

## A Text of John Donne's Poems: Unsatisfactory Compromise

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One of John Donne's most popular and well anthologized poems is "The Flea," but what is the text that he wrote or that he thought of as the intended final text (if he made revisions in it)?<sup>1</sup> The poem presents typical cruxes that must be solved by anyone offering a text of it and the rest of his poetry. Line 3 reads: "It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee" or "Me it suckt first, and now sucks thee"; line 5 reads: "Thou know'st that this cannot be said" or "Confess it, this cannot be said"; line 21 reads: "Wherein could this flea guilty bee" or "In what could this flea guilty bee." (There are various other verbal differences as well.) While the sense in each of these lines is equated by the variants, any study of a rhetorical or prosodic nature, for example, is going to be dependent upon which text is used and is going to be, therefore, subject to various kinds of "error" or misinterpretation. The first reading in each of these examples is taken from the first edition of the poems in 1633 and recurs in other early editions except for that of 1669, which gives the alternate readings in the first two cases but not in the third. (I mean to indicate no precedence by calling one the alternate of the other.) Sir Herbert J. C. Grierson in his two-volume edition of the poems in 1912 follows 1633 here, but Helen Gardner in her edition of *The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets* in 1965 prints the alternates in each case. Gardner has based her readings upon the readings in some of the manuscripts, since she has been an adherent of the view that the manuscript tradition observable in some of the manuscripts is superior to that in the printed editions and in other manuscripts.

Manuscripts which record the first reading of line 3 given before are: English Poetical MS e.99 (Dowden MS, Bodleian Library, Δ1),<sup>2</sup> Harleian MS 4955 (Newcastle MS, British Library, Δ3), Additional

MS 5778(c) (Cambridge Balam MS, Cambridge University Library,  $\Delta 4$ ), Leconfield MS (Perry MS, owned by the late Sir Geoffrey Keynes and now in Cambridge University Library,  $\Delta 5$ ), Stowe MS 961 (British Library,  $\Delta 15$ ), English MS 966.4 (Dobell MS, Harvard University Library,  $\Delta 16$ ), English MS 966.5 (O'Flahertie MS, Harvard University Library,  $\Delta 17$ ). These manuscripts have been classified as belonging to Group I MSS ( $\Delta 1$ ,  $\Delta 3$ ,  $\Delta 4$ ,  $\Delta 5$ ) or Group III MSS ( $\Delta 15$ ,  $\Delta 16$ ,  $\Delta 17$ ). Group I MSS seem to derive from a manuscript dated generally around 1614; Group III MSS seem to date from around late 1620s or early 1630s and to derive ultimately from a conflation of both Group I and Group II MSS.

Manuscripts which record the alternate first reading given before are: Harleian MS 4064 (Harley Noel MS, British Library,  $\Delta 2$ ), Additional MS 18647 (Denbigh MS, British Library,  $\Delta 7$ ), Lansdowne MS 740 (British Library,  $\Delta 8$ ), English MS 966.3 (Norton MS, Harvard University Library,  $\Delta 9$ ), MS R.3.12 (Puckering MS, Trinity College Library, Cambridge,  $\Delta 13$ ), MS 877 (Trinity College Library, Dublin,  $\Delta 14$ ), English Poetical MS f.9 (Phillipps MS, Bodleian Library,  $\Delta 20$ ), Additional MS 25707 (Skipwith MS, British Library,  $\Delta 21$ ), English MS 966.1 (Carnaby MS, Harvard University Library,  $\Delta 22$ ), English MS 966.6 (Stephens MS, Harvard University Library,  $\Delta 23$ ), MS EL 6893 (Bridgewater MS, Huntington Library,  $\Delta 24$ ), HM 198, Book II (Haslewood-Kingsborough MS, Huntington Library,  $\Delta 26$ ), and Additional MS 29 (Edward Smyth MS, Baumgarten Collection, Cambridge University Library,  $\Delta 45$ ). These manuscripts have been classified as belonging to or adjunct to Group I MSS ( $\Delta 2$ ), Group II MSS ( $\Delta 7$ ,  $\Delta 8$ ,  $\Delta 9$ ,  $\Delta 13$ ,  $\Delta 14$ ), Group V MSS ( $\Delta 26$ ), V.a ( $\Delta 20$ ,  $\Delta 22$ ), V.b ( $\Delta 21$ ), V.c ( $\Delta 23$ ,  $\Delta 24$ ). This last group, V, consists of a melange of manuscripts which seem to date generally from 1619 to the earlier 1620s, prior to Group II MSS, to have affinities with Group III MSS, and to show relationships among themselves as subgroups.  $\Delta 45$  has similarities to  $\Delta 21$ .

The preceding is based on printed reports of readings. No one at this point in time has made a complete collation of all the manuscript texts.<sup>3</sup> While there are undoubtedly unpublished collations of other texts, not all the texts given in Beal's listing have been brought together. To the above we can most likely add for the first reading: MS 49 B 43 (St. Paul's Cathedral Library,  $\Delta 6$ )—Group I MS; Narcissus Luttrell MS (owned by the late Sir Geoffrey

Keynes and now in Cambridge University Library, Δ18)—Group III MS; and for the alternate reading: Dolau Cothi MS (National Library of Wales, Δ10), MS GD 45/26/95/1 (Dalhousie MS I, Scottish Record Office, Δ11), MS GD 45/26/95/2 (Dalhousie MS II, Texas Tech University, Δ12)—generally Group II MSS; MS b118 (Raphael King MS, James Osborn Collection, Δ29), MS b148 (Osborn MS, James Osborn Collection, Δ30)—V.c and V.a MSS.<sup>4</sup> Remaining are seventeen nonclassified manuscripts, some of which have a number of Donne poems and some of which have very few indeed. These manuscripts cannot be witnesses to what Donne wrote or intended as final text since they are all clearly derivative.<sup>5</sup> They are important, however, in indicating transmission of text and possibly in dating transmission.

Line 5 reads with 1633 in Δ1, Δ3, Δ4, Δ5, Δ6; it reads with the alternate in Δ2, Δ7, Δ8, Δ9, Δ10, Δ13, Δ14, Δ15, Δ16, Δ17, Δ18, Δ20, Δ21, Δ22, Δ23, Δ24, Δ26, Δ29, Δ30, Δ45. Line 21 reads with 1633 in Δ1, Δ3, Δ4, Δ5, Δ6; it reads with the alternate in Δ2, Δ7, Δ8, Δ9, Δ10, Δ13, Δ14, Δ15, Δ16, Δ17, Δ18, Δ20, Δ21, Δ22, Δ23, Δ24, Δ26, Δ29, Δ30, Δ45. What is clear is that there are various combinations of these three lines in print and the manuscripts. This can be shown generally in the following table where 1 means line 3 as in 1633 and 1A means its alternate; 2, line 5 as in 1633 and 2A its alternate; and 3, line 21 as in 1633 and 3A its alternate:

1633-54	1, 2, 3
1669	1A, 2A, 3
Group I	1, 2, 3 except Δ2: 1A, 2A, 3A <sup>6</sup>
Group II	1A, 2A, 3A
Group III	1, 2A, 3A
Group V	1A, 2A, 3A.

One must choose for his text in these three specific instances 1, 2, 3 with the printed editions and Group I (giving a seemingly early text), or a combination 1, 2A, 3A with Group III (giving a text apparently recorded later but combining Groups I and II), or the alternatives 1A, 2A, 3A with Group II (a mid-20s and often sophisticated text) and V (an early 1620s, often independent and various text, though related to Group III). Δ2 may complicate or simplify this difficult choice. Other permutations are possible although

these primary texts do not record, say, 1A, 2, 3A. Choice of text in these three specific instances cannot be based on date, which is uncertain at best, or on a total number of texts showing a reading since so many are merely derivative from another (e.g.,  $\Delta 4/\Delta 5$ ,  $\Delta 7/\Delta 13$ ,  $\Delta 17/\Delta 18$ ,  $\Delta 20/\Delta 30$ ) or from a now-lost ur-text.

Can we make our choice dependent on rhetorical or prosodic issues? Certainly "It suck'd me first" gives us two iambs and emphasizes "suck'd," which would seem most appropriate for this seduction poem, particularly in view of the possible orthographic pun involving a printed long s, which one can see as an f if reading quickly. Contrast is also created by emphasis on "suck'd," but a lack of stress on "sucks"; a lack of emphasis on "me," but stress on "thee." The time element is stressed in both parts of the line. That "I" was "suck'd" and that now "thee" is undergoing the same act seems to be an important point for the poem. The alternate gives us a trochee and an iamb (or is "suckt" stressed, yielding a spondee?). The contrast of acts and of persons involved is lost in this reading; the stress of "Me" particularly seems to lack cogency for the point of the poem—this is *not* Satan's argument to Eve—although Gardner writes, "The inversion throws the stress where it is needed, on the two personal pronouns" (p. 174). In line 5 the tone is quite different between the two readings, and the editor's feeling for language and interpretation of the poet's attitudes will color his choice. "Thou know'st" is implanting an idea rather than necessarily believing that it is the truth, and "Confesse it" implies that the auditor is simply playing coy. Either is meaningful for the poem, but our interpretation of it will be dependent upon which phrase we read.<sup>7</sup> "Wherein" in line 21 is more abstract in reference and can thus mean "In what way" or "How" or "Through what act," whereas "In what" points to something tangible and, of course, the possible exception is something tangible: "that drop which it suckt from thee." My comments seem almost to suggest that the editor should give 1, 2, and 3A, but that is not the combination in any of the primary texts, and so what can we argue as evidence for such readings except a personal attitude or interpretation? A personal interpretation would thus be superimposed on the text for whoever reads it.

With a Donne poem, however, not only words matter but often so does punctuation, and to offer a text one must also be concerned with spelling, capitalization, italics, indentations, form.

(These likewise may add to or be dependent upon one interpretation or another.) We can note as an example that indention in Grierson's version of "The Flea" differs from that in Gardner's: ll. 1-6 are on the margin in each stanza and ll. 7-9 are indented (Grierson); ll. 2, 4, 6, 8, 9 are on the margin, ll. 1, 3, 5 are indented, and l. 7 is further indented (Gardner). Grierson follows 1633 and various manuscripts; Gardner does not indicate her source and I do not know what it was.<sup>8</sup> At the end of l. 11 Grierson (and 1633) gives a period; Gardner, a colon. Her note suggests that it is an editorial change. Otherwise the punctuation, like Grierson's, is that of 1633 even though, for instance, the comma in l. 20 ("Purpled thy naile, in blood of innocence?") is superfluous.<sup>9</sup> The spelling is that of 1633 as well, though one may wonder about retaining "sodaine," l. 19, and "yeeld'st," l. 26. Not that these are unusual spellings for the time—they are not—but they may represent the spelling of the compositor of 1633 as easily as Donne's or that of whoever was the copyist of its copy-text.<sup>10</sup> What is curious in all this is that Gardner rejects the text of 1633 in some very important verbal and structural ways but follows it almost exactly for accidentals. (She indicates that the text of Songs and Sonnets will be from 1633 unless otherwise stated, p. 29.)

On the other hand, accidentals in manuscript versions are a mixed bag of possible derivation, idiosyncrasy (particularly in spelling), and error (of inconsistency at least); and further, scribes do not usually differentiate italics (which would be written in a different, more open and cursive hand), often employ small letters at the beginning of lines (in such cases normally inconsistently), often do not employ punctuation at the ends of lines (the main exception to this being strong terminal punctuation like a colon or semicolon, although at times what is a strong terminal mark in print is a comma in manuscript, the scribe otherwise seldom using end commas), often capitalize or do not capitalize erratically, and generally use various shorthand forms and abbreviations. Clearly, many of these manuscript readings would not be reproduced in the usual edited text, only in a strictly diplomatic one. One example of the egregious kind of text that would occur were an editor to follow a manuscript version fairly thoroughly is the text presented by Helen Peters in her edition of *Paradoxes and Problems*

(Oxford: Clarendon, 1980). The text of the paradoxes is that of the Westmoreland MS ( $\Delta 19$ , Berg Collection, New York Public Library), except that various changes are made of necessity. Yet, for example, the text of Paradox V, pp. 9-10, gives line 2 as in  $\Delta 19$  ("headlong . . . backward") except that "backward" is printed by itself as runover on the next line since the manuscript version was able to place the word on line 2; line 3 (actually line 4 of printed text) as in  $\Delta 19$ ; line 4 (actually line 5 of printed text) as in  $\Delta 19$ ; line 5 (actually lines 6 and 7 of printed text) as in  $\Delta 19$  ("cowards . . . death") except that "death" is printed by itself on the next line; etc. We get a queer-looking text with lots of white space because someone made the absurd decision to reproduce the manuscript line-for-line as much as possible, even though it was not really possible and even though other changes had to be made in the text.

But aside from such matters of format, questions in following any manuscript text closely are numerous. Here in Paradox V we find spellings like "asmuch," "canons," "solitarynes"; such punctuation as ". . . as backward cowardise. Of which sorte . . ." (making what is one sentence in 1633 two in this edition); "When will your valiant man dye? necessitated?" (see Peters's note, p. 78, for justification) or "what foole will call this cowardlines, valor, or this basenes, humility?" Capitalized are "Valiants," "Spiritt," "Slaves," "Sea," "Cowards," "Allegoricall," "Religion"; not capitalized are "cowardise," two other examples of "cowards," "valor," "humility," and others. Italicized is only the Latin line from Martial; not italicized are "Extreames," "meane," "desperatnes," "valor," "cowardise," "unenforced deathes" (to look only at the first sentence or the first two sentences, ll. 1-3). In *John Donne: Selected Prose*, chosen by Evelyn Simpson and edited by Helen Gardner and Timothy Healy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. 15, the spellings are "as much," "*Cannons*," "solitarinesse"; the punctuation is ". . . as backward *Cowardice*: of which sort . . .," "When will your *valiant* man dye of necessity?" and "What *Foole* will call this *Cowardlinesse*, *Valour*? or this *Basenesse*, *Humility*?". "*Galants*" (given for "Valiants"), "*Cowards*," "*Allegoricall*," and "*Religion*" are capitalized but the others in Peters's text are not. The other foregoing citations of possible capitalizations or italicized words are so given in the Simpson version (based on the 1633 edition of *Juvenilia*).<sup>11</sup> It is certainly possible that  $\Delta 19$  represents the best text in all these matters, but we should not infer therefore that that is what a printed text would be or should be, and we should

not infer that these accidentals represent what Donne wrote or would have wanted to be his text. Rather, the examples of accidentals from just this one paradox suggest that we are getting Rowland Woodward's accidentals, some that he may have copied from his source, and some that are errors or that he simply was not concerned about.<sup>12</sup> For example, he seems to spell "valor," but did Donne? He spells "choke," but may Donne have written "choake"? He writes, "but alas he was mad," but may Donne have put it, "but alas! he was mad"? I do not know the answers to these questions, but they are questions which indicate that the text presented may be one illustrating idiosyncrasy, error, inconsistency, and unconcern on the part of the scribe in matters such as an edition must be concerned with.

A transcription of an epigram from the Denbigh MS (Group II) and the O'Flahertie MS (Group III), considered "good" manuscripts, will illustrate the point that close transcription from a manuscript will not necessarily give us a totally satisfactory text. But neither do 1633 and subsequent editions necessarily give us a totally satisfactory text that we can be assured was Donne's text. At best, 1633 is another version of text, not only with no real authority, but in certain ways with less authority. For between what might have been the copy manuscript text and the printed text has come a printer, who frequently has sophisticated the text or otherwise altered it.

*Δ7 (Denbigh MS)*

Niobe.

By Childrens birth, and death I am become  
So dry, that I am now myne owne Tombe

*Δ17 (O'Flahertie MS)*

Niobe.

By Childrens birth and death I am become  
So drye, that I am now made mine owne Tombe

1633<sup>13</sup>

Niobe.

By childrens births, and death, I am become  
So dry, that I am now mine owne sad tombe.

The manuscripts generally capitalize "Childrens" although there is no logical reason for it. The singular "birth" is consistently the reading of the manuscripts and is logical in conjunction with the singular "death," which is consistent in all texts. The comma after "birth" is not unusual in Renaissance pointing of a simple compound, and does appear more often in the manuscripts than not. But the comma after "death" seems like an editorial change on the part of the 1633 editor since it does not occur in the manuscripts and it seems to be intended to clarify reading. The spelling "dry" occurs in other manuscripts, as does "drie," and "drye" is also found. The spelling "myne" and the lack of a period at the end (a common omission) may be dismissed. The last word is capitalized in some but not all manuscripts. The verbal problem lies in the reading "now made mine owne tombe" or "now mine owne sad tombe." Perhaps what happened is that "sad" was omitted from the ancestor of Group II MSS (including the Denbigh), and the ancestor of the Group III MSS (including O'Flahertie) as well as  $\Delta 19$ , the Westmoreland MS, compensated by adding "made."<sup>14</sup> Apparently because "made" occurs in  $\Delta 19$  and "sad" is omitted, Wesley Milgate prints that reading in his edition of the epigrams. I find it difficult to accept "made" as artistically significant, let alone as meaningful, for "made" implies a maker rather than simply transformation. "Sad" may be redundant with "tomb" in many situations, but here I read it as emphasizing her "sadness" as well as indicating that "tomb" is really metaphoric. The epigram does not seem to be alluding to the mythological explanation that the gods changed Niobe into a rock; the rock continued to weep. The epigram seems to be trying to get at the metaphoric importance of the tale: when one boasts, adversity may bring such sadness in the removal of that of which one boasted that he/she becomes an insensate thing. There is a play between water imagery (generative) and stone (a part of earth but unregenerative), and between womb (generative) and tomb (unregenerative).

Do we without alteration follow one specific manuscript? Do we without alteration follow a printed text? Do we confound the two and with what specific justifications? The previous discussion suggests that this be the proffered text of this epigram:

By childrens birth, and death I am become  
So dry, that I am now mine owne sad tombe.



This differs from 1633 in two instances, from the Denbigh MS in five instances, and from the O'Flahertie MS in six instances.<sup>15</sup>

A transcription of a few lines from a different poem from three different manuscripts, compared with the printed editions, presents like conclusions:

1633

*Elegie V.*

Here take my Picture, though I bid farewell;  
Thine, in my heart, where my soule dwels, shall dwell:  
... When weather-beaten I come backe; my hand,  
Perhaps with rude oares torne, or Sun beams tann'd,  
My face and brest of hairecloth, and my head  
With cares rash sodaine stormes, being o'rspread, ...  
(ll. 1-2, 5-8)

$\Delta 1$  (*Dowden MS*)

Here take my Picture, though I bid farewell,  
Thyne in my Hart, wher my Soule dwells shall dwell;  
... When weatherbeaten I come backe, my hand  
Perhaps wth rude Oares torne, or sunbeames tand;  
My face, and brest of hayrecloth, and my head  
Wth Cares rash todayne stormes orespredd, ...

$\Delta 9$  (*Puckering MS*)

Here take my Picture though I bid farewell  
Thine in my hart where my Soule dwells shall dwell  
... When weather-beaten I come back, my hand  
Perhaps wth rude oares torne, or Sun-beames tann'd  
My face, & breast of hairecloth, & my head  
Wth cares rash sudden stormes being o'rspread; ...

$\Delta 27$  (*John Cave MS*)

Heer take my picture; though I bid farwell  
Thine in my harte where my soule dwells shall dwell  
... When weatherbeaten I come backe, my hand  
Perchance wth rude oares torne, or sunn beames  
tan'd

My face & brest of hayrecloath & my head  
 Wth cares rash suddayne horinesse o'respread: . . .

The commas after "Thine" and "dwels" would seem to be sophistications by the 1633 printer, and the semicolon after "backe" an example of his heavy and even erroneous punctuation. The hyphen in "weather-beaten" may come from a Group II source, and other accidentals and spellings in the 1633 text have precedent, or partial precedent, in some manuscript or are simple enough variants (like "heart" or "Sun" or the comma after "hand"). An editor, however, must present some text, logically one derived for the most part from the same copy text throughout rather than an eclectic one made by picking and choosing what he/she wishes. Do we stay with the 1633 text or one of the manuscript texts? How and why do we alter the text we choose?

Line 8 in Group I is defective (as well as in some Group V MSS); Δ 27 as well as Group III and other Group V MSS fill out the line by replacing "stormes" with "horinesse"; and Group II sophisticates by adding "being."<sup>16</sup> Which was Donne's line? I cannot believe that he wrote the weak and padded "stormes, being" of Group II. "Horinesse" sounds right for the way in which cares may suddenly cause whitening of the hair and an old look to come into the face. "Stormes," also, makes sense, but the line is thereby defective. Do we let it stand or do we replace it with "horinesse"? Gardner prints "hoarinesse" from the O'Flahertie, Westmoreland, and John Cave MSS, as well as "Perchance" in line 6 from the Westmoreland, Additional 25707, and John Cave MSS. She chooses "perchance," apparently because of reliance on the Westmoreland MS and because "There is no other example of 'perhaps' in the *Concordance*" (p. 144). She explains "horines / stormes" as a scribal misreading of the former; but might it not have gone the other way? The answer may rest on how we read "rash suddayne horinesse" but also on whether we will allow a defective line.<sup>17</sup> A relationship between 1633 and Group II, however, seems certain, not only because of the foregoing, but because of line 16, "now," which appears only in Group II MSS and 1633, and "like and" (with elision), which we find in the other manuscripts. We may thus dismiss "stormes, being" in 1633 as deriving from Group II, and reject Group II because other manuscript evidence is against it—except that "stormes" by itself is also the reading of Group I and some Group V MSS.

I turn to three other, related, problems in creating an edited text: the order of the poems within a generic category and then the order of generic categories in a complete, single-volume edition, and the generic classification of certain poems. Anyone who has paid attention to Donne's Holy Sonnets is aware that the order in which the sonnets appear casts "meanings" upon them. The order has depended upon placement in early editions or manuscripts or on proffered dating. The order of other subgenres must also be attended to in producing an edition (particularly since most poems, not being firmly datable, cannot be arranged chronologically), as well as the order of the subgenres in a collected edition. Obviously the poems must be presented in some kind of order and arrangement, although little attention seems to have been given this by Donne's editors. Donne's epithalamia may at first seem to pose no problem since there are only three and these are datable: "Epithalamion made at Lincolnes Inne," probably June 1595; "An Epithalamion, Or marriage Song on the Lady *Elizabeth*, and *Count Palatine* being married on St. *Valentines* day," 14 February 1613; and "Ecclogue" and "Epithalamion . . . at the mariage Of the Earle of Sommerset," 26 December 1613. An obvious order is chronological if an editor decides to group the subgenres and casts the first poem here as a legitimate epithalamion. But it is a mock poem (in lampoon of Spenser's *Epithalamion* which had been published earlier in the year) for a college revels,<sup>18</sup> taking on, thus, what should better be considered satire (it is not a verse satire, of course), just as the epigrams are satiric though in different generic form. The grouping of this particular poem, therefore, represents an editor's reading of it or editorial tradition, and subtly implies how the reader is to treat it.

Group I MSS omit the Lincoln's Inn epithalamion along with the epigrams, and the first edition of 1633 adds it from a Group II MS as it does the epigrams. (It is possible, though not demonstrated, that 1633 may derive from a copy text which was a conflation of a Group I and a Group II manuscript. Generally, 1633 has been thought of as derived from Group I with poems from Group II added.) The order of the three epithalamia in 1633 is "Elizabeth" (pp. 118-22), "Somerset" (pp. 123-35), and "Lincolnes Inne" (pp. 135-38). The first two are given together in Group I, except for Δ3, which separates them by other poems. Group II

MSS copy "Lincolnes Inne" after the epigrams and follow it immediately by "Somerset." "Elizabeth" precedes the epigrams but is separated from them by other poems in  $\Delta 9$  and  $\Delta 14$ , and is omitted in  $\Delta 7$  and  $\Delta 13$ .  $\Delta 10$ , interestingly, separates the epigrams and "Lincolnes Inne" by many poems (all songs and sonnets) and omits the other two epithalamia.<sup>19</sup> There is a break in the manuscript after "Lincolnes Inne" and then epicedes, divine poems, and verse letters follow. Group III and Group V MSS and their adjuncts are most various (1633 following the order of  $\Delta 16$ ):

Group III unites all three epithalamia:

- $\Delta 15$  Somerset, Elizabeth, Lincolnes Inne
- $\Delta 16$  Elizabeth, Somerset, Lincolnes Inne
- $\Delta 17, \Delta 18$  Elizabeth, Lincolnes Inne, Somerset

In Group V and others,

- $\Delta 24$  separates all three: Elizabeth (two spurious poems), Somerset (many poems), epigrams and Lincolnes Inne
- $\Delta 51$  has only two: Elizabeth (many poems), Somerset<sup>20</sup>
- $\Delta 20, \Delta 30$  have only two: Lincolnes Inne (many poems), Elizabeth
- $\Delta 60$  has only two: Lincolnes Inne, Somerset.<sup>21</sup>

It seems reasonable to conclude that at one time "Lincolnes Inne" was attached to the epigrams. Such is the evidence of Group II MSS,  $\Delta 24$ , and  $\Delta 20$  and  $\Delta 30$ , where it follows "Pyramus and Thisbe," and is hinted at by its omission from Group I, which also omits all epigrams.<sup>22</sup> Obviously there is no standard order except that "Elizabeth" precedes "Somerset" in some way in 1633, Group I, Group II,  $\Delta 16$ ,  $\Delta 17$ ,  $\Delta 18$ ,  $\Delta 24$ ,  $\Delta 51$ ; places are reversed only in  $\Delta 15$ .

Position of this subgeneric category of poems in collections is inconsistent: 1633 and  $\Delta 18$  put them after verse letters; 1635 and  $\Delta 16$  after elegies,  $\Delta 15$  placing them amidst elegies and epicedes; Group I and  $\Delta 17$  have them after songs and sonnets, followed by epigrams in  $\Delta 17$ ; and Group II generally shows them after the epigrams.<sup>23</sup> If we relate "Lincolnes Inne" to the epigrams and keep the epithalamia as a group, we might put them after the epigrams. If we emphasize the epithalamic tradition for the three poems as a group, we might put them after the songs and sonnets. In any case the order is not without its uncertainties.

Or, as another example of a seemingly easy grouping, the satires. The usual order (and numbering) is that of 1633, Group I, Group IV, and some Group V or associated manuscripts.<sup>24</sup> Group II MSS place the second after the spurious sixth satire, and Group III and some associated manuscripts reverse the first two.<sup>25</sup> Thus the usual arrangement and numbering is the most evidential.<sup>26</sup>

The position of the satires as a group in collections is first in Group I (except for  $\Delta 4$ ), Group II, Group IV, and various Group V MSS. Their position is various in 1635-69 and in other Group V MSS, and after at least some of the divine poems (and others) in 1633,  $\Delta 4$ , and Group III. The evidence points to their appearing first in a collected edition, and the probability that Group I derives from a manuscript produced around 1614 just before Donne's ordination emboldens that decision. The satires had circulated as a group previously and had brought Donne reputation as a poet; this arrangement capitalizes upon that public awareness.<sup>27</sup> Thus Grierson's placement of them after the epithalamia and before the verse letters and A. J. Smith's after the epigrams and before *Metempsychosis* and the verse letters have no textual basis.<sup>28</sup> They both, undoubtedly, started with the songs and sonnets because of their reputation in the twentieth century, thus placing the satires somewhere else.

One other question on arrangement of poems exists for some of them: generic classification. Two examples will suffice. "Image of her whom I love" is printed in 1633 after "The Autumnall," which is preceded by verse letters, epithalamia, an epicede, and an elegy, and just before an epicede, a divine poem, and another epicede. 1635 gives it among the elegies, but preceded by "The Autumnall" and followed by an epicede. Groups I and III MSS copy it among the songs and sonnets; Group II MSS, with elegies and songs and sonnets; Group V, with an important exception, among songs and sonnets, although at times other kinds are close by. The exception is the Stephens MS ( $\Delta 23$ ), which has it among the numbered elegies, labelling it number ten with the title "Picture." 1635 calls it "Elegy X. The Dreame," which is the title used by Grierson. Its form (pentameters with alternating rhyme, ending in a couplet) and treatment are definitely not those of the love elegy (pentameter couplets) but are those of the songs and sonnets. Grierson follows 1635; Smith follows Grierson, except that he prints it in varying stanzas, following partially Roger E.

Bennett; Gardner puts it with songs and sonnets, titling it "Image and Dream" in brackets, and in stanzas; and I include it in the songs and sonnets with only part of the first line as quoted title, and in stanzas.<sup>29</sup>

The manuscript evidence of position and the poem itself in form and treatment classify it under songs and sonnets; the form and that classification indicate that it should be printed in stanzaic form. (Bennett's and Smith's confounding of position and form suggests inattention to what an elegy is.) The significance of genre is, of course, what it tells the reader about the way the author thought of its being read; even when we deconstruct the poem, our reading of it places it as lyric genre, not as love elegy.<sup>30</sup>

The classification of "You that are she" is specifically difficult. 1633 prints it after an epicede, which is preceded by songs and sonnets, and before a love elegy, a song and sonnet, and two divine poems. Its title is "*Elegie to the Lady Bedford.*" 1635, Δ17, and its cognate Δ18 give it among the verse letters, where it is called "To the Lady Bedford." In Δ14 (Group II) it is preceded by the same epicede as in 1633, which is preceded by songs and sonnets and epicedes mixed; it is followed by songs and sonnets. In Δ8 (Group II adjunct) it is preceded and followed by epicedes, but songs and sonnets are close at hand. The title in both these manuscripts is similar to that in 1633. (Again we see a relationship between 1633 and Group II for some poems.) Group I MSS do not include the poem, but Δ2, an adjunct to that group (although we have already noted an affinity with Group II), has it mixed with epicedes and songs and sonnets. The Group V MSS are even more curious: Δ23 and Δ51 present it as a love elegy; Δ20, Δ25, and Δ30 have it among epicedes, songs and sonnets, and love elegies. Only Δ22 places it squarely as an epicede. The subject is someone who has died and thus the classification as epicede is appropriate; the title "elegy" clearly does not mean love elegy, despite Δ23 and Δ51. However, the treatment is not dissimilar to that of a verse letter; yet only the cognates Δ17 and Δ18 so place it, and 1635, which often derives from a copy text similar to them, repeats this. The evidence of placement in the manuscripts, therefore, while confused, gives more weight to the poem's being an epicede, and the subject matter agrees. Grierson, Milgate, and Smith print it as a verse letter with the 1635 title; I print it as an epicede with the 1633 title. Wherever it is placed, not everyone will be satisfied,

and the major significance for either placement is the kind of reading that such generic classification implies for the reader.

But what if we had a manuscript in Donne's holograph? Would our problems be solved? Well, no, they would not be, though some Donne scholars express dismay at such a statement. Probably they have not edited anything other than from direct printed texts, and maybe not even looked at or studied a seventeenth-century manuscript. We might, with a holograph, at least achieve verbal reliance, although we should recognize that varying versions of a poem could represent authorial recensions of that poem.<sup>31</sup> If we examine the evidence of the two Latin epigrams in Donne's hand, we can recognize some of the problems. The four-line epigram in Scaliger's *De emendatione temporum* gives the first word of the second line with a small letter, *præmia*. Or is it a capital as apparently Milgate and I independently read it previously? We both capitalize and neither gives a note. But it certainly looks like a small *p*. The holograph gives *conantur* in line 3 as *conãtʹ*, which is the way I print it, but Milgate expands it without a note. We differ on the punctuation mark after *tempora* in line 1. I read and print a semicolon; Milgate, a comma. My rechecking of the holograph convinces me that it is a semicolon, which also makes syntactic sense. However, I formerly read *Supplicium* with a small *s*; I now think it is a capital. Milgate read it as a capital. The two-line epigram in Covell's *A Defence of . . . Hooker* was first published in Edmund Gosse's *Life and Letters of John Donne* (London: William Heinemann, 1899; I, 270) with three alterations; Milgate's and my texts are the same and without these alterations. The problems if we had holographs would probably include, in addition to questions of accuracy on Donne's part, consistencies, and completeness in such matters as elisions, questions of short forms and of the validity of readings, particularly of spellings, punctuation, and capital or lower case letters.

The manuscript of the verse letter to Lady Carey and Mrs. Riche now in the Bodleian Library, the only poem in Donne's hand aside from the two epigrammatic inscriptions just noted, poses many questions for the text. Should *schisme* be *Scisme* as Donne wrote it? Do we print *is* and *it* consistently as *ys* and *yt* in this poem? Donne gives *yt* three times and *ytt* once. Do we change the latter to *yt*? and what do we do in other texts that may

have *it*, *itt*, *ytt*? He uses *ys* consistently here except that the seemingly like *Tis* occurs twice. Did he spell these forms differently? or do the spellings that we have here come by way of offhand practice at that specific point in time? Do we really want to print *Thay?* and *Doe-bakd?* Helen Gardner is quite correct in noting that Donne's punctuation in this holograph is heavy,<sup>32</sup> but do we really want to print the indefensible semicolon after *you* in line 13—"That ys, of yo<sup>w</sup>; who are a firmament / Of vertues"—or the meaningless capital of *Harmelesnes* in line 20—"In Doe-bakd men, some Harmelesnes wee see"? And there is that big question: how much extrapolation do we engage in on the basis of this our only holograph English poem? Should words like *flat* all be spelled with double *t*? (*Shott?* *satt?* surely not *thatt?*) Do we use lots of capitals on words like *soul* and *ornament* and *humility* and *circumstantial*? Do we throw in punctuation because Donne's here is heavy?

Some of the problems of reading the handwriting with certainty, noted above, are demonstrated in Nicolas Barker's discussion of Gardner's edition of this holograph manuscript.<sup>33</sup> He makes corrections but he also raises questions; for instance, of commas and of capitals, and whether it should be "Religions" as in all other known texts or "Religious" in line 29 ("Spirituell *Cholerique* Crytiques, which in all / Religions find faults, . . ."), for the holograph could be either an *n* or a *u*.

I suppose someone has to edit Donne's poems, and I suppose all we can do is hope that all the evidence will be examined and weighed objectively before decisions are made. But very frequently one will find, I am sorry to warn, that the editor is going to have to step in and make sense of a line, is going to have to interfere. And whatever textual conclusion is made, it is going to be an unsatisfactory compromise for some readers. At least let us hope that we will not have a resurgence of such textual ignorance as shown by those who wish to return to Grierson's often misleading and subjective text, or who criticize prejudiciously Gardner's text because she has had the courage to make decisions.



## NOTES

1 Any revisions that Donne may have made in any of his poems must be inferred from variant readings. We have only three poems in the full canon in his hand (to be discussed later); we have no evidence of revision, and once revision is inferred, possible dates and reasons for such alleged revisions must likewise be inferred.

2 See the listings by Peter Beal in *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (London: Mansell, 1980), Vol. I, Part 1.

3 Currently a group of scholars is engaged in producing the first variorum edition of Donne's poems, under the general editorship of Gary Stringer. Collations of texts of all early printings and of all known (and available) manuscripts are being prepared. The nature of the text to be printed with this variorum edition will be decided upon after all collations have been gathered and a fuller study of the stemmata of the texts than heretofore reported has been completed. The present paper is both an indication of the difficulties the variorum editors will encounter and an attempt to suggest that whatever that text will be, it, like *all* that have preceded it, will be a compromise that will satisfy some scholars and not satisfy others.

4 These respective readings have been confirmed for  $\Delta$  6,  $\Delta$  10,  $\Delta$  18,  $\Delta$  29, and  $\Delta$  30. I have not seen  $\Delta$  11 and  $\Delta$  12.

5 These manuscripts are: MS CCC.E.327 (Fulham MS, Corpus Christi College MS, Bodleian Library,  $\Delta$  36), Rawlinson Poetical MS 117 (Wase MS, Bodleian Library,  $\Delta$  39), Egerton MS 2230 (Glover MS, British Library,  $\Delta$  42), Stowe MS 962 (British Library,  $\Delta$  44), MS Ee.4.14 (Moore MS, Cambridge University Library,  $\Delta$  46), MS V.a.103 (Thomas Smyth MS, Folger Shakespeare Library,  $\Delta$  48), MS 6504 (Wedderburn MS, National Library of Scotland,  $\Delta$  55), MS Grey 7 a 29 (South African Public Library, Capetown,  $\Delta$  60), Monckton-Milnes MS (privately owned and unavailable,  $\Delta$  63), 1633 *Poems* with emendations by John Crynes (St. John's College Library, Cambridge,  $\Delta$  67), Malone MS 19 (Bodleian Library), Rawlinson Poetical MS 172 (Bodleian Library), MS V.a.170 (Folger Shakespeare Library), MS 243/4 (Rosenbach Collection), MS S288 (Hugh Barrow MS, Arents Collection, New York Public Library), MS f b66 (James Osborn Collection), and MS f b88 (James Osborn Collection).

6 Gardner (*Elegies*, p. lxvi) says that  $\Delta$  2 reads consistently with Group I MSS except for "The Flea."

7 "Confesse it" is not really parallel with the imperatives "Marke . . . marke" of line 1; their tones are most dissimilar.

8 A sample of manuscripts shows general inconsistency.  $\Delta$  1 (Group I) varies the three stanzas: Stanza 1, ll. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 on margin; 7, doubly indented; 9, indented. Stanza 2, ll. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9 on margin; 3 doubly indented; 6, indented. Stanza 3, ll. 1, 2, 4, 8, 9 on margin; 3, 5, 6 indented; 7, doubly indented.  $\Delta$  2 (adjunct to Group I but "The Flea" reads with Group II) shows ll. 1, 2, 5, 6 on margin; 3, 4, 7, 8, 9 indented, which form is also found in  $\Delta$  9 (Group II).  $\Delta$  18 (Group III) indents as in 1633.

9  $\Delta$  18 has the comma, whereas  $\Delta$  1,  $\Delta$  2,  $\Delta$  9 give no punctuation.

10  $\Delta$  1 and  $\Delta$  2 similarly spell "sodayne";  $\Delta$  9 and  $\Delta$  18 have "suddaine."  $\Delta$  1 and  $\Delta$  2 give "yeildst";  $\Delta$  9, "yeild'st"; and  $\Delta$  18, "yealdst."

11 Peters notes (p. 77) that she departs from the reading of  $\Delta$  19 twice: l. 17, "Why do they chaine these Slaves" rather than "their Slaves"; and ll. 14-15, "a brave, a fiery sparkling, and a climbing resolution" rather than "a very braue, and a very clyminge," saying that "a phrase which is omitted in *W* has been supplied from the text in *Bur*." "The remaining witnesses," she tells us (p. 79), "omit 'fiery sparkling' and 'resolution' but include 'climbing'." They read nonsense: "and this seems a very braue, and a very clyminge which . . ." She has inserted commas after "brave," "sparkling," and "resolution." She respells "tought" as "taught," and one wonders why in a so-called old-spelling text for students of the seventeenth century. Simpson, Gardner, and Healy also spell "taught." *Bur* is  $\Delta$  53, the Burley MS (DG7/Lit. 2, Leicestershire Record Office).

12 In the matter of verbal differences, note the singular "misery" (l. 8) and "reputation" (l. 12); "lashe" (l. 18), which is "loose" or "task" in other texts; "that" (l. 21); "strive" (l. 25), which is not given in other texts and is not necessary to the sense; "stop" (l. 26); "those" (l. 32); "that" (l. 33); and "of" (l. 35). To repeat myself, "what is the text Donne wrote or that he thought of as the intended final text?"

13 1669 often "modernizes" the text as here by deleting redundant final "e": "own" and "tomb."

14 Of course, it is possible that the copy text for Group II read "now made mine owne Tombe" and "made" was dropped; and that Group III derived from a cognate copy text.

15 It differs from  $\Delta$  19 in five specifics:  $\Delta$  19 has "&," "I ame," "yt," "now made," and "sad" omitted.

16 The Phillipps ( $\Delta$  20) and Bridgewater ( $\Delta$  24) MSS fill out the line by adding "cruel" in different positions.

17 The last line of the poem appears to be hypermetric ("To feed on that, which to disus'd tastes seemes tough") until we elide "to," whereby the rhythm also becomes normal.

18 See David Novarr, "Donne's 'Epithalamion Made at Lincoln's Inn': Context and Date," *RES* n.s. 7 (1956), 250-63.

19 Other manuscripts in which only one epithalamion appears are: "Lincolnes Inne,"  $\Delta$  19; Edward Hyde MS (owned by the late Sir Geoffrey Keynes and now in Cambridge University Library,  $\Delta$  52); Additional MS 34744 (West Papers XVIII, British Library). "Elizabeth,"  $\Delta$  21;  $\Delta$  26;  $\Delta$  27; MS D25, F17 (Nedham MS, Victoria and Albert Museum,  $\Delta$  28); MS J1583 (St. John MS, Bedfordshire Record Office,  $\Delta$  35);  $\Delta$  39; Harleian MS 3511 (Capell MS, British Library,  $\Delta$  43);  $\Delta$  45; MS 41 (Morley MS, Westminster Abbey Library,  $\Delta$  62); MS English Poet. e.37 (Bodleian Library); Rawlinson Poet. MS 142 (Bodleian Library); Rawlinson Poet. MS 160 (Bodleian Library); MS b 197 (James Osborn Collection). "Somerset," MS HM 198, Book I (Haslewood-Kingsborough MS, Huntington Library,  $\Delta$  25); Additional MS 23229 (Conway Papers, British Library,  $\Delta$  40); MS 1083/16 (Bishop MS, Rosenbach Collection,  $\Delta$  59); MS D258/28/5i (Derbyshire Record Office); MS Laing III.436 (Edinburgh University Library); MS b 205 (James Osborn Collection).

20  $\Delta$  51 is the Utterson MS, English MS 966.7 (formerly Norton MS 4620) in Harvard University Library.

21 The Grey MS ( $\Delta$  60) shows affinities with Group II MSS in other poems. Perhaps the omission of "Elizabeth" is evidence of a relationship with  $\Delta$  7 and  $\Delta$  13, which are cognate (see Grierson, II, xciv).

22 Of the three manuscripts including only "Lincolnes Inne,"  $\Delta$  19 also records epigrams.

23 These statements are generally true, but there are certain details to note; for example,  $\Delta$  16 transcribes another elegy after the epithalamia and that is followed by verse letters.

24 In Group I ( $\Delta$  1,  $\Delta$  3,  $\Delta$  4,  $\Delta$  5,  $\Delta$  6),  $\Delta$  3 omitting Satire 5; in Group IV ( $\Delta$  19, listed as a separate group by Gardner, but associated with Group III); in Group V or associated MSS ( $\Delta$  23,  $\Delta$  27,  $\Delta$  28,  $\Delta$  29,  $\Delta$  51), and  $\Delta$  32, MS 216, Queen's College Library, Oxford;  $\Delta$  33, MS D25, F16, Neve MS Dyce Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum; and  $\Delta$  34, Heneage MS (in private hands).  $\Delta$  40 probably originally had all five satires in this usual order; only ll. 203-44 of Satire 4 and all of Satire 5 remain in the manuscript.  $\Delta$  31, Harleian MS 5110 (British Library), has the first three in order;  $\Delta$  46, the first two.  $\Delta$  21 gives the fourth satire first;  $\Delta$  22 omits the fifth and reverses the third and fourth.

25 Group II MSS ( $\Delta$  9 and  $\Delta$  14).  $\Delta$  11 omits the first and copies 3, 4, 5, 2 in order; similarly  $\Delta$  8 has the arrangement 3, 4, 5, 2, poem, "6," 1. Group III and associated manuscripts ( $\Delta$  17,  $\Delta$  18,  $\Delta$  24,  $\Delta$  44).  $\Delta$  15 gives only 2, 1, and 4; and  $\Delta$  16

arranges them 1, 5, "6," 4, 2, 3. Related to the Group II arrangement is that in two cognate Group V MSS: 2, prose, 1, 3, 5, 4, other poems ( $\Delta$  20); 1, 3, 5, 4, other poems, 2, prose ( $\Delta$  30).

26 Other transcriptions of the satires will be found in  $\Delta$  53, Satire 4;  $\Delta$  54 (MS 2067, Hawthornden MS XV, National Library of Scotland), 2 and 4;  $\Delta$  55, 2 and 4; Ashmole MS 38 (Bodleian Library), 4; MS PwV 191 (University of Nottingham Library), 4. Additionally, there are emendations for Satires 2-5 in Nathaniel Crynes's copy of the 1633 *Poems* ( $\Delta$  67).

27 See also my discussion in "All Attest His Writs Canonical: The Texts, Meaning and Evaluation of Donne's Satires," in *Just So Much Honor*, ed. Peter A. Fiore (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1972), pp. 245-47.

28 A. J. Smith, ed., *John Donne: The Complete English Poems* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974).

29 Bennett, ed., *The Complete Poems of John Donne* (Chicago: Packard, 1942); Shawcross, ed., *The Complete Poetry of John Donne* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1967). When it is titled in manuscript or the editions, it is called "Elegy" or in  $\Delta$  23, also "Picture," but usually the manuscripts give no title. The stanzaic form in Smith yields the odd and unlikely 8 lines, 4 lines, 4 lines, 4 lines, 4 lines, and 2 lines. Bennett's, Gardner's, and my stanzas are logical and consistent: 8 lines, 8 lines, 8 lines, and 2 lines. All print alternate lines indented except for the final couplet.

30 Compare Jaques Derrida, "La Loi Du Genre / The Law of Genre," trans. Avital Ronell, *Glyph* 7 (1980), 176-232.

31 Can we be sure, for example, that the two versions of "Epitaph on Himselfe" (ll. 1-16 and 7-24) do not represent two poems written by Donne at different times? Should they be compounded into one, or presented as two separate poems in spite of the repetition of ll. 7-16? Now that we have two separate transcriptions of "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward," apparently in the hand of Sir Nicholas Rich and probably penned prior to 1617, can we allow that Donne first wrote (l. 5) "And being thereby whyrled every day" and that "And being by others hurried every day" is a recension? Or that "There should I" (l. 11) found here and in such manuscripts as  $\Delta$  6 and  $\Delta$  17 is a recension of "There I should," the reading of the editions and such manuscripts as  $\Delta$  4,  $\Delta$  14, and  $\Delta$  15? Or are all these matters scribal errors or alterations?

32 Helen Gardner, ed., *John Donne's Holograph of "A Letter to the Lady Carey and Mrs Essex Riche"* (London: Scolar Mansell, 1972), p. 7.

33 Nicolas Barker, "Donne's 'Letter to the Lady Carey and Mrs. Essex Riche': Text and Facsimile," *Book Collector* 22 (1973), 487-93.