endeavoured thy Satisfaction. //Thine, I. M.*" (sig. 3D8r). Marcus has argued that this apology "may be partly disingenuous," but it seems unlikely that Marriot—or any other publisher—would include a spurious errata notice, especially for a single,

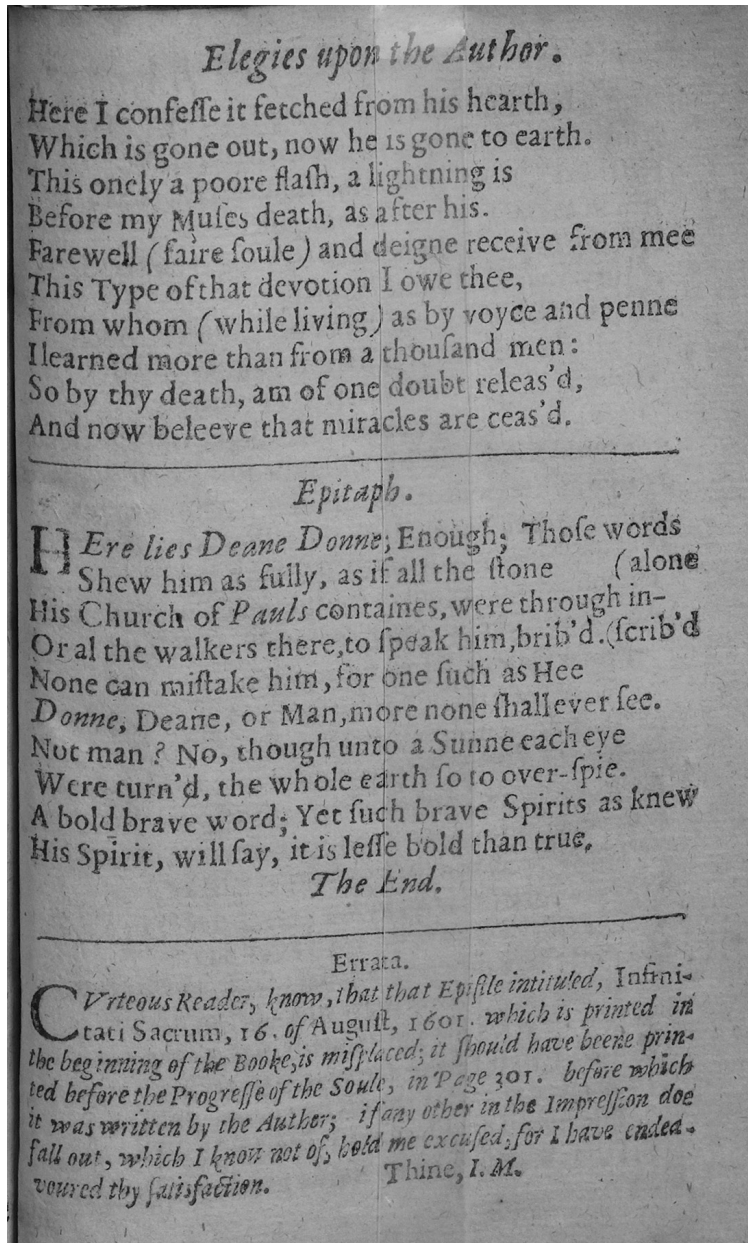


Fig. 2. Errata notice from *Poems, by J. D.* (1635), Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University.

deliberate “error.”<sup>29</sup> It is clear, rather, that Marriot recognized that this oversight interfered with his overall design for the reorganized book. Indeed, the epistle was reunited with the poem it introduces in the next edition (*C*) and remained with it through all subsequent seventeenth-century printings.

In place of *Metem* (which may have lost some of its original satiric appeal by the 1630s), *Flea* was elevated from its obscure position in the middle of *A* (and in H6) to be the first poem in *B*. The poem both encapsulates the volume’s mixed contents and demonstrates religion’s ubiquity even in Donne’s early writing, recalling Carew’s account of the continuity of Donne’s career. Nevertheless, though the frequently anthologized poem’s prominence may now seem unsurprising, previous generations of editors and critics questioned its placement. Grierson, for instance, calls *Flea*’s placement in *B* “a strange choice” and prints it as the thirty-fifth poem in his edition of the *Songs and Sonets*.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, early readers likely would not have expected *Flea* to introduce the collection; in manuscript, the poem was copied only slightly more often than was average for the *Songs and Sonets*, and though Ernest W. Sullivan, II, has noted 178 printed witnesses to individual *Songs and Sonets* in British and continental books other than the Donne collections, *Flea* appeared only once, in translation, in a Dutch book called *Koren-Bloemen* (1658).<sup>31</sup> The modern status of *Flea* as a quintessential Donne poem—if not *the* quintessential Donne poem—can thus be traced back to *B* and its emphasis on Donne’s fusion of religious and erotic ideas. Far from being a mystery or an indiscriminate choice, *Flea* highlights both the underlying unity of Donne’s life and career and the very kinds of poems he arguably needed to repent. *Flea*’s continued popularity, it seems, has

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<sup>29</sup>Marcus, p. 197.

<sup>30</sup>Grierson, ed., *The Poems of John Donne*, 2 vols. (1912; rpt., London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 2:36.

<sup>31</sup>Beal identifies forty-four exempla of “The Flea,” more than the average thirty-one copies of most of the *Songs and Sonets* but still fewer than the three most popular in the group: “Break of Day” (sixty copies), “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” (fifty-four), and “The Broken Heart” (forty-nine). See *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, 5 vols. (London: Mansell, 1980–), 1:262–568; and Sullivan, *The Influence of John Donne: His Uncollected Seventeenth-Century Printed Verse* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), p. 3.

less to do with its status among early scribes and readers than with choices Marriot made when preparing *B*.

Positioned thus, *Flea* introduces the full range of material included in the collection, as its metaphysical joke turns on the same ideas that Donne explores in earnest in the *Divine Poems*. The poem famously opens with a direct, dramatic address to an unseen second person: “Marke but this flea, and marke in this / How little that which thou deny’st me is” (sig. A7r, [1–2]). In the context of the individual poem, the address is purely apostrophic; however, in the poem’s new location in *B*, the apostrophe also serves to announce some of the collection’s major themes, particularly that of witty seduction in the *carpe diem* mode. The new, pseudo-Petrarchan heading *Songs and Sonets* is printed directly above the poem in a larger typeface than any part of the book except the word “POEMS” on the title page and alludes to the kind of sixteenth-century love poetry that is strikingly absent from Donne’s collection. But *Flea* offers a different kind of persuasion to enjoy, one that requires the addressee to buy into the speaker’s alternative, purely rhetorical value system.

The printed book’s physical layout heightens the poem’s formal effects, delaying the addressee’s possibly sacrilegious but inevitable squashing of the flea and the speaker’s turn from attempted seduction to the imputation of guilt. Marotti has astutely noted that the addressee “answers’ the lover’s facetious arguments with gestures dramatically placed between the stanzas,” an effect created in any text that preserves these stanza breaks.<sup>32</sup> In *B*, however, the concluding stanza’s overleaf position also creates a moment of suspense before the speaker’s indignant condemnation begins. Having witnessed the addressee’s attack on the flea between the second and third stanzas, the speaker cries, “Cruell and sodaine, hast thou since / Purpled thy Nayle, in blood of innocence?”

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<sup>32</sup>Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (1986; rpt., Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2008), pp. 93–94. Among manuscripts traditionally assigned to Group I, neither the Newcastle MS (B32) nor the St. Paul’s MS (SP1) has space between the poem’s stanzas, but the Leconfield MS (C8) divides them with rules. All of the non-Group-I witnesses to *Flea* that I have examined (DT1, B46, H6, and B13) separate the stanzas with white space as in the printed book. It is difficult to draw substantive conclusions without examining additional copies, but the forthcoming *Donne Variorum* edition of the *Songs and Sonnets* will undoubtedly clarify the precise relationship between the manuscript and printed texts.

(sig. A7v, [20–21]). The addressee has presumably used her fingernail to crush the flea, and although this is certainly an efficient way to kill a flea, the speaker's ambiguous statement about the sort of "Nayle" used gives the charge a Biblical overtone, especially when paired with "blood of innocence." By describing a nail covered in "blood of innocence," the speaker likens the crushing of the flea in which all three had their being to the crucifixion of Christ, taking the poem's *pathos* over the top. The speaker persists, arguing that if the addressee does not feel her physical strength diminished by the flea's death ("saist that thou / Find'st not thy selfe, nor me the weaker now"), she will not experience any diminution of honor by yielding to his seduction:

'Tis true, then learne how false, feares be;  
 Iust so much honour, when thou yeeldst to mee,  
 Will wast, as this flea's death tooke life from thee.  
 (sig. A7v, [24–28])

Marriot's placement of *Flea* emphasizes its supple manipulation of religious material in the service of seduction and suggests that Donne's interest in and facility with sacred ideas well predated his ordination, lending credence to both the preparation and continuity models. Of course, any number of Donne's poems could have done so, but the conspicuous placement of *Flea* in *B* produced and secured its status as an emblem of both its author and his canon.

Though the significance of beginning with the *Songs and Sonets* and ending with the *Divine Poems* is immediately apparent, the intervening groups are also hierarchized: the classically influenced *Epigrams* are more defensible than the *Songs and Sonets*, the satires are more morally edifying than the sexually explicit elegies, and the *Epicedes and Obsequies* include the sober funeral poems that might, in other books, be described as "elegies." Even if readers did not read the poems in order, they could not help but notice the new running heads or the lack of titillating juxtapositions like those found in manuscript collections. Belying Marriot's statement in *A*, *B* also includes several misattributed poems as well as fourteen additional Donne poems that had not appeared in *A*, including two *Songs and Sonets*, two *Verse Letters*, seven *Divine Poems*,

and, most significantly, three of the five *Elegies* “excepted” from *A*.<sup>33</sup> There is no conclusive evidence indicating why the elegies were forbidden to begin with—the *Donne Variorum* editors comment that their exclusion was “presumably for political or religious reasons,” while N. W. Bawcutt suggests that it may have stemmed from a dispute over ownership rather than overt censorship—and there is no evidence that they were ever officially allowed.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless, Marriot seems to have deliberately hidden them among the previously allowed elegies, renumbering them to avoid having them identified as the forbidden “first, second, Tenth, Eleaventh and Thirteenth Elegies.” *ElBrac* became “Elegy XII,” which is, as Stringer notes, “far from the number-one position it occupied in the Group I source used for *A*.”<sup>35</sup> The other two newly included elegies were similarly disguised: *ElPart* became “Elegy XIII,” and *ElFatal* was reclassified as one of the *Funerall Elegies* and retitled “Elegie on his Mistris.”<sup>36</sup> Circumscribed by their new generic headings and places within the book’s larger narrative structure, these controversial poems seem to have escaped further notice.

*Father*, now located in the new section of *Divine Poems*, is again the collection’s final Donne poem. As the last poem in the new *B* arrangement, it functions both as a valediction and as the culmination of the book’s narrative and Donne’s repentance. Traditionally held to have been written during Donne’s illness of late 1623 (the same period in which he produced the *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*), the poem is the plea of a penitent sinner; when printed at the end of *B*, it also seems to point back to the beginning of the book, to the *Songs and Sonets* and other secular poems, and to *Flea* in particular.<sup>37</sup> The opening lines set up

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<sup>33</sup>See Sullivan, “Poems, by J. D.: Donne’s Corpus and his Bawdy, Too,” *John Donne Journal* 19 (2000): 299–309, especially p. 304.

<sup>34</sup>See Gary Stringer et al., 2:8; and Bawcutt, ed., *The Control and Censorship of Caroline Drama: The Records of Sir Henry Herbert, Master of the Revels, 1623–73* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 48.

<sup>35</sup>Ted-Larry Pebworth, “The Early Censorship of John Donne’s Elegies and ‘Sapho to Philaenis’ in Manuscript and Print,” *Text* 13 (2000): 193–201, especially p. 195; and Stringer et al., 2:lx–xcix, especially p. lxxix.

<sup>36</sup>Pebworth, p. 195.

<sup>37</sup>Walton first proposed this date in the *Life*. For a countervailing argument, see Novarr, *The Disinterred Muse: Donne’s Texts and Contexts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 184–192.

a productive ambiguity: "Wilt thou forgive me that sinne where I begunne, / Which was my sin, though it were done before?" (sig. 2B8v, [1–2]). By using the demonstrative pronoun "that" without a clear referent—which sin?—Donne leaves the poem open to several interpretations. The sin could simply be original sin, or the sin any dying Christian must repent. More locally, the poet's career, like the collection of his works opening with *Flea*, began with "sin" that is now renounced. The penultimate line of the first stanza reiterates this point: "When thou hast done, thou hast not done." The pun on Donne's name recalls Donne's alleged lament following his clandestine marriage and subsequent unemployment: "John Donne, Anne Donne, undone."<sup>38</sup> This phrase, as Jonathan F. S. Post notes, became a popular "jest," and while Donne probably found it darkly humorous at best, its endurance—and its apparent echo in *Father*—is further evidence that many readers were not only aware of but also fascinated by the details of Donne's illicit marriage.<sup>39</sup>

The second stanza continues to bring the poem's complicated biographical resonances to the fore as the speaker implores,

Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I have wonne  
                   Others to sinne? and, made my sinne their doore?  
 Wilt thou forgive that sinne which I did shun  
                   A yeare, or two, but wallowed in, a score?  
(sig. 2B8v, [7–10])

The speaker's concern that he has "wonne / Others to sinne" recalls the volume's opening poem, an attempt to bamboozle a young woman into sin through a show of rhetorical craft, more than the *Divine Poems* that immediately precede it. Furthermore, as the capstone of the biographically organized collection, the poem seems to address the very concerns raised by Donne's 1633 elegists and by Walton's frontispiece. In the final stanza, the speaker commends himself to God, punningly asserting, "thou hast done, / I feare no more" (sig. 2B8v, [15–16]). The

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<sup>38</sup>Quoted, among other places, in Jonathan F. S. Post, "Donne's Life: A Sketch," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne*, ed. Achsah Guibbory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1–22, especially p. 10.

<sup>39</sup>See Post, *English Lyric Poetry: The Early Seventeenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 20–21.



collection, like the speaker of the poem, ends both where it had begun, emphasizing the underlying continuity of Donne's wit, and somewhere else, demonstrating his repentance.

"Elegies upon the Author" once again close the volume. Browne's elegy is not reprinted (perhaps because Donne's poems are no longer disturbingly "mingled"), but three new elegies join the twelve reprinted from *A. Daniel Darnelly's* "In obitum venerabilis viri *Iohannis Donne*" celebrates Donne's life but does not comment directly on Donne's reputation. The two additional English elegies, Sidney Godolphin's "Elegie on D. D." and John Chudleigh's "*On Dr John Donne, late Deane of S. Paules, London,*" explore Donne's legacy without the pervasive anxiety of the 1633 elegies and instead focus on Donne's instructive later piety.<sup>40</sup> Godolphin emphasizes Donne's reforming influence on fellow poets: "Passions excesse for thee wee need not feare, / Since first by thee our passions hallowed were" (sig. 2C6v). Donne, Godolphin argues, was an example for the next generation, teaching them to lament "sinne" rather than a lack of "the Successe" and helping them learn how "from gladnesse" to "separate offence." Godolphin only refers to Donne's poetic reputation four lines from the poem's end, when he describes Donne as an incomparable "prodigie of wit and pietie" (sig. 2C7r). Godolphin thus links Donne's secular and religious lives, stressing the need for appropriate judgment without worrying overmuch about the poems. In contrast, Chudleigh opens by announcing that poets should have mourned Donne long before his death:

Long since this taske of teares from you was due,  
 Long since, ô Poëts, he did die to you,  
 Or left you dead, when wit and he tooke flight  
 On divine wings, and soar'd out of your sight.  
 Preachers, 'tis you must weep. . . .

(sig. 2C7r)

Comfortable in his narrative of Donne's career, Chudleigh does not express misgivings about Donne's earlier writings, preferring to describe Donne's career as a series of conversions that parallel the organization of *B*: "Honest to knowing, unto vertuous sweet, / Witty to good, and

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<sup>40</sup>See also Gottlieb, pp. 26–28.

learned to discreet" (sig. 2C7r-v). "Wit," Chudleigh is quick to note, "Hee did not banish"; instead, Donne "transplanted it, / Taught it his place and use, and brought it home / To Pietie, which it doth best become" (sig. 2C7v). Chudleigh, then, subscribes to something like Walton's preparation model. Unlike the preemptive defenses of Donne's secular verse in *A*, though, both of *B*'s new elegies blithely treat Donne's early writings as an essential part of the late Dean's reputation.

*B* thus anticipated Walton's *Life* and inaugurated a new biographical account of Donne's transformation from young rake to sober Dean, albeit a more complex, less straightforward narrative than the one Walton would eventually settle upon. In so doing, *B* also established the emphasis early modern (and modern) editors placed on biography as a means of understanding Donne's poems, highlighting his aptitude in a variety of poetic forms (as Carew had in his elegy) while assigning each genre to a particular moment on his trajectory from reprobate to divine (a practical compromise between the repentance and preparation models and an innovation upon the manuscript tradition). Seemingly responding to the *A* elegists' concerns, Marriot refashioned the canon to support their claims about the circumstances and value of the secular poems, but the pair of poems to and from the bookseller evinces lingering concerns about the strategy's effectiveness. Furthermore, individual Donne poems show that the three biographical models could not always be made to agree; *Flea* demonstrates the continuity of Donne's habits of mind and the rhetorical value of his poems, while *Father* is presented as evidence of Donne's repentance. Despite the tension remaining between the three models, however, Browne's fretful elegy is not included in *B*, and the three new elegies added to the revised collection do not seem to share the earlier elegists' apprehensions. Ultimately, the revised second edition must have seemed, at least to Marriot and the elegists, to offer a satisfactory framework to help readers understand Donne in print, and it would become a deeply influential model for future poetic publications.

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Having found a suitable arrangement, Donne's publishers continued to reproduce the structure of *B* even as they expanded the canon in subsequent seventeenth-century editions and issues. Though Donne's poems continued to circulate in manuscript much as they had (albeit less

frequently after 1640), the Donne of *B* was the Donne catalogued and preserved in the eighteenth century, rejected in the nineteenth, and recovered in the twentieth. Even as critics have sought to dismantle this Donne in the last several decades, they have reinscribed many of his most distinguishing features, including the purported relationship between generic categories and specific moments in Donne's life.

Beyond reforming Donne, *B* also established a new paradigm for reading poets' lives; if Marriot had any remaining doubts about the volume, perhaps they were allayed in the coming decades, when a new generation of poets and their publishers adopted his biographical approach to preserve poets' frivolous or profane writings alongside more sober, mature work. Only a handful of earlier books, including Edmund Spenser's *Fowre Hymnes*, had referred to their own mixture of sacred and profane material, but after *B*, lyric collections patterned on the Donne collections (including the collected works of Richard Crashaw, John Hall, Robert Herrick, Thomas Philipot, Richard Corbet, and William Cartwright, among others) advertised their own interpretively helpful bifurcation.<sup>41</sup> By dividing the texts in these collections into two or more categories and giving them titles that emphasized the presence of both secular and religious works, authors and their publishers could justify the former as "youthful recreations" (as Walton had described Donne's early verse) abandoned in favor of later divine poems. Portraits, letters, and extended sections of commendatory verse reinforced these claims by making the collected works of even living authors appear to be posthumous, memorial collections. In short, *B* proposed a new career model that differed from either the traditional Virgilian model, in which poets moved from pastoral to epic, or the Ovidian model identified by Patrick Cheney, which allowed poets leeway to write plays alongside their love poems and eventual epics.<sup>42</sup> This new, Donnean career model represented lyric poetry as a youthful diversion on the way to public and

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<sup>41</sup>Dobranski notes that "double books" like Francis Bacon's *Sylva Sylvarum* and *New Atlantis* (1627), Michael Drayton's *Poems* and *The Battaile of Agincourt* (1627), and John Milton's *Paradise Regain'd . . . Samson Agonistes* (1671) were common, but he does not discuss double lyric collections; see Dobranski, p. 189.

<sup>42</sup>See Richard Helgerson, *Self-Crowned Laureates* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1983); and Cheney, *Shakespeare, National Poet-Playwright* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

clerical service (unless thwarted entirely by death or other extenuating circumstances).

More broadly, *B* and its poetic successors demonstrate the concrete ways in which print culture altered English ideas about literary authorship and the nature of literature. When *A* approximated the experience of reading Donne's poems in their original manuscript context, Donne's elegists objected that this was not the most appropriate way to present Donne's poems to a broader print readership. Marriot seems to have taken the elegists' concerns into account as he prepared the revised second edition, but the volume still evinced some conflict between the competing models. The matter was more settled after Walton fleshed out the contours suggested by *B* in his *Life*, one of the first English literary biographies.<sup>43</sup> Among its successors was Fulke Greville's *Life of the Renowned Sir Philip Sidney*, which, though first composed between 1609 and 1614, remained unpublished until Henry Seile issued it as a freestanding work in 1652.<sup>44</sup> Greville had intended for the *Life* to introduce important themes in Sidney's writing because, as Douglas Pfeiffer observes, "Greville understood the two chief contexts for interpreting an author's writing to be that author's life story and his ethos or character—his fixed disposition over time."<sup>45</sup> The various models proposed by Donne's elegists certainly did not emphasize fixity, but they did encourage readers to read his poems with reference to his life story. While this understanding does not seem to have been shared widely earlier in the century, by 1652, readers would have encountered many collections making just this claim.

It is a claim that Donne himself probably would have resisted. Echoing Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* near the end of a 1622 Easter sermon, Donne remarked, "Poetry is a counterfait Creation, and makes things

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<sup>43</sup>See Allan Pritchard, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 128–144; and Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker, "Introducing Lives," in *Writing Lives: Biography and Textuality, Identity and Representation in Early Modern England*, ed. Sharpe and Zwicker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 1–26, especially pp. 4, 8.

<sup>44</sup>Douglas Pfeiffer, "'A Life Beyond Life': The Rise of English Literary Biography" (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, 2004), pp. 147–149.

<sup>45</sup>Pfeiffer, p. 194.

that are not, as though they were.”<sup>46</sup> More famously, in a letter to Ker (this one sent in 1625), Donne wrote, “[Y]ou know my uttermost when it was best, and even then I did best when I had least truth for my subjects.”<sup>47</sup> These disavowals would seem to be the defenses of a mature man for youthful indiscretions if they were not so similar to other early modern defenses of and apologies for poetry. *B* and collections like it, on the other hand, proposed reading poems through the lens of authorial biography. When eighteenth-century publishers began issuing standard editions of the English classics, author biographies were an important feature; indeed, Samuel Johnson’s monumental *Lives of the Poets* resulted from the need to provide new biographies for authors who lacked them, and the series it was meant to accompany is only of incidental interest now.<sup>48</sup> The Romantic poets turned this interest in the relationship between a poet’s life and work into an aesthetic ideal and linked the author to the work to such a degree that Robert Browning’s dramatic monologues (with their obvious debts to Donne’s lyrics) seemed shocking and even troubling to their first readers.<sup>49</sup> This close relationship between writer and writing, however, would not have been immediately apparent in the early modern period, and it emerged in part because of the elegists’ efforts to reconcile the late Dean’s diverse early writings to his later ecclesiastical prominence for a print readership. Because recent scholarship has tended to slight the printed collections on the grounds that they lack textual authority, we have missed the ways these collections indelibly altered our understanding of Donne, and ultimately, English ideas about poetic authorship itself.

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<sup>46</sup>Donne, *LXXX Sermons Preached by That Learned and Reverend Divine, John Donne, Dr in Divinity, Late Deane of the Cathedrall church of S. Pauls London*, STC 7038 (London: M. Flesher for R. Royston, 1640), sig. 2A2v.

<sup>47</sup>Gosse, 2:215.

<sup>48</sup>Thomas Frank Bonnell, *The Most Disreputable Trade: Publishing the Classics of English Poetry, 1765–1810* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), especially pp. 134–168.

<sup>49</sup>See Charlotte Crawford Watkins, “Browning’s ‘Fame within These Four Years,’” *Modern Language Review* 53 (1958): 492–500, especially p. 496.