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Donne's "Strange Fire" and the "Elegies on the Authors Death"

Robert Thomas Fallon

The most extensive body of commentary on the poetry of John Donne prior to Coleridge is the collection of "Elegies on the Authors Death" which appears in the last pages of the 1633 edition of his works. There were thirteen of them, with three more added in the 1635 volume. Of these sixteen one was dropped, that of Thomas Browne, which appears only in the first edition.

We do not expect to encounter disinterested insights into a poet's work in elegies written on the occasion of his death, nor can we realistically hope to find memorable poetry in such a collection; a "Lycidas" will occur only infrequently. The elegists have come to praise the poet, who is already buried; and whatever their true sentiments, they are not inclined to "speak ill of the dead." They must, further, work under certain constraints of form and content. There are conventions to be observed and one can anticipate an echo of Horace's "monument more lasting than brass," an apotheosis or two, and variations on the theme that the world is in a sorry state now that the subject has departed. And indeed we find that in the elegies on Donne these conventions, and more, are accorded proper place.

In view of these constraints, it is remarkable how much these poems tell us, perhaps not so much about Donne himself as they do about his contemporaries' view of him and, further, of the very book whose pages they share with him. In truth, a reading of the poems will find them, with one or two exceptions, markedly similar in theme and expression. The conventional sorry state of things, for example, is a recurring theme. The poet adopts a posture of complaint, protesting that he has been called to an impossible task. How is one to write an elegy, he asks, on a poet who has himself exhausted the language of lament.[1] The reference is to the *Anniversaries*, of course; Jasper Mayne cites the poems and "that blest

maid" (9)[2] who is their subject and Endymion Porter wonders "if a purer Virgin dies," whether there is anyone left to "write her Elegie" (23-24).[3] "The Epitaphs thou writst," complains Edward Hyde, "have so bereft / Our tongue of wit, there is not phansie left / Enough to weepe thee" (5-7). Richard Corbet protests: "Who then shall write an Epitaph for thee, / He must be dead first, let it alone for me" (17-18). Carew has to force an Epitaph from "widdowed Poetry" (1) and Henry King summarily objects: "I do not like the office" (43). The poems are all artful contradictions of themselves, elegies on the impossibility of writing elegies.

It is a conventional theme, to be sure, though the fervor with which it is pursued in poem after poem seems to surpass mere convention. Anne Barton has described the pervasive nostalgia for the reign of Elizabeth that prevailed in the 1620s and 1630s among those who treasured "heightened memories or impressions of what life had been like under the great queen";[4] and indeed these poets, as they mourn the loss of Donne, seem to be looking about them to see who remains from that remarkable age. Where are the giants of but a generation ago, those years when Marlowe, Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare flourished? Now that Donne is dead, only old Ben Jonson is left from that time; and he, out of favor with the court, sits grumbling about the decline of the stage. Something surely has come to a close; that boundless energy of the English Renaissance seems to have exhausted itself. Donne's passing, Thomas Carew laments, is a signal of "The death of all the Arts" (76).

There is, it may be said, a less apocalyptic explanation for the reoccurrence of this theme in the elegies: The poets may have, quite simply, read one another's poems. There is evidence to indicate that some of them were in circulation prior to 1633. When Izaak Walton published his elegy in the 1670 edition of the *Lives*, he appended to it the date April 7, 1631.[5] Michael Parker has suggested that Edward King's elegy is a reply to Carew's, a position somewhat complicated by the fact that King's poem had appeared in print in 1632, a year before Carew's; but there are, indeed, occasional hints that the poets have been influenced by one another.[6]

On the other hand, perhaps we need not look to literary convention or cross-fertilization to explain the repetition of themes in these poems. Another factor is the marked similarity in the social, political, and ideological background of the contributors. Of the thirteen elegists, twelve can be identified with some assurance (one poem is anonymous). Of these, eight were associated in one way or another with Oxford University; and if one considers the three who added elegies in the 1635

edition, the figure becomes even more striking—eleven out of fifteen. Many were, or were to become, priests; and others not destined for the cloth were later appointed as prebendaries or canons of ecclesiastical communities. All but one, Arthur Wilson, were to be loyal supporters of the King in the coming Civil War, not surprisingly, of course, for so many identified with the Church of England and associated with Oxford, a refuge for the royal court during the years of struggle.[7]

The most suggestive of these similarities in background is the fact that five of the twelve were in residence during the 1620s at the same Oxford college—Christ Church.[8] The identity of two of these figures has been the subject of some conjecture. Thomas Browne has been thought to be the famous one of Norwich; but Geoffrey Keynes doubts this of a man who was that year but "an obscure medical student working in Leyden." Keynes prefers Thomas Browne, B.D. (1604-73), who later became proctor at Oxford and chaplain to both Archbishop Laud and King Charles.[9] As to the identity of "R.B.," A. J. Smith suggests three possible names, all of whom for one reason or another seem doubtful.[10] Keynes proposes Richard Busby (1606-95), citing a contemporary, Giles Oldisworth, who altered the title of the elegy to read "R. Busby" in a 1639 edition of the *Poems*; and though Keynes elsewhere observes that Oldisworth is "not always trustworthy," there are other reasons to recommend this identification.[11] Busby was, for example, a loyalist, later appointed by Charles I to be Headmaster of the Westminster School, a position he held until his death.

There are two other factors not mentioned by Keynes which add weight to these identifications. Both Browne and Busby were students at Christ Church during the years when Henry King, Richard Corbet, and Jasper Mayne were there as well. Browne entered in 1621, Busby in 1624. Further, all were frequent contributors to the same books of commemorative verses which were published with some frequency at Oxford during the 1620s. In brief, the 1633 edition of Donne's poems was not the first book in which their names appeared together.

The name of Christ Church does appear occasionally in Donne's biography. He was awarded an M.A. from Oxford in 1610, when his friend John King was Dean of Christ Church and Vice Chancellor of the University. Among his prebendaries when he became Dean of St. Paul's were two, William Piers and Samuel Fell, who had been students and later became Deans at Christ Church; Thomas Whyte was a canon there; and Henry King was to become one. Aside from these coincidences, however, there is no evidence of a close association between Donne

and the college, or for that matter Oxford itself, no evidence, that is, that he ever preached, or held office, or even visited there after 1610.[12]

There are, in fact, only two known links between Donne and Christ Church in the 1620s. The first is his close friend, Henry King, who was appointed canon there in 1624, though the position would not necessarily have meant a continuous residence at Oxford. The second is Donne's son; and it is his name which can be most reasonably associated with the elegists of the 1633 volume. John Donne, Jr., matriculated at Christ Church in late 1622, sometime "before Lady, 1623," that is, January of that year, as the *Matricula Aedis Christi* records it.[13] He took his B.A. in 1626, his M.A. in 1629, and apparently stayed on for some years thereafter (The *Matricula* indicates that he "Left out at Xtmss 1632"). His residence, therefore, was contemporaneous with the five Christ Church elegists, for during those years Corbet was Dean, King was canon, and Browne, Busby, and Mayne were fellow students.

There is another association between John Donne, Jr., and his father's elegists, however, which is even more suggestive. One of the popular literary exercises in the Oxford community at the time was the writing of commemorative verses, which were published by John Lichfield, the enterprising editor of the press there. The faculty and students apparently seized upon any legitimate occasion at hand as an excuse to demonstrate their skills. One such collection, for example, was published in 1623 when Prince Charles embarked for Spain in search of a princess; and another appeared later in the year when he returned empty-handed, the latter consisting of 168 poems in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The younger Donne contributed four Latin poems to three of these publications, the *Carolus Redux* in 1623, celebrating the return of Charles, the *Camdeni Insignia* in 1624, on the death of William Camden, and the *Oxoniensis Academiae Parentalia* in 1625, on the death of James I.[14]

Of significant interest is the appearance of other names in the collections to which Donne contributed. In both *Carolus Redux* and *Camdeni Insignia*, he is joined by Thomas Browne and Sidney Godolphin, one of the 1635 elegists; in *Oxoninesis Academia Parentalia* by Richard Busby, Richard Corbet, and both John and Henry King. Similar publications of those years bear witness to the activity of others who were invited to contribute to early editions of Donne's poems. Among the verses in *Epithalamia Oxoniensia*, on the marriage of Charles I and Henrietta Marie, are pieces by Jasper Mayne, Richard Busby, Daniel Darnelly and

John Chudleigh, the latter two, again, 1635 elegists; and those to *Vitis Carolinae*, on the birth of Prince James in 1633, include John King, John Chudleigh, Jasper Mayne, and Thomas Browne.[15] The appearance of John Donne, Jr., among the names of those engaged in this popular activity at Oxford in the 1620s suggests that he may have provided the link between the edition of his father's poems and the elegists chosen to observe his death. He was at Oxford in 1632 during the months when the volume was in preparation and was acquainted certainly with the five from Christ Church and probably a number of the other contributors from the university.

One must wonder, however, if this is all there was to it. Were the young Donne and Henry King the only links between the famous preacher and that single college? It seems unlikely that so many Christ Church and Oxford alumni would have been asked to contribute to the volume had they never been associated with the Dean of St. Paul's. Henry King, as Donne's executor, surely had a hand in producing the 1633 volume; but was it he or the younger Donne who enlisted the elegists? And is it likely that either of them would have made the choices they did simply on the basis of their own earlier friendships, regardless of whether any of these men had been close to Donne or not? What more was he to them, or they to him, that they were chosen to praise him?

It is intriguing to find these elegists, Donne's contemporaries, reflecting on a theme which has occupied the attention of readers down to our present day, the contrast in tone and content between the early and the late work, between, if I may generalize, the "poet" and the "priest." In many elegies, particularly those in the pastoral tradition, this distinction presents no difficulties; the two can be artfully woven into one, as Milton does for Edward King. But with Donne it was not so easy. The poet here was a cynic and a libertine, urging his mistress to disrobe and license his hands to range "Behind, before, above, between, below." The priest was the devout, even saintly, Dean of St. Paul's, a model of rectitude in an increasingly moral age, known for his inspired sermons, which were responsible for the conversion of many to the Church.

The problem, of course, was the book itself, for within its covers appeared the poet and the priest side by side. Perhaps not all who were inspired by his sermons were acquainted with those early poems; and those who were may have been inclined to forget them, swayed as they were by the eloquence of this priest and edified by his devotion. But here was a volume which would serve as a vivid reminder of the differences

between the early and late Donne, and perhaps as a disturbing revelation to the faithful unfamiliar with his background.

Sidney Gottlieb observes that the elegies are "surprisingly argumentative and defensive,"[16] a tone which may well reflect an uneasiness with this potentially embarrassing juxtaposition of poet and priest. Not all, to be sure, are concerned with the problem. Henry King and Edward Hyde ignore the matter and address themselves to the priest; when they do mention the poet, it is clearly the divine works they mean. This is quite in keeping with the entire collection, in fact, for with one or two exceptions, it is a commemoration of the Dean of St. Paul's. The most conspicuous exception is the elegy of Thomas Carew. His is the best known and most highly valued, and I think precisely because it is largely about the poet. Carew bows briefly to the priest, who "Committed holy Rapes upon our Will" (17); but the bulk of the poem with its well-known phrases, "Pedantic weedes," "A Mine / Of rich and pregnant phansie," "a line / Of masculine expression," and the "exil'd traine / Of gods and goddesses," is devoted to praise of the Donne who most engages our attention today, the poet of love verses. Carew does not seem disturbed by the contrast between the priest and the poet, perhaps because he is clearly more interested in the latter. In the end he puts the two in nice balance: Donne was "Apollo's first, at last, the true Gods Priest" (98). Carew, like the others, laments "The death of all the Arts" (76); but he does not adopt the fiction that he cannot, therefore, write an epitaph. Donne has not taken poetry to the grave with him though his death does mark the end of an era. With him gone, "new apostasie" (70) will arise to undo all he has achieved.

Others, however, in praising the priest, feel obliged to account for the poet; and they do so by employing a number of strategies designed either to diminish the importance of the early work or to justify it in some way. Izaak Walton's elegy is illustrative. He devotes the bulk of the poem to the priest, praising his divine works, his preaching, and his many converts, among whom he numbers himself. In a brief eight-line verse paragraph (25-32), he acknowledges the love lyrics and introduces two themes which reappear elsewhere in the lines of those writing under that same burden of justification. The first is the notion that Donne's early works describe sin so vividly as to make the reader turn from it. In an allusion to the *Satyres*, Walton proposes that Donne made sins sound "so foule / That some have fear'd their shapes & kept their soule / Freer by reading verse" (27-28). Donne, in brief, was doing the priest's work from the very beginning, however unknowingly. The second theme is

that the offending early works were composed very early indeed: "Did hee (I feare / The dull will doubt:) these at his twentieth year?" (30-31). The earlier the work, of course, the less consequential it may be shown to be, the easier it is to attribute it to youthful indiscretion, and the less it taints the image of the devout Dean. Years later, in his *Polyhistor*, Daniel Georg Morhof was to claim that the love lyrics were all written by the time Donne was eighteen![17]

Sir Lucius Cary picks up Carew's closing line but puts a moral edge to it: Donne "was a two-fold Priest; in youth, / Apollo's; afterwards, the voice of Truth" (7-8). It is clear that Cary is absorbed in "the voice of Truth"—the poem is all in praise of the priest--but he also senses the need to justify that Apollo past. He introduces a theme taken up later by Walton and others, claiming that Donne had undergone a conversion in his life, like that of St. Augustine, and so was to be the more admired for turning from the youthful excesses reflected in his love lyrics, indeed was a better priest for the experience. "He conquer'd rebell passions," Cary writes, and "Banish't so farre their working, that we can / But know he had some, for we knew him man" (85-88). Therefore, he concludes, "let his last excuse his first extremes, / His age saw visions, though his youth dream'd dreams" (89-90); and such dreams, it is implied, are a necessary prelude to holy visions.

Jasper Mayne acknowledges the love lyrics, but with faint praise. True, Donne's "carelesse houres brought forth / Fancies beyond our studies" (20-21); but it was all just jotted down, "thy pen flow'd rashly fit" in "thy weakest straine" (24-26). He castigates Donne's imitators, those who, as he puts it, wrote "this . . . in Wine, and this in Beere" (34), much to their discredit. Mayne then apologizes, "But I do wrong thee, *Donne*, and this low praise / Is written onely for thy yonger dayes" (49-50), before ending with a long paean to the Dean of St. Paul's.

The shortest elegy (save for the anonymous "Epitaph"), and certainly the most interesting from our perspective, is that by Thomas Browne. His poem was omitted from subsequent editions, the only one of the thirteen to be so treated, and a closer look at his lines may reveal why. The uneasiness felt by some of these poets over the mixture of the sacred and the profane in this edition of Donne's works is nowhere so vividly and unambiguously addressed as in Browne's short poem. He comes directly to the point in his lengthy title:

> To the deceased Author,
> Upon the *Promiscuous* printing of his Poems,
> the *Looser sort*, with the *Religious*.

When thy *Loose* raptures, *Donne*, shall meet with Those
That doe confine
Tuning, unto the Duller line,
And sing not, but in *Sanctified Prose*;
How will they, with sharper eyes,
The *Fore-skinne* of thy phansie circumcise?
And feare, thy *wantonnesse* should now, begin
Example, that hath ceased to be *Sin*?

And that *Feare* fannes their *Heat*; whilst knowing eyes
Will not admire
At this *Strange Fire*,
That here is *mingled with thy Sacrifice*:
But dare reade even thy *Wanton Story*,
As thy *Confession*, not thy *Glory*.
And will so envie *Both* to future times,
That they would buy thy *Goodnesse*, with thy *Crimes*.

In the lines Browne scorns the prudery of those disturbed by the love lyrics and mocks their ingenious rationalizations. The poem, although addressed to Donne, is a witty and provocative challenge to those who might be expected to read the volume unsympathetically. Browne singles out clerics who, unlike the learned and inspiring Dean, are wont to preach "unto the Duller line, / And sing not, but in *Sanctified Prose*" (3-4), those who, he predicts, will want to "circumcise," or censor, the love lyrics, "The *Fore-skinne* of thy phansie," for fear their "*wantonnesse*" will tempt readers into sin by "*Example*" (6-8). Furthermore, such readers "Will not admire / At this *Strange Fire*, / That here is *mingled with thy Sacrifice*" (10-12). The fire image appears throughout the collection but elsewhere almost exclusively in reference to Donne's sermons or divine works: Carew's "flame / of thy brave Soule, that shot such light and heat" (14-15) from the pulpit; the "cleare fire" of "thy diviner Poems" (49) in Arthur Wilson's elegy; or Lucius Cary's "fire in us" (45) ignited by reading "The Crosse." Cary also praises the priest at the implied expense of the poet: his sermons "did flames of more devotion move / Then ever Argive Hellens could of love" (73-74). Carew refers to the "two Flamens" (96), God's and Apollo's priests, but for Thomas Browne alone that "*Strange Fire*" is the love lyrics, mingled in the pages of the volume with the divine poems, "*thy Sacrifice*." What will those "knowing eyes" do about the "*Wanton Story*" of the love lyrics, he asks.

Well, they will read them not for themselves, as Donne's "*Glory*," but as evidence of an Augustinian conversion, his "*Confession*," which makes the divine works the more to be wondered at. This is essentially what Lucius Cary says in praising Donne for conquering his "rebell passions" (85) so that we can "let his last excuse his first extremes" (89). And, Browne implies, this is the only way, absurd as it is, that they will be able to accept both the "*Goodnesse*" of the divine, and the "*Crimes*" (16) of the profane, works.

Why was this poem excluded from later editions? On close examination it appears to be not so much about Donne as his readers, those with their "sharper" and "knowing" eyes, and, as the title implies, about the volume itself. Browne may well be writing about some of his fellow elegists in a not altogether charitable reproof of their prudish uneasiness and sanctimonious rationalization for the inclusion of the love lyrics in the edition. Browne seems to scoff at the moral blinders that prevent them from recognizing the true value of Donne's early works. If it was read thus, then clearly it had to go.

But a question remains: Was this simply prudery on the part of overly pious priests and laymen, or were their concerns in any way justified? One could examine that moment in history for some light. In 1633, the year the volume appeared, William Laud was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury, giving added weight to his efforts, already well advanced, to "purify," in his own lights, the Church of England. And here, in the midst of these attempts, appears a volume of poems which seems by its very design to remind all that one of England's most renowned priests had led a misspent youth. Further, there is the matter of Donne's reputation itself, so important to those who loved and admired him.[18] The Dean of St. Paul's was not without his critics. It should come as no surprise that there were those who envied him his position. In his elegy R.B., using the parable of the laborers in the vineyard, alludes to Donne's detractors:

> It was his Fate (I know't) to be envy'd
> As much by Clerkes, as lay men magnifi'd;
> And why? but 'cause hee came too late in the day
> And yet his Penny earn'd, and had as they. (59-62)

He had indeed come "late in the day," ordained in his forties and rewarded soon after with St. Paul's; and just how, his critics with their "knowing eyes" might well ask, had he been employed earlier in that

day, while they were laboring so ardently. Sidney Gottlieb's observation about the "surprisingly argumentative and defensive" tone of some of the elegies[19] is surely appropriate; and perhaps that tone, the often transparent rationalizations of Donne's youth, and the fiery attacks on his detractors can best be explained as a response to the printing of his licentious poems, which his admirers feared could only add weight to the complaints of those already disposed to discredit him.

The contributors would have had additional cause for concern once they had the opportunity to examine the pages of the 1633 volume itself, for a quick glance reveals that Browne's characterization of the "*Promiscuous* printing" of the sacred and profane is most apt. The works are not ordered under the headings we know today but are thrown together indiscriminately under the general labels, "Poems," which occupy about 80% of the pages, "Satyres," and "Letters."[20] And they appear in no discernible sequence, which makes for some rather disturbing juxtapositions, underlining for any reader the embarrassing identification of the licentious poet with the devout priest. For example, the last lines of "Sapho to Philaenis" share the same page (168) with the opening lines of "The Annuntiation and Passion." The *Anniversary Poems* appear in the midst of a grup of what was to become the *Songs and Sonets* (233-76), preceded there by "The Flea" (230) and "The Curse" (231), and followed by "The Extasie" (277) and "Loves Deitie" (280). "The Crosse" (64) is preceded by "To Sr. Henry Wotton: 'Sir, more than kisses'" (61) and is followed by the "Elegie on the Lady Marckham" (66). "Elegy XV: The Expostulation" (300) is followed by "The Paradox" (302), which in turn is followed by "A Hymne to Christ" (304). One could go on. If the Dean's youthful indiscretions had been forgiven or forgotten during his later, more exemplary life, nothing could be better designed to revive the issue than this promiscuous juxtaposition of his sacred and profane works.

Thus, it can be readily appreciated that the organization of the volume would have been a cause for concern among Donne's admirers. One can imagine the reaction in our own time if a book of sermons by a modern Prince of the Church were to appear with less edifying works from an unpromising youth mixed indiscriminately among his expressions of pious sentiment. Were we uneasy about the priest's reputation, or apprehensive about the image of the Church, we might worry as well and leap to his defense with whatever device came to mind.

The sequence of poems in the 1633 edition, especially in the complete absence of logical order among them, could well offer important

clues to the identity of manuscript origins of the works. We can easily imagine a day in 1632 when a busy man, perhaps Henry King or Izaak Walton, appeared in the office of John Marriot with an armful of hastily collected manuscripts, which there had not been time to sort out. One can further imagine the equally busy publisher then handing the pile to his print-setter, who in turn simply started with the page on top and did his work until he had reached the bottom. Or perhaps, as Ted-Larry Pebworth puts it, the volume was compiled "as occasions presented themselves," that is, with manuscripts tacked on at the end as they became available.[21] Much might be seen in subjecting the entire volume to a detailed scrutiny of the relationship between the order of the poems and the manuscript sources, as John Shawcross has done with the Elegies;[22] such scrutiny would at least "help to thicken other proofs / That do demonstrate thinly."

Grierson praises the 1633 edition as one which "bears more evidence of competent editing by one who knew and understood Donne's poems than any later edition";[23] but it is difficult to accommodate this view with the evidence of a volume so carelessly indiscriminate in the ordering of the poems.[24] It has been proposed that the first two editions were compiled from different manuscript sources[25] with the implication that the ones used for the 1633 volume were somehow closer to Donne's original words; but this position does not satisfactorily resolve the issue. The problem, in brief, is that in comparing the first two editions, we are asked to conclude that in 1633 the editor took extraordinary care with the text but gave no thought to the order of the poems; whereas in 1635 whoever undertook the revision of the volume obviously gave serious thought to the ordering of the poems but was neglectfully unconcerned about the accuracy of the text. Those less schooled in textual matters may find this a difficult proposition to accept.

In any event, all was set right in the 1635 edition, where the poems are reduced to the order we have come to know, and identified as the familiar "Songs and Sonets," "Elegies," "Epithalamions," "Divine Poems," and so forth. The striking feature of the sequence is that it was intended to be roughly chronological, with the profane poems first and the sacred last.[26] The editor, confronted with the chaos of the first edition, could have chosen any number of alternatives to this sequence; but he decided to open the volume with the *Songs and Sonets*. Why did he not give primary place to the divine poems, or open as in the 1633 edition with the "Progresse of the Soule"? It would have been politic to do so, for there were apparently still those who questioned whether a

book of Donne's poems was the appropriate way to preserve his name. On that score, an anonymous epigram introducing the volume (A4b) strikes a curiously dissenting note.[27] The poet agrees "'T was well, and pious" to ensure Donne's "Eternitie" by publishing the poems; but he goes on to urge "a better way" to honor the priest: "Print but his sermons," he proposes, "and if those we buy, / He, We and Thou shall live t'Eternitie."

But who was the person most responsible for this second edition, for there was no small labor involved in revising the volume, and no little love? The evidence of the book, at least, points to Izaak Walton. Another change was the addition of a frontispiece, an engraving of Donne at eighteen. Now, this is curious. Why did the editor include a picture, the only one in the volume, of the Dean of St. Paul's as a teen-ager, when there were so many more appropriate alternatives at hand[28] and when most of the potential readers would remember him as a learned priest approaching sixty? Will the collected works of John Paul II open with his high school photograph? It was Walton's choice, it seems clear, and his epigram beneath the engraving provides an explanation, not only for the picture, but, I suggest, for the sequence of poems as they appear in the 1635 edition:

> This was for youth, Strength, Mirth, and wit that Time
> Most count their golden Age; but t'was not thine.
> Thine was thy later yeares, so much refind
> From youths Drosse, Mirth, and wit; as thy pure mind
> Thought (like the Angels) nothing but the Praise
> Of thy creator, in those last, best Dayes.
> Witnes this Booke, (thy Embleme) which begins
> With Love; but endes, with Sighes, and Teares for sins.

Walton continues to be concerned about Donne's reputation and repeats the theme of his elegy, diminishing the importance of the love lyrics by pushing the date of their composition as far back into Donne's youth as possible and praising the priest at the expense of the poet. The picture of the eighteen-year-old adds unspoken emphasis to Walton's position that the early works were very early indeed, and as the product of youthful indiscretion, need not be taken seriously. This is not to say that the volume was organized to fit Walton's epigram; but as Sidney Gottlieb observes, the arrangement of the poems "reinforces the view of Donne's life" that its lines profess; that is, let the volume mirror the life.[29] To use Thomas Browne's words, present the "*Strange Fire*" of the poet

first, that we may wonder the more at the "*Sacrifice*" of the priest to come in later pages.

Walton reflects these same concerns in his various *Lives* of Donne. The first, which appears in the 1640 edition of *LXXX Sermons*, is entirely appropriate to the content of the volume—it is a biography of the priest who delivered the sermons.[30] David Novarr observes that "Walton was concerned in 1640 with Donne as a man of God,"[31] to which may be added his concern that nothing taint the memory of that man of God. Scant space is given to the early years and subsequent editions adopt roughly the same proportions. Further, in later revisions he grows even more dismissive of Donne's early poems. In 1640, for example, borrowing a phrase from his elegy, he observes that they were "carelessly scattered" (p. B4) in Donne's youth; but by 1658 they had become "facetiously Composed and carelessly scattered" (p. 75). Again, he calls them "loosely scattered" in 1640 but "loosely (God knows too loosely) scattered" (p. 54) in 1670.[32] We can only conjecture about Walton's influence on the dramatic revision of the 1635 edition but it can be observed that the final ordering of the poems fits nicely his view of the priest of St. Paul's.

And it was Walton's view that prevailed. For the next two hundred years his *Life* was reprinted time and again and later biographers borrowed liberally from his account. It is safe to say that readers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw Donne through Walton's eyes and his uneasiness about the love lyrics is a continuing concern during all that period. It is a temptation to dismiss the concern of Donne's elegists as a quaint idiosyncrasy of the age; but in fact almost two-and-a-half centuries later, as Dayton Haskin has told us, Alexander Grosart was still wrestling with the question whether the licentious poems should be printed at all.[33]

Our own age experiences little discomfort with the two Donnes. We have found religious imagery an integral part of the secular poetry, and the divine works cast vividly in material and sexual terms, walled towns and spiritual rapes. We observe that he uses the same qualities of wit in both, though even this thoroughly modern insight did not escape the attention of early admirers. John Chudleigh, in his elegy of 1635 (Cc7-Cc8b), noted that:

> 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)

And Giles Oldisworth in his annotations of a 1639 edition found scriptural sources for many lines in the *Songs and Sonets*.[34] We, however, with much less than they of our moral and spiritual lives invested in the priesthood, can grow impatient with those who saw the contrast between the poet and priest as a cause for concern. Indeed, Joseph Brodsky in his 1973 "Elegy for John Donne" seems incensed that the issue is raised at all:

> But one last verse
> awaits its end, baring its fangs to snarl
> that carnal love is but the poet's duty—
> spiritual love the essence of the priest.[35]

What's the problem, he protests! But one wonders if it was all that easy for John Donne, or for those who sought to celebrate his memory in the "Elegies on the Authors Death."

LaSalle University

Notes

[1] See Sidney Gottlieb, "*Elegies Upon the Author*: Defining, Defending, and Surviving Donne," *John Donne Journal* 2, No. 2 (1983), 23-38. Gottlieb characterizes their problem thus: "And how does one write an elegy—or any poem at all, for that matter—when the source of poetic inspiration is gone?" (p.3 4). It was only after I had completed my work with the original sources that I discovered Gottlieb's fine essay on the elegies. He will be delighted, as was I, to have some of his insights independently confirmed.

[2] The quotations are from *Poems, by J. D. with Elegies on the Authors Death. Printed by M. F. for John Marriot*, the 1633 and 1635 editions; the line numbers are from H. J. C. Grierson, *The Poems of John Donne*, 2 vols., 5th ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1953), I, 371-95.

[3] See Michael Parker, "Diamond's Dust: Carew, King and the Legacy of Donne," *The Eagle and the Dove*, eds. Claude Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1986), pp. 191-200. Parker observes (pp. 193-96) that the image of the turning wheel in Carew's poem is an obvious allusion to the images of "Motion in corruption" in the *First* (ll. 67-73) and *Second* (ll. 7-22) *Anniversaries*.

[4] "Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia," *ELH* 48 (1981), 724.

[5] See David Novarr, *The Making of Walton's Lives* (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1958). Novarr doubts the date, calling it "fictitious" (p. 102). The elegy is not dated in the earlier editions but surely in the absence of other evidence the author's word must carry weight. Walton's memory would have been particularly vivid about an occasion when he composed, or at least drafted, an elegy within a week after his good friend's death.

[6] Parker, p. 196.

[7] The date is from *The Dictionary of National Biography*, Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses*, 2 vols. (London, 2691-92), and Joseph Foster, *Alumni Oxoniensis* (Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1968).

[8] The associations are as follows: Richard Corbet: Student, 1599; B.A., 1602; M.A., 1605; Senior Student, 1612; Dean of Christ Church, 1620-28. Henry King: Student, 1609; B.A., 1611; M.A.,

1614; B.D. & D.D., 1625; Canon, 1624. Thomas Browne: Student, 1621; B.A., 1624; M.A., 1627. Richard Busby: Student, 1624; B.A., 1628; M.A., 1631. Jasper Mayne: Servitor, 1623; Student, 1627; B.A., 1628; M.A., 1631.

[9] Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *A Bibliography of John Donne*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 196n.

[10] *John Donne: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 101.

[11] Keynes, pp. 196, 202. Giles Oldisworth's annotated edition is in the Cambridge University Library, Keynes B. 4. 8. See p. 416.

[12] R. C. Bald, *John Donne: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 390-91. Donne attended Hart Hall, of course, but left there when he was fourteen, before any of the elegists except Richard Corbet had been born.

[13] *Matricula Aedis Christi. 1546-1635*, Christ Church College Library, D.P.i.a.1.

[14] *Carolus Redux. Oxoniae, Excudebant Iohannes Lichfield, & Iocabus Short, Academiae Typographi. 1623*, Bodleian 4O H17 Art, ff. G4-G4v. *Camdeni Insignia. Excudebant Iohannes Lichfield, & Iocabus Short, Academiae Typographi, 1624*, Bodleian 4O H17 Art, f. E2. *Oxoniensis Academiae Parentalia, Excudebant Iohannes Lichfield, & Guilielmus Turner. Anno Dom. 1625*, Bodleian 4O I21 Art, f. D4.

[15] *Epithalamia Oxoniensia. Oxoniae, Excudebant Iohannes Lichfield, & Giulielmus Turner. Anno Dom. 1625*, Bodleian 4O M37 Art. *Vitis Carolinae. Oxoniae, Excudebant Iohannes Lichfield & Giulielmus Turner. Ann. Dom. 1633*, Bodleian 16 Art. Seld.

[16] Gottlieb, p. 28.

[17] *Polyhistor Literarius Philosophicus et Practicus* (Lubeck, 1714), p. 994.

[18] In 1637 John Donne, Jr., petitioned the Archbishop of Canterbury to order the printing of the works to stop, expressing a concern that the publication of "certaine Poems by ye sayde John Marriote" and the "new impressions" thereof, presumably the 1633 and 1635 editions, were to "the discredite of ye memorie of [my] Father" (Grierson, II, lxvii). Laud apparently shared his concern and ordered publication to cease, but to no effect. Donne did not gain control of the poems until a decade later (Keynes, 247).

[19] Gottlieb, p. 28.

[20] One page (350) also labeled "Poems" appears between the "Satyres" and "Letters," completely out of place. It contains "A Hymne to God the Father."

[21] "Manuscript Poems and Print Assumptions: Donne and his Modern Editors," *John Donne Journal* 3, No. 1 (1984), 4.

[22] "The Argument and Order of John Donne's Poems," *Poems in Their Places*, ed. Neil Freistat (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 123-28.

[23] Grierson, II, lxvi. Grierson insists on the superiority of the 1633 text. Elsewhere he remarks, "As regards text and canon it is the most trustworthy of all the old editions" (II, lix) and it is "far and away superior to any other single edition, and, I may add at once, to any other *single* manuscript" (II, cxvi).

[24] Pebworth has questioned Grierson's advocacy of the 1633 edition in similar terms. The volume, he observes, "reflects no authorial control, and it suffers from all the consequences of that lack of control" (p. 4).

[25] Grierson, II, xcvii.

[26] There is one exception. The 1633 edition opens with "The Progresse of the Soule," preceded by the prose letter, "*Infiniti Sacrum, 16 Augusti 1601*," which accompanies it. The editor moved the "Progresse" back to page 301 in 1635 but neglected to move the "*Infiniti Sacrum*" with it. The letter is thus the first work in the edition, an oversight for which "I.M." (John Marriot) apologizes on the last page of the volume. The error was corrected in the 1639 edition.

[27] Novarr (p. 34) agrees with Gosse that the author was Walton. There is no evidence to support the identification but the sentiments reflect well the thought of one perhaps even then planning an edition of the sermons.

[28] See Keynes, pp. 372-76 for other possibilities.

[29] Gottlieb, p. 30. Although Novarr believes that Walton's part in editing the 1633 and 1635 editions was "negligible" (p. 31), he does agree that the 1635 edition "carries out the division suggested in Walton's elegy" (p. 33).

[30] *The Life and Death of Dr. Donne*, in *LXXX Sermons preached by that learned and reverend divine, John Donne, Dr. in Divinity, Late Deane of the Cathedrall Church of S. Pauls London. MDCXL.*

[31] Novarr, p. 51.

[32] *The Life of John Donne, Dr. in Divinity, and Late Dean of Saint Pauls Church London. Printed by J.G. for R. Marriot* (London, 1658 and 1670). See Smith, pp. 116-17. For further examples of Walton expanding phrases in later editions see Novarr, pp. 83-84.

[33] "Essay on the Life and Writings of Donne," *The Complete Poems of John Donne, D.D.*, 2 vols. (London: Robson and Sons, 1872-73), I, x.

[34] To cite but a few, by l. 24 of "The Sun Rising" Oldisworth wrote "Col: 3.3" and by l. 29 "1 Cor: 3.21." By l. 17 of "Breake of Day" he has "Luk, 21.34." Several lines in "The Canonization" are marked "Xtian" as is l. 26 of "The Baite." By ll. 22 & 25 of "Loves Exchange" and ll. 31-32 of "The Dreame" he wrote "God."

[35] *Selected Poems*, trans. George L. Kline (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 39-45.