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"Awry and Squint": The Dating of Donne's Holy Sonnets

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The limits of biographical information about Donne have prompted unwarranted assumptions by editors trying to date those of his writings, like the Holy Sonnets, for which no occasion is known. Anne Ferry cautions us to avoid the stereotype that poets write amorous verse when young, penitently turning to sacred subjects only in later years: "Donne was no slave to convention, and . . . there would have been no uneasiness for him in writing love poems and devotional verse simultaneously."[1] In regard to the Holy Sonnets, Donne scholars succumbed to this stereotype prior to the influential work of Dame Helen Gardner. For years people merely accepted Izaak Walton's unfounded suggestion that the Holy Sonnets had been written after Donne was ordained. Similarly uncritical tendencies should not prevent our examining Gardner's own theory dating sixteen of the nineteen Holy Sonnets between 1609 and 1611, a theory that has never been seriously challenged.[2]

The central assumption in Gardner's theory is that, if the sonnets are understood to be a series of sequences, they may be dated as groups of poems all written at about the same time. Because six of the Holy Sonnets appear in some manuscripts to be arranged as a sequence meditating on the Last Things, and because among these six are three that can be shown on internal evidence to have been written no later than August 1609, Gardner assumed that the entire group of sonnets on the Last Things must antedate August 1609. She reasoned further that another group of six sonnets may have been written just after the first six, if only because in the same manuscripts they follow those on the Last Things. Finally, Gardner extended her idea to the dating of four more sonnets, in this way using their arrangement in some manuscripts to date sixteen of the Holy Sonnets without any other evidence except about three of them.

Several objections might be made to Gardner's theory that the Holy Sonnets were composed as a series of sequences, but the one she herself anticipated is that there are two arrangements of the Holy Sonnets in the manuscripts of Donne's poems, only one of which yields the sequence on the Last Things.[3] Gardner argued that this arrangement is indeed to be found in the manuscripts she with Grierson judged to be most authoritative. However, in the Westmoreland manuscript (and in some manuscripts of lesser authority) the sonnets are arranged in a distinctly different order. Here the sequence on the Last Things does not even occur as a sequence, and the other sequences Gardner descried in her favored manuscripts are similarly skewed. This would be less a problem if Westmoreland were a less authoritative manuscript; but Westmoreland at one time belonged to a close friend of Donne's, Rowland Woodward. Its canon is sound; its text is strong. Moreover, it contains several letters addressed to Woodward himself; and it was once attached to Woodward's copy of *Pseudo-Martyr*, personally inscribed to Woodward by Donne.

In her 1952 edition Gardner termed the arrangement of the Holy Sonnets in Westmoreland an "accident."[4] Later, in her revised edition of 1978, convinced by this time that Westmoreland is actually written in Rowland Woodward's own handwriting, Gardner nevertheless changed her view only the more emphatically to call the arrangement of the Holy Sonnets in Westmoreland an "error."[5] Accidents or errors can certainly happen as manuscripts pass from hand to hand over a period of years; but should we simply assume, as Gardner does, that Rowland Woodward (who received the poems either directly from Donne himself, or from a copy very close to Donne's own papers) muddled the arrangement of the Holy Sonnets so badly as to obscure their intended sequence?[6]

Apart from her assumptions about authorial arrangement of the Holy Sonnets, Gardner's only evidence for dating any of the poems is that three of them must have been written prior to August 1609. These three—"At the round earths imagin'd corners," "This is my playes last scene," and "Death be not proud"—express something like the heresy of mortalism, or soul-sleeping, a theological view Donne had decidedly rejected by the time he wrote *Pseudo-Martyr*, late in 1609. Moreover, as was first pointed out by Sir Edmund Chambers, "Death be not proud" must have preceded another of Donne's poems in which it is mentioned, his elegy on the death of Cecilia Bulstrode (4 August 1609). Thus Gardner establishes a *terminus ad quem* of August 1609 for three of the

Holy Sonnets.[7] But from her evidence about these three poems no *terminus a quo* can be deduced, since on the one hand Donne may from an early age have held the kind of mortalist views she discerns in the sonnets; and on the other hand the Bulstrode elegy's allusion to "Death be not proud" shows only that the sonnet must be earlier than the elegy.[8] Although "At the round earths imagin'd corners," "This my playes last scene," and "Death be not proud" probably were written before August 1609, we are still unable to tell how long before.

Gardner attempted to supply a *terminus a quo* by again assuming exclusive authority for her arrangement of the first six sonnets. She further assumed that this sequence on the Last Things is identical to the "six holy Sonnets" that apparently were sent with Donne's verse letter, "To E. of D. with six holy Sonnets." Moreover, she joined to these assumptions yet another (based on Grierson's conjecture) that "E. of D." was Richard Sackville, third Earl of Dorset. Since Dorset succeeded to his title in February 1609, Gardner reasoned that the six sonnets on the Last Things must have been written after that date.[9] But Gardner's reasoning about "To E. of D. with six holy Sonnets" demonstrates again, in each of her editions, some difficulty in acknowledging the evidence of the Westmoreland manuscript.

In her 1952 edition Gardner tried to explain the anomaly that in the Westmoreland manuscript "To E. of D. with six holy Sonnets" (headed simply "To L. of D.") is inscribed not with the Holy Sonnets she supposed it to have introduced, but in another part of the manuscript among verse letters Donne addressed to Rowland Woodward and other friends of theirs when they attended Lincoln's Inn in the 1590s. Gardner's explanation is curiously circular: "The sonnet ['To E. of D.'] is much later than the other letters and is the only one addressed to a later patron and not to an early friend. It is difficult to see how it has got into the manuscript unless it was attached to the six 'holy Sonnets' it was written to introduce." As we have seen, in another place Gardner argues that the six Holy Sonnets on the Last Things must have a *terminus a quo* of February 1609 because they were accompanied by this verse letter. Here her only argument that this verse letter is much later than the other verse letters is that it was written to introduce the six sonnets on the Last Things.[10]

Did a consciousness of this argument's circularity account for Gardner's terse discussion of the same anomaly when describing the Westmoreland manuscript for her edition of the love poems in 1965? (By this time Alan MacColl had convinced her that Westmoreland is

written in Rowland Woodward's hand.) She observes laconically that the first part of Westmoreland, including satires, elegies, and verse letters, "contains, with one explicable exception, no poem we should date after 1598."[11] But Gardner does not go on to explain the explicable. Wesley Milgate, working closely with Gardner in editing the satires and verse letters, in 1967 did attempt more of an explanation. Describing this same first part of the Westmoreland manuscript, he skips over the fact of an anomaly about the verse letters to Lincoln's Inn friends (thus leaving unaccounted for the further anomaly that one of them was to be omitted from his edition). But instead, describing the later section of Westmoreland including the Holy Sonnets, Milgate interpolates parenthetically that "a sonnet 'To E. of D.,' here called 'To L. of D.,' [has] strayed from its appropriate set of Holy Sonnets into the first part of the manuscript."[12] But like Gardner, Milgate cannot satisfactorily explain this poem's waywardness.

In her revised edition of 1978, Gardner updated her 1952 explanation to take into account Rowland Woodward's handwriting: "It is difficult to account for [this sonnet's] coming into Woodward's hands, unless it came with the 'six holy Sonnets' it was written to introduce."[13] But this form of the explanation is even harder to accept than the merely circular one of 1952. How plausible is it to argue that Woodward, who had received the poems directly from Donne himself or from a copy close to Donne's own papers, would not only have muddled the arrangement of the Holy Sonnets but beyond this (either before or after muddling them) would have detached "To E. of D." from the sonnets on the Last Things in order to tuck it in amongst an unrelated group of letters addressed to himself and to other friends of the young Donne? Can Woodward be thought not to have recognized the difference between these early letters and a much later letter addressed under much different circumstances to a much younger man? Gardner evidently remained assured in this implausibility even after thirty years of reflection. But what if she is wrong to attribute this second "accident" or "error" to Woodward? What if "To E. of D." *does* belong among verse letters of the 1590s?

Once this question has been asked, a reading of the poem suggests that it was not addressed to the third Earl of Dorset because it does appear to have been written at about the same time as the other verse letters that all along formed its original context in Westmoreland and in 240 years of editions. In Westmoreland, "To L. of D." is inscribed between two of the verse letters headed "To Mr T. W." ("Hast thee harsh verse" and "Pregnant again"). The only other manuscripts including the poem are Dolau Cothi, Additional MS. 23229, and O'Flahertie, in each

of which it is grouped also with verse letters.[14] In 1633, as in all editions until Alexander Grosart's of 1872, "To E. of D. with six holy Sonnets" is printed among the early verse letters. Grosart, impressed by this heading, made a seemingly reasonable adjustment and relocated the poem among Divine Poems.[15] In this he has been followed by all subsequent editors; his innovation has never even been questioned.[16] However, what Grosart intended as a relatively minor editorial adjustment becomes an extremely important editorial crux when Gardner tries to make it bear all the weight for her theory dating the Holy Sonnets after February 1609.

Let's look at the poem itself. In "To E. of D." Donne adopts the pose of poetic neophyte in a way quite foreign to his persona in poems written around 1609. The opening lines of the poem submit his work for approval as to a master:

> See Sir, how as the Suns hot Masculine flame
> Begets strange creatures on Niles durty slime,
> In me, your fatherly yet lusty Ryme
> (For, these songs are their fruits) have wrought the same.

How likely was Donne by 1609 to have presented himself in this way as a poetic son of Sackville, a man seventeen years younger than he was and without any reputation as a poet?

> But though the ingendring force from whence they came
> Bee strong enough, and nature doe admit
> Seaven to be borne at once, I send as yet
> But six, they say, the seaventh hath still some maime;
> I choose your judgement, which the same degree
> Doth with her sister, your invention, hold,
> As fire these drossie Rymes to purifie,
> Or as Elixar, to change them to gold.

Would Donne by 1609 have submitted six poems for criticism or have been ruled by others' judgment about whether a seventh was suitable? Donne's own reputation as a master was already long established in 1609, and his assured epistolary style in poems known to have been written thereabouts shows how far he had come from the note struck in "To E. of D."

On the other hand, Woodward copied "To E. of D." among some early verse letters in many of which Donne carries on similarly as a fledgling poet writing to other poets. Grierson, who first pointed out that

this poem "is in the same strain" as the other early verse letters, judges that all of them were "poetical replies to poetical epistles," and that all of them were written at about the same time.[17] Especially characteristic of these poems is the trope in the opening lines describing how Donne's enclosed "songs" are "strange creatures [engendered] on Niles durty slime" by the poems of E. of D. To this figure may be compared the reference to "slimy rimes bred in our vale below" in the verse letter "To Mr E. G." Related figures might be cited in several other Lincoln's Inn letters comparing the poems or muses of Donne and his correspondents to fathers, mothers, pregnancies, or offspring. Whatever its relation to the Holy Sonnets, "To E. of D." resembles more closely poems of the 1590s than poems of following decades, a resemblance supporting Gardner's own textual judgment that the entire portion of Westmoreland in which "To E. of D." is inscribed "appears to be copied from a collection antedating 1600."[18]

If "To E. of D." does antedate 1600, to whom could it have been addressed? Gardner's candidate, the third Earl of Dorset, would seem out of the question since he had been born only in 1589. But neither Grierson nor anyone else so far concerned with this matter has been aware of certain biographical information recently come to light. For several years after 1585 Donne served as a waiting gentleman in the household of Henry Stanley, fourth Earl of Derby.[19] A number of facts suggest that "E. of D." may have been one of Derby's sons.

Ferdinando Stanley became fifth Earl of Derby at the death of his father (25 September 1593). He seems possible as a recipient of Donne's poem mainly because he (unlike Dorset) did have a reputation as a poet. Shortly after his death in 1594, Ferdinando was eulogized as "Amyntas," a poet and patron of poets, by Edmund Spenser in his *Colin Clouts Come Home Again*.[20] Unfortunately, all but one of Derby's poems seem to have been lost. The only verses we can attribute to him are a sort of pastoral ballad in thirty-five stanzas.[21] Though strangely entitled "A Sonnet," this piece is not likely to have inspired Donne's Holy Sonnets. Some of Derby's poetry was evidently incorporated in *Bel-Vedere*, a kind of poetic commonplace book containing unattributed lines by various hands. Derby's part in this potpourri is indistinguishable, but his mention along with other well-known poets in the preface of the book corroborates Spenser's evidence that he was highly regarded as a poet even after his death.[22]

More and better evidence suggests that "E. of D." was Ferdinando's brother, William Stanley, who succeeded as sixth Earl of Derby after Ferdinando died (16 April 1594). Donne and William Stanley had

known each other at least since January 1585, when they traveled together in the ambassadorial retinue of Stanley's father, sent to Paris to award the Order of the Garter to King Henri III.[23] However, the strongest evidence that William Stanley was "E. of D." is that he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn when Donne and Rowland Woodward were students there.[24] When Woodward copied the verse letter into the Westmoreland manuscript, he copied the heading simply as "To L. of D." Ferdinando Stanley, from at least 1572 to his accession as fifth Earl of Derby, had been styled "Lord Strange,"[25] and thus would not normally have been called or thought of as "my Lord of Derby." But, unlike Ferdinando, William before his accession to the Earldom had been called "my lord of Derby" and thus could more naturally have been referred to at some point as "L. of D." by a fellow Lincoln's Inn student such as Donne or Woodward.

Moreover, there is evidence that William Stanley may, like Ferdinando, have been not only an active patron of poets but himself a poet. Spenser's eulogy of Ferdinando as "Amyntas" in *Colin Clouts Come Home Again* is followed by a passage in praise of another poet, "Aetion," who has plausibly been identified as William Stanley.[26] Thomas Lodge, who had been a friend of the Stanley family for many years, in 1595 published his *A Fig For Momus*, dedicated to William Stanley and referring in a prefatory letter to his standing as "the true *Maecenas* of the *Muses*, and iudiciall in their exercises," both qualifications that are mentioned in "To E. of D."[27] And two letters of 30 June 1599 from one George Fenner report among various English news that the Earl of Derby "is busye penning commodyes for the commoun players."[28] It remains true that no poems have as yet certainly been ascribed to William Stanley.

But further evidence that one of the Stanleys received "To E. of D." is found in the concluding couplet of Donne's poem:

> You are that Alchimist which alwaies had
> Wit, whose one spark could make good things of bad.

At about the time of Ferdinando's death, George Chapman named "ingenious *Darbie*" along with "deepe searching *Northumberland*, and skill-imbracing *Heire of Hunsdon*" as associates in what has become known as "the School of the Night," a group of students of alchemy and allied disciplines.[29] The "*Heire of Hunsdon*" was Sir George Carey, married to the sister of Ferdinando's wife. "*Northumberland*" was of course the ninth Earl of Northumberland, Henry Percy, whose interest in

alchemy can be traced to his contacts in the late 1580s with Sir Walter Ralegh and his proteges Thomas Harriot, Walter Warner, Nicholas Hill, and other scientifically or pseudo-scientifically oriented savants.[30] John Dover Wilson first identified "ingenious *Darbie*" as Ferdinando Stanley and has generally been followed assuming that Chapman's prefatory letter was written in the period before Ferdinando's death in April 1594.[31] However, Christopher Devlin has suggested that Chapman wrote this passage after the death of Ferdinando, and that the Earl of Derby who should be connected to alchemy was actually William Stanley.[32] The history of the "School of Night" is generally rather murky, perhaps because of the charges of atheism against them, which may have led to destruction of letters and documents. However, it seems important that in extant fragments of the only private diary we can connect to the group, that of John Dee, William Stanley's name is prominent.[33] But whether "ingenious *Darbie*" was Ferdinando or William, he seems more likely than Richard Sackville to have been "that Alchimist" in Donne's verse letter.

If "To E. of D. with six holy Sonnets" was written not to Sackville in 1609 but to Ferdinando or William Stanley before 1600, which poems were the "six holy Sonnets"? In "To E. of D." Donne speaks of six "songs" enclosed, but they are "strange creatures" fathered by the recipient's "lusty Ryme." These terms seem inappropriate to the Holy Sonnets. Except for their mention in the headings in the Dolau Cothi and O'Flahertie manuscripts and in the edition of 1633 (followed by all subsequent editions), no one would likely ever have connected "To E. of D." with the Holy Sonnets. Since Westmoreland makes no such reference, perhaps we should regard reference to the Holy Sonnets in two manuscripts and in 1633 as mistaken. The "songs" referred to in the poem were perhaps six of the love poems Donne wrote in the 1590s. Or, given their dependence as "creatures" on the "lusty Ryme" of the recipient, perhaps the six "songs" were verse epistles. On the other hand, the 1633 edition has been adjudged by most modern editors as of high authority, because it followed manuscripts of Groups I and II.

In either case, Gardner's theory for dating the Holy Sonnets is wrong. If 1633 is accurate in its reference to "six holy Sonnets," then at least six or seven Holy Sonnets *may* have been written in the 1590s. But even if 1633's heading for "To E. of D." is inaccurate, the poem seems to antedate 1600, leaving utterly no evidence for Gardner's *terminus a quo* of February 1609. In summary, all Gardner shows is that three of the Holy Sonnets had been written by August 1609. Despite her assurance

about the others, the evidence she cites cannot show that any of them was not written at any point in Donne's mature life.

Gardner's basic impulse for seeking to date the Holy Sonnets prior to Donne's ordination is that their spiritual turmoil was more likely to have occurred at a time when Donne was still considering Anglican orders.[34] But if the period prior to the ordination was, as Gardner and others have supposed, a more likely time for spiritual crisis in Donne's life, it was not the only such period. The period of the satires and of *Metempsychosis*—the middle and late 1590s—would seem another such period. In any case, given the paucity of Gardner's evidence, maybe Donne scholars should cease allowing her biographical assumptions to govern interpretations of the poems; and should cease fabricating readings of the poems to substitute for biographical evidence. As Thomas P. Roche, Jr. observes, writing about Elizabethan sonnet sequences of the 1590s, too often such poems have been read as if they were written by Goethe's Werther: "The inconsequence of the narrative elements of these poems has usually led the critics from the fiction of the poems to the biographies of the poets."[35]

To conclude, the state of the evidence so far presented by editors, critics, and biographers may indicate that non-biographical interpretations of the Holy Sonnets ought to be given more consideration than is usual, and that several possible scenarios for their composition ought to be entertained. For all we know (and there is some evidence to suggest it), the Holy Sonnets may like other sonnet sequences have been written in the 1590s, a date of composition suiting well with Roche's observation that, unlike many nineteenth and twentieth century poets, those of the Renaissance did not organize poems biographically, or with a view to what we think of as human "psychology."

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Notes

[1] Anne Ferry, *The "Inward" Language: Sonnets of Wyatt, Sidney, Shakespeare, Donne* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 217.

[2] Helen Gardner, ed., *John Donne: The Divine Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952; rev. ed. 1978), pp. xxxvii-*l*. David Novarr has raised some important questions about Gardner's dating of the three so-called "late" sonnets found only in the Westmoreland manuscript; see *The Disinterred Muse* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1980), pp. 115-41. Novarr concludes that "slight as the evidence is that they are late, it is about as strong as that for earlier composition" (p. 120). However, Gardner's central finding about the dates of the other sixteen sonnets has been generally admired. Among reviewers of her first edition, J. B. Leishman credited Gardner with "almost irrefutable evidence" ("John Donne: The Divine Poems," *RES* 5 [1953], 23); and I. A. Shapiro, conceding that the theory was "persuasive," noted that it called "for very careful sifting" ("Donne's Devotional Verse," *New Statesman and Nation* 45 [1953], 212). A sampling of other assessments: the editor A. J. Smith

seems to agree with Gardner's theory, though he is precise and cautious, stipulating that her argument is based on "circumstantial evidence" (*John Donne: The Complete English Poems* [New York: Penguin, 1971], p. 624). David Novarr, in contrast, declares with uncritical fervor that Gardner was able "to demonstrate brilliantly and conclusively that twelve of the sonnets must have been written in 1609" (Novarr, p. 116). Gardner's dating of the Holy Sonnets is one of the few things agreed upon by Louis Martz and Barbara Lewalski in their diverse discussions: Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1954), p. 216; and Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth Century Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979), p. 480. There is also the understated confidence of the biographer R. C. Bald: "It is now recognized that not only 'A Litanie' and 'La Corona' were composed during the Mitcham years, but the majority of the 'Holy Sonnets' as well" (*John Donne: A Life* [Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970], p. 233).

[3] Gardner's theory of how the sonnets ought to be arranged has been controversial; see esp. the important work of Patrick F. O'Connell, "The Successive Arrangements of Donne's 'Holy Sonnets,'" *PQ* 60 (1981), 323-42, on which I rely in my review of Gardner's theory. As O'Connell points out, Gardner's arrangement has actually been rejected by two of five subsequent editors (pp. 323 and 338, n. 4). Since O'Connell wrote, Gardner's arrangement has also been rejected by C. A. Patrides, ed., *The Complete English Poems of John Donne* (London: Everyman's Library, 1985), p. 428.

[4] Gardner, *Divine Poems* (1952), p. xlii, n. 2.

[5] Ibid. (1978), p. xlii, n. 2.

[6] This question was first asked by O'Connell, pp. 328-29. O'Connell further suggests (on the basis of certain physical characteristics of the Westmoreland manuscript) that there is no single authorial sequence of the Holy Sonnets, but that Donne himself arranged twelve of them in two different ways at two different times: the way the first twelve are arranged in Westmoreland, and the very different first twelve of Gardner's edition. O'Connell maintains that the Westmoreland arrangement was Donne's original sequence, which he later changed for some reason to the sequence in Gardner's favored manuscripts (ibid., pp. 329-30). Westmoreland is one of four manuscripts Gardner did not examine but saw only in photostats. For her 1978 revision she still had not consulted the manuscripts themselves (Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. lxix).

[7] Ibid., pp. xliii-xlviii. Of course, evidence involving mortalism proves nothing if (as some interpreters feel) the poems are intended to parody the theological views they express.

[8] Gardner tries to argue that the poems must be proximate or the allusion to the sonnet would not be "apposite" (ibid., p. xlviii). But this is not especially persuasive because a poem like "Death be not proud" could easily seem memorable even after several years; one could certainly allude effectively to it in the twentieth century.

[9] Ibid., pp. xlviii-xlix. Though Gardner's whole argument for a *terminus a quo* depended on the soundness of these assumptions, she could present in support of them only the facts that Dorset married into the circle of Donne's friends at the time he became Earl; that he was an admirer of Donne's friend Edward Herbert; that he was a patron of Donne's in later years; and that the 1620 edition of Robert Southwell's poems was dedicated to him. While this evidence is versatile, it cannot establish that Dorset was sent the sonnets on the Last Things or that February 1609 is their *terminus a quo*.

[10] Ibid. (1952), p. lxxx.

[11] Helen Gardner, ed., *John Donne: The Elegies and the Songs and Sonnets* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), p. lxxii.

[12] Wesley Milgate, ed., *John Donne: The Satires, Epigrams and Verse Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. xlvi.

[13] Gardner, *Divine Poems* (1978), p. lxxx.

[14] Dolau Cothi was not known to Gardner in 1952. But in her revised commentary of 1978 she noted its inclusion of "To E. of D." She made no mention of the fact that in all four manuscripts the poem appears not with Holy Sonnets but among verse letters.

[15] Alexander B. Grosart, ed., *Complete Poems of John Donne*, 2 vols. (London: Robson & Sons, 1873), 2: 273-74.

[16] Except Patrides (p. 294), who without questioning Gardner's theory simply arranged his edition in accord with that of 1635.

[17] Grierson's discussion for no apparent reason presumed that 1609 was not too late to be "the period when most of the letters among which that to L. of D. in *W* appears were written" (2: 226-29). It was R. C. Bald who first showed that this group of poems must date from the early 1590s ("Donne's Early Verse Letters," *HLQ* 15 [1952], 283-89). But Bald for some reason did not mention "To E. of D." in his article.

[18] Gardner, *Divine Poems*, p. lxxix. Gardner herself actually notes a similarity in diction between lines 1-2 of "To E. of D." and lines 18-19 of "Satyre IV," a poem Milgate has dated in early 1597. Cf. ibid., pp. 64-65 and Milgate, pp. 148-50.

[19] Key documents listing Donne in Derby's service are Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS. B146/67 and Lancashire Record Office, Faringdon MS. F/2429. For my discussion of these and other evidence of Donne's activities after his matriculation from Hart Hall, Oxford, in the fall of 1584, see "Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility," *ELR* (forthcoming).

[20] Ernest de Selincourt, ed., *Spenser's Minor Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1910), pp. 320-21. Before his death Ferdinando had been a patron of Shakespeare's theater company.

[21] Francis Grose, ed., *The Antiquarian Repertory*, 4 vols. (London: Edmund Jeffrey, 1808), 3: 431-37.

[22] *Bel-Vedere, or The Garden of the Muses* (London: Hugh Astley, 1600), sig. A5.

[23] Bodleian Library, Rawlinson MS. B146/67.

[24] William Stanley was admitted to Lincoln's Inn on 13 August 1594; *The Complete Peerage*, 13 vols. (London: St. Catherine's Press, 1910-1940), 4: 213.

[25] The title "Lord Strange" denoted the Barony of Strange of Knokin. This title was actually held by Ferdinando's father, though Ferdinando was called by it as early as his matriculation at Oxford in 1572. When Ferdinando acceded to the Earldom he inherited this and the other baronies of his father; but when Ferdinando himself died shortly afterwards without male issue, the Barony of Strange technically fell in abeyance, though the Earldom itself passed to his brother William. Nevertheless it seems to have been widely accepted that William too had become Lord Strange in 1594, since at his death his son James was called to Parliament as Lord Strange under the erroneous belief that the Barony of Strange had been vested in his father (ibid., 4: 212-14). In this connection we ought also to consider as a pun Donne's statement in line 2 of his verse letter that his enclosed poems are like the "strange creatures" begotten by the sun in Nile's mud.

[26] "There also is (ah no, he is not now)
But since I said he is, he quite is gone,
Amyntas quite is gone and lies full low,
Hauing his *Amaryllis* left to mone.
Helpe, O ye shepheards helpe ye all in this.
Her losse is yours, your losse *Amyntas* is,
Amyntas floure of shepheards pride forlorne:
He whilest he liued was the nobles swaine,
That euer piped in an oaten quill:
Both did he other, which could pipe, maintaine,
And eke could pipe himselfe with passing skill.
And there though last not least is *Aetion*,
A gentler shepheard may no where be found:
Whose *Muse* full of high thoughts inuention,
Doth like himselfe Heroically sound"

(de Selincourt, *Spenser's Minor Poems*, pp. 320-21). That "*Aetion*" is William Stanley is suggested by his grouping with "*Amyntas*" (Ferdinando) and "*Amaryllis*" (Lady Alice Spencer Stanley, Ferdinando's widow); and also by the connection between "*Aetion*" (from the Greek root for eagle) and the eagle in the Stanley family crest. This identification was first made by Abel Lefranc in *Sous le Masque de "William Shakespeare,"* 2 vols. (Paris: Payot & Co., 1919), 1: 199-237. Less plausible cases have been made for identifying "*Aetion*" as Marlowe, Drayton, or others.

[27] *The Complete Works of Thomas Lodge*, 4 vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1963), 1:4.

[28] Public Record Office, SP12/271/34 and 35. On this and other evidence it has been argued that William Stanley was not only a practicing poet but also wrote the works of Shakespeare. See especially Lefranc's *Sous le Masque de "William Shakespeare."* Lefranc actually cites Donne's "To E. of D." as evidence for his thesis. Writing thirty-three years before Gardner's edition, Lefranc incidentally dated the verse letter and its enclosed six Holy Sonnets 1607-1609 but gave no evidence for this hypothesis (ibid., 1: 136-37).

[29] Chapman's references are in a prefatory letter to his book of "Poeticall Hymnes," *The Shadow of Night* (1594). See Phyllis Brooks Bartlett, ed., *The Poems of George Chapman* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1941), p. 19.

[30] On these connections see John W. Shirley, "Sir Walter Ralegh and Thomas Harriot" in *Thomas Harriot, Renaissance Scientist* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), pp. 16-35.

[31] See Wilson's edition of *Love's Labour's Lost* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1923; rev. ed. 1962), p. li. Among those following Wilson are Janet Spens, "Notes on *Love's Labour's Lost*," *RES* 7 (1931), 333; Frances A. Yates, *A Study of "Love's Labour's Lost"* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1936), p. 9 and passim; Muriel Bradbrook, *The School of Night* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1936), pp. 8 and 130; and Bartlett, p. 422, where the dating of Chapman's poem early in 1594 is based on the sole though questionable assumption that the reference to "ingenious *Darbie*" was written before Ferdinando's death.

[32] See Devlin's "The Earl and the Alchemist" in *Hamlet's Divinity and Other Essays* (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1970), pp. 81-82. The first to identify "ingenious *Darbie*" as William Stanley was one of those seeking to prove he wrote Shakespeare's plays, Robert Frazer, in *The Silent Shakespeare* (Philadelphia: William J. Campbell, 1915), p. 205. Lefranc argued that Donne's "E. of D." must have been William Stanley because of the latter's interest in alchemy, but again he gave no particular evidence of Stanley's alchemy (*Sous le Masque de "William Shakespeare,"* 1: 137).

[33] In the spring of 1595 William Stanley wrote a letter helping Dee to secure the wardenship of Manchester College. In the fall of the same year, Dee visited Stanley at his London residence, Russell House, and dined with him twice. In the summer of 1596 Stanley visited Dee's house at Manchester College two times. And again in the summer of 1597 Stanley was at Dee's house for a few days. Sir George Carey, "*Heire of Hunsdon*," had been godfather at the baptism of Dee's daughter in 1590 and visited with Dee later in the spring of that year. He attempted to secure Eton College for Dee, as Stanley later succeeded with Manchester. Dee also visited Ralegh at Durham House in the fall of 1595. Ralegh and Dee had known each other since at least 1583, and by the mid-1590s it appears that the whole group had been in touch for several years. See *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee* (London: Camden Society, 1842), pp. 20, 21, 33, 34, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, and 59. Ferdinando Stanley is not mentioned in Dee's diary.

[34] "Many readers have felt a discrepancy between the 'Holy Sonnets' and the picture which Walton gives of Donne's later years. . . . The image of a soul in meditation which the 'Holy Sonnets' present is an image of a soul working out its salvation in fear and trembling" (Gardner, *Divine Poems*, pp. xxix and xxxi). A very different view of Donne's "despair" in the Holy Sonnets is offered by John Stachniewski in "John Donne: The Despair of the Holy Sonnets," *ELH* 48 (1981), 677-705; but Stachniewski's theory of Calvinism in the poems is constructed on some of the same biographical assumptions as Gardner's theory about their incorporating Jesuit meditation: "Helen Gardner suggests the years 1609-10 as the probable date of the 'Holy Sonnets.' . . . This dating is, moreover, biographically and historically apt" (p. 697). More recently, Richard Streier, in "John Donne Awry and Squint: The 'Holy Sonnets,' 1608-1610," *MP* 86 (1989), 357-84, argues that the Holy Sonnets express Donne's tense psychological response under inward as well as social pressures to conform to Calvinism; Streier calls Gardner's theory "the great breakthrough in scholarship" on these poems (p. 358).

[35] Thomas P. Roche, *Petrarch and the English Sonnet Sequences* (New York: AMS Press, 1989), p. x. Roche also comments that "The word *sequence* as used in nineteenth- and twentieth-century criticism . . . calls up images of progression, which automatically transfers the term to the realm of psychology so that we come to expect a sequence of moods and psychological states as if these Renaissance poems were forerunners of *In Memoriam*" (pp. xi-xii).