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Which "springs encrease"? Estimating the Date of Donne's "Spring"

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Donne's poem "Spring"—better known as "Loves growth" and abbreviated *LovGrow* by the *Variorum*—insists on its own temporality, rooting both love and poetry in the soil of real time.[1] In light of this emphasis, one cannot help but wonder when it was written. The short answer is that we cannot be sure. The poem's opening gambit resembles that of Shakespeare's sonnet 115 ("THose lines which I before have writ doe lie, / Euen those that said I could not loue you deerer"), and that poem was printed in 1609.[2] But the connection is of little help in dating Donne's poem, since we do not know when Shakespeare wrote 115, whether he circulated it in manuscript before 1609, whether he had seen *LovGrow* in manuscript

[1] The title "Spring," either with or without the definite article "The," appears in the majority of seventeenth-century ms. witnesses of this poem, including five Group I mss. (B32, C02, C08, O20, and SP1), the Group III mss. (B46, H5, C9, and H6), and several mss. associated with Group III (H7 and Y2), among others. "Loves growth," the title used in the 1633 edition, likely derived from a Group II ms. witness or one that reads with Group II. Gary Stringer believes "Spring" was the header Donne used in his original and revised holographs (both now lost), which is why I use it throughout this essay. Stringer made his determination in light of stemmae he wrote in response to my queries, which trace the derivation of all extant manuscript and print versions from the two lost holographs (personal correspondence, 14 July 2017). I am grateful to Stringer for his advice on the text and to both Stringer and Donald Dickson for providing me with printouts of a DV-COLL manuscript collation generated on 29 June 2017 (Dickson) and 11 July 2017 (Stringer).

[2] *Shake-speares Sonnets* (London, 1609), Sig. [G4v]-H[1r].

before writing it, or whether Donne read 115 in print or manuscript before writing *LovGrow*.[3] If one wants to pursue the question of when Donne wrote his poem, one must therefore seek answers in what Wimsatt and Beardsley call "an intermediate kind of evidence," including that which may reveal "private or semi-private meaning to words or topics by an author or by a coterie of which he is a member."[4] In the essay that follows, I present a case, based on evidence of this sort, for dating "Spring" to spring 1610 or later. Part I explores connections between Donne's poem and astronomical works by Galileo and Kepler; Part II investigates links between the poem's startling conclusion and the debates that dominated English royal and parliamentary politics in 1610; and Part III comments on the poem's place in the larger context of Donne's career as a writer.

I: "Spring" and the New Science

In some of Donne's poems, a combination of imagery and external evidence makes it possible to determine, with some certainty, a *terminus post quem*; for example, in Donne's "The Primrose," the speaker says that the "forme" and the "infinitie" of white flowers blanketing a hillside "Make a terrestriall Galaxie, / As the small starres doe in the skie" (5, 6-7). Shawcross notes in his "Chronological Schedule of the Poems" that this astronomical image probably postdates Galileo's 1610 *Sidereus Nuncius*, which confirmed definitively that the Milky Way "galaxy is, in fact, nothing but a congeries of innumerable stars grouped together in clusters."[5] Donne knew Galileo's treatise, as is clear from *Ignatius His*

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[3] For an extended intertextual reading of Donne's poem and Shakespeare's sonnets 115-116—which includes a more extensive discussion of the title "Spring"—see Theresa M. DiPasquale, "Prosody, Poetics, and Mutability in Donne's 'Spring' ('Love's Growth') and Shakespeare's Sonnets 115 and 116," *Modern Philology* 117.4 (2020): 470-496.

[4] W. K. Wimsatt, Jr. and M. C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 54.3 (1946): 478.

[5] John T. Shawcross, ed. *The Complete Poetry of John Donne* (Garden City, NY: Anchor/Doubleday, 1967), p. 414. All quotations from Donne's poetry are from this edition with the exception of the header for *LovGrow*, which I refer to as "Spring"; Shawcross uses the 1633 edition's header "Loves growth." I quote Stillman Drake's translation of Galileo's treatise (*The Starry Messenger* [1610] in

Conclave (Latin version entered in the Stationers' Register on 24 January 1611; English version entered 18 May of the same year). Donne's narrator remarks that "*Galilaeo* . . . of late hath summoned the other worlds, the Stars to come neerer to him, and give him an account of themselves"; a marginal note confirms that the source is "*Nuncius syderius.*"[6] What appears to be an allusion to the same text in "The Primrose," along with the poem's title as it appears in the 1635 edition of Donne's poems ("The Primrose being at Montgomery Castle, upon the Hill on which it is Situate") and a 7 April 1613 prose letter from Donne to Sir Robert Harley, which indicates that the letter is being sent from "Montgomery," all lead Robin Robbins to date the poem to Donne's stay at Montgomery (the home of his friend Sir Edward Herbert) during the spring of 1613.[7]

"Spring," too, may reflect Donne's knowledge of Galileo's landmark 1610 treatise and of Galileo's comments on the planets in letters sent to Johannes Kepler, which were published by Kepler in 1611. The most obviously relevant lines are 15-18, in which the speaker launches an astronomical analogy: "And yet no greater, but more eminent, / Love by the spring is growne; / As, in the firmament, / Starres by the Sunne are not inlarg'd, but showne . . . ." As Herbert Grierson points out in his notes on these lines, the analogy is confusing if one reads it as referring to the fixed stars because they "are not revealed by the sun, but

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Discoveries and Opinions of Galileo, trans. Stillman Drake [New York: Anchor Books, 1957], p. 49). The astronomer prefaces this remark by saying that he has "observed the nature and the material of the Milky Way" and that, through his telescopic observations, "all the disputes which have vexed philosophers through so many ages have been resolved, and we are at last freed from wordy debates about it."

[6] *Ignatius His Conclave* (1611), ed. T. H. Healey (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969), p. 7.

[7] Robbins, ed. *The Complete Poems of John Donne* (Harlow, UK: Longman, 2010), pp. 234-35. As Robbins notes, the likelihood that Donne is here alluding to Galileo's *Sidereus Nuncius* was first suggested by Charles M. Coffin (*John Donne and the New Philosophy* [Columbia University Press, 1937], pp. 152-54). In his gloss on "The Primrose," which he prints with the 1635 heading, Robbins explains that, "Though the particular nature of the Milky way was familiar to classical writers, . . . D[onne]'s clear certainty that it consisted of 'small stars' support[s] the argument by Coffin . . . that this is an allusion to the experimental telescopic observations . . . recorded by Galileo" (235).

hidden."[8] Galileo himself notes, near the end of *Sidereus Nuncius*, that "the stars appear very feeble by day and in twilight."[9] The logic of Donne's lines thus depends, first of all, upon recognizing that the "stars" in question are the planets, which—as Nancy P. Brown points out in a 1953 essay—were often referred to as "stars" in Early Modern English.[10] Of course, the planets, like the fixed stars, are also less visible during the daylight hours; Galileo remarks, "Venus itself, when visible in broad daylight, is so small as scarcely to appear equal to a star of the sixth magnitude."[11] Brown thus argues persuasively that Donne's lines comment, not on how the planets appear by daylight versus at night, but rather on a phenomenon discussed by Galileo in his letters to Kepler: the fact that a planet's appearance as seen from earth changes in keeping with its orbital position and depends upon how close it is to the sun and to the earth at any given time.

Conceding that classical writers were already familiar with the idea that the planets reflect the light of the sun, Brown argues that Donne's analogy between spring's effect on the appearance of love and the sun's effect upon the appearance of the stars is not fully explained by this concept known to the ancients.[12] As Brown notes, the idea of the planets' light as reflected "does not elucidate the ambiguity of 'not [e]nlarg[']d,' nor does it clarify the comparison with the love that is 'not

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[8] Herbert J. C. Grierson, ed. *The Poems of John Donne*. 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), 2:31.

[9] Galileo, *Starry*, 58.

[10] Nancy P. Brown, "A Note on the Imagery of Donne's 'Loves Growth,'" *Modern Language Review* 48.3 (1953): 324-25. See *OED*, "star," n. def. 2.

[11] Galileo, *Starry*, 46.

[12] I am indebted to Sean McDowell for his excellent summary of how the New Science clarified and expanded the ancients' observations of this phenomenon: "One problem with the Ptolemaic system is that it didn't establish definitively the size of each planet's supposed epicycles and so couldn't do much on the brightness problem, though it could account for retrograde motion. Copernicus provided a reliable account of the ratio of planetary orbits to each other (one half of the brightness equation); Galileo's discovery that Venus underwent a full set of phases (itself the mortal wound of the Ptolemaic system) was the other half of the equation. Changes in perceptions of relative brightness and size were a combination of both factors, which wasn't entirely understood until Galileo" (McDowell, personal correspondence, 17 May 2019).

greater, but more eminent.'"[13] Brown concludes that the source of Donne's very specific astronomical distinction must have been Kepler's 1611 publication of his correspondence with Galileo, which includes—in a 26 March 1611 letter by Galileo—remarks that sound very much like a source for Donne's conceit: "Il principal fondamento di mio discorso è nell' osservare io molto evidentemente con gli occhiali che quei Pianeti di mano in mano, che si trovano più vicini a noi, e al Sole, riciveno maggiore splendore, e più illustremente ce lo riverberano" ("The principle foundation of my discourse [in the *Sidereus Nuncius*] is in my observing—very clearly with glasses [telescopic lenses]—that the planets receive greater splendor and reflect it more eminently in proportion as they are found closer to us and to the sun").[14] The observations made by Donne's speaker in lines 17-18 of "Spring" are very much in the spirit of this passage; particularly intriguing is "more eminent," which reads like an adjectival English paraphrase of Galileo's adverbial "più illustremente." But Donne might also have gleaned the astronomical point made by his speaker from the *Sidereus Nuncius* itself, in which Galileo says that the "secondary light of the moon . . . is greater according as the moon is closer to the sun. It diminishes more and more as the moon recedes from that body . . . . But when the moon is within sixty degrees of the sun it shines remarkably, even in twilight."[15] For Donne, whose grasp of astronomy was considerable, this comment alone would have been ample inspiration for the planetary conceit in "Spring."[16]

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[13] Brown, p. 325.

[14] Ioannis Kepleri, *Dioptrice . . . Praemissae Epistolae Galilaei de iis* (Augsburg, 1611). Kepler includes both Galileo's Italian and his own Latin translation thereof. The English translation of Galileo's Italian is mine.

[15] Galileo, *Starry*, p. 42.

[16] On Donne's familiarity with the ideas presented in *Siderius Nuncius* and evidence that Donne's familiarity with the Northumberland Circle, including the astronomer Thomas Harriot and his associate William Lower, kept him "up to date on the latest developments in natural philosophy and astronomy" (152), see Massimo Bucciantini, Michele Camerota, and Franco Giudice, *Galileo's Telescope: A European Story,* trans. Catherine Bolton (Harvard UP, 2015), pp. 146-53. While Bucciantini, Camerota, and Giudice provide an ex–cellent account of the intellectual and cultural milieu in which Donne wrote, their reading of Donne's satirical approach to astronomy in *Ignatius His Conclave*

William Empson, though he does not mention Brown's arguments, partially reiterates them in his remarkable essay "Donne the Space Man," published in 1957. Discussing "Spring" as one of several poems that illustrate Donne's interest in other planets, Empson sees no cause for confusion in the astronomical analogy: "I had always thought Donne simply means that the planets are seen by light reflected from the sun—just as the moon obviously is, because of its phases. The proof of this belief did not come till Galileo in the autumn of 1610 saw Venus as a half-moon through his telescope, too late for his decisive publication of that year."[17] Empson makes clear here, in his own inimitable style, his conviction that Donne's poem was on the cutting edge of astronomy. The only objection he can imagine to the idea that "Spring" was written after Donne had the chance to read Galileo's 1613 *Letters on Sunspots* (in which the astronomer first published his late 1610 observations of Venus) is that most critics would be reluctant to assume that "this rather boyishly fleshly poem" was written so late in Donne's life. Empson does not seem to know of Kepler's 1611 publication of his correspondence with Galileo, but his general point is that the poem would have to date from the second decade of the seventeenth century if it were to reflect Galileo's findings, and that Donne—who turned forty in 1612—was by then too old to be writing a love lyric like "Spring."

This objection seems much flimsier today, in part because Donne criticism of the twenty-first century has refused to accept at face value the sharp distinction Donne himself tried to make between "Jack Donne and Dr. Donne"[18] and in part because critics have acknowledged that there is nothing particularly boyish about "Spring." It is at least as sophisticated numerologically and philosophically as "The Primrose,"

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is far too literal; for an alternative reading of the astronomical imagery in that work, see my "'*Lunatique*' Satire: Jonsonian Audacity, Lunar Astronomy, and Anne of Denmark in Donne's *Ignatius His Conclave*," *Studies in Philology* 115.1 (2018): 99-128.

[17] William Empson, "Donne the Space Man," *Kenyon Review* 19.3 (1957): 370.

[18] See Judith Scherer Herz, " 'By parting have joyn'd here': the story of the two (or more) Donnes," *Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 732-42.

which, as noted above, was probably written during the same springtime journey during which Donne wrote "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward."[19] As Wilbur Sanders notes, moreover, the "richly anti-climactic" opening lines of *LovGrow* demonstrate, at "its most mature," Donne's "ripe awareness" that "living, growing reality" is better and more satisfying than "the static perfections of infinity."[20]

Those opening lines evoke the speaker's sudden realization that something he had thought "pure and abstract" (11) is in fact organic, mutable, and as implicated in the processes of growth and decay as everything else in the sublunary world; in short, they evoke a paradigm shift very much like the one brought about by Galileo and other astronomers, including Thomas Harriot in England, whose observations of sunspots proved that the sun was not, as Aristotle believed, part of an immutable and unchanging celestial realm.[21] In an attempt to defend the old cosmology, Jesuit mathematician Christoph Scheiner had insisted upon the bodily integrity—one might even say chastity—of the sun: "It has always seemed to me unfitting and, in fact, unlikely," he wrote in *Tres Epistolae de maculis solaribus* (Augsburg, 1612), "that on the most lucid body of the Sun there would be spots"; he thus declared himself "please[d] . . . to liberate the sun's body entirely from the insult of spots" by arguing that what appear to be sunspots must in fact

[19] On the numerological structure of *LovGrow*, see Julia M. Walker, "Donne's Words Taught in Numbers," *Studies in Philology* 84.1 (1987): 44-60.

[20] Sanders, *John Donne's Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 32. See also Michael A. Winkelman, who agrees with Edmund Gosse that *LovGrow* "probably belongs . . . to the peaceful days at Mitcham" (*The Life and Letters of John Donne*, 2 vols. [London, 1899], 1: 119) and who thus dates it to "the first decade of Donne's marriage, 1602-1611" (Winkelman, *A Cognitive Approach to John Donne's* Songs and Sonnets [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013], 75, 213n27).

[21] On Harriot's observation of sunspots, see the translators' commentary on "Turning the telescope to the Sun: Thomas Harriot and Johannes and David Fabricius" in Galileo Galilei and Christoph Scheiner, *On Sunspots*, trans. Eileen Reeves and Robert Van Helden (University of Chicago Press, 2015), 25-30; and Bucciantini, Camerota, and Giudice, 145.

be satellites in orbit around the sun.[22] Critiquing Scheiner's *a priori* approach, Galileo responded:

> [I]t is not conclusive to say . . . that because the solar body is very bright, it is not credible that there are dark spots on it, because as long as no cloud or impurity (*impurità*) whatsoever has been seen on it we have to designate it as most pure (*purissimo*) and most bright, but when it reveals itself to be partly impure and spotted (*in parte impuro, e macchiato*), why shouldn't we call it both spotted and impure (*e macolato, e non puro*)? Names and attributes must accommodate themselves to the essence of the things, and not the essence to the names, because things come first and names afterward.[23]

The speaker of Donne's "Spring" is similarly blunt in calling things as he sees them; like Galileo, he does not hesitate to revise his notions of things he formerly believed to be "pure": "I scarce beleeve my love to be so pure / As I had thought it was," he cries (1-2); observing the empirical evidence of his love's springtime growth, he concludes that this changeable phenomenon must "borrow" its "working vigour" from "the Sunne" (10) and must therefore be—"as all else," including that maculate heavenly body itself, "elemented" (13)—a thing not wholly composed of one, pure essence, but composite and therefore—as Galileo puts it—"*in parte impuro*." In short, the tone, the imagery, and the rhetorical stance of "Spring" all suggest strongly that the poem dates from a point in time after Donne had had the opportunity to read Galileo's publications of 1610-1613.

The poem's vocabulary reinforces this suggestion, for it resembles that of works composed by Donne in 1610 or later. For example, the

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[22] Christoph Scheiner, *Tres Epistolae de Maculis Solaribus* in Galileo Galilei and Christoph Scheiner, *On Sunspots*, trans. Reeves and Van Helden, pp. 62, 67.

[23] Galileo Galilei, "Galileo's First Letter," in *On Sunspots*, trans. Reeves and Van Helden, 91; the source for my parenthetical quotations of Galileo's Italian is his *Istoria E Dimostrazioni Intorno Alle Macchie Solari E Loro Accidenti Comprese in Tre Lettere* . . . (Rome, 1613); online at the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/65059245. As Reeves and Van Helder note, Galileo's first letter on sunspots—addressed to his German correspondent Marc Welser—is dated 4 May 1612; it was printed in the *Istoria*, which "came off the press near the end of March 1613" (*On Sunspots*, 80, 248).

word "vicissitude," which appears in line 4 of *LovGrow*, also appears in other texts Donne wrote during the second and third decades of the seventeenth century—the 1612 *Second Anniversarie* and sermons written in the 1620s—but it is to be found nowhere else in his poetry. The same is true of "vigour": Donne uses it only in "Spring" (line 10), in "A Funerall Elegie" (composed late 1610, printed 1611), in *The Second Anniversarie* (composed 1611, printed 1612), and in his religious prose of the 1620s.[24] Perhaps most interestingly of all, a great deal of circumstantial evidence points to early spring 1613 as the date for "A Letter written by Sr. H. G. and J. D. *alternis vicibus*,"[25] a lighthearted poem with alternating stanzas by Donne and his friend Henry Goodyer. Addressed to two ladies, the poem begins with lines by Goodyer that recall (or anticipate) the imagery, tone, wording, and end rhymes of "Spring," lines 19-20. "Since ev'ry Tree begins to blossome now / Perfuminge and enamelinge each bow, / Hartes should as well as they, some fruits allow," says the opening stanza of the Goodyer/Donne poem; "Gentle love deeds, as blossomes on a bough, / From loves awaken'd root do bud out now," says the speaker of "Spring" (19-20).[26]

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[24] For a possible source of the speaker's view that love resembles everything else in the organic world partly in that it "borrow[s]" its "working Vigor" from "the Sunne," see Johannes Kepler's *Dissertatio cum nuncio sidereo*, which was his first response to Galileo's work, published in May, 1610: "In the center of the world is the sun, heart of the universe, fountain of light, source of heat, origin of life and cosmic motion" (*Kepler's Conversation with Galileo's Sidereal Messenger*, trans. Edward Rosen [New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1965], 45).

[25] For arguments in defense of this date, see Dennis Kay, "Poems by Sir Walter Aston, and a Date for the Donne/Goodyer Verse Epistle 'Alternis Vicibus,'" *RES* ns 37 (1986): 208-210; Robbins (110); and Daniel Starza Smith, *John Donne and the Conway Papers: Patronage and Manuscript Circulation in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 246-51.

[26] Starza-Smith thinks the addressees of the Donne/Goodyer poem may have been Lady Lettice Carey and her sister, Essex Rich, the daughters of Penelope Devereux, to whom Donne addressed his only poem to survive in a holograph copy, the 1611 verse epistle "A Letter to the Lady Carey, and Mrs. Essex Riche, From Amyens" (*John Donne and the Conway Papers*, pp. 250-51). Donne's Easter 1612 poem "To the Countess of Bedford, Begun in France, but never perfected" also uses imagery and vocabulary similar to those of "Spring" (though in a repentant tone) to apologize for having written poems in praise of someone other than the Countess: framed, as the opening lines of "Spring" are,

The details of Donne's (and Goodyer's) lexicon are by no means decisive evidence, but they lend further credibility to the argument—made in different ways by Brown and Empson—that "Spring" was written late enough for Donne to know of Galileo's findings on the appearance of the planets as seen from earth and perhaps even of his observations on sunspots: that is, no earlier than late spring 1610 and possibly as late as spring 1613.

II-- "Spring" and the Great Contract Debate

Also pointing (or perhaps shrugging ironically) toward a date of 1610 or later is the taxation conceit in the final three lines of "Spring": "As Princes doe in times of action get / New taxes, and remit them not in peace, / No winter shall abate the springs encrease" (26-28). This politico-economic analogy, which departs rather abruptly from the foregoing nature imagery, depends upon a satirical truism intelligible in most times and places. The philosopher R. K. Elliott goes so far as to use Donne's analogy as an example in arguing that the soundness of poems' truth-claims is essential to their meaning. "[I]f as a matter of fact princes tended to abolish taxes in war-time and not to re-introduce them when peace was re-established," Elliott explains, "the meaning and general emotional character of the poem would be drastically changed." For the implied sincerity of the poem's final line depends upon the reader's acknowledging the previous two lines' factual validity. Indeed, it depends upon those lines' "having successfully satirized the actual behavior of actual princes": for "if the sting of the real is removed from the preceding lines, the last line will not communicate so strong an impression of sincere and steadfast commitment."[27]

As it happens, the "actual behavior of actual princes" with regard to taxation was the hottest topic in English politics during 1610 and for some years before and after. Beginning in 1603, Robert Cecil, as Secretary of State and Master of the Wards, had begun to explore new ways of dealing with the debts and expenses of the Crown, including

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as a confession of ill-advised speech, this poem includes multiple words and phrases that echo (or anticipate) those of the love lyric: "waken," "season," "spring," "growth," "bud," "grow," and "I . . . scarce."

[27] R. K. Elliott, "Poetry and Truth," *Analysis* 27.3 (1967): 79-80.

the possibility (first bruited upon the death of Cecil's father, Lord Burleigh, in 1598) that Parliament might guarantee the monarch a "fixed annual payment" in return for the Crown's abolishing the much-despised Court of Wards.[28] This proposal went nowhere in 1604, as the Commons were largely opposed to the idea that James should receive an annual subsidy in return for redressing what they considered an abuse of the royal prerogative.[29] In spring 1606—in part because Cecil played up the realm's vulnerability in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot—the Commons voted to supply the king's needs by means of "two subsidies and four fifteenths"[30]—which amounted to a grant of almost

[28] Pauline Croft, "Wardship in the parliament of 1604," *Parliamentary History 2* (1983): 39-40.

[29] The wardship system had been established by Henry VIII in the 1540s to place the administration of estates inherited by minors into the hands of the monarchy. A document entitled "Form of Apology and Satisfaction" that was drafted by a committee of the House of Commons in June of 1604 did express the writers' hope that—in return for "the offer of a perpetual and certain revenue, not only proportionable to the uttermost benefit that any of [his] progenitors ever reaped thereby but also with . . . an overplus and large addition"— the peace-loving James would (the typical princely practices mentioned in "Spring," 26-27 notwithstanding) abolish a source of Crown revenue established by Henry VIII to support the cost of "his wars against Scotland"; for the writers "hope[d]" that conflict "now to be at an everlasting end" (J. R. Tanner, *Constitutional Documents of the Reign of James I* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930], p. 229). The Apology-writers' "hope" would become official policy with the passage in 1607 of the "Act for the Removal of Hostility" between England and Scotland (7 & 8 Jac. I, c. I; *Statutes of the Realm* iv, p. 1156; excerpts reprinted in Tanner, *Constitutional Documents*, pp. 38-45). However, the "Form of Apology and Satisfaction" was never passed by the Commons as a whole and was almost certainly never shown to the king. Because the officers of the Court of Wards opposed its abolition and because Cecil "doubted whether parliament would offer enough" to compensate for the Crown's loss of income from wardships, Cecil abandoned the plan (John Cramsie, *Kingship and Crown Finance Under James VI and I, 1603-1625* [Woodbridge, UK and New York, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2002], p. 76).

[30] Cramsie, *Kingship*, 78. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "subsidy" as "A tax levied on imports and exports, the income from which was granted by parliament to the sovereign to meet particular needs" (n. def. 2a); a fifteenth is "A tax of one-fifteenth formerly imposed on personal property" (n. def. 1).

£400,000.[31] But Parliament remained deeply resistant to the idea of granting the crown a permanent annual "endowment."[32] In 1609, Cecil—who had become Lord Treasurer in 1608—came to the conclusion that "James's estate could not subsist without further burden to his subjects and [that] it was politically inadvisable to impose that burden outside a parliamentary settlement." He thus formally proposed "a revolutionary idea": "the creation of an annual tax to support the crown's necessities."[33] With Sir Julius Caesar, who was both a member of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Cecil attempted to hammer out an agreement whereby the crown would forego certain ancient feudal privileges involving control over purveyances (requisitions of goods and services), and impositions (import and export taxes). In return, Parliament would guarantee the king an annual grant of £200,000. As John Cramsie explains, "The rump of this design became the Great Contract which dominated the parliamentary sessions of 1610 and generated the most searching examinations of kingship, governance and finance in the reign."[34]

We know from Donne's *Problems* that these issues interested him and provided him fodder for his satirical writing. The Problem numbered X by Helen Peters in her edition of the *Paradoxes and Problems* ("Why Venus starre onely doth cast a Shadowe?") resembles "Spring" in combining references to the erotic, the astronomical, and the political. In the Problem, Donne contrasts Venus, who presides over sexual desire, with Mercury, who presides over rhetoric and persuasion, arguing wittily that Mercury has greater need of shadows:

> Eloquence, [Mercury's] occupation, is all shadowes and colours. . . . And who doubts that Eloquence (which must perswade people to take a yoake of Soveraignty and then beg and make lawes to tye them faster, and then give monny to the Invention, repayr and strengthen it) needes more shadowes and colourings then to perswade any man or woman

[31] Andrew Thrush, "The Parliament of 1604-1610," in *History of Parliament*, ed. Thrush and Parrish. Online at https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/survey/parliament-1604-1610. 6 September 2018.

[32] Cramsie, *Kingship*, p. 79.

[33] Ibid, p. 89.

[34] Ibid, p. 9.

> to that which is naturall.[35]

As Michael Price points out, "For Donne and his coterie of wits, several of them former or current members of Parliament, this discussion of eloquence evoked the early Jacobean debate over supply for the King's government, including issues of sovereignty, legislation, and taxation, issues that had been a main feature of parliamentary sessions from 1604."[36]

In her edition of the *Paradoxes and Problems*, Helen Peters discusses reasons to date the Problem on Venus' shadow to 1606 or 1607. She cites I. A. Shapiro's 1937 essay showing that the piece could have been written no earlier than 1606, since it includes a quotation from Kepler's *De stella tertii honoris in cygno* published in Prague in 1606. The astronomical points made in the problem are—as C. M. Coffin pointed out in a reply to Shapiro—ancient ones, known to Pliny; indeed, the astronomy invoked in the piece is essentially Ptolemaic despite Donne's including the Kepler quotation (which he would also use in *Ignatius His Conclave* [1611]).[37] In this, the Problem resembles "Spring": both blend allusions to contemporary astronomy with more traditional images of the Ptolemaic "spheares" ("Spring," 23).[38]

But while 1606/1607 is a *terminus post quem* for the Problem determined by Donne's allusion to Kepler, I would argue that the political satire featured both in the Venus' Shadow Problem and in "Spring" points to a date of composition several years later. Given its

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[35] Donne, "Why Venus starre onely doth cast a Shadow?" in *Paradoxes and Problems*, ed. Helen Peters (Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 33-34.

[36] Michael Price, "The Problem," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 244.

[37] Peters, ed. *Paradoxes and Problems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), xliv and 105, citing I. A. Shapiro, "John Donne the Astronomer: The Date of the Eighth Problem," *TLS* 3 July 1937 and C. M. Coffin, "Donne's Astronomy," *TLS* 18 September 1937.

[38] For another example of Donne's astronomical flexibility, see my reading of his verse epistle "Man to God's image" and the prose letter in which he enclosed it (Theresa M. DiPasquale, *Literature and Sacrament: The Sacred and the Secular in John Donne* [Duquesne University Press, 1999], pp. 223-36).

fall 1606 publication (the dedicatory epistle is dated 9 September), Kepler's treatise would not have been available to Donne during the second session of the 1604-1610 Parliament, which ended in May of 1606. The next session of Parliament, which began 18 November 1606 and ended 4 July 1607, focused not upon issues of crown finance but upon the question of the Union and upon the King's desire (also much resisted by the MPs) that Scots be recognized as English citizens. The subject of supply became a focus again only during the fourth session, which began on 9 February 1610, nineteen months after the third session ended, and featured the Great Contract debate.

Contemporary accounts of speeches on crown finance by Cecil, the King himself, and various members of the House of Commons during this session focus regularly upon issues mentioned in the Venus' shadow Problem (the "yoake of Soveraignty," the making of "lawes" designed to strengthen that yoke, and the "monny" required to maintain it). They also confront, explicitly and repeatedly, a question implicitly posed by lines 26-27 in "Spring": that is, whether, in peacetime, King James ought to be imposing taxes as high or higher than those imposed during the more war-torn reigns of Elizabeth I and her predecessors.

Addressing a committee of Lords and Commons on 15 February 1610, Cecil explaining that the current Parliament had been convened for two reasons: to discuss the installation of the king's eldest son as Prince of Wales and "to procure supply of his Majesty's estate."[39] The following Saturday, 17 February, three of the committee members who had heard the Lord Treasurer's speech—Francis Bacon, Edwin Sandys, and an acquaintance of Donne, the Attorney General Henry Hobart—recounted to the Commons what Cecil had said.[40] Cecil's goal, they

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[39] This is the wording in what Elizabeth Read Foster calls "the 'official' version of Salisbury's speech" as transcribed in Harleian MS 777 (Foster, ed., *Proceedings in Parliament* 1610, vol. 2, *House of Commons* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966], p. 9n1). Foster notes that State Papers Domestic 14/52/69—which includes "a series of notes probably taken while the speech was being delivered" (10n1)—records Cecil's rhetoric as more specifically skirting the question of the Jacobean peace: "I will not now speak of the King's military wars, which is not now in action. But 40,000 *li.* per annum his ships cost him" (p. 11n6).

[40] *Parliamentary Debates in 1610. . . . from the Notes of a Member of the House of Commons*, ed. Samuel Rawlinson Gardiner [Camden Society, 1862; available

explained, had been "To demand some supplie of treasure."[41] His speech, they noted, had outlined divers "dangers and inconveniences if the King's wants should not be supplied"; the Lord Treasurer had mentioned in particular that many existing treaties and alliances between the English crown and "forrayne Princes" were likely to break down ("wee knowe not how soone"), that the crown had many ongoing expenses relating to Queen Elizabeth's support of the Dutch against the Spanish, and that James had recently "bene at greate charge" in dealing with a rebellion in Ireland.[42] He then proceeded to deal with "certaine silent objections" that he anticipated from his parliamentary listeners, the second being that "The King is not in warres nor in action."[43]

Two days later, on 19 February, the Commons began to discuss what they had been told, and when the "Comittee of greavanc[e]s" met that afternoon, several members voiced not-so-silent objections. Thomas Wentworth, MP for Oxford, argued that the king ought, before instituting a permanent tax, to rein in the extravagance of his gifts to favorites, "And therefore he wished that wee might joyne in humble petition to His Majestie that he would diminish his charge, and live of his owne, without exacting of his poore subjects, especially at this tyme, when we have no warres, but gather the fruytes of peace upon the stalks of warre."[44] Wentworth's agricultural metaphor is sardonically answered

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online at Google Play, play.google.com/store/books], p. 1. On Donne's friendship with Hobart, see Emma Rhatigan, "Donne's Readership at Lincoln's Inn and the Doncaster Embassy," *Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 577.

[41] *Parliamentary Debates*, p. 2. For an overview of Cecil's speech, see L. M. Hill, *Bench and Bureaucracy: The Public Career of Sir Julius Caesar, 1580-1636* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. 152-55.

[42] Ibid., pp. 3, 5.

[43] Ibid., pp. 3, 7.

[44] Ibid., p. 11. Donne and Wentworth may have been acquainted; both matric–ulated at Oxford (though at different colleges) in 1584 and both studied at Lincoln's Inn: Wentworth beginning in 1585 and Donne from 1592-1597 (David Colclough, "Donne, John (1572–1631), poet and Church of England clergyman." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/7819. 4 Sep. 2018; and Maija Jansson, "Wentworth, Thomas (1567/8–1628), lawyer and politician." *Oxford*

by lines 26-27 of Donne's poem. When it comes to taxes, rulers are blind to harvest bounty; they live in a perpetual springtime of growth and expansion.[45]

Caesar, speaking as the Chancellor of the Exchequer, defended James, arguing that he was by no means so spendthrift as Wentworth implied.[46] As the debate unfolded over future sessions, the Chan–cellor—though he continued to work with Cecil to find a compromise acceptable to both James and the Commons—became more and more concerned to preserve the crown's prerogative and to ensure that the king's sovereignty would in no way be compromised by the terms of any agreement he made with Parliament.[47] The Chancellor's concerns mirrored those of James himself, who addressed a joint session of Parliament at Whitehall on March 21, 1610 (1609 old style). In a passage that effectively glosses the princely logic satirized in "Spring," 26-27, the king argues, "in case it might be obiected by some, that it is onely vpon occasions of warre, that Kinges obtaine great Supplies from their Subiects: notwithstanding my interne Peace, I am yet in a kind of warre"—being obliged to maintain a military presence for various reasons in France, Holland, and Ireland.[48]

In the same speech, James raised the subject of divine right, asserting (in an oft-quoted passage) that monarchy is "the supremest

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Dictionary of National Biography, 2008. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29055. 4 Sep. 2018. Wentworth was also, as Rhatigan notes, one of the Lincoln's Inn benchers who would appoint Donne to the Inn's chaplaincy in 1616 ("Donne's Readership," p. 579).

[45] A similar point is made in the 1604 "Form of Apology and Satisfaction": "The prerogatives of princes may easily and do daily grow."

[46] *Parliamentary Debates*, p. 12.

[47] Hill, *Bench and Bureaucracy*, pp. 169-71. During the summer of 1610, Caesar wrote a brief on the advantages and disadvantages of the Contract, in which he warned that it might be seen as "a readie passage to democracy, which is the deadliest enemy of a monarchy" (qtd. in Hill, p. 171). Many historians have thus blamed Caesar for the breakdown of the Great Contract negotiations, but Hill argues that the brief was probably seen only by Cecil and had no direct influence on the king.

[48] James I, "A Speach to the Lords and Commons" in *Political Writings*, ed. Johann P. Somerville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 196. As Somerville notes (p. 295n851), the speech was printed shortly after it was delivered and went through three printings in 1610.

thing vpon earth" and that "in the Scriptures Kings are called Gods."[49] This part of his speech no doubt fueled the fears of several members of the House of Commons, including Donne's acquaintances John Hoskins and Richard Martin, who had recently expressed their dislike of a 1607 dictionary of legal terms by civil lawyer John Cowell.[50] The dictionary—entitled *The Interpreter*—included several entries that gave the MPs pause: particularly those for the terms "Subsidy," "Parliament," and "Prerogative," which alarmingly seemed to defer too much to royal power.[51] The legislators' concerns were warranted, for several of Cowell's definitions did reflect James' absolutist theory of monarchy; but in response to Parliament's objections, the king claimed—first through a speech by Cecil on March 8 and then in person during his speech of 21 March—that he himself disapproved of Cowell's presumption in commenting upon royal rights and privileges.[52]

The second 14-line stanza of Donne's "Spring" is thick with words defined by Cowell's book. Indeed, *The Interpreter* contains entries for no fewer than seven of the words used in lines 19-28 of Donne's poem, and these entries in several cases function as helpful glosses on terms that, because of their inclusion in Cowell's dictionary and in the broader debate over the Great Contract, were much in discussion during the

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[49] James I, "A Speach," p. 181.

[50] Both were associated with Donne through the society of wits that assembled regularly at the Mermaid and Mitre Taverns. On their objections to Cowell's book, see Robert Zaller, "Martin, Richard (1570–1618), barrister and politician." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008. doi.org/10.1093 /ref:odnb/18206. 4 Sep. 2018. On their Mitre Tavern associations, see Zaller; Wilfrid Prest, "Hoskins, John (1566–1638), poet and judge." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2008. doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13838. 4 Sep. 2018; and Michelle O'Callaghan, "Tavern societies, the inns of court, and the culture of conviviality in early seventeenth-century London," in *A Pleasing Sinne : Drink and Conviviality in Seventeenth-century England*, ed. Adam Smyth (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 36-54.

[51] *Parliamentary Debates*, p. 19.

[52] See ibid., pp. 22-25 and Linda Levy Peck, "Kingship, counsel and law in early Stuart Britain," in *The Varieties of British Political Thought, 1500-1800*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock, Gordon J. Schochet, and Lois Schwoerer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 88-89. Though James followed through on his professed disapproval by issuing a proclamation suppressing the book, it would be reprinted again several times between 1637 and 1684.

spring and summer of 1610 by men who were both members of parliament and friends or acquaintances of John Donne. The very first word in Cowell's dictionary, printed with an ornamental capital A, is "ABATE," a term which, according to Cowell, is often used to refer to the invalidation of a written document ("to abate a Writ, is by some exception to defeate or ouerthrow it" [sig. A1r]). Read in light of this remark, the final assertion of Donne's Poem—"No winter shall abate the springs encrease"—sounds all the more meta-poetic; it guarantees the enduring legal force of the poem's words as "deeds" ("Spring," 19) in the sense of "wrightings that containe the effect of a contact" (Cowell, *Interpreter*, sig. X4v). Indeed, Cowell's definition of "deedes" introduces the possibility that the "Loue deedes" in line 19 of "Spring" are not simply active expressions of love, but contracts binding the speaker and his beloved. And *The Interpreter*'s entry for "Addition" as "a title giuen to a man . . . shewing his estate" (sig. B2v) connects the mathematical meaning of "additions" in "If . . . / . . . love such additions take" (21-22) to line 15's declaration that love has been made "more eminent." Cowell's lengthy entry on "Action" has to do with laws and lawsuits rather than with wars (as is the sense of the term in "Spring," 26); but it includes a paragraph—very interesting when read in connection with "Spring"'s meditations on love's infinity versus its temporality—on how an action may be either "perpetuall or temporall." In Cowell's opinion, "all may be called perpetuall, that are not expresly limited" (sig. B2r). Also included in *The Interpreter* are standard def–initions of "Peace" and "Prince," as well as an entry on "task"—that is, tax—which, Cowell explains, "was in auncient times . . . imposed by the king at his pleasure, but . . . Now . . . is not paide, but by consent giuen in Parliament"; "it differeth from the Subsidie in this," Cowell adds: "that it is always certaine, accordingly as it is set downe in the Chequer booke" (sig. Sss2r).[53] Cowell thus evokes the wisdom of a timeless proverb: "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."[54] Or rather, as the final lines of Donne's poem would have

[53] The dictionary also includes an entry for the legal Latin term "remittere," but its meaning is not, as I read it, relevant to Donne's use of "remitte" in line 27.

[54] According to John Simpson and Jennifer Speake, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, 5th ed. (Oxford UP, 2008), this wording was used by Benjamin Franklin in a 1789 letter, but the saying's first appearance in print

it, of anything but Taxes and the perpetuall "encrease" of love recorded in love's own "Checquer book," a poem called "Spring."

The king's suppression of Cowell's dictionary was only one of many political moves in a series of thrusts and counter-thrusts that led, by November 1610, to the breakdown of the Great Contract negotiations.[55] The terms of the contract continued to be debated, tweaked, and re-defined throughout the summer of 1610; during a meeting of the committee for impositions on 29 June, Francis Tate, MP for Shrewsbury, argued again that "onely in tyme of warre impositions ought to be layd" and "Never . . . in tyme of peace."[56] Sir Henry Yelverton argued, to the contrary, that, whatever cause the king might have to impose, he had every right to do so.[57] Yelverton's views were in turn attacked by Donne's acquaintance Richard Martin and upheld by his acquaintance Henry Hobart.[58] The debate continued into the next session of the Commons' committees on 2-3 July, with the MPs who spoke including Hobart and another Donne acquaintance, Dudley Carleton.[59] Nicholas Hyde, MP for Christchurch, Hampshire brought up the usual objection, saying that "He was of the opinion that the Kinge in tyme of peace cannot impose upon his subjects' goods transported and imported."[60] Hobart made a similar point by noting that monarchs who reigned during the Wars of the Roses never imposed taxes during peacetime: "Hen. 5, E. 4, H. 7, H. 8, all had peace, and yet none of them imposed."[61]

When parliament convened again the following autumn, James had shifted his position and was demanding a completely untenable "£500,000 as the price of continuing with the Contract."[62] Parliament's

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was in Daniel Defoe, *The Political History of the Devil* (London, 1726), where certain improbable "Things" are described as being "as certain as Death and Taxes."

[55] On the details of the summer and autumn sessions, see Cramsie, *Kingship*, pp. 108-116.

[56] *Parliamentary Debates*, p. 84.

[57] Ibid., pp. 85, 88.

[58] Ibid., pp. 88-93 and Foster 2: 198-201.

[59] Ibid., pp. 88-124; see also *Proceedings in Parliament*, ed. Foster, p. 249.

[60] *Parliamentary Debates*, p. 109.

[61] Ibid., p. 118.

[62] Cramsie, *Kingship*, p. 111.

response to the king's demand during the November 1610 session was, not surprisingly, quite negative. Among those who spoke on 6 November was Donne's close friend Christopher Brooke, who argued that it was "not safe to bargain except the impositions be cast into it"—that is, unless the impositions were, as we say now "on the table,"; indeed, he insisted that Parliament be sure, before negotiating further "that the king be restrained from further imposing."[63] Even more outspoken was the gentleman from Bishop's Castle, Samuel Lewknor, who declared in a lengthy speech on 17 November that, if the Great Contract was "the fair Helen that we all courted," not wantonly, but as "suitors with a firm purpose and resolution to wed her, might we have enjoyed her at the price she was once offered us," the marriage negotiations had now broken down; for "our forwardness of desiring her hath caused her to be set at higher rate than our abilities could possibly reach unto." He stressed that neither merchants nor the working class could afford to fund the crown at the level the king had demanded; "The comons," he insisted, "are not able. They have given more in tyme of pease then ever was formerly given in time of warre." The King should therefore, he said, take a page out of the ancient King Cyrus' book and tap the resources of the nobility or, if that would not serve, simply "abate his train." More conciliatory was the next MP to speak, Donne's father-in-law, Sir George More, who made a staunchly Protestant gesture in support of the crown when he said he "wished wee should not so farre disable the State as that wee could not give supplie, for that would give great incouragement to the enimies of our religion"; but he remained exquisitely noncommittal on the question of what might be "fitt to give, and what fitt to desyre from His Majesty."[64]

More's rhetorical evasions were, at that point, moot. In asking for so astronomical an amount, James was revealing that he had decided the

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[63] *Proceedings in Parliament*, ed. Foster, 2:394-95. Brooke had acted as the witness for the clandestine marriage of John Donne to Anne More; his brother Samuel, a clergyman, had officiated. On Christopher Brooke's participation throughout the Great Contract debate, see John P. Parrish and Simon Healy, "BROOKE, Christopher (c.1570-1628)," *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons*, *1604-1629*, ed. Andrew Thrush and John P. Parrish (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Online at www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume /1604-1629/member/brooke-christopher-1570-1628.

[64] *Parliamentary Debates*, p. 135.

Contract was not in his best interest. That is, he had seen for himself a point made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his personal notes on the Great Contract: if it were to be passed, "the King" could expect "to receive noe more subsidies or fifteenths from his subjects in tyme of peace," since the agreement would "stripp the King from his greatest honorable and profitable privileges and prerogatives" and would take "awaie his future hopes of further relieffs from his people (unlesse it be in tymes of war . . .)."[65] In short, it would be the height of absurdity to imagine a ruler signing on for such a deal.[66] It is upon the addressee's grasp of this absurdity that the speaker of "Spring" depends in his final conceit, with its smiling assurance that the speaker's love will never be cooled by winter. That will happen, the speaker tells his beloved, only when the Great Contract is signed; when Parliament manages to roll back impositions first imposed in feudal times and now funding the court expenses of the irenic big-spender, James. That will happen, in short, during no English winter to come, but when pigs fly, winging their porcine way over a hell that has solidly frozen over.

III: "Spring" and the Donnean Middle

If—as I have argued above—Donne most likely wrote "Spring" circa 1610-1613, then it is part of what may be the most turbulent and perplexing part of Donne's writing career: the middle. As John T. Shawcross's conservative and often tentative "Chronological Schedule of the Poems" makes clear, we can be entirely certain of the dates for only a few of Donne's verse compositions. But if he began writing

[65] Ibid., p. 178.

[66] With both Parliament and King James refusing to yield any of their own rights and prerogatives, the Great Contract shriveled on the vine. In the years that followed, the discussion of reforming crown finances continued in parliament and continued to be essentially fruitless. When Donne served as MP for Taunton in the "Addled Parliament" of spring 1614, the Commons were still battling James over the subject of taxation, refusing to vote in favor of subsidies as long as the king continued to insist on the royal prerogative to impose import and export duties (Andrew Thrush, "The Parliament of 1614," *History of Parliament*, ed. Thrush and Parrish. Online at https://www.historyof parliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/survey/parliament-1614. 4 September 2018).

epigrams during his teens (possibly as early as 1587 by Shawcross's estimation), and if one joins Dennis Flynn in finding Donne's 1607 Latin commendatory poem on Ben Jonson's *Volpone* a turning-point, after which Donne "sometimes wrote with greater daring, emulating the boldness of Jonson" by making "politically charged work . . . freely available in print," then we might designate 1587-1606 as Donne's early career and the period from 1607 to 1615 (when he was ordained) as its fraught middle period.[67] From these interstitial years come writings as diverse as *Biathanatos* (completed between 1607 and 1609), "Upon the Annuntiation and Passion" (March 1608), "Elegie to the Lady Bedford" (1609), the *Anniversaries* (1610-1611), *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), *Ignatius His Conclave* (1611), "To the Countess of Bedford. Begun in France but never perfected" (1612), "Goodfriday 1613. Riding Westward," and "Obsequies to the Lord Harington" (1614). To add *LovGrow* to this list reinforces the previously existing evidence that Donne was as capable of writing love lyric during these middle years as he was he was funeral elegies, meditative long-form poems, verse letters, prose letters, political nonfiction prose, satirical fiction, and religious lyrics.

Perhaps more importantly, however, acknowledging *LovGrow*'s allusions to the ideas of Galileo and Kepler enhances our sense of Donne as a writer whose personal opinions can be very difficult to pin down because he tends to position himself in an equivocal middle ground between opposing extremes. As Judith Scherer Herz reminds us, Donne's poetry and prose embrace, rather than merely straddle, "multiple binaries," including "Jack/John, sinner/saint, Catholic/Pro–testant, apostate/survivor, careerist/man of integrity, rake/husband, courtier/divine, poet of the carnal/poet of the sacred—the list could go on and on."[68] An extended list of the sort Herz mentions would include the political and philosophical binaries that underlie the imagery of "Spring": staunch Jacobean absolutist/subversive resister; Ptolemaic reactionary/Copernican "Space Man." The author of this poem, at the

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[67] Dennis Flynn, "Donne's Travels and Earliest Publications," *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 518.

[68] Judith Scherer Herz, 'By Parting Have Joyn'd Here': The Story of The Two (Or More) Donnes," *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 738-739.

mid-point of his writing career in particular, neither stood upon the solid Ptolemaic Earth nor flew through the heavens upon the rotating Copernican globe; he was neither willing to commit to priesthood in the Church of England nor comfortable in the Catholic milieu of France. While he no longer skulked about the environs of the Court, he was anything but content to suck on country pleasures; and though he was not whole-heartedly pursuing a calling, he continually bemoaned his failure to do so. Indeed, in many of his writings from this period, he seems caught in an unfamiliar and disconcerting space in between. As the Scottish folk rockers Joe Egan and Gerry Rafferty put it in a well-known and frequently covered 1972 song, "Clowns to the left of me, jokers to the right, / Here I am, stuck in the middle with you."[69] Like the persona in the song, Donne's response to the discomfort of intersticial existence is not to decide between the clowns and the jokers, but to exploit them both in reaching out to any "you"—any reader or addressee—capable of appreciating his ambivalence and skepticism. For as Herz explains, the study of Donne's discourse reveals that, for him, "it is often an issue of both/and rather than of either/or."[70]

Spring"—I would argue—supports a "both/and" response to the

[69] The song was first released on the eponymous debut album of Egan and Rafferty's band Stealer's Wheel. It is perhaps best known as the soundtrack of a torture scene in Quentin Tarantino's 1992 film *Resevoir Dogs*. For the lyrics, see MetroLyrics at http://www.metrolyrics.com/stuck-in-the-middle-with-you-lyrics-stealers-wheel.html; for a discussion of Tarantino's film as an inspiration for subsequent covers, see Thomas Erlewine's discussion of the song at AllMusic, https://www.allmusic.com/song/stuck-in-the-middle-with-you-mt0045037666.

[70] Herz, p. 739. My reflections on Donne and liminality in this paragraph were inspired in part by a conference session on "John Donne Betwixt and Between," organized by Kirsten Stirling for the 65th Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America in Toronto, Ontario, 19 March 2019, and in particular by Joel Eric Salt's paper "'In limine inferni haerebat': Virgil, Donne, and the Imperfect Infernal Threshold in *Ignatius, His Conclave*." On Donne's refusal to choose between opposed binaries at earlier and later points in his writing career, see my "Anti-Court Satire, Religious Polemic, and the Many Faces of Antichrist: An Intertextual Reading of Donne's 'Satyre 4' and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*," *Studies in Philology* 112.2 (2015): 264-30; and my discussion of Donne's views on "The Doctrine of Eucharistic Sacrifice" ("Appendix" to *Literature and Sacrament*, pp. 252-59).

much-debated question of Donne's opinions on astronomy. For Donne's use of both concentric spheres and Galileo/Kepler-inspired images in the poem demonstrates the equal-opportunity approach to astronomical models that he employed throughout his writing career. Recent literary criticism and cultural history have devoted much energy to refuting both Charles M. Coffin's argument that Donne was deeply disturbed by the "New Science" precisely because he took it seriously and found it all-too-persuasive and Empson's contention that Donne was energized and excited by the astronomical discoveries of his time.[71] Scholars seeking to undermine these accounts of Donne's thinking have attempted to pin Donne down as a scientific conservative who stubbornly persisted in assuming a geocentric perspective despite the challenges posed to Ptolemaic cosmology by Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler.[72] But the idea of Donne's siding decisively with Ptolemy against Copernicus is, at best, an oversimplification. At least one of Donne's favorite images—that of perfectly circular "spheares" that are "all concentrique unto" one geometrically precise center—is featured not only in Ptolemy's geocentric universe but also in Copernicus' 1543 *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium*. And while both Copernicus' heliocentric model and the more recent and revolutionary discoveries of Galileo and Kepler clearly troubled Donne, neither his consternation at the discoveries' religious and philosophical implications nor the poetic uses he sometimes made of his consternation would make any sense at all if he had found the discoveries—and the scientists' accounts of them—implausible.

Donne's creative use of the new astronomy in "Spring" demonstrates that he took Galileo and Kepler seriously enough to mine their writings for imagery; he was clearly fascinated by their work. Indeed, just as

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[71] See Charles Monroe Coffin, *John Donne and the New Philosophy* (Columbia University Press, 1937), especially p. 101.

[72] See, for example, Christopher Stone, "John Donne and the Astronomers in *Ignatius His Conclave*," *JDJ* 30 (2011): 51-63; 2012; Massimo Bucciantini, Michele Camarota, and Franco Giudice, *Galileo's Telescope: A European Story*, trans. Catherine Bolton (Harvard University Press, 2015; originally published as *Il Telescopio di Galileo: Una Storia Europea* [Einaudi, 2012]), 146-53; and Catherine Gimelli Martin, "Milton's and Donne's Stargazing Lovers, Sex, and the New Astronomy," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 54.1 (2014): 143-71.

Milton would take the opportunity to visit Galileo during his 1638 visit to Florence, so—during his stint as chaplain to the Doncaster embassy in 1619—Donne called upon Johannes Kepler in the Austrian town of Linz.[73] But the astronomical imagery in "Spring" also confirms what Joan Bennett pointed out in 1934: that Donne tends not to argue in favor of any particular cosmological model but rather to use both the competing cosmologies "indifferently or the conflict between the two, for the expression of something else."[74] Indeed, Donne draws not only Ptolemy and Copernicus, but also on Brahe, Galileo, and Kepler, less to express his views on their theories than to put in play whichever astronomical model best illustrates his or his speaker's moral, theological, socio-political, or emotional argument. Thus, the narrator of *Anniversaries* alludes balefully to the "new Philosophy" as a barometer of all that is wrong with the world as we know it (*FirAn* 205) but, later, maps the glorious flight of the death-released soul through Tycho Brahe's cosmos (*SecAn* 195-206). And though Donne sardonically compares the fleshly and unspiritual nature of contemporary life with the Copernican solar system in lines 37-40 of his verse epistle *BedfWrit*, he follows up, in the same poem, with an analogy that responds to geographic and astronomical discovery as an impetus for virtuous living and dying: "We'have added to the world Virginia,'and sent / Two new starres lately to the firmament; / Why grudge wee us (not heaven) the dignity / T'increase with ours, those faire soules' company!" (*BedfWrit* 67-70). As Shawcross notes, "the new stars in Cygnus . . . and Sepentarius" were "discovered by Kepler and described by him in *De Stella Nova* (1606)," and the lines may also allude to the recent deaths

[73] We have no record of Donne's motivations for making the visit or of Donne's perspective on their interactions; but Kepler's letters include one telling of the visit, during which he solicited Donne's help in presenting to King James a copy of his recently-published *Harmonices Mundi* (Linz, 1619); for an account of the meeting (not entirely reliable on the subject of allusions to Kepler in Donne's writing, but otherwise fascinating), see Jeremy Bernstein, "Heaven's Net: The Meeting of John Donne and Johannes Kepler," *The American Scholar* 66.2 (1997): 175-95.

[74] Bennett, *Four Metaphysical Poets: Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Crashaw* (Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 33.

of Lady Bedford's friends, "Lady Markham, May 4, 1609, and Mrs. Boulstred, August 4, 1609."[75]

In "Spring," too, the speaker draws parallels between things ter–restrial and things celestial. Just as Galileo's and Kepler's observations on the brightness of the planets provide him with an analogy to emerging blossoms, and both of these images help to explain how his love has grown more "eminent" (15), so the pre-Keplerian "spheares" of line 23—which correspond to concentric pattern of ripples made in still water is "stir'd" when a stone or pebble is dropped into it—convey the speaker's ongoing and constant devotion to the woman he addresses. The point is not to embrace any one model of the macrocosm, but to describe the ardent and enduring, yet ever-expanding nature of love as he experiences it. And when the speaker turns in the poem's final lines to a taxation image that evokes the Great Contract debate of 1610, he does so neither so as to side with Parliament against royal prerogative nor so as to defend the ways of kings, but in order to convince his beloved that "no winter shall abate the springs encrease." It is the woman he loves, not a crowned head or an astronomical model, to whom he pledges allegiance.

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[75] Shawcross, *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, p. 230.