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978-0-521-54003-2 - The Cambridge Companion to: John Donne
Edited by Achsah Guibbory
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The Cambridge Companion to John Donne

The Cambridge Companion to John Donne – the first comprehensive guide to his works to be published – introduces students (undergraduate and graduate) to the range, brilliance, and complexity of John Donne. Sixteen new essays, written by an international array of leading scholars and critics, cover Donne’s poetry (erotic, satirical, devotional) and his prose (including his sermons and occasional letters). Providing readings of his texts and also fully situating them in the historical and cultural context of early modern England, these essays offer the most up-to-date scholarship and introduce students to the current thinking and debates about Donne, while providing tools for students to read Donne with greater understanding and enjoyment. Special features include a chronology; a short biography; chapters on political and religious contexts; a chapter on the experience of reading his lyrics; a meditation on Donne by the contemporary novelist A. S. Byatt; and an extensive bibliography of editions and criticism.

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THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
JOHN DONNE

EDITED BY

ACHSAH GUIBBORY

Barnard College, Columbia University



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521540032

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First published 2006
Reprinted 2007

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-83237-3 Hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-54003-2 Paperback

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PREFACE

It is the right time for a Cambridge Companion to Donne, for important new work on Donne is being done on both sides of the Atlantic, indeed in countries around the world, and volumes of the ambitious Variorum edition of the poetry are appearing. Even if these things were not the case, we would still need a Companion, for Donne matters to students as much as ever. He may have lived four hundred years ago, but he seems so contemporary, for he explores issues that absorb us and that undergraduates are eager to talk about: love, sex, the problems of intimacy, spiritual longing, the challenges of faith, and the prospect of death and what, if anything, comes after. He seeks truth, while questioning authority, refusing to take things – even God – on trust. We watch Donne search for stability, fulfillment, and permanence in an age of religious and political conflict, a world rapidly changing with the emergence of new sciences and technologies. The world Donne inhabited was, of course, different from ours, and yet there are striking points of contact.

So Donne continues to speak to readers who are, often, seduced by his passionate wit from the first encounter. Students respond intensely to Donne's poetry but they also need help learning "how" to read Donne. He presents a special set of challenges and problems, but, as Coleridge suggested, once we learn how to read Donne, we know how to read poetry. This volume of new essays, each by a scholar with a special expertise and take on Donne, will, I hope, provide necessary tools. Offering new perspectives, these essays assimilate and add to the rich tradition of Donne criticism, to which we are all indebted. They also incorporate contributions from other disciplines (e.g. linguistics, or history) that can illuminate and contextualize Donne's writing. When we historicize Donne, we find his writing opens a window onto the past, revealing the complex interrelations among religion, politics, love, and gender that existed in early modern England. But our primary concern is, always, better to understand Donne's texts.

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PREFACE

The following chapters cover the full range of Donne's writing, while bringing multiple contexts to bear on it. The early chapters discuss Donne's biography (Jonathan Post), the unique problems presented by Donne's often unstable poetic texts (Ted-Larry Pebworth), and various contexts for Donne's writings: his relation to literary predecessors and contemporaries (Andrew Hadfield); the social context and nature of his writing (Arthur Marotti); the religious world Donne inhabited (Alison Shell and Arnold Hunt); and the political world of early modern England (Tom Cain). The chapters by Cain and Shell/Hunt have different focuses and arguments, but both examine the close interrelation between religion and politics in this period, and thus should be read together. Although this first set of chapters emphasizes context, most of them also discuss Donne's literary "texts" in some detail, embodying our belief that text and context are interwoven and interdependent. The second group of chapters focuses more intensely on Donne's poetry and prose, beginning with Judith Herz's chapter on the experience of reading Donne's poetry. Subsequent chapters explore Donne's modes of writing: satirical (Annabel Patterson), erotic (Guibbory), devotional (Helen Wilcox), and the sermons (Peter McCullough). Three specific aspects of Donne's writing then require further attention: Donne's distinctive use of language (Lynne Magnusson), the issue of gender and the role of women in his poetry (Ilona Bell), and Donne's obsession with death (Ramie Targoff). Having traveled from his life to his death, we learn from Dayton Haskin about Donne's afterlife apparent in later editions and Donne's reception, and in the creative "reinvention" of his writing by later artists. The concluding chapter is by a novelist who has herself reinvented Donne in her own work. A. S. Byatt, whose intelligence and wit are a match for Donne, draws on her experience as a reader and writer – and the insights of neuroscience – to discuss Donne's "feeling thought," a concept made famous by T. S. Eliot but now given a new significance. This chapter offering the perspective of a contemporary writer is an important and unique feature of this Companion, exemplifying how (and why) Donne matters, not just to academic scholars or in the classroom but to practicing creative writers. Finally, Liam Semler has compiled a select bibliography of works that incorporates the authors' suggestions for further reading and introduces students to the rich resources of scholarship on Donne.

Each chapter is written to stand on its own, but they are interconnected, and even more powerful as a whole. Some clearly intersect – mine on "erotic writing" and Bell's on "gender matters," for example, or those by Cain and Shell/Hunt on Donne's political and religious worlds. Marotti and Magnusson define different social dimensions of Donne's writing. Magnusson and Herz both focus on Donne's language, although one could say that virtually all of

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the chapters attend to language. Although generic concerns appear in several chapters (most notably Marotti's, Patterson's, and McCullough's), the volume is organized, not by genre, but according to topics that allow the authors the freedom to discuss a broader, more interesting selection of Donne's writings, and that allow different patterns to emerge. Structuring the Companion in this way means that the *Songs and Sonets*, for example, and the sermons are treated in more than one chapter, allowing readers to experience different perspectives on Donne's texts. So, for example, while the *Satires* are the focus of Patterson's essay, they also figure importantly in Hadfield's. While McCullough focuses on Donne's sermons, Targoff also concludes with a close reading of a Donne sermon, in this case the famous "Deaths Duell" sermon. Like most things, Donne's writing is best approached through multiple perspectives, but these chapters also give a sense of the debates about Donne, who, like Proteus, resists being tied down and provokes us repeatedly to reconsider the brilliance of his writing and insight.

My thanks go to all of the authors, who have made extraordinary contributions; to my students of Donne over the years (both at the University of Illinois and more recently at Barnard College), who continue to surprise me; to my indispensable colleagues and long-term friends in the John Donne Society, who have shaped my thinking about Donne (especially Dennis Flynn, Dayton Haskin, Tom Hester, Judith Herz, and Jeanne Shami); to Dayton Haskin and Jonathan Post for their especially helpful advice on this volume; and to Sarah Stanton at Cambridge University Press, who first asked me to consider doing it.

ABBREVIATIONS

Bald	Bald, R. C., <i>John Donne: A Life</i> , Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970
Carey	Carey, John, <i>John Donne: Life, Mind and Art</i> , London, Faber and Faber; New York: Oxford University Press, 1981
ELR	<i>English Literary Renaissance</i>
Flynn	Flynn, Dennis, <i>John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility</i> , Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995
Gosse	Edmund Gosse (ed.), <i>The Life and Letters of John Donne</i> , 2 vols., London: 1899; rpt Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1959
JDJ	<i>John Donne Journal</i>
JEGP	<i>Journal of English and Germanic Philology</i>
OED	Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edn.
SEL	<i>Studies in English Literature</i>
Walton	Walton, Izaak, "The Life of Dr. John Donne," in <i>The Lives of John Donne, Sir Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert and Robert Sanderson</i> , ed. and intro. by George Saintsbury, London: Oxford University Press, 1927; rpt. 1950

The following editions of Donne have been used (and cited by abbreviated titles as listed), unless otherwise noted in individual essays. Original spelling is retained in quotations but u/v and i/j are modernized.

<i>Biathanatos</i>	Ernest W. Sullivan, II (ed.) <i>Biathanatos</i> , Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984
<i>Devotions</i>	John Sparrow (ed.) with bibliographical note by Geoffrey Keynes, <i>Devotions upon Emergent Occasions</i> , Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923

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- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| <i>Essays in Divinity</i> | Evelyn M. Simpson (ed.), <i>Essays in Divinity</i> , Oxford: Clarendon, 1952 |
| <i>Letters</i> | <i>Letters to Severall Persons of Honour</i> (1651), facsimile reprint by M. Thomas Hester (ed.), New York, Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977 |
| <i>Poems</i> | Herbert J. C. Grierson (ed.) <i>The Poems of John Donne</i> , 2 vols., volume 1 (The Text of the Poems, with Appendixes), London: Oxford University Press, 1912; rpt. 1968 |
| <i>Pseudo-Martyr</i> | Anthony Raspa (ed.), <i>Pseudo-Martyr</i> , Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993 |
| <i>Sermons</i> | Potter, George R. and Evelyn M. Simpson (eds.), <i>Sermons</i> , 10 vols., Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1953–62 |

CHRONOLOGY

- 1534 Henry VIII breaks with Rome; Act of Supremacy declares him head of Church of England
- 1535 Sir Thomas More executed for refusing to accept Henry as head of English church
- 1543 Copernicus *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium*, with revolutionary hypothesis of sun (not earth) as center
 Vesalius's *De humani corporis fabrica libri septem*, his new anatomy based on dissection
- 1547 Henry VIII dies; Edward VI becomes king
- 1553 Edward VI dies; Mary I becomes queen
- 1554 England officially "Catholic" again; "Marian" (Protestant) exiles flee to Geneva
- 1559 Elizabeth I crowned Queen in January; Act of Supremacy requires Oath of Allegiance; Act of Uniformity requires attendance in Church of England and use of Book of Common Prayer (England once again a "reformed" nation)
- 1563 First edition of John Foxe's anti-Catholic *Acts and Monuments (Book of Martyrs)*
- 1564 William Shakespeare born
- 1570 Queen Elizabeth I excommunicated by Papal Bull
- 1572 John Donne born
- 1576 Father, John, dies; mother remarries
- 1580 Jesuit "mission" in England commences; Parliament begins to pass series of acts making practice of Catholicism synonymous with treason
- 1581 Jesuit priest Edmund Campion executed (December); others to follow
- 1584 Donne matriculates at Hart Hall, Oxford University
- 1585 Donne perhaps traveling abroad? Or at University?
- 1587 Donne at Cambridge? Or traveling abroad?

CHRONOLOGY

- 1586 Death of Sir Philip Sidney
- 1587–88 Christopher Marlowe’s *Tamburlaine the Great, Part I* performed (published 1590)
- 1588 The Spanish Armada defeated; England rescued from “Catholic threat”
- 1590 Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene*, Books I–III published
- 1591 Sidney’s *Astrophil and Stella* published
- 1592–95 Donne at Lincoln’s Inn; writes (most of?) the elegies
- 1594 Donne’s brother Henry dies, imprisoned for harboring a priest
- 1594–96 Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*
- 1596 Second edition of *The Faerie Queene*, including Books IV–VI
- 1596 Donne in Essex’s (Robert Devereux) expedition to Cadiz
- 1597 Donne in expedition to Azores Islands – writes “The Storme,” “The Calme”?
- 1597 or 1598 Donne becomes secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton
- 1598 Writes the satires?
- 1599 June 1599, Bishops’ Ban (by John Whitgift, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London) on printing satires; recall and public burning of some
- 1600 William Gilbert’s *De Magnete, Magneticisque Corporibus, et de Magna Magnete Tellure* (“On the Magnet, Magnetic Bodies, and the Great Magnet, the Earth”)
- 1600–01 Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*
- 1601 Execution of Essex, after his failed rebellion
 Donne briefly member of Parliament; secretly marries Anne More (December), niece of employer (Egerton) and daughter of Sir George More
- 1602 Sir George More has Donne briefly committed to jail (February) when marriage is revealed
- 1603 Death of Queen Elizabeth; James VI of Scotland comes to English throne as James I
- 1604 Christopher Marlowe’s *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* first published
- 1605 November 5, [Roman Catholic] Gunpowder Plot to blow up Parliament and King is discovered
 Francis Bacon publishes *The Advancement of Learning* calling for new science
- 1605–06 Shakespeare’s *King Lear*
- 1606 Donne moves with family to Mitcham
 Ben Jonson’s *Volpone* performed (published 1607)
 James I charters The Virginia Company

CHRONOLOGY

- 1607 Jamestown (Virginia) founded
- 1608 Donne writes *Biathanatos*
 John Milton born
- 1609 Donne writes many of the Holy Sonnets?
 William Shakespeare's *Sonnets* published
- 1610 Galileo's *Siderius Nuncius* ("Starry Messenger")
 Donne's *Pseudo-Martyr* published, arguing Roman Catholics
 can take Oath of Allegiance to king
 Donne receives honorary MA from Oxford University
 Elizabeth Drury, fifteen-year-old daughter of Donne's
 patrons, Sir Robert and Lady Drury, dies
- 1611 *The First Anniversary* ("The Anatomie of the World") published
 Donne travels to France with Sir Robert Drury
Ignatius his Conclave (Conclave Ignatii)
 The King James Bible (Authorized Version) published
 Aemelia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* published
 Shakespeare's *The Tempest*
- 1612 "Of the Progress of the Soule" published in *The First and
 Second Anniversaries*
 Donne and family move to Drury Lane
- 1614 Donne serves as member of Parliament
- 1615 Donne ordained as priest in the Church of England in
 January; appointed a royal chaplain to James I
- 1616 October, Donne appointed Reader in Divinity at Lincoln's
 Inn (Inns of Court)
 Ben Jonson's *Workes* published (folio)
 Shakespeare dies
- 1617 August 15 – Anne More Donne dies (aged 33) after giving
 birth to stillborn child
 Donne writes holy sonnet, "Since she whom I lov'd"
- 1618 beginning of the Thirty Years War over religion in Europe
- 1618–19 Synod of Dort confronts challenge of Arminius, and reaffirms
 Calvinism
- 1619 Donne travels with Viscount Doncaster's diplomatic mission
 to Germany; preaches at the Hague and at Heidelberg
 Donne writes "A Hymne to Christ, at the authors last going
 into Germany"
- 1620 Francis Bacon's *Great Instauration*
 The *Mayflower* ship lands in Massachusetts; Plymouth
 Colony founded

CHRONOLOGY

- 1621 First edition of Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*
 November – Donne becomes Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral
 Lady Mary Wroth's "The Countess of Montgomery's *Urania*"
 and *Pamphilia to Amphilanthus* published
- 1622 James I's Directions to Preachers; Donne preaches at Paul's
 Cross in its support
 Donne made honorary member of the Virginia Company
- 1623 *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories and Tragedies*
 (folio)
 December – Donne severely ill
- 1624 *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (republished in 1634,
 1638)
 Donne appointed to St. Dunstan's West
- 1625 James I dies; Charles I becomes king
- 1626 Death of Launcelot Andrewes
- 1627 Donne preaches at marriage of the daughter of the Earl of
 Bridgewater
- 1628 William Laud appointed Bishop of London
 William Harvey publishes his discovery of the circulation of
 blood
- 1629 Charles I dissolves Parliament, beginning his eleven-year
 "personal rule"
- 1631 February 25, Donne preaches last sermon, Death's Duell at
 the king's court;
 March 31, Donne dies; buried April 3, St. Paul's
- 1632 *Deaths Duell* published (republished 1633)
- 1633 William Laud becomes Archbishop of Canterbury
Poems by J. D. (first edition of Donne's poetry)
Juvenalia: Or Certaine Paradoxes and Problems published
 George Herbert's *The Temple* published
- 1634 Milton's *Mask* (otherwise known as "Comus") performed for
 Earl of Bridgewater
- 1635 Second edition of Donne's *Poems*, with engraving of Donne
 by William Marshall
- 1640 Donne's *LXXX Sermons*, published by Donne's son,
 dedicated to Charles I – Izaak Walton's "Life of Donne
 published" with the sermons
 Parliament meets for first time since 1629; Roots and
 Branches Petition to Parliament to reform the church from
 Laud's "popish" abuses

CHRONOLOGY

- 1641 *Of Reformation*, John Milton's first tract arguing for reform of the English church
- 1642 English Civil War breaks out
Isaac Newton born
- 1643 Parliament abolishes episcopacy
- 1645 Parliament replaces Book of Common Prayer with Directory of Public Worship
- 1644 Laud tried by Parliament as traitor for attempting to bring in popery and to "return" England to Rome
- 1645 Laud executed (January)
John Milton's *Poems* published, with engraving of the author by William Marshall
- 1646 *Biathanatos* published for first time (by Donne's son)
- 1649 January 30, Charles I executed for "treason"
Donne's *Fifty Sermons*, published by son
Descartes publishes *A Discourse of a method*
- 1651 Donne's *Letters to Severall Persons of Honour*, published by his son
Donne's *Essays in Divinity* published
Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*
- 1652 Donne's *Paradoxes, Problems, Essays, Characters* published
- 1653 Oliver Cromwell becomes Lord Protector of England
- 1660 Restoration of monarchy; Charles II assumes throne
Donne's *XXVI Sermons* published
- 1662 Act of Uniformity reestablishes the national Church of England
- 1667 Milton's *Paradise Lost* (first edition)
- 1669 Donne's *Poems* (finally including elegies omitted from earlier editions)