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Donne's Dubia: Reassessing the Authorship of Six Prose Works

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In the 1920s, Evelyn M. Simpson contemplated editing Donne's prose paradoxes and problems. The pairing of these seemingly unrelated prose genres began in seventeenth-century manuscript collections and was formalized by their initial, tandem publication in 1633 as *Juvenilia*—a title that has contributed to critical dismissal of these works as "Foolish trifles," "the slightest of his prose works," and, of course, "juvenile essays."[1] This posthumous printed edition is filled with errors, so many that Simpson lamented, "When to the native obscurity of Donne's style there were added forty or fifty blunders made either by scribe or by printer, the wonder is not that so few people have read the *Paradoxes and Problems* but rather that the book found any readers at

I am grateful to Peter Beal for his generosity in sharing with me his discovery of Donne's short prose in a hitherto unknown manuscript. This essay has benefitted from comments made by Timothy D. Crowley, Dennis Flynn, and Marta Kvande.

[1]Simpson actually supplied these labels. Although she afforded Donne's paradoxes and problems little praise, she acknowledged their importance and advanced their study through uncovering manuscripts containing them. Simpson's first two critical remarks appear in "Donne's Paradoxes and Problems," in *A Garland for John Donne, 1631–1931*, ed. Theodore Spencer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), pp. 21–49; quotations from p. 23. The third statement is found in *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1948), p. 137. Currently, there is only one extended study of these works: Michael W. Price, "'Jeasts which cozen your Expectatyonn': Rhetorical Dissimulation in John Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems*" (PhD diss., Purdue University, 1996).

all."[2] Likely hoping to obtain more reliable texts, Simpson sought early manuscript copies of these works. Although Donne apparently sent copies only to a few selected, intimate friends (such as Henry Goodere) whom he begged not to disseminate them further, readers beyond Donne's immediate circle obtained copies during his lifetime. Building upon the work of Herbert Grierson and others, Simpson uncovered these short prose works in 17 extant manuscripts, usually alongside his poetry, proving that Donne's short prose certainly "found . . . readers" in the seventeenth century.

Although Simpson set aside this editorial project to focus on Donne's sermons, she passed her notes on the paradoxes and problems to R. C. Bald, who passed them to Helen Gardner, who then passed them to her student Helen Peters. And Peters filled a gaping hole in Donne studies by offering the first annotated scholarly edition of these works in 1980.[3] She wisely based her texts on manuscript versions, which, in addition to providing better texts, prove chronologically closer in preparation to Donne's period of composition than those in the 1633 and expanded 1652 printed collections.

Yet, this seminal scholarly edition proves only "a qualified success" in various ways.[4] For instance, it downplays the works' humor, wit, and complexity—seeming tacitly to accept their inferiority to Donne's poetry and later prose. And the edition contains many errors, suggesting that the editor had limited access to many of the 23 manuscripts it mentions.[5]

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[2]Simpson, "Donne's Paradoxes and Problems," p. 32.

[3]*John Donne Paradoxes and Problems*, ed. Helen Peters (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). Titles and passages quoted from Donne's short prose, as well as line numbers, are taken from this edition.

[4]Janel Mueller criticizes several elements of the edition, including its dating of Donne's prose, in a review in *Renaissance Quarterly* 34 (1981): 458–463. As Price notes, additional reviews of this edition include the following: D. F. Bratchell, review, *Notes & Queries* 227 (1982): 76–78; Tom Cain, review, *British Book News* (1980): 694; Dennis Flynn, "A Problematic Text," *John Donne Journal* 3.1 (1984): 99–103; Jenny Mezciems, review, *Modern Language Review* 79 (1984): 150–152; Robin Robbins, "Craving for Security," *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 Sept. 1980: 996; and John T. Shawcross, review, *Analytical and Enumerative Bibliography* 5 (1981): 46–53.

[5]Following is a list of the manuscripts mentioned in Peters's edition that contain one or more of Donne's paradoxes and/or problems. They are listed by

Many errors in this edition are surely not the fault of the editor. For example, Peters apparently did not realize that the long-lost Burley manuscript had been recovered by 1980, for Peter Beal includes it in his *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, published that same year.[6] Since Peters wanted to use Burley manuscript versions of the paradoxes (along with those in the Westmoreland manuscript) as copy-texts, she relied upon Simpson's copies of Grierson's copies of Logan Pearsall Smith's transcriptions of the Burley texts. With so many levels of remove, it is no surprise that various errors crept into the edition. In addition, Peters admits in a letter to Gardner that a range of difficulties, such as her lack of a research assistant, complicated the final phases of the editorial project.[7] Reviews of the edition acknowledge its important contribution

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sigla, if available, assigned by *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*, gen. ed. Gary A. Stringer, 4 vols. to date (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995–): B7: British Library Add. MS 18647 (Denbigh ms.); B13: British Library MS Add. 25707 (Skipwith ms.); B34: British Library MS Harley 5353 (John Manningham's Diary); B47: British Library MS Stowe 962; CT1: Cambridge University, Trinity College Library MS R.3.12 (Puckering ms.); DT1: Dublin, Trinity College MS 877; H4: Harvard MS Eng. 966.3; H5: Harvard MS Eng. 966.4 (Dobell ms.); H6: Harvard MS Eng. 966.5 (O'Flahertie ms.); H7: Harvard MS Eng. 966.6 (Stephens ms.); HH1: Huntington MS EL 6893 (Bridgewater ms.); LR1: Leicestershire Record Office MS DG7/Lit. 2 (Burley ms.); NY3: New York Public Library, Berg Collection, Westmoreland ms.; O8: Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Don. b. 9 (Wyburd ms.); O9: Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Don. c. 54; O21: Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. poet. f. 9 (Phillipps ms.); P1: Bedford Estates Office MS 26 (Woburn ms.; HMC No. 26); Y2: Yale University Library MS b114 (Raphael King ms.); Y3: Yale University Library MS b148 (Osborn ms.); Bodleian Library, Oxford, Ashmole MS 826; Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. poet. d. 3 (Edward Pudsey's commonplace book); Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. poet. e. 112; and Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Tanner 299.

[6]Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, vol. 1, part 1 (London: Mansell; New York: Bowker, 1980).

[7]In a letter from Peters to Gardner, her former thesis director, Peters discusses her personal difficulties, and she complains about the Press's mistakes in the proofs stage, exclaiming, "Clarendon wouldn't have dared to do such a sloppy job for you!" (letter dated 6 July 1980 from St. John's in "The Dame

to Donne studies, but John T. Shawcross voices scholarly consensus in lamenting that we are "stuck" with a problematic volume: a "new edition we need, not just a correction of all the errors for some new printing."[8]

As Dennis Flynn notes in his review, the editor's most controversial choice centers on Donne's canon. Peters ascribes to Donne all nineteen problems normally attributed to him but only ten of the twelve paradoxes, relegating to dubia "A Defence of Womens Inconstancy" and "That Virginity is a Vertue," along with four prose works frequently associated with the paradoxes and problems and attributed to Donne since the seventeenth century: "Newes from the very Country," the "Character of a Dunce," the character "The Description of a Scot at first sight," and "An Essaie of Valour." Peters credits this decision to manuscript evidence, but this "evidence" is tenuous. And, as Flynn argues effectively, Peters failed to recognize the works' context and purpose in satirizing King James's court. Other scholars have echoed Flynn's objections. Michael W. Price not only dismissed these challenges to Donne's authorship but entitled the only book-length study of Donne's *Juvenilia* "'Jeasts which cozen your Expectatyonn': Rhetorical Dissimulation in John Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems*"—quoting from the allegedly spurious "A Defence of Womens Inconstancy." In one of the few additional studies of these works, Anne Lake Prescott answers her own question "Did Donne write all these prose works?" by saying she is "confident that he did."[9] In fact, Peters seems to be the only reader ever to have adamantly challenged Donne's authorship. Yet, Flynn's review provides the only substantive rebuttal.

In addition to the 23 manuscripts that contain Donne's short prose that are listed in Peters's edition, four other important seventeenth-century manuscripts containing these works have come to light, for a total of 27 manuscripts.[10] Two additional manuscripts that each contain

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Helen Gardner Papers," The Massachusetts Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies, p. 1).

[8]Shawcross, p. 52.

[9]Prescott, "Menippean Donne," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Donne*, ed. Jeanne Shami, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 158–179; quotation from p. 176.

[10]The four additional manuscripts containing Donne's accepted prose are Chetham's Library, Manchester, MS Mun. A 3. 47, discussed in Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*; a privately owned manuscript that Beal calls the

one of the dubia have surfaced as well. While two of the four manuscripts containing Donne's accepted short prose works have been discussed elsewhere, two other manuscripts were uncovered only recently by Peter Beal and myself: Derbyshire Record Office MS D258/7/5/9 and Derbyshire Record Office MS D258/7/13/6 (vi), which I will refer to as the Gell manuscript. The Gell manuscript, compiled by Thomas Gell, contains Donne's ten canonical paradoxes, as well as excerpts from an essay by Francis Bacon and materials related to the 1597/8 Inns of Court revels.[11] This manuscript contains texts superior to the printed versions, and it was compiled by this Inns of Court man in the 1620s or early 1630s. In addition, the Gell manuscript contains some of Donne's supposedly spurious prose. This new manuscript evidence compels us to reconsider the authorship of these six works.

It is unfortunate that having only one scholarly edition available, and a problematic one at that, has contributed to critical neglect of not just the dubia but all of Donne's *Juvenilia*. In addition to being intellectually inventive and often humorous, these works seem to be rich in heavily veiled political and social satire. In fact, Arthur F. Marotti claims that Donne's problems and related writings "had a political dimension that would not have been missed."[12] Price maintains that advanced seventeenth-century readers could have discerned the works' principal, secret, and sometimes scandalous meanings. Building on work by critics

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Berland manuscript, described in Beal, "More Donne Manuscripts," *John Donne Journal* 6.2 (1987): 213–218; and Derbyshire Record Office MS D258/7/13/6 (vi) and MS D258/7/5/9. Beal kindly informed me in 2006 that he had discovered Donne's short prose in MS D258/7/13/6 (vi). I uncovered some of Donne's prose problems in MS D258/7/5/9 later that year. "An Essaie of Valour" also appears in Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries, Mostyn Tracts Collection MS E205, discussed in Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*. Beal also has uncovered the "Character of A Dunce" in Huntington MS HM 1338 (see *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts*, DnJ 4097).

[11]I describe Derbyshire Record Office MSS D258/7/13/6 (vi) and D258/7/5/9 in detail in my current book project, "Interpreting Manuscripts: John Donne's Poetry and Prose in Early Modern England." I also provide a transcription and an analysis of the revels texts.

[12]Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 184.

such as Leo Strauss and Annabel Patterson, Price theorizes that Donne's paradoxes and problems exhibit "rhetorical dissimulation":

> if Donne exhibits an affirmative stance in public and a subversive stance in private, sometimes he formulates a carefully disguised mixture of *both* in a single work (hence *double*-voicing), usually by dissimulating a volatile subtext beneath an apparently safe surface-level text (hence rhetorical *dissimulation*).[13]

Price posits convincing interpretations of topical, political references buried within these works, discernible, it seems, to Donne's social circle. Modern audiences distanced from the wit and humor that once made these works so popular would benefit from studying contemporary printed versions and the manuscript copies prepared by early readers who shared Donne's cultural contexts. This article argues that print and manuscript evidence confirms that early modern manuscript readers assigned these "dubious" prose works to Donne and that we should restore most, perhaps all, of these satiric pieces to Donne's canon.

Awareness of Donne's accepted contributions to the genres of prose paradox and prose problem is relevant to consideration of his authorship of these supposedly spurious works, particularly as many of these canonical and non-canonical works apparently circulated together. Donne's paradoxes belong to the classical tradition of prose paradoxes that argue against received opinion, claiming such things as "That good is more common then evill" and "That all things kill themselves," as well as the incongruent "That only Cowards dare dye." His paradoxes mostly avoid the alternate paradox tradition of mock encomia.[14] Donne's prose problems match his paradoxes in wit but explore issues through a darker lens. Whereas the paradoxes mirror many of Donne's poems in mood and tone, the problems seem disappointed, even bitter, as they cynically—though humorously—consider contemporary social, cultural, and ethical questions, ranging from "Why doe young Laymen so much

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[13]Price, p. 8.

[14]I attend to Donne's generic innovation in these short prose works in a forthcoming study. I also explore in "Interpreting Manuscripts" how manuscript evidence illuminates readers' responses to this rhetorical dissimulation in Donne's prose.

study Divinity" to "Why doth the Poxe so much affect to undermine the nose."

Regarding the two "dubious" paradoxes, one of them ("A Defence of Womens Inconstancy") was among the 11 paradoxes and 10 problems that appeared in the 1633 printed quarto edition of Donne's *Juvenilia*, published by Henry Seyle.[15] Sir Henry Herbert (Master of the Revels) licensed the book on 25 October 1632, but on 14 November the Bishop of London delivered an inquiry by command of King Charles I, ordering Herbert to defend before the Star Chamber this choice to allow Seyle to publish Donne's paradoxes—suggesting that contemporary audiences took these "Foolish trifles" quite seriously.[16] In fact, Simpson believes that some or all omitted works probably result from objections by the licensing authorities.[17] In spite of this inquiry, the collection was printed twice in 1633. The paradoxes and problems were not printed again until 1652 when Thomas Newcombe printed the book for Humphrey Moseley with permission of John Donne, Jr., who had succeeded in 1637 in procuring an injunction against the unauthorized publication of his father's works.[18] In spite of the numerous blunders present in the 1633

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[15]*Iuuenilia: or, Certaine paradoxes and problemes* (London, 1633).

[16]Simpson, "Two Manuscripts of Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems*," *The Review of English Studies* 3.10 (1927): 130. Information on print history reflects work by Simpson and Peters, as well as Geoffrey Keynes, comp., *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914).

[17]Simpson, "Two Manuscripts of Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems*," p. 138. Peters suggests that Herbert was a careful censor based on his prior choices regarding the printing of Donne's verse. Peters also believes that Seyle apparently had, based on his texts, several manuscripts with more problems than he provides, which she views as evidence of censorship by Herbert, who "refused to license the missing material" (*Paradoxes and Problems*, p. lxxxii).

[18]*Paradoxes, problemes, essayes, characters, written by D^r Donne Dean of Pauls: to which is added a book of epigrams: written in Latin by the same author; translated into English by I: Maine, D.D. As also Ignatius his Conclave, a satyr, translated out of the originall copy written in Latin by the same author* (London, 1652). Some copies of this book are bound with Donne's *Essays in Divinity*. According to Keynes, the duodecimo volume was issued twice, accounting for its dual Wing listings as 1866 and 1867; the first quire (eight leaves) was reset (Keynes, especially pp. 61–65). "The Table" appears on A6v–A7r, indicating the twelve paradoxes, the seventeen problems, the two characters, "An Essaie of Valour," the translated epigrams, and *Ignatius His Conclave*. The first eleven paradoxes

editions, the younger Donne did not alter the texts of the paradoxes and problems, apparently following his established routine of merely adding to previously published material. He contributed a twelfth paradox, "That Virginity is a Vertue," and seven new problems, as well as the two characters, "An Essaie of Valour," *Ignatius His Conclave*, and a group of epigrams that seem to be Jasper Mayne's English translations of Donne's Latin originals. Simpson, who does not challenge Donne's authorship of any of these prose works, suggests, "Since the younger Donne added so much new material, he must have had access to a manuscript of his father's early prose work."[19]

Extant manuscript evidence supports Donne's authorship of "A Defence of Womens Inconstancy," in which the speaker celebrates the changeable woman:

> Gould that lyeth still rusteth, water Corupteth, and Ayre that moveth not poysoneth. Then why should that which is the perfectyon of other things be Imputed to women as greatest Imperfectyon? Because thereby they deceive men? Are not your witts pleased with those Jeasts which cozen your Expectatyonn?
>
> (14–19)

It probably does not "cozen" our "Expectatyonn" that manuscript collectors assigned this witty work to Donne before it was printed as his. "A Defence of Womens Inconstancy" appears in four extant seventeenth-century manuscripts. In one collection, the paradox appears without ascription, but the other three manuscripts, including the reliable Gell manuscript, assign the work to Donne. Thanks to the Gell manuscript's variant texts from the printed versions and to the manuscript's early compilation, we can be sure that Inner Templar Thomas Gell grouped these eleven paradoxes as Donne's for reasons unrelated to their attribution to Donne in print.[20]

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appear in the same order as the 1633 edition (B1r–C7r), but the twelfth paradox appears on E5r–E8r.

[19]Simpson, "Two Manuscripts of Donne's *Paradoxes and Problems*," p. 130.

[20]This paradox, like the rest of these prose works within the Gell manuscript, appears in a section of the manuscript entitled "Paradoxes by Iohn Dun" (folio 1r): thus, all works in this section, written in a single secretary script, seem to be

I surmise that a primary reason for Peters's decision to relegate these two paradoxes to dubia is that they happen not to appear in her copy-texts, the Westmoreland manuscript and the Burley manuscript. Yet, in a letter from Donne copied into the Burley manuscript, a letter that apparently accompanied the ten paradoxes in this manuscript, Donne says, "S^{r} Only in obedience I send y^{o} *some* of my paradoxes" (fol. 308v; emphasis added). While the original letter might have accompanied only a few of the manuscript's canonical paradoxes, it more likely accompanied all of them; thus, the word "some" indicates that Donne composed other paradoxes.

These two paradoxes, like some other supposedly dubious pieces, likely allude to the scandal surrounding Thomas Overbury's murder in 1613, which was later connected to Frances Howard.[21] Howard's first marriage to Robert Devereux, third Earl of Essex, was annulled in 1613 on charges of impotence, though it seems that her primary (perhaps sole) motive for divorce was to marry the King's favorite, Robert Carr, Viscount Rochester (and later Earl of Somerset). For objecting to this match, it seems, Overbury was poisoned in the Tower. The paradoxes seem to refer to Howard, rumored to be far from chaste and frequently lampooned in contemporary libels. "That Virginity is a Vertue" celebrates not the virginity that "resideth / onely in the *Bodies integrity*" (1–2) but the virginity that "is willing and desirous to yeeld it selfe upon honest

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attributed to "Dun." The paradox is among Donne's prose in H7, and an attributed version appears in Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. poet. e. 112. An unattributed version appears in Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Eng. poet. d. 3 (Edward Pudsey's commonplace book). Peters lists this manuscript under "Manuscripts containing both Paradoxes and Problems" as a manuscript that contains an "Extract of one Paradox" (*Paradoxes and Problems*, p. ic). The manuscript should be listed instead under "Manuscripts containing the Paradoxes," but it is odd that she would list the manuscript at all if she believed that Donne did not compose this paradox.

[21]Flynn first connected these "dubious" works to the Overbury scandal in "A Problematic Text." For more on the events and on contemporary responses, particularly in manuscript libels, see Alastair Bellany, *The Politics of Court Scandal in Early Modern England: News Culture and the Overbury Affair, 1603–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Joshua Eckhardt, *Manuscript Verse Collectors and the Politics of Anti-Courtly Love Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), especially pp. 67–92.

and / lawfull terms, when just reason requireth" (5–6)—perhaps suggesting a lack of justification for the annulment by alluding to the Countess's earlier affair with Carr.

These two satiric paradoxes probably were written after Donne composed the primary group, which could explain why they did not circulate frequently with the other ten paradoxes in manuscript. According to Flynn, while it would have been highly dangerous in the early seventeenth century to allow works that satirize Somerset, his bride, or the king to circulate widely, John Donne's son could claim them as his father's in the 1650s, when he had them printed among Donne's works. Perhaps Gell, who collected other manuscript materials associated with this scandal, recognized this satiric link.[22] The appearance of "A Defence of Womens Inconstancy" as Donne's in the Gell manuscript contributes to ample manuscript support for Donne's authorship of this paradox. While we currently lack manuscript evidence to substantiate the printed claim that Donne composed "That Virginity is a Vertue," we have no competing claim for its authorship by contemporaries, who apparently accepted both paradoxes as Donne's.

"Newes from the very Country" seems to touch on the Overbury scandal as well. "Newes" mocks London-life (and often court-life) through a series of witty comparisons with country-life. "Statesmen hunt their fortunes, and are often at default," meaning, according to "Newes," that they have lost their prey's scent (33). But "Favourites," a favorite subject of scorn for Donne, "course her and are ever in view," with "course" indicating a form of hunting by sight as opposed to scent (34). This remark places the frequent hunter James into the role of prey but also seems to play on his well-known attraction to handsome young men: by staying "in view" of the monarch, "Favourites" remain "in view" of their fortunes. Another item seems to echo Donne's frequently voiced concern that his potentially dangerous works might miscarry or be misconstrued; he complained, for example, to his friend Sir Henry Goodere that "I know what I shall suffer from many interpretations" by

[22]In Gell's hand, for example, are accounts of "The Lady ffrancis Howard before the kinges delegates" in 1613 and "The Earle of Essex replies" to her charges against him (Derbyshire Record Office MS D258/7/13/6 [x], folios 1r–v).

readers outside of his intended manuscript audiences.[23] Similarly, "Newes" reads, "That sentences in Authors like haires in an / horse taile, concurre in one roote of beauty and strength, / but being pluckt out one by one, serve onely for springes / and snares" (21–24).

In spite of its lively, vicious conceits and its subjects of interest to Donne, Peters labels "Newes" "a difficult work with several obscure passages, but with few of the flashes of wit that are associated with Donne."[24] Yet, "Newes" was printed as Donne's long before the paradoxes and problems were. "Newes" first appeared in 1614 in the second edition of *A Wife*, a quarto volume named for one of its many works: the poem Overbury composed before his death about Somerset's potential spouse.[25] The poem seemed a potentially big seller; however, printer Lawrence Lisle apparently thought it was not long enough to constitute a book, for he added commendatory verses, twenty-one prose characters, and a group of works labeled "conceited *Newes*" to the volume.[26] According to James E. Savage, these additional pieces were close at hand and were primarily products of Overbury and his friends.[27] Savage suggests that "Conceited *Newes*" represents a witty, courtly game officiated by Ben Jonson and played by such men as Benjamin Rudyerd, Thomas Roe, and Donne, who proves "one of the more skillful players of the game."[28] "Newes from the very Country" (G2r–v) was attributed to

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[23]Donne, *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour (1651)*, ed. M. Thomas Hester (Delmar, NY: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1977), pp. 196–197.

[24]Peters, ed., *Paradoxes and Problems*, p. xlix.

[25]*A wife novv the widdow of Sir Thomas Overburye Being a most exquisite and singular poem of the choice of a wife. Whereunto are added many witty characters, and conceited newes, written by himselfe and other learned gentlemen his friends* (London, 1614).

[26]It seems that Overbury probably was in love with the Countess of Rutland, for whom he likely intended "Wife" (Charles Edward Gough, ed., *The Life and Characters of Sir Thomas Overbury* [Norwich: The East of England Printing Works, 1909], pp. 14–15).

[27]James E. Savage, ed., *The "Conceited Newes" of Sir Thomas Overbury and His Friends: A Facsimile Reproduction of the Ninth Impression of 1616 of Sir Thomas Ouerbury His Wife* (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1968). The book was entered in the Stationers' Register on 13 December 1613.

[28]Savage, ed., pp. xxvi–xxvii. Savage suggests that the news pieces resemble Joseph Hall's abstract *Characters of Virtue and Vice* (1608), as well as the

"I. D." and was printed in all subsequent editions of the extraordinarily popular *A Wife*. Donne the younger attested to his father's authorship by incorporating "Newes" into the 1650 edition of Donne's *Poems* (pp. 369–370), the first collection in which he exerted editorial control. Savage, like most other scholars, accepts Donne's authorship of "Newes," based on "the unusual skill with which its conceits are handled."[29]

In terms of manuscript evidence, jottings from "Newes" appear in the Burley manuscript. In fact, over thirty items of "Table Talk" in this manuscript resemble closely the printed items of "Newes" by Rudyerd, Overbury, and Donne.[30] Michelle O'Callaghan has drawn apposite attention recently to topicality and satire among texts by Donne and his Inns of Court friends Richard Martin and John Hoskins, but the role of Rudyerd—who penned a description of the 1597/8 revels in which they all participated—could merit further analysis.[31] The political and literary interests, as well as the membership, of the Sireniacal gentlemen overlap with that of the "Newes" group. Further exploration of rhetorical dissimulation in "Newes" might illuminate Donne's literary cohort. The

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Overburian characters (p. xxiv). Savage believes that the literary game took place in the "Chamber" of Cecily Bulstrode, a lady-in-waiting to the Queen who censured Ben Jonson, eliciting his bitter remonstrance in "An Epigram on the Court Pucell." Savage suggests that Bulstrode's death in 1609 provides an end date for the composition of most of the twenty items that came to constitute this section (pp. xxvi–xxvii). According to Savage, other contributors are Sir Henry Wotton, John Cooke, William Strachey, Sir Ralph Shelton, someone with the initials "H. R.," and "A. S." whom he somewhat surprisingly suggests to be Lady Anne Clifford. Lady Clifford became Lady Anne Sackville early in 1609, but she apparently became the Countess of Dorset only three days later (p. xxxviii).

[29]Savage, ed., *The "Conceited Newes" of Sir Thomas Overbury and His Friends*, p. xxix.

[30]For additional information, see Simpson, "John Donne and Sir Thomas Overbury's 'Characters,'" *Modern Language Review* 18 (1923): 411.

[31]*Le prince d'amour; or the prince of love. With a collection of several ingenious poems and songs by the wits of the age* (London, 1660). See Michelle O'Callaghan, *The English Wits: Literature and Sociability in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). For more on Donne and Martin in particular, see Tom Cain, "Donne and the Prince d'Amour," *John Donne Journal* 14 (1995): 83–111. Also see Patrizia Grimaldi Pizzorno, *The Ways of Paradox from Lando to Donne* (Firenze: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 2007), especially pp. 96–120.

fact that much of the Burley manuscript was penned by another likely friend of Donne, William Parkhurst, lends further weight to the authenticity of "Newes." Perhaps Peters's exclusion of "Newes" stems from her lack of access to this manuscript while compiling her edition, as previously mentioned. Whatever Peters's reason, Simpson disagreed: she claims, "trifling as it is, ["Newes"] bears the characteristic marks of Donne's early prose style."[32] Prescott similarly reads "Newes" as "Pure Donne, and chilling."[33]

As mentioned, *A Wife* also includes prose characters, such as the "Character of a Dunce." A "character," according to Charles Edward Gough, "endeavours to depict tersely, and if possible, wittily, the action of some prominent trait, say a firmly implanted virtue or perhaps a ruling vice, on the words and deeds of all men who come under its influence."[34] In 1592, Isaac Casaubon printed a Latin translation of "Characters" by Theophrastus, a student of Aristotle who lived circa 373–284 BCE and was the "most often cited model for characterizing."[35] Soon after, Jonson began to incorporate character sketches in his plays. In 1608, Joseph Hall published his *Characters of Virtue and Vice*, the first English book of characters. *Characters* seemed to imitate Theophrastus's writings in form and substance. The eighty characters added over time to *A Wife* by writers such as Henry Wotton transcend descriptions of abstract ideas to satirize specific human types. These clever, funny, and sometimes venomous works often refer covertly to prominent public figures. The genre became fashionable in seventeenth-century England, largely due to the popularity of *A Wife*. "That Virginity is a Vertue" might recall the Overbury collection, as well as its subject, in the paradox's final lines: "the name of *Virgin* shal be exchanged / for a farre more honorable name, *A Wife*" (105–106).

The eleventh edition of *A Wife* (1622) includes "The true Character of a Dunce" unattributed (G3r–G5r). Flynn convincingly argues that this character seems to point to Thomas Coryate or to a similar figure at the

[32]Simpson, "John Donne and Sir Thomas Overbury's 'Characters,'" p. 411.

[33]Prescott, p. 177.

[34]Gough, ed., p. 29. For more on the historical tradition of the "character," also consult *Theophrastus Characters*, ed. and trans. James Diggle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[35]Prescott, p. 175.

court of James I.[36] O'Callaghan discusses the enigmatic Coryate, a friend to Donne and his fellows and yet a frequent butt of their jokes, as the approximately 160 pages of front matter to *Coryats Crudities* (1611) attests. One might believe Donne, whose desire to participate in this publication outweighed his aversion to printing his own verse, capable of calling Coryate "a foyle for better witts" (18) who "speakes just what his booke or last / companion sayd unto him, without varying a whitt, and very / seldome understands him selfe" (33–35). Seyle, publisher of *Iuvenilia* who joined Lisle in printing this edition of *A Wife*, probably had access to a manuscript collection of Donne's short prose, one that likely included "Dunce" and "The Description of a Scot at first sight." Flynn claims that "a Scot" represents James I and that Donne first saw the king "in *Charterhouse*" (1) soon after James's arrival in London in spring 1603. Both Flynn and Peters associate "Hee then grewe a knight wright, and there is extant of his / ware at 100, 150 and 200^{lb} price" (15–16) with James's selling of knighthoods. Flynn notes that many men able to pay the fee were made knights in 1603, including Donne's friends Robert Cotton and Francis Wolley, his cousin-in-law, "whose house the Donnes shared from 1602 to 1605."[37] Certainly, printing "A Scot" would have proven dangerous for Donne in 1622 but not in 1652, when John Donne, Jr. printed both characters as Donne's.

These two characters also appear in a number of seventeenth-century manuscripts, which confirm their popularity and support Donne's authorship. "Scot" appears in seven manuscripts. Two of these collections, the Gell manuscript and Huntington MS HM 1338, were unknown to Peters. They, like most manuscript copies, were compiled long before the 1652 printing.[38] "Dunce" appears in six of these same manuscripts, as well as another collection unknown to Peters, a privately owned manuscript Beal labels the Berland manuscript, which also contains eight problems, the essay on valor, and six poems labeled

[36]Flynn, "The Originals of Donne's Overburian Characters," *Bulletin of New York Public Library* 77 (1973): 63–69.

[37]Flynn, "The Originals of Donne's Overburian Characters," p. 67.

[38]"Scot" appears in B47, H5, H6, H7, HH1, Huntington MS HM 1338, and Derbyshire Record Office MS D258/7/13/6 (vi).

"Poems of JD. not printed."[39] These poems were, in fact, censored from the 1633 collection, though several were published in 1635. This fact lends weight to Beal's hypothesis that this manuscript was compiled in the 1630s. In addition, "Dunce" and "Scot" appear in the O'Flahertie manuscript, a collection that Peters validates: its texts serve as her copy-texts for Donne's problems. It seems curious that she thought this manuscript, among the many manuscripts and printed editions containing Donne's problems, so reliable that she took her copy-texts from it, yet she ignored some of its attributions. All manuscript copies that assign authorship of "Scot" and "Dunce" attribute them to Donne.

"An Essaie of Valour" was also printed for the first time in the eleventh edition of *A Wife* (Q6r–R1r) without attribution and with arguably superior readings to the younger Donne's 1652 version. Like "characters," "essays" represented a relatively new prose form in seventeenth-century England, often close "in spirit and subject matter" to the encomiastic paradox.[40] Sir Francis Bacon's *Essays* (1597) apparently were modeled on Montaigne's *Essais* (1580), and Donne's friend and fellow paradox-author Sir William Cornwallis composed forty-nine essays, published in 1600 and 1601. But "An Essaie of Valour" appears much closer to a character than to a modern essay. It was listed, in fact, under "Characters" in the 1652 Table of Contents (A8).[41] The essay offers a satiric sketch of a so-called valorous man explaining to his friends why he is "of opinion that nothinge is so potent eyther to / procure, or merit Love, As Valour" (1–2). He continues, "And I am glad I am soe, / for therby I shall doe my selfe much ease because Valour / never needs much wytt to mayntaine yt," seeming not to recognize the parodic self-censure (2–4). Nor does the speaker acknowledge the irony when, in the

[39]"Dunce appears in B47, H5, H6, H7, HH1, Derbyshire Record Office MS D258/7/13/6 (vi), and the Berland manuscript. In addition to the previously mentioned description of this manuscript in Beal's "More Donne Manuscripts," a copy of the complete Berland manuscript is available in "The Dame Helen Gardner Papers," The Massachusetts Center for Interdisciplinary Renaissance Studies.

[40]Arthur Stanley Pease, "'Things Without Honor," *Classical Philology* 21 (1926): 34.

[41]Prescott suggests that this argument's "terse declarative style resembles something by Bacon even as its personal opening ('I am of opynion') recalls Montaigne" (p. 176).

midst of boasting, he claims, "he that / braggs of his owne Valour diswades others from beleiving yt" (10–11). His verbose exposition on bravery as a seduction tool ends abruptly (and humorously) when the speaker suddenly reminds himself, "But now I / remember I am for *Valour*, and therefore must be *A Man / of fewe words*" (118–119).

This essay is the only work among these six prose items ever to be "attributed" to another author. The essay appeared in a shortened form as *Valour Anatomized in a Fancie* in *Cottoni Posthuma*, a collection of Sir Robert Cotton's tracts collected by his son for publication in 1651. Following *Valour* is a poem called "Wooing-stuffe" that begins, "Faint Amorist: what, do'st thou think"—both attributed to Sir Philip Sidney.[42] For years the essay, dated "1581," appeared in the canons of both Sidney and Donne, though Simpson suggested a logical reason for its misattributed publication: "Evidently Sir Robert Cotton had possessed a transcript of Donne's essay, and this was found among his papers after his death, and by some accident Sidney's name was appended to it. There was no justification for ascribing it to Sidney."[43] Flynn, however, argues persuasively that Donne could have offered Sidney, the exemplar of virtue and valor, purposefully as a fictional attribution added for literary effect.[44] Such literary play appealed to Donne's milieu, and Cotton's appearance in the early seventeenth-century Latin poem "convivium philosophicum" clarifies that he, too, was among the gentlemen who met at the Mitre tavern. One could argue that the fact that Donne's friend Cotton had a copy of the essay among his papers actually contributes to the evidence that Donne wrote it.

Whether the Sidney attribution was deliberate or accidental, Simpson asserts that the essay's "cynical, anti-chivalrous tone is characteristic of

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[42] *Cottoni posthuma divers choice pieces of that renovvned antiquary Sir Robert Cotton, Knight and Baronet* (London, 1651), pp. 321–328. This printed version omits the initial twenty-five lines and the final two lines of the essay. The book was reprinted in 1672 and in 1679. The text and the attribution of the essay and poem are unchanged, though in the 1679 edition the work begins on p. 323.

[43] Simpson, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*, p. 135, n. 1. Simpson does not attend to the authorship of "Wooing-stuffe," but Prescott suggests it "might seem to many ears more in the Cavalier style than in that of Sidney—or of Donne" (p. 178).

[44] Flynn, "Three Unnoticed Companion Essays to Donne's 'An Essay of Valour,'" *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 73 (1969): 424–439.

Donne, and quite foreign to Sidney," and manuscript copies support her claim.[45] Out of four extant manuscript copies of the essay, only one assigns the work to Sidney, and, according to Beal, this text likely was copied from the 1651 printed version.[46] The other three manuscripts, including the important Gell manuscript, attribute the work to Donne. Such attributions have led Beal to include "An Essaie of Valour," as well as "Scot" and "Dunce," among Donne's prose in the new digital *Catalogue of English Literary Manuscripts*.

Apart from the single attribution to Sidney (perhaps purposefully ironic as misattribution), all print and manuscript evidence in 29 manuscripts points toward Donne's authorship of these six prose works. Thus, one might be surprised that Donne's authorship ever was challenged. We also should consider that Donne wrote even more short prose than is extant, a fact that suggests that Donne's inclination toward such composition probably was greater than we have recognized. As previously mentioned, Donne alludes to additional paradoxes in his letter in the Burley manuscript. In addition, John Manningham recorded in his diary alongside versions of "That Women Ought to Paint" and "That a Wise Man is Known By Much Laughing" two additional paradoxes: "Hee that weepeth is most wise" and "To keepe sheepe the best lyfe" (folios 101r–v). R. E. Bennett argued so convincingly that Donne penned "Hee that weepeth" that Robert Parker Sorlien claims that Bennett "has proved beyond reasonable doubt that Donne composed it."[47] Sorlien adds that "To keepe sheepe" "may be Donne's also." Manningham was a Middle Temple man and a seeming friend to Donne's Middle Temple and Lincoln's Inn comrades, such as Martin, Hoskins, Rudyerd, and William Hakewell; thus, Manningham would have had access to Donne. Flynn also has argued that Donne's friend Cotton had three additional essays by Donne, which were published

[45]Simspon, *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne*, p. 135, n. 1.

[46]The essay appears in a section containing items by Donne in H7, the Berland manuscript, and Derbyshire Record Office MS D258/7/13/6 (vi). Kenneth Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries, Mostyn Tracts Collection MS E205 assigns the poem to Sidney.

[47]*The Diary of John Manningham of the Middle Temple, 1602–1603*, ed. Robert Parker Sorlien (Hanover, NH: The University Press of New England, 1976), p. 382. Bennett's argument for Donne's authorship appears in "John Manningham and Donne's Paradoxes," *Modern Language Notes* 46 (1931): 309–313.

alongside *Valour* in *Cottoni Posthuma*. Like *Valour*, Flynn argues, these essays on "Honesty, Ambition, and Fortitude" were attributed ironically: this time to Sir Francis Walsingham.[48] Donne also discusses in a letter to Henry Goodere "this probleme" on "women wearing stones" that "was occasioned by you."[49] Not only did Donne write this non-extant problem, but his letter suggests that he and Goodere collaborated while composing it. Studying those of Donne's prose works that are extant could enhance our understanding of Donne's relationships with friends both inside and outside of the Inns of Court, as well as their collaborative and performative literary productions.

The current scholarly edition of Donne's prose offers little evidence or justification for extracting from Donne's canon these six playful—and perhaps dangerously topical—works, which his son acknowledged as Donne's compositions long after the Overbury affair. Admittedly, some scholars have questioned the younger Donne's abilities as an editor. They have argued that some of the eight volumes of Donne's writings that his son published show carelessness or even purposeful distortion.[50] Yet, as Flynn notes, Donne's son contributed for the first time in print many of the works now included in Donne's canon: "To this day, all but one of John Donne, Jr.'s more than 300 first attributions is still generally accepted, apart from the exclusions Peters has now made."[51] Thus, the younger Donne's attribution of these works should carry considerable weight.

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[48]Flynn, "Three Unnoticed Companion Essays to Donne's 'An Essay of Valour.'" Prescott asserts that "Flynn makes a good case" for attributing these works to Donne (p. 179). Analyzing Donne's authorship of these three essays, as well as the two paradoxes in Manningham's diary, is beyond the scope of this essay. But the fact that these scholars have made compelling arguments for attributing these additional prose works to Donne is noteworthy.

[49]*Letters of Severall Persons of Honour (1651)*, p. 108. While the letter is addressed "*To S^r^* G.M." in the printed edition, it was likely written for Goodere in 1608. For more on this letter, see Price, pp. 65–67.

[50]Edwin Wolf, II, for example, labels John Donne, Jr. an "irresponsible editor" in *The Textual Importance of Manuscript Commonplace Books of 1620–1660* (Charlottesville: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1949), p. 16.

[51]Flynn, "A Problematic Text," p. 102.

The Gell manuscript's inclusion of these works should carry considerable weight as well. The characters and the essay are grouped with Donne's paradoxes and clearly assigned to him, as they are in a number of seventeenth-century manuscripts compiled long before the works were printed together in 1652. Uncovering these "new" manuscript texts of four of the six dubious pieces might also encourage us to review the poetry and prose excised from Donne's canon prior to the recovery and cataloguing of the many seventeenth-century artifacts currently known. While there may not be sufficient manuscript evidence to confirm Donne's authorship of "That Virginity is a Vertue" and "Newes from the very Country," there is no extant evidence to refute the substantial print evidence in Donne's favor. And the Gell manuscript, prepared in part by a significant, identifiable early reader of Donne's prose, adds to substantial manuscript evidence supporting Donne's authorship of "A Defence of Womens Inconstancy," the "Character of a Dunce," "The Description of a Scot at first sight," and "An Essaie of Valour."

Seventeenth-century readers—like nearly all subsequent readers—attributed these prose works to Donne. Perhaps over time anonymous and apocryphal Renaissance works will begin to receive the critical attention that they often deserve. But, for now, I hope that my forthcoming edition of Donne's *Juvenilia* for the John Donne Society's Digital Text Project will draw scholars' attention to these six prose works. In addition, I hope that this new edition will place all of Donne's short prose works more firmly onto the critical map for early modern studies. Donne's paradoxes, problems, and (I believe) characters, essay, and news should be considered alongside his poetry and other prose, for these works can inform interpretations of each other. Donne's short prose also informs modern readers about contemporary interests and attitudes, particularly those of the highly influential Inns-of-Court men. Early modern manuscript and print readers eagerly collected and studied these short prose works, as should we.

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