

CHATTERTON LECTURE ON POETRY

Donne, By Hand

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‘WHY NOT DO DONNE—an edition and Life—for the Clarendon Press?’ With this letter of 1906 from W. A. Raleigh, newly installed in the new chair in English Literature at the University of Oxford, to H. J. C. Grierson, the first Professor of English at the University of Aberdeen, began a new phase in the afterlife of John Donne’s poetry.¹ The edition that Grierson produced, *The Poems of John Donne*, published as a two-volume set by the Clarendon Press in Oxford in 1912, decisively reshaped Donne for the twentieth century as a manuscript poet and as a university poet.² Those two claims—one about the material forms in which the texts of Donne’s verse circulated, and another about its institutional contexts—will be explored in this lecture through an account of the making and the influence of Grierson’s edition. What that exploration reveals, as I will argue, is that his edition was made and conceived within what was, on the one hand, a continuing manuscript culture and, on the other, the developing institutional and intellectual culture of a new subject: university English.

This reshaping and relocation of Donne at the start of the twentieth century is (of course) just one of the many through which his life and writings have passed; literary history is (among other things) the history of

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¹W. A. Raleigh–H. J. C. Grierson, 11 Dec. 1906: Bodleian MS Eng. poet. e. 92, fol. 487r. Bodleian MSS Eng. poet. e. 92–3 are together Grierson’s own interleaved set of his 1912 edition; MS Eng. lett. d. 363 contains correspondence and other items removed from this set and separately bound.

²H. J. C. Grierson (ed.), *The Poems of John Donne*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1912); unless otherwise noted, quotations from Donne and other poets will follow this edition.

just so many equivalent reshapings and relocations, in different ways for, and of, different writers. But there are reasons to think that the privileged invitation extended to Chatterton lecturers—to talk ‘on the life and works of a deceased English poet’—may make Donne, and *this* Donne in particular, appropriate as my subject. Raleigh’s complementary pairing—‘an edition’ of the works and a ‘Life’ of the author—presupposes one kind of connection between writing and biography; here I would like to propose another, by addressing not the life *and* the work, but the life *of* Donne’s works in later readings and writings, offering a study of some of their different afterlives. Donne has seemed to many readers to be a writer preoccupied with the problem and the possibility of posthumous existence, a preoccupation that extends to the continued life of his works, and more particularly still with their afterlives, a term whose varied meanings I will explore in the first section of my lecture.³ I will turn then to the making and shaping of Grierson’s *Donne*, before closing with some reflections on how this remaking and relocation of Donne in 1912 was itself remade and relocated over the later years of the century. Many early readers—like Ben Jonson—feared ‘That Donne himself, for not being understood, would perish’; this lecture argues instead that subsequent understandings of Donne and his works, in manuscript and print, and by different audiences, are necessary elements of the poet we read today.⁴

Many factors bear on Donne’s afterlife: here I would like to signal three, to be explored in more detail in what follows. The first is that his poems in many ways establish the terms in which subsequent readers and writers respond to them. The second is that although later responses very often remain within a poetic or a conceptual space established by Donne’s writing, they may very well run counter to, or mis-recognise aspects of, the poems from which they depart, giving a new direction or a new emphasis to the older texts. The third is that debates about the kind of poet Donne is, or might be, have always formed the conditions within which readers first encounter his poems; and those debates have always partly at least been about whether Donne is a poet of manuscript or of print.

³See, for instance, Ramie Targoff, *John Donne, Body and Soul* (Chicago, 2008).

⁴Ben Jonson, ‘Conversations with Drummond, l.158’, in Ian Donaldson (ed.), *Ben Jonson* (Oxford, 1985), p. 599; see further Ian Donaldson, ‘Perishing and surviving: the poetry of Donne and Jonson’, *Essays in Criticism*, 51 (2001), 68–85.

I

From the first printing of his poems in 1633, two years after his death, Donne's biography has been part of what a reader encounters in encountering his poems: 'POEMS, | *By* J.D. | WITH | ELEGIES | ON THE AUTHORS | DEATH', as the title-page of that first printed edition has it. That claim grows more specific with time, as the works collected as Donne's become more numerous, so that by the title-page of the last seventeenth-century edition in 1669 the simple initials of 1633 have given way to a full name, a profession and an institution: 'POEMS, &c. | BY | JOHN DONNE, | *late Dean of St. Pauls.* | WITH | ELEGIES | ON THE | AUTHORS DEATH. | To which is added | *Divers Copies under his own hand,* | **Never before Printed.**' This development across the century, however, was not only, or was not simply, a print phenomenon. It is clear that, following Donne's death in 1631, a manuscript debate about the kind of poet he had been took place; this debate was later transplanted into print, where it is most easily approached, and where its meanings changed as it expanded and developed.

The first elegies to Donne were printed in the last sheet of the posthumously published *Death's Duell* in 1632; by Henry King and Edward Hyde (not, most scholars think now, the future Lord Chancellor but a cousin sharing his name): the two poems were reprinted in the following year, together with ten other tributes in the *Poems* of 1633.⁵ The placement of these elegies is important. Donne had preached upon the Penitential Psalms in 1623 that 'the whole frame of the Poem is a beating out of a piece of gold, but the last clause is as the impression of the stamp, and that is it that makes it currant'; we might say here, for a book as for a poem, that the elegies which close both books form a frame through which any new reader of Donne in print would encounter the preacher or the poet, and make that reading current.⁶ These elegies were the last clause of a reader's experience of the book they held; to change metaphors, the Donne they read was always already placed and shaped by subsequent responses, his poems wrapped in the printed sheets of elegies as his body had been wrapped iconically in its winding sheet. Donne's death here is both an entry into the life of the poems, and an entry into their afterlife;

⁵John Donne, *Deaths Duell* (London: Richard Redmer and Benjamin Fisher, 1632), pp. 45–7; Donne, *Poems* (London: John Marriot, 1633), pp. 373–406.

⁶George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson (eds.), *The Sermons of John Donne*, 10 vols. (Berkeley, 1953–62), 6.41.

and this frame, as we shall see, is one, vitally, preserved and extended in Grierson's edition.

Henry King's poem, 'To the Memorie of My Ever Desired Friend D^r. Donne', leads forth the tributes to the dead poet as the first of the two poems printed with *Death's Duel* in 1632, and as the first of a dozen poems printed with the *Poems* in 1633. But it is an odd poem with which to begin such a concluding sequence for it is itself already situated not so much at the start of a process as in its middle. The poem responds to a poem that King must have encountered earlier in manuscript: Thomas Carew's poem, 'An Elegie upon the death of the Deane of Pauls, D^r. Iohn Donne' (1.378).⁷ Carew's 'Elegie' was printed in the pages following King's in the *Poems* of 1633, but had earlier circulated in manuscript among the circle of Donne's admirers;⁸ and it is against Carew's poem, and in some ways against Carew's Donne, that King pushes at the close of the first section of his poem:

Who ever writes of Thee, and in a stile
Unworthy such a Theme, does but revile
Thy precious Dust, and wakes a learned Spirit
Which may revenge his Rapes upon thy Merit. (1.371, lines 23–6)

These lines, as the best recent critics of the poem have argued, take up and then redirect phrases from Carew's earlier poem, in particular his claim that 'the flame' of Donne's 'brave Soule' 'Committed holy Rapes upon our Will' (1.378, lines 14–5, 17); King makes a claim for a fresh and accurate response to Donne partly at least by repositioning and correcting the errors and vocabulary of the earlier poet.⁹ But the four lines of King's poem that I quoted, as well as looking back to Carew, also anticipate the epigrammatic close of his own poem, when the 'precious Dust' of these earlier lines becomes further refined:

⁷Three manuscript texts of the poem now survive, listed as CwT 195–7 in Peter Beal, *Index of English Literary Manuscripts, Volume II: 1625–1700*, 2 parts (London, 1987); the eight manuscript texts of King's poem listed by Beal as KiH 762–9 all seem to post-date print publication in 1632, though they may not derive from it.

⁸Though only three MSS now survive: CwT 195–7.

⁹Michael P. Parker, 'Diamond's dust: Carew, King, and the legacy of Donne', in Claude J. Summers and Ted-Larry Pebworth (eds.), *The Eagle and the Dove: Reassessing John Donne* (Columbia, MO, 1986), pp. 191–200; John Lyon, 'Jonson and Carew on Donne: censure into praise', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 37 (1997), 97–118; Scott Nixon, 'Carew's response to Jonson and Donne', *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900*, 39 (1999), 89–109; and Jonathan F. S. Post, 'Helpful contraries: Carew's "Donne" and Milton's *Lycidas*', *George Herbert Journal*, 29 (2005–6), 76–91.

Commit we then Thee to Thy selfe: Nor blame
 Our drooping loves, which thus to thy own Fame
 Leave Thee Executour. Since, but thine owne,
 No pen could doe Thee Justice, nor Bayes Crowne
 Thy vast desert; Save that, wee nothing can
 Depute, to be thy Ashes Guardian.
 So Jewellers no art, or Metall trust
 To forme the Diamond, but the Diamonds dust. (1.372, lines 51–8)

King's clerical experience shapes the communities through which these lines move, and which they create, just as much as his poetic memory; the lines are shaped not only by the allusion to Carew (and by self-allusion), but by an echo, and a complication, of 'The Order for the Burial of the Dead'. Ashes to dust is King's progression, and dust to dust in a new way his conclusion, even as the assonantal internal rhyming and thickened alliteration of the opening phrase, 'Committ we then Thee to Thy selfe', remembers the priest's intoned prayer at the graveside from the *Book of Common Prayer*: 'And his body we commit to the earth.'¹⁰

At the same time, King's line offers a very different and less fixed interment. As the poem's syntax extends out and across the following two line-breaks, different kinds of agency stir against one another as the grammatical structure concludes: the poem does not say 'Nor blame | Our drooping loves, which thus to thy own Fame | Leave Thee', which would commit the passive poet to the subsequent ministrations of a Virgilian or emblematic *fama*;¹¹ instead, it grants Donne a remarkable posthumous agency, the power to carry into effect the shaping and the organisation of his own afterlife, 'to thy own Fame | Leave Thee Executour'. King's lines are powerful not only because they reflect on, and from within, his own appointment as an executor to Donne's will,¹² and his predicament as one poet paying tribute to an earlier (and greater) poet; they are powerful, too, because they alert a reader to an impulse towards subsequent imaginings of future life with which Donne's poems are already shot through. For King's unbalancing phrase remembers, and enacts its own relationship to, earlier Donne: 'Though I be dead, which sent mee, I should be | Mine owne executor and Legacie', he had written in 'The Legacie' (1.20). Where

¹⁰ John E. Booty (ed.), *The Book of Common Prayer, 1559: the Elizabethan Prayer Book* (Charlottesville, VA, 1976).

¹¹ I have benefited here, as throughout my lecture, from Keith Thomas, *The Ends of Life* (Oxford, 2009), esp. pp. 226–67 ('Fame and the afterlife').

¹² 'I make my welbelov'd Friendes Henrye Kinge Doctor of Divinitie & John Montfort Doctor of Divinitie ... Executors of this my Will': R. C. Bald, *John Donne: a Life* (Oxford, 1970), p. 563.

'The Will' had maintained, with a donor's wry sense of wrenched appropriateness, that 'I give my reputation to those | Which were my friends' (1.57), only in the sure and certain hope that they would be false to it, King's poem trusts only Donne finally to frame his own posthumous Fame.

The testamentary motives in Donne's poems, recalled and deployed here by King, were a part of his mind formed by his legal training, and a part, too, of his theological imagination; but the vagaries or reversals of reputation may find their fullest exploration in his lyric verse. A poem such as 'The Relique' captures this doubleness, and is given life by it:

When my grave is broke up againe
 Some second ghest to entertaine,
 (For graves have learn'd that woman-head
 To be to more then one a Bed)
 And he that digs it, spies
 A bracelet of bright haire about the bone,
 Will he not let'us alone,
 And thinke that there a loving couple lies,
 Who thought that this device might be some way
 To make their soules, at the last busie day,
 Meet at this grave, and make a little stay?

If this fall in a time, or land,
 Where mis-devotion doth command,
 Then, he that digges us up, will bring
 Us, to the Bishop, and the King,
 To make us Reliques; then
 Thou shalt be a Mary Magdalen, and I
 A something else thereby;
 All women shall adore us, and some men;
 And since at such time, miracles are sought,
 I would have that age by this paper taught
 What miracles wee harmelesse lovers wrought.

First, we lov'd well and faithfully,
 Yet knew not what wee lov'd, nor why,
 Difference of sex no more wee knew,
 Then our Guardian Angells doe;
 Comming and going, wee
 Perchance might kisse, but not between those meales;
 Our hands ne'r toucht the seales,
 Which nature, injur'd by late law, sets free:
 These miracles wee did; but now alas,
 All measure, and all language, I should passe,
 Should I tell what a miracle shee was. (1.62–3)

A poem literally about what remains to survive from and of the past (its titular ‘relic’ deriving from the Latin *reliquiæ*), this is delightedly also a poem about the future. It is, though, a poem startlingly uncomfortable with the present, drawing only to the moment in its final two and a half lines with the darkening and self-undoing closure (for the poem, at least) initiated by the temporal pointing of ‘but *now* alas’ (line 31; emphasis added). There, rather than ‘set free’ from the formal restraint of the third stanza’s closing triplet, the poem folds and holds itself within a triple rhyme beyond which, as its modal verbs acknowledge, it can not pass. Those different temporal layers in Donne’s poem have their futures tensed by its religious daring, and are braced by the tact with which it imagines the future reception not only of the couple at its centre but of its own future material forms and audiences: all the women and, after an important concession, *some* men, ‘by this paper taught’ on the occasion of its projected and expected discovery.

‘The Relique’ is, as many of its best readers have reminded us, a poem about subsequent interpretation,¹³ about (in Jonathan Miller’s probing phrase) ‘the peculiar transformation undergone by works of art that out-live the time in which they were made.’¹⁴ Miller called this ongoing process of successive remaking and rediscovery the afterlife of an art object, and he drew attention to the changes that art objects may undergo in this process:

If they are rediscovered after a long period of being lost or neglected, it is as if they are perceived and valued for reasons so different from those held originally that they virtually change their character and identity . . . As well as the physical effects that can be inflicted upon an object, comparable social and institutional influences change the life of a work of art. The work may be transferred to a place or setting that bears no resemblance to the one where it had a recognizable social, aesthetic or religious function.¹⁵

‘The Relique’ is not mentioned by Miller, but the poem seems both to know and to anticipate him, for Donne’s poem resonates with his formulations: ‘If this fall in a time, or land, | Where mis-devotion doth command,’

¹³ Achsah Guibbory, ‘A sense of the future: projected audiences of Donne and Jonson’, *John Donne Journal*, 2 (1983), 11–21, an argument summarised by Dayton Haskin who makes the poem central to ‘Donne’s Afterlife’: ‘Donne’s explicit inscription in “The Relique” and other works of an interest in what future audiences might make of his writing suggests a deep longing ultimately to be known and understood’ [Achsah Guibbory (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 233–46 (at p. 233)].

¹⁴ Jonathan Miller, *Subsequent Performances* (London, 1986), pp. 23–8.

¹⁵ Miller, *Subsequent Performances*, p. 28; Miller returned to these ideas later in *The Afterlife of Plays* (San Diego, CA, 1992).

the second stanza opens (lines 12–13), before moving through the confidence of doubled misapprehension, ‘Then, ... | ... | ... then’ (lines 14–16), to its centre:

Then, he that digges us up, will bring
 Us, to the Bishop, and the King,
 To make us Reliques; then
 Thou shalt be a Mary Magdalen, and I
 A something else thereby;
 All women shall adore us, and some men[.] (lines 14–19)

Much of the poem’s power comes, here and elsewhere, from its setting single striking verse lines against and within the three-part rhyme-scheme of its eleven-line compound stanza (each stanza expands from a couple of couplets through an arch-rhymed quatrain and into a closing triplet). The dazzling line from stanza one that was later to catch T. S. Eliot’s eye and ear—‘A bracelet of bright haire about the bone’ (line 6)—gains that dazzle partly at least because its length, being the first pentameter line in the poem, is set off by the two framing trimeter lines before and after it; though companionably rhymed to the second of these short lines, this ‘bone’ does seem to enact that rhyme, standing ‘alone’ in the poem’s structure.

In stanza two this structural effect is moved forward: it is not the long sixth that stands out, running on from the fifth as it does by the alliterating syntactical connection of ‘then | Thou’, but the seventh, ‘A something else thereby’. This is a line whose meanings have occasioned much controversy. William Empson, writing in the late 1950s, owned himself ‘glad to see that the recent edition by Mr Redpath of the *Songs and Sonets* (1956) is at last willing to envisage that “A Jesus Christ” is what the poet ostentatiously holds back from saying’.¹⁶ Donne, or his critics, had been holding back for a long time, Empson maintained. In combative correspondence with Helen Gardner about a draft of his article he went further: ‘By the way, I really did think years ago that this meaning was taken for granted; I certainly didn’t learn it from Redpath’s edition.’¹⁷ Empson’s sturdy heterodoxy may identify one source of the line’s power to shock; but it may have a wider force, too. For every reader’s encounter with the poem may (we might argue) make it ‘A something else thereby’ (Empson was clear about

¹⁶William Empson, ‘Donne the spaceman’ (first printed in 1957), quoted from his *Essays on Renaissance Literature, Volume I: Donne and the New Philosophy*, ed. John Haffenden (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 78–128 (at p. 87).

¹⁷William Empson–Helen Gardner, 26 Oct. 1956: John Haffenden (ed.), *Selected Letters of William Empson* (Oxford, 2006), p. 258.

the difference between ‘something else’ and ‘*a* something else’). This process—being made ‘A something else thereby’ by each new reader—is, we might maintain, the condition of a poem’s afterlife, and a poet’s afterlife, in the minds of subsequent readers: poems become not just different, something else, but in subsequent readings may inhabit any one of the many possible different futures among the imagined and unimagined possibilities of a poet’s afterlife.

This happened to ‘The Relique’ in 1912; the poem changed, and became, in Grierson’s edition, a something else that it had not been before in quite that way. ‘If this fall in a time, or land, | Where mis-devotion doth command,’ the poem’s second stanza begins in 1912, and its beginning in this way called from Grierson a sharp commentary note in the second volume of the edition:

Where mis-devotion doth command. The unanimity of the earlier editions and the MSS. shows clearly that ‘Mass-devotion’ (which Chambers adopts) is merely an ingenious conjecture of the 1669 editor. (2.49)

Grierson’s collations, his record of the textual choices made by earlier editors of Donne, more starkly still show how the earlier history of the poem’s variant readings sides against those of the 1669 *Poems* and E. K. Chambers’s popular Muses’ Library edition of 1896. On the one hand stand the printed editions from 1633 to 1654 and, in unanimous agreement, all the manuscripts containing the poem that Grierson had seen; on the other stands the edition of 1669 and—the sole proper name in the note—‘Chambers’. This massed agreement can be seen again in the note to the variant in line 15. Does the poem here read ‘Us, to the Bishop, and the King’ or ‘Us, to the Bishop, or the King’? The note in its collational compression enacts its own deliberative decision: Grierson’s edition, ‘1633–54 and MSS.’ all unite in reading ‘and’; while, isolated for a second time in a glum double act, ‘1669, Chambers’ read ‘or’. Read ‘and’ and you can be right, the note seems to say, or you can read ‘or’ and be wrong; it knows which side of the separative colon it wishes to stay.

In this, and in other innumerable editorial decisions, Grierson changed the Donne that readers read after 1912. I will return to Chambers’s edition—a more interesting and a more influential treatment of Donne than this skirmish might imply—later; now, though, I would like to pick up the implications of the first of the two variants I isolated, and to address the question of how ‘mis-devotion’ and ‘mass-devotion’ each have their place in the account of Donne that I am offering. For if Donne in the earliest phases of his reception history seldom seemed to be an author appealing

to, and read by, a mass audience, it has often been a feature of supposedly new readings that they correct the mis-devotion of earlier readers. The ways in which literary history maps Donne's reputation, and how we give our accounts of the subsequent placement and recreation of his work in and through successive phases of his afterlife, have both changed in recent years, so that what was once a simple (and heartening) narrative of loss and recovery has now become a more complicated (if more nuanced) history of the various reading and writing publics that have formed audiences for Donne's writings in the centuries following his death. A. J. Smith—so it is reported—wished to call the second volume of his *John Donne: Critical Heritage* anthology 'The Critical Rehabilitation of John Donne', intending his title to mark the extent to which the fifty years covered in the volume, 1873–1923, offered new and revitalising responses to a poet who had been marginal over the previous century and a half.¹⁸ Following the work of Dayton Haskin, in a series of articles and the book they shaped, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century*, Donne's 'Rehabilitation' (if Smith's is the right word) can be seen to have come about over a much longer duration, and to have been the product of many different forces more complicated than criticism alone.¹⁹ How Donne has been read, and the forms in which he has been read, have emerged as twinned concerns over this period.

Today, following the work of Peter Beal, Arthur Marotti, Harold Love, Henry Woudhuysen and others, early modern manuscript circulation has been recovered as a central mode in and for the material understanding of the texts written in this period; and Donne—in Peter Beal's phrase—has been confirmed in his position as 'clearly the most striking instance of a major Tudor–Stuart poet who flourished in the context of a manuscript culture'.²⁰ This idea is not new, but its prominence may be. We can find earlier versions of this formulation circulating at least a century earlier: William Minto, with whom Grierson was to work at Aberdeen, had written in an article published in *The Nineteenth Century* in 1880 that Donne's 'genius', and therefore his poetry, was determined 'by the conditions under

¹⁸ A. J. Smith and Catherine Phillips (eds.), *John Donne: the Critical Heritage*, 2 vols. (London, 1975–96), 2.xi.

¹⁹ Dayton Haskin, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 2007); Haskin generously allows that 'the years 1901–1912 ... warrant further probing', though they fall outside the scope of his book (at p. 269).

²⁰ Peter Beal, 'John Donne and the circulation of manuscripts', in John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie and Maureen Bell (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain, Volume IV: 1557–1695* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 122–6 (at p. 122).

which he wrote'. Donne's poems, Minto continued, 'were not intended for wide publicity; they were intended for the delight and amusement of a small circle among whom they were circulated in manuscript'.²¹ And here, as the focus of my lecture turns towards the 'small circle' within which Grierson came to Donne, it is appropriate to raise some of the difficulties, and also the rewards, of approaching literary texts through an account of the bibliographical and social networks through which they circulate.

Stefan Collini has written recently on the tension between the life and works of the individual in literary history and the networks within which both existed. How, he asks, are we to separate, if indeed we can separate, achievements that 'are bound to appear tangibly individual, the expression of apparently autonomous creative energies' from the wider 'enabling effect of belonging to certain advantaged groups'? How, too, are we to map the 'overlapping categories' to which any individual may at any one time be said to belong, if those categories are determined, one against (or within) the others, by different discriminating factors of birth, class, education, public recognition, and social situation.²² An awareness of this tension (as Collini proposes it) between the individual's biography and the elite within which he—typically he—worked has real purchase on Grierson's work with Donne. This is so, I think, because it chimes with what has been one of the most influential readings of Donne over the last twenty years or so, that offered by Arthur Marotti in *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (1986). There, by tracking Donne's texts through the small social networks of his late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century readership, Marotti offered a way of understanding poems as (in effect) social events. Marotti argued that Donne's poems should be understood 'as coterie social transactions, rather than as literary icons'; aiming to recover the first meanings of, and audiences for, the poetry, Marotti situated Donne's mainly secular verse as the product and record of 'a series of social relationships spread over a number of years', and over the phases of Donne's career into which the book's structure divides: 'Donne as an Inns-of-Court Author', 'Donne as a Young Man of Fashion, Gentleman-Volunteer, and Courtly Servant', 'Donne as a Social Exile and Jacobean Courtier' (Donne as a churchman is a marked absence from Marotti's book).²³

²¹ William Minto, 'John Donne', *The Nineteenth Century*, 7 (1880), 845–63 (at p. 863).

²² Stefan Collini, 'Well connected: biography and intellectual elites', in his *Common Reading: Critics, Historians, Publics* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 283–98.

²³ Arthur Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet* (Madison, WI, 1986), pp. 19, 24.

Marotti claimed for his approach the virtue of recovering ‘some of what has been lost through the literary institutionalization of Donne’s verse’, but stopped short of exploring the processes operating within that ‘literary institutionalization’.²⁴ Such restraint recognises that historical understandings change; we might add that there is, for one thing, an anachronism, or at least a geographical relocation, built into Marotti’s application of the term *coterie* to the metropolitan elites, and metropolitan institutions, within which Donne moved; Cotgrave’s French–English dictionary of 1611 defined *coterie* as a ‘compañie, societie, association of countrey people’ (as the *OED* notes), where for many—including Barbara Everett, when she made Donne the subject of her Chatterton lecture in 1972—Donne has seemed best ‘a London poet’.²⁵ The greater strength of Marotti’s formulation may instead be that his conception of the *coterie* poet is flexible enough to accommodate and illuminate that very process of ‘literary institutionalization’ with which my lecture is concerned. For Donne *had* seemed to scholars before Marotti a *coterie* poet: following on from Minto’s discussion of Donne’s ‘small circle’ of manuscript readers, George Saintsbury’s ‘Introduction’ to Chambers’s edition had recognised ruefully that ‘Donne is eminently of that kind which lends itself to sham liking, to *coterie* worship, to a false enthusiasm’. Saintsbury’s contrast between ‘the infidels’ and ‘the true believers’ who make up Donne’s audiences is clearly a kind of belle-lettristic over-bidding;²⁶ but it is useful, nonetheless, to see in some ways how closely the contrast does identify the audiences for Donne over the last third of the nineteenth century, audiences very different from those engaged by Grierson’s Donne in (and after) 1912.

To see this clearly we must see that Donne, over the last third of the nineteenth century, was a rare poet, and he had rare friends. The two-volumes containing *The Complete Poems of Dr. John Donne*, edited by the Rev. Alexander B. Grosart for The Fuller Worthies Library, were ‘PRINTED FOR PRIVATE CIRCULATION’ (as their title-pages stipulate) in 1872; the limitation statement, ‘106 copies only’, is primly noted at the foot, as if to confirm and enforce the privacy of the privileged circulation which this subscription edition enjoyed. Grosart, born in Stirling in

²⁴ Marotti, *John Donne, Coterie Poet*, p. 24

²⁵ Barbara Everett, ‘Donne: a London poet’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 58 (1972), 245–73; collected in her *Poets in Their Time: Essays on English Poetry from Donne to Larkin* (London, 1986), pp. 1–31.

²⁶ E. K. Chambers (ed.), *Poems of John Donne*, intro. George Saintsbury, 2 vols. (London, 1896), 1.xi.

1827 and educated at the University of Edinburgh (though he did not take a degree), was at the time he published his edition of Donne a clergyman, minister of St George's, Blackburn.²⁷ He was, as an editor of Donne, very much in the line established by Henry Alford, whose six-volume edition of *The Works of John Donne, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's, 1621–31*, published in 1839, even more strongly emphasised Donne's divinity, not only in its title, but by its placement of his selected poems only at the back of volume six, to be reached only after a long (if spiritually edifying) pilgrimage through the sermons and the prose.²⁸ Grosart was an editor of huge energy; and he worked with that energy to create an audience for Donne. His edition was dedicated to Browning,²⁹ and through the study of individual sets of the edition we can see that Grosart presented them as gifts to other poets. One set was given by Grosart to A. C. Swinburne, and although there is no inscription to date that gift Swinburne's letter shows him having received the volumes as part of a 'splendid present' for which he wrote in thanks in September 1875; the books he received included editions of both Donne and Herbert. Swinburne enjoyed these gifts: 'I have just read through carefully for the first time Donne's "Anniversaries"', he told Theodore Watts in March 1876; he wrote to Grosart later in the same year to report that he was now 'cutting the leaves of your admirable edition of Herbert'.³⁰ Later, the Donne volumes formed a second present, to 'J.C. Collins | from his friend | A.C. Swinburne', recorded by the donor in the volumes themselves.³¹ The books are now in the Special Collections at the University of Birmingham, where John Churton Collins held the first Chair in English Literature, founded in 1904.

A second gift inscription may localise for us the rarity of a second late nineteenth-century Donne, here a resolutely East Coast phenomenon. A different kind of limitation statement introduces Charles Eliot Norton's edition of *The Poems of John Donne*, printed by The Grolier Club of New

²⁷ Arthur Sherbo, 'Grosart, Alexander Balloch (1827–1899)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11659>>.

²⁸ Six vols. (London: John W. Parker, 1839)

²⁹ This dedication had been proposed by Grosart in acknowledgement of 'enjoyment and profit in the deepest parts of him from Mr Browning's magnificent-thoughted Poetry': A. B. Grosart–Robert Browning, 22 Feb. 1871: BL Add. MS 59794, fol. 16 (at fol. 16v).

³⁰ A. C. Swinburne–A. B. Grosart, 7 Sept. 1875; A. C. Swinburne–Theodore Watts, 15 March 1876; A. C. Swinburne–A. B. Grosart, 31 May 1876: Cecil Y. Lang (ed.), *The Swinburne Letters*, 6 vols. (New Haven, CT, 1959–62), 3.64–5, 3.152, 3.188–90.

³¹ Alexander B. Grosart (ed.), *The Complete Poems of John Donne, D.D.*, 2 vols. ([n.p.]: Printed for Private Circulation, 1872); these books are now University of Birmingham, Special Collections, r PR 2245.A2-1872, set 1.

York, again in two volumes, in 1895. Here, before a reader meets even the half-title of the first volume, printed on a tipped-in leaf, is another invitation to recognise oneself as part of a coterie audience, bound and constituted by the particularities of place and time:

The Publication Committee of the Grolier Club certifies that this copy of *The Poems of John Donne*, in two volumes, is one of an edition of three hundred and eighty copies on hand-made paper, and three copies on vellum, and that the printing was completed in the month of August, 1895.³²

What kind of audience, or what succession of audiences, for Donne might be recalled if we were able to follow these copies, on hand-made German paper, or on vellum, through their owners', or their readers', hands? One copy with which I have worked tells us this: 'Given by | Charles Eliot Norton | to G. Burne-Jones | And by her | to J.W. Mackail | Jan: 16: 1913'.³³ Georgiana Burne-Jones (Georgie) was the wife of the artist Edward Burne-Jones, a regular correspondent of Norton's; J. W. Mackail, classicist and former Professor of Poetry at Oxford, was her son-in-law. From such details might again be mapped out precisely that movement of Donne within different artistic and educational coteries towards which I have been moving; something similar might be done with the British Library set of the Grolier Donne, which once belonged to Henry Spencer Ashbee, a prodigious collector both of books and pornography, substantial collections of which he left to the (then) British Museum Library.³⁴ What kind of gift to Mackail was this? Where would the promiscuous texts of Donne's erotic verse fit within Ashbee's tastes? That both the sets of books I have been discussing were left to an institution is part of the story I am exploring, and will come back to; Donne, over the life of these copies and their histories of reading, was moving away from the coterie and into the university, away from a readership of the few and towards a readership of the many.

To one early reviewer of Grierson's edition, however, this talk of limitation statements and the coterie readership of a High Victorian and *fin-de-siècle* Donne would have seemed contrary to the evidence around them, and contrary in particular to the evidence of one further late-century Donne. Indeed, to the young Rupert Brooke it seemed that at the start of

³² Charles Eliot Norton, *The Poems of John Donne*, 2 vols. (New York, 1895), n.p.

³³ The books are now University of Birmingham, Special Collections, r PR 2245.A2-1895.

³⁴ The books are now British Library Ac.4714/15; Ashbee's collecting is described by David Chambers, 'Ashbee, Henry Spencer [*pseud.* Pisanus Fraxi] (1834–1900)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/737>>; and more colourfully in Ian Gibson, *The Erotomaniac: the Secret Life of Henry Spencer Ashbee* (London, 2002).

the twentieth century Donne was travelling further and faster than ever before: 'If one has entered, any time these last years, a railway carriage, and found some studious vagabond deep in a little blue book, it generally turns out to be Mr. Chambers's invaluable edition in the Muses' Library.'³⁵ E. K. Chambers was 30 when he published his *Donne*, and had behind him a prize-winning undergraduate career in Oxford; but he was not, as Grierson would be, an academic. Chambers was a civil servant, working for the Education Department, which he had joined in 1892 having been disappointed in his hopes of a college fellowship.³⁶ If Chambers, then, is closer to the developing subject of university English (Oxford founded its English school only in 1894), he still remains crucially outside it—though if Samuel Schoenbaum's account of Chambers's usual working practices is to be believed, he might seem only minimally to have been employed within the Education Department: 'In his early days as a civil servant he would check in at the office in the morning, read his mail, dictate a few replies, and then adjourn to the British Library, returning to the office to sign the letters before going home.'³⁷ Chambers's *Donne* exists, then, to one side of his professional life, but right at the centre of Donne's reputation over the turn of the century. Brooke's 'little blue book' could in fact have been one of many with Chambers's name on it: a revised edition followed in 1901, and a smaller-format reprint in 1905. As a reprint of a reprint, this last *Donne* may tell us something about the relations between book trade economics and a poet's readership at the start of the century; it may tell us something, too, about the very late date at which Donne finally gained admission into that thriving run of stereotyped poetry series current from the 1870s onwards.³⁸ But this apparent availability of Donne matters more (to backdate the phrase with which Eliot finally signalled his growing distance from Donne at the close of the 1920s) as 'an affair of the present and the recent past rather than of the future'.³⁹ One reason for thinking this is because Brooke in his review moved to a connected and forward-looking present: 'And now Professor Grierson and the Delegates

³⁵ Rupert Brooke, 'John Donne', in Christopher Hassall (ed.), *The Prose of Rupert Brooke* (London, 1956), p. 85, repr. from *The Nation*, 15 Feb. 1913.

³⁶ F. P. Wilson, rev. Nilanjana Banerji, 'Chambers, Sir Edmund Kerchever (1866–1954)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/32354>>.

³⁷ S. Schoenbaum, *Shakespeare's Lives*, new edn. (Oxford, 1991), p. 513.

³⁸ I explore the ways in which such series shape responses to Milton over a similar period in 'Milton in the Twentieth Century', in Paul Hammond and Blair Worden (eds.), *John Milton: Life, Writing, Reputation* (Oxford, 2010), pp. 167–86.

³⁹ The phrase is quoted by Frank Kermode, *Forms of Attention* (Chicago, 1985), p. 72, as part of his valuable short account of Donne's later reception.

of the Clarendon Press have given us, clothed in the most attractive garb possible, a perfect text of the poems, and an immense body of elucidatory comment.⁴⁰

To see what made Grierson's Donne stand out we need to attend to the institutions within which it was shaped, and we need to take seriously the opening words of his Preface: 'The present edition of Donne's poems grew out of my work as a teacher.' It was the difficulties faced by his students when encountering Donne—a poet they found 'difficult alike to understand and to appreciate'—that caused Grierson to look again at the passages in the verse occasioning their difficulties; the students' want of understanding quickly gave way to Grierson's own; and on undertaking 'a more minute study of the text of his poems than I had yet attempted', he discovered 'that there were several passages in the poems, as printed in Mr. Chambers' edition, of which I could give no satisfactory explanation to my class' (1.i). This, for the first time, is a Donne that begins not in the church or outside the university, but in the lecture room and seminar.

If this Donne began there, then we can quickly see it expanding out into the new world of the twentieth-century university. The conditions under which Grierson gained access to the documents in manuscript and print on which his edition was based are revealing. Once he had signed his contract with Oxford University Press, Christ Church, Oxford, lent Grierson their set of the early printed editions of 1633, 1639, 1650 and 1654 (1.xi; 2.lxiv, lxx); Raleigh, at whose suggestion Grierson had embarked on the project, complemented this with the loan of his copy of the 1669 *Poems*. Among others, Grierson thanked the libraries of Trinity College, Dublin, and Trinity College, Cambridge, 'for permission to collate their manuscripts on the spot' and 'for kindly lending them to be examined and compared in the Library at King's College, Aberdeen' (1.xi–xii). We can see from Grierson's notebooks what work he did in comparing the manuscripts from the two Trinitys.⁴¹ The very fact of the loan itself, moreover, may seem to contain within itself a whole social history of the edition and the profession within which it took shape. The letter that authorised the loan only really becomes interesting at its signature:

⁴⁰ Brooke, 'John Donne', p. 85.

⁴¹ National Library of Scotland MSS 9324, 9325 and 9325A comprise together a body of Grierson's working notes towards the text of his edition; NLS MSS 9326 and 9327 contain a similar body of working notes towards its commentary.

Dear Prof. Grierson

The Council having approved your request for the loan of MS. R.3.12 I enclose a bond for £50 for your signature & seal & shall also require a note from the Librarian of King's College accepting custody. When I receive these the MS shall be sent.

I hope you may make interesting discoveries!

Yours sincerely

W. W. Greg

Greg's postscript suggests one area in which such discoveries might be pursued: 'It will be worth your while examining the watermark of the paper on which the MS is written, which I suspect fixes the date c.1620.'⁴²

Greg's period of employment as the Wren Librarian at Trinity, his one 'salaried' university job as Henry Woudhuysen reminds us, focuses again the developments that were at this time shaping the careers of would-be English academics.⁴³ What is fascinating to see here is not only the interplay between the personal and the institutional responsibility—Grierson's 'signature & seal' complemented by the Librarian's agreement—but the developing interchange between Greg's research and his collegiate responsibilities. Greg's two papers 'On certain false dates in Shakespearian Quartos', published in *The Library* in 1908, had been among the first to deploy watermark evidence to the dating and analysis of printed books; in this letter, the quasi-scientific confidence of the coming New Bibliographers interacts with Grierson's in many ways more old-fashioned scholarship, formed as it had been (in a phrase of R. W. Chapman, revealingly his publisher in Oxford) 'upon the application of principles which in the field of Greek and Latin textual criticism have been elaborated in the course of centuries. It is thus no accident,' Chapman continued, 'that the work done in English editing in the last five-and-twenty years has been largely in the hands of scholars trained in the Oxford school of *Literae Humaniores*'.⁴⁴ Scientific means very different things in these two cases; Grierson's edition is the lens through which those differences can be focused.⁴⁵

⁴² W. W. Greg—H. J. C. Grierson, 27 Jan. 1911: NLS MS 9333, fols. 192A–B.

⁴³ H. R. Woudhuysen, 'Greg, Sir Walter Wilson (1875–1959)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33549>>; the journal *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation*, 4 (2009), has recently devoted a special issue to the fiftieth anniversary of Greg's death.

⁴⁴ [R. W. Chapman], *Some Account of Oxford University Press, 1468–1921* (Oxford, 1922), p. 75.

⁴⁵ The New Bibliography is brilliantly contextualised in Laurie Maguire, *Shakespearean Suspect Texts: the 'Bad' Quartos and their Contexts* (Cambridge, 1996).

But perhaps more important than these institutional loans were the personal kindnesses that Grierson received from collectors and men of letters as he went about his work. His was a period in which the infrastructure of academic research looked very different, as the disciplines in which it was conducted were themselves coming into the curriculum. Edmund Gosse lent Grierson a good deal of material, including notes by Brinsley Nicholson that had earlier been lent to Chambers,⁴⁶ but more importantly he lent early editions of the poems, and unique manuscripts, including the Westmorland manuscript. Such loans were not always easy on both sides. ‘Now, I don’t want to hurry you in the least,’ Gosse wrote in January 1912 with a list of the on-loan materials, ‘but I think you have had all these many months, and some of them years. They seem ceasing to belong to me altogether.’⁴⁷ But manuscripts were ceasing to belong to individuals more widely in this period. When Grierson listed and gave sigla for the principal manuscripts on which his edition was founded, only nine of the thirty-seven were still in private rather than institutional ownership; four manuscripts, those bequeathed by Charles Eliot Norton to Harvard, had only very recently moved from private to institutional ownership, and in doing so gave a clear indication of the direction in which the pattern of collecting was moving, away from the amateur and towards the professional, away from the individual and towards the institution.

But what of books, in manuscript and print, that could not be lent, either by institutions or collectors? These books take us further into the textual culture within which Grierson’s edition was produced, and which—at the same time—it confirmed.

Print and manuscript, and their changing relationships, shaped Grierson’s edition. The *mise en page* of the *Poems* 1912 was very closely modelled on that of the *Poems* 1633; indeed when the design for Grierson’s later anthology of metaphysical verse was discussed, it was explicitly in relation to early modern texts.⁴⁸ But it was manuscript that had a greater formative effect. Grierson, who even in old age did not use a typewriter, and persisted in manuscript correspondence (a fact for which he apologised more than once), was working in a period in which a good living could be made as a manuscript copyist at the British Museum or the

⁴⁶The notes are now among the uncatalogued Gosse–Grierson correspondence, 2 Aug. 1905–26 Sept. 1927, in the University of Leeds, Brotherton Collection.

⁴⁷Edmund Gosse–H. J. C. Grierson, 27 Jan. 1912: University of Leeds, Brotherton Collection, uncatalogued Gosse correspondence.

⁴⁸See Oxford University Press Archives, PB/ED 004577 and PB/ED 018269, consulted with permission of the Secretary to the Delegates of Oxford University Press.

Public Records Office: Henry Plomer, now remembered as a historian of print, was one such copyist, working on the borders of what was becoming academic study of the early modern period.⁴⁹ Other examples support this: when Logan Pearsall Smith discovered the Burley manuscript, for example, his first action was to commission a full transcript of it; the transcript, only recently recovered, is part of the larger story of disappearance and recovery associated with that manuscript, and examination of the transcript confirms that it is to Grierson that we owe the identification of the two hands, D1 and P, that he thought responsible for the transcription of the original on which it was based.⁵⁰ W. W. Greg, too, as his memoir for the British Academy recalled, employed two different hands: one for correspondence and one for transcription.⁵¹ The extent and availability of such scribal cultures gloss the thanks Grierson offered to ‘Mr. Charles Forbes, of the Post Office, Aberdeen, who transcribed the greater portion of my manuscript’ (1.x). Donne and the Post Office make an odd collocation; but a docketing note in Grierson’s hand, written on the reverse of a transcription of a poem, not by Donne, offers a longer institutional history for Forbes: ‘Charles Forbes first in the Post Office & then the Library Aberdeen.’⁵² For though this anonymous poem survives in Forbes’s hand, I have not been able to locate any of the Donne transcripts he produced for Grierson: like the manuscript that served as printer’s copy for the *Poems* of 1633, these manuscripts—though their characteristics can be inferred from the evidence of print and of related documents—have disappeared. Forbes may differ from these early modern scribes, it is tempting to think, only inasmuch as we now recall his name.

Better documented is the assistance that Grierson received from other transcribers. Unable to gain direct access to much American material—even copies of Norton’s edition arrived with him only very late in the project (though not as late, perhaps, as his statements may have suggested)—Grierson relied on transcripts and answers provided from Boston by Mary H. Buckingham, who consulted both manuscript and printed texts on his behalf.⁵³ Grierson’s former student, Rachel Annand Taylor,

⁴⁹ H. R. Woudhuysen, ‘Plomer, Henry Robert (1856–1928)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/51567>>.

⁵⁰ The transcript is now Bodleian Library MS Eng. poet. c.80, transcribed in ink by an unidentified hand from what is now Leicester Record Office, MS Finch DG7/Lit.2; Grierson annotated the transcript with identifications of the hands in the original manuscript in ink and pencil.

⁵¹ F. P. Wilson, ‘Sir Walter Wilson Greg, 1875–1959’, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 45 (1959), 307–34 (at p. 332; see also p. 320).

⁵² NLS MS 9349, fol. 82v.

⁵³ Bodleian MS Eng. lett. d. 363, fols. 7–8.

was crucial, too, to the edition. Rachel Annand (as she was then) had graduated from Aberdeen in the first year of Grierson's appointment; he remembered her, when writing of 'The development of English teaching at Aberdeen', with a phrase that registers not only the novelty of his subject but the novelty of its being studied by women, as the 'first prize-man in the class, 1894–5' and 'the most gifted and interesting student it has been my lot to encounter'.⁵⁴ After her marriage and a move to London, Annand Taylor worked for Grierson as a *de facto* research assistant, primarily in the (then) British Museum Library, writing regularly to him in Aberdeen with the results of her researches, and the news (and frustrations) of her developing career. The map of such encounters is invaluable for our sense of how to place Grierson's work at this period. Take this letter of April 1909, written as Annand Taylor worked her way through seventeenth-century printed verse miscellanies in search of fugitive items by Donne:

'Wit's Interpreter' seemed undiscoverable till I learned from an edition of the 'Westminster Drolleries' that it was edited by J. C. (John Cotgrave). And so with others. One day M^r Laurence Binyon found me at the catalogue and offered his help. I tried him with 'Vinculum Societatis' and the 'Marrow of Complements'. Perceiving M^r E. K. Chambers in the distance, he went and inflicted them on him. Oddly enough, M^r. Chambers was just engaged on a list of these very anthologies. He presently discovered that the 'Marrow' was by Philomusus, and in the catalogue under that name; while the 'Vinculum' was by John Carre, but not in the Catalogue at all.⁵⁵

'The harvest is rather scanty after all,' she concluded; but the literary sociology is fascinating. Partly it is that the resources on which scholars so regularly now depend simply did not exist: the first *Short-Title Catalogue* of early printed books was not planned until 1919 by the Bibliographical Society, and Pollard and Redgrave's first edition did not appear until 1926. This was also a period in which the kind of scholarship to which Grierson was professionally committed, and which his career represents, existed alongside (perhaps existed behind) the kind of after- or between-hours amateurism of men such as Binyon and Chambers. Location mattered then as it does not now in an age of digital scholarship: a scholar in Aberdeen simply had to work in different ways from a scholar in London;

⁵⁴H. J. G. Grierson, 'The development of English teaching at Aberdeen', *The Aberdeen University Review*, 1 (1913–14), 49–53 (at p. 50).

⁵⁵Rachel Annand Taylor–H. J. C. Grierson, 5 April 1909: NLS MS 9328, fol. 9r. A letter of Binyon's, acknowledging receipt of presentation copies of the 1912 Donne is Bodleian MS Eng. poet. e. 92–3, 2 286b.

and, more particularly, a scholar with a full-time university position in Aberdeen worked very differently from a part-time amateur scholar in London.⁵⁶

The impact of these contexts on the textual culture within which Grierson worked has not been fully appreciated. When the collaborators in the largest current edition of Donne's verse, the *Donne Variorum* under the general editorship of Gary A. Stringer, wrote about their undertaking in the early 1980s they tended to criticise Grierson for treating (in Ted-Larry Pebworth's phrase) 'manuscript poems' with 'print assumptions', reserving particular comment for Grierson's not having seen personally all the manuscripts whose readings he reported.⁵⁷ This is not untrue, far from it; but it has seemed to me at the same time a small failure of the tact of historical scholarship on the later editors' part. For one way to measure Grierson's difference from the processor-powered discoveries of the *Donne Variorum* is to remember, as Grierson's youngest daughter did, that his house in Aberdeen was without electricity, and all that it might represent of the coming world: 'electricity had come to symbolize for us a whole way of life, a social status, an emancipation. Its absence humiliated us,' she wrote.⁵⁸ It is not, quite, that the new technology here calls all in doubt, but perhaps that later technological assumptions have obscured historical understanding. Instead, I would argue that attending to the compatibility of Grierson's edition with its subject matter here allow us a way back into what made it so distinctive in its own time and for ours.

If these were the coterie conditions under which Grierson gained access to the documents on which his edition was based, what did he do with them? One answer is that Grierson's edition benefits from the textual culture of one twentieth-century coterie so that it can record the textual cultures of Donne's seventeenth-century coteries. In this sense the appendixes to Grierson's edition close the frame that the manuscript making of his edition opens; for there, after Donne's Latin poems and translations, follow the evidence for the texts circulated among the coterie manuscript

⁵⁶ Articles published by Grierson as he drew together the edition make clear the conditions of access to material under which he worked: see particularly 'Bacon's Poem, "The World": Its Date and Relation to Certain Other Poems', *Modern Language Review*, 6 (1911), 145–56 (at p. 152, on the use of Saintsbury's library).

⁵⁷ See, both pieces without coincidence from the early volumes of *John Donne Journal*: Ernest W. Sullivan, II, 'Replicar editing of John Donne's texts', *John Donne Journal*, 2 (1983), 21–9; and Ted-Larry Pebworth, 'Manuscript poems and print assumptions: Donne and his modern editors', *John Donne Journal*, 3 (1984), 1–21.

⁵⁸ Janet Teissier Du Cros, *Cross Currents: a Childhood in Scotland* (East Linton, 1997), p. 35.

cultures within which Donne became such a singular manuscript author. There are the poems attributed to Donne, as Grierson's formal phrase has it, 'in the old editions and the principal manuscript collections', organised by the names of those taken by Grierson to be their probable authors, among them Sir John Roe, Francis Davison, Henry Constable, John Hoskins, the Earl of Pembroke and John Dowlands (Appendix B). More radical a collection yet is Grierson's third appendix, containing poems only a few of which could claim an attribution to Donne, but which instead 'frequently accompany poems by Donne in manuscript collections'. Here, though the full force of the move is not trumpeted by Grierson, is a real editorial departure: an edition not of an author's work, but of his textual culture, his contexts and his contacts (Appendix C).

Culture, contexts and contacts: the capacity of Donne's writing to produce and energise audiences and publics with a sense of their own particular specific gravity runs through the correspondence around Grierson's edition, and the edition itself. At a point in 1911 when Grierson still planned to include *Biathanatos*, and was thinking about a possible future edition of Donne's Sermons, his sponsor in the project, Raleigh, wrote remarkably of that coterie sense of ownership that the new kind of academic, and the new kind of university press, felt towards authors such as Donne:

I don't think *any* modern divine should be allowed to touch Donne. They have lost the explicit worldliness that would be their only possible qualification. [...] An Evangelical Life of Donne would no doubt run 'Wild Jack, and how he came to Jesus.' No; no clergy need apply. Donne belongs to us, not to them.⁵⁹

This letter forms a part of a correspondence in which the two men, writing from their private addresses rather than the addresses of their employers, exercise a freedom that comes from and reinforces their community. 'Us', here, might be (in the case of Raleigh and Grierson) a matter of the two men being of similar ages, both now in their forties, and of their sharing the geographies and effects of a Scottish upbringing and a university education in Oxford; but it is also a matter of their both being, and sharing a powerful awareness of being, secular professionals attending to Donne with the intention of making his texts available to a purchasing public through a professional publisher, R. W. Chapman, and a newly

⁵⁹W. A. Raleigh–H. J. C. Grierson, 9 Sept. 1911: NLS MS 9332, fols. 77v–78r.

confident university press: of not being, like Grosart, clergymen editing the poems for a subscription library series; of not being, like Chambers, a civil servant with literary and scholarly leanings, editing the poems for Lawrence and Bullen; and of not being, like Norton, a Harvard polymath, completing an edition of the poems begun in mid-century by James Russell Lowell, and published in a luxury edition intended for a society of New York bibliophiles. This was an edition of, and for, the university.

It was also an edition both of manuscript and print. Peter Beal takes as the epigraph to the first volume of his *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* a line of Latin verse by Donne, written to a friend, Richard Andrews, who, shame-faced at his children having torn up a printed book that belonged to Donne, returned instead a manuscript copy of the same book: *Sed quae scripta manu, sunt veneranda magis*, Donne replied, a phrase that scholars are now accustomed to render via the verse translation of Edmund Blunden: ‘What Printing-presses yield we think good store, | But what is writ by hand we reverence more.’⁶⁰ Grierson knew the poem, and offered his own prose translation in a letter to *The Spectator* of March 1943, correcting an error in Evelyn Hardy’s *John Donne: a Spirit in Conflict*, which had been reviewed a fortnight earlier: ‘We are glad to get a printed book, but a written one is *more revered*.’⁶¹ Grierson’s Donne, I have been arguing, is worthy of our reverence not because it is a printed book, nor because it is a written book, but because it is both: because the process of its making is the process of the interaction between manuscript and print; and because its final form, using the evidence of manuscript circulation even as it echoed the physical shape of the 1633 *Poems* whose text (in Grierson’s word) it vindicated (1.vi). At the same time, Grierson’s scholarship inaugurated a way of reading Donne and his contemporaries that transformed scholarship in the twentieth century and continues that transformation today: Grierson’s edition brings the afterlife of Donne’s poems back to full life, because it returns them to the conditions in which they were composed and first circulated during Donne’s lifetime. If the *Poems* of 1633 represent the beginning of Donne’s afterlife in print, the *Poems* of 1912 open up the possibility of future life for Donne in manuscript—which is where, because of work done by hand, by Grierson and by others, they have stayed.

⁶⁰ I follow the connection made by Hilton Kellier, ‘Donne, Jonson, Richard Andrews and the Newcastle Manuscript’, *English Manuscript Studies, 100–1700*, 4 (1993), 134–73.

⁶¹ Grierson’s own press-clipping of this letter is now Bodleian MS Eng. poet. e. 92–3, 1.407v.

II

I began with a question that was an invitation; I want to close with the reply it received, and the consequences of that reply. ‘Why not do Donne’, Raleigh had asked. ‘I should have answered your letter sooner’, Grierson replied, ‘but I have had some exams in & also a good deal of university business. Also I have wished to think it over.’⁶² This will not have been the first time that an academic apologised to a publisher for slowness, or found that ‘university business’ has a way of making thought seem sometimes like an afterthought; but it may have been the first time that an editor of Donne apologised for his project in this way. We should read, I think, Grierson’s edition as the product (and record) of a particular kind of university coterie, but with one exception: its later readers, in their number and in their diversity, do not constitute an equivalent university coterie.

Grierson chafed at the slowness with which Oxford University Press were prepared to make revisions to his first edition, or to countenance a selected edition, on one occasion in 1916 calling forth the firmly worded reminder from Charles Cannan that ‘An O[xford]. P[oets]. Donne will be a task for the compositors when they return from the trenches.’⁶³ But the absence of revisions did not preclude frequent reprintings; and in a single-volume recension of the *Poetical Works* in 1933 Grierson was able to incorporate corrections to his first edition. In this single-volume format, Donne, now accepted as an Oxford Standard Author, was reprinted regularly through the mid-century, only falling out of print in this form remarkably late in 1985, long after Grierson’s death in 1960. Between these dates, of course, came if anything an even more influential contribution to early modern studies: Grierson’s 1921 anthology, *Metaphysical Lyrics & Poems of the Seventeenth Century, Donne to Butler*. The story of the making of this anthology remains to be told, but its canonical impact has been rehearsed many times before, beginning as it does with T. S. Eliot’s (then anonymous) leader in the *Times Literary Supplement* (20 October 1921), a review that later became part of his essay on ‘The Metaphysical Poets’.⁶⁴ What also remains to be told is the impact of Grierson’s different Donnes on readers who scarcely could have encountered his verse in the

⁶² H. J. C. Grierson–W. A. Raleigh, 29 Dec. 1906: OUP Archives, OP 669/4714.

⁶³ Charles Cannan–H. J. C. Grierson, 4 Sept. 1916: OUP Archives, OP 669/4714/2.

⁶⁴ [T. S. Eliot], ‘The metaphysical poets’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 20 Oct. 1921; T. S. Eliot, ‘The metaphysical poets’, *Selected Essays*, 3rd edn. (London, 1951), pp. 281–91; Cairns Craig, ‘The last Romantics’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 Jan. 2010, shows how this enquiry might now be taken forward.

tightly controlled circulation of earlier editions before 1912. Many of these readers may have had no family history of secondary education, still less a family history of university education; but in copy after copy, in mine and other families, there is testament to the opportunities and possibilities, the Americas and the new-found lands, opened up by Grierson's work with Donne's verse. A Donne made within, and designed for, the universities became a Donne beyond them, with a reach and a readership spread out over the twentieth century, and reaching now into the twenty-first.

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