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ARTICLE



## Baroquely valedicting: Donne *forbidding mourning*. Date, purpose, and repurposing

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### ABSTRACT

The poem known to readers since the seventeenth century as 'A valediction: forbidding mourning' is analyzed regarding, first, the transmission of the text: I show that there is a recognizably early version, close to the original written by Donne although he did not himself subsequently intervene in any significant fashion in the transmission of the poem. I then consider the dating of the poem, arguing that it was a communication to Anne before her secret marriage to Donne in 1601. I define 'Valediction' as a Baroque piece, and develop a reading with particular emphasis upon its playing with paradox. Finally, I consider its ms. transmission as an indication of its reception, and, in particular, consider Walton's purposes in presenting both an eccentric version of the text and his use of invented or re-interpreted biographical details to force his own ideological allegiances onto Donne and his poetry. This article, then, attempts to draw an arc, stretching from the initial intention that informed the composition of the poem, to its later, definitive reception within a carefully constructed web of misleading, and mainly invented, details about Donne's life which have informed criticism of Valediction (and other poems) since.

### ARTICLE HISTORY

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Donne; Baroque; astronomy; compasses; Walton

Before analyzing a text, that text needs to be established. Thus, I shall begin with an analysis of the poem's transmission through manuscript and in print. The discussion is particularly important since we shall be inquiring into the dating of the poem and questioning the circumstances of its genesis. In the analysis, a genetic method is used, in which a stemma is traced, following the ramifications of initial and inherited variation amongst the readings of the manuscripts. There has been one serious attempt at understanding the transmission of the poem: Mark Roberts, basing his approach on the majority readings of the three major groups of Donne's poetry that carry the poem, identified something approaching an early text (or, in his words, 'a number of readings from an early version or versions of which we have no substantive record') in Group III's witness,<sup>1</sup> followed by a later recension, with improvements carried out by the poet (Roberts 1981: 27, 30–32).

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<sup>1</sup>It is both a traditional assumption and an incontrovertible fact that there exist three main groups of manuscripts containing Donne's poetry. From the text-critical point of view, however, each one of these groups is, in essence, simply a number of texts all dependent upon the same sub-archetype, and therefore their importance when placed against the many manuscripts that escape simple classification should not be overstated. When referring to manuscripts, I give the *siglum* by which each is designated by the *Digital Donne* project (see [digitaldonne.tamu.edu](http://digitaldonne.tamu.edu)) followed by the full manuscript reference; only the former is used thereafter. Group III is composed of two sub-groups: on the one hand, H6 (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University

Such an understanding of the textual history was accepted by Gardner and Robbins in their editions of the poet's verse (Robbins 2013: 313). The thesis was not entertained by Redpath (1983: 260–61), who provided his own, eclectic edition of the poem. The latter process was an exercise more in connoisseurship than editorial finesse, and simply continued the mechanisms we can observe with a number of seventeenth-century copyists, who made choices amongst variants from the wider spread of witnesses to the poem, rather than limiting themselves to copying a single model. Such a process in the transmission of manuscript copies is usually referred to as 'contamination' (Zaccarello 2009: 56–57).

Redpath, however, in the service of his comparison of versions of the text and personal selection of variants, brought together a large number of *variae lectiones*, and these can be of great assistance in piecing together a map of the poem's transmission. We may thereby offer both a confirmation and a corrective to Roberts' view. At one end of the stemma, taking into account a wide range of manuscripts, we do find the Group III texts – and at the other Group I and II texts. Yet the basic question, when we do not possess a holograph or an evidently early and trustworthy manuscript copy, is: in which direction do the variants flow? Did the transmission of the poem begin with the archetype of Group III and by a process of change, error and emendation, reach that of Groups I–II,<sup>2</sup> or was it the other way around? Such a decision regarding any textual tradition is never easy to make, but Group III preserves what is evidently a *lectio difficilior* and therefore something which is likely to be a reading not produced by a copyist: in ll. 7–8, two of the Group III manuscripts (H6, C9) read 't'were profanation to our joys', whilst all others read '... profanation of our joys'. It is possible – although rare – for the noun *profanation* to employ 'to';<sup>3</sup> 'of' is much more common. Therefore, the former is the *lectio difficilior* and should be chosen as the more authentic reading, since it is less likely to have been inserted by a scribe and more likely to be changed by a scribe to follow more common usage. This is only a balance of probability, but it provides us with a place to begin.

And so with this in mind, I give a first approximation to the poem based on the text offered by H6. Now, in citing the H6-text and variants of the poem, I use a modernized spelling unless the discussion requires reference to elements of original orthography.<sup>4</sup> I do, however, follow

---

Library, ms. Eng. 966.5, pp. 245–46), and C9 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, ms. add. 8468, fol. 99r); and, on the other, H5 (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Library, ms. Eng. 966.4, foll. 185v–187r), and B46 (London, British Library, Stowe ms. 961, foll. 84v–85r).

<sup>2</sup>Group I: B30 (London, British Library, Harley ms. 4064, fol. 270r–v), B32 (British Library, Harley, ms. 4955, foll. 12v–13r), C2 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, ms. add. 5778, foll. 41v–52r), C8 (Cambridge University Library, ms. add. 8467, foll. 72r–73r), O20 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Eng. poet. e. 99, foll. 102v–O3r), SP1 (London, St Paul's Cathedral Library, ms. 49, B.43, foll. 78v–79v); Group II: WN1 (Aberystwyth, Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru, ms. 6748, pp. 98–99), CT1 (Cambridge, Trinity College Cambridge, ms. R. 3. 12, pp. 19–20), DT1 (Dublin, Trinity College Dublin, ms. 877, foll. 13–161v, at pp. 49–50/fol. 47r–v), B7 (London, British Library, ms. add. 18,647, foll. 9v–10r), B40 (London, British Library, Landsowne ms. 740, fol. 112v).

<sup>3</sup>For example, '[it] would be a profanation to a priestess' sacred person' (Morton 1792: 27); 'it is a profanation to his lips' (Hazlitt 1819: 13).

<sup>4</sup>In the poem, the following changes have been effected: 1. addition of apostrophe (13: *Louers*); 2. significant alteration of orthography (30: *rome*; 11: *Spheares*; 21, 25: *ar*); 3. expansion of contracted syllables (17: *rifind* · 27: *fixd*); 4. minor changes: (i) expansion of an abbreviation (16: *w.<sup>ch</sup>* · 21: *w.<sup>th</sup>*); (ii) removal of majuscule (1: *Men* · 6: *Teare* · ... · 8: *Layty* · ... · 11: *Trepidation* · ... · 13: *Louers* · 21: *Soules* · 22: *Gold* · 24: *Thinness* · 26: *Twinn* · ... · 27: *Soule* · 35: *Circle*); (iii) suppression of final vowel: (1: *passe* · 2: *soules* · ... · 3: *doe* (& 28) · 6: *Teare* · ... · 9: *harmes* · ... · 17: *wee* · 18: *knowe* · 20: *lesse* · ... · 24: *Thinness* · 25: *bee* (& 33) · 26: *stiffe* · 27: *Soule* · ... · 31: *leanes* · 32: *growes* · 34: *foote* · 35: *firminesse* · 36: *mee* – cp. *bee*, ll. 25, 33, *wee*, l. 17); (iv) suppression of double final consonant (3: *sadd* · 14: *admitt* · 20: *lipps* · 29: *sitt* · 24: *runn*) · (v) alteration of internal vowel (1: *vertuous* · 3: *frinds* · 10: *ment* · 17: *rifind*); (vi) exchange of graphemes, i.e. internal *u* to *v*, or *v* to *u*, *i* to *j* or *y* to *i* ('*u*' – 5: *vs* · 6: *moue* (and 28) · 8: *Loue* · 9: *Mouings* · 13: *Louers loue* · 15: *remoue* · 17: *loue* · 18: *selues*; '*i*' – 2: *theyr* · 3: *theyr* · 5: *noyse* · 8: *Layty* · 24: *ayry* · 35: *iust*).

the copyist's punctuation and *mise-en-page*; certainly, the latter may well be an original feature, since the absence of stanza-division is also witnessed in Group II.

|                                            |    |
|--------------------------------------------|----|
| As virtuous men pass mildly away           |    |
| And whisper to their souls to go           |    |
| Whilst some of their sad friends do say    |    |
| The breath goes now; and some say No       |    |
| So let us melt and make no noise;          | 5  |
| No tear-floods nor sigh-tempests moue      |    |
| T'were profanation to our joys             |    |
| To tell the laity of our love.             |    |
| Movings of th'earth cause harms and fears: |    |
| Men reckon what it did and meant           | 10 |
| But trepidation of the spheres,            |    |
| Though greater far is innocent             |    |
| Dull sublunary lovers' love                |    |
| Whose soul is sense, cannot admit          |    |
| Absence, because it doth remove            | 15 |
| Those things which elemented it            |    |
| But we by a love so much refined           |    |
| As our selves know not what it is          |    |
| Inter assured of the mind                  |    |
| Care less eyes lips and hands to miss.     | 20 |
| Our two souls, then, which are but one,    |    |
| Though I must part, endure not yet         |    |
| A breach, but an expansion,                |    |
| As gold to airy thinness beat.             |    |
| If they be two, they are two so            | 25 |
| As stiff twin-compasses are two            |    |
| Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show    |    |
| To move, yet doth if th'other do.          |    |
| And though it in the centre sit            |    |
| Yet, whilst the other far doth roam        | 30 |
| It leans and harkens after it              |    |
| And grows erect as that comes home         |    |
| Such wilt thou be to me, who must,         |    |
| (Like th'other foot) obliquely run         |    |
| Thy firmness makes my circle just,         | 35 |
| And makes me end where I begun             |    |

The numerous variants to the poem are summarized below (Table 1) with, on the left side, the manuscripts which follow the earlier reading, and, on the right, the *varia lectio*. As a shorthand, I shall refer to the variants via their line number. Manuscript groups are underlined.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Other than Groups I–III, the manuscripts cited are: B13 (London, British Library, Add. ms. 25,707, fol. 19r), B47 (London, British Library, Stowe ms. 962, foll. 90v–91r), H3 (Harvard University Library, ms. Eng. 966.1, foll. 4v–5r), H7 (Harvard University Library, ms. Eng. 966.6, foll. 162v–63v), HH1 (San Marino, CA, The Henry E. Huntington Library, ms. EL 6893, fol. 11r–v), O21 (Harvard University Library, ms. Eng. 966/6), SN4 (Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, ms. 6504), VA2 (London, Victoria and Albert Museum, Dyce Collection, cat. no. 25.F.17, fol. 26v); and the printed editions: the *princeps* (Donne 1633: 193–94) was followed by a new edition two years later which re-ordered the poems (Donne 1635: 42–44), and four reprintings from the same printer and publisher (1639: 42–44; 1649: 41–42; 1650: 41–42; 1654: 41–42). The rights then passed on to Henry Harringman (Donne 1669: 39–40); Walton's version (1675: 33–34) was therefore the last of Donne's poems to be printed by the Marriots.

<sup>6</sup>Walton's text offers an individual variant: see below, p. 23.

**Table 1.** List of variant readings.

| line  | mss.                                                                                  | reading                      | variant                            | mss.                                                         |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3     | III B47 H3 VA2 1633 Walton                                                            | Whilst                       | <i>And</i>                         | I II B13 B40 H7 HH1 O21 SN4 WN1                              |
| 7     | C9 H6                                                                                 | to                           | <i>of</i>                          | all other witnesses                                          |
| 8     | II B46 B40 B47 C9 H3 H6 HH1<br>VA2 <sup>om.</sup> our                                 | of our                       | <i>our (om. of)</i>                | I B13 H5 H7 SN4 WN1 1633 Walton                              |
| 9a    | C9 H5 H6 VA2 Walton<br>B46 <sup>om.</sup> the B47 <sup>m-g</sup> of earth             | movings ... cause            | <i>movings ...</i>                 | B13 SN4 WN1 – see 9b                                         |
| 9b    | (9a)<br>B13 SN4 WN1                                                                   | <i>movings ... bring</i>     | <i>bring</i>                       | I II B40 H3 H7 HH1 O21 1633                                  |
| 11    | II B13 B40 B47 C9 H3 H6 HH1<br>O21 SN4 WN1 1633 Walton                                | trepidation                  | <i>trepidations</i>                | I B46 H5 H7<br>VA2 <sup>(but: sphere)</sup>                  |
| 12    | I <sup>(C2 ante corr.)</sup> II B3 B13 B40 C9<br>H3 H6 HH1 O21 SN4 WN1<br>1633 Walton | is                           | <i>are</i>                         | B46 B47 C2 <sup>(post corr.)</sup> H5 H7 VA2                 |
| 15a   | <i>all other witnesses</i>                                                            | because                      | <i>for that</i>                    | B47 H7                                                       |
| 15b   | <i>all other witnesses</i>                                                            | it                           | <i>that</i>                        | B13 WN1                                                      |
| 18    | III                                                                                   | As                           | <i>That</i>                        | <i>all other witnesses</i>                                   |
| 21–22 | III B47<br>H7 <sup>therefore ... b. o. ... p.</sup>                                   | then ... but one<br>... part | <i>therefore ... one</i><br>... go | I II B13 B40 H3 SN4 VA2 WN1 1633                             |
| 24    | III B13 B47 H7 SN4 VA2 WN1                                                            | As                           | <i>Like</i>                        | I II B40 H3 1633 Walton                                      |
| 28    | III B47 VA2                                                                           | yet                          | <i>but</i>                         | I II B13 B40 H3 H7 SN4 WN1 1633<br>Walton                    |
| 30    | III B47 H7 VA2 <sup>while</sup>                                                       | whilst                       | <i>when</i>                        | I II B13 B40 H3 SN4<br>WN1 1633 Walton                       |
| 30b   | <i>all other witnesses</i>                                                            | rome <sup>(i.e. roam)</sup>  | <i>come</i>                        | II                                                           |
| 31    | <i>all other witnesses</i>                                                            | as                           | <i>when</i>                        | O21                                                          |
| 32    | III <sup>(H5 in marg.)</sup> B13 B47 H7 VA2<br>WN1 1633                               | that                         | <i>it</i>                          | I II B40 H3 H5 <sup>(in text)</sup> HH1 O21 SN4 <sup>6</sup> |
| 35    | <i>all other witnesses</i>                                                            | makes                        | <i>drawes</i>                      | VA2                                                          |

The textual variants may be supplemented by a collation of the titles provided for the poem (Table 2). Unconstrained by the demands of versification, we have four distinct groupings of titles; runes (*fé*, *úr*, *Thurs* and *As*) are used to provide the *sigla* distinguishing familial relationships.

**Table 2.** List of variant titles.

|                | Title                                          | mss.                                                                   |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ƿ              | <i>Upon the parting from his Mistress</i>      | B46 H5 C9 B47 H7 <sup>(om. the)</sup> H6 <sup>(add. Valediction)</sup> |
| п              | <i>To his Love upon his departure from her</i> | VA2 <sup>7</sup>                                                       |
| þ              | <i>A Valediction: forbidding mourning</i>      | 1633, B3, H3                                                           |
| þ*             | <i>Valediction forbidding mourning</i>         | II, WN1 <sup>8</sup>                                                   |
| þ**            | <i>Valediction against mourning</i>            | B13                                                                    |
| þ***           | <i>A Valediction, forbidding to mourn</i>      | Walton                                                                 |
| þ <sup>†</sup> | <i>Valediction</i>                             | SN4                                                                    |
| þ <sup>‡</sup> | <i>A Valediction</i>                           | I (B30 B32 C2 C8 O20 SP1) HH1                                          |
| ‡              | <i>Elegy</i>                                   | B40 <sup>9</sup>                                                       |
| ‡*             | <i>An elegy</i>                                | O21 <sup>10</sup>                                                      |

The information is sufficient to construct a robust stemma of the transmission of the poem between manuscript and print either in graphic (Figure 1) or tabular form (Table 3).

In the stemma (Figure 1), the variants which mark a departure from the previous, inherited text are recorded in lighter hue, and each point in the stemma at which titles were adopted is indicated by the rune-*sigla*, as described above. We are left, then, with a gradual development and a slow accretion of new readings.

Table 3. Stemmatic relationships.

| <i>siglum</i> | <i>title</i> | <i>definition</i>                        | <i>witnesses</i>                 | <i>further development</i>     |
|---------------|--------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| α             | –            | <i>the archetype</i>                     |                                  |                                |
| β             | ℙ            | <i>first ms. publication of the poem</i> | C9 H6                            |                                |
| γ             |              | <i>variant 11</i>                        | B46                              |                                |
|               |              |                                          | >H5                              | 8, 12, 32. <sup>11</sup>       |
| δ             |              | 15a                                      | B47                              |                                |
|               |              |                                          | >H7                              | 3, 8, 9b, 11–12. <sup>12</sup> |
| ε             | ?            | 21–22 <sup>13</sup>                      | <i>all remaining witnesses</i>   |                                |
|               |              |                                          | >VA2                             | η, 35                          |
| ζ             | ℙ?           | 28, 30                                   |                                  |                                |
|               |              |                                          | >Walton                          | 8, ℙ*, * <sup>14</sup>         |
| η             |              | 9a                                       | <i>all remaining witnesses</i>   |                                |
| θ             |              | 3, 8, and not 9b, 24 (κ)                 |                                  |                                |
|               |              |                                          | >SN4                             | 32 but not 15b (ι)             |
| ι             |              | 15b                                      | B13                              | ℙ**                            |
|               |              |                                          | >WN1                             | ℙ*                             |
| κ             |              | 9b, 24, and not 3, 8 (θ)                 | <i>all remaining witnesses</i>   |                                |
|               |              |                                          | >1633                            | 8                              |
| λ             |              | 32                                       | <i>all remaining manuscripts</i> |                                |
|               |              |                                          | >H3                              |                                |
| μ             |              | 3                                        |                                  |                                |
|               |              |                                          | >B40                             | ‡/‡*                           |
|               |              |                                          | >O21                             |                                |
| ν             | ℙ‡           |                                          | HH1 & μ                          |                                |
| ξ             |              | 8, 11                                    | Group I                          |                                |
| ο             | ℙ*           | 30b                                      | Group II                         |                                |

Crucial moments in the transmission of the poem are found at ε, which provided the innovation at 21–22, but also presented the poem without a title. The suppression of the title ℙ (“Upon the *parting* ...”) is of a piece with the substitution of *part* by *go* at l. 22.<sup>15</sup> The title’s

<sup>7</sup>The same title in NY1 (New York Public Library, Arents Collection, cat. no. S191, pp. 27–28). A similar thought, although showing no textual dependence, is that found in O16 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Engl. poet. e. 14, fol. 39r), ‘Dun To his M<sup>rs</sup> when he was to travayle’: a form of this title was adopted by Constantijn Huygens in his Dutch translation of 1630 (Todd 2002: 113).

<sup>8</sup>Further, B13 (London, British Library, ms. add. 25,707, fol. 19r) and SA1 (Cape Town, South African Public Library, ms. Grey 7 a 29, p. 70).

<sup>9</sup>And TM1 (Tokyo, Meisei University Library, Shakespeare Collection, ms. Crewe, pp. 46–47), TT1 and TT2 (Lubbock, Texas, Texas Tech University Library, PR 1171 D14, fol. 48r–v; and PR 1171 S4, foll. 24v–25r, respectively).

<sup>10</sup>And others, for example Y3 (New Haven, Yale University Library, John Osborne Collection ms. b148, p. 58).

<sup>11</sup>The alternation in this manuscript (H5) at 32, between a more evolved reading in the text with the primitive reading in the margin, is a clear sign of contamination.

<sup>12</sup>It is also difficult to understand these ‘errors’ as anything other than contamination. Comparison of *lectiones variae* did go on in this family of manuscripts, for instance the alternate lines to *The Curse* (ll. 14–16) included in the margins of H6 and C9 (Robbins 2013: 209).

<sup>13</sup>The actual genesis of H7’s *therefore* is probably due to contamination, as is the case with many of its variant readings. One might suppose that the change from *then* ... *but one to therefore* ... *one* took place over two stages, with *then* first misread as *therefore*, producing a hypermetric line which was corrected by a subsequent copyist or copyists *metri causa*. A comparison with the transmission of other poems suggests this scenario is credible: *And then* in H6 C9 contrasts with *there* in H5 in *The Apparition*, l. 11 (Robbins 2013: 177); *then* is mis-construed as *there* at *The Bait*, l. 5, and *thou, there*, and *then* all jostle at the same point – l. 12 of the latter poem – (Robbins 2013: 181).

<sup>14</sup>And see below, pp. 22–24, for a number of changes found only in Walton’s version.

<sup>15</sup>*Part* was a word with a significant multivalence, which *go* somewhat flattens; it evoked both ‘to take one’s leave’ (OED, s.v. *part* 1) and ‘make a separation between (two or more persons or things); to bring about, effect a separation

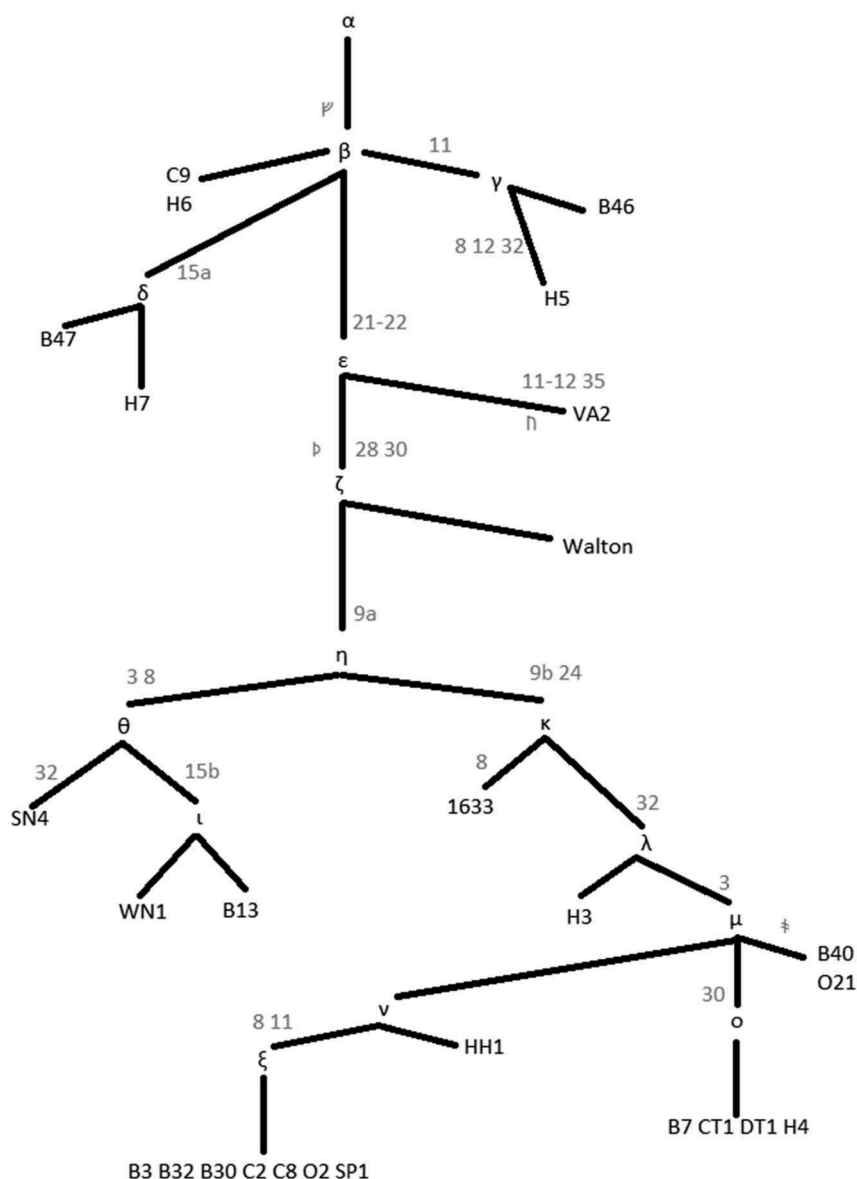


Figure 1. Stemma of *valēdictio*.

omission from this part of the transmission resulted in new titles being supplied: one for VA2, and another at ζ, a variant of which was used in almost all the later copies. ζ also supplied the further errors of 28 and 30;<sup>16</sup> a distant reflexion of this sub-archetype is found in Walton's idiosyncratic copy which will be discussed at the end of the paper. The new title given in ζ was almost certainly *A valediction forbidding mourning* (ϐ). These errors and innovations were passed

of (a thing) from another' (*OED*, s.v. 4a), as well as – with the alchemical background in mind – 'separate (gold and silver) from each other' (*OED*, s.v. 4b). However, the suggestion that the separation might be permanent ('forsake', *OED* s.v. 2c) may have forced the scribe's hand.

<sup>16</sup>The synonymous variation, between *yet* and *but* at l. 28 may offer nothing grander than scribal preference: cp. *But* vs. *And* in *The Broken Heart*, l. 20, or *For* vs. *And* at *The Computation*, l. 3 (Robbins 2013: 193, 205).

on to  $\eta$ , which offered its own, significant change: the alteration of *cause* in favour of *bring*; this is almost certainly not an emendation, or a new creative variant, but simply an error born of a misreading.<sup>17</sup>

Over the entirety of the stemma, certain points of the poem seem to have been particularly attractive for emendation at the hands of the copyists: 3, 8, 11(–12). The first was probably caused by an unclear abbreviation carried over from  $\eta$  (the abbreviation  $W^e$  misread as & in the far separated  $\theta$  and  $\mu$ , respectively).<sup>18</sup> With regards to the second, the suppression of *of* in l. 8 («laity of our») *metri causa* was a constant temptation, since trisyllabic *laity* was the more normal pronunciation. And for the third, the vacillation at l. 11 between *trepidation* and its plural followed a widespread scientific uncertainty, and will be discussed in more detail below. Such examples of polygenesis are not alone.<sup>19</sup>

We have thus a poem which was not, on the evidence in our possession, influenced in its manuscript transmission by any subsequent involvement by the poet himself, and the primacy of the H6–C9 text may be reaffirmed. I will therefore use the H6 text, as reproduced above, for my later analysis of the poem.

## A date

Izaak Walton, towards the end of his own life, and between half- and three-quarters-of-a-century after the occasion for which he assumed it had been composed, explained the poem as a piece written as a consolation for Anne More (then Mrs Donne) by her devoted husband when he was about to depart on a diplomatic mission to France with one of his patrons, Sir Robert Drury, who was, in turn, accompanying Lord Hay (Walton 1675: 28–29). The poem and its ancillary details were absent from Walton's previous versions of Donne's biography; they were added without significant alteration to the details that then surrounded them (Walton 1670: 32; cp. Walton 1658, 1640).

For Walton, the lines were characterized by chaste devotion and spiritual communion, forming a poem replete with Neoplatonic allusion, a celebration of spiritual love and the unceasing union of spouses even over distance. Indeed, to cap this interpretation, Walton inserted an account of how Donne, by then abroad, received a spectral vision of his wife and soon-to-be-deceased nursing, with the express purpose of underlining their unbreakable sympathy of souls (1675: 31–32). For Walton, the poem was not so much the evocation of an ideal, but rather the description of an actual state that held between the married couple. Nevertheless, the visionary tale, in particular, has caused readers both consternation and embarrassment. Zouch, in his early nineteenth-century edition of

<sup>17</sup>*Cause* would, with an initial majuscule, in some scripts, have been easily misread for *bring*, since *C* and *b* (because of the initial diagonal ascender that formed both) would have been interchangeable; – *a*–, if partially formed, would have suggested – *n* – (particularly with the rounded –*r* (–*z*–) that would follow a *b*–); that medial *u* was mistaken for *n* is one of the most constant errors in the written history of the Latin alphabet; and *se*, composed of a long-S that descended beneath the line, with a ligature to the *e*, would have suggested *ge*, giving the contemporary spelling, *bringe* (so:  $\mathfrak{C}aufe > baufe > bzufe > bzufe > bzinge$ ).

<sup>18</sup>For example, at 18, we may suspect that *As* has been merely misconstrued, as  $\tau^{ht}$ ; a similar misread abbreviation might lie between the change of *whilst* with *when* at l. 30: cp. the uncertainty created by a similar abbreviation at *The Damp*, l. 19, where *Which are* (via  $W^{ch}$  *are*) engendered  $W^{th}$  *are* expanded to *With are*, as well as *As a* (in DT1, WN1, and CT1, respectively; Robbins 2013: 212).

<sup>19</sup>The running together of 'Care less' at l. 20 to form *Careless* is not only found in the model for Group II – *o* – but also in the third edition of Donne's poetry (Donne 1639: 44). There are, of course, also simple errors of transcription, such as in B46 at l. 20; here the transposition of 'lips and hands' to *hands and lips* was not passed on, as far as one knows, in further copying.



Walton's prose, felt compelled to justify the author's seriousness and honesty at this point, even though, in truth, he was well aware that Walton's knowledge of Donne's early career, including his early ecclesiastical career, was hardly irreproachable.<sup>20</sup>

The best we can say for Walton is that, given the large amount of time that had passed between events and record, he might have conflated his sources in some way. The trip he mentions as the occasion for the poem, of c. 1605, after the family's removal to Mitcham, in Surrey, certainly took place. But that was in the company of Sir Walter Chute, not Drury (see Mariotti 1986: 169; Ferris 2010a). Donne did go to the continent a few years later – between 1611 and 1612 – in the company of Sir Robert Drury (Ferris 2010b), in memory of whose daughter he wrote and published *The first anniversarie: an anatomy of the world* in 1611 (Robbins 2013: 902). Thus, Walton may have mistaken the date of composition; or have switched (consciously or not) the eventually disgraced and disinherited Chute for the slightly more respectable, and significantly richer, Drury (Walton 1807: 41 note *m*). But, given the evidently invented matter used to justify his presentation of the poem, and the late date of the poem's inclusion in his biography, joined to an evident confusion over just when the composition was actually carried out, we might conclude that Walton was merely extrapolating from the subject of the poem in order to combine it with his incontrovertibly defective knowledge of Donne's actual biography.

Donne's departures for the continent have also been suggested as occasions for the composition of a number of poems: the other *Valedictions*, that of *the Book* and that of *Weeping*, were both suggested by Marotti (1986: 169) to have been motivated by such absences. *Of the Book* perhaps has a serious claim to the journey of 1605.<sup>21</sup> Both, however, tolerate, celebrate, and commemorate the tears shed at his departure; *Valediction: forbidding mourning* does the exact opposite. Obviously, there is nothing to prevent Donne writing contradictory instructions to Anne; but, similarly, the message of the one (the lack of tears shows the superiority of their love) is rather undermined by the acceptance of tears in the other two. Furthermore, the opening verses, bidding silence at his departure, are unlikely to be situated in the midst of a burgeoning family. It would seem, if not obligatory, then at least sensible to consider another occasion as providing the spur to the writing of this particular *Valediction*.

An indication for a date might be found in the initial lines 1–6. The negation of 'tear-floods' and 'sigh-tempests' is often taken as an anti-Petrarchan motif,<sup>22</sup> although it would probably be better to describe it as 'post-Petrarchan'. It is true that the lover in *Twickenham Garden* begins his complaint, 'Blasted with sighs, and surrounded with tears' (Robbins 2013: 310), since sighs and tears were the emotional register of the impassioned, yet unrequited, lover. The parting which forms the occasion for our *Valediction* ought not to evoke emotional expressions of meteorological force precisely because the lovers are *not* frustrated in desire, not separated by disdain; on the contrary,

<sup>20</sup>The narrative of the vision in the *Life of Dr. Donne* hath subjected the author to some severe animadversions. Let it, however be remembered, that he probably related the matter with cautious and discreet fidelity, as it was really represented to him. The account is not inserted in the earlier editions of Dr. Donne's *Life*. Hence we may presume that the strictest and most severe inquiry was made before its introduction.' (Walton 1807: 15). Zouch later points out that Walton had garbled the circumstances of Donne's appointment as preacher to Lincoln's Inn (Walton 1807: 58 note *r*).

<sup>21</sup>Marotti 1986: 327, notes that ll. 37–38 may well hark back to Donne's legal battle to prevent Anne's furious father from getting the marriage annulled.

<sup>22</sup>For example, Chu-Chin Sun 2011: 151. An anti-Petrarchan poem is most decidedly the third sonnet of the *Divine Meditations*, which begins 'O might those sighs and tears return again/Into my breast and eyes ... /In my idolatry, what shows of rain/Mine eyes did waste!' (Robbins 2013: 599).

they are passionately united. The love is shared, yet, at the same time, requires no sign that it might exist. Thus, the poem requests a show of indifference, implores constancy, and promises an (eventual) return.

The idiosyncratically Donneish coining of *inter-assured* (l. 19) can strengthen the connexion to the years immediately around the turn of the century: ‘assured’ alludes to their engagement;<sup>23</sup> and *inter-*, its lack of publicity, its being personal and limited to the two lovers. Given the urgings to secrecy, the anxious insistence upon constancy, the exaltation of both lovers and love itself, the clear echoes of the thought of *The Extasie*, and the heady promise of completion on return: – a suitable juncture for the poem to have been written and conveyed would be at a separation sometime in 1601, perhaps with the secret marriage-ceremony already envisaged. The alternative is to accept that Donne was something of a sadist, enjoining his wife and mother of his numerous children to maintain a stiff upper lip when her already difficult life was being complicated even further by his absence on the continent for a couple of years in the service of wholly peripheral figures in the court, all so that no-one might know how deeply, how spiritually, they loved each other.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, if we accept Robbins’ reading of the first lines, the poem opens with an allusion to the hesitant demise of Lord Burleigh in 1598 (Robbins 2013: 315);<sup>25</sup> these lines are more likely to be contemporary allusion (and possibly political satire) than folkloric evocation, adding a further element of probability to the dating.

There is thus a coherent argument to maintain, and a balance of probabilities to suggest, that Walton’s late and contradictory attribution of our poem to a period in Donne’s marriage should not be taken seriously. I shall examine the reasons for Walton’s dating at the end of this article.

## Baroquely valedicting: towards a definition of the baroque

I shall argue, in the next section, that the manner in which Donne’s poem was originally read was conditioned by an awareness of and response to its baroque style. Grady’s excellent recent discussion of Donne’s poetry has re-opened the question as to how far Donne himself engaged with the aesthetic ideas of his age, and, in determining that he was properly a baroque poet – thereby eschewing the insular (and anachronistic) denomination of ‘metaphysical’ – Grady allows Donne to be placed amongst his contemporary Europeans. Relying upon Walter Benjamin’s groundbreaking, although fragmentary, theses regarding German early-modern theatre (which he reads, in turn, through a post-modern lens), it is no surprise that Grady’s emphasis in

<sup>23</sup>As astutely observed by Changizi & Ghasemi 2010: 175; Redpath 1983: 232, glosses: ‘a reference to a solemn legal assurance, or transference of title’.

<sup>24</sup>This convoluted argument is probably what Redpath wished to imply (1983: 261–62) when he dismissed Gardner’s sensible observation (1965: xxix) that a wife has no need to hide the grief she might feel at her husband’s departure.

<sup>25</sup>Burleigh seems to have fulfilled both elements of the first stanza: ‘then lyeing still, the standers by might hear him saie softlie to himself, *Lord receave my spirite, Lord have mercy on me*; which weare the last wordes he was hard to speake [...] So he contynued specheles, and senses, lyeing still as it weare in a sleepe without paine, tyll it was eight of the clocke in the morning, and then died; wherein one thing was observed most straunge, that though manie watched to see when he shold die, he lai looking so sweetlie, and went away so myldie, as in a sleep, that it cold scarce be perceived when the breath went out of his body’ (Collins 1732: 63). The lack of distinction of the moment of death is a common feature neither of the *ars moriendi* literature nor contemporary accounts; in the latter, in line with medieval notions, there was a preference for pious speech until the final breath: see Wunderli 1989.

his reading of the poem that concerns us falls upon readerly *jouissance* and a delight in what is novel (Grady 2017: 152–55). This is one essential part of the baroque: its embrace of the emotions, its exaltation of the sensual, and the delights of ingenuity it offers. But, at the same time, one should provide its counterpoint within the aesthetic system: the equally warm embrace of the demands of rationality and its exaltation of the rigorously suasive deployment of rhetoric (Gaylord 2004: 227–28). It is a truism to point to the centrality of the ‘conceit’ or the ‘concepto’ to this poetry; it would be worth-while, however, to pause over the aesthetics of the matter. For contemporary theorists, the power and appeal of this type of metaphor was expressed in terms of the tension created by opposition or dissimilarity, and more precisely the resultant stretching of the mind or comprehension to grasp the comparison, allied to the sensual impact of the imagistic juxtaposition. The more extreme or the more outlandish, the more arresting, the greater the effect, the deeper the affect (see the excellent discussion in Liang-Chao 2014: 85–86).

Bearing contemporary aesthetic theorists in mind, it might be best to conceive the *concepto* (or its derivatives in other languages) as lying on the borderline of the ‘mad’ metaphor or as a form that evoked a ‘crazed’ ontology, as was eloquently expressed by Emmanuele Tesauro, in 1620 (Tesauro 1663: 83–84). With its tying together of disparates, of extremities, of contraries, and their incessant multiplication (Gracián 1993: 435), the use of metaphor was constantly striving to produce a sense of paradox, not simply as a witty literary figure, but as a fundamental connexion with an underlying structure of reality (Gal 2019), and as a fundamental mode of thought within the literate professions (Ruthven 1969: 8). But that ‘reality’, although perceptible, was still in important aspects dubiously unknowable, and was presented to an individual’s perception as a sequence (or jumble) of sense-impressions framed by that observer’s constant awareness of the yet-to-come rather than a hieratic appreciation of stasis, certainty, and fixity.<sup>26</sup> The paradox was not simply a literary figure, but an aesthetic experience, and metaphor was the means by which this was enacted; the *paradoxical* becomes the key in which the artistic work (and much else) is lived-through.<sup>27</sup> To express ourselves in familiar Hegelian terms: the baroque work shall produce both a thesis and its antithesis, yet not allow these to collapse into synthesis; a work’s expressive potential is brought into being through a fundamental dissonance, and continued by the maintenance or continual generation of contradiction.

We should glance, now, at the grotesque beauty of the misshapen pearl that lies at the origin of the word *baroque* (Wölflinn 1974: 58): its varying contours change as it is moved, and play in the light, and constantly shift away from the spherical ideal. In a sense, then, we might say that the baroque poet aims to defeat the literary critic, as the purpose of the literary critic is understood, at least from a traditionally New Critical perspective: there is not here an intrinsic *meaning* to be unlocked by careful and weighted analysis, a cautious exegesis which will display *the message*, an

<sup>26</sup>For the central importance of skepticism in the period, see Robbins 2007; for the flux of perception, Skelton 2015: 10–12.

<sup>27</sup>Tesauro (1663: 681–83), for example, defines any performative creation as a metaphor, and so ‘metaphor’ comes perilously close to the modern affectation of the ‘meme’ (Dawkins 1976: 192; for a discussion of rapid evolution of ‘the meme’ in a changing environment, see Castaño Díaz 2013).

argument to be produced to show how the artist's intention *must* have been this-or-that. If that is the purpose of criticism, this article will be an abject failure. Baroque art does not have a 'message' locked away within the text; rather it expresses a fundamental tension, and extends that tension as a process. The best that criticism can do is identify the forces the work's creator brings into being and sets to work.<sup>28</sup> However, it would be wrong to extrapolate from this view of the inner workings of the artistic machine that the art was designed for its own sake, that it was useless, and that therefore we should all pack up and go home (Ben 1971). It cannot be denied that baroque art was rhetorical; rhetorical not simply in the deployment of anadiplosis (for example), or because of the intellectual work required to structure the effects produced through rhetoric; but rhetorical through the situatedness of rhetoric, which by its nature must fit itself to a context and to an audience. It is for this reason that I embark upon what might otherwise be quite rightly disparaged as 'biographical criticism' in inquiring after the original date of the poem, and the intention behind its composition. I will not, then, be searching for an intended meaning, but an intended effect.

### A baroque reading of valediction

We may characterize the poem as a playful engagement with circles and spheres. On the one hand, it presents the macrocosm, through which the *virtuous man's* soul should travel; and, on the other, the circles or spirals which the lover must go through in departure and regress, and which provide a vision of the microcosm: not of a single man, but of the lovers, the two-as-one. In the following discussion of these images, I will understand the thirty-six lines of the poem to be divided into three twelve-lined sections, each exemplifying one of these 'circles', and will approach each one in turn, beginning with ll. 1–12.

### A cosmic structure

The first eight lines present a comparison: the good death of the virtuous with the ideal separation of the lovers, their religion of love effortlessly superior to the profane laity who should remain ignorant of the lovers' 'joys'. The conceit – which emphasises the crucial importance of concealment – is continued into the following lines (9–12), taking forward the climatic references from tears and sighs: *tempests* and *floods* which are intrinsically connected to earthquakes: 'Movement of th'earth' is a direct translation of the usual Latin word for earthquake, *terrae motus*, linked in Roman Law with floods and tempests as examples of *vis maior* (Berger 1953: 769).

The shaking of the earth, by scaring people and attracting their attention, provokes them to seek an interpretation of its significance and its causes. However, the much greater, but *invisible* movements in the heavens do not attract this interest. The reference to the heavens and the earth is quite nicely tied into the previously hushed sighs and tears, since excesses of wind and humidity were closely associated with the production of earthquakes; I cite a scientific discussion from the period, which neatly

<sup>28</sup>Cp. Tesauro (1663: 76): 'siccome Iddio di quel che non è, produce quel che è: così l'ingegno, di *non Ente*, fa *Ente*' (just as God, from that which is not, brings forth that which is, so wit from *non-being* creates *being*).

juxtaposes a traditional fear of the Most High as shaker of the earth (and all-round Punisher-in-Chief, and Enforcer of Virtue), with up-to-the-minute physicalist explanations which are but a confirmation of Aristotelian theories, as transmitted by the scholastics, on the causes of earthquakes (Oeser 1992: 14–18):

There was yet an other earthquake in the Realme and Cittie of Quitto; and it seemes all these notable Earthquakes vppon that coast, have succeeded one an other by order, as in trueth it is subiect to these inconveniences. And therefore although vpon the coast of Peru, there be no torments from heaven, as thunder and lightning, yet are they not without feare vppon the land: and so everie one hath before his eies, the Heraults of divine lustice, to moove him to feare God. For as the Scripture saith, *Fecit haec ut timeatur*. Returning then to our purpose, I say the sea coast is most subiect to these earthquakes, the reason is, in my iudgement, for that the water dooth stop the conduites and passages of the earth, by which the hote exhalations should passe, which are engendered there. And also the humiditie thickning the superficies of the earth, dooth cause the fumes and hot exhalations to goe close together and incounter violently in the bowells of the earth, which doe afterwards breake forth. (Acosta 1604: 199–200)

Earthquakes should provoke fear and trembling. Yet the phrase, *motus terrae* had, as Donne was writing, also taken on another meaning, as the 'New Astronomy' began to erode the certainties of the Ptolemaic system: the Copernican revolution was hesitantly beginning, and the problem of the 'movement of the earth' had become a *quaestio disputata* for anyone of intellectual aspirations. There was not, however, a simple binary, a choice between Kopernik or Ptolemeos, and Donne's reference to *trepidation* (l. 11) indicates he was up-to-date regarding contemporary arguments (although whether he ever understood them with any clarity it is not really possible to establish).

Strictly speaking, *trepidatio* within the medieval Ptolemaic system concerned only the outer sphere that englobed the inner heavens, whose movement was transmitted to the fixed sphere of the stars; that movement was originally hypothesized by astronomers whose common language was Arabic to explain slight rotations, over long time-periods, of the stars in the firmament (which should, according to the original Ptolemaic theory, have been fixed, and not moved at all). It passed into European astronomy through the Alfonsine Tables, drawn up in the second half of the thirteenth century under the patronage of Alfonso X, king of Castile-León, in whose court the common language was Castilian, and thence, via Latin translations, to the rest of Europe. By the sixteenth century, however, the single outer sphere, beyond the fixed heavens, had been multiplied to provide a new model, comprised of an eleventh sphere, which englobed the rest of the cosmos within, and which performed one complete revolution in twenty-four hours, conveying this movement to the other, lower spheres; immediately below the eleventh, there turned a tenth sphere, following the eleventh in making a complete revolution in twenty-four hours, but contributing its own oscillation in a north-south direction; within the tenth sphere, there was the ninth, which received its rotation (again, once in twenty-four hours) and the north-south oscillation from the tenth sphere, but added an east-west oscillation. Three spheres (rather than just one) were required because it was seen as unfitting that a single sphere in the perfect heavens might add more than one type of movement. Thus, we have 'the trepidation of the spheres' – plural –, which are 'innocent'.<sup>29</sup> The trepidatory movements do not give rise, like

<sup>29</sup>For the variant reading 'trepidations', see above, p. 4. VA2 offers the deplorably unscientific variant, 'trepidations of the sphere'.

earthquakes, to ‘harms’, and thus are *innocent*, that is *in-nocens*, un-harmful; moreover, knowledge of their movement was part of a natural astrology, was thus not concerned with the morally censurable search for future predictions, and therefore *innocent*, unimpeachable (see Rabassini 2006: 648); and, furthermore, as they were set above the fixed stars and planets, they were not *nocens*, and so innocent, since it was the planets which were, in classical astrology, deemed to be *nocens* (baleful) at certain points of their journeys through the degrees of the zodiac.<sup>30</sup>

That, at least, was the traditional view. Within the new Copernican system (which dispensed with trepidation), there were still necessarily two movements of the earth to consider: the *revolutio*, the turning of the earth around the sun; and the *libratio*, the slight wobbling of the earth around its axis, which accounted for the oscillatory effect which had previously been explained by the concept of *trepidatio* (Lattis 1994: 170–71). Thus, ‘Movement of th’earth’ may well indicate the slow figure-of-eight that the earth would perform via the *libratio*, being set against the *trepidatio*; the ‘harms and fears’, a foretaste of Donne’s thought in *The First Anniversarie* and *Ignatius his Conclave* where the astronomers would be condemned and ridiculed for the dire social effects they were producing, although the playful tone of the *Valediction*, in a universe over which love is still the unifying and motivating force, is light years away from his ostentatious reeling from Galileo’s discovery of Jupiter’s moons and the consequent collapse of any hope of maintaining the music of the Ptolemaic cosmic order (Galilei 1610; Bernstein 1997: 184–85; Grady 2017: 71–72) – or, more importantly, hope of gaining deserved preferment at court (Robbins 2013: 940) – .

At the turn of the century, authoritative academic opinion had begun to support Copernicus’s theory of the moving earth as far as the *libratio*, without endorsing the patently ridiculous idea that the earth might be moving at high speed through the heavens. Such was the view, for example, of Christophorus Clavius, a member of the commission that oversaw the Gregorian calendar reform (Lattis 1994: 166–67), and whose current oblivion compared to Copernicus would come as a great surprise to the printers that produced edition after revised edition of his work.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Donne’s awareness that the *trepidatio* is ‘greater far’ than that of the movement of the earth would seem, too, to be an echo of the contemporary debate over the impossibility of rationally accepting that the outer heavens should gyrate at the phenomenal speed necessary for them to move in a full rotation within twenty-four hours to produce their *trepidatio*, as had been mentioned by Copernicus, but was developed in detail by the German astronomer, Michael Maestlin, in 1596 (Treadwell 2004: 309).

<sup>30</sup>Thus, for example, Manilius, *Astronomica*, ll. 443–49, (Goold 1997: 256–57): “accipe damndae quae sint per sidera partes. | Lanigeri pars quarta nocet nec sexta salubris; septima par illi ac decima est decimaeque secunda | quaeque duas duplicant summas septemque novemque; unaque viginti numberis pars addita laedit | et quinta et duram consummans septima partem. | Tauri nona mala est ...’ (Learn then of the degrees, sign by sign, which merit condemnation. The fourth degree of the Ram inflicts harm, and the sixth is also unwholesome; the seventh is as bad as the sixth, and so are the tenth, that second to the tenth, and those which double the numbers seven and nine; added to the count of a score one degree is damaging, so too a fifth and a seventh, the last completing the adverse portion of the sign. The ninth degree of the Bull is malign ...). *Nocens* was a commonplace of astrology: Getty 1941, 1955: 118, n. to l. 651.

<sup>31</sup>Clavius 1570, 1581, 1583, 1585, 1591, 1583, 1594, 1601, 1602a, 1602b, 1603, 1606, 1607a, 1607b, 1608, 1618; Vinetus, Junctinus & Clavius 1610. Clavius’s printings outnumber those of Copernicus fourfold: cp. Copernicus 1543, 1566, 1617, 1640.



In any case, the moral of the astronomical allusions is that any observable physical sign will cause both harm and fear amongst the surrounding 'laity'; whereas the greater emotional interior experience, if uncommunicated, will be passed over without remark. At the same time, Donne's voyage of departure is set within a universe of uncertain, or multiple, centres, where one may not be sure whether the ground beneath one's feet is constantly moving at high, medium or/and slow speeds, around its axis, around the sun, shivering slightly at the poles as it goes, or, indeed, staying wholly put. There used to be only one movement, or quaking, of the earth to preoccupy the sinner.

Despite the challenges posed by Copernican astronomy, the traditional concepts had most certainly not died, and Donne continues with his model of englobing spheres, moving from the very outer (the trepidatory spheres) to the inner: the sub-lunary, or the 'Globe of mortalitie', as it was still being described by Thomas Digges when he was attempting to introduce Copernican ideas to English readers in 1576; the limitations of this sphere are explored in the following twelve lines (ll. 13–24) via a parallelistic sequence (Digges 1605: fol. 42v; see, further, Johnson & Larkey 1934).

The contrast is established between purely sensual lovers (ll. 13), those without truly intellectual souls (l. 14), who are incapable of tolerating the absence of each other's bodies (ll. 14–15), since it was mere physicality which gave rise to the love itself (l. 16);<sup>32</sup> in contrast, Donne's and Anne's shared love, or their sharing in Love itself, which is unknowable because of its purity (ll. 17–18),<sup>33</sup> can do without physicality since it is based upon a spiritual consonance (ll. 19–20). The following lines (21–24) echo the development of the previous, since the souls, joined by love (l. 21, cp. l. 17), although physically divided (l. 22), do not experience or suffer ('endure' l. 22; cp. 'admit' l. 14) any division or absence but remain like the 'refined' (l. 17) gold, whose properties included almost infinite extension, since their love is given existence (l. 16: 'elemented') not by the senses, but by soul itself (or love; or soul-love); the physical connexions of eyes, lips, and hands (l. 20: sight, speech/kisses, touch) are replaced by the continuous material of the loving, united soul (l. 24), animating them both. So from the earth (astronomical symbol: ☉), we move to gold (alchemical symbol: ☉), and then on to the closing image-sequence of three stanzas, the famous 'twin-compasses', as implied by the previous two symbols, with the central point and circumference drawn around it, depicting precisely the same symbol.<sup>34</sup>

Donne proceeds by paralleling the binary vs. unity of l. 21 ('Our two souls, then, which are but one') with ll. 25–26 ('If they be two, they are two so/as stiff twin compasses are two'); like gold hammered to near-invisible leaf, the souls similarly expand as the joined legs of the compass. Yet this image, too, maintains the request for impassability in the poem's first stanzas, at ll. 27–28, although, imperceptibly, the fixed foot does share in the same movement of the other half of the compasses: as with

<sup>32</sup>There is a further play upon 'absence': *ab-sentia*, non-presence or lack; and *ab-sense*, without sensual stimulation.

<sup>33</sup>The majority reading of l. 18, 'by a love so refined' has a significant variant in H6 which reads 'by loue so rifnd'; metrically, *a* would need to be joined by synalepha to the preceding *by*, so neither version offers an intrinsically better reading *metri causa*; 'a love' refers to the lovers' mutual devotion; 'love' (or even, 'Love') refers to the ennobling Neoplatonic motor of the universe. The *usus scribendi* supports H6: cp. *The Extasie*, l. 21 'If any, so by love refined' (with no variants, at Robbins 2013: 223).

<sup>34</sup>*Earth*: as used, for example, in the Diggeses' *Prognosticon* (Digges 1605: fol. 42v); *alchemy*: Murray 1958; Freccero 1963; Bauer 1995: 103; *compass*: Conner 1977: 97. Note, further, the musical notation, ☉, known as the *More Prolation*, an evident allusion to Anne, and which may well have been the original conceit.

the multiple centres of the Copernican universe, nothing is still, although it was vital that it should seem to be.

### **Mapping the poem**

This structure by which macrocosm and microcosm are evoked and explored, has brought forward dissonant interpretations on the part of critics. We might classify these as a more traditional, spiritualizing impulse, which takes Walton more-or-less at his word in establishing the (emotional, biographical, ideal) meaning of the poem; the other, more earthy, more geared to the sexual elements implicit in the verses, more concerned to expose the barely concealed (but, nevertheless, still concealed) bawdy. Certainly the potential for an erotic reading has struck a number of readers: Warley (2014: 116), for example, comments on Donne's 'insertion of a penis-joke' at the end of the poem, which 'punctures the Neoplatonism-lite that the poem has been peddling'; Grady (2017: 155) observes, 'as many readers and critics have pointed out, the language at the end of the poem seems to reference sexuality in the idea of the compasses' legs, which grow "erect as that comes home" and in the poem's final words "and makes me end where I begun" which allude not only to the return from the voyage but can also be seen to reference a return to the vaginal cavity from which the speaker emerged at birth'; de Sa Wiggins (2000: 79) highlights the frequency of erotic allusions, 'Just as the legs of a compass do not have to rejoin each other for the circle to be drawn perfectly, the poem's collocation at its close of such words as "stiffe", "foot", "center", "erect", "firmnes", and "circle" stresses love's physical and ephemeral manifestations in a bawdy counterpoint to that interassuredness of the mind on which the speaker has insisted' (and, further, Novarr 1980: 60; Docherty 1963: 72–75). Others, such as Freccero (1963: 349), are aware of the sexualized vocabulary but insist that it has other meanings ('erect', for example, properly refers to planetary movements). But this is no real solution, since *double-entendres* work that way: they must have another, non-sexual referent to function as paronomasia. And the striking aspect of the poem is how thick and fast these erotic key-words slip past; and yet, at the same time, how elusive they are. If they were, in fact, wholly unmeant by Donne, one might chide him for carelessness; but a charge of vocabularistic laxity seems wholly improbable. This section of the present article, then, will show how the erotic implications of the subject-matter is established from the very first lines of the poem and continued through to the end. The discussion provides *a* reading, not *the* reading; the evocation of the eroticism by no means exhausts the poem's expressive potential, nor does it provide an 'inner' or 'secret' meaning.

The opening, death-bed scene provides a barrage of *double-entendres*. The enjoined silence, the avoidance of any hint of mutual passion (on which the whole poem turns, we should not forget) is cast as a 'profanation to our joys' – *joys* sketch a familiar path of using a religious reference (the 'joys' of paradise, to be kept from the *laity*) in order to refer to the heights of physical pleasure.<sup>35</sup> The 'virtuous man's' silence at the moment of death prevents him from – as was an occasional feature of the 'good' death – exclaiming

<sup>35</sup> A sixteenth-century commonplace, with *joies* and *gozos*, in their respective languages, fulfilling the same function as *gaudia* amongst the Ancients: for the latter, Montero Cartelle 1991: 184–85; for Spanish delight, López Martínez 2010: 8; for French *jouissance*, Dorais 2008: 75.



over or describing the celestial joys into which he was being inducted. The death – bliss comparison had been cheekily used by Donne already in Elegy 19, *On his Mistress going to Bed*, ll. 34–35: ‘As souls unbodied [that is, through death], bodies unclothed must be/ To taste whole joys’ (with its quibble on whole/hole).<sup>36</sup>

The death of the ‘virtuous man’ is equated with the lovers’ melting (a favoured word for orgasm);<sup>37</sup> and the sighs and tears from which the lovers are to refrain had long been the staple of allusions to sexual fruition, and had gained an added vogue in preceding years.<sup>38</sup> With such a sequence of sexual references, and a decidedly transgressive element through its equation not just of sex and death, but its taking as a model of sex an actual pious death, the reader should be disposed (if he or she has kept up-to-the-minute with literary fashion) to read the development of the poem also in a sexual key. Contemporary readers were already primed for this type of wordplay: as we have seen (above Table 2), earlier copies of the poem offer a scribal summary as a title: ‘Upon the Parting from his Mistress’. Most later copies offered a version of the *princeps* title, ‘A Valediction Forbidding Mourning’,<sup>39</sup> playing on the homonymous *morning* of the aubade, the lovers’ parting at daybreak (Jahn 1978). Nevertheless, the secrecy traditional to that motif is here transferred to the female partner, rather than characterized by the male poet’s obligatory slipping quietly and quickly away before daylight should discover his identity or presence. A sexual subtext was expected by, at least, later readers.

The addressee of the poem should not ‘tell of’ their love to the ‘laity’, which plays with one sense of *tell* (‘to give an account, report, or description of’, and which alludes to the revealing of arcane knowledge to those unordained) against another: ‘to give evidence, be an indication of’ (*OED*, s.v. *tell*, 2b and 7b). The poem continues by emphasising the ‘moral’ of the comparison: that which is invisible produces no reaction in the onlookers. However, the reaction to any emotional display is expected to be strong (‘harms and fears’): there could be no reason for anyone to respond to a wife’s emotional outburst at the departure of her husband with anything other than compassion – but every reason for concerned relatives to react with horror at the discovery of an inclination in a young heiress for a highly unsuitable suitor.

The second section of the poem expresses the neoplatonizing justification for the lovers’ ability to withstand mutual absence: they are superior to earth-bound lovers because the ‘soul’ of the latter’s love was created and is maintained by sensual contact (ll. 12–16). Donne and his lover’s love, however, has been purified by love to such an extent that the ‘soul’ of that love unites them as one, unifying their individual souls: they may thus go beyond and without the physical: ‘we ... Care less eyes, lips and hands to

<sup>36</sup>For *hole*, ‘vagina’, Williams 1994: 167–73.

<sup>37</sup>For Donne, Garland Pinka 1982: 141, n. 55 at p. 182; more generally, Williams 1994: 872–73; for *melt* as feminine orgasmic pleasure in Spenser, Eggert 2000: 14. Freccero (1963: 365) observes, ‘The most famous of all “metaphysical” double-entendres, “to die”, might therefore be equally well rendered “to melt”, or, as Donne himself sometimes renders it, “to dissolve”.’ Freccero thereby establishes a connexion with alchemy, which runs through the first two-thirds of the poem, particularly in relation to the thinning of gold.

<sup>38</sup>Such encoded sexual allusions are ancient and would have been provided by a good education, if nothing else: the classical scholar might refer to Adams 1982: 30 (*lacrimas*), 195 (*suspiria*), 197 (*deliciae*). For the growing interest in England for continental neo-Latin and non-Petrarchan poetry of the time, where such allusions were common, see Maurette 2017 and Prescott 1978. Trans-lingual word-play is an established element of the poem: Bauer 1995.

<sup>39</sup>H6 combines the two traditions, adding ‘Valediction’ to the end of ‘Upon the Parting from his Mistress’; hence we may assume that the poem was written and had circulated before the other *Valedictions*, being only brought into relation to them at a later point, when Donne (or scribal convenience) had begun to use the ‘Valediction’ title for other poems.

miss' (ll. 17–20) – yet still, the two spiritual lovers only 'care *less*' about their physical separation, not not at all (Divine 1973: 80); and, despite that, they still have a quicker sense of the physical than the sublunary lovers, who are *dull*, 'wanting sensibility or keenness of perception in the bodily senses and feelings' (OED, s.v. *dull* 2a).

If the souls are united, though, they cannot be divided (l. 23), so their physical contiguity must also continue, as a form of invisible hylomorphism, 'as gold to airy thinness beat'. We have, essentially, moved on from the leave-taking (no physical signs of distress) to the attitude to be taken during the absence (no need for physical contact since they are in constant invisible, soulful communion). The third section continues with the promise of return, which makes the stifled emotions during absence worthwhile, and introduces the image of the 'stiff twin-compasses' as an image of their souls. The lover, by maintaining her feigned indifference ('Thy soul ... makes no show/To move', ll. 27–28), fixed, sitting (ll. 27, 29), silently listening out for the other (l. 31),<sup>40</sup> reacting with exaltation when Donne returns (l. 32) but maintaining her 'firmness' (l. 35), her external emotional impassibility. At the same time, Donne will 'obliquely run', like a compass's moving foot, not running straight, rather tracing a circle (even tracing a circle on a globe: Reeves 1993: 174–75). But, with the well-attested extended sense of *obliquely*, he will behave 'indirectly', 'unexplicitly', 'secretly'. Donne, too, will make no confessions of attachment, will conceal his purposes. The lover's 'firmness' will make (or convert) that obliquity into something 'just': proportionate, joined together (as a circle),<sup>41</sup> equitable (to the lovers), morally right, justifiable, honourable (as a covert form of action).

Yet lines 29–32 and 33–36 offer contrasting resolutions to the comparison of the lovers to a compass: in the first, the physical compass closes (the legs 'come home', and are joined); in the second, a completed circle and a maintenance of distance between the poet and his beloved.<sup>42</sup>

The compass, for Donne, had previously had a strikingly erotic deployment: *Elegie XVIII*'s description of the prone female form, which presents the unchanging *foot* as the opposite of inconstancy, 'It is the emblem that hath figured/Firmness' (ll. 79–80).<sup>43</sup> Here we have an evocation of a different journey to a sexual destination (here, 'her India') with its constant *foot* (which draws attention to its French subjunctive homophone: Robbins 2013: 415), a paronomasia which seems to have been immeasurably funny in the latter years of the sixteenth century.

Yet 'the emblem ... Firmness' equates the female foot with that of the compass, usurping (quiet shockingly) the venerable emblem of the golden dividers used by the great Antwerp printer, innovator and humanist, Christophe Plantin; those compasses were accompanied by the motto *Labore et constantia*. As the great man himself explained in the first book of the monumental *Biblia poliglotta*, one leg of the compasses stands for *constantia*, and is fixed; the other turns around it, and stands for labour (Meuss 2018: 90). His publishing house, the Officina Plantiniana (which specialized in

<sup>40</sup>OED, s.v. *hearken*, 6: 'to seek to hear tidings, to inquire after, ask for'.

<sup>41</sup>*Just* was a current term in geometry: see, for example, Miller 2006: 149.

<sup>42</sup>Adroitly pointed out by Robbins 2013; solutions have been sought in cartography (Reeves 1993: 181), astronomy (Freccero 1963: 343–49). One solution to the impasse is to increase the number of rotations, by making 'circle' plural (so *circles*), as occurred in the third edition of Donne's poetry (1639: 43). See, further, on the compasses: Roebuck 1989; Powers 1958; Allen 1956.

<sup>43</sup>Explained by a folk-religious gloss: 'Least subject to disguise and change it is – /Men say the devil never can change his' (ll. 47–48).

high-quality publications of learned, scientific, and top-drawer literary texts), continued with the motto and the emblem well into the seventeenth century (Voet 1969–72). A proper translation of the motto would be: – *by honest toil and perseverance*.<sup>44</sup> Another would be: *through exertion and firmness*. The latter makes clear the bawdy sub-text Donne was invoking: *labor*, in any case, was a word he used for the calorie-burning element of amorous activity: ‘Until I labour’, he observes to his bed-bound mistress, ‘I in labour lie’ (*Elegy: to his mistress going to bed*, l. 2). The compass, the compass’s pointy foot, and the motto associated with it, had a wittily erotic charge for Donne.<sup>45</sup>

The question, though, is whether it continued to have such an erotic fore-text in the present poem. The answer is, I think, no. The image – although contradictory – successfully conveys the spiritualization of love, and any joining or excitement is limited to the compass-legs (not known for conspicuous fornication); and, if any carnal conjoining were suspected, common sense would observe, with Freccero (1963: 351) in his memorably arch phrase, that a certain ‘physiological naivety [was] required for an erotic interpretations [sic] of the words’. *Erect* could not apply to the female; and Donne, being male, did not possess a *circle* (vulva).<sup>46</sup>

A straightforward and no-nonsense reading would conclude that the carnal has been left behind, or assimilated into a greater whole. Propriety is more than apparent, as the poem ends with a biblical allusion, an evocation of the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and end, where Donne promises to end where he begun, right at the final line.<sup>47</sup> The A & Ω (often represented as O in contemporary printing) reflects the round drawn by the compass, and the form of the ‘stiff twin-compasses’ which, when extended, had the form of an A (Figure 2). Max Nänny (1999: 174) describes the image as ‘a transparent letter-icon’, the A also referring to the first letter of Anne More’s name (cp. Bauer 1995: 109).

If one is minded to read backward from those ending lines, however, that ‘stiff compass’, with its supporting appendage attached to the ‘fixed foot’, and along which the circling leg could move, might be said to become steadily more erect as the legs are brought together (Figure 3). This is not the first time that the phallic nature of the shut compass has been noted (see Alcázar 2002: 199).<sup>48</sup>

A man of common sense would dismiss such thoughts, though, since the non-applicability of the imagery to the other sex was clear: ‘erect’ and ‘firmness’ could only properly apply to the male. Nevertheless, a man of science would not be quite as quick

<sup>44</sup>Or, in the emblem-book of George Wither (1635: 141), the image of the golden compasses with the motto *Labore et constantia* is accompanied by the couplet: ‘Good Hopes we best accomplish may/by lab’ring in a constant way’ (Wither’s italics); for the engraver, William Marshall, see below, n. 67; further, Freeman 1948: 146–47. The compass was something of a favoured ethical emblem or device: Saunders 2000: 141–44.

<sup>45</sup>Turner 1987–2007: 417, describes the progress of the poem as ‘cartographic fetishism’.

<sup>46</sup>For example, Mansour 2005 argues (whilst accepting that the sexual imagery has precise referents) that the poem should be understood as being spoken by a woman to a man. For the equation *circle*–*vulva* (connected to an extended allegory of the compass/geometry) see Williams 1994: 224; for *erect*, Williams 1994: 445.

<sup>47</sup>For further theistic senses of the compass as a divine instrument used in the creation of the world, see Proverbs 8:27, Friedman 1974; the ‘golden compasses’ were part of the Miltonic Supreme Being’s assembly kit: McColley 1939, Whiting 1958: 118.

<sup>48</sup>Erection of the virile member was the punch-line of a joke relying upon a traditional means of discernment of spirits (and, unfortunately, an expression of islamophobic orientalism wholly characteristic of its time: see Sohrabi & Pirnajmuddin 2017: 17) in *Elegy: to his Mistress going to bed*, ll. 19–24: ‘In such white robes, heaven’s Angels us’d to be/Reveal’d to men: thou Angel bringst with thee/A heaven like Mahomets Paradise, and though/III spirits walk in white; we easily know,/By this these Angels from an evil sprite,/Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.’

to judge. Medical writers were quite happy to speak of the clitoris in terms of the male member, rendering common sense otiose; thus André de Laurans (1593: 259; and further, Garland Pinka 1982: 144):

Non fuit tamen veteribus incognita: hanc Auicenna albatram vocat, id est, virgam, Albucasis tentiginem, Falopius *kleitorída*, ab obsceno verbo *kleitorízein*, Columbus amorem et dulcedinem veneris, nos mentulam muliebrem, et penem foemineum ... per fricata torpentem excitet facultatem. Crescit in quibusdam tam importune, ut extra rimam pendeat, mentulae instar.

It was not, however, unknown to the ancients: Ibn Sīnā calls it *البُتْر* [stub], that is, rod;<sup>49</sup> Abū al-Qāsim al Zahrāwī calls “the lecherousness”; Fallopio calls it the *κλειτορίδος* (from a vulgar word, *κλειτοριάζω* [meaning “to touch the same”]); Realdo Colombo, Venus’ beloved and charm; we call it the feminine member and the woman’s penis ... ; its latent power is aroused by rubbing. In some it grows to unusual size, such that it hangs outside the cleft, like the male member.

Donne’s own practice was to emphasise the unity of the sexes (Mintz 2001: 600), the lack of ‘difference of sex’ (*The Relic*, l. 25) as exemplified, above all, in his relationship with Anne. With regard to the depiction of the couple in *The Canonization*, Robbins (2013, to ll. 23–27) notes, ‘The absence of sexual differentiation means that both experience orgasm and renewal of desire equally and simultaneously’. Such a return to the ‘joys’ of before, however, can only be assured by *firmness*, constancy, fidelity – of which ‘sublunary lovers’ are incapable. Erlich (1979: 360), points out that *roam* ‘suggests something of adventurous infidelity and not merely a mechanical draftsman’s exercise’; and as pointed out by Bauer (1995: 111), *rome* (the spelling of *roam* throughout the ms. tradition) is a well-worn anagram of *More*, designed to banish the idea of infidelity whilst conjuring it.

The lovers’ souls are one; their bodies, too, fuse via sexual union.<sup>50</sup> But this is fundamentally paradoxical, and leads to no ‘higher’ state (such as that supposed by Guibbory 1996; or Mariotti 1986: 177), no bringing both body and spirit together, no (unironic) ‘religion of love’ nor ‘religiosity of the senses’, no ethical project being carried out by a poet-philosopher – the spiritual communion of their being apart is merely a prelude to, and guarantee of, the satisfaction of subsequent coition. Targoff (2008: 75–76) quite rightly stresses the ‘this-worldly’ nature of the poem.

The poem ends where it begins, like Donne’s own circle: the ring-composition of the comparison of death and sexual intercourse in the first verses is picked up in the final line: paradoxically Donne will *end* (die) where he began – where he started to live, that is, a womb. The same phrasing, ‘where I begun’, is used in the tortured poetic expression of grief at Anne’s death normally referred to as *A Hymn to God the Father*, there also indicating the (sinful) maternal womb (Robbins 2013: 655).

The history of twentieth-century criticism of the poem has shown a distinct preference for a more de-sexualized reading, ignoring or dissipating erotic code-words, emphasising the exalted and the spiritualized, free from the earthy and the excessively sensual. And the poem is not wholly traduced by such an interpretation. Both can be maintained side-by-side, an over-arching paradox to accompany all the other paradoxes

<sup>49</sup>Or, possibly, *البَاسِر* [sword].

<sup>50</sup>For the bringing together of both compass-feet as the etymological meaning of *con-stantia* (and thus, a mutual sharing of ‘firmness’): McColley 1997: 97–98.



**Figures 2–3.** Compass, open and closed.

that run through each section of the poem. This may be maintained as long as one does not insist that Donne must be siding with, believing in, espousing one particular point of view, rather than deploying an opinion or perspective against another within an overall rhetorical structure.

If the dating suggested is correct, then we should approach the question of intent and purpose to the poem. It is, clearly, an instruction to silence. But this cannot possibly be how Donne informed Anne that she was to keep their relationship a secret. It is a poeticisation of the situation: an argument explaining to her *why* she must conceal her feelings, and providing her with an imaginative picture of the specialness of the relation between the two lovers, a motive for continuing her deceit and deception of parents, friends, and family.<sup>51</sup>

Our poem is not, then, a lyrical production, in that it is not an abstract expression of the purity of love. Its abstruse references, its delight in paradoxes, its enthusiasm for separation from and proclamation of superiority over the uninitiated, its off-colour or not-quite-pornographic references, categorises it as a coterie poem, evoking its own circle of like-minded connoisseurs for the primary reader, who should have been suitably dazzled by its paradoxical promises. We may thus rephrase the issue, by observing that the tightly worked, intricate Baroque artifice was primarily concerned with inculcating an ethos, aimed first and foremost at communicating to a sixteen (going on seventeen) -year-old heiress the importance of giving no suspicion to her family of her (soon-to-be-solemnized) sexual relationship with a rakish convert from Catholicism of dubious orthodoxy and of distinctly libertine reputation. Even nearly a decade after Donne's marriage to Anne, Tobie Mathew could opine: 'I found that they [Donne and Richard Martin (1570–1618)] were mere libertines in themselves' (Mathew 1904: 86). Mathew had been imprisoned for his conversion to Catholicism, but went on to become one of James I's most trusted ambassadors. Donne had a poor reputation; but he also had a plan. He was fully aware, thanks to his employment under Egerton, of the legal niceties regarding secret marriages without banns (Knafla 2003: 52). And after the secret marriage, he wrote in self-exculpation to Anne's father, Sir George More: 'I knew that to give any intimation of it had been to impossibilitate the whole matter' (Gosse 1899: I.100).

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<sup>51</sup>Brown (1995: 131–38) characterizes the poem as a form of persuasion, although I would not wish to side unquibblingly with her argument that the poem is an example of casuistry.

Anne, by participating with Donne in secretive sexual relations, is being exalted by merging with the poet, taking on the attributes of maleness. These attributes, in turn, provide a means of accessing the poetic coterie that the poem both evokes and enacts. It expresses how the poet [*qua* poet] and female subject [or silent object] are one. The woman's acceptance of her silence forms the bedrock of the claim to a secret superiority above the 'laity'. And that silence enables a continued sexual union with the poet (see, further, the discussion in Warley 2014: 119).

To appreciate the poem is to stand above its two conflicting levels: a half-concealed sexual level and a half-convincing chastely platonic expression of mutual esteem – as if it were 'in cipher writ', as Donne characterized his and Anne's correspondence before their marriage in *A Valediction: of the book*, probably composed in 1605.<sup>52</sup> This is hardly a call to begin a retrospective seventeenth-century #EgoQuoque movement, but still, an awareness of the poem's likely genesis and the intention behind it would not, necessarily, redound to Donne's credit, particularly in the devout circles in which his poetry (and especially his prose) were being progressively savoured.

## Reception of the poem

The evolution of Donne's texts, which we have sketched at the beginning with regard to *Valediction*, go hand-in-hand with the development of his *image d'auteur* – which might be best summarized as the 'legendary aspects of the *fonction-auteur*'.<sup>53</sup> As Ruth Amossy notes, 'La production d'une image d'auteur dans le discours des médias et de la critique obéit à des impératifs divers, correspondant aux fonctions qu'elle est censée remplir dans le champ littéraire.'<sup>54</sup> Engagement on the part of copyists with the text of the poems generated a subtle process by which the reception of the same would be channelled to better align with (in their turn) developing preconceptions about what an author of Donne's stature would (or should) ideally have written.<sup>55</sup> Ong's observation (1982: 130) that copies were a 'constant process, ... a dialogue' is pertinent, although not, as Ong thought, a dialogue with the original, but rather with their immediate model. Such a dialogue responded to various extra-textual factors, such as the *image d'auteur*, propriety, genre-expectations and space available. One might also observe that a suitable *image d'auteur* which a recension embodied would increase the likelihood of that text being copied in similarly receptive environments – the frequency of such

<sup>52</sup>Robbins, ed., p. 326, 325. For the highly contested suggestion that Anne was already pregnant at the time of the marriage, see LeComte (1972): 18–21. It would be attractive to link the period of composition to the four anonymous letters in the Burley manuscript (Redford 2017: 188–89 [text no. 438], 191–92 [no. 442], 200–01 [no. 450], 207 [no. 458]), which Bell (1986) ascribed to Donne, writing to Anne in the autumn of 1601; although, it has to be said, the rather hackneyed Petrarchanism of letter 438, despite Redford's enthusiasm (2017: 331), does not increase one's confidence in the attribution; the surprisingly dull style of the other letters would further lead one to conclude that passion had hardly set that lover's quill on fire. Bell's further identification (1996) of *The Curse* as an irate response to the early discovery of their relationship has not found favour with Robbins (2013: 208), with similar doubts about the attribution of the letters.

<sup>53</sup>On the *fonction-auteur*, see (*inter alia multissima*) Wilson 2004.

<sup>54</sup>Amossy 2009: §6 (the production of an author-image in media and critical discourse responds to diverse pressures, depending upon the functions which the image is required to fulfill in the literary field).

<sup>55</sup>Such engagement did go on, and so the story of transmission is not one of constant degradation: the copyist of DT1 was capable of spotting the mistaken reading at l. 30, *come* (for 'rome') which had originated in the sub-archetype of Group II, and consequently corrected it, emending it to 'rome'. Examples of repair, however, were more likely to take the text further away from the archetype, as can be seen in the discussion of Walton's version of the poem, below.

environments and the subsequent preservation of works from these environments have determined the number of the copies which we have.

We have already noted one element of the poem's reception: the various titles by which it circulated, most depicting it as a leave-taking poem, with a greater or lesser allusion to the *aubade*. Another notable feature in the transmission is the tendency, over the arc of the poem's development, for temporal conjunctions which suggest process or impermanence (*whilst, yet, as*) to be removed from the poem, being replaced by words that provide a more definitive, almost a-temporal statement. The poem ceases to be fixed in a biographical moment: the expression of the fleetingness of the separation, the drive for it to be over, is modified – by various scribal hands – towards an expression of a permanent spiritual union, over and above any (legitimate) concerns of the flesh. A hierarchy – absent in Donne's own text – is imposed.

### **Walton's version of a valediction**

The most significant, and eccentric, of the subsequent versions of the poem is that presented by Izaak Walton when he eventually included it in his fourth version of his biography of Donne, together with the fallacious details with which he explained its composition. Although Walton may well have made some of his own emendations to the text he presented, it is overwhelmingly likely that he reproduced a manuscript copy which suited his purposes; otherwise, one would expect that he would have simply taken over and altered the text of the poem as presented in one or other of the printing of *Poems, by J.D.*, a copy of which he certainly had to hand.<sup>56</sup> The manuscript he used, as we have seen above (pp. 4–6), descended from an early version of the poem, several stages above that used in the *princeps*. Nevertheless, the text bears a further thirteen otherwise unwitnessed changes from its source.

Such a number are unlikely to have come all at once. Indeed, some errors suggest that the text has been produced from a poor copy which was subsequently cleaned up when copied in its turn, perhaps encouraging a re-working, which responded to the copyist's own ideas regarding the nature of Donne's poem. The signs of careless copying are provided below

| line | model                         | Walton                       |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 11   | ... <u>it</u> doth remove     | ... <i>that</i> doth remove  |
| 12   | Those things <u>which</u> ... | Those things <i>that</i> ... |

Almost certainly the fault of misconstrual, at some point, of orthography and abbreviations. Line 11's variant was possibly due to a misconstrual of *yt* as *y<sup>t</sup>*, and hence *that*; the variant in l. 12 produced by the misconstrual of *w<sup>ch</sup>* as *y<sup>t</sup>* and hence *that*.

|    |                                         |                                           |
|----|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 17 | But we by a <u>love</u> so much refined | But we, by a <i>Soul</i> so much refin'd, |
| 18 | That our <u>selves</u> know ...         | That our <i>souls</i> know ...            |

<sup>56</sup>The difference between Walton's text and that of the *princeps* and later printings is presumably what caused Martin (2001: 189) to assume that he cited the poem 'evidently from memory'. For Walton's involvement in the second edition of the *Poems*, see McCarthy 2013.



Poor handwriting possibly explains the repetition of *soul* in Walton's two lines; *loue* might well have been misconstrued by mistaking the initial *l* – for a long-s (*l*), and the final – *e*, consequently, as an – *l* (so: *loue* > *loue* > *foul*). *Selves* may have seen interference from the previous misreading with an – *e* – misread as an – *o*–, and – *lu* – transposed (so: *felues* > *folues* > *foules*).

20      eyes lips and hands      hands lips and eyes

The switching of the order of the body-parts (from *A-B-and-C* to *C-B-and-A*) inclines one to suppose a degree of scribal distraction at this point. The physical list was a weak-point in transmission: B46 inverts the two final elements ('eyes, hands and lips', i.e. *A-C-and-B*); the printed texts present an asyndeton ('eyes, lips, hands').

33      Such wilt thou be to me, who must      Such *must* thou be to me, who must

Perhaps influenced by the rhyme-word, *wilt* could well have been misread as *must* (wilt > *uult* > *milt* > *mlft* > *mult*).

Nevertheless, once these examples of slipshod copying are set aside, we are confronted with a set of purposive emendations, interventions, and suppositions which, following the prejudices regarding the type of poem established by the scribes' *image d'auteur*, would have been required when copying an evidently defective model. The following alterations, then, show a clear motivation to foreground the spiritual experience of the lovers and to diminish the ambiguity of the references, removing, as much as possible, any sub-text. The most important change was to clean up the title, and move it away from any paronomasia via *mourning–morning* and thus any conjuring up of the saucy setting of an aubade: *A Valediction, forbidding to mourn*.

Further, at l. 5, the words are re-arranged and altered to allow the insertion of *us*. The verse in its model read, 'No teare-floods, nor sigh-tempests move', but this is altered in Walton's version, by inverting the elements of water and air, diminishing the force of one of the compounds: 'No *wind-sighs* or *tear-floods* **us** move'. The re-arrangement can only have been motivated by the desire to insert *us*: the equality of the partners is thereby stressed, and any thought that it should only be Anne staunching the tears is banished. The same impulse is found at l. 25, where the compass-legs are described, and again the lovers are more consciously intruded: all other witnesses offer 'If they be two, they are two so ...'; Walton's version substitutes **we** for both occurrences of *they*: 'If **we** be two, **we** are two so ...'.

The final lines (ll. 35–36: '... makes my circle just,/And makes me end ...') are altered by the suppression of the second *makes*, creating a zeugma rooted in the *makes* of l. 35, which then allows *me* to take up the stressed position: 'makes my circle just/And *me* **to** end ...'. This resolution recalls the preference for the infinitive in the new title: *to end, to mourn*.<sup>57</sup>

Lines 29–32 are targeted in a similar way: personal possessive adjectives take the place of a more concrete reference to the compass legs, keeping uppermost in the mind that the poet is referring to the lovers' *souls* rather than anything that might be physical.

<sup>57</sup> Motivated, possibly, by the sexualized import of 'end', used euphemistically to refer to the female – or occasionally the male – pudenda (a *double-entendre* probably intended by Donne, since the first recorded use is from Spenser: see Williams 1994: 438).



What was present in Walton's distant model read: 'And though it in the centre sit/Yet when the other far doth roam/It leans, and hearkens after it/and grows erect as that comes home'. In Walton's text this had become:

And, though **thine** in the Centre sit,  
Yet, when **my** other far does rome,  
**Thine** leans, and hearkens after it,  
And grows erect as **mine** comes home.<sup>58</sup>

The process by which the lovers become purified – through *love* – had already been omitted (l. 17), and all the emphasis falls upon the already-purified spiritual nature of each one; these soulful lovers now no longer 'Care less eyes, lips and hands to miss' but rather, absolutely, 'Care **not**, ...'.

Such a version, with the untoward elements either removed or toned down and the spiritual exalted, was unlikely to be unappealing to Walton, a man whose well of inspiration ran over to such a degree that any idea was repeated as many times as possible, in almost indistinguishable phrasing (Oliver 1945: 287–88). One might thus compare the import of the poem as presented by Walton (particularly its presentation of the union of souls between the mature John Donne and the mother of his children, combined with Donne's unhappy dream-vision), with his corresponding treatment of the results of George Herbert's having succumbed to a *coup de foudre* and hastily arranged an immediate marriage: 'this mutual content and love, and joy, did receive a daily augmentation, by such daily obligingness to each other, as still added such new affluences to the former fulness of these divine Souls, as was only improvable in Heaven, where they now enjoy it' (Walton 1670: IV.39).

### ***The role of valediction in the life***

Walton's life of Donne grew over time: *Valediction* provided the last piece to be fitted into it. I shall now consider how this inclusion was characteristic of Walton's method in the biography, and how he deployed supposedly biographical details for ideological purposes, in order to guide a reading of the poems he cited.

We have seen how the version of *Valediction* which he adopted fits his ideological ends surprisingly well. It provides a serious, philosophical exposition on married love, a wholly laudable denial of the importance of sex, and showed how, after putting away the childish things of his earlier erotic verse and his Catholicism, after plotting his course of conversion to the established church of the realm by indefatigable study, and after dedicating himself to the lyre of the spirit, he was now capable of producing verse surpassing anything ever written in Latin or Greek (Walton 1675: 33–34): 'I beg leave to tell, that I have heard some Criticks, learned both in Languages and Poetry, say that none of the Greek or Latine Poets did ever equal them.' Such an opinion, proves, if proof be necessary, that Walton was writing for those who had no clue about poetry at all. As Smith (1983: 118) noted acerbically, Walton 'gave the poem and that supposed circumstance a fame which persisted down into the nineteenth century among commentators who sometimes seem to have read nothing else of Donne for themselves.' Walton's

<sup>58</sup>A reason for the change may well have been the growing use of *it* and *that* with euphemistic yet obviously sexual valence: *it* may refer both to the phallus and to coition (Williams 1994: 719); *that*, to the female pudenda (idem, 720).

retelling of the critical judgement may well be a garbling of (or reaction to) the fact that Stubbe (1658: 21–24) had produced a Greek translation of the poem in the 1650s.

The *Valediction* had held Walton's attention before: he had mined it for suitably spousal sentiments when he first came to describe Donne's grief-stricken reaction to his wife's death (Martin 2001: 179–80, 188–89). Even for an event as fulcral in Donne's life as the death of Anne, however, Walton was simply reduced to placing together stray shards of information to fill out his story. He recorded that a sermon had been preached on the Lamentations of Jeremiah to suitably emphasise Dr Donne's dedication to his pastoral vocation, even whilst grief-stricken and bereft. It is true that Donne did preach on Lamentations, but not at this time; there is no other evidence that he delivered a sermon immediately after Anne's death, as David Novarr (1958: 78) pointed out.

Rather than abandoning the biographical information as wholly unfounded, Jessica Martin (2001: 180, n. 26) attempted to at least save some appearances of truthfulness by supposing, as Zouch also had (Walton 1807: 57, note o), that Donne's verse-translation, 'The Lamentations of Jeremy, for the most part according to Tremelius' (Donne 1633: 306–23), were composed with a personal application. But this is not preaching on them, and it is worth bearing in mind that the Lamentations were an attraction in their own right for an early modern translator with literary pretensions. Francisco de Quevedo, an author in many ways very similar to Donne in style and outlook, created his own, stylish Castilian version (Rodríguez Mediano 2016: 87–88). There is, simply, a danger in trying to extract information from Walton by extrapolation when the actual information he relays is always inherently suspect and often the result of guesswork or garbling (see above, n. 20), or fictionalizing re-arrangement. His reproduction of what he claims is Donne's 'letter', for example, in fact represents a series of choice selections from several of Donne's epistles, reflecting none of them (Bennett 1937). Similarly, Walton stitched together Donne's final words, with eminently hagiographical intent, from Donne's own sermons, in order to emphasise that his was a life well-ended, if not consistently well-lived (Martin 2001: 247–49). Walton's moving anecdote regarding Donne's commission of a sculpture of himself in his last days stretches credulity well beyond any reasonable breaking point (Cotteignies 2013: 144–46). Finally, the poem that Walton cites as his deathbed composition, *An hymn to God my God in my sicknesse*, was not written on that funereal occasion (Novarr 1958: 101).

Walton further reproduced and situated *A hymne to God the Father* (as he knew the poem to be called) within an atmosphere of penance and repentance, by prefacing the work with a short biographical note which established its composition in a time, though of travail, yet of mighty consolation: 'yea, even on his former sick bed, he wrote this heavenly Hymne, expressing the great joy he then had in the assurance of Gods mercy to him' (first mentioned Walton 1640: fol. 84v). The association with adversity was prized by later readers, and the text found its way into the pious commonplace book of William Sandcroft (1617–93; archbishop of Canterbury 1677–90); he annotated the copy as 'Dr Donne in his former sicknesse. See his life and his poems. p. 368'.<sup>59</sup> The text chosen for reproduction by Walton was that found in the printed editions of Donne's poems, which needed no alterations for his purposes: its text had, like

<sup>59</sup>O43 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Tanner 466, foll. 4v–5r). The printed text was also copied in Elizabeth Littleton's late-seventeenth-century hand into her commonplace book, C3 (Cambridge University Library, Add. ms. 8460, p. 62; on this volume, see Burke 2003). The two other manuscript copies of the poem to bear a similar title are both from the early eighteenth century, and so taken from one of the printed versions: O32 and R1 ('A Hymne to God the Father', in Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Rawlinson F 90, fol. 107v; and 'A Hymne to God', in Philadelphia, Rosenbach Museum and Library, ms. 239/16, p. 10). Winstanley, in his abbreviation of Walton's life of Donne (1687: 117–21, at 120), cites only this poem by Donne, introducing it as having been written in a time of sickness.

Walton's later *trouvaille* of the *Valediction*, already been shepherded towards a quasi-*a lo divino* version (or travesty) of that which Donne had originally written: the latter was, of course, much more questioning, paradoxical and uncertain (Pebworth 1987). The circumstance of its writing was not an illness, but rather the acute grief over the recent death of his wife (Robbins 2013: 654). Walton's misdirection successfully dampened any speculation that there might be a repeated reference to Anne More in the 'Hymne' until well into the twentieth century.<sup>60</sup> In all this, though, Walton was abiding by the necessary forms of the genre he was operating in, as his first version of Donne's *Life* was designed to accompany a tranche of sermons. As Martin (2003: 258) observes,

A primary aspect of the clerical biographer's task was to facilitate the translation of words into works by mediating his subject's exemplary virtues via the book into the acts of the reader. The task was double: the preface writer on the one hand eased the reader into the sermon texts, and on the other demonstrated the rectitude of the author through a homiletically conceived narrative.

One might observe that Walton was more concerned with establishing an ethos than reflecting the truth (Lambert 2012, Haskin 2007: 11–13; Cotteignies 1999; Kreuger 1964). He was slightly less constrained for space when drawn to revisit his biographical sketch of Donne in 1658; this *Life* of Dr Donne was to be published as a single volume, and so he could add new details which could further illuminate his major points (1658: 74–78). Walton thus chose to increase the wastrelness of Donne's wild second decade before the citation of the *Hymne* (which had already appeared in the shorter biography that introduced the sermons), to which he added a coda, providing further details as a justification for having cited it in the first place:

I have the rather mentioned this *Hymne*, for that he caus'd it to be set to a most grave and solemn tune, and to be often sung to the *Organ* by the *Choristers* of that *Church* in his own hearing, especially at the Evening Service;

Walton then narrates Donne's supposed words 'to a friend' after he rose from his prayers: 'The words of this *Hymne* have restored to me the same thoughts of joy that possess my soule in my sicknesse when I composed it'. And, 'Oh the power of Church musick! that Harmony added to it has raised the affections of my heart, and quickened my graces of zeal and gratitude' (1658: 77–78; 1670: 55; cp. the relevant passages in Smith 1983: 116–17). A fine setting of the poem had been essayed by John Hilton (1599–1657),<sup>61</sup> and it was presumably to this that Walton was referring (Holmes 2005: 189).<sup>62</sup> The praise of church-music in Donne's mouth is wholly anachronistic, but serves the purpose of asserting an indigenous Anglican tradition of sacred music to set against the Restoration's new-fangled introduction of a French taste for secular tunes and

<sup>60</sup>First suggested by Leigh 1978; rejected by Novarr 1987; taken up again by Ahl 1988: 22. Walton's confusion may have been due to his association of the poem with a similar composition by Henry Wotton, who had composed *A Hymn to my God in a night of my late sickness* during an episode of repeated bouts of fever, which he had sent to Izaak Walton (Wooton 1685: 363–64).

<sup>61</sup>B22 (London, British Library, Egerton ms. 2013, fol. 13v; transcription by Spink 1971: 100). Hilton, despite employment as organist at Westminster Abbey, directed his compositorial efforts to popular music, publishing – to much success – two irrepressibly vulgar collections (Hilton 1627 & 1652); some of his instrumental music is preserved in the late seventeenth-collection of London, British Library, Add. ms. 29,283, fol. 3v–5v. The setting by Pelham Humphry, of the late seventeenth century, OX1 (Oxford, Christ Church Library, ms. Music 350, p. 114), and first published in *Harmonia sacra* (Humphrey 1688–93: l.51–52) would have been a little too recent to have allowed Walton to pass it off as Donne's own commission.

<sup>62</sup>Lewton-Brain 2013: 180–81, assumes that Donne himself commissioned the setting from Hilton. Given the eccentricity of the text used by the composer, however, it seems unlikely to have come directly from the poet.

instrumentation.<sup>63</sup> These emendations carried over another twelve years later when he included his biography of Donne amongst other hagiographic pieces, and again five years after that, when he added the *Valediction* and accompanying material.

Such biographical details which explain the genesis of a poem become a fundamental means by which the work may be understood, establishing readers' expectations around a normative interpretation from which it can be fiendishly difficult to escape.<sup>64</sup> Even where an ascetically fastidious New Critical approach is adopted – and thus biography is to be theoretically eschewed (Kuschnier 2001: 94–95) – the assumptions of just *how* the various parts and allusions of the poem will work together are themselves conditioned by the biographical ethos established and by the imperceptible assumptions already sketched out through the already-present and unquestioned *image d'auteur*.

Walton's method was not only one of invention, but of elaboration and extrapolation from what was known, accepted or expected. And, as we can glimpse within the manuscript tradition, and the printings,<sup>65</sup> he was only a part of a much wider process, a form of 'canonization' of Dr John Donne, a complex interplay of scribes and readers and the incessant movement of society and Church. As such, despite claims to the contrary, Walton really was writing a type of hagiography, presenting an idealized figure to people who had already exalted, or were prepared to idealize, that figure; creating an ideological standard-bearer to justify present concerns against more recent enemies and current antagonists; and, through *Valediction*, creating a justification for his own previous characterization of Donne's seriousness of mind and abandonment of secular poetry when barely into his twenties. Of course, it was a ball set in motion by the later Donne, as he repackaged himself to great profit as a leading divine. And Donne was primarily celebrated in Walton's circle not for his poetry, but for what were considered the true works of his genius, the sermons pronounced from the pulpit in St Paul's (Haskin 1993: 19–20). Such a judgement continued past Walton's day: William Winstanley (1687: 119), observed that 'as of an eminent Poet he became a much more eminent Preacher'.

And this gradual creation of an ever more ideal biography for Donne was but a confirmation of the re-arrangement of his poetry carried out in the second edition of the *Poems* (Donne 1635), which, in turn, followed a template established in some of the manuscript collections of Donne's poetry (Todd & Wilcox 2012: 191). The second, revised, edition allowed the reader to follow Donne's Augustinian development from lustful knavish roguishness to upright respectable devotion.<sup>66</sup>

This presentation of Donne, though, was a communal endeavour undertaken by the printers and, undoubtedly, Walton himself. Only Walton's elegy, amongst those commemorating Donne, was emended in this edition (Oliver 2014: 2; McCarthy 2013: 59).

<sup>63</sup>For the changing tastes, see Spink 1995: 435–37; further, Oliver 2014: 3–4, who highlights Walton's Arminian tendencies as an explanation for his rewriting of Donne's religious devotion; nevertheless, Donne's own move towards a much more Laudian perspective was marked later in his life (my thanks to Alistair Watson for pointing this out).

<sup>64</sup>This is, in effect, a general rule. See, for example, the discussion of the application of *ahādith* (exemplary pseudo-biographical material from Muhammad's life) to the Qur'anic creation story in Lamrabet 2016: 14.

<sup>65</sup>For the wider cultural and political issues involved in the printing and the social role of Donne's printers, see Crabstick 2016: 483–503; Peabworth 2008.

<sup>66</sup>The *princeps* presented the poems in eclectic order. In the second edition, the divisions are: *Songs and Sonets* (Donne 1635: 1–67) *Epigrams* (68–70), *Elegies* (71–102), *Epithalamions, or, Marriage Songs* (103–23), *Satyres* (123–47), *Letters to Severall Personages* (148–210), *Funerall Elegies* (211–74), [Prose] *Letters* (275–300), *The Progresse of the Soule* (301–27), *Divine Poems* (327–88). Elegies on Donne's death follow.

And it was Walton who designed the frontispiece, carried out by an engraver favoured by publishers catering to High Church interests, William Marshall.<sup>67</sup> Donne was depicted as a youth with the family crest and an ironic motto, which was all turned into an emblem of future redemption by Walton's moralizing epigram inscribed underneath the portrait (Cresswell 1995; Flynn 1995: 3–5).

The re-organization of the works and the imposition of paratexts were accompanied by a widening of the selection of what were to be considered Donne's works, and so included much extraneous material. As Brandon Centerwall (2006: 271) pointed out, 'the editor of the 1633 edition had excellent judgement as regards what was a poem by Donne and what was not, whereas the editor of the 1635 edition had abysmal judgement in this regard, even by the loose standards of the day.' This disconnect between Donne's actual production and Walton's anthologizing instinct is important to bear in mind; Walton was not so much an authoritative voice on the poet's individuality, but was attempting to assemble disparate and dispersed materials, weaving them into an expression not of individuality at all, but of communal identity. The biographical details that encase *Valediction* in Walton's text, and which have done much to condition the reading of the poem, do not – and cannot – provide much of a guide to the poem's creation and early distribution. They do, however, confess a great deal about how, in the long gestation of Donne's legacy, it was felt that his poetry – particularly to and about Anne – should be read. We might say that Walton was engaged in a de-Baroquicizing of Donne's poetry: turning the paradoxical into the simple; and transforming Donne's uncertain, confusing, and constantly-changing poetry into something sincere, direct and static.

## Disclosure statement

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<sup>67</sup> Marshall had also prepared the title-page for Donne's *Devotions* (Donne 1634) the previous year; the central image of the frontispiece is that of Donne in a full-length shroud (in imitation of the bust from his tomb), surrounded by illustrations of biblical verses. As an engraver, he was much in demand, and, although he did produce some early work for puritans (frontispieces to Fulke 1633, Ames 1633; Taylor 1633; Preston 1637; Sibbes 1637; Sym 1637) and adorned a number of academic or purely literary works (Winterton 1635; Drayton 1637; More 1638; Bacon 1640; Randolph 1640; Casimir 1646), most of his output had some connexion to royalist or high church circles: James I & VI 1631; Holland 1632; Smith 1633; Taylor 1633; Abbot 1634; Braithwaite 1635; Hodson 1636; Quarles 1635; Welby 1637; Baker 1638; Braithwaite 1638; Habington 1638; Herbert 1638; Martin 1638; Fuller 1639; Braithwaite 1641a, 1641b; Parsons 1641; Thornborough 1641; Fuller 1642; Isaacson 1642; Udall 1642; Baker 1643; Quarles 1644, 1645; Howell 1645; Featley 1645; Quarles 1646; Usher 1647; Charles I 1648; Ducon 1648; Montagu 1648; Bayly 1649; Gauden 1649; Shute 1649; Hall 1650. His frontispiece to *Poems, by J. D.* recalls his earlier engraving for Clavell 1628, another example of the repentant versifier.

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 B46 British Library, Stowe ms. 961 [B46], foll. 84v–85r.  
 B30 London, British Library, Harley ms. 4064, fol. 270r–v.  
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 C2 Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, ms. add. 5778, foll. 41v–52r.  
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 HH1 The Henry E. Huntingdom Library, ms. EL 6893, fol. 11r–v.  
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