POEMS.

By J. D.

WITH

ELEGIES

ON THE AUTHORS

DEATH.

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Elegies Upon the Author: Defining, Defending, and Surviving Donne

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So much has been made of Thomas Carew's brilliant poem "An Elegie upon the death of the Deane of Pauls, Dr. John Donne" that we tend to neglect the other *Elegies Upon the Author* appended to the early editions of Donne's poems. Although these elegies appear at the end of the volume, they are a featured part, announced prominently on the title page—which reads "POEMS, / By J.D. / WITH / ELEGIES / ON THE AUTHORS / DEATH"—and they take up fully thirty-four pages of the 1633 edition. Carew's has been found to be the only poem of this group worth repeated attention, and it has endured in large part because of its convincing way of fixing Donne in formulated phrases: "fresh invention," "rich and pregnant phansie," "masculine expression," and "imperious wit" remain the almost inescapable terms of Donne's poetic legacy. But it is worth recalling that the early response to Donne's life, death, and art is captured cumulatively in the entire series of elegies, not just Carew's. Even the lesser efforts are quite informative, as they show much about Donne and his contemporary reputation that Carew does not, and provide an extremely revealing context for Carew's elegy, highlighting certain themes and strategies in his poem that might otherwise be overlooked or discounted. All the elegists attempt to define or characterize Donne, but what becomes more apparent as we read through the series is the extent to which they envision Donne set in numerous controversies and feel it necessary to defend him. In addition, many of the elegies raise the problem not only of writing an elegy on Donne but writing poetry at all after his death.[1] Particularly when read against this background, Carew's elegy takes on new importance as one of the first great poems on what has since his time become known as "The Burden of the Past and the English Poet."

Ironically, the harshest comments on the *Elegies Upon the Author* seem to come from the scholars who have done most to preserve and make them accessible. Both H. J. C. Grierson and W. Milgate print these elegies in their editions of Donne, but do not hesitate to call them "very bad," dull, and occasionally "tasteless."[2] A. J. Smith includes the elegies in his *John Donne: The Critical Heritage*, but introduces them rather unenthusiastically: "Both the number and the quality of the tributes to Donne assembled in the volume indicate that the publication was no ordinary event; though rather few of the elegists actually mention his poetry, let alone praise particular poems, and only one of them presents him as something other than a great divine who expressed his piety in verse."[3]

The image of Donne as a remarkable preacher is surely very strong in the elegies, but on the whole Smith's statement is somewhat unfair. Several of the elegists, such as Bishop Corbet and Izaak Walton, take stock of Donne in ways that are hardly illuminating, but Carew is not the only one who gives useful critical comments or valuable responses to Donne's poetry. Jasper Mayne, for example, praises Donne's copiousness and apparently effortless artistry in a couplet that is an implicit rebuke to anyone claiming to see only untuned "roughness" in Donne's verses: "So learned was thy chance; thy haste had wit, / And matter from thy pen flow'd rashly fit."[4] (Carew, like Henry King, whose elegy may have influenced him in this regard, praises Donne's richness—he "open'd Us a Mine" [37]—but does not emphasize his easy and natural spontaneity; Mayne, on the contrary, notes four times [ll. 24, 31, 54, and 73] that Donne "flowed.") Similarly, Arthur Wilson perceives that there is somewhat more of a "straine" (45) behind Donne's poetry than Mayne cares to notice, but uses the multiple meaning of this word to suggest that music and harmony as well as "nervy strength" stand together in the works "that issued from thy brain" (46); even the satires are described as "nimble" (45). Wilson's larger concern is to praise Donne's refining power, evident not only in "thy diviner Poems (whose cleare fire / Purges all drosse away)" (49-50) but in the many subjects touched by his "fancie": "What ever was of worth in this great Frame, / That Art could comprehend, or Wit could name, / It was thy theme for Beauty" (41-43). And Henry Valentine takes yet another approach to what Wilson calls Donne's "flaming raptures" (35), focusing not on the transformation of earthly objects into golden artifacts, but rather on the animating influence of Donne's poems

on his readers. This idea is also central to Carew, but Valentine develops it in his own particularly interesting way, a point that I will return to later.

The tributes to Donne's animating power and forceful presence often picture him in his role as preacher rather than poet, but these can still be valuable to a literary critic. No matter what one's special interest in Donne may be, it is worthwhile to study what may be first-hand reports in these elegies of Dean Donne at work. R.B.'s description may be drawn from real-life experience or an imaginative composition of place, but in either event it captures Donne's ability to inspire, not tire, his audience:

> Mee thinkes I see him in the pulpit standing,
> Not eares, or eyes, but all mens hearts commanding,
> Where wee that heard him, to our selves did faine
> Golden Chrysostome was alive againe;
> And never were we weari'd, till we saw
> His houre (and but an houre) to end did draw. (27-32)

Similarly, for Mayne Donne's dramatic movements are as important as his words, and though literal truth is not always to be expected in an elegy, Mayne presents his comments as direct observations:

> Yet have I seene thee in the pulpit stand,
> Where wee might take notes, from thy looke, and
> hand;
> And from thy speaking action beare away
> More Sermon, then some teachers use to say.
> Such was thy carriage, and thy gesture such,
> As could divide the heart, and conscience touch.
> Thy motion did confute, and we might see
> An errour vanquish'd by delivery. (57-64)

Lucius Cary goes even further than Mayne in stressing the grandeur of Donne's holy appearance:

> Nor was there expectation to gaine grace
> From forth his Sermons only, but his face;
> So Primitive a looke, such gravitie
> With humblenesse, and both with Pietie;
> So milde was Moses countenance, when he prai'd
> For them whose Satanisme his power gainsaid;
> And such his gravitie, when all Gods band
> Receiv'd his word (through him) at second hand,

Which joyn'd, did flames of more devotion move
Then ever Argive Hellens could of love. (65-74)

These tributes are predictably hyperbolic descriptions of Donne, perhaps without a great deal of critical import. But it is especially in the more elaborate analyses of Donne's sermons that the elegists' treatment of Donne as a preacher becomes relevant to our understanding of his poetry. Intentionally or not, the terms used to describe and praise the distinctive power of Donne's sermons work just as well when applied to his poems. We must be careful not to confuse or conflate the sermons and poems: they are (or derive from), to use Carew's image, separate "flames" (cf. ll. 14 and 21 of his elegy). At the same time, however, as even this image suggests, the two genres have much in common, and a number of the comments on his sermons may be read profitably as a kind of deflected or oblique literary criticism.

The elegies by Sidney Godolphin and John Chudleigh (added to the 1635 edition of Donne's *Poems*) are especially rich in this kind of criticism. Throughout Godolphin's "Elegy on D.D.," for example, there is a purposeful ambiguity or blurring of focus, such that the words of praise encompass Donne as both preacher and poet. Like many modern readers, Godolphin is struck by Donne's penetrating psychological insight and effect. Midway in the poem he sets Donne in the pulpit and calls him a "Pious dissector" (23), but certainly the reader is expected to recall that Donne was an "anatomist" in his poems as well as in his sermons. If we did not know that the following passage specifically refers to what Donne was able to accomplish during his "one houre" (23), the time of a sermon, I wonder if we would guess that Godolphin is *not* talking explicitly about the poems, many of which indeed treat

The thousand mazes of the hearts deceipt;
Thou didst pursue our lov'd and subtill sinne,
Through all the foldings wee had wrapt it in,
And in thine owne large minde finding the way
By which our selves we from our selves convey,
Didst in us, narrow models, know the same
Angles, though darker, in our meaner frame. (23-30)[5]

Explicitly or not, this is an excellent and apt piece of literary criticism that acutely describes the impact of such poems as the Holy Sonnets and "Goodfriday, 1613. Riding Westward" on seventeenth- as well as twentieth-century readers.

Much more than Godolphin, Chudleigh restricts his focus to Donne the preacher, noting in his opening lines the fact that as a poet Donne was "Long since" (2) dead. But his argument is curious: far from rebuking Donne's early days as a poet, disparaging or disregarding his poetic powers, Chudleigh's elegy is structured as an apotheosis of wit. In what may well be a quick parody of Donne's "The Progress of the Soule"—such parodies, echoes, and borrowings are far more a feature of the elegies on Donne than the scholarly editions record—Chudleigh pictures the moment "when wit and he tooke flight / On divine wings, and soard" (3-4) from the poets to the preachers, from secular to sacred concerns. One of Donne's most extraordinary achievements comes as he tames and redeems an unruly but extremely valuable mental power:

> The wit he taught
> You [the preachers] doe enjoy: the Rebels which he brought
> From ancient discord, Giants faculties,
> And now no more religious enemies. (5-8)

Donne is, it seems, not only the monarch but also the professor of wit, and one of his great lessons is that "Who treats with us must our affections move / To th' good we flie by those sweets which we love" (53-54). Like Godolphin, who notes that "first by thee our passions hallowed were" (12), Chudleigh finds it important to stress that the passionate poet lives on in Dean Donne:

> He kept his loves, but not his objects; wit
> Hee did not banish, but transplanted it,
> Taught it his place and use, and brought it home
> To Pietie, which it doth best become. (13-16)[6]

Chudleigh's immediate concern is to celebrate and at the same time show the underlying unity behind Donne's turn from "the giddy minde / Of flashy youth, and thirst of woman-kinde" (24-25) to "Christs Epithalamy" (18), "Incense of loves, and fansies holy smoake" (20). But this is set within the larger theme of the defense of wit and an elaboration of what can be called an aesthetics of religion. Far from being enemies or representing separate selves within Donne, wit and piety must be merged: dullness properly belongs to vice (12), while religion is effective and "enrich'd" (21) when it is beautiful and joyous. When Chudleigh notes that "man grew well / Through the same frailtie by which he fell" (39-40), he

not only succinctly expresses what is perhaps the ultimate justification for wit, but also praises Donne's lifelong artistry, as a preacher and poet, in a manner that is strikingly modern.

We should of course expect to find a great deal of high praise for Donne throughout the elegies; praise, lament, and consolation are, as various critics note, the traditional elegiac actions.[7] But often this praise turns out to be surprisingly argumentative and defensive. The picture of Donne that emerges from the *Elegies Upon the Author* is that of a man deeply involved in controversy, and one of the chief tasks of the elegists as the first custodians of Donne's reputation is to measure him against his antagonists. Much of the praise of Donne as a preacher, for example, is joined with scorn for the Puritans, who were, according to several of the elegists, his inveterate enemies. R.B., for example, notes in his elegy that the "doctrine-men"

> . . . humm'd against him; And with face most sowre
> Called him a strong lin'd man, a Macaroon,
> And no way fit to speake to clouted shoone,
> As fine words [truly] as you would desire,
> But [verily,] but a bad edifier.
> (40-44; brackets in the original)

While R.B. of course disputes this judgment, such criticism makes his job of praise that much more difficult; he cannot simply point out Donne's vast amount of "learning, languages, of eloquence, / And Poesie" (21-22) because some voices in the crowd consider these qualities suspicious, particularly in a man who also "came late in the day" (61) to the priesthood. As a result, R.B. finds himself nearly "strai'd to Satyre, meaning Elegie" (64), and the tone of his poem becomes rather strident and argumentative.[8]

Other elegies similarly place Donne in the midst of the religious controversies of his time, simultaneously distinguishing and defending him from as well as attacking the Puritans (for example, cf. Mayne, 65-72, and Lucius Cary, 57-64). But the elegists do not contrast Donne only with religious opponents. Some of the most interesting moments in the elegies come when Donne's particular poetic skills are compared with those of other contemporary and perhaps more popular "schools" or styles of poetry. Carew's memorable praise of Donne is to a large extent an act of comparative criticism, and much of his defense of Donne as the monarch of wit takes the form of a vigorous satire of the various pretenders to the throne. Although he does not name names, Carew's version

of early seventeenth-century literary history rather unmistakably places Donne far above all those who challenge, and even threaten, Donne's pre-eminence: the "ballad rimers," hardly even poets for Carew, perhaps like John Taylor the Water Poet, whose works far outsold those of nearly all the poets found worth reading today; the Spenserians, with their "tales o'th' Metamorphoses" (66) that "swell the windy Page" (67); and even the Sons of Ben, or at least those sons whose derivative classicism hardly stands up to Donne's "fresh invention" (28).

Carew's view is reinforced by Jasper Mayne, who similarly raises Donne's reputation by trampling on that of his competitors. Far more than Carew, who had close ties to Jonson, Mayne seems willing to place the Sons of Ben under Donne's pedestal, satirizing very effectively a poetaster whose alcoholic inspiration, smooth, conversational style, secular themes, concern for patronage, and borrowed classical "clothes" mark him as in the line of Jonson. Donne, Mayne advises in lines worth quoting at length, would be a far better model:

> Here light your muse, you that do onely thinke,
> And write, and are just Poets, as you drinke,
> In whose weake fancies wit doth ebbe and flow,
> Just as your recknings rise, that wee may know
> In your whole carriage of your worke, that here
> This flash you wrote in Wine, and this in Beere,
> This is to tap your Muse, which running long
> Writes flat, and takes our eare not halfe so strong;
> Poor Suburb wits, who, if you want your cup,
> Or if a Lord recover, are blowne up.
> Could you but reach this height, you should not need
> To make, each meale, a project ere you feed,
> Nor walke in reliques, clothes so old and bare,
> As if left off to you from *Ennius* were. (29-42)

Much of the defensiveness of the elegies, however, focuses not so much on religious or poetic controversies but rather on the major "problem" of Donne's career: that is, reconciling the details of his early and later life. Perhaps the elegy as a form inevitably tends toward apology; in any event, the publication of Donne's *Poems*, containing signs of his intense meditations on affairs of the body as well as the spirit, could not help but prompt the elegists to try to make sense out of what seemed to be a deep split in Donne's personality. The most extravagant response comes in the elegy by

Thomas Browne, titled "Upon the *Promiscuous* printing of his Poems, the *Looser sort*, with the *Religious*." (Grierson feels that this elegy may be the earliest published work by the author of *Religio Medici*, while Milgate finds it "highly improbable" that these "tasteless lines" were written by the renowned Dr. Browne.[9]) Browne's poem is startling throughout. He first imagines that when a dull and strictly decorous audience reads Donne's "*Loose* raptures" (1) they will "with sharper eyes, / The *Fore-skinne* of thy phansie circumcise" (5-6). Donne's true audience, though, with "knowing eyes" (9), will not easily be put off and will "dare reade even thy *Wanton Story*, / As thy *Confession*, not thy *Glory*" (13-14). Browne more than tolerates the "Strange Fire, / That here is mingled *with thy Sacrifice*" (11-12), and the allusion to Leviticus 10 in these lines alerts us to just how audacious is Browne's praise. Unlike Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron who offer strange fire to the Lord and are burnt to death by holy fire for their trouble, Donne, like the lovers in his own poem "The Canonization," becomes a pattern "to future times" (15). Browne justifies Donne's life and works, mixed as they are, by concluding that it would be perfectly proper to "buy thy *Goodnesse*, with thy Crimes" (16)—certainly a bold way of advertising a book of poems written by a priest.

Browne's elegy was, for obvious reasons, dropped from the 1635 edition and subsequent reissues of the *Poems*, where the emphasis turns to a much more delicate treatment of the relationship between Jack and Dean Donne. For example, Walton's epigram on the plate of Donne added to the 1635 edition refers to the new arrangement of the poems, an editorial decision with significant consequences: instead of "promiscuously" mingling the poems as in the 1633 edition, in 1635 the secular poems are printed first, followed by the divine poems. Such an arrangement obviously reinforces the view of Donne's life in Walton's epigram, a short tale of "youths Drosse" turned to "pure mind."[10] Walton concludes: "Witnes this Booke, (thy Embleme) which begins / With Love; but endes, with Sighes, and Teares for sins."

Of course not all the elegies, either in 1633 or 1635, share Walton's rather simplistic reading of Donne's life. As we have seen, Chudleigh's poem is an extremely perceptive attempt to put both halves of Donne together and show the continuity between Donne's healing wit as a poet and as a preacher. And though Lucius Cary, like Walton, stresses Donne's maturity, he does not find it necessary to renounce all that came before. To Thomas

Carew's description of Donne as ruling the "universall Monarchy of wit" (96), Lucius Cary adds "The Kingdome of ones selfe" (81):

> He conquer'd rebell passions, rul'd them so,
> As under-spheares by the first Mover goe,
> Banish't so farre their working, that we can
> But know he had some, for we knew him man.
> (85-88)

Cary's closing couplet—"Then let his last excuse his first extremes, / His age saw visions, though his youth dream'd dreams"—is perhaps the most eloquent expression of a theme that runs through many of the elegies on Donne: the repeated blend of encomium and apology, praise and defense of a man who was controversial as well as revered.

Even after Donne has been successfully praised and defended, though, the elegists still face the serious task of imagining and coping with the effects of his death. Again and again the *Elegies Upon the Author* suggest that one of the ironic consequences of Donne's creative power while alive is the apparently inescapable decay arriving at his death. Poetry in particular suffers. The theme of the death of poetry following upon the death of a great poet is, of course, commonplace in the traditional elegy; perhaps Moschus sets the pattern in his "Lament for Bion" when he says that "Bion is dead, Bion the shepherd; [and] with him, music has died, and all Dorian song has perished."[11] Most of the elegists writing on Donne endorse this commonplace. Henry King, for example, describes the state of poetry without Donne:

> Widow'd invention justly doth forbeare
> To come abroad, knowing Thou art not here,
> Late her great Patron; Whose Prerogative
> Maintain'd, and cloth'd her so, as none alive
> Must now presume, to keepe her at thy rate. (13-17)

Like King, Edward Hyde notes that Donne's achievement prevents —that is, comes before and also intimidates—those who live on:

> . . . there's not language knowne
> Fit for thy mention, but 'twas first thy owne;
> The *Epitaphs* thou writest, have so bereft
> Our tongue of wit, there is not phansie left
> Enough to weepe thee. (3-7)

Mayne agrees, noting "now wee dare not write" (17), and Endymion Porter urges even more strongly that "Poets be silent, let your numbers sleepe, / For he is gone that did all phansie keepe" (25-26). Although these writers are talking primarily about the difficulty of writing a suitable elegy for Donne, and showing appropriate humility, their comments also describe a far more extensive and ominous feeling of poetic exhaustion. For R.B., the most telling sign marking Donne's death is not a bright comet but

> A dearth, the like to which hath never beene,
> Treading on harvests heeles, which doth presage
> The death of wit and learning, which this age
> Shall finde, now he is gone. (14-17)

King, Hyde, Mayne, Porter, and R.B. are well versed in the tradition of the elegy and also seem to draw much from Donne's *Anniversaries*, lamenting the decay and speechlessness of the world after he is gone, but they are not able to do much more than make the commonplace theme of the death of poetry a part of the rather oppressive setting of their poems. Henry Valentine, though, explores this commonplace more thoughtfully and at least attempts to resolve the problems raised by it. He begins by stating simply that "the world [is] witlesse now that DONNE is dead" (5). His death, in short, is our death, a "Massacre" (10) of the world's imagination such that those who live on "shall have *Ballads*, but no *Poetry*. / *Language* lyes speechlesse" (14-15). Far more interesting than these direct statements, though, is Valentine's style: intentionally or not, he imitates Donne's conversational manner and habit of trying out various metaphysical ideas and images, only to drop them quickly; and he clearly alludes to and echoes several of Donne's works, weaving them through his elegy.[12] One could say that this is simply bad, derivative metaphysical poetry, or one might credit Valentine with attempting something more adventurous and witty, for his style is a poetic enactment of the philosophical idea he discusses at length in his final stanza:

> If that Philosopher, which did avow
> The world to be but Motes, was living now:
> He would affirme that th'*Atomes* of his [Donne's]
> mould
> Were they in severall bodies blended, would
> Produce new worlds of *Travellers, Divines,*

> Of *Linguists, Poets*: sith these severall *lines*
> In him concentred were, and flowing thence
> Might fill again the worlds *Circumference*. (33-40)

Several of his sermons and such a poem as "Obsequies to Lord Harrington" (cf. 53-56) show that Donne was a great speculator on what might happen to a man between death and resurrection as the elements of his body became scattered or absorbed by other living beings; in this sense Valentine's lines are yet another echo of Donne. But more importantly, they represent a remarkable parody of the process of inspiration, and dramatically support the elegist's insistence that even in death Donne has generative power: instead of a heavenly breath giving life to dust, the biblical and etymological meaning of inspiration, Valentine suggests that Donne's dust brings living bodies up to a higher level, creating a race of men after his model—"new worlds of *Travellers, Divines*, / Of *Linguists, Poets*." Valentine's elegy is evidence of Donne's inspiration, coming to life because it is filled with "these severall *lines*"—a phrase that Milgate reads as a geometrical metaphor[13] but which I would suggest also refers to the many bits and pieces of Donne's works that form much of the substance of this elegy. Milgate notes possible recollections here of Donne's "An Hymn to the Saints," "To the Countess of Bedford," and the *Death's Duell* sermon, and I would add possible echoes—sometimes fleeting, sometimes more insistent—of the *Anniversaries*, "Obsequies to Lord Harrington," "The Relique," and "The Funerall."[14] Valentine thus not only likens Donne to the Phoenix (42-44) but also dramatizes a rebirth from his ashes in writing this elegy.

Yet each of Valentine's daring suggestions is quickly undermined because his poem is structured as a series of hypothetical speculations. Immediately after imagining Donne's incorruptibility and continuing influence on those who survive him, Valentine inexplicably stops short:

> But, busie Soule, thou dost not well to pry
> Into these Secrets; *Griefe*, and *Jealousie*,
> The more they know, the further still advance,
> And finde no way so safe as *Ignorance*. (45-48)

Somewhat like Coleridge much later in his poem "The Eolian Harp" (also a poem about inspiration), frightened by the implications of his ideas or unable to sustain an imaginative effort for very long, Valentine lapses into a rather timid conclusion: Donne is

"translated" (51) to heaven, and not even as a guiding "genius" (as at the end of *Lycidas*) but only as a remote star, "'bove others farre" (54).

After examining how most of the *Elegies Upon the Author* dwell on and succumb to, in Valentine's words, "the *great* and *generall*" loss (22) caused by Donne's death, we are in a better position to appreciate Thomas Carew's vision of and victory over poetic exhaustion, aspects of his elegy that are often overlooked or underemphasized. The problem of writing an elegy is double-edged: How does one write an elegy that is a fitting tribute to a great poet? And how does one write an elegy—or any poem at all, for that matter—when the source of poetic inspiration is gone? Carew's poem is usually read as a particularly effective answer to the first question, and indeed it is so. But of recent commentators, only Ada Long and Hugh Maclean focus on Carew's attention to the second question, and their conclusion is that despite its claim "to be considered the most remarkable poem in the canon of Carew's verse," the elegy fails in its mission: "Donne gone, the world cannot hope for a successor in whom his spirit will be re-animated."[15] However, the poem is somewhat more successful and consoling than Long and Maclean allow.

Consolation does not come easily to Carew, in part because he has to accept the devastating consequences of Donne's life as well as his death, both of which have the power to ruin the great work of time. Donne's death obviously leaves the following generations vulnerable to the "Pedantique weedes" (25) he "purg'd" (26) and the false "gods and goddesses" (64) he "banish'd" (65). Even the achievements of his life may leave his followers in a somewhat weakened condition. In attempting to understand the silence of the poets at Donne's death, which later proves to be an ominous sign of "The death of all the Arts" (76), Carew raises a question that is simultaneously an accusation: "Did'st thou dispense / Through all our language, both the words and sense? / 'Tis sad truth" (9-11). Donne is thus pictured as one who administers and gives great gifts but also uses up the supply of precious materials. Although Carew praises Donne's richness—"Thou hast redeem'd, and open'd Us a Mine" (37)—his legacy is one of exhaustion. The great poets, as Carew sees them, "cull the prime / Buds of invention" (54-55), and although Donne was able to glean "more / Then all those times, and tongues could reape before" (59-60), his successors may be left only with "bare lands" (57) and "rifled fields, besides the feare / To touch their Harvest"

(56-57). Carew uses Donne's great skill primarily as a club against false poets and "Libertines in Poetrie" (62), but one senses that "thy strict lawes will be / Too hard" (61-62) for anyone to follow. As a poet, Donne proves to be inimitable, and when Carew notes near the end of the elegy that "Yet art thou Theme enough to tyre all Art" (92), the pun on tire/attire conveys for a final time the distressing ambiguity that has run through the whole poem: Donne exhausts as well as adorns the art of poetry.

We have come to expect mixed messages when one poet writes about another. Harold Bloom sees the Romantic and post-Romantic period predominately as an age of the anxiety of influence. Walter Jackson Bate shows very persuasively that the eighteenth-century poets struggled against the "burden of the past." And earlier ages as well felt a similar strain: Roger Rollin, for example, suggests that Ben Jonson's poem on Shakespeare is subtly cool and competitive, and Joseph Wittreich argues that Marvell's poem on Milton is an act of assertive self-definition as well as critical praise.[16] Without being a deceptively ambiguous tribute to Donne, Carew's elegy is nevertheless explicable in terms offered by these critics. For all its accurate and witty praise, Carew's elegy also registers very sensitively the great pressures on those, like himself, who would attempt to write poetry in Donne's shadow.

Ironically, the most neglected section of the poem (71-86) shows how successfully Carew is able to resist these pressures. He does, after all, break "The reverend silence that attends thy herse" (72), and although he apologizes for his "untun'd verse" (71), the images herein counter, even as they envision, poetic exhaustion. Carew first imagines Donne's influence as a kind of temporarily lingering momentum:

> So doth the swiftly turning wheele not stand
> In th'instant we withdraw the moving hand,
> But some small time maintains a faint weake course
> By vertue of the first impulsive force. (79-82)[17]

The next image, though, is not nearly so tentative, and the terms in which Carew describes his own elegiac action are particularly revealing:

> And so whil'st I cast on thy funerall pile
> Thy crowne of Bayes, Oh, let it crack a while,
> And spit disdaine, till the devouring flashes
> Suck all the moysture up, then turne to ashes. (83-86)

An elegy is, it seems, self-consuming, but the moment of immolation is also a moment of triumph. The Promethean fire that earlier in the poem seemed gone forever, "quench't now in thy death" (24), glows again, perhaps briefly but brilliantly, in Donne's funeral pyre and Carew's funeral poem. Certainly, as Long and Maclean point out, Carew's elegy does not offer the traditional consolation of immortality,[18] but for a poet like Carew the dearly earned vision of the imagination flaming up yet once more against a background of grief and decay may be consolation enough.

David Masson's comment on the tributes contained in *Jonsonus Virbius* stand as a useful warning to anyone who would make extravagant claims for the majority of seventeenth-century critical elegies: "The gist of all the panegyrics, various as they were in style, was that English poetry had died with Ben. The panegyrics themselves went near to prove it."[19] Yet the *Elegies Upon the Author*, uneven as they are, deserve no such easy dismissal. Although with only one important exception do they contain little memorable poetry, the elegies add much to our knowledge of Donne's contemporary reputation and give a sometimes striking presentation of several critical and biographical problems that we, no more than they, have been able to solve. Finally, though there is no evidence that Carew's poem was, like *Lycidas*, intended to be climactic or that it was written later than the others—quite the contrary, several of the elegies seem to echo and imitate Carew—nevertheless it may be useful to adopt Joseph Wittreich's recent approach to *Lycidas* and study Carew's elegy as in some ways "an active complication" of the others it appears alongside, assuming a "dialectical relationship" with them.[20] We are in a better position not only to measure but, more importantly, to understand the success of Carew's elegy when we read it against the background of all the *Elegies Upon the Author*.

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NOTES

1 Attempts to defend the dead poet from his rivals coupled with an elegist's sense of his own poetic inadequacy or paralysis are not, of course, themes unique to the *Elegies Upon the Author*, but rather familiar aspects of the sub-genre of the "critical elegy" defined by Avon Jack Murphy in his essay "The Critical Elegy of Earlier Seventeenth-Century England," *Genre*, 5, No. 1 (March 1972), 75-105. John Shawcross kindly called my attention to this extremely valuable study.

2 *The Poems of John Donne*, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson, 2 vols. (1912; rpt. London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968); *John Donne: The Epithalamions, Anniversaries, and Epicedes*, ed. W. Milgate (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978).

3 *John Donne: The Critical Heritage*, ed. A. J. Smith (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 11.

4 *Donne: Poetical Works*, ed. Herbert J. C. Grierson, Oxford Standard Authors (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 352. All quotations from the *Elegies Upon the Author* will be from this edition, and will be referred to by line number only in the text of my essay.

5 See also the well-known section in Carew's elegy describing the effects of Donne's sermons (14-21), which is often appropriated by critics to describe Donne's poems.

6 The terms of Chudleigh's argument were common in seventeenth-century attempts to turn secular wit to sacred purposes; see Richard Strier, "Changing the Object: Herbert and Excess," *George Herbert Journal*, 2, No. 1 (Fall 1978), 24-37.

7 See, for example, O. B. Hardison, Jr., *The Enduring Monument: A Study of the Idea of Praise in Renaissance Literary Theory and Practice* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1962).

8 John W. Draper discusses the turn toward satire in seventeenth-century elegies in *The Funeral Elegy and the Rise of English Romanticism* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1929), esp. chapters 2 and 5.

9 Grierson, *The Poems of John Donne*, II, 255; Milgate, p. 221.

10 Smith, p. 115.

11 *Greek Pastoral Poetry*, ed. and trans. Anthony Holden (Baltimore: Penguin, 1974), p. 187.

12 Carew's elegy also repeatedly echoes and is otherwise deeply influenced by Donne's works, as Michael P. Parker notes in "Diamond's Dust; or, What Do We Do With Donne? Carew, King, and the Early Elegies," a version of which was presented at The Fifth Biennial Renaissance Conference at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, *The Eagle and the Dove: Reassessing John Donne*, October 1982. Parker cites and then expands on earlier work on this subject: Louis L. Martz, *The Wit of Love* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 98; and Joseph H. Summers, *The Heirs of Donne and Jonson* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), p. 65.

13 Milgate, p. 224.

14 Valentine's statements that the world is "witlesse now that DONNE is dead" (5) and that "*Language* lyes speechlesse" (15) recall not only the general theme and mood of the *First Anniversary* but also Donne's specific complaint to the world that "thou art speechlesse growne" (30) because "shee is dead" (180). Though Milgate suggests that Valentine's closing image of Donne "now translated / From Earth to Heaven, and there *Constellated*" (51-52) may derive from the conclusion of Jonson's tribute to Shakespeare (cf. Milgate, p. 220), Donne's more elaborate treatment of this conventional figure in the *Second Anniversary* (189-213), showing Elizabeth Drury's soul flying "in a minute all the way, / Twixt Heaven, and Earth" (188-89) stringing the individual celestial spheres into a constellation, may just as well have influenced Valentine. In "Obsequies to Lord Harrington" Donne suggests that after the death of a "vertuous man" (52) another may "feed" on his remains "and so / Part of his body to another owe" (53-54); in this way a man's virtue might be passed on to the next generation. Valentine similarly raises the possibility that "th'*Atomes*" (35) of Donne's body "Were they in severall bodies blended, would / Produce new worlds of *Travellers, Divines*, / Of *Linguists, Poets*" (36-38). Interestingly, both Donne (59-62) and Valentine (45-48) immediately retreat from such speculations with a disclaimer signaled by the word "but." Finally, Valentine's elegy may owe something to several love poems in which Donne imagines not only his own death but his continuing life as a relic. When he pictures Donne's body as something "Succeeding ages would Idolatrize, / And as his *Numbers*, so his *Reliques* prize" (31-32), Valentine perhaps has in mind not only the general scene of "The Relique" but also several specific lines in "The Funerall" where Donne notes that "it might breed idolatrie, / If into others hands these Reliques came" (19-20). Donne's poems are quoted from *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967).

15 Ada Long and Hugh Maclean, "'Deare *Ben*,' 'Great DONNE,' and 'my *Celia*': The Wit of Carew's Poetry," *SEL*, 18, No. 1 (Winter 1978), esp. pp. 84-87.

16 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973); Walter Jackson Bate, *The Burden of the Past and the English Poet* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970); Roger B. Rollin, "The Anxiety of Identification: Jonson and The Rival Poets," in *Classic and Cavalier: Essays on Jonson and the Sons of Ben*, ed. Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1982), pp. 139-53; and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., "Perplexing the Explanation: Marvell's 'On Mr. Milton's *Paradise Lost*,'" in *Approaches to Marvell: The York Tercentenary Lectures*, ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 280-305.

17 Anthony Low studies this image in "The 'Turning Wheele': Carew, Jonson, Donne and the First Law of Motion," *John Donne Journal*, 1, Nos. 1-2 (1982), 69-80.

18 Long and Maclean, p. 85.

19 *Ben Jonson*, ed. C. H. Herford, Percy Simpson, and Evelyn Simpson, 11 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1925-52), XI, 429.

20 Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., *Visionary Poetics: Milton's Tradition and His Legacy* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1979), esp. pp. 90-98. Wittreich refers to and expands on earlier work on this subject by Michael Lloyd and J. B. Leishman; cf. pp. 248-49, note 34.