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Poems, by J. D.: Donne's Corpus and His Bawdy, Too

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All of us who work in Renaissance literature are aware of the extent to which we depend on what literary artifacts have survived. Certainly as the Textual Editors of the Donne Variorum attempt to reconstruct the textual history of most of Donne's various poems, we expend nearly our entire supply of Greek letters (used to stand in for missing artifacts) and expletives (used to stand in for bibliographical analysis). Although the over 4,000 manuscript copies of Donne's poems in over 250 surviving manuscripts form the bulk of the extant Donne literary remains, by far the most influential remainders of Donne's corpus for textual scholars and critics up to the end of the twentieth century survive in the seven, seventeenth editions/issues of *Poems, by J. D.* and the scholarly editions that derive from them. And deservedly so, you reply—we all know that manuscripts are flimsy pieces of loose paper, virtually worthless in themselves and obviously subject to the vagaries of time, whereas books are mighty monuments, critical to the preservation and development of civilization, ancient repositories of the best humankind has thought. The bad news, alas, is that texts in books, too, are subject to the vagaries of survival and therefore do not guarantee the survival of an author's corpus in its original form.

Let me offer you an example from Shakespeare. Suppose that *Hamlet,* like *The Two Noble Kinsmen,* had not survived in the Folio edition of 1623, but only in its first appearance in Quarto in 1603. If so, Shakespeare's presently most famous and admired text would read as follows:

To be, or not to be, I there's the point,
To Die, to sleepe, is that all? I all:
No, to sleepe, to dreame, I mary there it goes,
For in that dreame of death, when wee awake,
And borne before an euerlasting Iudge,
From whence no passenger euer retur'nd,
The vndiscouered country, at whose sight
The happy smile, and the accursed damn'd.
But for this, the ioyfull hope of this,
Whol'd beare the scornes and flattery of the world,
Scorned by the right rich, the rich curssed of the poore?

I am fully aware that Shakespeare scholars have argued that he wrote this text and that it was performed in his lifetime, but I submit that had *Hamlet* survived only in this form Shakespeare would have been in love with Kathy Bates (in *Misery)* and not Gwyneth Paltrow.

Unfortunately, Donne's equivalent to the 1603 Bad Quarto of *Hamlet,* the 1633 first edition of *Poems, by J.D.,* has become the official relic of Donne's textual corpus, largely through its canonization by Sir H.J.C. Grierson in the first great twentieth-century edition of Donne's verse and in all subsequent major twentieth-century editions until the Donne Variorum. Despite not knowing who had gathered the manuscript(s) from which the typesetters of *1633* worked (Grierson conjectured Henry King)[1] or which manuscript(s) were used as copy-text for *1633* (Grierson postulated a manuscript like Dowden [O20], Newcastle [B32], or Leconfield [C8] and owned by Sir Henry Goodyere)[2] Grierson selected *1633* as the embodiment of Donne's corpus. Grierson's record of the original autopsy that led to the selection of *1633* established the importance of the printed editions to Donne's survival: "I went to Oxford and began in the Bodleian a rapid collation of the text of that edition with the older copies, especially of 1633.... My first proposal to the Delegates of the Clarendon Press was that I should attempt an edition of Donne's poems resting on a collation of the printed texts; that for all the poems which it contains the edition of 1633 should be accepted as the authority, to be departed from only when the error seemed to be obvious and certain .... In the case of poems not

contained in the edition of 1633, the first edition (whether 1635, 1649, 1650, or 1669) was to be the authority" (I, iii-iv).

Unfortunately for Grierson and twentieth-century Donne readers, *1633* is not a very accurate representation of the canon or the texts of Donne's work, a fact recognized by Donne's seventeenth-century editors as they attempted to complete Donne's canon and to repair the ravages of censorship and folly in Donne's texts. The net result, unnoticed by Grierson, of the work of Donne's seventeenth-century editors is a larger and considerably bawdier Donne in the last third of the century than in the first.

The contents of *1633* have been accorded the status of a collected edition, yet its 148 Donne poems are only 69 percent of the 216 to appear in the Donne Variorum, considerably fewer than the 169 in the O'Flahertie manuscript (H6), and not many more than in other manuscripts eschewed by Grierson: 143 in Trinity College Dublin 877 (I) [DT1] and Norton 4503 (H4), 140 in Luttrell (C9), and 129 in Dolau Cothi (WN1). *1633* contains only two poems not by Donne;[3] however, its omissions form a pattern that casts the dark shadow of censorship over the contents and texts in the volume. *1633* represents some genres very well: Satyres (5 of 5), Songs and Sonets (52 of 57),[4] Epithalamions (3 of 3), as well as the Anniversaries and Epicedes and Obsequies (10 of 10). Other omissions are understandable: poems not widely circulated like Verse Letters (29 of 40), Divine Poems (22 of 34), and inscriptions in books, epigraphs, epitaphs, etc. On the other hand, the omission of 7 of 23 Epigrams suggests the possibility of censorship. Admittedly, many of the epigrams did not circulate widely, including the two missing that are among Donne's most sexually controversial poems ("Faustinus" ["*Faustinus* keepes his Sister and a Whore,/ *Faustinus* keepes his Sister and noe more" and "The Iughler" ["Thou call'st me effeminat, for I love womens ioyes/ I call not thee manly, though thou follow boyes"]);[5] however, censorship of the Epigrams becomes more plausible given the deliberate censorship of the Elegies and Satyres. *1633* omits 7 of the 18 Elegies (*The Bracelet, Love's War, To his Mistress going to bed, On his Mistris, Loues Progresse, His Parting from Her,* and *Variety).* The order of the thirteen Elegies in

Grierson's Group I manuscripts[6] (the source of the Elegies on pp. 44-56 in *1633*) and an entry by John Marriot, the publisher of *1633*, in the Stationers' Register for "13o. Septembris 1632" establishes that the first five of the seven omitted Elegies listed above did not meet with the approval of the licensers: "John Marriot Entred for his Copy vnder the handes of Sir Henry Herbert and both the Wardens *a booke of verses and Poems* (the five *satires,* the first second, Tenth, Eleaventh and Thirteenth *Elegies* being excepted) and these before excepted to be his, when he bringes lawfull authority ..... vjd. Written by Doctor John Dunn" (Edward Arber, *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London; 1554-1640 A. D.* [London, 1887], IV, 285).

Evidently, "lawfull authority" never arrived for the publication of the five Elegies in *1633*; however, the Satyres were salvaged as indicated by a subsequent entry for "31o. octobris. [1632]" in the Stationers' Register: "John Marriot Entred for his Copy vnder the hands of Sir Henry Herbert and Master Aspley warden *The Five Satires* written by Doctor J: Dun these being excepted in his last entrance. vjd." (IV, 287). It is not clear whether licensing delay or concern over their content relegated the Satyres to the very end of the volume (pp. 325-49), followed only by "*A Hymne to God the Father.*" Unfortunately for *1633* as a representative of Donne's verse, the texts of the Satyres evidently gained the licenser's approval by the deletion of offensive materials: censored lines or word(s) are indicated in the text by replacing each deleted line or word(s) with an equivalent horizontal line. In *Satyre II,* a horizontal line replaces "Dildoes" (l. 32, p. 330) and a blasphemous reference to the "Letanie" (l. 33);[7] horizontal lines replace the politically incorrect couplets "And to every suitor lye in every thing,/ Like a Kings favourite, yea like a King" (ll. 69-70) and "Bastardy abounds not in Kings titles, nor/ Symonie and Sodomy in Churchmens lives" (ll. 74-75). In *Satyre IV,* horizontal lines replace a grotesque parody of the King's touch:

> That as burnt venome Leachers do grow sound
> By giving others their soares, I might growe
> Guilty, and he free (ll. 134-36).

Interestingly, some unacknowledged censorship by the editor of *1633* also went on in the printing of *The Anagram* with the omission of the sexually graphic lines 53-54 sans horizontal lines to signify the deletion: "Whom dildoes, bedstaves, and her velvett glas/ Would be as loth to touch as Ioseph was." This censorship is almost certainly the work of the editor: every surviving Group I manuscript (B32, C2, C8, O20, and SP1)[8] that contains the poem has the lines.

So where did the editor of *1633* get the materials to construct his edition? Despite Grierson's hypothesis of a single manuscript source (a Group I manuscript like B32, C8, or O20 that belonged to Goodyere), it is clear that several different manuscripts from various textual traditions supplied the texts of the poems in *1633*. The Variorum textual editors have not yet identified the copy-text for every poem in *1633*; however, B32 and O20 are not candidates for any poems so far, though C8 (Leconfield) closely parallels the texts of the poems with Group I sources. For the Elegies deriving from a Group I manuscript, the likely source very much resembled C2 or C8, though variants show that the editor emended a number of Group I readings in *Jealousy, The Anagram, The Perfume,* and *Oh let me not serve so* to readings from a Group II manuscript. The texts of *The Comparison* and *The Expostulation* in *1633* derive from a Group II manuscript much like DT1, and shared unique readings in *Sapho to Philaenis* and *The Autumnall* prove their derivation from WN1, generally a Group II manuscript. Perhaps most interestingly, Gary Stringer argues in the Donne Variorum General Textual Introduction to the Elegies that Marriot checked at least the text of *The Comparison* against a Group III manuscript and that that Group III manuscript was H6 (O'Flahertie), a manuscript compiled in preparation for an edition of Donne's poems and, according to a note on its title page, "finishd this 12 of October 1632," only one month after Marriot obtained his license to print *1633* (p. lxxviii). Among the Epicedes and Obsequies, *Elegia* ("Sorrow, who to this house, scarse knew the way") derives from a Group III manuscript; and the *Elegie vpon the death of Mrs.* Boulstred and both the prefatory prose letter and its poem "*A Hymne to the Saynts and To the Marquesse* Hamilton" derive from a Group II manuscript. The fact that Marriot used

manuscripts from Groups I, II, and III implies that he used several manuscripts from a variety of sources, rather than the one postulated by Grierson; and the fact that he turned to manuscripts from other textual traditions for emending the texts of some of his Group I manuscript(s) suggests that Marriot knew some of his texts were inferior (though he certainly did not systematically emend the hundreds of egregious errors in the *1633* texts).

Thus, for Donne's seventeenth-century editors (including Marriot again in 1635), the main task became the recovery and rearrangement of the scattered parts of Donne's racked corpus presented as his anatomy in the 1633 first edition of *Poems, by J. D.* And in 1635, Marriot not only rearranged the poems largely by genre, but he also added fourteen new poems: two Songs and Sonets, three Elegies, two Verse Letters, and seven Divine Poems including four Holy Sonnets.[9] He also added fourteen noncanonical poems and dropped William Basse's "Epitaph upon Shakespeare." The addition of three Elegies (*His Parting from Her, On His Mistris,* and the previously censored *The Bracelet*), without obtaining official sanction would seem like an act of bravery on the part of Marriot in an effort to show the bawdy reality of Donne's corpus except that he printed a bowdlerized 42-line truncation of *His Parting from Her* (ll. 1-4, 45-56, 67-82, and 95-94) from O34 or a cognate of O34 rather than the full 104-line version available to him in H6 and located it among the funeral poems and that he, without authority among the surviving manuscript witnesses, revised either Donne's original "taint" or Donne's revised "fault" in line 11 to "way" in *The Bracelet* in order to circumvent an apparent denigration of the angels and make the poem more theologically correct: "Nor yet by any taint/fault [way] haue stray'd or gone." On the other hand, Marriot did retain the "ingled" reading in line twenty-nine of *The Perfume* ("And kist and ingled on thy fathers knee"), instead of replacing it with the considerably less bawdy "dandled" from H6. Marriot also filled in "Dildoes" in line 32 and the missing couplets in lines 69-70 and 74-75 of *Satyre II* as well as lines 134-36 in *Satyre IV*, though he failed to fill in the blank with "Letanie" at the end of line 33 of *Satyre II*. In any case, Donne's corpus in *1635* is bawdier by three Elegies, the more complete

Satyres II and IV, and larger by fourteen canonical and thirteen noncanonical poems.

And which manuscripts contributed to the differences in *1635*? While we have not yet identified the sources for the changes in all of the poems, it is clear that at least four manuscripts contributed to the reconstruction of Donne in *1635.* By far the most influential was H6 (the O'Flahertie): three of the Elegies first printed in *1635*—the dubious *Julia, The Bracelet,* and *On his Mistris*—all have H6 as their copy-text in *1635;* and readings from H6 show up in *1635*'s texts of *The Anagram, His Picture, Oh let me not serve so, Natures Lay Ideott, The Comparison, The Autumnall, The Expostulation, Sapho to Philaenis, An Elegie vpon the death of Mrs.* Bulstrod ("Death I recant"), *Elegie vpon the death of Mrs.* Boulstred ("Language thou art too narrowe"), and *Obsequyes vpon the Lord* Harrington *the last that dyed.* WN1 served as the source for *The Autumnall* and *Sapho to Philaenis,* while another Group II manuscript (like DT1) was the source for *The Comparison* and *The Expostulation.* O34, the Wase manuscript (a manuscript that has not provided us with any reliable texts to date), or a cognate served as copy-text for *His Parting from Her* and *A Tale of a Citizen and his Wife* even though a far superior text was available for both in H6.

The 1639 third seventeenth-century edition *of Poems, by J.D.* is a page-for-page resetting of *1635,* and its few textual changes are compositorial or editorial.

The fourth seventeenth-century edition, consisting of three issues of the same typesetting in 1649, 1650, and 1654, does, however, bulk up the Donne corpus and make it a bit bawdier. There are no additional poems in *1649* (though the editor does attempt a fix for the missing "Letanie" in line 33 of *Satyre* II by adding a metrically correct but nonsensical "gallant, he"); however, by 1650 John Donne, Junior, had acquired the rights to his father's materials, and, likely as a result of his involvement, *1650* contained nine new poems: one by George Herbert ("In Sacram Anchoram Piscatoris"), two by Ben Jonson ("To Lucy, Countesse of Bedford, with M. Donnes Satyres" and "To John Donne"), and Donne's *"Amicissimo, et meritissimo* Ben: Ionson," "To Mr.

George Herbert with One of My Seals" (and its translation "A sheafe of Snakes"), "Translated out of Gazaeus," *Variety,* and "Self Love." The Elegy *Variety,* the credo of a commitment-challenged male, does add an element of bawdiness to the collection, though not on the scale of the five originally censored elegies.

This fourth, three-issue edition does contain quite a few textual revisions (five in the Elegies received from *1639*), but their source remains unidentifiable. All but two of the new poems derive either from print ("Amicissimo" derives from the first edition of Ben Jonson's *Volpone* published in 1607) or from no-longer-extant holographs formerly in the possession of the younger Donne. Yet another manuscript adds its influence to the print tradition in this fourth edition: VA2 served as the copy-text for *Variety,* though its readings are heavily revised—probably by the compositor or editor.[10]

Perhaps not surprisingly, the 1669 Restoration edition of *POEMS, &c BY JOHN DONNE* revivifies Donne's corpus nearly to its full bawdiness by adding (in addition to two noncanonical works ["Break of Day," stanza 1 (p. 17) and *Satyre VI* (p. 138)]): two of the five, original officially censored Elegies (*Loues Progresse* and *To his Mistress going to bed*); the *1635* editorially-censored lines 5-44, 57-66, and 83-94 to bring the Elegy *His Parting from Her* to its full representation; "Letanie" in place of "gallant, he" at the end of line 33 in *Satyre II*; and the editorially-censored lines 53-54 in *The Anagram.* With *1669,* we essentially have all of Donne's bawdy except one of the originally officially censored Elegies (*Love's War*) and the two Epigrams "The Iughler" and "Faustinus." Interestingly, fragments of *Love's War* had appeared in print in 1654 (ll. 29-46 in Richard Chamberlain's *The Harmony of the Muses,* pp. 6-7) and in 1655 (ll. 29-32, 35-36, 39-40, and 43-46 in John Cotgrave's *Wits Interpreter,* sig. T4v), though the poem did not appear in its entirety (excepting line 26) until 1802 in F. G. Waldron's *A Collection of Miscellaneous Poetry* and *The Shakspearean Miscellany.* So, *1669* gave the latter part of the seventeenth century a bigger (190 poems, 170 canonical) and bawdier Donne than the more saintly *1633* had given the earlier seventeenth century (150 poems, 148 canonical).

But where did *1669* dig up the materials to expand Donne's corpus? In addition to an enormous number of incredibly stupid emendations harvested from his own fertile imagination, the editor drew upon at least seven manuscripts to augment and beautify Donne's corpus. For the new *To his Mistress going to bed,* the editor combines readings from manuscripts derived from at least two different textual traditions (B43 and F14—Stringer 175); for the likewise new *Loues Progresse,* he creates another amalgam from a manuscript in the H7-H8 family (ultimately derived from the lost original holograph) and another from the B7 tradition (ultimately derived from a lost revised holograph—Stringer 311); and to complete the truncated version of *His Parting from Her,* he drew on a manuscript resembling B47 (Stringer 344-45). Finding problems in the texts of other Elegies he inherited from *1654*, the editor of *1669* turned to O34 to make "repairs" in *The Bracelet, Jealousy, Change,* and *On his Mistris* (Stringer lxxxi-lxxxii,17, 101, 205, and 251). Fortunately, the editor of *1669* turned to either C9 or H6 for lines 53-54 to complete *The Anagram,* but unfortunately he used C9 or H6 to substitute "dandled" for "ingled" in line 29 of *The Perfume.*

Thus, during the course of the publication of the seven seventeenth-century editions/issues of *Poems, by J.D.,* some real progress was made: Donne's corpus became larger and bawdier, partly more like its original and partly a kind of Frankenstein—a compilation of unrelated and even artificial parts, founded on but larger than the original, and scarred by foreign materials and botched efforts at beautification. For over 300 years, the remains of Donne's racked corpus have provided editors with an ill anatomy upon which to work and scholars an equally grievous text to read; as those among us who are editors return to Loseley, we need to remember that we are part of a very long tradition of painstakingly slow progress, a tradition kept alive by our fascination for Donne's corpus and, speaking for myself, his bawdy, too.

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Notes

1. Grierson speculated that Henry King had served as editor: "This would help to account for the general excellence of the text of that edition [*1633*], for King, a poet himself as well as an intimate friend, was better fitted to edit Donne's poems than the gentle and pious Walton, who was less in sympathy with the side of Donne which his poetry reveals" (*The Poems of John Donne* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912], II, 255).

2. "It would be interesting if we could tell whence this manuscript was obtained, and whether it was *a priori* likely to be a good one" (Grierson, II, xc). Based largely on an analysis of the order of the poems, Grierson hypothesized that "a manuscript closely resembling that now represented by these three manuscripts [Dowden, Newcastle, and Leconfield] supplied the editor of *1633* with the bulk of the shorter poems" (II, xc) and went on to speculate that this "principal manuscript used by the printer was an 'old book' which had belonged to Sir Henry Goodyere and in which his secretaries had transcribed poems and letters by Donne" (II, xci), with the "old book" being that mentioned by Donne in a 20 December 1614 letter to Goodyere discussing Donne's intention to publish his poems in a volume dedicated to Robert Ker, Earl of Somerset:

> I am brought to a necessity of printing my Poems, and addressing them to my L. Chamberlain. This I mean to do forthwith; not for much publique view, but at mine own cost, a few Copies .... By this occasion I am made a Rhapsoder of mine own rags, and that cost me more diligence, to seek them, then it did to make them. This made me aske to borrow that old book of you, which it will be too late to see, for that use, when I see you.
> (*Letters to Severall Persons of Honour* [1651], pp. 196-97)

3. The noncanonical poems are William Basse's *"An Epitaph upon Shakespeare"* (p. 149 [165]) and *"Psalme* 137" (pp. 157-45 [6l]), tentatively assigned to Francis Davison by Grierson (I, 424).

4. The omissions are all relatively minor poems: "A Lecture upon the Shadow," "The Token," "Farewell to Love," "Self Love," and "When my heart was mine own."

5. Unless otherwise noted, poem texts are from the Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne.

6. See Figure 2: Major Collections of Elegies in Seventeenth-Century Artifacts in Gary A. Stringer, ed., *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne,* Volume 2, *The Elegies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. lxvi.

7. Quotations of the text of the Satyres are from Grierson.

8. Manuscript sigla throughout this essay are those of the Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne.

9. The added Songs and Sonets are: "Farewell to Love" (p. 63) and "A Lecture upon the Shadow" (p. 66). The three Elegies are: *The Bracelet* (p. 89), *His Parting from Her* (p. 95), and *On His Mistris* (p. 269). The two Verse Letters are: *To the*

Countess of Huntingdon (*HuntUn,* p. 191) and "Epitaph on Himself: To the Countess of Bedford (*BedfCab,* p. 271), repeated on p. 386 as "On himselfe." The four Holy Sonnets are: *HSMade, HSLittle, HSSighs,* and *HSSouls.* Finally, the three Divine Poems are: *Upon the Translation of the Psalms by Sir Philip Sidney* (p. 366), "To Mr. Tilman after He Had Taken Orders" (p. 369), and "A Hymn to God My God, in My Sickness (p. 387).

10. As noted in the Textual Introduction to *Variety,* "this first printing contains several readings not found in any surviving manuscript: 'lov'd' for 'loue' in line 3, 'cleare' for 'farr' in line 12, 'love able' for 'loueable' and 'ever' for 'auer' in line 19, 'were' for 'are' in line 31, 'little' for 'title' in line 45, and 'same' for 'flame' in line 72. Most of these variants may be explained as misreadings of an unclear manuscript printer's copy, but those in lines 12 and 31 distort the intended rhymes, and those in line 19 cause problems in the rhythm" (Stringer 396).