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"Puff the Magic Dragon": Henry King, Thomas Carew, and Their Elegies to Donne[1]

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I have always deeply admired Thomas Carew's elegy first printed, in the company of others, in the 1633 edition of Donne's *Poems*. But as is often the case, the present essay began in one direction and then curved around in another, as I began to understand the nature of the problem. My initial impulse was to attempt to account for the poem's singularity by tracing its immediate lineage back to Jonson's great eulogy to Shakespeare and then forward, aided by the broader tradition set out by Auden in his famous elegy on Yeats: that poetry "survives / In the valley of its making"—surely relevant to the commendatory enterprise generally—and, as specifically worked out in Carew's elegy, as a place in which "the words of a dead man / Are modified in the guts of the living."[2] At the same time, I wanted to

[1] An early draft of this essay benefitted from comments by members of the Renaissance Research Workshop at Cambridge University in 2018. I want to thank Raphael Lyne for inviting me to participate.

[2] Auden, *The Collected Poems*, ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1976), 197-8. Carew's Elegy has inspired much critical commentary as part of the recovery of Donne in the twentieth-century. As a sign of its own significance, it has likewise participated in many of the major critical and theoretical revolutions of the same period: New Critical, New Historicist, Feminist, literary historical as well as influence studies, coterie studies, and studies dedicated to canon formation. A sampling of recent essays includes three by John Lyon, "Jonson and Carew on Donne: Censure into Praise," *SEL: Studies in English Literature,* 1500-1900 37.1 (Winter, 1997): 97-118; "The Test

understand Carew's poem in its contemporary eulogistic environment: as one elegy among the twelve initially published in 1633. That number would grow to fourteen in 1635.

Initially, things were going along pretty well. Thanks to Wesley Milgate's 1978 edition of Donne's *Epithalamions, Anniversaries, and Epicedes*, which includes the elegies to Donne, and the updated *DNB*, it is easy to construct a lineage for this Oxford top-heavy, episcopal-leaning collection of verse elegies. As the Printer to the Reader, John Marriot, notes, "not long after [Donne's] decease," friends were already circulating in manuscript poems in honor of Donne. It was probably then a relatively simple matter to widen the circle, aided by word of mouth and a common set of vocational, institutional, and literary affiliations. If a point person were needed, Donne's executor, the churchman and uber-elegist, Henry King, was on hand, perhaps in conjunction with Edward Hyde, the future Earl of Clarendon and author of *The History of the Rebellion*. Both men had provided unsigned elegies for the posthumous publication of Donne's *Death's Duell* in 1632. Beyond these two people are many names, some familiar to the general reader, a number to specialists, and several no longer to anybody.

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of Time: Shakespeare, Jonson, Donne," *Essays in Criticism* 49 (January, 1999): 1-21; and "The Critical Elegy" in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 267-275, and one by Scott Nixon, "Carew's Response to Donne and Jonson," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 39.1 (Winter, 1999): 89-109. Nixon's concept of verse miscellanies (and "answer" poems) fostering competition is germane to the present essay, although we differ on the important issue of dating Carew's elegy. A fuller bibliography can be found in Charles Green, "'A Tombe your Muse must to his Fame supply': Elegizing Donne in Manuscript and Print," *JDJ* 35 (2016), 57-86. Our essays were independently composed about the same time, and although overlapping in places, they go in different directions. Nothing in his richly circumstanced study contradicts my thesis, although his essay does subscribe to the traditional assumption that Carew's elegy predates King's. I have also written on Carew and Milton in "Helpful Contraries: Carew's 'Donne' and Milton's *Lycidas*," in *Divisions on a Ground: Essays on English Renaissance Literature in Honor of Donald M. Friedman*, ed. Kimberly Johnson, Michael C. Schoenfeldt, and Richard Strier (*George Herbert Journal*: Special Studies & Monographs, 2008): 76-91.

There are a few anomalies, along with an awful lot of mediocre and some downright bad verse. Franklin Williams once counted no fewer than 4,748 commendatory verses written from 1478-1640—the period covered by the STC—with the mania for puffery cresting around the time of the early Donne editions.[3] Anyone who slogs through this material will be impressed by Carew's skillful navigation through a field littered with clichés and howlers and also will cherry-pick a few along the way for posterity. A favorite of mine is the unintentionally funny opening of Henry Valentine's elegy: "All is not well when such a one as I / Dare peepe abroad, and write an Elegie." Still, Valentine, a Cambridge graduate, was retained in the 1635 edition of the *Poems* whereas the author of "To the deceased Author, Upon the Promiscuous printing of his Poems, the Looser sort, with the Religious," one Thomas Browne—not to be confused, as Grierson did, with the author of *Religio Medici*—was dropped for what editor Milgate calls his "tasteless lines."[4] And tasteless they are and also a bit convoluted, but among the more interesting in the volume, for they clearly take a Donnean conceit further than decorum allows, especially as decorum might be defined by Henry King. Browne's initial reference to, and preference for, Donne's "*Loose* raptures," in favor of the "Duller line" of "*Sanctified Prose*," raises the ungainly, indeed blasphemous question, "how will they [the makers of sanctified prose], with sharper eyes, / The *Foreskinne* of thy phansie circumcise"—the loose raptures associated with the erotic verse. And the answer is not very easily.[5]

Browne's expulsion, if that's what it was,[6] raises the more interesting question of Thomas Carew's problematic inclusion in this mix since the

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[3] Williams, "Commendatory Verses: The Rise of the Art of Puffing," (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1962), 1-14, esp. pp. 3 and 5.

[4] John Donne, *The Epithalamions, Anniversaries and Epicedes*, ed. W. Milgate (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), p. 221.

[5] For an elaborate discussion of Browne's poem on, among other subjects, textual "promiscuity" in the 1633 *Poems,* see Ben Saunders, "Circumcising Donne: the 1633 Donne and Readerly Desire," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 30.2 (Spring, 2000): 375-399.

[6] At the 2018 Donne Conference in Lausanne, Erin McCarthy made the valuable point that Browne's poem might also have been dropped because "Promiscuous Printing" no longer applied to the generically ordered 1635 edition of Donne's *Poems*.

reference to "*Loose* raptures" seemed an obvious allusion to Carew's notorious Ovidian elegy, "The Rapture," in which Carew overgoes two of Donne's elegies ("Come, Madame, Come" and "Love's Progress") in a single erotic bound. The best poet of his generation, with already a tribe of his own, was something of a bad boy along a particularly worrisome Donnean line.

So I began to construct an imaginary conversation between King and Carew as follows: "Thom, we'd like to have you aboard, I think, but you need to toe the line a bit. In penning your elegy, why don't you first look at a few samples? Mine and Hyde's are already in print, and since you are friendly with Sir Lucius Carey, you might take a look at his, which is still in manuscript." As I said, this is a purely imaginary conversation, but that is when the problem began, although it took a particular passage about "rape" to bring it to a point. In a famous passage speaking to the subject of desire (Carew is the only elegist to use the word desire, by the way)[7], Carew explains the dazzlingly violent effects of Donne's presence on him:

> 'Tis a sad truth; The Pulpit may her plaine,
> And sober Christian precepts still retaine,
> Doctrines it may, and wholesome Uses frame,
> Grave Homilies, and Lectures, 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.[8]

The unusual phrase "holy Rapes," in the plural, usually bears a footnote to "Batter My Heart," perhaps deservedly so, but there should be another footnote, to Henry King's elegy, which states early on:

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[7] The one exception, curiously enough, is King himself, who, perhaps picking it up from Carew, added the word "desire" to the title of his commendatory poem in the 1633 volume of Donne's *Poems*.

[8] Quotations from Carew's poetry are taken from Rhodes Dunlop, *The Poems of Thomas Carew with his Masque "Coelum Brittanicum"* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949).

> Who ever writes of Thee, and in a stile
> Unworthy such a Theme, does but revile
> Thy precious Dust, and wake a learned Spirit
> Which may revenge his Rapes upon thy Merit.[9]

Here is where the problem became unavoidable. In conjunction with a number of other echoes, it is pretty clear that there is a relationship between these two poems, but precisely what it is depends on determining which poem comes first, not in terms of placement in the volume—that much is clear; King's has pride of place—but in order of composition. Almost everyone who thinks about this matter, except for me, has come to assume that Carew's poem predates King's.

Rhodes Dunlop, the editor of the 1949 Oxford *Poems of Thomas Carew*, first put forward the thesis of an early dating of Carew's poem as follows: "Carew's poem seems to have been written a considerable period before its publication; it is referred to by Aurelian Townshend in his verses to Carew on the death of Gustavus Adolphus in 1632 and by Lord Herbert of Cherbury in his own Elegy for Doctor Dunne, lines 47-51. [Quotes the relevant lines.] Other elegies in the 1633 volume seem to echo Carew's ideas and phraseology. Moreover, Carew's opening lines, if they are to be taken literally, must have been written before other elegies had appeared."[10] Milgate repeats Dunlop's observations almost verbatim but pushes the date of composition even further forward: "Carew's poem must have been written very soon after Donne's death."[11] Accepting the assumption of a very early dating, Michael Parker, whose important work is essential to my argument, points to the existence of a manuscript version of Carew's elegy as further evidence that Carew's poem precedes King's poem.[12]

Before considering the matter further, we should keep in mind a few dates. Most Donne scholars know that Donne died on March 31, 1631,

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[9] Quotations from King's poetry are from *The Poems of Henry King*, ed. Margaret Crum (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965).

[10] Dunlop, *The Poems of Thomas Carew*, 249-50.

[11] *John Donne: The Epithalamions, Anniversaries, and Epicedes*, p, 226.

[12] Parker, "Diamond's Dust: Carew, King, and the Legacy of Donne," in T*he Eagle and the Dove: Reassessing John Donne*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1986), p. 192.

and was buried in St. Paul's on April 3. But fewer might recall that Gustavus Adolphus died some nineteen months after Donne, on November 6, 1632. From a purely factual perspective, Carew's elegy must have been composed sometime between these two dates, just possibly even a little later, considering that Townsend had already written his elegy on Adolphus when he invited Carew to join him (which Carew declined to do.) The Printer to the Reader of the 1633 Donne *Poems* simply refers to "some" who early on had elegies in the works, without naming anyone. We can probably assume that Walton was among this group. Milgate remarks, on the basis of a comment in Walton's *Life of Donne*, that "in its final form," Walton's elegy is dated 7 April 1631.[13] This isn't quite accurate since Milgate then goes on to note that for the 1635 edition of Donne's *Poems*, Walton added four lines at the end and made further changes in his own *Life of Donne* in 1658. King and Hyde were also probably in this group. Their elegies first appeared in conjunction with the publication of *Deaths Duell* in 1632, but, as some scholars have conjectured, Donne's already famous sermon could have been published in late 1631. The work was entered in the Stationer's Register on September 30, 1631, six months after Donne's death.[14] Beyond these three names, one can only guess who the other earlier contributors might have been.

The main evidence for dating Carew's poem "very soon after Donne's death" (Milgate) is Carew's opening line. "Can we not force from widowed Poetry, / Now thou art dead (Great Donne) one Elegy / To crowne thy Hearse." Provided that the lines be taken literally, Dunlop noted that Carew's poem "must have been written before other elegies had appeared" (p. 250). Perhaps, but there are reasons to go slow here. Apart from sharing a critical bias common in his day that the aesthetically superior work is usually the source for later, inferior writing, Dunlop's argument assumes a) that Carew, at the time of writing the lines, had no knowledge that other elegies were in the works, which seems doubtful, given the Printer to the Reader's statement; b) that print is the primary means whereby other works are

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[13] *John Donne: The Epithalamions, Anniversaries, and Epicedes*, p. 224.

[14] Jonquil Bevan, "Hebdomada Mortium: The Structure of Donne's Last Sermon," *Review of English Studies* 45.178 (May, 1994): 185-203 (p. 192).

known, in spite of the existence of a rich manuscript culture; c) and that Carew didn't have another meaning in mind in the reference to "one Elegy."

With regard to this last matter, we enter into the important realm of interpretation, including the very real possibility that, rather than assuming King was responding to Carew, Carew's line was stimulated by King's demurral in his elegy that "Widow'd invention justly doth forbeare / To come abroad, knowing Thou art not here." King's line makes little sense if it is directed at Carew, since his poem would already have "come abroad." Michael Parker, who has shed more interpretive light than anyone on the many parallels between Carew's poem and King's, assumes, as I said, that Carew's elegy predates King's and that King's is a point-by-point critique or "refutation" of Carew's poem. This was done, Parker says, largely in the interest of shielding Donne's memory "from other unauthorized elegies and to avert the discussion of the Dean's unedifying early career that such elegies would surely entail."[15] Parker is no doubt right about King's anxiety over this issue, one underscored by King's unusual insistence, as Parker says, that "*nothing* can be said of Donne,"[16] by which Parker understands his own italicized "*nothing*" to denote the heavy reliance by King (and also, as it turns out, by Hyde) on the impossibility topos. Donne is beyond reach, etc.; therefore, any attempt to be other than silent is disrespectful.

But does it follow that King had Carew's poem in his sights and constructed his elegy as a way to preempt Carew's, given that King's poem first appeared in *Death's Duell*?—that is, unaccompanied by Carew's poem? It doesn't seem likely, but let's say King did have this specific concern in mind, based perhaps on reading Carew's poem in manuscript or hearing about it, and with the further knowledge that there would be more elegies forthcoming, including Carew's, attached to the 1633 *Poems*. It still seems rather futile as a preemptive strategy at shielding Donne. Readers would only have to turn a few pages to discover Carew's elegy in full dress. (As it turns out, there is nothing in Carew's elegy about "the Dean's unedifying early career.") In any event, Parker observes, noting the irony: "King's efforts were ultimately (and

[15] Parker, "Diamond's Dust," p. 191.
[16] Ibid., p. 196.

fortunately) unsuccessful."[17] King's efforts were unsuccessful, I suggest, because Carew was never the target.

A simpler explanation is that King and Hyde wrote their elegies for *Death's Duell* before Carew wrote his, enlisting, as best they could, the impossibility topos as a way to respond to the anxiety of amplification, surrounding, finally, Donne's posthumous emergence in print here and shortly, too, in the 1633 *Poems*. Carew read these poems (or perhaps earlier versions in manuscript) with great interest as early forays into representing Donne to the public, but he resisted their censoring impulses here, just as, in a different vein, he resisted censorship in "The Rapture." In a manner congruent with his usual Mannerist practice, he braided their commentary into his own elegy, making a brilliant poem of praise, but with a completely different result. He actually has something to say, as many literary historians have subsequently noted. Carew's poem then circulated in draft form among friends. Lucius Carey's elegy certainly suggests knowledge of Carew's poem, and it is quite possible that the additional end lines in Walton's 1635 version of his poem also bear the impress of Carew's final ending in 1633. Thus, even if we assume Carew first saw the elegies by King and Hyde in *Deaths Duell*, there was still a full year between the date of its publication and the death of Gustavus Adolphus. During this period, Carew had plenty of time to work on his poem, while others, like Lucius Carey and one R. B. (Richard Busby), had the opportunity to read and steal from it.

To look at one such overlapping instance in detail: Parker rightly observes that "the most convincing link between" Carew's and King's poems is "the extended financial image" about coining language.[18] Carew uses the metaphor as a means of exploring Donne's originality: "The lazie seeds / Of servile imitation throwne away; / And fresh invention planted, Thou didst pay / The debts of our penurious bankrupt age." Carew then continues:

> Thou hast redeem'd [our bankrupt language] and open'd Us a Mine
> Of rich and pregnant phansie, drawne a line
> Of masculine expression, which had good
> Old Orpheus seene, Or all the ancient Brood

[17] Ibid., p. 191.
[18] Ibid., p. 198.

> Our superstitious fooles admire, and hold
> Their lead more precious, then thy burnish't Gold,
> Thou hadst been their Exchequer, and no more
> They in each others dust, had rak'd for Ore.

King uses the coining metaphor as a way of explaining why it is better to say nothing than try to borrow language from "her bankrupt Mine," now that Donne is dead:

> I doe not like the office. Nor is't fit
> Thou, who did'st lend our Age such summes of wit
> Should'st now re-borrow from her bankrupt Mine,
> That Ore to Bury thee, which once was Thine.
> Rather still leave us in thy debt; And know
> (Exalted Soule) more glory 't is to owe
> Unto thy Hearse, what we can never pay,
> Then with embased Coine those Rites defray.

Parker reads King's lines as a "recision of Carew's extended financial image" in order "to ensure that his readers (or one reader at any rate) recognize the identity of his target, thus discrediting Carew's poem and discouraging other would-be elegists from following suit."[19] But if so—and I don't think this is the case for the reasons given earlier—it creates a further problem as Parker recognizes: "Yet the strategy is inherently paradoxical. In asserting Donne's inimitability, King is forced to fall back on Carew's imitation of Donne to make the assertion. In capturing his opponent's guns in order to turn them back against him, King implicitly admits the excellency of Carew's artillery; blame becomes an indirect form of praise. Under the combined weight of these *paradoxical epidemica*, the poem begins to totter."

It is in desperate moments like these when I am most sure of another, simpler, better explanation. King is either incredibly stupid, or Carew read these lines in King and then, provoked by the churchman's challenge, proceeded to show precisely how it is possible to use Donne's language in the service of praising the poet—with the understanding that there is no greater praise than that of seeking to revivify Donne's idiom by drawing "a line of rich masculine expression."

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[19] Ibid.

(The word "line" functions itself as a rich pun, and not as an example of "two-edged words" used by Donne's non-followers whom Carew was criticizing.) In striking contrast to King's poem, no one can read Carew's elegy and think he does not "like the office." Rather he rises remarkably to the occasion itself, as left available by King. What Carew recognized in King's poem is not that he, Carew, was the specified "target" but that King, in his demurrals, created an incentive for his own poem, in which emulation—not "servile imitation"—could form an opportunity to plant "fresh invention."

There is one curious moment that lends further support to my argument via a recognition that Carew viewed his elegy as part of a larger project of eulogizing Donne. His poem is singular in its perspective but not one to be received as a solo event that the reference to "one Elegy" suggests, if taken literally. Near the end of the poem, in preparation for the epitaph, Carew writes, in panegyric fashion: "Though every pen should share a distinct part, / Yet art thou Theme enough to tire all Art." The lines were not included in the version of the Donne elegy that appeared in Carew's posthumously published *Poems* 1640. Both Grierson and Dunlop believe the 1640 elegy was printed from an inferior draft version of the elegy and consequently chose the 1633 version as their copy-text, as did Milgate.[20] All of this seems sensible. The many changes, some of a word or two, others of greater consequence, certainly suggest an author attentive to improving his text, and Carew was nothing if not a careful craftsman. The largest alteration was the addition of these two lines drawing attention to the community of poets. Then follows the politely dismissive couplet[21]: "Let others carve the rest, it shall suffice / I on thy Tombe this Epitaph incise." What the additional lines do, even if only meant hyperbolically, is to call further attention to the exceptional nature of Carew's poem, its singularity—the sense that, if "forced," "Widdowed Poetry" might produce "one Elegie" worthy of its subject. Let others—King, Hyde, and even Lucius Carey—carve the rest. As the other changes attest, Carew continued in this upward mode of address by substituting

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[20] *John Donne: The Epithalamions, Anniversaries, and Epicedes*, p. 226.

[21] In characterizing the couplet as "politely dismissive," I follow Joshua Scodel's lead in *The English Poetic Epitaph: Commemoration and Conflict from Jonson to Wordsworth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 134.

"Tomb" for "grave" and by burnishing the epitaph itself with italics. In this regard, as well, his elegy is exceptional. Reading Lucius Carey's calling at the outset of his elegy for poets to attend to Donne's "Tomb" ("A Tombe your Muse must to his Fame supply") perhaps reminded Carew of his loftier duties here and of his need to further differentiate himself from the pack (to "incise" suggests writing, whereas to carve does not); and for later readers to note, as Milgate elegantly says, that Lucius Carey's "elegy on Donne obviously takes its rise from that by Carew immediately preceding."[22] And also its fall, as a comparison between these two elegies, placed side-by-side, by two poets with the same last name, inevitably reveals.

Knotty as this discussion has been, if I am right, two truths emerge with startling clarity. Donne continues to be the "flame" that burns through Carew's "frame"—the rhyme words are Carew's—and one of the major sources for his great elegy has been right under our noses lo these many years. As for the underlying matter about why King was so jittery about securing Donne's posthumous reputation, Parker hints at the right explanation but then deviates from it in favor of developing an anxious reading à la Harold Bloom, then in vogue. The younger poet, Parker argues, felt inadequate to the commendatory task. "King seems so overwhelmed by the personality of Donne that his muse is stifled." Hence, his extensive recourse to the impossibility topos in his elegy.

But a more persuasive explanation, I think, is not oedipal but historical, more about filial piety than poetic inheritance. It has to do with circumstances immediately following King's father's death in 1621, when it was soon bruited about that John King, Bishop of London, experienced a deathbed conversion to Catholicism. So exercised was the son by these allegations about his father that he published a lengthy, learned, and impassioned sermon attacking these posthumous imputations. Following Margaret Crum, Henry King's editor, Parker sees the sermon only as further proof of King as "unusually given to self-deprecation," and he cites the opening lines of the sermon, quoted by Crum, as evidence of King's "startling modesty."[23] But the 1621 title page gives a better reckoning of the sermon's scope and subject, its unequivocal tone and authority, its personal concern with family

[22] Milgate, p. 227.
[23] Parker, p. 196.

scandal: "A sermon preached at Pauls Crosse, the 25. of Nouember. 1621 Vpon occasion of that false and scandalous report (lately printed) touching the supposed apostasie of the right Reuerend Father in God, Iohn King, late Lord Bishop of London. By Henry King, his eldest sonne. Whereunto is annexed the examination, and answere of Thomas Preston, taken before my Lords Grace of Canterbury, touching this scandall. Published by authority."

The sermon proper, now readily available on Early English Books Online, bears out the wide-angle view of pulpit oratory encouraged by the Paul's Cross setting. The chosen text for the day is appropriately admonitory, dealing with remembrance, and implicitly, the sin of misremembering and calumny: "IOHN 15. vers. 20: Remember the word that I said vnto you, The seruant is not greater then the Lord: If they haue persecuted me, they will also persecute you." The sermon that follows doesn't so much cut a moderate, middle way between puritan preaching (one potential source of the slander that King is trying to scotch) and Popish pride (something King fiercely denounces). Rather, it unequivocally indicts the falsehoods and practices associated with each party, whether through persecution by the mouth or of the body: "not only Persecutio manus, violence offered to the body, but to the Good Name by slanders and calumnies" (p. 46). With great pressure, the sermon then bears down on the subject immediately at hand, giving a "catalog of wronged worthies" (p. 49) that includes those of Jesus and Luther, and, of course, the preacher's father, John King. As part of the spirited defense against "calumnious tongues," the sermon includes lengthy sections of the more hagiographical sort about the bishop's life spent ministering to his London flock and detailed testimony of the late bishop's final hours as a devout servant of the church. The sermon concludes with an apologetic note "To the Reader." "How little I affect to be in Print, needs no Apologie to any, who either know already it was the desire of some my most Honourable friends, whose intreaties were commands to me, or but consider the subiect which first set me a worke, a Slandered and traduced Father: vnto whom duty and necessity vrged me to doe this right." The sentence begins with the usual gentlemanly aversion to descending into print but ends on a more Hamlet-like note about the need to set the record straight.

To add a further note of cultural authority to its defense, the printed sermon then concludes with "THE EXAMINATION OF THOMAS PRESTON, taken before the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, at Lambeth, Decemb. 20. 1621," in support of the accuracy of the charges, its representation of the allegations made against King's supposed conversion, and the defense offered by Henry King of his father's loyalty to the church. "The said Bishop of London did neuer confesse himselfe vnto this Examinate, nor euer receiued Sacramentall absolution at his hands, nor was euer by him reconciled vnto the Church of Rome, neither did renounce before him the Religion professed and established in the Church of England, nor did performe any other circumstance tending that way, as is in the said booke of the Protestants Plea deliuered." In short, this is not a sermon of "startling modesty." It is a full-throated, public defense against a spurious, posthumous attack on his father's reputation.

Ten years later, Henry King was in a similar, though not identical, situation. As gifted a preacher and poet as Donne was, he wasn't King's father, but it had been his father, nonetheless, who had ministered to Donne at the crucial moment when Donne was considering, finally, taking orders. Writes Crum: "It was to this uncompromising man, Walton says, as to 'his deare friend,' that Donne went when he decided to take orders: 'That reverend man did receive the news with much gladnesse, and after some expressions of joy, and a persuasion to be constant in his pious purpose, he proceeded with all convenient speed to ordain him both Deacon and Priest'."[24] Henry King's burden was great when he assumed the executorship of Donne's estate. Greater still, because public, was the weight of being Donne's first eulogist, in light of all his birth father had been through after his decease, and it was his sincere hope to prevent another posthumous scandal. In doing so, King opened the door to—and helped shape—one of the great critical elegies of the early modern period.

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[24] Margaret Crum, *The Poems of Henry King*, p. 4.