

**WILLIAM BODHAM DONNE:
PORTRAIT IN A LANDSCAPE.**

T HUGHIE JONES

**A Thesis submitted to the Department of English
of the University of Leicester
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

2002AD

UMI Number: U155515

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



UMI U155515

Published by ProQuest LLC 2013. Copyright in the Dissertation held by the Author.
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

All rights reserved. This work is protected against
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.



ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

T Hughie Jones

William Bodham Donne:

Portrait in a Landscape.

ABSTRACT

William Bodham Donne (1807–1882) was born in Norfolk, attended school in Suffolk and entered Cambridge University in 1824. Elected an ‘Apostle’, he went down without graduating, objecting to making the necessary religious subscriptions. Returning to Norfolk, and moving later to Suffolk, he began the career which would result in the writing over the years of eight books and 170+ articles in learned journals. Although a classical specialist, his range of interests was wide, reflected in his publications.

In 1852 he became librarian of the London Library and in 1857 the Lord Chamberlain’s Examiner of Plays, a post he held until retirement in 1874. His evidence to the 1866 Select Committee of the House of Commons on theatrical licensing and censorship is central to an understanding of nineteenth century practice. While holder of the Examinership, he directed for a time the command performances at Windsor Castle, for which he was rewarded by Queen Victoria. In 1867 he composed his *magnum opus*, editing the correspondence of George III with Lord North.

He was the friend of many prominent literary figures of his day, including Bernard Barton, J W Blakesley, Edward Fitzgerald, J A Froude, J M Kemble, Charles Merivale, James Spedding, W M Thackeray, Richard Chenevix Trench, as well as the actress, Fanny Kemble, with all of whom he engaged in voluminous correspondence.

The thesis offers a portrait (not formal biography) in a landscape which is both geographical and intellectual. It reveals Donne as a kindly, discriminating literary critic, omnivorous in his reading, retiring in his habits, loyal to his friends. One of them wrote – ‘Many men are *liked*, Donne is *loved*’.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
Abbreviations	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Preface	iv
Family Background and Early Years	1
The Intellectual Landscape	5
Cambridge and the 'Apostles'	15
The Norfolk Years	24
Suffolk Days and Suffolk Ways	31
'Bondsman to the Reading Public'	40
'The Devil's Archdeacon'	54
'I Am Fallen upon Evil Times'	68
The Windsor Theatricals	74
Donne on Drama	83
Donne on the Classics	100
Donne the Historian	128
Donne's Political Writings	156
Donne on Poetry and poets	165
Random Harvest	202
Donne the Lecturer	210
Envoi	214
Appendix A (Donne's Lineal Descent)	a
Appendix B (Donne's Published Articles)	b
Appendix C (Donne's Published Books)	f
Appendix D (Trench's Poetic Tribute to Donne)	g
Classified Bibliography	h

ABBREVIATIONS

1832 Report *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Dramatic Literature*, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1832-33, VII. Footnote references will be to the *1832 Report*, the number following, unless otherwise indicated, referring to a question and/or answer taken from the evidence. Reference numbers to obvious questions and/or answers quoted in the text will follow the quotation, in parentheses.

1853 Report. *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the system under which Public Houses, Hotels, &c, and places of Public Entertainment are sanctioned and regulated, etc., etc.*, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers 1852-53, XXXVIII, I. Citation practice as for *1832 Report* above.

1866 Report. *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Theatrical Licenses and Regulations*, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1866, XVI, I. Citation practice as for *1832 Report* above.

1892 Report. *Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Theatres and Places of Entertainment*, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers, 1892, XVIII, I. Citation practice as for *1832 Report*.

BL British Library

Blakesley Joseph Williams Blakesley Archive, Trinity College Library, Cambridge, Add Ms.a.243-4. (v. 'Unpublished Sources').

Correspondence *Correspondence of George III with Lord North 1768-1783, Edited from the Originals at Windsor, with an Introduction and Notes, by W Bodham Donne*, 2 vols., (London: John Murray, 1867).

DNB *Dictionary of National Biography*, (London:1885-1900).

Friends Johnson C B, *William Bodham Donne and his Friends*, (London: Methuen, 1905). (v. explanatory note at the end of this list).

JP Johnson Papers (v. 'Unpublished Sources').

PRO Public Record Office

Censorship Stephens, John Russell, *The Censorship of English Drama 1824-1901* (Cambridge: CUP, 1980).

Stottlar Stottlar, James F, 'A Victorian Stage Censor: the Theory and Practice of William Bodham Donne', *Victorian Studies* XIII,2, (March 1970), 253-282.

WBD William Bodham Donne.

THE ABBREVIATION ‘*FRIENDS*’

Although, for the convenience of readers who might require access, some of the correspondence cited in this thesis is related to the collection called *Friends**, many of the original letters are in the Johnson Papers (*JP*) and have been seen there by the writer. Other original documents are related to their present location in the usual way.

Friends requires its own explanation. It is a collection of two hundred and eighty letters, mostly to or from William Bodham Donne, connected by a perfunctory narrative, and assembled by a grand-daughter of the subject. It is highly selective, inaccurate in some particulars and speculative in others, but absolutely indispensable to the researcher, as some of the material is no longer traceable elsewhere.

The bulk of the letters (253) connect Donne to six people, with whom, over the years, he corresponded. They are (with the number of exchanges in parenthesis):

Bernard Barton (73); J W Blakesley (27); Edward Fitzgerald (43); Fanny Kemble (54); John Mitchell Kemble (16); R C Trench (40). All of these will figure largely in the thesis though, curiously, the most prolific correspondence – that with Bernard Barton, the Suffolk poet – probably matters least.

- Johnson C B, *William Bodham Donne and his Friends*, (London: Methuen, 1905), hereafter cited as *Friends*.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am greatly indebted to Her Majesty the Queen, by whose gracious permission I have been allowed to consult and cite material in the Royal Archives. Miss Pamela Clark, the Deputy Registrar at Windsor Castle, was both hospitable and most helpful during my repeated visits. Professors Philip Collins and Norman Doe, my supervisors for earlier research degrees, supported my registration for this project. Professors Rosemary Ashton, Simon Keynes and Bill Lubenow, Dr Felicity Rosslyn, the late Dr John Russell Stephens and Peter Whiteley, biographer, all generously responded to requests for information and clarification, while Dr Russell Jackson gently but substantially improved my article for *Theatre Notebook*,¹ which reproduced material on the Windsor Plays. My supervisor, Dr Richard G Foulkes, has been a constant source of inspiration, criticising helpfully and sharing his vast stock of theatrical knowledge.

Two persons deserve special mention. Mrs Margaret Sharman, owner and custodian of the Johnson Papers, made me free of her priceless and irreplaceable material, her home and her time. It is a source of great sadness that she died just before this project was completed. Without her, the thesis could not have been written. Without the selfless support, prodding and reassurance of my wife, Beryl, it would not have been.

The Society for Theatre Research honoured and encouraged me with the Stephen Joseph Award for the year 2000.

The following libraries and other institutions all contributed to my research, named individuals deserving special mention: The George Borrow Society (the late Sir Angus Fraser); the British Library; Cambridge University Library (John Wells); Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge (Miss Ellie Clewlow, Archivist); King Edward VI School, Bury St Edmund's (Mrs Cooper, Librarian); Leicester University Library (Mr Brian Marshall); the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle-upon-Tyne (Elizabeth A Pescod, Librarian); the London Library (Alan Bell, Librarian); the Norfolk and Norwich Central Library (Mr C Wilkins-Jones, Librarian); the Norfolk Record Office (Dr John Alban); the Public Record Office; the Royal Institution (Dr Frank A J L James); the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge (Mrs Sproston); the Manuscripts and Rare Books Library, University College, London (Steven Wright).

The final acknowledgement must be, of course, that I alone am responsible for any errors, omissions and infelicities.

¹ T Hughie Jones, 'The Censor Turns Manager: William Bodham Donne and the Windsor Theatricals', *Theatre Notebook* 55.1 (2001), 37-47.

PREFACE

In the year 1807, in the Norfolk village of Mattishall, a son was born to Doctor Edward Charles Donne and his wife, Anne. In the same year, the future Archbishop Richard Chenevix Trench and the philologist John Mitchell Kemble were also born; Walter Scott was serving as secretary to a royal commission and composing 'Marmion'; Wordsworth was publishing his sonnets on *Liberty*; the Quaker poet, Bernard Barton, was working as a coal and corn merchant in Woodbridge; and the infant George Borrow was about to leave his birth-place, a stone's-throw from Mattishall, following his military father around the country.

All these people, and many more, figure in the story of William Bodham Donne, sub-titled, 'Portrait in a Landscape'. The landscape is cultural and intellectual, as well as geographical. It embraces Norfolk, Cambridge, Suffolk and London. Through it move literary and political figures. On the horizon, defying spatial reality, can be seen Spain, Italy, Hungary and Greece. There are other figures in the landscape, some easily recognisable, others unknown, needing identification.

It is the story of a man of letters, a temperamental recluse, never happier than when reading and writing in a rural study, but taken by circumstances into the bustle of the capital, there successively to become a librarian and a court official, to mingle with the leading literati, the royal household and, eventually, the sovereign herself and her consort. It is also the story of a cultural evolution, of an England which moved, during our subject's lifetime, from Coleridge's *Christabel* to Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, from Scott's *Waverley* to Shaw's *Cashel Byron's Profession*, from the birth of the Oxford Movement to the post-Darwinian loss of faith, and from Bentham's utilitarianism to William McDougall's social psychology.

The thesis will attempt to delineate some features of the landscape, beginning with the Coleridgean concept of 'clerisy', and weaving others into the narrative of Donne's life, career and writings. The *dramatis personae* will perform their leading roles or walking-on parts on cue.

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND EARLY YEARS

The family of William Bodham Donne can be traced back with certainty, though also with some teasing questions, to the seventeenth century.¹ All known lineal ancestors are found in Norfolk, either in Norwich or surrounding towns and villages. The earliest, Richard Donne, 'of Holt', was churchwarden 1614/15, married the otherwise unknown and intriguingly named Praxides, and died in 1633. His firstborn, Thomas, is described as having property in 1633, presumably inherited from his father; was also churchwarden of Holt, (1623-38) and died in 1654, having fathered eight children.

With his firstborn, also Thomas, the scene moves to Letheringsett Hall, where Thomas is described as a 'Dornix weaver'. "Dornix" is a variant of 'Dornick', referring to fabric originally produced in the Dutch town of that name and used for vestments, hangings, tapestries, etc.. Having out-produced his father, with ten children, this Thomas died in 1685 and is buried in St Peter Hungate, Norwich. With his third son, William, the family arms appear, as does the information that he administered property (no details). A degree of upward mobility would seem to be taking place. William married Mary, daughter of the Reverend Roger Flynt, of Ludham.

There may be no causal connection between the facts that William named his youngest son Roger, after his own father-in-law, and that Roger became the heir to his grandfather's estate, but facts they are. Roger Donne is intriguing in that, having gone up to Caius College, Cambridge, thus initiating a family tradition for future generations, he is nonetheless described in a family constructed pedigree as a tanner, surely the

¹ Appendix A.

best-educated tanner for miles around, also described as ‘Roger Doune [*sic*] of Ludham, gentleman commissioner for draining and enclosing the common of Stokesly’.² It was this Roger (there are at least four others in the Donne pedigree), whose daughter Anne, having married the rector of Berkhamstead, gave birth to the poet, William Cowper, separated from the subject of this thesis by two generations.

Anne’s youngest brother re-introduces the Christian name, William, into the family tree. This William lived at East Dereham. He married three times, fathering by his first wife, who was the daughter of a Norwich physician, two sons, of whom the elder, another William, was a Norwich notable. Like his maternal grandfather, Dr Edward Sayer, he was a medical practitioner, described as ‘Surgeon’. He was noted for his skill in operating for calculi (kidney-stones), some of his triumphs being still preserved in the Norfolk and Norwich hospital, where his miniature portrait hangs. In 1763 he was admitted to the freedom of the city of Norwich.

The celebrated Parson Woodforde records in his diary that on the 8th May, 1784, Dr Donne inoculated the four children of Squire Custance against smallpox. This form of treatment, which involved administering a small quantity of the smallpox virus, was introduced into England in 1718 by Lady Wortley Montagu, who had observed its use during her residence in Constantinople. It aroused much opposition until about 1760, when it became more acceptable. Unfortunately, it was only partially successful, and carried the additional danger that those inoculated could still spread the disease. In 1796 it was superseded by Jenner’s breakthrough – vaccination with cowpox.

He died in 1803, a respected and well-loved citizen. No doubt he hoped that his oldest son, Charles Edward, would follow him into the medical profession, and indeed, after entering Caius College, like his great-grandfather before him, Charles Edward obtained his MB degree in 1799. He was of poor health, however, and never practised medicine, retiring to the village of Mattishall, where he kept a tame duck and buried himself in his books. It has been said³ that he might have sat for the original of old Mr

² *Norfolk Archaeology*, XIII (1848), 285.

³ *Friends*, p.xi.

Caxton, in Bulwer-Lytton's novel of that name. No trace remains of the *magnum opus* he was always going to write (theme unknown), and his only achievement was that of fathering our subject, William Bodham Donne, an only child.

Born on the 29th July 1807, William was in fact a second child, replacing a boy of the same name, who died in 1806 at the age of three. With this William, the ninth generation Donne, the subject of this thesis now really begins.

Early Years

Little is known of William Donne's childhood. 'At the age of seven he was sent to the Grammar School at Hingham, a few miles from his home, but schools were in those days rough places for delicate boys, and after a bad attack of bronchitis, brought on from exposure [?], his parents had to remove him'.⁴ When he was nine years old, his father died, and he was sent for his education to the famous King Edward VI Grammar School, at Bury St Edmund's. As an outsider, he was a 'foreigner', as distinct from the 'royalist' pupils, whose homes were in the town, and he lodged with one of the masters, the Reverend J Shore.

The Grammar School was the first, in point of time, of the thirty schools founded by the youthful monarch, and according to Rivington's *Liber Scholasticus*, a publication of 1843, it ranked thirteenth among the public schools of England. Many parents, like James Spedding's father, a north countryman, moved to Bury in order to enrol their sons. Along with Spedding, Donne's contemporaries included John Mitchell Kemble, Edward Fitzgerald and William Airy, all of whom remained fast friends and made their respective marks in the world of letters.

Their headmaster was the redoubtable Dr Benjamin Heath Malkin, under whose nineteen years' leadership the school produced many future scholars as eminent as himself. Malkin's regime was benevolent and enlightened and was acknowledged in a tribute written by James Spedding in 1854. There was no fagging, bullying was virtually non-existent, and

⁴ *Friends*, p.xii.

playground fights were allowed to take their course, provided that they were spontaneous and not cold-blooded. [The Doctor's] 'priorities were not the acquiring of solid information or "habits of judicious study", but the development of an independent and open mind and an intellectual curiosity. A portly man with a rosy face, he was "majestic in demeanour and voice," but with nothing formal or pedantic about him'.⁵

Donne clearly both enjoyed and profited by his schooling, and in 1846, three years after the death of his wife, would move to Bury in order that his three sons might attend the school. His own attendance ended in 1824, when he went up to Cambridge.

There he would meet some representatives of a publicly unrecognised group whose existence and influence was nonetheless significant for the well-being of the community. They occupy most of the intellectual landscape in which this portrait of Donne is set, and to that landscape we now turn.

⁵ Elsie McCutcheon, *Bury St Edmund's, Historic Town*, (Bury St Edmund's: Alastair Press, 1987), p.110.

THE INTELLECTUAL LANDSCAPE

Among those who will be introduced in this thesis – men of letters, politicians, churchmen – drawn from the middle or higher social classes, a not surprising congruity of cultural outlook existed. Most of them had attended public schools, followed by a university education, based on a curriculum predominantly classical and mathematical. Many of them continued the academic life as college fellows. Their intellectual pursuits and social concern led them to wonder about the calibre of the country's political leadership, and the possibility and necessity of calling to account those who exercised it. Accordingly, an old question became of current importance.

Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

'Who oversees the overseers?' is the question which occupied the minds and writings of those who will attract our attention. At home and abroad. political unrest led to a desire for relating the conduct of rulers to those fundamental principles which should, but did not always, determine their activities. Were there any, and if so, who were they, to whom the guidance of leaders could be entrusted? And how could such guidance be given?

A useful way into this area is provided by an examination of Knights's exhaustive study of the idea of 'clerisy' in the nineteenth century.⁶ The concept, which Knights believes to emerged from the aftermath of the French revolution,⁷ attempted to describe a category of persons, distinct and remote from the political rulers, whose values would nevertheless legitimately guide and influence those rulers. The borrowing

⁶ Ben Knights, *The Idea of Clerisy in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1978).

⁷ Knights, *op. cit.*, p.4.

of the term from ecclesiastical usage was not accidental, and in Coleridge, its earliest English proponent, was interchangeable with 'church', though in a sense to be explored.

His vision was of a 'clerk', or 'man of letters', who would see, hold to and propagate eternal values, unknown to or ignored by the rest of society. There is a class implication in the vision; not a social class as economically defined, but an elite – the clerisy – distinct from all others by virtue of this capacity for concentrating on higher concerns and verities. Knights states the importance of this capacity by his repeated [mis]quotation of the adage 'Where there is no vision, the people perish' (Proverbs 29.28). Interestingly, there is another Biblical statement which bears on the adage and its application. It is found in an editorial gloss in I Samuel 9.9 – 'He that is now called a prophet was aforetime called a seer'. The sequence is one not only of nomenclature, but of procedure. Before a man can prophesy, i.e., proclaim, he must first see, i.e., have something to proclaim. The prophet first sees that which is hidden from the generality of men and then shares it with them. This is precisely the concept to the delineation and advancement of which Coleridge gave voice.

Devoutly, if not conventionally, religious, and committed to maintaining and defending the status of the Church of England, he sought to substantiate the right of the clergy to direct both morals and politics. Although the idea of the clerisy was not fully developed until Coleridge's later years, Knights states that

From an early age he looked to an elite to purify and revive society, hoping that he himself might play such a mediating part, and developed a theory in which speculative philosophy was essential to the cultivation, ultimately even to the existence, of the nation...Historically, the church had provided a home for the national clerisy. This held advantages for men of letters, and even by the time of writing the *Biographia* he was observing that 'the church presents to every man of learning and genius a profession in which he may cherish a rational hope of being able to unite the widest schemes of literary utility with the strictest performance of professional duties' (*Biographia Literaria*, I, 11).⁸

In such works as *Lay Sermons* and *Constitution of the Church and State* Coleridge expounded the clerisy theme, influencing both contemporaries and some who followed later.

⁸ Knights, *op. cit.*, p.63.

One such was John Stuart Mill, whose own father had proposed to replace the Church of England by a secular church, with the object of promoting adult and communal education – ‘there would be a clergyman in each conveniently-sized district, called a parish, with a bishop or “inspector” over groups of such clergy’.⁹ His son’s estimate of Coleridge, in an article first published six years after the poet’s death, contains two eulogies often quoted with approval:

Every Englishman of the present day is...either a Benthamite or a Coleridgean...

As a philosopher, the class of thinkers has scarcely yet arisen by whom he is to be judged¹⁰

Let Augustine Birrell speak for the many who concurred with Mill’s verdict:

These quotations suffice to show that, in his opinion, Coleridge was not merely an influential and suggestive writer, but a great thinker, destined to engage the concentrated attention of students for long years to come.¹¹

While addressing Mill’s work, Knights broadens the examination of clerisy, for there are obvious and important differences between the stance of Mill and that of other thinkers to be considered, which Knights acknowledges:

It has long been recognised that although he [Mill] stands in a different tradition from that represented by Coleridge, Carlyle and, to some extent, Arnold, his speculative ambit overlapped with theirs.¹²

Like many thinkers of his day, Mill was enormously attracted and influenced by Goethe, whose significance for the work of those here under review cannot be overemphasised. The principle of utilitarianism to which Mill was committed led him to test all literary activity by the canon of its efficacy in promoting the common good. Declaring the need for conformity to ‘a common system of opinions, he stated that

In order that mankind should conform to any set of opinions, those opinions must exist, must be believed by them. And thus, the state of speculative faculties, the character of propositions assented to by the intellect, essentially determines the moral and political state of the community.¹³

⁹ James Mill, ‘The State of the Nation’ and ‘The Reform of the Church’, (*London Review* I, 1835).

¹⁰ J S Mill, ‘Coleridge’, in *Dissertations and Discussions*, (London: 1846).

¹¹ Augustine Birrell, ‘Samuel Taylor Coleridge’, in *More Obiter Dicta*, (London: Heinemann, 1927) p.17.

¹² Knights, *op. cit.*, p.140.

¹³ J S Mill, *System of Logic*, (London: 1861), II, p.516.

He had little faith in the corporate wisdom of contemporary society:

The natural tendency of...modern civilisation is towards collective mediocrity: and this tendency is increased by all reductions and extensions of the franchise, their effect being to place the principal power in the hands of classes more and more below the highest level of instruction in the community.¹⁴

Mill was no more an advocate of unbridled democracy than were the others here discussed (nor, for that matter, Donne himself, as we shall see). Classicists all, Coleridge pre-eminent among them in this respect, they had more than a touch of sympathy with Plato's belief (stated most clearly in *The Republic*) that the existence of a subordinate or slave class was inevitable for the realisation of good social conditions. For Mill, the dilemma was that of providing a platform for the masses to protest against the tyranny of the ruling classes while, at the same time, ensuring that those same masses would actually understand and have a preferable alternative programme to offer. For the encouragement and realisation of this, a clerisy of informed and enlightened tutors was required. The clerisy should have – for Mill was always concerned to translate his philosophical ideals into political reality – a higher degree of franchise power than the unenlightened they sought to serve. His *Representative Government*, therefore, argued for a modification of Thomas Hare's proportional voting scheme, which would have created electoral assemblies from all classes. It was his hope that many would become 'more accessible to all truth by making them more open-minded'.¹⁵

The adjective 'seminal' is often overly and inappropriately used of writers and thinkers, but with reference to Coleridge and his concept of a clerisy, it is entirely warranted. He not only gave England the word, he planted an idea which was to be cultivated, albeit also modified, by many who, with or without acknowledgement, owed part of their own vision to him. Among them, along with J S Mill, and given more extended treatment by Knights than is possible here, were Carlyle, Matthew Arnold and Mark Pattison.

¹⁴ J S Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government*, (London: 1861), p.265.

¹⁵ H Elliot (ed.), *Letters of John Stuart Mill*, 2 vols. (London: 1910), II, p.223.

In *On Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History*, six lectures delivered in May 1840, Carlyle devoted Lecture V to 'The Hero as Man of Letters'. Although he did not use Coleridge's term, he saw his man of letters (paradigmatically himself) as an upholder of ultimate values, moral commentator on his age and spirited, fearless castigator of all which seemed to him at variance with the divine will.

Carlyle's other heroes – divine, prophet, priest, king – have existed throughout recorded history: the man of letters, however, is a new phenomenon:

He is new, I say; he has hardly lasted above a century in the world yet. Never, till about a hundred years ago, was there seen any figure of a Great Soul living apart in that anomalous manner; endeavouring to speak-forth the inspiration that was in him by Printed books, and find place and subsistence by what the world would please to give him for doing that.¹⁶

The man of letters is to be 'regarded as our most important modern person...He, such as he may be, is the soul of all'. As has often been observed, and hinted at above, there is an autobiographical element in much of Carlyle's writing, nowhere more apparent than in this lecture. Like his creation, and in emulation of his own hero, Goethe, he strove for a continuous process of *Bildung* [formation/education] into that position of spiritual authority which would authenticate and command respect for his views. After Goethe's death, eight years before delivering the *Heroes* lectures, Carlyle sought to adopt the stance of the one to whom he had once written

If I have been delivered from darkness into any measure of light, if I know aught of myself and my duties and destination, it is to the study of your writings more than to any other circumstance that I owe this; it is you more than any other man that I should always thank and reverence with the feeling of a Disciple to his Master, nay, of a Son to his Spiritual father.¹⁷

With Goethe and Coleridge, Carlyle affirmed the primacy of the man of letters over the ostensible 'rulers' of society:

Literature is fast becoming all in all to us; our Church, our Senate, our whole Social Constitution. The true Pope of Christendom is not that feeble old man in Rome; nor is its Autocrat the Napoleon, the Nicholas, with his half-million even of obedient bayonets; such Autocrat is himself but a more cunningly devised bayonet and military engine in the hands of a mightier than he. The true Autocrat

¹⁶ Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, (London: Dent, Everyman's Library edition, repr. 1973), p.383.

¹⁷ C E Norton (ed.), *Correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle*, (London: 1877) p.279.

and pope is that man, the real or seemingly Wisest of the past age; crowned after death; who finds his hierarchy of gifted Authors, his clergy of assiduous journalists...¹⁸

In Carlyle, faith in the ultimate power of literature to effect change alternated with despair over its current low esteem, reflecting his personal fortunes as a writer, at once the acknowledged sage and the unwanted *enfant terrible* of literary society.

By Matthew Arnold, the clerisy notion is developed along similar lines to those of both Coleridge and Carlyle, though with his own distinctive slant:

If we are to derive comfort from the doctrine of the *remnant* (and there is great comfort to be derived from it), we must hold fast to the austere but true doctrine as to what really governs politics, overrides with an inexorable fatality the combinations of the so-called politicians, and saves or destroys states. Having in mind things true, elevated, things just, things pure, things amiable, things of good report; having these in mind, studying and loving these, is what saves states.¹⁹

The second sentence quoted above reveals the son of a clerical father (it paraphrases Philippians 4.8); a son who, in *Essays in Criticism* (1865), *Culture and Anarchy* (essays collected in 1869 from the *Cornhill Magazine*), *St Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873) and *God and the Bible* (1875), expounded his own version of a new hierarchy of culture and morals (i.e., a clerisy) by which mankind would be saved.

Unlike his father, the poet of *Dover Beach* could no longer subscribe to the traditional dogma of the church, but believed that what that church had contributed was still needed, and had to be supplied. His sadness at the ebbing of the sea of faith was paralleled by an optimism concerning the ability of wise men to influence for good the course of human affairs.

Arnold's preaching was timely, and though his panacea of 'culture' provoked not a few sceptical smiles, he served the cause of true progress by turning, to use his own words, a stream of free thought upon our stock notions and habits.²⁰

¹⁸ Thomas Carlyle, 'Historic Survey of German Poetry' (1831), in *Complete Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. H D Traill, 30 vols., (London: 1995-9) XXVII, p.337.

¹⁹ Matthew Arnold, *Discourses on America*, (London: Macmillan, 1896²), pp. 31-32.

²⁰ E Dowden, 'Matthew Arnold', in *Chamber's Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, (London/Edinburgh: Chambers. 1938), III, p.594.

Biblically literate as Arnold was, a key doctrine in his cultural crusade was that of the remnant. Deriving the term from the prophet Isaiah, it was for him a description of the 'saviour of the nation'. Small, often despised, the remnant of the intelligentsia would ultimately prevail over the apathy and hostility of the majority, a majority which was, in his view, 'unsound'.²¹

Knights opens up the clerisy theme even more by using Mark Pattison and John Henry Newman to examine the nature of a university.

In the mid-nineteenth century, concern over Oxford and Cambridge led to a major appraisal of the justification of universities as educational institutions, resulting in both internal initiatives and external legislation to secure it. It will shortly be seen that the existence of the Cambridge 'Apostles', so important for Donne, was a direct outcome of this concern.

Newman needs only a mention here, though his writing and speaking were, of course, profoundly influential, both in church and university circles. His lectures on *The Idea of a University*, and the unhappy attempt to create a Catholic university in Ireland (of which he was briefly rector), have been well examined by MacHugh and others.²²

Pattison deserves notice as one who believed that a university best served society by pursuing its own scholarly interests. Initially supporting the tutorial system against the professorial (though he later changed his position), he did so on the grounds that it was that [system] 'which aims at disciplining the faculties, and basing the thoughts on the permanent ideas proper to the human reason'.²³ Contrasting the efficacy of the university professorial system ('this lecture-room polish') with the 'much more athletic discipline of our old grammar-school system', he declared, 'Each system has its own place; they should not be rivals, the one for the mass of the people, the other for a cultivated *clerisy* [his italics].

In Knights's survey of nineteenth-century writers, the names of six 'Apostles' appear, all of whom, in different ways, contributed to or were affected by the concept of the clerisy.

²¹ Matthew Arnold, 'Numbers; or, The Majority and the Remnant' in *Discourses in America*, (London: Macmillan, 1896²), p.9.

²² R J MacHugh, *Newman on University Education*, (Dublin: 1944).

²³ Mark Pattison, *Evidence given to the Royal Commission on Oxford*, 1850.

F W Farrar, schoolmaster, cleric and eventual Dean of Canterbury, edited *Essays on a Liberal Education* (1867). Half the contributions to the book are defensive of the role of the classics in the preparation of a clerisy, though a very different view was contributed by Sidgwick, mentioned below. The same applies to F J A Hort, whose essay on Coleridge appeared in *Cambridge Essays Contributed by Members of the University* (1856), in the wake of the Royal Commission. F D Maurice receives two mentions, the first for his novel, *Eustace Conway*, which influenced Carlyle's thinking about the duties to society of educated young men; the second for his influence on J S Mill. Henry Sidgwick, fellow of Trinity, Cambridge, was a critic of *Culture and Anarchy*, in which he thought Arnold to have been too dismissive of the 'interiority' of culture. A pioneer of higher education for women, he also strongly denied the claim that the classics had an exclusive place in the intellectual formation of the young. James Fitzjames Stephen, judge and journalist (an unusual combination) receives mention for his *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* (1873). John Sterling was the subject of the famous biography by Carlyle. Through Sterling's story Carlyle illustrated what he wanted to say about spiritual authority, the role of the Church of England, and the aspirations and duties of all earnest souls – all clerisy themes:

In Sterling's Writings and Actions, were they capable of being well read, we consider that there is for all true hearts, and especially for young noble seekers, and strivers towards what is highest, a mirror in which some shadow of themselves and of their immeasurable complex arena will profitably present itself.²⁴

It should be remembered that Sterling was both a Cambridge contemporary and fellow-Apostle of Donne, who later joined the club Sterling formed on similar lines.

Specific evidence of Donne's commitment to the clerisy concept is minimal, but of some interest. Five years after Coleridge's death, he wrote the review article noticed in 'On Poetry and Poets'. It concentrated on the poet's literary achievements and merit, with no use of the term 'clerisy', and perhaps only an implied reference:

²⁴ Thomas Carlyle, *Life of John Sterling*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1851), p.344.

It forms no part of our present design to enter into the merits of Coleridge's philosophy as a science and a system, further than it has been made *publici juris* in his prose works from the 'Friend' to the 'Church and State'.²⁵

That he had, however, for some time been aware both of the concept and of the terminology is revealed from two sources. Among the *Johnson Papers* is a bound volume of miscellaneous pamphlets, one of which, dated 1832, is an address²⁶ given in that year by J H Green 'at the commencement of the medical session' of King's College, London. The author, who was professor of surgery at King's, pays tribute to Coleridge's *Church and State*, on which his own reasonings [on education] are based, and devotes the first two pages to an exposition of the concept of clerisy. No personal connection between Green and Donne has been traced, and it may reasonably be assumed that it is the content of the pamphlet which has caused its preservation in the collection.

The second source is a letter²⁷ to Donne from John Mitchell Kemble, soliciting his friend's contributions to the *British & Foreign Review*, the editorship of which Kemble had just taken over. Showing a greater affinity with James Mill and his desire for a secular clerisy than with Arnold, who would utilise the Anglican clergy, he writes that 'Education must be taken out of the hands of the parsons, till the parsons are educated for their task of educating others. The *clerisy* [Kemble's italics] of the land must no longer be the parsonry of the land'.

In a most remarkable letter to Trench, written at the age of twenty-three, Donne reveals an attitude to education in general and his own auto-didacticism in particular, in which self-interest and the altruism of clerisy advocates seem to war against each other:

Every year, I may say, each month, I feel the incumbency upon all whose eyes are opened to the true end of self-cultivation, to be more and more painstaking in ascertaining what education is proper to themselves...and steadily to accomplish it, without reference to the outward world...The early years of life, from the time we perceive the errors of our schooling, often a late hour in the day, are not more than enough to perfect the work of our own culture, and to lay up the vital and fruitful treasures of imbibed wisdom...Therefore I do not consider an intellectual life misspent even if we do not impress ourselves on the world more immediately than thro the speculations of a scholar...Learning, and our own culture, in

²⁵ WBD, 'The Life and Writings of Coleridge', in *British & Foreign Review*, April 1839, 414-451.

²⁶ J H Green, 'An Address delivered in King's College, London...(London: Fellowes, 1832). *JP*, 'Pamphlets'.

²⁷ J M Kemble > WBD, 21 September 1836. *JP*. See below, p.27.

themselves are self-recompensing...they are twofold in their aims...They first instruct the spirit of the possessor with the strength of knowledge manifold, and if indeed his be a vigorous and cheerful spirit, they bear a second fruitage for the good and delectation of others.²⁸

Five months later he was urging Trench to take up his pen, *pro bono publico*:

In intellectual duties, as well as in moral, 'the day is far spent and the night is at hand'; for if we progress in indifference to books and grave thoughts and careful composition, at the same rate of declination as for the last twenty years, it needs neither ghost nor prophet to tell us, that a strong and manifold and fructifying literature will quite expire²⁹

To which Trench responded in equally lugubrious terms:

Do you share in the general despondency of wise and good men at the present aspect of the world?...All that remains is the inner sanctuary (I do not mean the Church of England but the *ecclesia*); and when that is profaned, as I trust it never will, we shall hear the voices of our departing angels.³⁰

He, at least, has chosen a path of public service, in the ministry of the church. Donne, at this stage, is more selfishly inclined:

I find in all history and in all experience of time and self, a motive to rest and dwelling apart. You incline to the arena. If, after a life of intellectual labour and seclusion, I were not to write a single line, or search a single fact, yet had attained the end of self-cultivation, the moral and mental energy within, I have run my race of being well, and touched the goal. I desire no better epitaph than 'sibi et litteris sese dedit'.

Throughout his writings, Donne displays an ambivalence between the dictates of his character and personality, which led him to favour a retiring and selfish preoccupation with the satisfaction of his intellectual appetite, and the reluctant acceptance of a social duty, to take his stance alongside those whose concerns and values were his own. Both desires would be aroused and strengthened by his time at Cambridge, to which we now turn.

²⁸ WBD > R C Trench, 13 July 1831, *JP*.

²⁹ WBD > R C Trench, 8 December 1831, *JP*

³⁰ R C Trench > WBD, 6 December 1831, *JP*.

CAMBRIDGE AND THE 'APOSTLES'

In May 1824, two months before his seventeenth birthday, Donne was admitted as a pensioner to Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge, being awarded a scholarship the following year. Caius was the college of which his father had been a scholar and, briefly, a fellow, and though two of his three sons would belong to other Cambridge colleges (the third went into the army), a grandson would also be a Caian.

Cambridge University in 1824 was ripe for reform on many fronts, though none would come about with any statutory force until much later. As early as 1765, for example, a campaign had been mounted to allow college fellows to marry, but it came to nothing until the following century. An even more contentious issue was the move to admit dissenters to university degrees, also an eighteenth century concern. 'A few years later [than 1765] the university was called upon to discuss a proposal to throw open its degrees to persons not in communion with the Church of England',³¹ a proposal still before the authorities in Donne's day and later (pp. 21-2 *infra*).

The area of concern most consequential for the 1820s and later, however, was that of the university curriculum. Traditionally, students had been taught and examined in two fields only, mathematics and the classics. The former produced, as its most accomplished scholars, the 'Wranglers' and the latter, the 'Senior Classics'. The received wisdom, for which there is much support, is that it was dissatisfaction with this restricted diet which had led, shortly before Donne's arrival, to the foundation of the 'Cambridge Conversazione Society', better known as 'The Apostles'. However, to

³¹ D A Winstanley, *Unreformed Cambridge*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1935), p.301.

balance this view of the curriculum, before discussing the Society, it should be recorded that F D Maurice, writing to his mother on his arrival at Cambridge in October 1823, appears both to be aware of the criticism and to discount it. He is commending one of his lecturers, Julius Hare, for the breadth of his approach, which may not, of course, have been typical:

I am particularly pleased with his manner, especially that of recommending books bearing upon the subject in question, but out of the regular College routine...So false is the general opinion that the English Universities have a regular coach-road system, out of which their members are not for an instant allowed to deviate under penalty of life and limb.³²

The Apostles

Be that as it may, the general dissatisfaction mentioned above was certainly responsible for a most consequential creation, that of the Conversazione Society. Founded in 1820 by George Tomlinson (later to become Bishop of Gibraltar) and a number of other members of St John's College, and self-selecting in membership, it sought to supplement the restricted formal university studies by discussions (not debates) based on wide-ranging papers read by members, usually in their rooms. Those attending, usually on Saturday nights, were refreshed by anchovies on toast. Soon becoming known as the 'Apostles', probably because of its original, and largely continuing number of active members, the society has been the subject of at least four major studies, of varying quality.³³ Its impact on the lives and intellects of its members has been acknowledged by many of them, as revealed in the books listed below (n.33). One typical

³² Frederick Maurice, [son], ed. *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, Chiefly Told in his own Letters*, 2 vols., (London: Macmillan, 1884), I. p.48.

³³ Frances M Brookfield, *The Cambridge "Apostles"*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Co. Ltd., 1906). Written by the widow of a Cambridge man, not himself an Apostle, it gives pen-portraits of a dozen early members. Some inaccuracies.

Peter Allen, *The Cambridge Apostles, The Early Years*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1978). Deals with 1820 (foundation year) – 1834. Appendix of members. Excellent.

Richard Deacon, *The Cambridge Apostles: a history of Cambridge University's elite intellectual secret society*, (London: Robert Royce Ltd., 1985). Appendix of members. Light, but the only one to treat of all the Apostles to date of writing.

W C Lubenow, *The Cambridge Apostles 1820-1914: liberalism, imagination and friendship in British intellectual and professional life*, Cambridge: CUP, 1998). Appendix of members. Magisterial. Easily the best for the period covered.

v. also Paul Levy, *G E Moore and the Cambridge Apostles*, (New York: Holt, Rhinehart & Winstone, 1979). Appendix of members.

tribute comes in a pamphlet from the pen of Connop Thirlwall, fellow of Trinity and Bishop of St David's:

There has long existed in this place [Cambridge University] a society of young men...in which all subjects of the highest interest, without any exclusion of those connected with religion, are discussed with the most perfect freedom.³⁴

Interestingly, in the copy of the pamphlet which was examined, the passage quoted is surrounded by a marginal gloss on the subject of the Apostles, probably by John Mitchell Kemble, which contains a description of the procedure by which members were elected, and ends:

No society ever existed in which more freedom of thought was found, consistent with the most perfect affection between the members; or in which a more complete tolerance of the most opposite opinions prevailed. I shall say nothing of what the former and actual members of that Society have done, but very few of the distinguished Cambridge men of our time have not been members of it; and it existed to remedy a fault of our University education. Its business was to make men study and think in all matters except Mathematics and Classics, professionally considered. Its metaphysical tendency has altered, first in Trinity, the system of University examination itself. The affectionate intercourse of that brotherhood, which continues to subsist in all our altered conditions, is the basis on which some of my most valued friendships have been founded. To my education given in that Society, I feel that I owe every power that I possess, and the rescuing myself from a ridiculous state of prejudice and prepossessions with which I came armed to Cambridge. From the "Apostles" I, at least, first learned to think as a free man.

This is a useful corrective to the scorn expressed in an article which would be written forty years later:

out of ...the club or society called 'The Apostles', which boasts of having worked wonders in the domains of thought and imagination. It may lay claim to a man of genius or two, and several men of talent, as having belonged to the fraternity; but as regards national thought or progress, its annals might be cut out of the intellectual history of England without being missed.³⁵

W D Christie, author of a withering reply to the above dismissal,³⁶ valued the contribution made by the Apostles to the development of its members.

Some fifteen generations of young "Apostles" have passed from college to life. A few have gained eminence, several distinction. The just pride of members of the Society in the fame of its greater ornaments cannot surely be proscribed by the most cynical. Within the Society itself there is no hierarchy of greatness. All are friends. Those who have been contemporaries meet through life as brothers. All, old and young, have a bond of sympathy in fellow-membership.

³⁴ Connop Thirlwall, , *A Letter to the Rev. Thomas Turton DD...on the Admission of Dissenters to Academical Degrees*. 21 May 1834. London Library, Pamphlets 105, 6. 40.

³⁵ 'The Judges of England', in *Fraser's Magazine*, LXX, (July 1864), 96.

³⁶ W D Christie, 'The Cambridge Apostles', in *Macmillan's Magazine*, XI, (November 1864), 18-25.

Tributes such as these of Christie and Kemble abound, and are reinforced by the structured continuance of fellowship after Cambridge days. On going down, Apostles 'took wings' and became 'angels', with continuing privileges of membership but no requirement of attendance at the regular Saturday night sessions. Annual dinners were held in London, to one of which Donne refers in a letter of 1851 to R C Trench:

I must be in London in June as I am to be, I fancy, Chairman at the Pan Apostolicon. This is Spedding and Thompson's doing for which may Lucifer requite them. I cannot say unluckily that "I am unaccustomed", etc., since it has been my evil lot to be Chairman sundry times: but I had rather address a Norwich mob than the "Apostles", not that I mean to compare them, but the latter are so formidable.³⁷

This particular occasion was recorded by the Biblical scholar F J A Hort:

I left Cambridge on Wednesday afternoon (June 1851) and then went down to Blackwall and there had a most pleasant dinner with the Apostles old and new. Donne of Bury St Edmund's was President, and I, as junior member, Vice-President. Maurice, Alford, Thompson, F. Lushington, Tom Taylor, James Spedding, Blakesley, Venables, etc., were there. Monckton Milnes and Trench were unable to come.³⁸

Nearly two decades after he had gone down, Trench himself was to write of the invitations he was still receiving,

I received an announcement from Milnes this morning of the Apostolical Dinner fixed for next Friday, Alas, for our churchmanship – Friday!! However, it is not that which has deterred me from making one, but the being unable at the present moment to afford either the time or money.³⁹

There is little doubt that to be an Apostle was regarded as a privilege and a boon by most of them, though Alfred Tennyson (elected 1829) treated the responsibilities lightly, failing to deliver his required papers and resigning, or being expelled,⁴⁰ only to be restored on the initiative of F J A Hort in 1855 as an honorary member. This restoration, based on the realisation that Tennyson, as a poet, found it difficult and

³⁷ WBD > R C Trench, May 1851, *JP*, quoted in *Friends*, p.185.

³⁸ *Life & Letters of F J A Hort DD, DCL*, edited by his son. (London: Macmillan, 1896).

³⁹ R C Trench > WBD, 8 June 1841, *JP*.

⁴⁰ According to Fitzjames Stephen, the poet 'was turned out because he was so incurably lazy that he could not be got to write essays in his turn'. Fitzjames Stephen's *Autobiography*, Stephen Papers, Add. 7349/19/38. Found in W C Lubenow, , *The Cambridge Apostles*, p.45; but see also R B Martin, *Tennyson; The Unquiet Heart* , (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p.89 for a different version of events.

unattractive to attempt prose writing, allowed him to join the ranks of the 'angels'.

Apostles will re-emerge throughout this thesis, as one and another of them plays his part in Donne's story. From life-long intimate friends, such as J M Kemble and James Spedding, to those who found themselves on the selection panel which appointed him to the London Library (below, pp. 41-2) or who, as editors, furthered his literary career, this network within what Noel Annan and others have referred to as 'the intellectual aristocracy'⁴¹ was one of the most influential groupings of the nineteenth century. It still exists today.

Donne was elected an Apostle in 1827, which meant that he had only one year of active membership, for at the end of the Michaelmas term 1828, he went down without graduating. The reason was the requirement for Cambridge graduands to declare that they acknowledged the ecclesiastical supremacy of the Crown and subscribed to the tenet that both the Prayer Book and the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England were agreeable to the word of God. This Donne was unwilling to do, though no record survives of his reasoning. The requirement of subscription at Cambridge could be said to be less demanding than that at Oxford, where it came, as a condition of entry. at the beginning of a student's career.. When Thomas Hughes's 'Tom Brown' began his undergraduate days, he

...received a summons from the authorities, and went up to matriculate at St. Ambrose's College, Oxford. He presented himself at the college one afternoon, and was examined by one of the tutors, who carried him, and several other youths in like predicament, up to the Senate House the next morning. Here they went through the usual forms of subscribing to the articles, and otherwise testifying their loyalty to the established order of things, without much thought, perhaps, but in very good faith nevertheless.⁴²

Reflection on his own need to subscribe on entering Oxford gave rise to F D Maurice's pamphlet *Subscription No Bondage*.⁴³ The

⁴¹ Noel Annan, 'The Intellectual Aristocracy', in *Studies in Social History*, ed. J H Plumb, (1955). Annan cites George Meredith as one of the earliest to use the expression. Paul Levy, *G E Moore and the Cambridge Apostles*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979), pp.19-27.

⁴² Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown at Oxford*, (1861), *Introductory*.

⁴³ The full title, indicating Maurice's line of defence, is *Subscription No Bondage, or the Practical Advantages Afforded by the Thirty-Nine Articles as Guides in All the Branches of Academical Education. With an Introductory Letter on the Declaration which it is Proposed to substitute for Subscription to the Articles at Matriculation*. By Rusticus.

issue of subscription was to be pivotal to Donne's future career, and it is worthwhile examining it, as a phenomenon of the age, in some detail, prefacing such examination with references to his own situation. In the month following his withdrawal, Kemble wrote from Trinity College, replying to a letter of explanation Donne had apparently written [letter not traced]

Your determination has been a matter of great concern to your friends here, as it involves the certainty that many of them have parted from you for a long period, perhaps for ever [the annual dinners had not yet begun]...I shewed your letter both to Trench and Blakesley. From the first I have no concealments, and will you let me confess it, I thought your letter too honourable to yourself, too characteristic of your own excellent and manly spirit, to deny myself the gratification of imparting to the second some of the admiration which I felt for you.⁴⁴

Without denying Donne's "excellent and manly spirit", it should be noted that by 1837 he was wanting to return to Cambridge, declaring

I am thinking of going up to Cambridge in October and taking my B.A. degree; it will be more respectable than I am now, and though I could wish in spite of Maurice, that subscription were done away with, I think much more respectfully of the XXXIX than when I absconded – and would sign them even if they were forty.⁴⁵

It is not clear what brought on this change of heart, or mind, and the reference is sufficiently flippant to support doubt as to whether there had been a theological conversion. In June 1837, Donne was just beginning his sustained writing career. He had only four articles already published (in 1829) and two more were with a publisher. Did he feel the need of academic credentials ('it will be more respectable than now') for the type of contribution he hoped to make, or was it the desire to re-enter the Cambridge society which he had all too briefly enjoyed a decade earlier? Whatever the motivation, it was not to be, and despite exploring housing in Cambridge for himself and his family (including his mother), the onset of the illness which would beset his wife until her death six years later, brought the project to an end, never to be revived.

⁴⁴ J M Kemble > WBD, 13 January [1829], *Friends*, p.1.

⁴⁵ WBD > R C Trench, June 1837, *Friends*, pp.32-3.

His oblique reference to Maurice's pamphlet (he had asked Trench in 1835 how to obtain a copy), opens up the issue of subscription at Cambridge,⁴⁶ which now calls for a brief examination.

Subscription

Although the requirement is not to be found in the Elizabethan statutes under which Cambridge University had been governed since 1570, the growth of Puritanism demanded it, and by the ecclesiastical Canon 36 of 1604 all lecturers and readers of divinity, as well as all persons admitted to holy orders, were obliged to make a threefold subscription, declaring the sovereign to be the supreme governor of the Church of England, and the Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles to be in accordance with the word of God.

At that time, the declaration of supremacy, made at the time of graduation, was all that was required for admission to a degree. In 1613, however, James I demanded of the university Vice-Chancellor that a grace be passed requiring the threefold subscription before the award of a degree. It was passed, and this was still the situation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, though there had been various attempts in the preceding six decades to remove the requirement. It affected F D Maurice notably, and Donne less publicly, but just as consequentially. For Maurice, it led to a change of career; for Donne, to the abandonment of what would, in all likelihood, have been the life of a successful Cambridge don.

Maurice, a brilliant scholar, read law at Trinity Hall, having migrated from Trinity (as did John Sterling). Having discovered that subscription would be necessary in order to obtain the degree for which he had qualified in 1827 with first class honours, he immediately requested that his name be removed from the College books, as he could never conscientiously subscribe. He did, however, leave with a degree in civil law, for which acceptance of the Act of Supremacy alone was required. Three years later, he had changed his position and went up to Oxford

⁴⁶ For information on the history of subscription I am indebted to D A Winstanley, *Unreformed Cambridge*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1935), pp.301-6.

(subscribing on admission, as had Tom Brown), prior to his ordination to the priesthood in 1834. At the invitation of some of the 'Oxford party' [later known as 'The Oxford Movement'], from whom he would eventually part company, he wrote the pamphlet *Subscription No Bondage*. It attempted to justify the somewhat casuistical position that to subscribe was only to accept that the Anglican tenets were the framework within which university teaching took place. He had startled his friend Acland, a fellow of All Souls, by telling him that he looked on subscription as a defence of liberty.

The pamphlet produced no great furore,⁴⁷ but was welcomed by, among others, Sterling, whose candid criticism included the pertinent observation

There is not a word in it bearing in the least on the point at issue, viz., whether the undergraduates ought to be made to subscribe what they have never been taught to understand.⁴⁸

Maurice was too rigorous a thinker, however, to be able to hold to the absurdity of his original position indefinitely, and in later life he acknowledged subscription to be, indeed, a bondage. A retrospect of the matter was conveyed in a lengthy letter to his son, written in 1871.⁴⁹

For Donne, as we have seen, recantation, however deep or shallow, led to no such resumption of university life.

Although his time at Cambridge ended so disappointingly, his period of residence (6 May 1824-Christmas 1828) was highly significant for his future, not only in building on those foundations of classical scholarship which Dr Malkin had laid at the Bury St Edmund's school, but in the introduction to so many men with whom his life would thereafter be inextricably involved. As well as Maurice, he was contemporary with, or overlapped as an undergraduate, the Romilly brothers, Edward and Henry; John Sterling; John Mitchell Kemble, his oldest and dearest friend; the Buller brothers, Charles and Arthur; J W Blakesley, future Dean of Lincoln; Robert Tennant; James Spedding; Richard Monckton Milnes, later

⁴⁷ Olive J Brose, *Frederick Denison Maurice; Rebellious Conformist*, (Ohio University Press, 1971), p.116.

⁴⁸ Trench, *Letters*, I. p.201.

⁴⁹ Frederick Maurice, [son], *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice, Chiefly Told in his own Letters*, 2 vols., (London: Macmillan, 1884), I. Ch.xii.

Lord Houghton; Spencer Walpole; and R C Trench, future Archbishop of Dublin. His former schoolmate, Sydney Gedge, was a Cambridge fellow at the time, as was another 'Bury boy', B J Kennedy, future Regius Professor of Greek; Frederick Malkin, a son of his former headmaster, became a fellow of Trinity in 1825. With all of these, to a greater or lesser extent, William maintained contact and, as will be seen, mutual benefit ensued. For the time being, however, it was a return to the sleepy hollow of Mattishall, though at least two rude awakenings would quickly disturb its peace – marriage, and the Torrijos affair.

THE NORFOLK YEARS

Returning, then, to life with mother, Donne began to form the habit of serious and systematic reading which would remain with him for life. Almost immediately, at the invitation of its editor, John Sterling – not the only Apostolic editor to give him work – he wrote for the *Athenæum* four articles which launched his literary career. ‘Montaigne’, ‘The Hebrew Poets’, ‘Burton’ and, pre-eminently, ‘Sir Thomas Browne’, were well received. ‘Sterling...flattered me into sending sundry articles for his insertion; and accordingly, I acted as resurrection man to “Browne”, “Burton” and “Montaigne”’.⁵⁰

A weightier matter than authorship, however, was pressing on him, and leads to an intriguing conjecture on the part of one of his great-grand-daughters. Was romance, not remonstrance, the reason for his leaving Cambridge? Following parental example, he had long loved a cousin, Catharine (‘Kitty’) Hewitt, ten years his senior, and learned that in his absence at university, she was being wooed by the curate of nearby Dereham, The Reverend George Harvey. Though no documentation has been traced, and though his marriage to Catharine did not take place until two years after his coming down, ‘Aunt Mary’⁵¹ suggests that fear of losing her, allied to his dislike for mathematics (half the Cambridge staple diet), led to his abandoning his course.

He had hardly established himself back in Norfolk before world events made their impact on him and on some of his closest friends.

⁵⁰ WBD > Trench, undated, endorsed ‘December 1829’. *JP*

⁵¹ Catherine Mary Barham Johnson, great-grandchild of WBD, compiler of a Donne pedigree, annexed to *Friends*.

The year 1830 brought with it great anxiety to Donne. His two friends, Trench and Kemble, had joined the unfortunate expedition to Spain under General Torrijos, and nothing was heard of them for many months.⁵²

The Torrijos affair was an episode exemplifying (as did the Paget affair years later)⁵³ the idealism of young Englishmen and their willingness to become involved in the European upheavals of their day. Byron, of course, had been another example seven years earlier.

General Torrijos was one of several Spaniards who fled their country when the king set up a despotic government. Arrived in England, and lodging chiefly in Somers Town, they were a familiar sight to Carlyle.

Six and twenty years ago, when I first saw London, I remember those unfortunate Spaniards...Daily in the cold spring air, under skies so unlike their own, you could see a group of fifty or a hundred stately tragic figures...perambulating, mostly with closed lips, the broad pavements of Euston Square and the regions about St Pancras new Church.⁵⁴

John Sterling enthusiastically espoused their cause, collected money from his Apostolic friends, and induced Kemble, Trench and Robert Boyd, a cousin of Trench's, to assist in a landing in Spain, after which the rebels would hope to be joined by a mass uprising.

The whole business went tragically wrong. Inefficiency in the logistics, misleading intelligence concerning the degree of support to be expected, and betrayal, led to the capture of Torrijos, his Spaniards, and Boyd. Trench and Kemble escaped and returned to England, while Boyd, who refused to accompany them, was shot with all the others on the esplanade in Malaga.

Donne was kept *au courant* with affairs, through the correspondence of his friends. In the early days, the histrionic genes of Kemble responded excitedly to the glamour of conspiracy:

...one piece, and that is confidential; that we are on the eve of a vast explosion in Spain, and that arms and ammunition are provided; and that as soon as £5000 can be procured, a rising may be looked for there; and a word in your ear, that the first Constitutional banner that is waved over the Trocadero will have more than one young Englishman among its defenders...Think of Trench, seriously requesting me to give him lessons in the broadsword, and regretting that my

⁵² *Friends*, pp.6-7.

⁵³ Below, pp.159-160.

⁵⁴ Thomas Carlyle, *The Life of John Sterling*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1897) p.66.

Carlyle devotes ch.X of the biography to Torrijos and the vain rebellion.

pistols are not in Cambridge, and that he should be prevented from practising. Conceive that quietest of human beings having become so splendidly ferocious!⁵⁵

Trench is more cautious, and a year later is writing to Donne from Gibraltar in despondent terms:

Should anything very disastrous – I mean should we all be cut off – happen, for God's sake go to London immediately and be with Sterling – I have shuddering apprehensions of how he may receive the news. He will accuse himself as the cause of all.⁵⁶

A month later, Donne married Catherine, and after their wedding on the 15th November 1830, the couple set up home at South Green, with Donne's widowed mother. Eighteen months later (21st May 1832), their first child, Charles Edward, was born, followed by William Mowbray (21st October 1833), Frederick Clench (6th November 1834), Katharine Blanche (24th December 1835) and Valentia (17th October 1838). With at least one probable miscarriage, this relentless frequency of pregnancies, though not uncommon for the times, probably aggravated the poor health which dogged Catherine from the outset of their marriage, and led, in 1843, to her death, after only thirteen years of married life..

The children all play their parts in this narrative, but Catherine remains a shadowy figure, though obviously well-liked by all and certainly sadly missed by William. Letters to Blakesley and Bernard Barton tell their own tale of his bereavement.

Yes, my dear friend, you are quite right in saying that my dear departed Catherine was one to be loved even at first sight. How much she was to be loved is known only to myself, whose affection for her began with our childhood. Her ill-health was the only drawback to as perfectly happy a union as was ever known on this earth; and even ill-health developed qualities in her which unbroken happiness might have concealed.⁵⁷

Left at the age of thirty-six with five small children, he was distraught. Abandoning them to his mother, he travelled for some weeks to see friends like Trench and Kemble, returning from the Isle of Wight, London and Brighton to attend to household concerns in Mattishall. In June 1844, the roof and chimneys of South Green required repair; in September, Charles Edward was sent away to Norwich to a tutor and his sister, Blanche, placed with a Mrs Chapman in the same town; in October,

⁵⁵ J M Kemble > WBD, 13 January 1829, *JP*.

⁵⁶ R C Trench > WBD, 21 October 1830, *JP*.

⁵⁷ WBD > Barton, 5 February 1844, *JP*, quoted in *Friends*, p.79.

Fitzgerald invited him to stay ('I know you are somewhat shy of strangers') and in the same month Trench asked him to be sponsor for the baptism of his new-born daughter. (Trench himself was the godfather of Charles Edward Donne, whom he and Donne often refer to in correspondence as 'our boy').

October of that year occasioned one of Donne's frequent verses to Bernard Barton (*Friends* pp.86-7), concerning a 'great perplexity into which events have plunged' [him]

We have in our hundred of Mitford a foolish society for rewarding the industrious poor. Now in the first place the reward is wrong placed. We remunerate labour but we want employment: and therefore it ought to be a society of the poor for rewarding the employers...In the next place we reward people for bringing up the greatest number of children, whereas we ought to repay those who rear the fewest. My perplexity is this. I am to preside, and distribute the prizes and preach the sermon...I think it would be a novel feature...to speak in the following strain.

Hiram Smith – I do herewith present you with a crown piece
For rearing in your own back-yard a couple of your own geese.
Jonas Rump – you with the hump – come here and take your money;
A sovereign is awarded you for never tasting honey.
Rump, like your bees you sweat and freeze and others reap your labour;
So with your station be content, my very worthy neighbour.
Henry More – afflicted sore of late with corns and bunions,
Has grown upon a rood of land a hundredweight of onions;
It does appear that for next year you've plenty of bread sauce, man,
You'll let your landlord's game alone for all next year of course, man.
Elijah Wigg – your fattest pig is quite beyond rewarding –
But for your next. A sovereign I now am you awarding –
How comes it Wigg, you fat your pig, and are yourself so thin, man;
What I would do, if I were you, I'd with myself begin, man;
Eat bacon once in six weeks and – your wife she'd mend your tackling
You pinch yourself to fat your hams, your sausages and crackling.⁵⁸

In 1836, John Mitchell Kemble had taken over the editorship of the *British and Foreign Review* and wrote immediately to William, soliciting, though with reservations, his contributions to the journal:

I don't know if you see our Review. Bating our poetical taste, which is execrable, and which I mean, as soon as I can, to reform, we are as good, upright and clever, as we are an honest journal...Our foreign information is unrivalled; there is no periodical in Europe which knows so much as we do; no set of men in the world who so uncompromisingly act upon the knowledge they possess; so boldly tell the good and evil of our times, and so determinedly point to the path which Europe must follow if she would regenerate herself. I do not know if you are quite practical enough for us: I mean, whether you have sufficiently bored yourself with the questions of modern politics, to put your shoulder with us, to this spoke of the wheel; but there are many subjects of interest which no man could treat better, or more honestly than yourself, and right glad should I be to receive an article from you upon any such subject. I do not ask you to write about Roman

⁵⁸ WBD > Barton, 21 October [1844]. *Friends*, pp.86-87.

History, because I do not think people care about such matters...it is my opinion that on many matters of home or foreign interest you could produce something which would do us all good.⁵⁹

The offer was taken up, and between 1837 and the demise of the journal in 1844, seventeen articles came from Donne's pen, ranging from poetry reviews (Shelley, Trench, Monckton Milnes) through the history of Jews in Spain and Portugal to histories of the Reformation. The forbidden classical themes were only nudged at in reviews of Bulwer (Lytton)'s *Athens, its Rise and Fall* and Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*. Never was the employment more welcome than in the aftermath of Catharine's death.

She had been godmother to one of Trench's sons, Frederick, and for Christmas, 1844, Donne sent him a Bible as a present

from one, who is now no longer living, from one whom you never saw, from your deceased Godmamma...she every day read in her Bible, and guided herself by it, and although it pleased God to try her even from very early years with many trials, and to make the last years of her life painful and heavy...yet she never murmured nor repined but was always patient...and so I have sent you this book that you may sometimes think of your Godmama [*sic*] and remember what I have told you of her...⁶⁰

The whole lengthy letter is most poignant, revealing Donne's pain as well as a deep Christian faith more firmly held and clearly articulated than that of the Cambridge undergraduate would apparently have been.

By 1845 life was becoming more tolerable. He attended weddings, that of his cousin John Barham Johnson, in January, and that of Blakesley in August. In October he began a new venture, lecturing to the recently established Norwich Athenæum on *Literature as a Pursuit Honourable and Beneficial both to Nations and Individuals*.⁶¹ Though, like his friend, Edward Fitzgerald, he was a reluctant traveller, he did eventually cross the country to address literary and philosophical institutions.

For the short time that he remained in Norfolk, events were unremarkable. In January, the venerable Mrs Bodham (née Anne Donne) died, having, to her immense satisfaction, outlived Thomas Coke of

⁵⁹ J M Kemble > WBD, 21 September 1836, *JP*.

⁶⁰ WBD > Frederick Trench, 23 December 1844. *Friends*, p.88.

⁶¹ Below, pp. 211-212.

Holkham, who introduced Devon and Southdown sheep into the county, thereby incurring Mrs Bodham's wrath:

...One inveterate enemy, indeed, Coke thereby gained. A Norfolk lady, Mrs Bodham, of the most vehement Tory principles...always, to the last days of her life, railed against him on account of his "Whiggish sheep", by the introduction of which into the county, she said, he had completely ruined the flavour of Norfolk mutton!⁶²

Ironically, Donne, her great-nephew, some three years later, '...rendered a notable service ...by composing the fine inscription for the column in Holkham Park erected in honour of Thomas William Coke, Earl of Leicester of the second creation (1749-1853)'.⁶³

He wrote of the incident himself in a letter to Bernard Barton of the 11th May 1848:

I have written a work which will last a century and may, probably, much longer. A fig for such writers as you, who only use ink and paper! That the thought of my immortality may not perplex you too much...I add that it is an inscription for the late Lord Leicester's monument, and it will have the winds and rain in Holkham Park.

1846 was, of course, the year in which the Corn Laws were repealed, an event which divided the country as much as their original enactment had done. Donne added his own contribution to the cause of repeal with verses, modelled on Scott's *Pibroch o' Donhuil Dhu*, and printed in the *Examiner* on the 3rd January:

WRIT OF SUMMONS

Members of either House, Nobles and Commons,
You who have any *nous*, hark to this summons:
If you would not have things go to old Harry,
Come, as you all had wings, this January.

Twenty-two, Twenty-two, that is the day, Sirs,
Mind there be none of you out of the way, Sirs:
Come, leaving horse and hound, come from each Manor,
Ready to muster round Buckingham's banner.

Come without failing, the crisis approaches;
Come up by rail, and don't be slow coaches;

⁶² A M W Stirling, *Coke of Norfolk and his friends*...2 vols., (London: John Lane, 1908,) I., p.257.

⁶³ Charles Warburton James, *Chief Justice Coke, his Family and Descendants at Holkham*, (London: Country Life Ltd, 1929), p.254.

For if you do not your places that night fill,
You may be very sure Cobden and Bright will.

Leave the hall, leave the hall, kennel and stable'
Those who can't speak at all, are to vote able;
All can assist "the cause", hooting and hissing.
Guard, as you made, the laws – none must be missing.

There were eight stanzas in all, and it was years later, at a dinner party, that Donne revealed his authorship to the journal's editor, the verses having been sent in anonymously.

The leisure and tranquillity of Norfolk, however, were soon to be abandoned. By 1846, however, his oldest son, Charles, was fourteen years old, and his education, like that of his younger brothers, demanded a drastic move – to Suffolk.

SUFFOLK DAYS AND SUFFOLK WAYS

The reason for the move was Donne's desire to have his sons educated at his old school, now under the headship of a scholar equal to Malkin, Dr J W Donaldson. A former fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, though not an Apostle, Donaldson had, in 1839, published his *A New Cratylus*, which his DNB entry says practically started the science of comparative philology in England (Donne reviewed the work three times). Taking over the school in 1841, he was to remain there until 1855, though increasingly ill at ease:

[He] indulged in vague speculations on Biblical subjects, which rendered him a very unsafe guide for youth...Beside this, he was deficient in the tact and discrimination of character which are essential to the conduct of a public school, and after a lengthened trial, he discovered it for himself; when he resigned his post, and devoted his talents exclusively to literary and academical pursuits.⁶⁴

His unorthodox views on the Old Testament led to later troubles, though his writings on classical subjects secured for him a lasting fame.

Donaldson and Donne soon formed a lasting and close friendship, and were often to be seen walking together in the streets of Bury, occasionally in the company of Henry Crabb Robinson, who used to visit his brother, a resident in the town, and who recorded his delight at being included in their companionship. Of a walk to nearby Horringer, Robinson wrote, '...most entertaining walk; for we all three emulated each other in the narration of good things, epigrams, etc.'. Epigrams would certainly not be lacking when Donaldson was present. Perhaps one of his best concerned the three Bury brothers named Creed, locally known as "the 3 Creeds".

Donaldson said to Crabb Robinson one day, pointing to one of the three brothers, who was walking in front of them with his hands behind his back, "There goes

⁶⁴ Donaldson's obituary, *Gentleman's Magazine*, 55, (April 1861), 466.

Athanasian Creed". "How do you know?", said Crabb Robinson. "Why! By his damnation claws (clause)."⁶⁵

The Donnes' move, to a house in Westgate Street, was highly successful, though traumatic at the time.

I migrate to Bury sometime next month, as I wish to be quite settled before the school opens on the 20th of August. You have flitted *totum cum corpore*; I have flitted too, more than once, but never taken my goods entire with me. It is an awful dispensation, specially from an old house inhabited for three generations by people who delighted in accumulating chattels about them. I am sure when the people of Bury see what I bring, they will set me down for a retired pawn-broker, and when the visitors of my auction see what I leave, they will think Noah is selling off his fixtures and furniture from the Ark.⁶⁶

Mrs Edward Donne, his mother, gave up the house in Norwich in which she had been resident for some years to live with them and help bring up the children, and, all in all, the Bury years were among the happiest of Donne's life. Early recompense of the expenses of removal came with the offer of a further literary assignment:

Just as I am in the midst of chaos, comes a request from my Master, Dr Smith, that I would write him some sixty Roman lives for his dictionary, and in fact be his sub-editor, because forsooth he is going on his pleasures to Scotland. This is worshipful intelligence, but I am going to try and oblige him seeing that in the end I may repay my charges in moving.⁶⁷

A number of significant friendships was formed or strengthened during the Suffolk period, all of which issued in correspondence. As already noted (Introduction, *Friends*) that with Bernard Barton produced the greatest surviving volume of letters, though much of it is merely of domestic importance. Barton being a poet, Donne seems to have been stimulated into writing to him occasionally in verse. Although much of it, like the following examples, ranks only marginally higher than doggerel, it does indicate the light-hearted banter by which he teased the sterner Quaker:

Oh! what's the matter, what's the matter,
What can ail good Bernard B.?
'Tis ten days since he had my letter
And answer none returned has he.
Oh! has he got again rheumatics –
Or lost a tooth by chloroform –

⁶⁵ Quoted in *Friends*, p.104.

⁶⁶ WBD > R C Trench, 27 June 1846, *Friends*, p.104.

⁶⁷ WBD > R C Trench, 4 August 1846, *Friends*, p.106.

Or frightened been by drab schismatics
And vowed his conduct to reform?
(The first act of his reformation –
The act *they* most insisted on –
Being to cut all conversation
With Mr William Bodham Donne).⁶⁸

And in the same vein:

Bernard Barton oh!
Bernard Barton, Bless me!
Is it really so?
Much your words distress me.
Worse and worse I'm grown
'Stead of being better;
I'd have laid a crown
You owed *me* a letter.
But when back I look
On your latest note, it
At its right-hand nook,
Makes me rather doubt it.
There the date is plain –
"Sixteenth February",
Making it quite vain
For me to say contrary...
So now I remain
Yours sincerely very.
(Author of this strain)
William Donne of Bury.⁶⁹

The friendship with Edward Fitzgerald, begun at school and maintained throughout their lives (Fitzgerald survived Donne by a year) was much enriched by another voluminous exchange of letters,⁷⁰ and by occasional two-way visits, though neither man was much given to unnecessary travel. Of Fitzgerald's company, Donne noted that it 'would make one indifferent to a smoking chimney' and, on another occasion said -

⁶⁸ WBD > Barton, nd, *Friends*, p.135.

⁶⁹ WBD > Barton, 17 March 1847, *Friends*, pp.117-8.

⁷⁰ The full Fitzgerald correspondence (including 109 letters to WBD and another 100 concerning him), greatly exceeds the selection given in *Friends*, and can be found in A McK & A B Terhune (eds), *The Letters of Edward Fitzgerald*, 4 vols., (Princeton: 1980).

‘His life and conversation are the most perfectly philosophic of any I know. They approach in grand quiescence to some of the marvels of contentment in Plutarch. He is Diogenes without his dirt’.⁷¹

Another friendship was that with George Borrow, the first encounter with whom appears to have been arranged through an intermediary, Miss Worship. Borrow wrote to her in August 1842, concerning the Donnes, husband and wife, whom he had just met in Lowestoft, that ‘they seem very amiable people, and I am glad to have made their acquaintance’.⁷² In 1848, two years after settling in Bury, Donne wrote to Bernard Barton

We have had a great man here – and I have been walking with him and aiding him to eat salmon and mutton and drink port – George Borrow – and what is more, we fell in with some gypsies and I heard the sound of Egypt, which sounded wondrously like a medley of broken Spanish and dog Latin. Borrow’s face lighted by the red turf fire of the tent was worth looking at. He is ashy-white now, but twenty years ago, when his hair was like a raven’s wing, he must have been hard to distinguish from a born Bohemian. Borrow is best on the tramp; if you can walk 4½ miles per hour, as I can with ease and do by choice, and can walk 15 of them at a stretch – which I can compass also – then he will talk iliads of adventures even better than his printed ones. He cannot abide these amateur pedestrians who saunter, and in his chair he is given to groan and be contradictory. But on Newmarket-heath, in Rougham Woods, he is at home, and specially when he meets with a rough vagabond like your present correspondent.⁷³

Perhaps it was the word ‘compass’ which led Barton to reply

Thy account of Borrow takes my fancy much. I should come in for my share of his groans, for I’m sure I should never pedestrianize with him, an’ he be such a walker. I only creep and crawl, and do no great deal of either. I knew a Gent who had a very portly wife, a sort of she Daniel Lambert, who used to say that he walked twice a day round her, and found that exercise enough.⁷⁴

It is, however, in literary association rather than in athletic pursuits that this friendship should be recalled. It is well-known that Borrow’s *Lavengro* received a cool reception on publication (1851). It was so different from *The Bible in Spain* and *The Gypsies in Spain*, published a decade earlier, that its readers, particularly the professional critics, hardly

⁷¹ Quoted in Gordon N Ray, *Thackeray, the Uses of Adversity 1811-1846*, (Oxford: OUP 1955), p.130.

and Alethea Hayter, *Fitzgerald to his Friends* (London: Scolar Press, 1979), p.xxiv.

⁷² Material in this section concerning Borrow has appeared as part of my article in the *George Borrow Bulletin*, No.18, (Autumn 1999), 86-96, T H Jones, ‘The Two Vagabonds - Donne and Borrow’.

⁷³ WBD > Barton, 12 September 1848, *Friends*, pp.164-5.

⁷⁴ Barton > WBD, 14 September 1848, *Friends*, p.165.

knew how to assess it and, in their ignorance, savaged it. As he would do years later for J A Froude, whose *History of England* was similarly attacked,⁷⁵ it was Donne who now provided a strong and encouraging alternative appraisal. The background to his review of *Lavengro* in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*⁷⁶ is intriguingly revealed in the letter written by Dr Hake⁷⁷ to Mrs Borrow on the 24th March 1851:

I saw Mr Donne an hour after Mr Borrow's departure; he had returned [to Bury] the night before from town. He has not succeeded in obtaining the *Edinburgh* for *Lavengro*; it has been bespoke this twelvemonth by a person *now abroad*. Does this give you any clue? Donne did not like to ask until his article on Southey was out [*Edinburgh Review* April 1851] it being contrary to usage to have done so; but on Thursday he wrote and got this for answer – XXX XXXX XXXXXXXX.⁷⁸ The editor said he did not know what the contributor's object was in engaging the *Review* so long ago. Donne wrote yesterday putting the editor in possession of his view of *Lavengro*, as regards verisimilitude, vouching for the Daguerrotype-fidelity of the pictures in the first volume, etc., etc., in order to prevent him from being *taken in* by a spiteful article. Donne was to write to *Tait* last evening to see if he can get a hearing in his magazine (which is read everywhere), all the other magazines being pre-occupied. Should *Tait* fail, a second notice in the *New Monthly* will, I think, be possible.⁷⁹

Tait did not fail, and Donne's review paid tribute to what time has judged to be a major work by a major writer. Acknowledging the contrast with *The Bible in Spain*, he saw in the expectation that *Lavengro* would be in the same genre a prime source of the dissatisfaction which had been generally expressed: 'The public ...had been looking for a second Marco Polo, and have been presented, instead, with a nineteenth-century De Foe'.

Borrow is praised for his unrivalled first-hand knowledge of those he portrays; a knowledge owed to his painstaking and successful efforts to master their language and share their life-style. The admixture of experience and reflection upon it is seen as a skill worthy of honour:

Fact and fancy, indeed, interpenetrate one another like the hues of shot-silk. Where actual scenes and persons are described, *Lavengro* adheres to his original with scrupulous veracity. He is giving evidence upon strange yet serious matters, and he permits himself no license of invention. When, on the other hand, the purposes of his work demand a normal, rather than a special exposition of races,

⁷⁵ Herbert Paul, *The Life of Froude*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1905), p.113.

⁷⁶ WBD, 'Lavengro', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 18NS, (May 1851), 270-276.

⁷⁷ Bury resident and friend of Borrow. See Angus Fraser, 'Borrow and the Hakes', *George Borrow Bulletin*, 18 (Autumn 1999), 77-86.

⁷⁸ Sir John Bowring, linguist, writer, traveller, who seemingly plagiarised some of Borrow's Chinese material. He appears maliciously to have reserved the *Edinburgh Review* slot, not to write a review of *Lavengro*, but to prevent anyone else from doing so in that prestigious journal.

⁷⁹ The whole letter is cited in William I Knapp, *Life, Writings and Correspondence of George Borrow*, 2 vols., (London: John Murray, 1899), II, p.345.

principles, or social phenomena, his imagination knows no other law than the law of harmony and probability – the law which regulates the *Œdipus* of Sophocles, the Vision of Dante, the Weird Sisters and the fairy people of Macbeth and the Midsummer Night's Dream, and the Witch Sabbath in Faust. To discredit the reality of *Lavengro* because of its imaginative accessories, to overlook the imaginative accessories because of their marriage with fact, is a kind of criticism which would reject Shakespeare's plays because they contain material from Hall's Chronicle, or the Divina Com[m]edia because it alludes to events and depicts characters familiar to every Florentine of the fourteenth century.

It was not the first occasion on which Donne had praised Borrow's writing, nor would it be the last. He had greatly admired the Pushkin translations of 1835, stating that he considered 'the language and rhythm as vastly superior to Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*'; a tribute indeed, as in his review of the *Lays* Donne praises Macaulay whose 'verse never flags', whose stanzas are 'highly resonant and animated', and whose 'eloquence...can dignify what is humble, illustrate what is obscure and keep pace with whatever is morally or intellectually grand and noble'.⁸⁰ In 1857, writing to Borrow from his office in the London Library, Donne extolled the virtues, this time, of the *Romany Rye*:

My Dear Sir,

I received your book some days ago, but would not write to you before I was able to read it, at least once, since it is needless, I hope, for me to assure you that I am truly gratified by the gift...All I have said to you personally, or to others publicly or privately, I say again of *The Romany Rye*. Everywhere in it the hand of the master is stamped boldly and deeply. You join the chisel of Dante with the pen of Defoe. I am rejoiced to see so many works announced of yours, for you have more that is worth knowing to tell than anyone I am acquainted with. For your coming progeny's sake I am disposed to wish you had worried the literary-craft less. Brand and score them never so much, they will not turn and repent, but only spit the more froth and venom.⁸¹

In 1862, writing in the midst of his duties as Examiner of Plays, it was *Wild Wales* which called for Donne's gratitude [Borrow had sent it as a gift] and praise:

MY DEAR BORROW, - Many thanks for the copy of *Wild Wales* reserved for and sent to me by Mr Cook. Before this copy I had obtained one from the London Library and read it through, not exactly *stans pede in uno*, but certainly almost at a stretch. I could not indeed lay it down, it interested me so much. It is one of the very best records of home travel, if indeed so strange a country as Wales is can properly be called *home*, I have ever met with. Immediately on closing the third volume I secured a few pages in *Fraser's Magazine* for *Wild Wales*,⁸² for though you do not stand in need of my aid, yet my notice will not do

⁸⁰ WBD, 'Lays of Ancient Rome', by Thomas Babington Macaulay, *British & Foreign Review*, 15, July 1843, *passim*.

⁸¹ Clement K Shorter, *The Life of George Borrow* (London: Dent, 1919), p.225.

⁸² The pages may have been secured, but no WBD article appeared, there or elsewhere.

you a mischief, and some of the reviewers of *Lavengro* were, I recollect, shocking blockheads, misinterpreting the letter and misconceiving the spirit of that work.⁸³

Although he did not often have to swim against the prevailing critical tide, it is clear that Donne was undoubtedly willing to do so, in the name of friendship and in assertion of his own views.

Links with the Bury Grammar School were not confined to being the parent of three of its pupils. From time to time he assisted Donaldson in teaching, and in 1850 Fitzgerald encouraged him to consider taking over the headship, if opportunity afforded.⁸⁴

It may well have been through Donne that Donaldson invited Blakesley to examine at the school, an invitation which could not be accepted, though reluctantly declined:

Vanity, avarice and friendship unite their forces in disposing me to avail myself of Donaldson's offer with regard to Bury school, but I must resist all three, for the time which he names is exactly that in which I expect the apparition of Mrs Gamp in my house, and I am told that it is impossible for me under such circumstances to leave home.⁸⁵

Incidentally, it is in this same letter that Blakesley writes of the *Edinburgh Review*, whose editor, Napier, had just died. He asks whether Donne would be interested in the editorship. Whether he would have been or not, it went to Empson, Jeffrey's son-in-law, who held it until 1852, when Donne's name was again to be associated with the post. (Thesis p.43).

For the most part, life proceeded quietly in Bury. Thirty-five articles were penned and published.

Among Donne's occasional visitors was Fanny Kemble, who later recorded her appreciation of her host in a letter to her sister, Harriet (20 March 1848):

...Bury St Edmunds I saw nothing of, but was most kindly and hospitably sheltered by Mr Donne, who, being now the father of sons, is living at Bury in order to educate them at the school where he and my brother were as boys under Dr Malkin. [William Bodham Donne, my brother John's school and college mate, for more than fifty years of this changeful life the unchanged, dear and devoted

⁸³ Shorter, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-4.

⁸⁴ '...you have plenty to do...with the School and all to attend to – It seems to me Donaldson may take hold of the accident [details unknown] to leave the School: - if so, why should not you get it? – You are the man for it: and you have now all interest towards it.' Fitzgerald > WBD, 16 November 1850.

⁸⁵ Blakesley > WBD, 23 April 1847, Blakesley Archive, Add.Mss.

friend of me and mine – accomplished scholar, elegant writer, man of exquisite and refined taste, and such a gentleman that my sister always said he was the original of the hero of Boccaccio's story of the 'Falcon'.⁸⁶

One important social development is referred to in a letter to Bernard Barton:

The passenger trains open on Monday, and come as early as you can, as the accidents usually begin about ten days after the opening...I had one devoted friend, who came from Ipswich by the first luggage train some three weeks ago. He was four hours on his journey of twenty-six miles, and though he rode with the stokers and was blackened by the smoke, was well-nigh frozen when he arrived.

Perhaps the greatest accolade came Donne's way in 1850, the year in which the Grammar School celebrated the tercentenary of its foundation. He was elected chairman of the steering committee to plan appropriate events – a thanksgiving service in St James's Church, at which an old boy, Blomfield, Bishop of London, preached the sermon, and Dr Donaldson gave a retrospective address. The service was followed by a banquet attended by many distinguished scholars and civic dignitaries (2 August 1850). Donne was in the chair for this latter function, at which platitudinous fulsomeness knew no bounds:

I need hardly say that the only toast which will be proposed will be the health of her most gracious Majesty the Queen. (Loud applause). Whether a meeting be attended by few, and be ephemeral in its object, or whether, like the present, it be attended by many, and, I hope, be permanent in its object, I believe that no subjects of her Majesty meet together, on any occasion bearing the semblance of public, without both with heart and voice wishing her health, prosperity and happiness – (Applause) – and I think that at this meeting to commemorate Bury School, we are bound, in acknowledgement of our Royal Founder, to mention with peculiar homage, reverence and affection, that illustrious lady, who as a wife, a mother, and an English matron, sheds her benign and salutary influence from the palace to the cottage. (Loud applause).

The school had plenty to be proud of. Thanks to the former head, Malkin, of all the classical prizes in the University of Cambridge, between 1806 and 1814, the largest number was obtained by Bury boys. Two of the old boys present were law lords (the barons Alderson and Rolfe), while members of Parliament and senior medical men were among those returning and acknowledged on the night. Speeches (and there were many) were long and contrived; 'Hear, hear! And 'Loud cheers' pepper a report held in the school library.

⁸⁶ Frances Anne Kemble, *Records of Later Life*, 3 vols. (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1882), III, pp.341-2.

Donne responded to a tribute paid to him by the Bishop in words modest, but expressive of pride in his schooling:

I shall always look back to the time I spent in Bury School, on the one hand with gratification, on the other hand with humiliation. With humiliation, because I did not make (perhaps we may all join in this admission) – the best use of the opportunities afforded me; with gratification, because I belonged to an institution I so sincerely venerate, and because it has enabled me on this day to greet so many as friends, and to be surrounded by so many distinguished, and revered, and beloved persons. (Loud applause).

After Donne had paid glowing, and sincere homage to his own headmaster, Malkin, it was the turn of Donaldson to recognise the presence of the ladies present, to which the chairman replied ‘I do not expect an acknowledgement, as no lady would like to admit herself to be the senior lady in the room’. It was all good, clean fun, the proceedings ending with a final announcement:

THE CHAIRMAN said: I have a most pleasing piece of intelligence with which to close the present meeting. The Bishop of London has communicated to me his intention of founding a Medal [figuratively, one assumes], of the value of Five Guineas annually, for a Latin Essay, on a subject to be decided between his Lordship and the learned Head Master. (Loud cheers).

It is sad, but not surprising to realise that, were the endowment to be traced as still in existence (which it has not been), it would be of no avail to today’s scholars, for the curriculum at the comprehensive school which has replaced the former grammar school would not equip them to compose Latin essays on any subject.

All too soon, after six years, the Suffolk days came to an end, and Donne departed forever, to the hurly-burly of the metropolis. So to London, with him, let us go.

'BONDSMAN TO THE READING PUBLIC'

The office of Secretary and Librarian having been declared vacant by the death of J.G. Cochrane Esq., it was ordered that an advertisement be inserted twice in The Times and once in the Athenaeum, announcing the vacancy, that the salary was £200 per annum with unfurnished apartments. Candidates to send in their applications to the Library before Saturday May 22nd.⁸⁷

So began a new chapter in Donne's life; one which, by creating the conditions for his most prolific literary output, established him firmly among the scholarly writers of the day. And it might never have happened.

The election of a successor to Cochrane, first librarian of the London Library, was the occasion of what has been called 'the only first-class battle in the annals of the library'.⁸⁸ Four versions of the event exist.⁸⁹ As soon as the lists were opened Gladstone declared a candidate, James Philip Lacaita. A Neapolitan lawyer, Lacaita had met Gladstone in Naples eighteen months earlier and had helped the politician with his celebrated letter to Lord Aberdeen on the Neapolitan tyranny.⁹⁰ Seeking to establish himself in England, the possibility of a prestigious librarianship was attractive, and encouraged to believe that with Gladstone's support he could not fail to be appointed, he even postponed his wedding to the daughter of Sir Thomas Carmichael until after the election.

⁸⁷ Minute Book of the London Library, Committee meeting, 8 May 1852.

⁸⁸ Simon Nowell-Smith, 'Carlyle and the London Library', in C B Oldman, W A Munford, Simon Nowell-Smith, *English Libraries 1800-1850, Three Lectures delivered at University College, London*, published 1958, p.70.

⁸⁹ Frederic Harrison, *Carlyle and the London Library*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1907) David Alec Wilson, *Life of Carlyle*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1927). Simon Nowell-Smith, as in note 88 above.

John Wells, *Rude Words: A Discursive History of the London Library*, (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp.69-81.

⁹⁰ Philip Magnus, *Gladstone: A Biography*, (London: John Murray, 1963 pb.), pp.98-99.

Gladstone's support, however, was a major barrier in eyes of perhaps the most influential member of the Library – its virtual founder, Thomas Carlyle. As Nowell-Smith puts it (*op.cit.*, p.70), Lacaita was trebly disqualified in Carlyle's eyes – 'he was a Neapolitan émigré, he had no library experience and...he was Gladstone's candidate'. Carlyle had attempted to delay the appointment by promoting the assistant librarian, Jones, on a temporary basis, but the committee would have none of it, and the advertisement went out, producing some two hundred applications, reduced by a sub-committee to a short list of eleven.

At what stage Donne submitted an application, and whether on his own initiative or prompted by others, has not emerged. Certainly, as will emerge, his candidature was powerfully supported. Carlyle, housebound with influenza at a critical stage of the proceedings, managed to be present at the actual election meeting. Nowell-Smith's and Wilson's accounts agree in recording only four votes for Lacaita – those of Gladstone, Bunsen and the two Liberal lords, Lyttleton and Lansdowne – but disagree in claiming sixteen (Nowell-Smith) and eighteen (Wilson) for Donne, who was elected. Wilson derives his figure from a Carlyle letter to his brother (14 June 1852),⁹¹ stating 'there were twenty-two of us in all'. According to the minutes, there were only twenty, so Nowell-Smith has the right of it, as might be expected from a former holder of the post, with access to the library records. Carlyle's letter describes Donne as

...a friend of Spedding, Milnes, etc., a scholar of distinction, capital "man of business" (they say), and small Norfolk Squire who, - even the Justices of the Peace love him – appears to be, if *testimony* can be credited, little short of an "admirable Crichton", fit to be the envy of surrounding Libraries; but we shall see better what stuff is really in him, when once he takes his work in hand...

He may have deserved his appointment, but he was also the beneficiary of influential advocacy. The actress, Fanny Kemble, not only the sister of his closest friend but a long-standing friend in her own right, took it upon herself to write letters of commendation to the Earl of Ellesmere (Library vice-president), the Chevalier Bunsen (who actually voted for Lacaita), Travers (later Sir Travers) Twiss and Horace H Wilson,

⁹¹ *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle* (Duke-Edinburgh edition, 27 vols., London: Duke University Press, 1972), vol.27, p.144.

all of whom were Library committee members. Henry Hallam, another committee member and, like Donne, a Cambridge Apostle, was on the short-listing panel, while his Bury school-friend, James Spedding, another Apostle, was elected to the committee just in time to vote, along with fellow-Apostles Monckton Milnes and Arthur Helps. What of today's frequently seen rubric, 'Canvassing will disqualify'?

Perhaps Donne didn't know of the lobbying. Perhaps. He certainly could not have failed to know of the voting support, which was an example of Apostolic mutual aid rivalling that alleged of freemasons. It should be remembered that Apostles of varying ages met in London for an annual dinner, so that those of different undergraduate generations got to know each other. As has already been noted (above, p.18) Donne not only frequently attended the dinners, but also was often their chairman.

Carlyle, whatever the manipulation of the election might have been, was delighted at the outcome, which one of his biographers records tendentiously: 'thus was the London Library saved from a job'. Maybe, but arguably by another job. One of Carlyle's many biographers expresses wonder at the sage's successful intervention in the matter.⁹²

Gladstone wrote to Lacaita immediately after the vote:

My dear Mr Lacaita,

Mr Donne is elected. *You were the only other person for whom there were any votes* out of the one hundred and seventy-three candidates;⁹³ in point of fact, his only competitor; which is the fullest admission from everybody that your gifts, qualifications and character were faultless. Had your reputation in this country not been made before, I confidently assure you that this day would have made it.⁹⁴

Into the Library, then, Donne went, a forty-five years old country gentleman, with sixty-one published articles and two books already to his credit. Wells, whose unfriendly, slipshod and frequently inaccurate account⁹⁵ contains few commendatory words ('Donne was...one of the most affected men of his generation'), writes that he 'rather lackadaisically'

⁹² '...in helping to preserve the London Library from an attempt by Gladstone to force through an unsuitable nominee of his own as secretary, he showed a surprising skill in lobbying ...' Julian Symons, *Thomas Carlyle; the Life and Ideas of a Prophet*, (London: Gollancz, 1952).

⁹³ Reduced on the day to a short-list of eleven, of whom only two attracted votes.

⁹⁴ Quoted in John Wells, *Rude Words...* pp.80-1.

⁹⁵ John Wells, *ibid.* pp.82-94

Such tendentious value judgements, rarely supported, never fully substantiated, spoil his narrative and may well, in other areas of *Rude Words* which I am incompetent to judge, lead to similar injustices.

Wells is one of a number who have repeated the statement, without attribution as to its source, that earlier in 1852 Donne had been invited to become editor of the prestigious *Edinburgh Review*. Allegedly, he had declined on the grounds that 'his habits were too retired to keep him in the current of public opinion'. The language is credible, but the source has not been traced, and such an invitation seems to run counter to the known facts concerning the editorship at that time. After the death of Napier, in 1847, the editorship passed to William Empson, Jeffrey's son-in-law, who held it for five years. He was followed, in 1852, the time when Donne is alleged to have refused the post, by Sir George Cornwall Lewis, who in a change of government was between the political offices of Financial Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Lackadaisical or diligent, it was not long before Donne began to experience some of the less pleasant aspects of his office, which persisted throughout his tenure and evoked, in a letter to Fanny Kemble written after his departure from the Library, the self-description heading this chapter – 'Bondsman to the Reading Public'.⁹⁶ Though, as he would write in a letter of 1857⁹⁷ concerning the appointment of his successor, 'the agreeable relations between the Secretary and the Committee' were the '*couleur de rose* side of the matter', there were 'less pleasant circumstances between some of the members and the Secretary, which may make a gentleman pause before accepting an office in all other respects agreeable'.

These less pleasant circumstances arose largely from the borrowing regulations contained in the library's rules. Town members were allowed ten books at a time, country members, fifteen [still true today]. New publications might only be borrowed one at a time. There were also maximum periods of retention for various classes of book. Members played fast and loose with the regulations, and the statutory penalty fines

⁹⁶ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 5 July 1857, *Friends* p.220.

⁹⁷ The complete letter, headed (Private and Confidential), no date or addressee, refers to the likely offer of the librarianship to Lacaita. London Library Records, SG, 18/3/1971.

were never exacted, with the result that books were frequently unobtainable on request. Expressions of discontent were rife and constant, (Wells, 'complaints from the members about his running of the library poured in') [none has survived], and not long after the end of his first year in office Donne was stung into presenting a lengthy and defensive report to a committee of enquiry. Occupying three foolscap pages, it is bound into the minute book for 29 October 1853, when the committee received it. It begins with a threat of resignation which is but lightly veiled:

Sundry complaints having been made within the last six months by subscribers respecting the imperfect supply of books, the difficulty of obtaining books from the Library, and the general mismanagement of this Institution, I think it my duty to bring these questions before you, in order that if the complaints should prove, after due investigation, to be well grounded, they may be redressed by another system of management, or, if ungrounded, that the causes of them may be ascribed to the right parties.

Of the three headings under which the complaints were registered, the first was the imperfect supply of books. Some members had pointed out that for an identical subscription, Mudie's circulating library would supply 'all the new works of the season'. This was, of course, true, and the source of Mudie's success, but as Donne responded, the aims of the two institutions were different, that of the London Library being to provide its members with a wider range of material – books of solid learning and reference, foreign literature, both European and oriental, together with some 'books of the day'. Mudie's, in contrast, provided only the third category. To render any comparisons fair and valid, one or the other would have needed to change its policy. Donne claimed to have extended the provision of new works by ceasing to order Italian, Spanish and Portuguese works, other than by committee order, as there was no demand for them. He was also prepared to reallocate funds currently spent on German works if retrenchment was ordered in that area. The precise scope for secretarial discretion in purchasing books is unclear, most committee minutes recording 'books were ordered'. This suggests a corporate, rather than individual, initiative.

The second ground of complaint by members, and the one which brought out Donne's most robust defence, was the difficulty of actually obtaining books which were in stock. One reason alone was alleged to

account for this admitted situation – the dilatory return of borrowed books. With chapter and verse ('letters and lists were put in as vouchers') he supported the claim that never less than one hundred, and sometimes nearer two hundred, requests per week for the return of overdue books were sent, so that 'the postage of them has become a serious item in the expenditure of the Library'. The irresponsibility of members could even pass over into dishonesty:

In many cases no answers at all are returned by members; in others, the holder of the books required is said to have left home or to have gone abroad for some weeks or months; in a few instances the receipt of the books is altogether denied, although the names of the members holding them have been entered into the ledger, with date of issue, etc..

His solution was simple and obvious – apply the rules and exact the penalties – fines and the withholding of privileges, 'even at the risk of a partial withdrawal of members in consequence of such enforcement'. The committee recorded its agreement and intentions, never put into effect, so it is not surprising that the non-return of books continued (continues?) to be the librarian's nightmare.

Addressing the third, more general, and perhaps personally directed complaint, that of mismanagement ('perhaps personally directed', because no relevant correspondence has survived), he clearly believed that attack is the best means of defence:

The Librarian does not consider himself in a position to enter upon this class of complaint. He thinks, however, that the preceding statements, which he is prepared to support by numerous letters and lists, will, in some measure, account for what is called mismanagement by discontented subscribers. While also he is most anxious that the mismanagement alleged should be inquired into by the Committee, he is ready to admit that, among so many applications, errors occasionally occur. But he is equally ready to affirm, and can prove, that for one oversight committed by the staff of the Library, twenty causes of just dissatisfaction arise either from the irregular demands or the imperfect lists sent in.

One such proof (there are indeed many) is recorded in a minute of the following year:

A letter from W Ewart, MP, was read, in which complaint was made of the insufficiency of the supply of books. The Librarian was directed to point out to Mr. Ewart that he had already charged to his account 14 volumes beyond the number allowed at one time to subscribers by the "Rules for the Use of Books", and that his disappointment in obtaining books proceeded in great measure from his non-observance of the established mode of application for them.⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Minute Book of the London Library, 22 July 1854.

There is an irony in that William Ewart, MP for Dumfries, had, in 1850, been the driving force behind the Act establishing free public libraries.

Donne's only practical suggestion, apart from the punishment of offenders, was to suggest that the rules be examined to see whether, the enterprise having so vastly expanded from its beginnings, they were still adequate and appropriate, or whether they might with advantage be revised. No such revision was attempted or carried out. Indeed, at the time of writing, the rules appear substantially unaltered, though their application may now be more strictly enforced.

The opportunity for literary work afforded by the Library, with its profusion of source material, was not wasted. During his time there, Donne published forty-nine articles, essays and reviews, though, surprisingly, the writing of all his books lies outside of those five years. The subject range of his essays, informed by the vast literature at his disposal, was immensely varied, some of the titles defeating the attempt to guess what prompted them – 'Leith and its Antiquities', 'Coffee-Houses of the Restoration', 'Printing and Printers', 'China and the Chinese', find their place among more to be expected themes – 'Martial and his Times', 'Plays and their Providers', 'Dryden and his Times', 'Athenian Comedy'.

In the year preceding his arrival at the Library, a new interest had begun to emerge as a subject for Donne's articles – the political upheavals in Europe. Following the events of 1848, more than one regime had arisen or fallen, and the liberal Mr Donne (he once called himself the only surviving Whig) became passionately interested in, particularly, the relations between Austria and Hungary. 'The Goth and the Hun'⁹⁹, 'The Triumph of Despotism'¹⁰⁰, 'Bureaucracy and Military Systems in France and Germany',¹⁰¹ 'Louis Kossuth',¹⁰² 'Italia Militans'¹⁰³ and 'The Blue

⁹⁹ *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, NS 18, August 1851, 495-502.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* NS 18, February 1851, 113-117

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* NS 18, January 1851, 1-10.

¹⁰² *Ibid.* NS 18, November 1851, 692-699.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.* NS 18, September 1851, 570-574.

Book on Hungary'¹⁰⁴ see him tentatively testing his aptitude for political comment. In the Library years, further contributions would follow. These, their tenor, and the choice of journal for their publication, will be the subject of extended treatment in another chapter ('Donne's Political Writings'). The five years of his librarianship passed without major incident or innovation, though some events deserve mention. Wells¹⁰⁵ states on dubious evidence that [he] 'did his best to cling to his retiring habits, and spent his days writing in the Librarian's Room'. As the support he offers is a single journal entry by Jane Carlyle, based on a disloyal remark to her by the assistant librarian, Jones, it is hardly adequate grounds for the accusation. Jones was, to say the least of it, no fan of his master, in whose favour he had been passed over for the senior post. He was bitterly disappointed, as he was to be a second time when Donne retired and he was again defeated in his application. The resolution on the first occasion,

'That the Committee cannot inform Mr. Jones that their election of a Librarian has fallen upon another, without adding the expression of their high sense of the attention, ability and faithfulness with which he has discharged his duties in the Library, further informing him that they look forward, upon full consideration, to mark in some substantial manner this approbation'

went no way to appease him. Perhaps he did not regard as being 'in some substantial manner' the marks of approbation awarded the following month, when he was called into a committee meeting and notified that the sum of £30 was to be his 'in recompense of extraordinary services in 1852' and that his salary was to rise immediately from £104 to £117 [i.e., by 5/- per week]. Mid-way through Donne's term of office, however, the Inland Revenue authorities began to pester Jones for income tax, and the committee resolved to pay the tax until further notice. Two years later, Donne announced his forthcoming resignation, and Jones laid his first parallel with a request for a further rise in salary 'in consideration of his long service to the Library'. It was granted - £117 to £140 - but someone else, Robert Harrison, would be appointed to fill the vacancy, and Jones's cup of bitterness would be full.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* NS 19, January 1852, 37-41.

¹⁰⁵ John Wells, *op.cit.*, p.84.

Donne was not to be freed by retirement from the Jones saga. Fifteen years on, in 1872, Jones still serving, and Donne being now on the Library committee, an ugly incident arose over Harrison's misuse of his accommodation. Jones used it to discredit his superior. The details of what was a serious misdemeanour are on record,¹⁰⁶ but do not concern us here. What does concern us is Donne's conduct when involved in the matter. He wrote to Dougal Christie, who had been associated with the direction of the Library from the beginning

Thanks for your note. I asked Jones to show me the report of the committee and certainly it is a clear and strong one. I am glad that the decision was not to dismiss the Secretary [Harrison] – on account of his wife and children: but his procedure is unintelligible. He can scarcely regain his former position, at least with the managing body of the Library...I rejoice in the undivided recognition of Jones's conduct and merits...In a letter he wrote to me while this painful business was pending he said that he had been severely tried by being told that his place could be supplied for half his salary. He knows the Library and subscribers so well that, in my opinion, he deserves his present salary at the very least: while, for a larger one, we could not replace him. Jones and the present Secretary did not agree from the very first – and I had several times to shut him up when he began to state his grievances to me. Had there been any question about his deserts, I told him at once to send for me and that, for that purpose and that only, pending the present business, I would attend a committee meeting. I think as regards Harrison you, in my place, would do exactly as I have done – that is, keep aloof from anything affecting the Secretary...It is very grievous when there is not unity between the manager of an institution and his principal clerk. But there never has been such unity at the LL since I quitted as manager, and I am afraid it will not be 'a happy family' henceforth.¹⁰⁷

His propriety in staying outside the committee proceedings against Harrison is matched by his preparedness to champion Jones against disparagement of his value to the Library. He had certainly, in his own day, attempted to create and maintain a happy family of his colleagues on the Library staff, and was probably responsible for initiating the occasional, and modest, increases in wages and salaries. In 1853, a servant's wage, after two years' service, was raised to 8/- per week, and in 1855 the wage of the clerk, William Miller, was raised from £1 per week to £1.3.0d. A minute of 9 December 1854 reveals his concern for another Library servant, John Nash. For Donne, master of English, who wrote the minute, the sentence is unusually convoluted:

¹⁰⁶ Stanley Gillam, [then Librarian of the London Library], 'Genial Temper and Ready and Agreeable Speech', *The Library Association Record*, 79 (1977), 248.

¹⁰⁷ JP.

On the representation of the Librarian that John Nash, a servant of the Library, having fallen into great pecuniary distress, owing to his having been wrongly advised as to the application of certain monies, which he thought himself entitled to receive as heir at law; but the greater part whereof he has recently been compelled to repay to the rightful owners, and the Librarian having stated that at the urgent request of John Nash, he had advanced to John Nash £10, on the security of his weekly wages, the Committee, in consideration of John Nash's long and faithful services of 13 years to this Institution, agreed unanimously to excuse him from the repayment of the aforesaid sum of £10, and directed the Librarian to inform John Nash that they presented him with the same towards the relief of his present embarrassment.

The committee must have held Nash in unusual esteem. Over succeeding years his deteriorating health and ultimate inability to sustain his duties were met with repeated financial support, culminating in the eventual payment of his funeral expenses, after which his widow was told to expect no more assistance.

One procedural innovation was approved, on Donne's initiative. The admission fee of £6 for new members having proved a disincentive to entry, he suggested that each existing member be allowed one nomination per annum of a new member for whom the fee would be waived. This was to cause more problems than it solved, and after a few years the device was abandoned, although, interestingly, in 1867, ten years after resigning the librarianship but being on the committee, he was appointed to a sub-committee to examine proposals for differential membership – *plus ça change....* They were once more defeated. Innovation was not a characteristic of London Library management. When, in 1855, the threat posed by the rival attractions of Mudie's circulating library was re-examined, the outcome was that 'the Committee does not pledge itself to take in novels, whether English or foreign'. Alteration to the decorum of the Library's surroundings was something else not to be tolerated:

A paragraph having appeared in the Art Union Journal [November 1853], to the effect that it was intended to hire and occupy the house adjoining to the premises of the Library as a Theatre, Casino, or other place of common resort and entertainment, the Librarian was directed to ascertain the grounds for this announcement,¹⁰⁸ and to watch all proceedings tending to confirmation of the same, with a view to the effectual prevention of such or any similar design.

Prevention was certainly effectual, and lasting. To this day the Library has been constantly flanked by reputable business and banking establishments,

¹⁰⁸ A simple reading of the advertisement would have revealed that a theatre alone was envisaged, albeit one seating an audience of two thousand!

with the East India and Devonshire Club next door but one. *Floreat sobrietas!*

During Donne's time at the Library, its numbers were swelled and his friendships strengthened by the admission to membership of new Apostles and intellectual associates – Charles Kingsley, Charles Merivale, Charles Reade, J A Froude, W Hale White ('Mark Rutherford').

The precise circumstances of his resignation from the Library are difficult to determine from the available material. In a letter of early 1857 to Fanny Kemble he wrote 'One great pleasure in having a house of my own again, instead of this precipice [the Librarian inhabited an attic flat in the Library], will be that I shall then have no compunction in asking you to sit at meat with us'.¹⁰⁹ At this time, Fanny's brother, John Mitchell Kemble, the Examiner of Plays, had returned from Germany and resumed his duties as Examiner of Plays. No prospect of alternative employment for Donne has been traced, but the likelihood is that he had had enough of those irritations referred to in correspondence and his 1853 report.

It was not long before events took a sudden and unexpected turn. On the 27th March 1857, Kemble died in Dublin. Donne was the obvious choice to succeed him (see below, p.54), and four days later he was gazetted as Examiner. Prior to all this, however, at the Library committee meeting of 21 February, he had already given notice of his intention to resign with effect from 24 June. Whatever the full story – and it is only one of many which cannot be written from the available evidence – he must have run in double harness for the next three months, continuing to live in his Library accommodation. Though he was not one to whimper, the end of his librarianship, when it came, was certainly not with a bang. The committee's farewell was cordial, but hardly over-generous:

¹⁰⁹ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 20 January 1857, *Friends*, p.217.

To the regret of the Committee, which they believe will be shared by every subscriber to the Library, the services given to the Institution, since 1852, by Mr. William Bodham Donne, as the Secretary and Librarian, will cease at midsummer. Mr. Donne brought to his office all the necessities essential to a complete discharge of its duties: and the Library has profited, during his connection with it, quite as much by his ready and obliging courtesy, through business habits and scrupulous correctness in financial management, as by his literary accomplishments and knowledge of books. Feeling that the Members generally, therefore, would desire to offer to Mr. Donne on his retirement, some mark of recognition which, if not adequate to the services it acknowledges, might yet express the friendly esteem in which his name will continue to be held here, the Committee beg to recommend that "The Members assembled in General Meeting allow to the present Secretary on his retirement from office the privileges of a Life-Member of the London Library"

The recommendation was presumably carried¹¹⁰ at the ensuing annual general meeting, as part of the committee's total report, but it does not figure among the recorded resolutions, nor is there any mention of Donne in the minutes of that meeting; no monetary or other testimonial. Nothing.

In preparation for his departure and replacement, the committee had directed him to draw up a statement of the requirements for a librarian, under two headings:

What is essential for a Librarian or Manager of the London Library;
Duties very important, though not indispensable.

The resultant memorandum is illuminating. In particular, his response to the demands of the second category reveals his view of his own role and qualifications for it:

In addition to the above-mentioned duties, the Librarian is frequently applied to by literary men, and persons engaged in study or the production of books, for assistance in tracing facts, dates, opinions, connected with their several subjects. Even the verification of references and citations from books is often required. The ability to answer such questions, as well as the readiness to do so, add considerably to the advantages afforded to students by the contents of the Library. They however frequently involve considerable expenditure of time, and demand some acquirements in languages and general knowledge, more especially in bibliography. It is also perhaps desirable, though by no means essential, that the Secretary should be able to meet applicants for aid or information of this kind on tolerably equal terms, and for that purpose should have a fair acquaintance with literature generally, as well as with many practical matters connected with individual pursuits. In the correspondence also of the Library some degree of tact is necessary, in order to avoid giving offence, even while strictly insisting on the observation of the rules. There is also a mode of supplying particular deficiencies in certain departments of the Library which a committee could not undertake, and for which a mere managing clerk would be incompetent. Viz., the picking-up at second-hand book-stalls, or at public sales, volumes or editions which, if the immediate opportunity of securing them be lost, rise in price when they fall into the hands of booksellers aware of their value. A similar observation applies to

¹¹⁰ It has become standard practice on the retirement of subsequent librarians.

the study of and selection from the contents of old catalogues; and the Librarian, in order to take full advantage of such chances of adding to the Library, should have a fair acquaintance with prices, as well as with bibliography generally. Indeed, it would be no ordinary qualification for a Librarian, if he had previous experience in the collection of such second-hand books, and in the variation of their prices in catalogues and the book-market.

By direction of the committee, and arising from the foregoing remarks, the following clause was added to the memorandum:

It may also be held that the advice of a Librarian of high qualifications to the Committee, at their ordinary meetings, on the merits of books for consideration, and on other matters, is of much value. The Committee, from their long experience of the operation of the library, will doubtless be able to test the general accuracy of these remarks, and to extend them where defective. The impression of the present Secretary is, that the mere machinery might be managed by a superior head clerk [Jones?], controlled and superintended by frequent meetings of the Committee; but that the total working of the machine will be most efficiently maintained by a Secretary who combines in himself most of the qualifications stated in the second part of the sketch of the duties required of him.

As at the time of Donne's election, so at the time of his resignation, there was a division of committee opinion on strategy. A motion not to fill the vacancy at present was defeated, as Carlyle's had been in 1852, by an amendment to proceed as on the previous occasion. Robert Harrison, then librarian of the Leeds Public Library, was appointed, and served for the next thirty-three years.

Not surprisingly, Donne disappears from Library records for the next four years, re-appearing at the 1861 annual general meeting, where he was thanked for a donation of books and seconded the appointment of auditors. It was in that year that three notable new members were admitted – Charlotte Yonge, Walter Bagehot, and John Henry Newman. In 1864 he resumed an active part in the Library's affairs, being elected to the committee of management and its finance sub-committee.

He was to remain in touch for twelve more years, though he resigned from the finance sub-committee in 1873. He attended almost every other meeting and when present was usually elected to the chair, a tribute not only to his knowledge of the Library and its workings, but also to his acceptability and the affection in which he was held. Apart from the Jones/Harrison saga already mentioned, life at the Library proceeded without incident, save only the perennial chasing of members for the return of over-due books. 'Mr Donne' is periodically thanked at general meetings

for gifts of books, proposes votes of thanks and appointments, and is joined on the committee at various times by other literary figures, friends old and new – Spedding, Froude, G H Lewes, Dougal Christie, Brookfield, Dean Milman, Monckton Milnes, Kingsley and R H Hutton. He was there when the membership applications of James Payn, Mary Braddon, Arnold Toynbee, Oscar Browning and J A Symonds were approved.

With his retirement, in 1874, from the Examinership of Plays, energy and enthusiasm seem to wane, and there is a distinct withdrawal from outside interests. In 1876 he retired from the Library committee, his place being filled by Gladstone, and also wrote his last published essay, a review of Ward's *English Dramatic Literature*. Increasingly, he led a secluded life – 'I rarely leave my own fireside. London ways and hours do not suit me, and I do not know that I suit them'.¹¹¹

Although the London Library minutes record numerous tributes and condolences on the occasion of the death of worthy members, when his end came, in 1882, this former servant's passing went unrecorded. *Sic transit...*

¹¹¹ WBD > R C Trench, 20 December 1877, *Friends*, p.333.

'THE DEVIL'S ARCHDEACON'

The description is Donne's own¹¹². Having, since 1849, assisted J M Kemble in the examination of plays during the latter's frequent absences in Germany, he withdrew on Kemble's return to England in 1856. His work, initially unpaid, the fees going to Kemble, was appreciated in high places:

Sir,

I cannot permit you to retire from the duties which during the last few years you have performed as Examiner of Plays without testifying to you my entire satisfaction with the zeal and ability you have brought to the discharge of these duties and the discretion you have exercised on matters requiring no ordinary amount of care and attention. It gives me very great pleasure to be able to state my approbation.

Breadalbane, Lord Chamberlain¹¹³

The Lord Chamberlain was not the only one to appreciate Donne's services. Theatre managers, who on his retirement could not be thought to have ulterior motives for their plaudits, united in expressing their feelings:

...I have lived long enough to be promised a testimonial. I am as much surprised as Benedick was when he found he had lived long enough to be married. A few days ago I received a very polite note from Mr Benjamin Webster informing me that the managers of the theatres wished me to appoint a day and hour in next month for receiving them, as they desired to give me a token of their common obligations to me for punctuality, etc., etc., as Examiner of Plays during the term I held the office. I must say that I am very much gratified, since the goodwill of these gentlemen has been purchased by no concessions on my part; on the contrary, for a year or two many of them murmured at the increased strictness of the regime. In my next letter I shall be able to tell you what I am presented with, though indeed I should have been perfectly pleased and contented with a *round-robin* of acknowledgement¹¹⁴.

His grand-daughter records the occasion of the presentation:

...feeling nervous about receiving the deputation of managers with the testimonial, [he] asked Edward Fitzgerald to come and support him, which he did. When the time arrived an individual was ushered in, with a parcel, who proceeded to read an address, but he had not uttered many words before his "speech betrayed him", and Fitzgerald cried out, "Good heavens! It's Charles!" and Charles Donne [William's oldest son] had only just time to make his exit

¹¹² WBD > J W Blakesley, 29 September 1870, Blakesley Archive Add. Ms.A.234-5, 115.

¹¹³ PRO. LC1/51.

¹¹⁴ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 28 May 1856, *Friends* p.197.

before the real Mr Webster arrived. The practical joke helped the situation, however; all trace of nervousness disappeared and Mr Donne received the deputation with all his accustomed dignity¹¹⁵.

By March 1857, Kemble was in Ireland. Two notes among the Lord Chamberlain's papers tell their own story:

22 March 1857

Mr Donne applies to act during the severe illness of Mr Kemble¹¹⁶
[No such application survives].

3 March 1857

My Dear Sir,

I have shown your note to the Lord Chamberlain in which you kindly offer to examine the plays during the serious illness of Mr Kemble and I am desired by the Lord Chamberlain to thank you for the offer and to state the [?his] most willing acceptance of it.

Norman MacDonald¹¹⁷

Four days later, Kemble was dead, and Donne was gazetted as his successor. Why he accepted a full-time appointment which he never enjoyed is a question left unanswered by the available records, though sheer economic necessity no doubt played its part. He had five children to support, and his literary earnings may not at that stage have been adequate. Having said which, his enthusiasm for drama and the stage is unquestioned, and attested by the volume of writing he devoted to the subject.

His work as Examiner has been the subject of brief discussion by the present writer¹¹⁸ and of fuller treatment by Stottlar and Stephens¹¹⁹, the latter describing him as 'the first Examiner to take his responsibilities seriously and to administer his office on reasonably efficient business-like lines'.

The appointment was marked by a strained pun in *Punch*:

¹¹⁵ *Friends* p.199.

¹¹⁶ PRO. LC7/3.

¹¹⁷ PRO. LC1/51/185.

¹¹⁸ T H Jones, *Morals and Censorship in the English Theatre 1800-1900*, unpublished MA thesis, University of Leicester, 1971, pp.55-68.

¹¹⁹ James F Stottlar, 'A Victorian Stage Censor: the Theory and Practice of William Bodham Donne', *Victorian Studies*, 1970 (XIII), 253-282.

Stephens, John Russell, 'William Bodham Donne: some aspects of his later career as Examiner of Plays', *Theatre Notebook* XXV (1970-71) 25-32.

A respected correspondent writes to us to say that ever since the appointment of the amiable Gentleman and excellent scholar, now Censor of Plays – he, our correspondent, has been hammering at a joke, which is to bring in the names of that gentleman, an actress at the Lyceum [Sarah Jane Woolgar] and two rivers in Russia. He has not quite done it, but thinks he could make out if we would give him a little more time. He may have as much as he please, but we dare say we could knock it off for him at once.

Ques. If the best actress at the Lyceum liked a farce, why must the manager make a long journey to get it licensed?

Ans. Because he would have to go from the Dnieper to the Vistula? Certainly not – sold again! Because he would have to go from the Woolga' [Volga] to the Donne [Don]?¹²⁰

The new position demanded, of course, Donne's resignation from the London Library, an event which caused him no regret. Vacating the Library flat in St James's Square, he briefly took houses in Walton-on-Thames, then Blackheath, where the family remained until the death of his mother in 1859, and finally at 40 (later re-numbered 25) Weymouth Street. The demands of his new trade soon made themselves known, particularly in the accommodation of plays and scripts to the prevailing prejudices of the public, not all of which he shared:

Madame Ristori is to play Giuditta in a few evenings, but to please the thick-skulled superstitious British public I have been obliged to find a new name for the tragedy, and new titles for the characters, and all because the book of Judith happens to be bound up with the Bible [in the Apocrypha], being all the while as much inspired as "Tom Jones". When shall we be a wiser people?¹²¹

The answer is, not until 1967, when theatrical censorship was finally abolished.

Religious unacceptability, as illustrated here, was, of course, one of the three chief areas susceptible to censorship, the others being moral and personally political. It was the last named which had led to the existing provisions for censorship (though not its beginnings, which go back much farther), following the performance, in 1728, of Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. Its ridicule of Robert Walpole had been so pointed and offensive, both in the song 'If you censure the age' and in the fight between Peachum and Locket, only months after Walpole's duel with Lord Townshend, that when, some years later, a play called *The Golden Rump*, full of political

¹²⁰ *Punch*, 25 April 1857, cited in *Friends*, pp.218-9.

¹²¹ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 8 July 1858. *Friends* pp. 224-5.

allusions and grossness, was offered to Giffard, the manager of the Goodman's Fields theatre, he played for safety and laid the script before the Prime Minister. The result was an Act¹²² allotting, for the first time, legal powers to the Lord Chamberlain to license new plays or additions to old plays and making it an offence to perform plays with licence. The office of Examiner of Plays, who would henceforth act for the Lord Chamberlain, was instituted to administer the legislation, though nowhere appearing within the statute.

By the time that Donne took post as the tenth Examiner, working initially to John, Marquis of Breadalbane (he would serve five successive Lord Chamberlains), the parameters within which censorship was imposed had long been worked out and largely accepted. In 1832, the first of four nineteenth-century Select Committees of the House of Commons into various aspects of English theatrical law and practice heard relevant evidence¹²³, exposing the prevalent – and enduring – doctrine. The Committee's proceedings have been written up by Ganzel¹²⁴, and include a statement by John Payne Collier, deputy examiner to George Colman the Younger, which reveals their shared philosophy of censorship:

I did not exercise (or at any rate in that degree which otherwise I should have done) my own discretion. His instructions to me were those that I should have given myself under similar circumstances, to strike out or object to any profaneness, immorality, or anything political, likely to cause offence (341).

When Colman himself came to give evidence, it soon became clear that Collier had indeed understood aright his master's wishes:

What do you consider to be serving His Majesty faithfully as to the examination of plays? – To take care that nothing should be introduced into plays which is profane or indecent, or morally or politically improper to the stage. What do you consider to be "palpably objectionable"? [The phrase was Colman's]. – I allude to political and personal allusions, downright grossness and indecency, or anything that could be profane, which any candid man could not but say was improper, about which there could not be two opinions (844-851).

Colman's assumption that there are issues, and that impropriety is one of them, about which 'there could not be two opinions', is matched by his

¹²² 10 Geo.II, c.28, sec.2.

¹²³ 1832 *Report*. For full title and citation procedure, see Abbreviations.

¹²⁴ Dewey Ganzel, 'Patent Wrongs and Patent Theatres: Drama and the Law in the Early Nineteenth Century', *PMLA*, LXXVI (1961), 384–396.

faith in 'any candid man', whose twentieth-century descendant, invoked in a related controversy, is Lord Devlin's 'man on the Clapham omnibus'.¹²⁵

What is emerging this early in the century is the Examiner's belief, not without foundation, that there was, among those who mattered, a consensus of opinion concerning morals, indecency and impropriety, which it was quite easy for an Examiner of Plays to translate into the granting or withholding of the Lord Chamberlain's licence for a theatrical performance. (It should be realised that the legislation catered for the performance of a play, not for the publication of its script, so that responsibility for obtaining a licence lay with a theatre manager, not with the author).

In 1853, a second Select Committee addressed itself to theatrical affairs¹²⁶, the chief concern on this occasion being the extent, in territorial terms, of the Lord Chamberlain's jurisdiction and its relationship to the jurisdiction over theatres of the local magistracy. While containing a wealth of fascinating material on, e.g., the provincial theatrical scene, what is of interest here is its reaffirmation of the 1832 statements on censorship. Norman MacDonald, superintendent of the Lord Chamberlain's office, explained the procedure and its rationale:

...the form of proceeding is this: the stage play is sent to the Lord Chamberlain's office, not by the author, but by the manager of a theatre, for the licence is given for the performance, not to the author, but to the manager of a theatre.

For which this production may have been written? – Yes; it is then submitted to a gentleman who is called the Examiner of Plays, and if upon examination he sees nothing objectionable, the licence is granted, as a matter of course, by the Lord Chamberlain.

What is the character of the censorship of the Examiner of Plays; does it extend to the merits of the play, or is it confined to its moral tendency only? – Entirely to the moral tendency.

Then the purpose of this censorship, or examination of such productions, is to prevent anything being represented having an immoral or perhaps an irreligious tendency? – An immoral, irreligious or seditious character; perhaps the more proper expression may be, politically offensive.

Anything having a political tendency is not allowed? – That might fairly be considered as having an offensive political tendency, especially when tending to personality.

Does the Lord Chamberlain indicate to the Examiner upon what principle he is to proceed in his examination? – No; there are no specified rules; but the understanding is perfectly clear, that unless the matter is excessively or extravagantly offensive, the licence is not to be withheld (8126).

¹²⁵ Devlin, *The Enforcement of Morals*, (Oxford: OUP, 1965), p.15.

¹²⁶ *1853 Report*. For full title and citation procedure, see Abbreviations.

Statistics presented by MacDonald for the four years, 1850-1853, revealed that out of 683 scripts submitted to the Examiner, only 8 had been rejected, though there was no indication of the number in which excisions had been made or changes required. The rejections were explained:

...one was rejected from the very gross and monstrous nature of the incidents that were introduced into it, that were quite unfit to be put on any stage. Immoral in their character? – Grossly immoral; two were rejected at the time of the excitement respecting Cardinal Wiseman,¹²⁷ on account of their proposing to introduce very offensive allusions to the Roman Catholics; and two of them were French plays, which had a good deal of success in Paris, but which were still thought not very desirable to produce here (8129-8130).

The French plays were identified as *La Dame aux Camélias*, a constant victim of Victorian censorship, though as the opera *La Traviata* it was freely produced and enjoyed¹²⁸, and *La Tour de Nesle*, now remembered only for this doubtful distinction of having been banned.

As far as the censorship of plays is concerned, the evidence of the *1853 Report* seems to be that little had changed since 1832. The three traditional canons were still applied – morally, politically or religiously objectionable material was to be expunged from scripts; the same glib, unreflecting employment of the vocabulary of censorship still characterised all participants in the enquiry. Words like ‘improper’, ‘undesirable’ and ‘offensive’ were used on the assumption that all involved would agree on their meaning and application. Most to be wondered at in the twenty-first century, there was little voiced opposition to the whole business, whether from actors, critics, authors, or managers. The *minutiae* of operation might be questioned – the rapacity of a particular Examiner, or the inappropriateness of a specific excision – but that, despite the tribute paid to the right-minded, proper, moral, discerning English public, that same public, or at least some part of it, needed protection from its theatrical tastes, and that the Lord Chamberlain and his staff were the ones to give that protection; these assumptions appear to have been, with little exception, common to those who discussed censorship in 1853.

¹²⁷ On 29 September 1850, the Papal brief was issued restoring the English hierarchy, and on 3 October in that same year, Wiseman received the red hat.

¹²⁸ For further reference to *La Dame aux Camélias*, v. below, p. 64, text and ns.141,142.

As in 1853, so in 1866, when the third Select Committee reported on the theatre,¹²⁹ a degree of complacency is revealed over theatrical affairs in general, and the current practice of censorship in particular. It is perhaps not surprising that the participants in the enquiry, many of whom earned their living in and through the theatre, should by and large have a Panglossian belief that all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds, but their self-esteem contrasts sharply with the picture painted in contemporary periodicals and fiction. There, by silence as much as by utterance, a prevailing distaste for the stage is displayed:

...There are the low amusements of the low and uneducated, whom society has allowed to grow up in its midst, with minds untrained and untaught, with tastes unrefined by intercourse with art and letters, and who are narrowed in all their sources of pleasure and enjoyment. To these the brutal exhibition of a dog-fight or a public execution¹³⁰ affords the only opportunity for a saturnalia of enjoyment which is level with the meanest capacity and none other.

How different the amusements of the intelligent and refined – such as an intercourse with the beauties of nature, a ramble through a charming country full of historic associations, a concert of exquisite music, a picture exhibition, a soirée, an agreeable book, or an evening's delightful conversation with intelligent persons. Then there are the out-of-door amusements; the manly games, of which the healthful game of cricket is one of the most cheerful and exciting.¹³¹

While the class distinction running through this is flagrant, what is even more significant is the entire lack of mention of the theatre as a legitimate source of amusement for 'the intelligent and refined'. What *Bow Bells* implied by silence, *Blackwood's Magazine* had openly stated a month earlier:

...It is a pity that one form of rational enjoyment – the oldest, the most universally attractive, and in itself the most unobjectionable – the theatre – has for many reasons, and owing to very contradictory influences, by no means maintained the comparative place in public estimation to which it is entitled. In a highly civilised nation, it should be the purest, the grandest, the most perfect of national luxuries. It is very far from being so; and therefore it has but a capricious popularity among the highly educated and refined, to whom it should look for its true patronage and encouragement. Fashion will still flock to see a favourite play or a favourite actor – and these are by no means always the best of their kind. But the drama has not kept pace, either in the morals of the scene or the ability of the performers, with our advances in the more refined pleasures of life.¹³²

¹²⁹ 1866 Report. For full title and citation procedure, v. Abbreviations. By the time of the fourth and last nineteenth-century Select Committee, in 1892, Donne had been dead for ten years.

¹³⁰ The last public execution in England, that of Michael Barratt, took place in May 1868. For a description see William H Stacpoole, *Victorian England*, (London: Dean & Son, 1897), pp.183-4. Thackeray is on record as having attended a much earlier hanging – 'Going to See a Man Hanged', *Fraser's Magazine*, July 1840.

¹³¹ *Bow Bells*, 28 January 1867.

¹³² W Lucas Collins, 'Our Amusements', in *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol.C (1866-7), p.698.

Although this view of the theatre as largely decayed and dissolute was widespread, it was not shared by Donne, the chief witness before the 1866 Committee. While admitting some serious causes of its deterioration, he nonetheless championed both playwrights and actors of his day, when compared with their predecessors¹³³. Before examining his evidence to the Committee, it will be helpful to cast an eye over the years of his employment, the experiences of which helped to determine and formulate his views on censorship. The work fluctuated in intensity. Only one year after appointment he was complaining 'I might be dead and buried for any trouble the theatres give me, or for any pay for new pieces; never within my recollection was there such a dearth in the land'.¹³⁴

It was the summer, of course, and even then there were compensations:

'...though I get no money, I do get drink from the theatres: for praise be blest, two of the Saloon managers are also vintners, and one sends me a case of red wine, and the other of white. For what cause the 'mighty knows, since I have been no more civil to them than to others'.¹³⁵

Incidentally, the language of this quotation shows Donne applying to himself a similar censorship to that which he exercised on play scripts; 'praise be blest' and 'the 'mighty' are preciously euphemistic.

The winter season of 1858 brought renewed activity, and the arrival of one of the most troublesome classes of production for an Examiner – pantomime - of which more later¹³⁶. Taken as a whole, 1858 had by no means been a lean year for Donne. There are on file 30 submissions, some unqualified, some indicating Donne alterations, accounting in all for upwards of 200 plays approved for licence. A typical submission of that year from the Examiner to the Lord Chamberlain is that of 2 January;

My Lord,

I have the honour to submit for your Lordship's signature the licences for the undernamed theatrical entertainments – viz:

"A Lucky Hit"	Farce; 1 Act
"A Pleasant Time of It"	Farce; 1 Act

¹³³ See below, pp.83-99, *passim*.

¹³⁴ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 31 July 1858, *Friends* p.225.

¹³⁵ *ibid*.

¹³⁶ See below, pp.79-80.

The MSS of the latter piece has been referred to your Lordship as objectionable. But as the author has given the undertaking to expunge all that was improper in the first copy, I am enabled to recommend it and "The Lucky Hit" for your Lordship's authorisation¹³⁷.

As for Donne directly, so for his superior, 1858 was a busy year. It would appear that the licensing of a theatre, as distinct from a play, was in practice the work of the Comptroller of the Lord Chamberlain's office, rather than that of the Lord Chamberlain, though protocol demanded the ascription of authorisation, or its refusal, to the latter. Some interesting examples survive of relevant correspondence, over the signature of Spencer Ponsonby:

I have made known to the Lord Chamberlain what passed between us on the subject of your wish to renew the application to this office for a theatrical licence for the Rotunda, and I am to inform you that as it appears that the present proprietors, after being corrected and fined and repeatedly warned, systematically persist in a breach of the law by carrying on unlicensed performances in that building, the Lord Chamberlain cannot take the subject into his favourable consideration¹³⁸

The hand of Donne can clearly be seen, as that of the one who brought to the Comptroller's notice the repeated breach of the law. As it can also in another Spencer Ponsonby letter, adding weight to Donne's own position:

Sir,

The Lord Chamberlain has received your letter of the 26th instant, enclosing for his Lordship's consideration a drama intended for representation at the Victoria theatre, entitled "The Discarded Son, or, The Gambler's Progress", which has been advertised by the manager of that theatre for first performance this evening, the advertisement also stating that the drama has "received the licence of the Lord Chamberlain".

The Lord Chamberlain has attentively perused the drama in question [Had he? Or his Examiner?] and has reluctantly come to the conclusion that he cannot grant his licence for its representation. And in making known to you his decision, his Lordship desires me to request that you will convey to the manager his surprise that the great impropriety should have been committed of advertising a drama as having been licensed by the Lord Chamberlain before it had even been submitted for his Lordship's consideration¹³⁹

By the time the 1866 Committee sat, Donne had effectively been censoring plays for seventeen years, and was well able to articulate his approach to the task, before a group charged 'to enquire into the working of the Acts of Parliament for licensing and regulating theatres and places of

¹³⁷ PRO. LC1.

¹³⁸ PRO. LC7/12.

¹³⁹ PRO. LC7/12/

public entertainment in Great Britain, and to report any alteration which may appear desirable’.

Though, no doubt, any random selection of 1866 members of Parliament would have revealed a similar situation, the social composition of the Committee is interesting, and relevant to its proceedings. It included the son of a marquis (Lord Eustace Cecil); Lord Ernest Bruce; a knight bachelor (Sir Arthur Buller); a KCMG (du Cane); three baronets (Lusk, Powell, Selwyn); and a member of the Earl of Orford’s family (Spencer Walpole) . When it came to determining the amusements of the people, what was for their good, and what was to be permitted, it could hardly be claimed that these men (men only, of course) spoke with the voice of those for whom they legislated. Again, in 1866, this was not to be expected.

First of the thirty-four witnesses to be called, the Honourable Spencer Ponsonby (later Ponsonby-Fane), Comptroller of the Lord Chamberlain’s Office, laid down the criteria employed in the examination of plays. They are by now familiar:

The object has been principally to exclude any scriptural subject, or plays in which highwaymen or immorality are exalted, and any personal, or personally political questions (170)

Echoing his superior, Donne stated his reasons for rejecting a play to be that

It is either indecent, or profane, or it is religiously or politically objectionable. (2069)

His ban on religious subjects was absolute:

Both as a matter of morality, and as a matter of taste, I never allow any association with scripture or theology to be introduced into a play (2410)

There is no documentary support for the story, probably apocryphal, though often repeated,¹⁴⁰ that a visitor to Donne’s home found the examiner and his daughters reading plays, and a daughter saying ‘Father! Here’s another “God”’, answered by ‘Strike it out, dear, and write “Heaven”’, but the anecdote rings true to life.

Although, as has been shown, there was broad consensus of practice

¹⁴⁰ e.g., in *Friends*, p.298.

among the nineteenth-century Examiners, an interesting disparity between Donne and his immediate predecessor (Kemble) was revealed by the enquiry. It concerned their respective treatment of *La Dame aux Camélias*¹⁴¹, of which Kemble had passed the operatic version, *La Traviata*, while Donne refused to licence the play itself:

On what grounds was *La Traviata* allowed? – That was not done by the same examiner who refused to license *La Dame aux Camélias* [Donne himself] and Mr John Kemble thought differently and passed *La Traviata*.
But you rejected *La Dame aux Camélias* ? – Yes. (2280-1)

The exchange suggests at least the possibility of a difference between the two friends in their estimates of the play's moral worth¹⁴², quite apart from the new argument deriving from the addition of music, though Donne shared a common, perhaps erroneous, view in this latter respect:

...I think that if there is a *musical* version of a piece, it makes a difference, for the story is then subsidiary to the music and singing.
You have acted on that opinion? – Yes. (2284-5)

Further questioning allowed Donne to introduce another factor into the equation, that of long-standing universal acceptability:

You would license such a subject as "Faust" in the drama? – Yes.
I merely wish to ascertain the principle upon which you act. – Just so. "Faust" is a European story; there may be portions of that story which it would be advisable to cut out for stage representation, but the story is common property. But the story of "La Dame aux Camélias" is also common property, is it not? – I should hardly say that it was as common property as "Faust". Of course, there is this difference to be observed; the drama must deal with the exhibition of human passion, and when that passion is represented as leading to good or evil consequences, that is a legitimate object; but in cases where it is insinuated that, after all, wrongs may be right or, after all, not so very wrong; that becomes a far more serious question. (2303-5)

In stated theory, and consequent practice, Donne shows himself to be both a man of his times, sharing many of the prejudices of his class, and yet one who at the same time displayed occasional and sometimes

¹⁴¹ This play had been, and continued to be, a thorn in the side of the Examiner. In a departmental note of 16 July 1858 Donne wrote, after complaining that a theatre lessee had invaded his privacy by turning up on his doorstep to obtain a licence, '...with regard to the play, it turns out to be an old story, and it was Mr Webster's profession of extreme novelty on his bills that led me unavoidably to suppose that it was an original drama. *The Lady of the Camélias* at the Lyceum is the same as Lord Breadalbane sanctioned last year for the Rochester and Cardiff theatres, and is a shade more moral than the opera of *La Traviata*, inasmuch as the heroine is married, or at least a marriage is hinted...'

¹⁴² Donne had no time for it – 'My old enemy *La Dame aux Camélias* has at last escaped from her four years' bondage, and is now performing at [?as] the opera *La Traviata*, and in the full bloom of her original horrors!' WBD > Fanny Kemble, 28 May 1856, *Friends* p.197. Donne first banned the play in 1853, when he was still only Deputy Examiner; hence the "four years' bondage".

unexpected independence. Although the one statement which has persisted from his answers to the 1866 enquiry is his mistaken belief that the *double-entendre* was a dying form of wit, his overall evidence, corroborated by his many writings on the theatre and dramatic themes, shows him to have been a sensitive and sympathetic surveyor of the theatrical scene. His integrity was unquestioned, and of all the nineteenth-century Examiners, he stands out as the most effective, painstaking and sensible; worthy of the tributes paid to him in all quarters.

Tributes were not, nonetheless, universal. At the end of his first year in office, the theatre manager and dramatic critic, John Hollingshead, took advantage of his position as a staff writer for Dickens's *Household Words* to ridicule Donne's role in an unsigned satirical article.¹⁴³ He claimed that, given the choice, he would opt to be the Examiner of Plays, 'the single barrier left to stem the tide of written impropriety and represented vice'. Having extolled the three-fold role, by now familiar, in mocking terms – 'It is not only in the capacity of moral sentinel that the licenser of plays may be regarded with envy; he has another function. To his care is confided the safe custody of Church and State, the preservation of political dignity, and the protection of royalty from the rude attacks of unscrupulous dramatic satirists'.[himself?]. Shifting gear, Hollingshead then postulated the existence of 'a considerable body of men' without 'veneration for the old landmarks of public safety and governmental checks...To persons holding these opinions...the office of examiner of plays must appear to be one of the most feeble, the most ineffectual, the most unnecessary and the most ridiculous'. Making the valid point that censorship draws attention to and excites interest in the censored material, he claimed that interposing the voice of authority was 'like holding up the frailest parasol to protect the head from a shower of red-hot lava and cinders dropping from a fiery volcano'. For all his given reasons, Hollingshead delivers his final blow. 'I would gladly and willingly, as I have said before, accept the appointment of examiner of plays...that I

¹⁴³ 'An Official Scarecrow', *Household Words*, 24 July 1858, 143-4. Hollingshead was nonetheless among those who applied for the examinership in 1895 (*Censorship*, p.35).

might lock up the department, and put the key in my pocket, writing outside the door those familiar words, "Gone away; return uncertain".

Much nearer the end of Donne's time in office, one of his most celebrated antagonists was W S Gilbert who, in 1871, suffered along with fellow-librettists from Donne's wholesale excision of political allusions from the pantomimes of that year. The *Era* printed side by side (14 January) Donne's defence of his action and Gilbert's attack on it. Ridiculing the absurdity of allowing transparent euphemisms, while banning the word for which they stood, Gilbert pretended to believe that Donne avoided the abolition of his office by the volume of his cuts and alterations. He observed, 'I have no particular desire to bring about this catastrophe [abolition], but at the same time I am unwilling that it should be averted at my expense'.

The following year the two clashed again, over the production of Gilbert's *The Happy Land*, written in collaboration with Gilbert Arthur à Beckett and performed at the Court Theatre. Licensed by Donne as only generally political, it soon became specifically and personally so as the director, Miss Litton, ensured that the leading three characters, Messrs G, L, and A, were instantly recognised as leading lights in the government – Gladstone, Lowe and Ayrton. The incident is fully recorded by Stephens¹⁴⁴, who reproduces the specious device by which Miss Litton, though seemingly bowing to the Lord Chamberlain's personal directive, actually flouted it. It is interesting that in an interview to which she was summoned by Spencer Ponsonby (the Lord Chamberlain's Comptroller), she claimed that the whole incident had been a 'try-on', to which she had been urged by the authors.

Gilbert would again poke fun at the exercise of censorship, in the opera *Utopia Limited*, in which one of the six model Englishmen brought to the glamorous South Sea island by the king's daughter, is thus identified:

This is a Lord High Chamberlain,
Of purity the gauge –
He'll cleanse our Court [pun?] from moral stain
And purify our stage.

¹⁴⁴ Stephens, *Censorship*, pp.119-122.

Surprisingly, long after Donne's death, Gilbert declared himself a believer in censorship, when giving evidence before the 1909 Joint Parliamentary Committee on the subject:

THE CHAIRMAN (Mr Herbert Samuel): Why do you think a censorship of some kind is desirable?

SIR WILLIAM GILBERT: Because I think that the stage is not a proper pulpit from which to disseminate doctrines of anarchism, socialism and agnosticism. It is not the proper platform upon which to discuss questions of adultery and free love before a mixed audience.

Whether the answer expressed a reaction against the relatively new theatrical liberty exemplified in the work of such as Shaw and Ibsen, or whether it was merely the expression of age and knighthood, it is amusing to see Satan rebuking sin!

Such experiences as these clashes with Hollingshead and Gilbert pointed up the tensions inherent in the role of Examiner, which meant that censorship, though providing Donne with a living, was an uncongenial occupation. It was made the more so by the imposition of an even less attractive duty, that of Inspector of Theatres. This must now receive attention.

'I AM FALLEN ON EVIL TIMES'

The Lord Chamberlain's control of theatrical safety and comfort in London developed gradually¹⁴⁵, but its formal establishment was an inevitable consequence of the proliferation of theatres following the 1843 Theatres Act. This removed the privileged monopoly formerly exercised by the patent theatres and also extended the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain over a much wider area of London. In 1855 the institution of an annual inspection of theatres attempted to ensure compliance with conditions attaching to their licensing, and in 1857, with the appointment of Donne as Examiner of Plays, the rôle of Inspector of Theatres was officially added to his remit:-

On the demise of Mr. Kemble, Mr. William B. Donne, who had acted some years as Deputy Reader of Plays, was appointed Examiner of Plays (on 27 March 1857, see appt. book 130). The Lord Chamberlain made the following Rules for the future Government of the office of Reader:

1st That he shall reside in London, so as to be accessible:

2nd That he shall attend personally at the Lord Chamberlain's office at least once a week to examine the Playbills, and see by attendance at the Theatres when necessary, that the alterations and rules made by the Lord Chamberlain are actually carried out:

3rd That the Inspection of Theatres commenced by the Lord Chamberlain's office in 1855, shall be annually made by the Reader, the object being to secure improved ventilation, better egress and ingress, lighting, general security and comfort of the public.

These Rules are entered in full Warrant No. 36, p.143.¹⁴⁶

In the light of this, Donne's actual warrant of appointment is interesting in that it makes no mention of the inspectorial function:

¹⁴⁵ Richard Findlater, *Banned! A Review of Theatrical Censorship in Britain*, (London, Panther, 1968; MacGibbon & Kee, 1967¹), pp.71-2.

¹⁴⁶ PRO.LC7/14/2.

March 31, 1857

Whereas in consequence of an Act of Parliament made in the 10th year of His late Majesty King George II, for the better regulation of the stage, I am empowered to constitute, nominate and appoint an officer to examine all plays, tragedies, comedies, operas, farces and interludes, or any other entertainment of the stage of what denomination soever;

These are, therefore, to require you to swear and admit William Bodham Donne, Esq., into the place and quality of an Examiner of all and every the above recited plays, tragedies, comedies, operas, farces, interludes, or other entertainment of the stage of what denomination soever, in the room of John Mitchell Kemble, deceased;

To have, hold, exercise, and enjoy the same, together with all salaries, fees, and other emoluments to the said office that may arise, or in any way legally appertain. And for so doing this shall be your warrant.

Given under my hand and seal this 27th day of March 1857, in the 20th year of Her Majesty's reign.

(Signed) Breadalbane
Lord Chamberlain.

Donne was by no means pleased with this unsought addition to his duties. In 1859, he bemoaned the necessity of moving from Blackheath to central London (a move which he might have made anyhow after the death of his mother, but which he attributed to the demands of the rules quoted above):-

The Inspector of Theatres is a very different employé from the *Examiner of Plays* and the necessity of going to Town at least twice a week, often thrice or four times, adds considerably to my rent...my theatrical business demands an office, and though the Lord Chamberlain ought to find me one in St. James's Palace, he won't or can't, because the Duchess of Cambridge occupies the best rooms in that ancient but inconvenient building.¹⁴⁷

The previous year he had complained to Fanny Kemble about the hazards of inspection:

I am fallen on evil times: I am paid no more, indeed rather less, than my predecessors in the Examinership, but I am set to do as much work as the whole series, since there was a censor, ever performed. I descend into the bowels of the earth: I mount upon such pinnacles as Satan stands on in "Paradise Regained": I inhale evil smells: I cross dangerous places: "sometimes I fall into the water and sometimes into the fire", and all for £500 a year¹⁴⁸.

Years later, the same complaint was still being voiced to daughter Blanche:

All last week visiting theatres... horrible. I never had such a job. We took in the dressing-rooms this year. Talk of Ireland and pig-sties – they are Dutch cleanliness compared to some of these rooms. I have been sick and dizzy half-a-

¹⁴⁷ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 10 January 1859; *Friends*, p.231.

¹⁴⁸ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 9 September 1858; *Friends*, pp.226-7.

dozen times a day. I have imported into our own house several varieties of biting and stinging insects.¹⁴⁹

Two years later, the end appeared in sight:

I have been "hearing, consulting and advising with" the chief of the Lord Chamberlain's Department on the new Theatrical Licence Bill shortly to be laid before the Houses. If it pass, I shall have a good deal more work, and perhaps a little more pay. One good thing is that the Inspectorship of the buildings will be taken off my shoulders, and as it gave me a great deal of trouble, was yearly increasing in amount, and brought me in 0, I am well pleased to be rid of it.¹⁵⁰

It was not to be, however,¹⁵¹ and three years later, it was Blakesley who was again to hear of the matter:-

I have just completed the annual survey of 35 Theatres – very satisfactorily, inasmuch as the Report is at least one half of it commendatory, and the other half very slight in the articles of neglect or omission...There was indeed a sad finale. On the last day of examination a poor property-man overbalanced himself at the top of a stone stair-case, fell to the bottom and fractured his skull. It is a stair-case I had protested against for some years – the flights are too long, the breaks by landings too few: and the managers – now extinct – would not put up hand-rails, though indeed in this case they would not have availed, as he fell down the middle, and too rapidly to have caught at even a straw. He was not killed on the spot, but survived four days.¹⁵²

Despite his aversion to the duty of inspection, Donne took it very seriously, as is evidenced by the valuable records reproduced in Davis's account of the Britannia Theatre, Hoxton.¹⁵³ From his description of the 1858 rebuilt version as 'one of the most spacious and accommodating theatres in the metropolis', by way of his first annual inspection (1859),¹⁵⁴ his approval and support for the Lanes, who had re-opened the house, was constant. Not that all could continue without trouble.

¹⁴⁹ 19 September 1865, *Friends*, p.268.

¹⁵⁰ WBD > J W Blakesley, 18 April 1867, *Friends*, p.273.

¹⁵¹ Only with the passing of the 1878 *Metropolis Management and Buildings Act Amendment Act*, four years after Donne's retirement, did responsibility for theatre inspection pass from the Lord Chamberlain to the local authority, though for some time thereafter the Examiner of Plays was expected to be present at inspections (v.Stephens, *Censorship*...p.164,n.41 for Pigott's request to be excused).

¹⁵² WBD > J W Blakesley, 29 September 1870, *Friends*, p.273, *Blakesley*, 115.

¹⁵³ Jim Davis (ed.), *The Britannia Diaries 1863-1875: Selections from the Diaries of Frederick C Wilton*, (London: Society for Theatrical Research, 1992). Hereafter cited as *Britannia Diaries*.

¹⁵⁴ 'It would be very ungracious to Mr S Lane...merely to record "no defects". For in every respect, solidity of structure, commodious interior, number and facility of exits, precautions against casualties of every kind, uniformly good ventilation, and in everything conducing to the security and comfort of the public, this theatre, since its re-erection, stands pre-eminent" *Report*, PRO,LCP,LC1/70.

On the 6th January 1865, during a performance of the Christmas pantomime, a 'ballet-girl', Mrs Ellen Geary, was badly burned, her flimsy dress being ignited by the wing gas-lights as she ascended a pillar. Donne acted promptly, a letter within the week insisting that wire guards be attached to all lights within reach of performers.

As long ago as 1844, the risk of fire caused by gas-lighting in theatres had become a cause of general concern. David Jennings Vipan, one of Donne's friends, wrote to him at that time of the death of Clara Webster, a danseuse, who 'died of injuries received in being burnt on [sic] the theatre...she had been seduced by a Mr Bunce, and regarded her injuries as God's vengeance'.¹⁵⁵ The clerical man-about-town and gossip, William Henry Brookfield, wrote to his wife

I am always a good deal moved – not to tears – but I think a good deal about it, when an actress dies. Poor Clara Webster was very pretty and was a good deal talked about. Only three days before I had been reading bits of scandal about her; as how can a pretty actress escape; today she is dead – and so stupidly.¹⁵⁶

The Lord Chamberlain's Office had been exercised for some time about the hazards caused by gas lighting in theatres. A whole chapter is devoted to the matter in Rees's excellent monograph.¹⁵⁷, while readers of *The Era* were alerted to it by being offered a recipe for fireproofing ladies' dresses with sulphate of ammonia, at a cost of 4d to 6d for a full dress.¹⁵⁸ Rees castigates the Lord Chamberlain, and by implication his Examiner of Plays, for inconsistency and laxity in addressing the problem, and it may well be that the enforcement of undoubtedly existent legal powers, rather than the offering of advice and injunction, might have led to a tighter control of the unruly medium. Nonetheless, Donne's attendance at coroners' inquests into fatalities and reports to his chief make it clear that he personally took the incidents seriously.

¹⁵⁵ Vipan > WBD, 21 December 1844, *JP*.

¹⁵⁶ Frances M Brookfield, *The Cambridge "Apostles"*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1906). & Sons, 1906, p.62.

¹⁵⁷ Terence Rees, *Theatre Lighting in the Age of Gas*, (London, Society for Theatre Research, 1978), ch.11.

¹⁵⁸ J.L.L., *The Era*, 4 February 1859, p.9.

An anonymous article, 'Columbines and Casualties' (*Saturday Review*, February 20, 1864) reveals that the Lord Chamberlain had recently convened a meeting with theatre managers to address the problem. Although no attribution exists, it could well, from internal evidence, have been written by Donne himself. (He was, according to Bevington,¹⁵⁹ the author of at least twenty-six contributions to the paper). Questions were asked in Parliament and when a columbine, Mary Ann Thorne, was burned to death at the Pavilion Theatre, Whitechapel, the Lord Chamberlain's office considered a prosecution for manslaughter, as a means of enforcing tighter safety regulations.¹⁶⁰ They were certainly needed. Fitzgerald's statistics for the first decade following the introduction of gas-lighting show theatre fires exactly doubling in number.¹⁶¹

The *minutiae* of Donne's charges to theatrical managers testify to meticulous annual inspections – the removal of obstructive seats, the alteration of door openings, the securing of hanging pipework – nothing seems to have escaped his eye, aided as it was, by the eye of an accompanying official, often his immediate superior, The Hon. Spencer Ponsonby. (It was Ponsonby, not Donne, who prepared the licences for theatres). All requests, suggestions and demands were rigorously followed up to ensure compliance. In the light of Donne's letter to his daughter (pp. 69-70 and n.139 *supra*), it is interesting to read in the less than commendatory report of the *Britannia* inspection of 1865:-

All gas-piping or tin-piping to be removed from the Dressing-Rooms as they are very dangerous from their material and their place. It is again (a third time) to be lamented that this excellently constructed and planned theatre should be in so dirty a condition. The Dressing Rooms, staircases and passages leading to them urgently demand cleaning and more ventilation, as they are very discreditable to the management and are pestilential. It is understood by the Inspector that estimates are taken for cleansing before Christmas next – as little time as possible should be lost in doing this most necessary and long-deferred work.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Merle Mowbray Bevington, *The Saturday Review 1855-1868; Representative Educated Opinion in Victorian England*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966²).

¹⁶⁰ *Britannia Diaries*, p.86, p.223, nn. 1,2.

¹⁶¹ Percy Fitzgerald, *World Behind the Scenes*, (London: 1881).

¹⁶² *Britannia Diaries*, p.225, n.9.

In a pencilled note Donne added ‘...I told him [Wilton, stage manager] that the dirty state of the theatre was becoming serious – and that the Lord Chamberlain would order another inspection shortly to report on this’.

There can be little doubt that the post-1843 proliferation of theatres in London, and the extension to the lord Chamberlain of mandatory powers of inspection, not only increased Donne’s responsibilities enormously, but also created the growing dissatisfaction with his role that led, in 1874, to his abandoning it.

One unexpected outcome of his being a Court official requires treatment on its own – the direction of the Windsor Theatricals.

THE WINDSOR THEATRICALS¹⁶³

Queen Victoria's great interest in the theatre features in all the biographical literature, and that aspect which led, in 1848, to Christmas command performances at Windsor Castle has also been well documented.¹⁶⁴ It appears that the Prince Consort shared this interest, and we shall later see evidence of his personal involvement in the production of Windsor Plays. The subject of this chapter is Donne's direction of the plays during the Christmas seasons 1859/60 and 1860/61. As will be seen, the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle have revealed considerable evidence, most of which has not appeared before. Although his post as Examiner of Plays could well have brought him to the notice of the Royal Family, as it obviously did to more than one of the Court officials, the precise circumstances in which Donne was invited to assume responsibility for the Windsor Theatricals are as unclear today as they were to him at the time.¹⁶⁵ Until 1858, the direction had been in the hands of the actor, Charles Kean, who had played in the original Windsor performance, in 1849. The Queen

¹⁶³ The substance of this chapter has appeared as my article 'The Censor turns Manager: William Bodham Donne and the Windsor Theatricals', in *Theatre Notebook* 55. (2001), 37-47.

¹⁶⁴ John Chapman, *The Court Theatre and the Royal Dramatic Record*, (London: 1849). Benjamin Webster, *The Series of Dramatic Entertainments Performed by Royal Command before HM The Queen, HRH Prince Albert, the Royal Family and Court at Windsor Castle 1848-49*, (London: 1849).

George Rowell, *Queen Victoria Goes to the Theatre*, (London: Paul Elek, 1978) ch.4.

¹⁶⁵ 'I have been going to and fro almost daily to Windsor castle, or otherwise employed on errands therewith connected. For the Queen conveyed to me through Sir Charles Phipps [Keeper of the Privy Purse] such an unmistakable hint that I should manage Her theatre that there was no possibility of drawing back, and so I am for a load of most unlooked-for responsibility and care. I cannot conceive who put it into HM's head'. WBD > Fanny Kemble, 20 November 1859. *Friends*, p.233.

had a great affection for him, and on his death in June 1868, wrote in her own hand to his widow:

I recall most vividly to my mind the many hours of great intellectual enjoyment which your lamented and talented husband (who did so much for his profession) and you afforded to my dear husband and myself in bygone happy days. They will never be forgotten, and I shall dwell with melancholy pleasure on the recollection of them'.¹⁶⁶

The anonymous reminiscences of a courtier of the time may throw some light on the replacement of Kean:

...These true facts of the Queen's most reasonable wish to make adequate compensation for her pastimes go far to disprove the credibility – if indeed any contradiction were now needed – of the scandalous statements once made by Douglas Jerrold in *Lloyd's* newspaper with regard to the payment of actors who appeared before the Queen. The affair, which happened at the time that Charles Kean was 'Master of the Revels' at Court (a part for which he was chosen by the Queen in 1848) first got wind through a subordinate actor, who had lately appeared in a small part at Windsor, one day appearing in a police court and offering the presiding magistrate, as a contribution to the poor box, the paltry sum of a few shillings and some odd pence, saying that it was his fee for acting before the Queen. Much comment was made, and Jerrold worked himself into a white heat over the matter, which gave the Queen the deepest annoyance and pain. It was subsequently proved that the payment of the actors, as well as the engaging of them, was entrusted to Charles Kean, who cut down prices and filled his pockets at Her Majesty's expense.¹⁶⁷

In their accounts of the Windsor theatricals,¹⁶⁸ neither the late George Rowell (a major theme), nor Foulkes (a minimal concern), alludes to this charge, though Rowell does say that 'Kean had disqualified himself'. Whether the charge of peculation had any substance cannot now be known, but the allegation, along with Kean's disappointment at not receiving a knighthood, may well have led to his resignation. It made sense that his replacement should be someone from outside the jealousies and rivalries of the theatrical profession.

Jerrold's animosity towards Kean was fuelled by differences over the staging of a Jerrold play. (Professor Michael Slater, in conversation). Jerrold also objected strongly and vocally to Kean's stranglehold, as Director, on the selections and invitations to perform at Windsor. He must

¹⁶⁶ Quoted in Sidney Lee, *Queen Victoria, A Biography*, (London: 1902), pp.194-5. Lee claims that Donne was appointed Director of the Windsor Theatricals in 1857, but it is not so. That was the year of his appointment as Examiner of Plays.

¹⁶⁷ *The Private Life of the Queen, by One of Her Majesty's Servants*, (London: 1892), pp. 90-91.

¹⁶⁸ George Rowell, *op. cit.*, ch. 4
Richard Foulkes, *Church and Stage in Victorian England*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1997)

have been pleased when Donne took an early opportunity to invite Jerrold's friend, Phelps, to contribute to the festivities.

This *cause célèbre* – for such it was – may well have accounted for Donne's hasty and seemingly unexpected appointment, and certainly helps to explain his own obvious concern over the payment of those appearing at Windsor:

Mr Ellis [George Ellis, Kean's acting-manager, whom Donne had re-engaged] and myself have arrived independently of each other, at a solution of the question which I mentioned to you on Friday last – the payment of the actors who come en troupe. He thinks that they will be perfectly satisfied and made gratified also, if they are paid for the evenings on which the Windsor Plays are to be represented, besides their ordinary salary, twice the amount – i.e., one-third more than they have hitherto received.¹⁶⁹

In the same memo, Donne allows himself a mild dig at the situation which had obtained with his predecessor:

On looking over the tariff, I find that this [the proposed new scheme] will not increase the expenditure by more than £20: and since Mr Kean was paid for his acting, as well as allowed for closing his theatre, and you now have an unsalaried Director, the difference will be diminished; and we may perhaps curtail, without prejudice to the general instructions with which you have honoured me, some of the lesser issues as well.

Remuneration was clearly a major issue. To refuse a royal command was neither easy nor wise, but the economics of obedience have been hinted at above. Not only had an entire company, actors and ancillaries, to be transported and employed, but, obviously, their normal presence at a London theatre had to be suspended and the theatre temporarily closed. Donne's proposal for compensation was happily accepted by the recipients.

Other problems created by the transfer of plays and players between the Castle and a London venue were not so easily dealt with. In 1861, the drama *Wallenstein* was being considered. Donne himself had translated the Schiller original and was reducing the trilogy to a more presentable length. He was hoping that Samuel Phelps and his Sadler's Wells company would perform, but –

Phelps says, 'If you can make me a play that will run at Sadler's Wells after its introduction at Windsor – good: but if it would not run as a public entertainment, not so good, since I and my company would not have time to study such a drama for one performance.'¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ WBD > Phipps, 20 November 1859. RA PP/VIC/A246/5.

¹⁷⁰ WBD > Phipps, 25 February 1861. RA PP/VIC/1861/7061.

Phipps did not share Phelps's uneasiness concerning the commercial viability of the play:

Phelps is, like all actors, short-sighted, I think, even to his own interest. It is very probable that it might be difficult to make *Wallenstein* an attractive play to 'the multitude', but the fact of it being produced at Windsor Castle, especially for Miss Heath and him to play in, would raise them both in public opinion, and what with the Classical set who would be curious to see the poem on the stage, and the Royalty Hunters, who would go to see anything that has been acted at Windsor, it will be certain to draw houses for a certain time. However, he must do nothing unwillingly or that would give him a power afterwards of saying: I lost by the Windsor Plays.¹⁷¹

Phelps's Sadler's Wells company was one of those introduced to Windsor by Donne, and he was anxious to assure Phipps that the initial appointment, and supervision, for a performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, had been appropriate and effective:

I trust that not a word was said before the curtain last night unmeet to be spoken before such an audience. I saw each of the performers, whose parts respectively required cuttings beyond the usual cuttings of the prompt book, before they went on, and cautioned them. Mr Phelps himself had taken great care in revising...As this has been the first appearance of the Sadler's Wells company at Windsor Castle I will add that a more quiet and well-behaved troupe cannot be. Of course, I am now alluding to the inferiors.¹⁷²

It early became apparent that there was a problem in juggling invitations to companies and individuals, together with the choice of dramas, so as to avoid the semblance of partiality and favouritism:

There is considerable difficulty in avoiding the appearance of favouring one or two theatres at the expense – or, as it may be construed – to the prejudice of others. But the narrow range of choice arises from the fact that only three or four theatres just now possess sufficient forces or appropriate pieces for such occasions as the Windsor Plays. For example, Shakspeare [*sic*, and often] has already been represented this year before Her Majesty; it may be thought desirable to confer a similar honour on the national drama by selecting a classical three-act comedy. In such a case, the Haymarket and Sadler's Wells theatres alone afford the means of representation.

Mr Phelps has three excellent characters in the following comedies:- viz, *Road to Ruin* (Mr Thornton), *Man of the World* (Sir Pertinax), *School for Scandal* (Sir Peter Teazle). Perhaps I may without presumption add that I have not seen the *School for Scandal* so well acted, as it now can only be by the Sadler's Wells company, since 1827-8, when it was performed at Covent Garden Theatre¹⁷³...The Sadler's Wells Lady Teazle (Mrs C Young) has gone over to the Princess's Theatre, but she might well be supplied by Miss Amy Sedgwick, or (time allowed) I should not at all doubt (Miss Sedgwick declining) the capability of Miss Heath.

Similar observations, as far as regards the ability of the company to represent, apply to the Haymarket troupe and the *Bold Stroke for a Wife*, but in each case

¹⁷¹ Phipps > WBD, 26 April 1861; RA PP/VIC/1861/7061.

¹⁷² WBD > Phipps, 3 December 1859. RA PP/VIC/A246/9.

¹⁷³ The confident drama critic was then twenty years of age! - 'without presumption' ?

there is the possible dilemma of employing twice in one season the same performers.¹⁷⁴

There were other problems, relating to personalities, and Donne's tact and sensitivity were needed to solve them. Mention has already been made of George Ellis, Kean's acting-manager, whose services Donne had retained on assuming the Windsor directorship. Only months into office, he was made aware that Ellis was *persona non grata* with some of the theatre managers involved in command performances.

I found by experience last year, i.e., 1859-60, that Mr Ellis, though to me most useful and *sans reproche*, was not very popular in the theatrical profession. So this year, I have kept him as much as possible in the rear and put myself in the van – indeed, beyond seeing to a rehearsal or so, and superintending the stage business at the Castle, I have left Ellis nothing to do, either in the way of application to managers or correspondence with performers, and this arrangement has worked well.¹⁷⁵

Ellis himself was happy in his association with Donne,¹⁷⁶ and may have been unaware of his unacceptability in certain circles. That problem probably owed little or nothing to him, and much to an unworthy desire on the part of at least one theatrical company to oust him in favour of its own stage-manager. Donne was alive to the situation, and was not to be brow-beaten:

The jealousy of Ellis is inveterate – a portion that I believe he inherits from Mr Kean – so that if I am at the helm in 1861-2 I shall confine him to the duties at Windsor, and take on myself all the duties at this terminus [London]. I left him, indeed, during the last season, very little to do, but that led to several sparring matches, especially with the Haymarket company. This is no fault of Ellis's, as far as I can see, while to myself his services are invaluable. He knows every turn in the labyrinth of management of people as 'peculiar' as the Jews, either BC or AD, can have been. The gist of the Haymarket people is, I know, to force me, for my own quiet, to cashier Ellis, and to bring down, when they are summoned, their own stage-manager, but it won't do. Ellis knows thoroughly his business at Windsor, and it cannot be learned by one or two trials in a season. I must not include Buckstone himself [manager of the Haymarket] among the insurgents; understanding that after the last performance there was a 'revolt in the harem' menaced. I wrote to Mr Buckstone, and received from him the enclosed satisfactory reply. You will perceive that I assumed in my letter that I was the unpopular person, as Ellis is for the time only my servant.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ WBD > Phipps, 3 December 1859. RA PP/VIC/A246/9.

¹⁷⁵ WBD > Phipps, 4 January 1860. RA PP/VIC/A246.

¹⁷⁶ In a letter to Phipps, 13 February 1860, Ellis writes: '...The association of my name with Mr Donne's is a circumstance, too, of which I may justly feel a little proud; and I consider I am bound to acknowledge that to his uniformly kind and genial disposition, united with a thorough and unceasing desire to please all parties, the success that has attended our joint labours, is necessarily to be attributed'. Surprising literary felicity!

¹⁷⁷ WBD > Phipps, 12 February 1861. RA PP/VIC/A246.

Sadly, neither part of the Buckstone correspondence concerning Ellis has survived, but it would seem that Donne acted firmly and loyally.

Problems of a different order arose from the personal involvement of the Queen and Prince Albert in both the selection and performance of plays. Almost immediately on appointment as Director, Donne complained to Fanny Kemble – a leading actress who would understand the issue – of a last-minute switch in the choice of the piece to be presented, an occurrence which was to be a constant irritant throughout his administration at Windsor:

This letter is two posts later than I intended, but you must pardon a man perplexed in the extreme with changes of purpose at headquarters, the Queen exercising the full privilege of her sex and station in altering her will and pleasure¹⁷⁸

Scant notice was often given of the commanded bill of fare, with consequent inconvenience both for the Director and for the participants:

The Prince Consort commanded me yesterday to have *Delicate Ground* and *The Contested Election* performed on the 14th inst., next Friday week – Mr Grieve can be ready with the scenery and the Haymarket company with their parts, on that evening. But I much regret to add that Mr and Mrs Mathews, who sustain the principal parts in the latter, while he has the chief part in the former of these dramas, will then be performing in Manchester. Should they be required to appear at Windsor Castle on the 14th inst., I am afraid that Mr Knowles, the manager of the Theatre Royal, Manchester, would expect a compensation for closing his house.

I think it right also to point out that next week being appropriated to the Cattle Show [Smithfield Fat Stock Show?] is looked upon by managers as a sort of harvest week, in which they generally have overflowing houses. While Mr Buckstone drew my attention to the circumstance, he added that he would most cheerfully forgo any contingent advantage to be derived from the presence of the exhibitors and spectators at the Show, if Her Majesty required his presence at Windsor.¹⁷⁹ I shall hear tomorrow from Mr C Mathews whether Mr Buckstone's information be correct; and also whether Miss Swanborough can be ready with the character of Pauline in *Delicate Ground* on the 14th inst.. Of her ability to play it I sustain no doubt, as the part is a short and easy one.¹⁸⁰

Two days later, the commanded piece had been changed, and Donne's declaration of necessary obedience was tinged with just a touch of exasperation, not just at the last-minute substitution for the two plays already arranged and put in hand, but at an apparent instruction to vet the script for propriety:

I am in receipt of your letter containing Her Majesty's command for *Babes in the Wood* at Windsor Castle on the 14th inst., and I have given the necessary instructions to all persons concerned in the representation of that piece. I will

¹⁷⁸ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 20 December 1859, *Friends*, pp.234-5.

¹⁷⁹ Perhaps Kean was not the only actor-manager to hope for the royal accolade!

¹⁸⁰ WBD > Grey [*vice* Phipps], 4 December 1860. RA PP/VIC/A246.

again this morning read through the manuscript, although I am sure that there is no impropriety in it. And moreover, I will send with the messenger from Buckingham Palace the Examiner's copy, in case His Royal Highness the Prince Consort should desire to inspect it himself.¹⁸¹

Confidence in the innocence of a pantomime script was misplaced, as Donne might have suspected from his general practice as Examiner, and two days later he was eating humble pie:

I have received the manuscript of *Babes in the Wood*...I have the prompt copy which mends matters considerably, inasmuch as it cuts some half-dozen characters, and several entire scenes, one or two of which bordered on the objectionable, and which I should have had to modify in rehearsal. I shall attend the rehearsal tomorrow in person, not liking to leave the matter this time to my stage-manager. I hope we shall not come to grief on Friday, though I don't expect much joy.¹⁸²

It would appear that the referral to the Palace had borne fruit. Had Teutonic efficiency found something overlooked by the Director which might offend the sovereign? In any event, three days before a performance is little time enough for changes to the script and business, even for a seasoned and professional cast. 'Royal censorship' is well documented by Rowell¹⁸³, who makes it clear that the Queen was concerned not only, and perhaps not primarily, with lapses from decorum, but with possible causes of offence to visiting dignitaries, not least her royal relatives.

Another royal propensity which was to call for reluctant obedience from the Director was the Queen's fondness for certain actors and actresses. Her approval of Amy Sedgwick ('Miss Sedgwick acts Julia admirably') drew Donne's own very different estimate of that actress:

I quite agree in your opinion of Miss Sedgwick. She will tragedy-queen Lady Blanche. Last year she tormented me sorely in *The Hunchback*. But for orders neither to be answered nor questioned, I should never bring her down to Windsor.¹⁸⁴

His assessment was shared not only by Grey, the recipient of that memorandum, but by Buckstone, from whom he seems to have been taking soundings on the subject:

Miss Amy Sedgwick has never play'd in *London Assurance* at this theatre or anywhere in London. She *has* play'd Beatrice (*Much Ado*) and Constance (*Love*

¹⁸¹ WBD > Grey, 6 December 1860. RA PP/VIC/A246.

¹⁸² WBD > Grey, 10 December 1860. RA PP/VIC/A246.

¹⁸³ George Rowell, *Queen Victoria*...pp.62-4.

¹⁸⁴ WBD > Grey, 10 December 1860. RA PP/VIC/A246.

Chase), her range of characters as yet are few [*sic*]. Rosalind she has play'd (not good).

Donne's diplomacy continued to be necessary for keeping happy the various participants in the theatricals:

As regards Mr Grieve, I ventured to use (I hope not abuse) a little discretionary power, and when I communicated to the performers the Queen's message, I thanked and applauded him for his theatre. Had they been commended, and his services passed over in silence on that occasion, I thought he might be more than usually 'Grieve'.¹⁸⁵

There was another feature of the Windsor Theatricals which in 1860 caused some embarrassment and annoyance to their Director. It was the custom for the cast and others, after the show, to be entertained to supper, at the Queen's expense. Donne would chair the suppers and could usually report, with satisfaction, 'nor was the commodity of laughter by any means scant'. On one occasion, however, things went badly wrong:

I am inexpressibly annoyed at finding that among the actors' supper party on Thursday last there was someone who had the bad taste to report our proceedings. Hitherto the papers have simply stated the titles of the plays and the names of the actors employed at Windsor castle. As I cannot fix upon, nor indeed suspect the culprit on the occasion, the nuisance is the greater. And perhaps if I were to sift the matter, I might make bad worse by exciting the jealousy of the newspapers about their assumed and supposed privileges of invading privacy.¹⁸⁶

It seems that Donne's address at table had received adverse comment, and he was at pains, with supporting evidence, to show that nothing untoward had been said:

The printed scrap is from the *Era* newspaper. The script notes are those which I had beside me at the supper, and which I referred to before rising to propose each toast. Therefore I am certain that the Walking Jew metaphor in the former, is the reporter's, and not my figure of speech. As I have considerable experience in the use of the pen, and also some in that of the tongue, and as I am old-fashioned enough to think that words should be well-designed before they are written or uttered, I am quite sure that I never floundered on such a clumsy metaphor...my principal annoyance is...the impertinence of reporting proceedings strictly private.

Tantalisingly, the report cannot be traced. It was certainly not in the *Era*, and the number of alternative locations is legion. It did, however, lead Donne to record for Phipps the toasts to which he refers, fulsome, but innocuous:

¹⁸⁵ WBD > Phipps, 1 December 1860. RA PP/VIC/A246.

¹⁸⁶ WBD > Phipps, 2 December 1860. RA PP/VIC/A246.

1. The Health of Her Majesty, our Royal and Gracious Hostess on this occasion, who has always shown Herself a liberal and enlightened patroness of the national drama, and who, by bringing thus perennially to Her home its plays and performers, manifests Her continued and cordial interest in its welfare.
2. Of His Royal Highness the Prince Consort who, uniformly active in the advancement of science, literature and art, and remarkable for his attainments in them all, is no less an intelligent and zealous patron of the art to which sculpture, painting and poetry contribute – the art which is professed and adorned by the Ladies and Gentlemen to whom I have the honour of proposing the Health of the Prince Consort.
3. The Prince of Wales and the rest of the Royal Family at home and abroad. His Royal Highness may justly be ranked among efficient actors on the stage of the world; seeing he has so recently represented to the transatlantic possessions of the Crown and to the United States the character of an English Gentleman – dignified, self-respecting, accomplished, graceful and good humoured. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, etc..

Industry brought its reward, and at the close of the 1859/60 series, royal approval was tangibly expressed:

May I request of you the favour to convey to Her Majesty my most humble and grateful thanks for the beautiful gift which I received yesterday. It will be a source of perpetual pleasure to me – both as a memorial of Her Majesty's having selected me to be the Director of the Windsor Plays and of having been pleased to record Her satisfaction with the manner in which I discharged the duties confided to me.¹⁸⁷

The gift was described in a letter to Fanny Kemble, together with other information concerning the direction of the plays:

...My theatrical management obtained for me pudding as well as praise: *imprimis*, a silver inkstand from Her Majesty inscribed 'VR to WB Donne'; *secundo*, £100 for salary; *tertio*, direction of the plays, so long as I am of sound mind; and that there will be plays in future, under ordinary circumstances, seems likely, since HM has charged me to take council with Mr Grieve, and build Her a new theatre. Here is preferment for a simple Justice of the Peace, who moreover is now a Deputy-Lieutenant of the County of Norfolk, and thereby entitled to appear at Court in scarlet and silver, and crowned with a cock's feather a yard long. 'Bless thee, Bottom, thou art translated'.¹⁸⁸

'That there will be plays in future, under ordinary circumstances, seems likely'; but circumstances ceased to be ordinary, and the Christmas season 1860/61 was followed in December 1861, by the death of the Prince Consort. A grief-stricken widow, as is well known, shunned society and its pleasures for many years, and it was not until 1895, long after Donne's own death, that occasional command performances returned to Windsor.

¹⁸⁷ WBD > Phipps[?, unaddressed], 17 February 1860. RA PP/VIC/A246/34.

¹⁸⁸ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 1 April 1860, *Friends* p.238. The silver inkstand is in the possession of Mrs Margaret Sharman, owner of the *Johnson Papers*.

DONNE ON DRAMA

It is not surprising, given his life-long personal interest in the theatre, added to the years of involvement as a court official, that Donne should have used his pen to write on relevant topics. In more than thirty essays, articles and reviews,¹⁷⁹ over a period of as many years, Donne expressed his views on the state of drama and the stage, painting, in the process, vivid pen-portraits of some of the leading playwrights and actors of all ages. From 'Modern English Dramatists' in 1844, to Ward's 'English Dramatic Literature' in 1876, and in a dozen different periodicals, he covered a wide variety of topics, drawing not only on his comprehensive knowledge of classical literature and history, but on his experience as Examiner of Plays and on his personal friendships with theatrical persons.

The titles of the eight articles reprinted in *Essays on the Drama*, which ran into a second edition, indicate the breadth of his interests – 'Athenian Comedy', 'Beaumont and Fletcher', 'The Drama', 'The Drama, Past and Present', 'Charles Kemble', 'Plays and their Providers', 'Popular Amusements', 'Songs from the Dramatists'.

The Theatre – Thriving or Dying?

To the current debate on the state of the English theatre, its plays, playwrights and actors, Donne contributed an ongoing and balanced critique.

We do not at all chime in with the conventional wail on the poverty and decline of our national drama, and the lack of acting talent ('Music, Drama, and Fine Arts', 1851, 57)

¹⁷⁹ All these items are fully documented in the list of Donne's writings, Appendix B. They are here referred to by title and date.

For our part, we believe neither the prophets who prophesy smooth things, nor those who run up and down crying "woe, and threefold woe"; neither that acting is always deteriorating, or that managers are always on the brink of insolvency ('Plays and their Providers', 1853, 342)

That the tokens of serious or incurable decay are written on the brow of present theatrical literature or performance we deny...As yet, it must be owned, we have not been successful in detecting any particular decadence of the theatre ('The Drama of the Day', 1859, 552, 560).

He had little time for 'the Croaker family, that ancient house who, from the time of Micaiah the son of Imlah, have prophesied not good but evil, and who boded as dismally in Shakespeare's day, and will continue to bode so long as theatres exist' ('The Drama of the Day', 1859, 555). Nonetheless, he did identify certain factors which might be thought to militate against the welfare of the theatre and its component parts. They recur throughout his writing.

Statistics of theatre-going he found encouraging, rather than the reverse; the vastly increased numbers attending not to be accounted for solely by the increased population. But he acknowledged that audiences had changed. No longer did the theatre attract the nobler classes, as once it had done. It had become the theatre of the common man, with implications both for the fare it offered and the manner of its presentation.¹⁹⁰ Not that the nineteenth century lacked worthy and competent playwrights:

Without rashly predicting the life or decease of particular plays, after their first novelty has worn off, we may securely assert that the present generation has produced more good dramas, whether adapted to the stage or not, than the whole eighteenth century...there is an evident improvement in our play-writers ('Modern English Dramatists', 1844, 502-3)

We do not, indeed, despair of the opening of new veins of dramatic art, and if we were inclined to despond, should entertain fresh and lively hopes from the moment we saw Mr. Tom Taylor's last production at the Olympic. Of *Still Waters Run Deep* it is difficult to decide whether the composition or the representation be the more admirable ('The Drama, Past and Present', 1855, 104).

He was ambivalent about the then current emphasis on elaborate stage decoration and costume. Approving, on the whole, of a desire to render historical plays in particular with faithfulness to their period, he disapproved of a shift in priority which drew the attention of the audience away from the drama and its performers to the accidents of setting:

¹⁹⁰ That Donne had a crusade to improve the quality of the theatre, and to take audiences into the experience of purer drama, is the repeated contention of Davis and Emeljanow, in *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatre-going 1840-1880*, (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001); e.g., 105-6, 158-160, 161, 163. I am not fully persuaded.

We are not of the number of those who regard the triumph of mechanism and upholstery as a symptom of the decline of the drama. We believe, on the contrary, that Mr. C. Kemble, Mr. Macready, Mr. Phelps, and Mr. Charles Kean have rendered essential service to the stage by their endeavours to produce faithful historical pictures. If it were a step in the right direction to strip off Macbeth's brigadier uniform and to array the Thane of Fife in at least a Scottish garb, it has been no less an advance in the representative art to substitute for the bonnet and kilt of a Highlander the proper costume of an Anglo-Saxon noble and king....Let any manager at whose theatre Shakspeare, or dramas of the classical school, are often performed, try the experiment of a return to primitive innocence as regards scenery and costume... We remember to have seen Alexander the Great march in pomp through Babylon preceded by banners, one of which bore the Lion and Unicorn of England, and the other the S.P.Q.R. of a Roman emperor. The wrath even of the gods would be kindled at such a prodigy now-a-days, ('The Drama of the Day', 1859, 564).

But...

The question again arises – how far the historical plays of the poet [Shakespeare] are illustrated or encumbered by the art of the painter and the dress-maker ('The Drama, Past and Present', 1855, 97)

The drama has seldom presupposed or demanded in a greater degree the aid of the painter and costumier ('Calderon', 1857, 460)

The scene-painter and the upholsterer are now at least as important personages as the performers ('Charles Kemble', 1854, 608).

In the present day we have perhaps nearly reached the limit of stage-decoration, and surrounded the Shakespearian drama with accessories that would have amazed the poet himself, all compact of imagination as he was ('Ben Jonson', 1860, 425)

Never were scene-painters more expert, or upholsterers more inventive – never was archaeology more in request for dramatic illustrations, or managers more determined to be scrupulous in costume and landscape ('The Drama', 1854, 76)

We...represent the drama of Elizabeth and Charles with all the anxious precision of an archaeological society...The conditions of scenic effect are, it appears to us, not difficult to define. They are the frame-work of the picture, not the picture itself ('Plays and their Providers', 1853, 345).

We doubt...whether the rage for decoration be not equally prejudicial to the public and to the manager, and whether it be not a symptom of declining taste for the drama ('The Drama, Past and Present', 1855, 102).

The 'rage for decoration' may have been 'a symptom of declining taste', deriving from a public desire for sensationalism and spectacle, but it was not to be regarded as symptomatic of the decline of drama itself. Donne has already been quoted as admiring current dramatic writing, seeing other, extraneous factors as deleterious. One of these was competition from those novels and poetic compositions which provided dramatic interest without necessitating a visit to the theatre. Scott and Byron were held particularly responsible for this phenomenon, although, as indicated in the extract below, Scott also consented to the dramatisation of much of his work:

Forty years ago...The literature of fiction was becoming a formidable rival to that of the stage. Byron's Alps, Conrads and Laras had...a stirring and demoniacal spirit more potent by far than the Pierres, Horatios, or Alonzos of the scene. Scott's novels were even more adverse to the "regular drama" than Byron's poems: since, not only

when read were they replete with picturesque incident and dramatic situations, affording therefore at home the sort of excitement once monopolised by the theatre, but they readily admitted also of adaptation to performance. Regularly as the "Tales of my Landlord" or their successors came out, they were, in Scott's phrase, *Terryfied*, that is, fitted to the scene by his friend Mr. Daniel Terry, or some other transmuter of novel-bullion into stage-currency ('The Drama of the Day'), 1859, 562).

They [Scott and Byron] ...were the leaders in a species of literature which more than any other has proved prejudicial to the taste for theatrical entertainments ('Charles Kemble'), 1854, 610).

In contrast, the heyday of Charles Kemble was a period in which 'the audiences came with comparatively fresh emotions to the theatre. Their sensations had not been blunted by the quasi-dramatic excitement of Byron's poems or Scott's tales' ('Charles Kemble'), 1854, 608).

Although Donne had an opinion – not altogether favourable – concerning the influence of religion and the Church on the drama, he did not see them as directly responsible for whatever was wrong in the theatre: it was rather that the prevailing (im)morality of the theatre evoked a religious disapproval:

Whether abstract scruples against the stage be well-founded or not, this is neither the time nor the place to inquire. But it is certain that the passions and sentiments of the theatre are frequently such as the moralist would discourage; and although the actor may at times be a useful auxiliary to the preacher, yet his text and his doctrines are not necessarily in accordance with those of the pulpit ('Charles Kemble'), 1854, 610).

To the [above listed] causes of the partial decline of the drama in England we forbear to add one that is usually alleged among the foremost – the religious scruples which pervade a large class of the community¹⁹¹ ('The Drama of the Day'), 1859, 567).

As might be expected, he had a number of positive suggestions for improving the situation, arising from his conviction that, fundamentally, prospects were good: 'So far from being on the decline, the dramatic spirit has never been more active or spread over a wider surface than at the present' ('The Drama of the Day'), 1859, 567). In the same essay he offered a fourfold recipe for restoring the theatre to wider public acceptance. The elements are interesting as they bring together a number of continuing themes scattered throughout the dramatic essays.

Firstly, and closely linked to his belief that French influence was largely harmful and French drama immoral, was the demand that 'all that tends to make people think lightly of the marriage-bond, or even represents the relations of husband and wife as a fair subject for satire or ridicule, should be

¹⁹¹ For the major treatment of this theme, see Richard Foulkes, *Church and Stage in Victorian England*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1997). The chapter on 'Clerical Attitudes' is particularly useful.

banished from the theatre'. He expanded the demand into a comparison of French and English attitudes to marriage, to the disadvantage of the former:

It is notorious that half of the French vaudevilles rest on the supposition that marriage is an affair of social convenience, and not one in which the affections of the parties are in the least concerned...at least mere convenience is not the avowed pretext for marriage in this country and to represent it as such on the stage...is as false in fact as it is in morality.

It will come as no surprise to readers of this thesis that Donne's exercise of his censorial rôle¹⁹² is reflected in the recipe, so that, for example, 'the purgation of the theatre' from criminal sensation drama is the second element in his plan: 'We are convinced that the total extinction of this species of drama would be equally a boon to the manager who shut his doors against it, and to the general interests of the profession'. Note that here the thought is that the managers, rather than the censor, should expunge the offending species from the theatre.

This led to a third suggestion, that 'Respect for the art which at least they profess to hold in honour, ought to impress managers with their responsibility in the choice of their entertainments'. Even self-interest ought to move managers in the direction of plays against which there will be no moral objections that would keep prospective play-goers away. At this point the critic enunciated a diatribe against the genre of burlesque which, in Donne's view, was 'a scandal to the stage', a view which clearly was not universally held, even then, and which current scholarship shows to require qualification.¹⁹³ His indignation at one example of the genre was unrestrained:

Burlesque, on all occasions mischievous, was never more absurd than in the summer of 1856. A great tragic actress, the greatest, perhaps, whom the present generation will behold, was at the moment rivalling in the Italian drama the performances of Mrs. Siddons, Miss O'Neill, and Miss Fanny Kemble in days gone by. A manager, than whom no one was better qualified to appreciate the genius of Madame Ristori, employs an actor of equal excellence with himself to burlesque her impersonation of 'Medea'. This was the tribute paid by Englishmen to consummate histrionic powers! ('The Drama of the Day', 1859, 574).

The fourth ingredient in his recipe for improvement was nothing less than the wholesale reorganisation of theatrical London, specifically the suggestion that different theatres should specialise in different types of drama. It was already a proven advantage - 'No one in the habit of attending the

¹⁹² See above, pp.54-67, *passim*.

¹⁹³ For a recent balanced treatment of Victorian burlesque, particularly related to its treatment of Shakespeare, v. Richard W Schoch, *Not Shakespeare: Bardolatry and Burlesque in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002).

Princess's or Sadler's Wells Theatres can have failed to remark the advantages obtained by the careful drilling of their respective companies'. Habitual addressing of classical parts and subjects leads to precision and excellence in their portrayal - 'The result is alike favourable to the actor and the audience. Experience renders the one adroit, the other sagacious. The comedian does not wander unskilfully into the domain of tragedy: the tragic actor is not enforced to assume the levity or mirth which he has not in him; but each by the several experience gained in his proper province, acquires that ease and completeness which the higher talents alone exhibit on the English stage'. Donne had five years earlier advanced the notion of a consortium of managers, who would together create and administer a classification of theatres, itself providing the material for a proper estimate of the state of affairs:

It appears to us that an understanding among the managers of the metropolitan theatres themselves might lead to the saving of much forethought, anxiety and expense to many of them individually. To such keen rivals, and to a class of men supposed to be sufficiently irritable, it may seem hazardous to suggest the plan of a dramatic congress for the purpose of adopting a classification of theatres. If such a scheme be practicable – and to be practicable it requires only a general consent of the parties interested – its advantages are obvious. Their various experiences in different regions of the metropolis would constitute the materials for a report upon the condition of the drama. The capacity of the several theatres would afford *data* of the expenses that might be incurred with a fair chance of profit. It would be seen from the particular returns what species of drama is most popular and remunerating in any given neighbourhood. But the principal advantage of such a congress would be the suspension, and perhaps eventually the extinction, of a rash and reckless, as well as an unfair, system of mutual opposition ...A 'concordat', such as we have suggested, would assign to different theatres different classes of dramas; the actors would be better classified and better drilled, and the public reap the benefit of special and well-defined performances, elaborated by constant and undivided practice. That such an arrangement is neither impracticable nor visionary is a conclusion warranted by its success wherever it has been partially attempted in this country, as well as by its results where, as in France, it has been long and generally adopted ('The Drama'), 1854, 82-3).

There is some evidence in the most recent and exhaustive survey of nineteenth-century London theatregoing¹⁹⁴ that whether by co-operative action or as a result of independent experiment, a degree of specialisation had been going on in many theatres since the 1840s.

¹⁹⁴ Jim Davies & Victor Emeljanow, *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing 1840-1880*, (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Pr., 2001). See under 'Repertoire' for each theatre examined.

The Lowest of the Arts

Acting is the lowest of the arts, if it is an art at all .

(George Moore, *Mummer-Worship*)

Donne had died before Moore penned his epigram, but he would not have agreed at all with the assertion. His admiration for great actors was unbounded, though their acting was always seen in the context of their whole personalities. In the handful of assessments he has left us, their talents and his are equally revealed.

For the Kembles in general, and Charles in particular, his plaudits must be admitted to be less than disinterested. Charles was the father of John Mitchell Kemble, whose close friendship Donne had enjoyed from Suffolk schooldays until John's untimely death. John's daughter, Mildred, married Donne's eldest son, Charles Edward. Charles Kemble's daughter, the actress, Fanny Kemble, was Donne's partner in a correspondence which brightened the later years of both of them. The Kemble home and hearts were open to him and much valued.

On the death of Charles Kemble, he rushed into print with a glowing tribute ('Charles Kemble', *Fraser's Magazine*, Dec. 1854). Although acknowledging that 'the life of an actor, so far as it is an object of public interest, closes with his scenic farewell', he was 'unwilling that the name of Charles Kemble, so long and intimately associated as it has been with the brightest ornaments and the most intellectual age of the drama, should be written on the roll of death without some accompanying comment and commemoration'.

Stating that 'without a great school of actors the drama itself necessarily pines and dwindles', he included Charles within such a school, by virtue of his elocution, his discipline and his faithfulness to the task with which the playwright had entrusted him - 'He was...a veracious actor, neither adding to nor falling short of the conceptions of his author. He was moreover a most industrious and painstaking actor... inspired with a high ideal, assiduously striving to reach it'. And to some effect. 'With the single exception of Garrick, Charles Kemble played *well* -we emphasize the word...the widest range of characters on record'. Listing sixteen widely differing rôles, from

Edgar to Jack Absolute, he stated 'We should exceed our limits without exhausting the list of characters in which Charles Kemble had no equal'. Macbeth ('less distinguished') and Hamlet ('perhaps [his] highest achievement as an actor'), are given extensive treatment. Tribute is paid, not surprisingly from a man of letters, to Kemble's acquirements in literature:

He spoke fluently and with elegance several modern languages; he was well versed in the masterpieces of their literature. Although not perhaps a deep classical scholar, he was familiar with the best writers of ancient Rome and...renewed his early knowledge of Greek, and prosecuted its study with the zeal and energy of an aspirant for University honours...Art and the department of sculpture especially, he had made the subject of earnest study...Distinguished by a courtesy of demeanour [he] transmitted to the present age the express image of the English gentleman...with Charles Kemble departed from the stage the gentleman of high life and the representative of the classic or romantic hero.

Donne was no less admiring of Macready, whose edited *Reminiscences* he reviewed for the *Edinburgh Review* ('Reminiscences of William Macready', *Edinburgh Review*, April 1875). As so often with nineteenth-century reviewers, the presenting subject was made the vehicle for Donne's wider concerns, in this essay including a perceptive survey of the patent theatres. Macready managed in turn the theatres at Drury Lane and Covent Garden,

both of which houses were handed over to him in very Augean condition as regarded morals and the virtue next to godliness. To cleanliness there appears to have been no opposition; but to the isolation of women of the town from the body of both these theatres there was much grave and indeed fierce remonstrance. Shareholders took fright; committee-men shook their heads. If only good livers were to be suffered in front of the proscenium, what would become of the dividends?¹⁹⁵

Concerning Macready's earlier Drury Lane experience ('the most unhappy period of his professional life'), under the management of Alfred Bunn – 'one of the pettiest of tyrants' – Donne says, referring to Bunn's drubbing at Macready's hand, 'Our verdict on the case is, that to thrash Bunn was quite unworthy of the actor, to get the thrashing was quite worthy of the manager'.

'Macready, both as actor and manager, was the cause and promoter of much improvement in dramatic literature'. It is a Donne thesis that dramatists will only write if there are competent actors to perform their works: Macready was such an inspiration:

To Macready we owe, besides 'Virginius', 'William Tell', 'Glencoe', 'Mirandola', 'The Provost of Bruges', 'The Patrician's Daughter', 'Strafford', 'Ion', 'Richelieu', 'The Lady of Lyons' and several others...With such a helmsman at the two great

¹⁹⁵ On the presence of prostitutes in the theatres, v. Davis & Emeljanow, *op.cit.*, *passim*.

theatres, poets of mark and zealous for the revival of the drama – Knowles, Browning, Talfourd, Marston, Sir Henry Taylor, Procter, and Bulwer – were eager to furnish new opportunities for displaying, and also diversifying, his great powers.

Donne's concern with the influence of Byron on the drama is picked up in the statement that 'It was owing to his [Macready's] sagacity and experience that Byron's poems in dialogue – for that is a more appropriate title for them than dramas – were made fit for representation'.

Tribute to the rounded personality of Macready runs throughout the essay, the *Reminiscences* affording

a record of the man as well as the artist, of the scholar and accomplished gentleman, of the social and domestic life of one who vied with Betterton and Garrick, Henderson and Kemble, in literary tastes and private worth...He had never laid aside the classical knowledge acquired at Rugby; on the contrary, he added to it by making new acquaintances...He had fought a good fight; he had not hidden in a napkin any talent he possessed; he has left a name that in the annals of the stage will never be forgotten, but be 'semper virens'...this record...may also help to remove, or at least to qualify, a too commonly prevailing notion of the actor's vocation being incompatible with good works, well-grounded faith, and sincere piety'.

The Play's the Thing:

As already stated, Donne held drama in high esteem, regarding the craft of the playwright and the skill of the actor as combining to produce a rich medium of entertainment and uplift for the public. It was because of this that he deprecated any adulteration of dramatic representations, either through the unseemliness of the material, the incompetence of the actor, the over-emphasis on background decoration and dress, or any other factor. The first of these figured in the two articles he wrote, at an interval of three years, based on a new edition of the works of Beaumont and Fletcher.¹⁹⁶ In the earlier, and considerably lengthier one, he described the primacy, among literary genres, of dramatic writing at the time of 'our two greatest dramatists, after Shakspeare'.

About the beginning of the seventeenth century, the poets of England were almost all dramatists...In those days the writing of a play for the closet was never dreamt of...Every dramatic poet wrote for the stage. (*Edinburgh Review*, 48).

¹⁹⁶ *The Works of Beaumont and Fletcher. With Notes, and a Biographical memoir.* By the Rev. Alexander Dyce. 11 vols. (London, Moxon, 1843-46). Revd. By WBD, *Edinburgh Review* No.173, (July 1847), 42-64; *Fraser's Magazine*, 41, (March 1850), 321-332.

Beaumont and Fletcher may have been among the greatest, but they were still castigated for what, to Donne, was a heinous fault, reaching its height in the drama of the Restoration:

In the second of their great works, the young dramatists plunged headlong into that realm of sin, around whose frontier they had skimmed so often in 'Philaster'. The incidents of 'The Maid's Tragedy' are profoundly revolting; they are possible only in a state of society utterly abandoned; and unless on Madame de Stael's theory of the connexion between an immoral stage and a moral people, they must have been intolerable in representation to any audience but one whose standard of purity was miserably low...even in a description like the present, and far more in an actual representation, the decencies of the nineteenth century command a veil to be cast over some of the particulars (*Edinburgh Review*, 53).

After such a tirade, it is surprising to read his final pronouncement on the play – 'Regarded as a whole, 'The Maid's Tragedy' is, in our judgment, its authors' masterpiece'.

Another topic to which Donne returned in a number of essays finds a place here –the suggestion that English drama owes an unacknowledged debt to Spanish writing:

He [Dyce] has left untouched the curious question...of the obligations of their authors, especially in the comedies, to the Spanish stage. This is a mine as yet unwrought: and Beaumont and Fletcher are not the only dramatists of our old schools, whose works might derive considerable illustration from the opening of it (*Edinburgh Review*, 67).

There is still some obscurity attached to the origin of many of Fletcher's plots. We incline to think that closer study of the Spanish novelists and playwrights would lead to further discoveries of their sources...There is...an earnest and rhetorical amplitude in the Spanish comedy which must have been attractive to the brother poets...and there are resemblances in the plan and conduct of their dramas, in the first acts of their comedies especially, which point to the Spanish *stage* as well as the Spanish novelists...We should be glad to see this question examined by some scholar well versed in the writings of Lope di Vega and his contemporaries. It is almost the only unworked vein of illustration for the English drama (*Fraser's Magazine*, 322).

Donne ended his second article with a recommendation that *The Knight of Malta*, which he thought Dyce to have undervalued, be revived, perhaps by R H Home.

‘Three centuries ago the language and literature of Spain were as commonly studied by Englishmen, and well-educated English women also, as French, Italian, or German are at the present moment’.

So began his article on the Spanish playwright, Calderón.¹⁹⁷ His interest in the literature of Spain and his belief that it had contributed to English drama more than was acknowledged, has already been mentioned, and this review essay expands the theme. With a reminder that ‘Henry the Eighth’s discarded queen and Mary’s odious husband were scions of the royal Houses of Arragon and Castile’ and that ‘Spanish was written and spoken by the councillors and courtiers of our Tudor sovereigns’, he repeated that ‘our dramatic poets...borrowed so largely from the Spanish theatre’ (455).

Although the era of great Spanish dramatic literature was of brief duration (‘Little more than a century, reckoning from the birth of Lope in 1562 to the death of Calderón in 1681, includes the whole of it’)... ‘Its brevity however, is not so remarkable as its rapid and exuberant fertility’ (459). Recognising a current national distaste for Spain and its literature, deriving perhaps from England’s generally Protestant revulsion at the Inquisition, he nonetheless stoutly maintained that ‘directly or circuitously, Spain has contributed more than any single nation of Europe to the literature of fiction’. In dramatic invention, particularly, ‘Spain is especially the creditor of Europe...Could such ware as plots, scenes, and situations, be assessed or excised, and compound interest be charged for the time of unacknowledged possession, Spain might pay off all her *bonds*, and be entitled to a handsome surplus to boot’ (456).

While admitting that it is through German critics (Tieck, Schlegel) that Calderón became known in England,, Donne was delighted that of the three English versions of the Spaniard’s work here reviewed,¹⁹⁸ two were by close friends – R C Trench and Edward Fitzgerald. The latter, Donne’s school-fellow and life-long correspondent, is lauded for his rendering of six plays :

¹⁹⁷ WBD, ‘Calderón’, *Fraser’s Magazine*, 55 (April 1857), 455-470.

¹⁹⁸ *Life’s a Dream. The Great Theatre of the World. From the Spanish of Calderon, with an Essay on his Life and Genius.* By Richard Chenevix Trench. (London: John W. Parker & Son. 1856).
Six Dramas of Calderon, By Edward Fitzgerald. (London: John W. Parker & Son. 1853).
Dramas of Calderon: Tragic, Comic, and Legendary. Translated from the Spanish, principally in the metre of the original. By Denis Florence McCarthy, Esq. 2 vols, (London: Dolman, 1853).

‘The freedom, vigour, and liveliness of Mr. Fitzgerald’s translation it is almost impossible to commend too highly: he possesses the true art of compensation [*sic*]; and his version reads like an original composition of the best days of the English language’.

Trench, a fellow Apostle, close friend and godfather to Donne’s firstborn (as Donne was to Trench’s third child), was commended for his attempt, not entirely successful, to render the Spanish trochaic assonants into English lines of exactly the same construction. His right to be heard when pronouncing on the Spaniard’s work was upheld on the grounds of his unique depth of knowledge:

The Dean of Westminster, therefore, owing to the indifference or the scanty knowledge of his predecessors, may claim, in some measure, not merely a better right to be heard on this subject, but even priority of place and time, among Calderon’s judges – inasmuch as judges, having little or no knowledge of the cause, ought to have no privilege of adjudication (458).

(It should be remembered that Trench was one of those Cambridge Apostles involved in the ill-fated Spanish expedition of 1830 (Above, pp.25-6). His interest in the country was not merely academic). Donne’s gentle humour is evident in his exposure of Calderón’s multiple clerical appointments, and of his ability to write equally for religious and secular stages:

Calderon became a pluralist scarcely less notorious than some who still adorn the Anglican Church, since he held before Philip’s death four livings, apparently on the single and sole condition that each should be regarded as a sinecure...A modern divine might be perplexed between an order for the Haymarket Theatre and an order for Exeter Hall; but Calderon seems to have had no difficulty in complying with both secular and spiritual demands (462).

An interesting comparison was made between the Spanish Shakespeare and our own:

In one respect Shakspeare and Calderon nearly resembled each other – in their indifference to the fate of their productions after they were once launched on the stage. But the indifference of the English poet seems to have been absolute, while that of the Spanish poet was only relative: he was regardless of his profane dramas, but scrupulous in composing and correcting his religious ones (463).

The comparison is extended into another area – the volume of works composed:

Seventy-three sacramental *autos*, a hundred and eight authenticated dramas, perhaps also a considerable number of *Saynetes* or short farces, attest the activity of Calderon’s pen. The aggregate number – and it is certainly not the sum of what he actually wrote – exceeds that of the combined productions of Shakspeare, Jonson, Massinger, Ford, and Beaumont and Fletcher (464).

The greater is Donne's wonder that Calderón is relatively unknown and/or ignored in England, until it is realised that 'Except perhaps the disjointed chat and rapid gestures and articulation of a Spanish barber, nothing is so difficult to understand, for all born on this side of the Pyrenees, as the plot of a Spanish comedy' (465).

An aside on the distinctive Spanish *auto* [play], 'combining the rudeness of village revelry with the pomp and license of great cities' enabled Donne to evaluate and praise Calderón's contribution to and transformation of this unique dramatic form:

A nation more dogmatical in its religious sentiments would be appalled by the seeming profaneness and the indecent familiarity of the *autos* with sacred names and themes; and English spectators have generally been rather scandalized than edified by such representations. Foreigners indeed are for the most part more easily reconciled to the bull-fight, than to these sacred dramas, which blend with the seriousness of the pulpit the levity of Aristophanes in his dealings with Jupiter, Iris, and their Olympian companions (467-8).

It will seem strange to many that Donne rated the drama of Spain third only to that of ancient Rome and contemporary England, well ahead of France ('even Molière's is not the circle in which Shakspeare or Calderon moves, even in comedy') and Germany; 'German playwrights...appear to regard speech rather than action as the real soul of the drama' (470).

Donne used 'Ben Jonson: His Life and Works'¹⁹⁹, in which, culpably, and neither for the first nor last time, he made no reference whatsoever to the works he was supposed to be reviewing, to expound an interesting comparison of the poet with Shakespeare, to the advantage of the latter. Declaring a discrepancy between their respective theories of dramatic art, he claimed that Jonson's genius was lyrical and not dramatic and that the masque, not tragedy or comedy, was the proper region in which to deploy his art. A parallel was drawn between the relationship of Shakespeare and Jonson and that of Chaucer and Gower.

¹⁹⁹ *Bentley's Quarterly Review*, (January 1860), 404-433. The works to be reviewed were, *Poetical Works of Ben Jonson*, edited by Robert Bell, and *Annotated Edition of the English Poets*, J.W. Parker.

Gower and Jonson are massively learned, but their learning is used pedantically, with the result that

Gower has embedded in his 'Confessio Amantis' three or four stories that are still readable; Jonson has written about as many plays that can be read with complacency. Beyond these limits each of them is very tolerable and not to be endured [*sic*]. Shakspeare and Chaucer go hand in hand in their everlasting attractions' (406).

There is no intention of denying Jonson's real merits, but of stating the belief that 'he thwarted his own genius by a vicious theory'. Querulous by nature, quick to take offence and repay it, Jonson, in Donne's view, prostituted his undoubted talent to the issue of savage satire and pasquinades, often against his fellow dramatists.

Tracing the history of his compositions, Donne saw *Every Man out of his Humour* as 'the first step in Jonson's downward career, leading to an increasingly defiant and arrogant tone towards both spectators and critics'. *Cynthia's Revels* (1600) began 'that indiscreet display of arrogance and self-assertion which exposed Jonson to so much obloquy and rejoinder at the moment, and which even now grates on the ears of readers not predetermined, like editor Gifford, to see in Jonson only the perfect man and the upright'.

Commenting on the masques, Donne was commendatory and positive, reminding his readers of Jonson's collaboration with Inigo Jones. A contemporary note is struck by mention of the hostile reception, and banning, of *Eastward Ho[e]*, which nearly cost Jonson his ears and his liberty. 'No Lord Chamberlain at the present moment [1860; Donne was at the time the Examiner of Plays] would notice or prohibit a harmless jest or two at the expense of the Scots; but the king or his Master of the Revels scented treason in the play'.

Reinforcement was given to the defence of Jonson ('he who so nobly commemorated the prince of poets') against the charges of jealousy towards Shakespeare and of self-congratulation – 'if he "were a great lover and praiser of himself" he blew his trumpet more softly than either Coleridge, Southey, or Wordsworth often sounded theirs' (430). Donne's gift for the epigram was displayed in the regret he expressed for Jonson's inability to secure his future by conserving his present assets – 'Ben was

one of those who sing and dance with the grasshopper, but will not lay by with the ant' (431).

Donne's assertion of Molière's inferiority to both the English and Spanish master playwrights has been noted above (p.95), and left without expansion could mislead the reader into thinking that Donne had a low regard for the Frenchman. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The two essays in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*²⁰⁰, though brief, provided a platform on which to erect a theory of comedy and apply it to Molière's work.

Comedy is 'more universally attractive' than tragedy. 'Tragedy will always be read by the few capable of appreciating it', whereas comedy reflects the fact that

All the play-goers, and nearly all the readers of plays, look on the drama merely as a source of entertainment; and it is nothing but a natural feeling that prompts us to seek entertainment in scenes of cheerfulness and mirth, although as a temporary relief from the cares and inquietudes of real life.

What is more, 'many more actors are fitted for comedy than for tragedy', so that stage representation of the former are more likely to succeed. The contrast between the two modes of drama is developed at some length:

Tragedy owes much of its material inefficiency, as an instrument of scenical art, to its being necessarily imaginative, and to a great extent, abstract – qualities which add much to its intellectual grandeur, but which cannot be adequately represented on the stage...The conclusion we draw from these observations is, that comedy is essentially more dramatic than tragedy, although the latter is more intellectual and poetic.

It is interesting, therefore, 'that there have been many more writers of tragedy than of comedy, notwithstanding the higher, intellectual character of the former'. In ancient Greece, the proportion is three to one, while 'the classic age of Italian poetry did not afford a single comic dramatist, though no people have a keener perception of the ludicrous and the grotesque than the Italians'. It is the ridiculous which is the material of comedy, and it has existed more or less in all ages.

²⁰⁰ WBD, 'Molière - I, *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* 20NS (February 1853), 65-69.
" " - II " " " " (March 1853), 129-134.

To Molière's own age Donne next addresses himself, showing it to be singularly propitious to the composition of comedy. 'A gay and libertine court' set the pattern of domestic life, and 'conjugal infidelity was in all ranks reckoned more a foible than a crime'.

Not surprisingly, the fashion set by the sun king's circle was followed by his subjects at all levels:

Gallantry was the prevailing passion, but it was not that of Bayard. It was a sensual and licentious amour carried on by intrigue, and in defiance of common decency. Its grossness was ill-disguised by an affectation of romance, vented in sonnets and madrigals.

There are echoes here of Donne's strictures scattered throughout his essays on English Restoration writers and customs.

Molière's remarkable celerity in the creation of his dramas is noted – 'many of them were written with extraordinary rapidity, some of them having been composed and acted within a few days'. It is the more impressive, therefore, that he should, in Donne's estimation, outrank many of his English near-contemporaries:

The best comedies of Farquhar, Vanburgh or Congreve are mere sketches in comparison with *Le Tartuffe* or *Le Misanthrope*.

The final tribute is paid to his character, rather than to his work, admirable though that is:

Molière was as good a man as he was a dramatist...Gifted with the most amiable disposition, the enemy of nothing but folly and vice.

All in all, Donne's dramatic writings, spanning more than three decades and mostly written while he was acting as Deputy or Examiner of Plays, reveal an interest in theatrical concerns both comprehensive and sympathetic. Enough has been cited to show his championship of English drama and dramatists, his admiration of leading actors, his ambivalent attitude to French drama and to scenic extravaganzas and his high hopes for the future of the English stage. Interestingly, in the thousands of words he

wrote on drama and the theatre, only one reference²⁰¹ has been traced to censorship, the activity which occupied him for a quarter of a century.

²⁰¹ 'No Lord Chamberlain at the present moment would notice or prohibit a harmless jest or two at the expense of the Scots, but the king or his Master of the Revels scented treason in the play' ['Eastward Ho']. WBD, 'Ben Jonson' BQR 2 (January 1860), 427. Cited above, p. 96.

DONNE ON THE CLASSICS

By far the largest single group of Donne's writings is that in which he treats of Greek and Roman history, languages and literature. Some forty articles, many of them book reviews, cover a wide range of topics, with those on Roman/Latin themes (twenty-five) heavily outnumbering the Grecian (six). A miscellaneous collection make up the tally. Two in this last section survey the lives of notable eighteenth-century classicists, Edward Gibbon and Richard Porson, and they will serve to introduce Donne's thinking on the study of the ancients.

For Gibbon,²⁰² Donne has a great admiration, which he expresses in a letter to Trench:

I think you undervalue Gibbon. He is a great favourite of mine, and perhaps I am at the other extreme of Judgement of his worth, but he seems to me, at least in the main portions of his work, to have perfectly reflected the image of the time he wrote of, and to have had special qualities for his office.²⁰³

though he deplores the francophile bias shown in the historian's earliest work, *Essay on the Study of Literature*. Writing in French, with Montesquieu as his model, 'a multitude of French writers are brought upon the scene', but English writers are scarcely ever mentioned; 'if we are not mistaken, neither Bacon or Shakspeare is ever noticed'. The book was little read by Englishmen,

But how could the author be surprised at this result? It is not written in the English language, it is altogether destitute of English spirit, it is written in a style which is directly opposite to those of our greatest writers'

Contrasting Gibbon with other great English writers, Donne sees him as 'a slow mind', needful of much industry to achieve his undoubtedly impressive results. Living mentally in the distant past rather than the

²⁰² WBD, 'Edward Gibbon', *Fraser's Magazine* 46 (October 1852), 438-452.

²⁰³ WBD > Trench, 8 December 1831, *JP*.

present, 'His life was a life on paper; his study was his world; and the real world a theatre on which his fame might be trumpeted'.

That real world was, Donne claims, one which was not likely to build up in Gibbon the qualities and attitudes which were desirable in a thinker and writer. Its current state of mind was 'at once great and little, false and true, full of glory and full of shame'. Gibbon's autobiography is cited as evidence of the unhelpful influence of Oxford University (with hints of Donne's view of the Cambridge of his own day), of the prevalence of loss of faith in Christianity, and the quirk by which Gibbon himself turned, albeit briefly, to Roman Catholicism as a spiritual refuge. Later, his opinion was that 'atheism was much less pernicious than superstition. So said Hume, so said Voltaire, so said all the enlightened'. According to Donne, Gibbon, who 'hated novelties, and above all, religious novelties', hated Christianity because it was a novelty, supplanting the old paganism.

He had from childhood been fond of religious disputation, often with his aunt, Catherine Porten; and later, in Lausanne, he continued in the same pastime. A spell in the militia and then in Parliament did little to change this interest, neither did his increasing study of the classics, including, as it necessarily did, a familiarity with ancient beliefs:

The great defect in the ancient religion was also the great defect of Gibbon. The ancients never had any religious doctrines that could elevate human nature, and Gibbon's mind was in this respect well adapted to sympathise with a creed destitute of moral elevation.

The devotion of that mind to the immense task of composing his *magnum opus* is applauded, as is its outcome:

We cannot conceive how Gibbon's history can ever be superseded...He has left us in this elaborate work a history of Rome, a history of his own times, and a history of himself...It is a sublime work, a towering pyramid in an intellectual desert.

Donne concludes his essay by referring to the recent publication of the first volumes of Macaulay's *History of England*, and draws a parallel between the warnings for Rome contained in Gibbon's closing paragraphs, with those for Victorian England implied in the latter history:

There are still barbarians endangering civilisation...The great question of the nineteenth century seems to be, how are these barbarians to be civilised? May we act earnestly and wisely and thus escape the fate of Rome!

There was a developing feeling among the Victorian liberals that the growth of the British empire should be accompanied by a concern for the physical, spiritual and moral well-being of those indigenous populations whose territories were being both occupied and exploited. While the feeling is not explicit in Donne's work, it was expressed by, among others, his great friend James Spedding, who drew upon his experience in the Colonial Office to explore such themes as negro apprenticeship, theories of colonisation, and the situation in South Australia.²⁰⁴ By the 1890s, the moral decline of the Imperialists was a serious concern. Donne, of course, was dead.

Donne introduces his review²⁰⁵ of a recent life of the great Greek scholar, Richard Porson, (1759-1808) by regretting that 'the age is past for the public in general to take a strong interest in the labours of classical scholars'. With gentle irony he reminds his readers that the time 'is not remote from us, in which to be a first-rate Greek or Latin scholar was also a first-rate testimonial for employment in church and state'. It is no longer so; 'to have edited a Greek play no longer leads to the episcopal bench; indeed, if we may judge by some recent appointments, barbarians have a better chance than Greeks of wearing aprons and lawn sleeves'. While contemporary government office-holders Gladstone and Cornewall Lewis 'still attest the vitality of English scholarship', this is not the norm in political circles, and a retrospect of the eighteenth century shows many more who could then appreciate the work of such as Bentley and Porson.

The biographer of Porson whose work is under review, the Reverend J H Watson, is taken to task for errors of fact and for neglect of relevant sources – weaknesses which modern biographers still strive to avoid – while his treatment of Porson's notorious drunkenness is faulted for lack of relation to the drinking patterns of the age. His subject is claimed by Donne to have been 'the greatest scholar of the day', and modest with it.

²⁰⁴ James Spedding, *Reviews and Discussions Literary, Political and Historical, not relating to Bacon*, (London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1879).

²⁰⁵ WBD, 'Watson's Life of Porson', *Edinburgh Review* 114 (July 1861), 130-144.

‘He knew, he could not help knowing, that he possessed more of the science of the Greek language than any scholar then living’, so that ‘his frugality, accordingly, in altering and amending [Greek texts] was a virtue’. He is commended for the honesty which forbade him to accept a clerical fellowship. Donne quotes what he said ‘as he stood between compliance and conscience on this occasion’:

“I found”, said he, “that I should require about fifty years’ reading to make myself thoroughly acquainted with divinity – to satisfy my mind on all points – and therefore I gave it up. There are fellows who go into the pulpit assuming everything, and knowing nothing; but I would not do so”.

Porson’s objection to taking holy orders did not rest alone on his felt unfitness; there was another problem, with which Donne must have had great sympathy – ‘his theological opinions led him to regard subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles as an insurmountable barrier to his entering the Church’.

A closing tribute to Porson states the reasons for ascribing to him a foremost rank among Greek scholars – ‘First, to his acknowledged and consummate mastery of the most difficult of languages; secondly, to the rays of light which he threw into the chaos of Greek metres; and thirdly, to the school which he formed, and which still flourishes in this country’.

John William Donaldson has already appeared in this thesis as the headmaster of the Bury St Edmund’s grammar school, to whom Donne entrusted the education of his three sons. A formidable scholar, he and Donne became firm friends, and it was a pleasure to the latter to promote a second edition of Donaldson’s *New Cratylus* (1850)²⁰⁶ and, three years later, to repeat the exercise, adding on that occasion a notice of Donaldson’s *Varronianus: a Critical and Historical Introduction to the Ethnology of Ancient Italy, and the Philological Study of the Latin Language*. The two works have much in common, being, at a time when systematic philology was a young study and hardly attempted in England (J M Kemble being a notable exception), valuable contributions to a rigorous examination of the Greek and Latin languages.

²⁰⁶ WBD, ‘Donaldson’s *New Cratylus*’, *Gentleman’s Magazine* 34 (Dec 1850), 573-581.

Differing from Donaldson on the benefits to be gained from the current mainstay of classical studies in schools – ‘we think that he overrates the benefits derived from the practice of composition in the dead languages’ – Donne nevertheless acknowledges his right to be heard: ‘on this point he certainly has a claim to speak *ex cathedra*, since he is both an accurate verbal scholar and an accomplished linguist’.

Entering into a then contentious field of enquiry, the attempt to discover mankind’s primeval tongue, upon which ‘much time has frequently been lost and some gall has been shed’, Donne denies the validity of arguments in favour of biblical Hebrew, believing some part of central Asia to be the birthplace of the race and its original language, now for ever lost. He favours Donaldson’s approach, which is commended as entertaining, not forbidding, to the common reader. As the *New Cratylus* is more technical, it defies summary by Donne and, indeed, accessibility to the non-expert. It seems, however, ‘amply to justify the prognostications of the late Dr Arnold, “that its learned author would one day produce a work on the science of language which would rank beside the most acute and elaborate performances of German erudition”’.

Varronianus, doing for Latin what the *New Cratylus* did for Greek, might very well be that work of erudition forecast by Arnold. Again Donne pays tribute to the few English scholars, including Kemble, who are contributing to the now thriving infant science of philology. Donaldson is among their number:

In Thirlwall and Grote, in Arnold and Merivale, we possess a quaternion of writers in that province unsurpassed by laborious Germany or livelier France. In Mr Kemble’s *Saxons in England* we possess a work founded on sound philological investigations, and treating of the fontal problems of the English constitution.

In adding Donaldson to these illustrious men (all of whom Donne had reviewed, or would do so), some use is made of statements borrowed from the earlier article – for example, Donaldson’s overrating of the art of composition in the dead language. Having formed and polished his sentences, almost into epigrams, Donne is happy to reproduce them, often verbatim, in article after article. Here an earlier statement is amplified into a familiar Donne plea, for

The study at school and the university of our own classical writers. We have often had occasion to marvel at the skill displayed by ingenuous youth in writing Greek iambics, and by the solecisms they commit in English prose... whenever a real reform of university studies shall take place, we trust that English literature will be deemed as worthy of a professor's chair as Greek or moral philosophy.²⁰⁷

A recent symposium on the course of English studies repays examination on this theme.²⁰⁸

With this enlightened plea goes, as Donne examines in more detail the *Varronianus*, his strong preference for Latin studies over Greek:

We think the preference shown to Greek not altogether creditable to the managers of our great schools and universities... Even Mr Grote's earnest and thoughtful mind cannot invest the wars and policies of the Greek republics with a European interest... Rome, and not Greece, is the proper ancestor of Christendom; and Roman, and not Hellenic, literature is the root of Christian poetry, ethics, and history.

By way of what he describes as the ethnological interest of Donaldson's two works, Donne explores the origin of the Etruscan nation (still a contentious topic today) and the historical transmission of Latin to its modern descendants, the Romance languages. Siding with his friend, he declares the dominant race of northern Etruria to have been 'a low German tribe, who subjected the Pelasgians, and settled among them as conquerors'. Detailed and technical support is offered for the position.

As not infrequently, commendation is not total, and the sting is in the tail of the article:

We would part with a gentle hint to the author that a milder tone towards some of his scholastic contemporaries would not be amiss; he reminds us too often of the learned warfare of the Scaligers and Scipios... A little more amenity would greatly improve his controversial style.

An addendum to this philological theme is provided by the eight pages review²⁰⁹ of Colonel Mure's *Language and Literature of Ancient Greece*, a learned volume not untypical of the scholarly interests of non-professionals in the Victorian era. Its author is said to merit 'more than negative and circumstantial praise. He is a genial critic as well as a learned chronicler', particularly helpful to the general reader on the Homeric epics,

²⁰⁷ It was, of course; first at London University, where Thomas Dale occupied the chairs at University College and then King's, being succeeded at the latter by F D Maurice.

²⁰⁸ Alan Bacon (ed), *The Nineteenth-Century History of English Studies* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), *passim*, especially the *Introduction*.

²⁰⁹ WBD, 'Language and Literature of Ancient Greece', *Gentleman's Magazine* 34, (July 1850), 19-26.

for the study of which his military career has fitted him better than the 'closeted efforts of German commentators'. Again, honesty compels Donne to qualify his praise of Mure. 'He is less at home in the domain of the philologist [*sic*], and his work would perhaps on the whole have been better if he had confined himself to the literature, and excluded the language, of ancient Greece'

For the interpretation of that literature he is declared to have a sure touch, which encourages Donne to hope that the colonel will produce volumes on the later Greek writers, who 'although they no longer retained classical purity of thought and form, are little less interesting as records of the manners and speculations of later pagandom'. The ethical treatises of Plutarch, for example, 'are the great magazine of current opinions and superstitions, many of which passed over with philosophy and religion into Christian literature'.

We can explore this statement in one of Donne's longer essays, the twelve-thousand words review of *Plutarch's Lives*.²¹⁰ The edition reviewed has a bibliographical interest in being *The Translation called Dryden's. Corrected from the Greek and Revised, by A H Clough*. We shall note later Dryden's renderings of classical Greek works²¹¹, while Clough was another Apostle, younger than but well-known by Donne.

The worth of Plutarch's history is immediately and generously acknowledged 'If to have been the manual of men great in arts or arms constitutes a claim to republication, Plutarch's *Lives* possess it in a degree beyond any ancient book, Homer, Herodotus and the Bible only excepted'. Not that they are history in the same factual sense as some other works; 'as respects antiquity itself, these *Lives* stand to Thucydides and Livy somewhat in the relation of the Waverley novels to Buchanan and John Knox. For the living picture of the Covenanters, we turn to the "Abbot" and the "Monastery", to the "Heart of Midlothian" and "Old Mortality"'. Similarly,

From Thucydides we learn that Pericles was a consummate statesman and orator; from Plutarch ...that Pericles' head was "somewhat longish and out of proportion"; that the Athenians were once minded to ostracise him for his

²¹⁰ WBD, 'Plutarch and his Times', *Westminster Review*, 17NS (April 1860), 430-456.

²¹¹ See below, p. 190.

resemblance to the old tyrant, Pisistratus; that his voice pierced every corner of the agora; that his manners were reserved, and his demeanour majestic... Careless often in his facts, and inconsistent in his estimate of the motives which impel human actions in the mass, he [Plutarch] has the eye of a lynx for the accidents and varieties of the individual character.

Regretting the destruction of Plutarch's autobiography ('its loss is not the least among the calamities of ancient literature'), Donne seeks to amplify Clough's brief sketch of the historian's own life in an extended 'life and times', which occupies the rest of the essay. It is unnecessarily verbose, going into details of topography and tribal life-styles which seem to have been included more as a parade of Donne's learning than as essentials to understanding Plutarch. There are, however, occasional flashes of humour – 'Plutarch completed his education at Athens, which was equivalent to being sent nowadays to Trinity College or Christ Church, and implies that he was "a gentleman born"'. Of that Athens, Donne has much to say. 'It had descended to a lower level than even that which Aristophanes had counted degenerate'; among the teachers of rhetoric, 'words were all important, and matter secondary'. Artifices of style were tortuous and contrived; 'the art of writing prose had become little less intricate than that of writing verse', and content was secondary to effect.

From Athens, Plutarch took all it had to offer. Like his reviewer, he was a prodigious reader, citing in his *Treatises* and *Lives* some three hundred authors, 'most of whom are named by him alone'. His youthful stay in Athens coincided with the visit of Nero to Greece, a visit ('an insane progress') and an emperor ('not merely an assassin, he was a buffoon') savagely treated by Donne. Plutarch's time in Italy is more sympathetically dealt with, and his employment as tutor and/or lecturer noted with perhaps a touch of sour grapes by Donne, who in his earlier struggling years had sought pupils, with little success:

For either occupation [tutor, lecturer] there was constant demand at Rome. Englishmen, for the most part, are under an impression that none but clergymen are fit to be trusted with the education of youth; and the Romans had similar faith in the pedagogic abilities of the Greeks.

Sour grapes too, perhaps, in the contrast between the status of a lecturer in ancient Greece and Rome and that of one, like Donne, in nineteenth-century England:

The lecturer by profession has reappeared in the present day, but not at present with so important a character as he possessed in the imperial age of Rome. *Now* he is the occasional star of mechanics' institutes: *then* he had nobles for his auditors, and sometimes Caesar himself for his friend, patron, and even hearer. *Now* he is a mere appendage to libraries: *then* he was often the library of the people in himself.

Whatever the taste on Donne's tongue, it was firmly in his cheek when he wrote that Plutarch 'believed in auguries as firmly as all good subjects of the queen believe in the Thirty-Nine Articles'. No less did his dislikes show when he wrote 'we may lament that the smooth-tongued Scopelian [Ovid] lived in times when he could not become – Bishop of Oxford'. It will be remembered that Bishop Wilberforce's soubriquet was 'Soapy Sam'.

One observation leads into the conclusion of Donne's essay – 'It is remarkable that although Plutarch's miscellaneous writings make mention of or allude to nearly every ethical or theurgic opinion of his time, he is absolutely silent on the subject of Christianity'. No explanation is offered, and the final paragraph expresses the hope that Clough's projected Greek history, based on Plutarch, will soon be forthcoming.

'Athens; its Rise and Fall'²¹² was the subject of one of Donne's earliest classical essays (1838), based on a review of Bulwer's history of the same name. Admitting his previous criticisms of Bulwer²¹³, for reversing Donne's own opinions of historical characters, exalting the undeserving and damning the worthy, he confesses that 'on more than one occasion we have been led to express opinions of Mr Bulwer's literary character, not altogether perhaps in accordance with his own views of it'. [No evidence of such expression has been found]. 'It is therefore with pleasure that the present work can be praised', as being 'ground where his enthusiasm is laudable, his moral system intelligible, and his researches and philosophy are well bestowed'. Donne is pleased 'when self-contemplation and self-love are laid asleep', for then [Bulwer's] 'thoughts have a dignity and compass, and his language has a simplicity and freedom, that make us

²¹² WBD, 'The Rise and Fall of Athens.', *British & Foreign Review* 7 (July 1838), 36-85.

²¹¹ Edward Bulwer, later Bulwer-Lytton, Lord Lytton; politician, novelist, playwright.

regret the more that he should so systematically play tricks with them'. A diatribe against a contemporary classical historian, Mitford, whose edition of Gray's poems, reviewed three months earlier, will later be noted, (below, pp.173-176), describes him as 'devoid of imagination...destitute of sagacity...credulous...sceptical...no one by nature or acquired habits of mind, was less fitted for the historian of Greece'.

Bulwer is altogether different. His intentions are worthy – 'to vindicate the memory of the Athenian people without disguising the errors of Athenian institutions', and 'to write to the people, and not to scholars'. But his achievement has not matched his desire. 'He appears to us either to have misapprehended the nature of a popular work, or not to have made his object sufficiently clear to himself'. In an attempt to compress Athenian history within reasonable bounds, he has unfortunately divorced it from the wider Hellenic history. Donne kindly supplies the deficit, with an ostentatious parade of relevant knowledge not without precedent or repetition in his writings. It is as if the non-graduate, non-academic, has constantly to demonstrate his credentials.

A major area of omission from Bulwer's account is 'the ritual, the festivals and the deities peculiar to Athens', an omission Donne is happy to supply. Paying deserved tribute to Bulwer's felicity of expression, it is a pity that Donne, again not for the first or last time, displays his own occasional lapse from crispness, with such a passage as the following:

Referring to the book itself for an account of the most important revolution of early Greece, the gradual occupation of Peloponnesus by the Hellenes and the predominance of the Doric race, commemorated in history as the return of the descendants of Hercules, with the consequent emigration of the more resolute or the more noble of the earlier inhabitants, and the colonization of Asia Minor by a mixed race of Ionians, Achæans as well as Hellenes and Pelasgians, we pause at the next momentous period of Grecian history, the subsidence of its many races into two principal streams, the Dorian and Ionian families, whose moral and political antagonism is one of the most instructive lessons, because of perpetual application, which time has bequeathed to history.

One hundred and twenty-four words, numerous subsidiary clauses and phrases; the sentence almost defies parsing and turns back upon its author many of his strictures against other writers.

The parade of knowledge mentioned above is not altogether without point. Donne is trying to redress an imbalance in contemporary Greek histories by paying due attention to Sparta and its inhabitants, 'this remarkable people'. Not until the second half of the twentieth century did the Spartans receive their proper academic accolade, particularly with respect to their cultural achievements, which did not include music or architecture. Again, Donne offers exemplary material, citing Pindar in evidence of the legacy, slight though it is, of Dorian poetry.

A selection of Bulwer's more expressive passages leads Donne into his final remarks, in which he ranges widely over discrete episodes in Athenian history and legacy. Concerning the latter, he is somewhat dismissive of Bulwer's ability to transmit 'the glory that was Greece'; 'Mr Bulwer is more successful as a political historian than as a critic'. There is no pulling of punches in decrying Bulwer's incapacity for dramatic appreciation.²¹⁴

In his account of Sophocles there is the same want of familiarity with his subject, the same propensity to be rhetorical where clearness and simplicity are alone required, and the same feebleness in criticism, that are the besetting faults of these volumes.

There are, however, some saving features. Even in the account of Sophocles there occurs

One of those redeeming passages which, in the perusal of the 'Rise and Fall of Athens', have encouraged us to hope that the two remaining volumes may be more in keeping than those before us with the promises and professions of the preface, and worthier of a veteran author and of 'the labour of years'.

In his review²¹⁵ of the twelfth and final volume in Grote's monumental history of Greece (one of Donne's two known contributions to the *National Review*), he mounts a formidable, though reluctant, attack on the former bank clerk, who became one of the most revered classical historians of the nineteenth century.

Down to this period we generally acquiesce in the historian's views of men and events, and cannot but applaud the original and comprehensive spirit with which he has read and represented the annals of Greece. From his estimate of the Macedonian era, therefore, we dissent with the more regret. We think that it is erroneous, and even a blemish on his hitherto excellent narrative.

²¹⁴ Ironical, in the light of Bulwer's leading role in the 1832 Select Committee on the theatre and his record as a playwright.

²¹⁵ WBD, 'Grote on Alexander the Great', *National Review*, 3 (July 1856), 50-80.

The charge against Grote, which was not levelled by Donne alone, was one of bias and consequent distortion of the record. On this occasion, it is the representation of Alexander the Great which is challenged.

Acknowledging the skilful transition from the earlier story to the Macedonian hegemony, Donne regrets that Grote's overwhelming admiration for Athens and regret at the extinction of its liberties by Philip – both of which Donne shares – should lead him to belittle the accomplishments and characters of the Macedonian and his son. In the father, Grote finds only 'a liar, a drunkard, a voluptuary, a base Bezonian, two parts Illyrian to one Greek'. In the son, he sees 'only an Achilles, petulant, irascible, and insatiable of glory'.

The verdict of later times has given the pre-eminence to Grote's history over that of his contemporary, Connop Thirlwall, Bishop of St David's, but Donne would have challenged the verdict. While there is room and occasion for both the works in every well-stocked library, 'we have no hesitation in giving the preference to Dr Thirlwall's history'. There is a delicious irony in the fact that while both histories have long been academically dead, their authors share the same grave in Westminster Abbey.

Acknowledging that the character of Alexander gave abundant and legitimate scope to satirists, Donne rehearses, 'with vouchers', as he would say, his remarkable and admirable achievements. The welding together of Macedon, its establishment as the leading member of the Hellenic confederation, no less than his unique military conquests, are all rehearsed and given proper credit, while Alexander's education, under Aristotle, is given due weight in his formation.

A thoughtful analysis is offered to explain Alexander's seemingly uncritical acceptance of the conditions he found in the many territories he overcame; an acceptance used by Grote to diminish the conqueror's judgement. The rapid pace of his conquests, halted only by the pause at Babylon, gave little opportunity for assessment and alteration of the *status quo* in the realms now subservient to him. Among those, that of the Persians receives Donne's extended appraisal, though not without an ironical epilogue - 'To ride, to shoot with the bow, and to speak truth, were

the real or the pretended virtues of the ancient Persians. They retained the easier of these virtues, and abandoned the more difficult'. A throwaway line in the historical survey of the Persian empire makes one wish for its expansion – 'the reign of eunuchs has generally accompanied national decay'.

That the Greek states had no stomach for avenging the wrongs perpetrated by the eastern power is central to Grote's thesis that Alexander was alone in his ambition to subdue it, but Donne contests the view:

Whence Mr Grote has derived his opinion that the idea of a Pan-Hellenic league against Persia was unpopular, or obsolete in Greece, we are at a loss to conceive...his only authority...is that of Demosthenes; and we would as soon accept the speeches of the Whigs in 1806 as evidence for the unpopularity of the war with Napoleon in England generally...Neither is there any ground for believing with Mr Grote that Greece generally had abandoned its desire of vengeance on Asia.

All in all, though much of Grote's work, particularly in his earlier volumes, is to be admired, a task still remains as a result of his latest and last offering:

The history of Alexander remains to be written by some one who will hold the balance even between the fanatical applause of Droysen and Flathe, and the little less fanatical detraction of Mr Grote.

With an examination of 'Aristophanes'²¹⁶ we complete this survey of Donne's journal writings on Greek topics. (An examination of his edition of *Euripides* follows). Earlier in the year, he had written for *Tait's*, two articles on Molière, 'the great comic dramatist of France', and he now proposes 'to devote some pages to the writer who holds the corresponding place in the literature of ancient Greece'.

Aristophanes flourished during the descent of Athens from its greatest period, 'when the decline of public virtue, and the growing corruptions of civilisation had created subjects both for the humorist and for the satirist', and he is introduced by way of a discourse on the origins and nature of Greek comedy. Arising from the worship of Bacchus, which also gave birth to tragedy, comedy was found to be 'a convenient vehicle for personal invective...it was at once the licensed censor, and the chartered libertine'. Shortly before Aristophanes began to write, the law

²¹⁶ WBD, 'Aristophanes', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, NS20 (August 1853), 449-456.

had interfered to curb extreme licentiousness, but the check was short-lived, and it is to his credit that the poet himself kept his work within reasonable bounds, though Donne has to admit that

Wit and banter, satire and buffoonery, sense and nonsense, poetry and obscenity, religion and dirt, are all used indiscriminately, as occasion requires or caprice dictates. No weapon is too foul, no aim is too noble for a dramatist who was as unscrupulous in his means as he was earnest in his purposes, and who to patriotic motives added literary ability of the highest order.

It is in literary excellence that the work of Aristophanes differs from modern farce, and in breadth of humour that it differs from modern comedy. It can be, and usually is, a vehicle for the strongest diatribes against the victims of his vituperation. His quarrel with the demagogue, Cleon, is reflected in the *Knights*; while Socrates is the target in the *Clouds*, somewhat misdirected in that the sage was not a sophist, though there represented as such. Not that Aristophanes was unjust to the great philosopher. Despite history's apotheosis, Socrates is revealed by Donne as less than wholly admirable:

Notwithstanding his practical philosophy, his character was stained with vices which even in his own times were not practised without obloquy, and in ours are altogether infamous.

Conceding the grossness of Aristophanes' comedies, contrasted with the chasteness of Attic tragedy, Donne claims for them a unique and irreplaceable status, and with the claim, his essay ends:

They are among the most valuable remains of antiquity. They give us a strange insight into the everyday life of the men for whom Plato thought, Pericles thundered, Phidias sculptured, and Æschylus sung. They show us one side of those of whom the other is to be seen in the annals of Marathon and Salamis. Had they come down to us divested of their grosser elements, and merely as works of art, they would have been classed with the noblest efforts of the tragic muse; had they reached us without their artistic adornments, we would have supposed they had been the amusements of the dregs of the population unworthy of the name of Athenians. It is the combination in them of the highest literary excellence with the lowest buffoonery that makes them so precious, for they teach us that no degree of merely intellectual cultivation is incompatible with the grossest immorality.

The antipathy of Aristophanes for the tragedian, Euripides, is exposed in Donne's essay account of the *Acharnians*, expanded in the only book he issued on a Greek subject –

Euripides,²¹⁷ written as one of his two contributions to W Lucas Collins's series of *Ancient Classics for English Readers* (the other was *Tacitus*, 1873, to be noted below),

Written at the age of sixty-five, it shows a far more mature and restrained Donne than is revealed in his journal articles, even those of similar date. It seems that the more leisurely pace, and ample space, allowed a measured approach to the subject and, of course, a more extended exposition. Arguments do not have to be compressed; examples can be profuse, and an altogether more readable work composed.

It is the same Donne, of course. The massive learning and wide reading figure, as always, but this time there is no sense of a needless parade; rather, points are made and justified by reference to an impressive mass of relevant illustration. Shakespeare (citations from twelve different plays and some poetry), is found alongside fellow Englishmen, Pope, De Quincey, Wycherley, Browning and Fielding; the continent provides Goethe, Cervantes, Dante and Racine; while the ancient world offers Homer, Thucydides, Juvenal and, naturally, Aristophanes. In all, scattered within two hundred pages, are quotations from thirty-four writers.

Donne's sympathy for Euripides is manifest. He admits him not to be the greatest of the Greek dramatists and recognises that this is demonstrated by the reception given by fellow-Athenians to his works 'The most ardent admirer of Euripides is compelled to allow that this indefatigable writer of plays can hardly be ranked among successful poets'.

Defeated more often than successful in his annual bid for the crown, Euripides' relative unpopularity probably owed much to his intransigence. When the whole house, which he occasionally had to pacify, once demanded that an offensive passage or sentiment in a tragedy should be struck out, his response was, 'Good people, it is *my* business to teach you, and not to be taught by you'. Called by Donne 'the scenic philosopher', it was probably too strong a didactic intention which robbed him of mass appeal – 'Had he been less philosophic, he would probably have been more successful at the time, and less obvious to critical shafts'. It will be recalled

²¹⁷ WBD, *Euripides*, (Edinburgh/London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1872).

that Donne was ever critical of overt didacticism in creative writing.²¹⁸ But time changes things, and ‘within half a century after his death, his name stood foremost on the roll of Greek dramatic poets’.

It is easy to see why Euripides appealed to Donne. They shared a healthy scepticism concerning religious tenets, combined with a deep reverence for life:

The wise man’s only Jupiter is this,
To eat and drink during his little day,
And give himself no care. And as for those
Who complicate with laws the life of man,
I freely give them tears for their reward. (*The Cyclops*)

Both had a warm regard for their fellow-men, which did not blind them to human faults and failings. There is a recognition, for example, of the selfishness of the elderly – ‘the lengthening shadows on the dial often render the old less sensible of others’ woes’. The book is unintentionally a testament not only to its subject, but to its author.

Due to the bulk of Donne’s writings on Roman and Latin themes, it will not be possible to give detailed attention to all twenty-five essays, particularly as some regard must be paid to his two books. Instead, they will be grouped for some purposes, and introduced by a general survey of what was undoubtedly his area of greatest competence and abiding interest, the development of the Roman republic and empire.

The books are separated by more than thirty years, and while the later one, on Tacitus,²¹⁹ will be dealt with alongside his essay on the Roman historian, the earlier one²²⁰ is best dealt with here. Its publication was a trial and torment to Donne.

The story begins in 1839, when Donne, dissatisfied with his experiment of taking pupils to supplement his income, and with only half-a-dozen published articles to his credit, is seeking more literary work. His friend and fellow Apostle J W Blakesley (they were elected together),

²¹⁸ See, e.g., his comments on Trench, pp. 170-171.

²¹⁹ WBD, *Tacitus*, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1873).

²²⁰ WBD, *Roman History BC 390 to AD 31*, (London: Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1841-42).

writes to him to offer a more congenial way of passing the time and filling the coffers:

...Malden has brought down the history of Rome to the taking of the city by the Gauls, and our friends Thompson and Merivale [Apostles] had engaged to continue it; the first, from the Gallic invasion to the end of the Commonwealth, the latter from that time to heaven knows when. Thompson...declares that he finds he is utterly unequal to the task and, what is more, has determined to resign the affair. He would be extremely obliged if you would undertake it.

Blakesley reminds Donne that he is well-prepared with relevant material; that he will do a better job than Thompson, who has a 'natural turn for indolence and want of system'; and that the pay is reasonable – 'They propose to give £30 per sixpenny number, and they expect three such sixpenny numbers in the course of the year. This is pretty nearly an annuity of £90 for the next four years'.

Donne is hooked, and for the next eighteen months his correspondence is a developing saga of frustration. Apart from personal letters on the subject to Blakesley, Trench, Vipian, Fitzgerald and Blakesley himself, there are no less than forty-eight communications between Donne and the Society.

The fortunes of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge form a saga in themselves, and have been comprehensively recorded.²²¹ It is the story, not uncommon during the nineteenth century, of a philanthropic attempt, in this instance somewhat utilitarian in intention (Brougham was involved), to improve the education of the increasing number of new literates, by providing cheap 'improving' books and pamphlets. Sadly, the venture evoked a poor response from the public, though more than one series was begun, and Roman history fell into the category of the unwanted material, concerning which the society's own survey recorded 'Subjects of treatises in the Library of Useful Knowledge aroused little interest'.

Donne's contribution did see the light of day, though the surviving copy in the Society's archives ends abruptly on page 128; later sixpenny numbers having seemingly been abandoned. The inter-change of letters

²²¹ Monica C Grobel, *The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge 1826-1846*, (PhD thesis, London University, 1932), and H Smith, *The SDUK 1826-1846*, (Halifax, Nova Scotia: Dalhousie University, School of Library Services Occasional Paper 8, 1974).

between Thomas Coates, the Society's secretary, and Donne, becomes increasingly acrimonious and accusatory. If it isn't Donne, who has fallen behind with copy, offering excuses ranging from his own 'flu and scarlet fever to accidents to his children, it is the Society holding up proof-reading and return of emendations. The tone of both correspondents is ever more peevish, with Donne offering or threatening to resign and Coates complaining that manuscripts are not presented according to the Society's house style. There is a much resented accusation that Donne has used material from Rose's classical dictionary:²²²

I hope that my dealings with the Society hitherto had shown that I am not, as you seem to imply, a person likely to borrow either reference or language from another, or actuated in writing by merely economical motives.

The accusation was clearly withdrawn at some stage, for, on completion of the work, Donne writes:

I have to thank you for conveying to me the opinion of the Committee on my Roman history, which is the more gratifying to me from its implying that the work is original.

Donne has to make repeated requests for payment, doubtless reflecting the increasing financial difficulties which ultimately closed down the Society, but all ends amicably, with the Society responding generously to his request for a copy of his book by sending fifteen!

Perhaps an assessment of an incomplete work is inappropriate, especially as it was only available for inspection in the archives, but it displays all the hallmarks of a Donne production – copious notes, references to obscure authors, and familiar value judgements on leading characters. It would not be until 1873, only three years before he laid down his pen for good, that he would attempt another book on a Roman theme. written by his friend and fellow-Apostle, Charles Merivale. These latter add up to a book-length appraisal, totalling 144 pages of closely-written, closely-argued discussion of the subject. Donne was at home with the minutiae, as well as being able to see the broader picture. Certain themes emerge and re-emerge in the reviews.

Until then, essays and review articles would occupy him.

²²² Donne contributed to this work. If the material was his own, the charge was not plagiarist, but profiting twice from a single undertaking – a sin in academic circles also!

Most of the essays are devoted to Roman history, either through general surveys such as the magisterial 'Caesarian Rome'²²³, or the ongoing and equally authoritative reviews²²⁴ of the history of imperial Rome. One is a huge admiration for Merivale and his *magnum opus* – 'Mr Merivale is no ordinary writer [of] this most learned and interesting book...Mr Merivale compensates for the want of [novelty] by his original and comprehensive manner of dealing with this vast and varied subject'. He is stated to be 'no unworthy successor to the two most gifted historians of Rome [Arnold; Gibbon] whom English literature has yet produced'.

It is a constant complaint of Donne's, in a number of contexts – history, philology, drama – that England lags behind Europe in scholarly production, and he is always glad to point to exceptions, such as J M Kemble and, here, Merivale. The latter is hailed as 'an author who infuses into the dry bones of learning much of the spirit which usually pertains only to narratives of recent events'. The successive episodes of his recital evoke new tributes. 'We greet with no ordinary pleasure each instalment of Mr Merivale's work...a narrative which bids fair to hold a permanent place in historical literature'. The final accolade is bestowed in the review of the last volume:

We need not, on this occasion, to dwell further on Mr Merivale's merits as an historian. Twice before we have expressed our opinion of them in this journal [*Edinburgh Review*]; and his seventh volume afford no reasons for doubting the soundness of our former verdict. That judgement has been confirmed by the public, and Mr Merivale is already accepted by it as the classical historian of the Caesars of the first and second centuries...He may be justly proud for having supplied a void in Roman annals.

As for other of his friends (Borrow, Froude), Donne the reviewer was a doughty and loyal champion.

²²³ WBD, 'Caesarian Rome', *Edinburgh Review* 129 (January 1869), 68-102.

²²⁴ WBD, 'History of the Romans under the Empire', *Gentleman's Magazine* 33 (June 1850) 590-597.

- 'Merivale's Rome under the Empire' *Edinburgh Review* 92 (July 1850), 57- 94.

- 'History of the Romans under the Empire', *Fraser's Magazine* (June 1853) 657-669.

- 'Merivale's Rome under the Empire', *Saturday Review* II (3 May 1856), 14.

- 'Merivale's Romans under the Empire', *Edinburgh Review* 106 (July 1857) 1 157-194.

- 'The Flavian Caesars and the Antonines', *Edinburgh Review* 119 (January 1864) 26-61.

Like many a writer for periodicals, he was not averse to reproducing material, often only thinly disguised or minimally altered, for publication in more than one journal or article. The Merivale reviews allude constantly, for example, to Tacitus, for whose writings Donne has mixed approval, and to whom he devoted an entire essay²²⁵, finally gathering up all the scattered references in his 1873 book.²²⁶ He has the decency to acknowledge in the 'Advertisement' to that work, his debt to Merivale 'as a guide in many portions of this book'.

Although ten years passed between the two items, Donne did not add significantly in the book to what he had written in the journal essay. Certain themes re-emerged, including the realisation, now intrinsic in modern historiography, that it is impossible to keep the historian out of his work – 'If it be true that every great portrait-painter introduces upon his canvas something of his own nature, it is also true that every great historical writer infuses into his narrative something of his own feelings'. It may be remembered that Donne has adverted to this before, with the accompanying warning that the historian should be aware of the danger and minimise it. He detects in the two major works of Tacitus an indication that the historian displays some such awareness:

The *Annals* are conceived in a modern spirit, and are the model on which many subsequent writers have constructed their works.

The book affords, of course, greater space to expand the picture of Tacitus and draw attention to some of his qualities. His eloquence, for example – 'pregnant with thought, condensed in phrase, sagacious in its views, epigrammatic in its periods'.²²⁷ That eloquence characterises Tacitus's account of his father-in-law, Agricola – 'The concluding sections of the "Life of Agricola" have in all times been regarded among the noblest samples of historical eloquence', while the *Annals* cannot be surpassed among their author's works:

Far from being the dry bones of some purposed record, they are among the most signal examples of thoughtful, interesting and brilliant narration. They abound in

²²⁵ WBD, 'Tacitus and his times', *Fraser's Magazine* 68 (July 1863) 102-114.

²²⁶ WBD, *Tacitus*, (Edinburgh/London: Wm Blackwood & Sons, 1873).

²²⁷ The length of the book separates this commendation of epigrammatic periods from the complaint that 'even Tacitus himself is not quite free from the blemish of epigrammatic sentences'. Nor Donne from inconsistencies!

anecdote; their by-ways are often not less present than the main road; they take the reader into many lands; introduce him into many forms of life and manners...the "Annals" are "the roof and crown" of the mighty master's genius.

'Mighty master' Tacitus may be, but Donne is not afraid to contradict him. With chapter and verse he offers his own explanation for the recall of Germanicus, rejecting out of hand that of the historian – 'The removal of the young and successful general is ascribed by Tacitus to the fear or jealousy of Tiberius, but there is no reason to impute such motives to him'.

Donne is puzzled, and disappointed, to detect in Tacitus an anti-Jewish bias:

Bearing in mind the historian's relation to Vespasian and Titus, the conquerors of Judæa, to whom he owed his first advancement in public life, his account of the origin, the religion, the manners and customs of the Jewish people, is inexplicable, and, indeed, considering his opportunities for informing himself on the subject, without any apparent excuse.

His overall view of the Roman historian brings together conflicting aspects of his life and work. On the credit side, Tacitus 'was regarded by his contemporaries as...able...to revive the literary splendour of the Augustan age'. 'To him Pliny, who had by no means a low opinion of himself, yielded precedence in eloquence', while in modern times 'even those who undervalue his style, do not deny to him the possession of a transcendent intellect'. On the debit side, his presentation was distorted by his ignoring of certain factors in the affairs of Rome. For instance, we look to him in vain for a balanced account of the benefits which accrued to the provincials from the substitution of one master for many. 'Had he studied Gaul, or Spain, or Syria, with half the attention he bestowed on the Germans, we should have been better able than we are to describe the internal condition of the empire'.

There were excuses for some of his silences – 'Many of the best years of his manhood were spent under the sullen and capricious tyranny of Domitian. In that dark epoch it was dangerous to write or to speak freely'. He took Domitian as a sample of the twelve Caesars, and 'accordingly dipped his pen in gall throughout his narrative of their administration'. He has a republican bias, so that 'his dissatisfaction with his own times peeps out in all he wrote...He is therefore, if he be implicitly trusted, likely to

mislead us'. Nor does what appears to be corroboration of his account by Suetonius bolster his cause. Of the veracity of 'this often picturesque, and always entertaining biographer', Donne has even graver doubts. 'On any other supposition than that of a voracious appetite and a bad digestion, his collectanea [*sic*] of gossip are inexplicable'. Demonstrable of Donne's minute knowledge, he claims superior status as an historian of the empire for Velleius, hardly known outside the specialist academic field. Such knowledge is also displayed throughout an interesting review published in 1841, together with a generosity of spirit not possessed by all reviewers.

Donne's closing tribute to Tacitus, appropriately transferred from a Shakespeare Roman play, might well serve for himself as a historical writer:

He reads much;

He is a great observer, and he looks

Quite through the deeds of men. (*Julius Caesar*, I.ii.204)

When, in 1840, Prebendary Henry Milman, later to be Dean of St Paul's, published his *The History of Christianity under the Empire*, it immediately provoked one vicious and unrestrained reaction.²²⁸ The anonymous author, clearly a card-carrying Biblical fundamentalist, deplores Milman's heavy dependence on Gibbon (he had edited the *Decline & Fall* in 1835) both in style and attitude. 'Not in one point only, or in several, Mr Milman has imbibed the whole spirit and sentiment of Gibbon. The poison pervades the whole mass'. Dissimulation and a disguised departure from Christian fundamentals show 'how apt a scholar Mr Milman has proved himself in this new school of infidelity'. Although it would be some years yet before George Eliot would translate Strauss's *Leben Jesu* (1846), and even longer before Renan would publish his *Vie de Jésus* (1863), similar liberal studies from Germany and France, were already known and stirring unease among traditionalist evangelical believers in England. This particularly nasty attack ends with the faint hope that Milman will do the decent thing, and leave the paid service of a church

²²⁸ 'Milman's History of Christianity' *Fraser's Magazine* xxi (June 1840), 633-647.

whose tenets he clearly no longer upholds – ‘he ought not to contaminate the church by his presence and his evil example’.

Writing on the same subject a year later,²²⁹ and at much greater length, Donne displays a completely different attitude. Though at this time he did not know Milman (they would later become colleagues on the committee of the London Library), he approves a work which ‘deplores and condemns, under whatever names and pretexts they appear, the arrogance, the rashness and the bigotry of theologians’. It is not surprising, in the light of his own open-mindedness, that he should delight in an author of similar disposition:

His acquirements are various, the general temper of his criticism is liberal and candid, and the imagination of the poet is frequently a useful auxiliary to the pen of the historian...He is also exempt from many of the *idola tribus* of his own profession – the prejudices that would most seriously affect the task he has undertaken.

Unlike the earlier reviewer, Donne approves the even-handedness with which continental scholars are treated by Milman:

In the jealousy or the dread with which the theologians of Germany are sometimes regarded in this country, Mr Milman does not participate; but even when dissenting from their theories, he gratefully admits their merits and his own obligations.

Praise is not unqualified. The content of the work is not always fittingly clothed – ‘the general structure of the diction is lax and inexpressive...His periods are too often encumbered by parenthetical and dependent accessories, which disturb the symmetry and break the force of the narrative’. Nonetheless, it is valuable, not least for its freedom from the dogmatism which from all sides is characterising current theological discussion:

Some require the credentials, others assert the unquestionable validity of the ecclesiastical power: reason and tradition, the reformed and the patristic eras are once more advancing their several claims, and no one has at present spoken the word in season to compose and re-organize the warring elements.

Interestingly, and with greater accuracy than that of the *Saturday* reviewer, Donne notes that Milman’s examination of Strauss’s *Leben Jesu*

²²⁹ WBD, ‘Milman’s History of Christianity’ *British & Foreign Review* 12 (September 1841), 336-384.

led him to 'a complete, though of course an undesigned refutation of the learned German's hypothesis'. He is an honest and thorough scholar, owing nothing to bigotry and everything to painstaking personal enquiry:

In his general freedom from professional prejudices, he is honourably distinguished from nearly every church historian in our language; and his candour or his scepticism arises from research and reason, not from the love of innovation, or from indifference to results.

Donne's two reviews²³⁰ of the story of Julius Caesar as told by the French emperor, Napoleon the Third, give him the opportunity to speculate on the monarch's motives for writing:

We are not doing injustice to the imperial author by supposing him to have thrown a glove into the political arena, or that, under the garb of an historian, he is giving us a treatise on European, if not English, affairs.

This is not to diminish Napoleon's qualifications for writing, one of which Donne has alluded to in a number of articles – 'They who enact history themselves deserve, and are pretty certain of, attention when they take up the pen...[he] brings to his task the experience of an active and meditative life'. The emperor does not, however, bring to his task that discriminating judgement which history demands and which, Donne claims, has only recently begun to be exercised in classical scholarship:

The history of Rome, since the revival of learning, has passed through several phases. First came the age of faith in whatsoever was written in Latin books. Then an age of reason, in which men...wrote political commentaries on the facts as they found them. Lastly, the facts themselves were winnowed and sifted...The French emperor's work belongs less to the third than to the two former of these classes.

In both reviews Donne challenges Napoleon's assertion that historical truth is ascertained by the application of logic. He finds such a claim unintelligible – 'to us a history written by the "rules of logic" seems of possible execution nowhere beyond the kingdom of Laputa'. He also finds unacceptable the stated relation between motives and facts, in which the emperor appears to have reversed reality, ascribing Caesar's motivation for actions to causes incapable of substantiation, rather than to the impact of the known events in which those actions were situated.

²³⁰ WBD, 'Histoire de Jules César', *Christian Advocate & Review* V (1865), 301-307.
'Histoire de Jules César', *Fraser's Magazine* 71 (May 1865), 655-670.

In 1850, the poet Horace attracted Donne's attention, in a fascinating article²³¹ combining an examination of the Roman poet with one of the Italian, Tasso. Curiously, they had just been the subject of simultaneous publications by two members of the Milman family, Horace by the Dean of St Paul's, and Tasso by his nephew, later to become Bishop of Calcutta. Donne declares his intention of forsaking his usual literary criticism, offering instead 'a re-introduction to the men themselves [i.e., Horace, Tasso], to their friends and patrons, their employments and amusements, their foibles and their sorrows'. The article is complimentary to both the Milmans. Not for the first time, Dean Milman, a future close associate, is praised as having 'already earned for himself a station in literature which no commendation of ours would render more certain or conspicuous'. His Horace is not a particularly taxing or erudite production – 'To a scholar so accomplished, and to so experienced a writer, it was probably the work of leisure hours'. This is not to depreciate its quality. It is an 'eminently beautiful and splendid edition of the works of Horace', a poet who is essential reading for those who would be familiar with ancient Rome – 'Of Rome, or of the Roman mind, no one can know anything who is not profoundly versed in Horace'. Donne cannot resist showing his own familiarity with the subject by supplying, in one particular, 'what has escaped even his last and best biographer', and, in another section, stating that 'One literary effect of Horace's campaign has been unnoticed by his biographers'. This proclivity for repairing omissions is marked, and while it substantiates Donne's claim to be a careful reader and erudite writer, it is sometimes so done as to jar.

There are some gentle and amusing touches. Writing of the Sabine farm given to Horace by his munificent patron, Maecenas, he says

His pastures were apparently too mossy – his arable land too overgrown with the wild cyclamen and the dwarf oak, to entitle him to a medal from the Royal Agricultural Society; and his friend Virgil, if he went to visit him, had doubtless the mortification to find all his Georgical precepts set at nought.

while his wide cultural interests are shown in a comparison of the

Three [Roman poets who] have eminently succeeded in depicting natural scenery and rural life. In Lucretius we have the earnest gloom of Salvator's landscapes:

²³¹ WBD, 'Horace and Tasso', *Edinburgh Review* 188 (October 1850), 533-574.

in Virgil the tenderness and fidelity of Poussin; and in Horace the luminous grace and artful combinations of Claude.

This passage is specially interesting as being one of the rare mentions by Donne of visual art and adding to the well-known names of Poussin and Claude, that of the relatively obscure Salvator [Rosa].

Horace's epistolary verses ('perhaps the boldest and most inventive step in all Roman literature') are highly commended: 'They have all the grace of the most animated and refined conversation. They are the "Spectator" of the Roman supper-tables'.

In dealing with Tasso, the article passes on 'to a more turbulent and tragic aspect of poetic life...Tasso was the dupe of tomorrow even from a child'. Impoverished because of his father's political indiscretions, exiled, spurned, 'during his agitated life his only havens of rest were his early childhood and his death-bed'. Again, Donne parades his learning by referring, for background material on Tasso, to biographies and critical sketches in Italian, French and English, with all of which he shows familiarity. (This, it should be remembered, is before Donne's residence in the London Library, when such resources would have been readily available). The account of Tasso's later persecution and incarceration in an Italian madhouse is poignantly rendered.

Twenty years later, Donne returned to Horace²³² in an oblique, and perhaps unintended, piece of self-commendation. The book reviewed was in the Blackwood's series *Ancient Classics for English Readers*, edited by The Rev. W Lucas Collins. Donne's *Euripides* and *Tacitus* (already separately noticed) would appear in the same series during the next two years, a series the success of which is 'in the first instance...due to the signal ability with which the series is, and promises to be conducted'. It is to be assumed that the 'signal ability' was not confined to the general editor, but displayed by his chosen authors also. Repeating that 'no epistles in verse succeeded the Horatian', the poet's 'exceeding great reward' is to be

The poet of ages, instead on one period and one people; to be read in lands never overshadowed by the Roman eagles; and to be cherished, by the descendants of

²³² WBD, 'Theodore Martin's *Horace*', *Edinburgh Review* 133 (April 1871) 530-545.

racers whom he accounted barbarous, as a sage instructor, a genial companion and, wherever the ancient classics exist, 'a possession for all time'.

It is the function of the Collins series of manuals to help ensure that the ancient classics do, indeed, continue to exist.

Having more than once rebuked Donne for parading his learning, it has to be admitted that he was very knowledgeable indeed, particularly in the field of Roman and Latin studies. Perhaps a practice cultivated in his early days to bolster up his (non-academic) credentials, became in later life a habit which served him for a signature.

On one occasion he intervened in a highly technical enquiry, conducted in the pages of *Archæologica*. In 1860, the Earl of Stanhope, a distinguished amateur scholar and president of the Archæological Society, had sent for comment a copy of his 'Notes on Human Sacrifices among the Romans' to H G Liddell, Dean of Christchurch, Oxford. Liddell responded in no uncertain terms – 'The question "Were human sacrifices in use among the Romans?" must, I conceive, be answered in the negative'. With detailed quotations in Greek and Latin, from pagan and Christian authors, twenty-one in number, he demonstrated to his own satisfaction, if not conclusively, that the accusation that the Romans practised human sacrifice is due in part to a misunderstanding of the circumstances in which some criminals were executed, and partly to an early Christian response to accusations against themselves of similar practices.

In 1863, the Stanhope study, together with Liddell's response and other contributions, appeared in print²³³, and came to Donne's notice. He composed a memorandum and sent it to Stanhope.

MY LORD,

In the volume of 'Miscellanies' which has recently appeared under the able editing of your Lordship, are some remarks by Lord Macaulay, Sir Robert Peel and yourself, on the use of human sacrifice by the Romans. These remarks, which I have read with great interest, lead me to turn to various passages in classical authors that bear on the subject. The result of my inquiry I take the liberty of forwarding to your Lordship. I have not attempted to make any selection of the extracts, and as I have no theory to support, I must request your Lordship to consider them merely materials for the use of some one with more leisure and greater ability than myself.

To all of Liddell's cited authors he adds another half-dozen of the ancients, including Minucius Felix, whose Christian apologetic, *Octavius*,

he had reviewed a decade earlier. Interestingly, he also draws on a very different area of his own reading, the Spanish conquest of America. (It will be remembered that he had written several reviews of Helps's history as successive volumes appeared²³⁴). After rehearsing Helps's discoveries among the Aztecs, he suggests that their civilisation, being at the relevant times on all fours with those of the Greeks, Celts and Romans, provides significant, if not conclusive, support for the practice of human sacrifice among the Romans. He is tentative in the application of his evidence:

It may very likely be impossible to arrive at any positive conclusion, still less to discover any governing law. In the following extracts, a selection is not attempted; but they may be of some use as materials for determining the doubt so far as the Romans are concerned.

The subject continued to interest him, and four years later he was exchanging correspondence with Blakesley on human sacrifice among the ancient Greeks.²³⁵

As in the consideration of Donne's offerings on both history and literary criticism, so here, it is interesting to see at work an amateur in a field which would become increasingly the domain of the professionals. Such writers as Jenkyns²³⁶ have shown how the Victorians (a loose term²³⁷) gradually formalised classical studies, which had always been the mainstay of university education.

Curiously, it is in areas which, because of their technical requirements, might have been thought particularly susceptible to this trend of increasing professionalism - botany, geology, astronomy - that the amateur held his own and made distinguished contributions to knowledge.²³⁸

²³³ In *Miscellanies*, collected and edited by Earl Stanhope, (London: 1863).

²³⁴ v. Bibliography of WBD articles, Appendix B, and pp. 146, n.254.

²³⁵ J W Blakesley > WBD, 4 February 1867, JP.

²³⁶ Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980)

²³⁷ It is salutary to recall, for example, that when Thomas Arnold, one of Lytton Strachey's 'Eminent Victorians', died, Victoria had only been on the throne for five years.

²³⁸ See, for example, Lynn Barber, *The Heyday of Natural History*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980).

DONNE THE HISTORIAN

Demonstrable of Donne's wide-ranging interests and knowledge is the collection of articles on modern, i.e., non-ancient, historical themes. English and foreign events and individuals are brought under examination and while the views expressed are rarely startling, they are his own, reflecting his liberal political stance and hatred of tyranny, whether royal or plebeian.

In 'Histories of the Reformation'²³⁹ he contrasts the recent publications of German (Ranke) and French (D'Aubigné) scholars. The former is commended for those qualities which have characterised his earlier work:

The same thorough honesty of investigation, the same disposition to penetrate below the surface and fill up the deficiencies of former histories by the help of new materials; and especially the same thorough sympathy with the feelings, and familiarity with the manners, of the age of which he treats.

While the French work has acquired more general celebrity,

We, mere literary critics, can scarcely speak of it except in what its admirers will think a disparaging tone. He [D'Aubigné] writes for a religious party, and will of course meet with the destiny of authors who devote themselves to such a purpose – high popularity with the party in question, neglect or discontent on the part of the rest of the world...Setting out with the principle that the Reformation in its early stages was the cause of God, and the opposition to it the work of Satan, it is of course of comparatively little importance in his view, that individual reformers should have committed errors, or lapsed into human frailties.

Donne, the self-styled 'mere literary critic', has other grounds of complaint against the Frenchman than partisanship - 'His principal fault as an author is his excessive, intolerable wordiness...

²³⁹ WBD, 'Histories of the Reformation' *British & Foreign Review* 15 (April 1843) 101-151. The works reviewed are Von Leopold Ranke, *Deutsche Geschichte Im Zeitalter der Reformation* and J H Merle D'Aubigné, *Histoire de la Reformation du Sièxième Siècle*, both read by WBD in the original languages.

His pages savour strongly of journalism; he seems to have felt it necessary to make every chapter contain a point, like the unhappy scribes who spin out novels, à la Dickens or Lever, by the month'. Nor is this all - 'The commonest tricks of romance writers are not beneath his adoption', in particular, an 'artificial liveliness, to our taste one of the most intolerable sins in historical style'.

Donne repeats in this article one of his habitual assumptions, that of the common stock of specific, as well as general, knowledge of the matters under review - 'Everyone knows the history of the celebrated quarrel of Investitures, and the ultimate triumph of the papal over the imperial power in the thirteenth century'. At least one holder of a theology degree did not, and had to check! We shall see again and again that if Donne is not over-rating his readers, their minds were very differently stocked from those of their descendants.

The whole of the rest of the review is largely devoted to Luther, despite the statement that 'it is no part of our intention to dilate on that deeply interesting and attractive subject, the personal character of...Luther...We will only remark that we know of no historical character which grows so strongly, not on the admiration only, but on the affections, in proportion as its details are studied, as that of this truly wonderful man'. The 1519 Leipzig confrontation with Eck is delightfully handled, with Luther's growing unease with his personal position aphoristically treated - 'He came to Leipzig a Catholic, he left it a Protestant'.

Luther's fellow-reformer, Carlstadt, from whom he later differed on the matter of the eucharist, is noted for having

arrived, almost before the Reformation had begun, at the conclusions of very modern criticism; doubting of the authorship of the Pentateuch, the authenticity of the Gospels in their present shape, and so on.

German mysticism of this period, though treated with qualified approval, is contrasted to its advantage with 'the ostentatious and disgusting extravagances which disfigure the history of the herd of those of whom southern nations have made their saints'. There will be other examples of Donne's deep-rooted dislike of Catholicism, scattered among his writings on many subjects; here, such expressions as 'the reanimated

bigotry and power of Rome, under which hundreds of martyrs were even then perishing' are typical. The equivalent sufferings of Catholics under Protestants pass without record or comment.

Luther's contest with the humanist, Erasmus, is honestly described as one in which the reformer 'felt the bitterness of literary defeat' at the hands of his antagonist:

That practised fencer saw the weak point of his adversary in a moment; held him entangled in the sophistries in which his view of justification by faith had involved him, and exhibited him in those meshes, a wretched spectacle to cool reasoning sages like himself.

Following a brief, and largely commendatory survey of the work of Zwingli, whose praise is that 'In respect of personal character, [he] appears more nearly allied to Luther than any other of the great reformers', Donne ends his article by re-affirming his admiration for Luther, and for his lasting legacy – 'Where in all Europe can the eye of the observer who loves to dwell on practical results rest, even at this day, with so much satisfaction as on the states of Protestant Germany?'.

The Reformation both introduces and concludes the two lengthy reviews of Hallam's 'Introduction to the Literature of Europe...' ²⁴⁰ which, as frequently with Donne, became pegs on which to hang his own views on the subject. Conceding that 'much literary history is contained in the writings of Cicero', he claims that 'for a literary history, in the modern sense of the term, the ancients had few materials'. The nearest approach is found in the collections circulated by Aristotle for a history of the Greek drama. In more recent times, an account of the revival of letters has been lacking, and Hallam's modestly titled 'Introduction' is the more gladly to be received for being just that:

As an introduction...conveying extensive and accurate knowledge, in language always pure and perspicuous, and sometimes eloquent, it merits both praise and welcome as a well-executed and seasonable work.

It is schematically arranged, easy to follow, and reliable in its assessment of the works it deals with, as is its author:

²⁴⁰ WBD, 'Hallam's Introduction to the Literature of the Middle Ages', *British & Foreign Review* 6 (January 1838) 1-46; 11 (January 1840) 355-416.

His judgements on literary character and books wear always the impress of good sense, of refined taste, and an extensive acquaintance with many languages and the chief works contained in them.

Donne's regard for the German peoples and their scholars leads him to contrast them favourably with his *bête noire*, the Catholic traditions of ultramontane Europe:

Modern literature, especially in southern Europe, where it first came to maturity, did not decline an alliance with paganism. To the worshippers of the Virgin and the Saints the ethnic notions of intermediate deities were not unacceptable...

Nor does the church fare better with him as custodian of literary values; 'this claim upon the gratitude of more enlightened times should be received with caution':

Literature had enemies within the church no less than without. A notion prevailed among ecclesiastics that secular learning was incompatible with their sacred office, or, in the stronger temper and language of the times, that the devil's songs could never make God's music... They successively opposed – and where they opposed they too often persecuted – the schoolmen, the revivers of learning, and the few who cultivated the exact sciences...

None of this, it should be recorded, derives from Hallam, who acknowledges that but for the clergy 'the records of that very literature would have perished'. Donne, however, will not be deflected from his harangue:

Without going further into the question, we shall merely state our impression that, as regards secular learning, the patronage of the church was indirect; that its effects upon invention and genius were repressive; and that, when it directly favoured liberal studies, it was either from being forced into a new position by outward pressure, or from being actuated for a time by the spirit and example of a Gerbert [Pope Sylvester II], an Anselm, or a Nicholas V.

Donne's praise of Hallam for one virtue rebounds on himself, particularly with respect to many of his classical articles:

Mr Hallam is free from the affectation of praising a few obscure authors because his peculiar researches have led him to the perusal of their works, and of magnifying what even to scholars must, for the most part, remain unknown.

The first survey continues with penetrating analyses of the Vulgate, Jerome's version of the Bible, which 'preserves, in the Old Testament, the abrupt and figurative manner of the Hebrew, its bold personifications, its audacious metaphors, its pastoral sweetness and zealous spirit': the work and character of Abelard: Dante, whose 'poem is not more wonderful in its conception than valuable as a picture of thought and manners'; and

Petrarch. Donne regrets a degree of verbal parsimony on Hallam's part in dealing with the latter:

We could have desired...a more particular examination of Petrarch's character as an original writer, and of his influence upon literature in general...The early brilliance of Tuscan literature was so important in its effects, especially in secretly counteracting the absorbing devotion for antiquity, that the brief and cursory mention of it, by one so well qualified to do justice to the subject, appears to us a deficiency.

Contrasting Hallam, to his advantage, with his predecessor, Gibbon, Donne allows himself a mild cynicism on the acclaim which scholars receive, for, after all, 'the worth of a reputation for learning depends upon the means for acquiring knowledge, and upon the degree of information in those who confer applause'. An observation by no means outdated!

A selection of extracts is adduced as evidence that 'where his subject admitted of ornament, Mr Hallam has indulged his fine taste and discriminating judgement in passages equally admirable for composition, argument and feeling'. One of them relates to Pico da Mirandola, to whom Donne compared Buckle in his tribute to the English historian, while others examine, yet again, the relation between Luther and Erasmus. For the reformer, Donne has a great admiration, and differs from Hallam, who 'suspects that Luther's "intellectual greatness" has been exaggerated'. This may be, but

The true parallels of Luther in history are men like Augustine and Athanasius: with them he must stand or fall, whether the reader incline [as Donne does] to regard him, in his age, as the foremost man in all the world, or merely as the most able instrument of its inevitable changes.

With a final tilt at Mariolatry – 'which alone of all the ancient heresies retained its hold on the affections of the people for ages, after more intellectual errors had passed away', and some reflections on Machiavelli – 'one of those men who see beyond the present' and with whom 'in modern literature...political philosophy may be said to begin', the assessment of Hallam's first volume ends.

When Hallam produced the final three volumes, Donne resumed his commendatory assessment of the work:

The expectations we had formed from the first volume of Mr Hallam's History of Literature are now gratified by the completion of the work...to the larger and more arduous portion of his task the author has brought the same discriminating spirit and comprehensive knowledge that made the introductory volume so

welcome an accession to critical literature...he treads with equal security the dark places of ethics and metaphysics, the steep and far-stretching range of the Baconian philosophy, or the pleasant mazes of fiction and poetic creation.

Not surprisingly, in a survey of mediæval literature, Donne addresses yet again the ambiguous role of the church, the visible unity of which 'has in all ages been a powerful plea, a pleasing delusion, or a useful prejudice'.

For once, it is not the Catholic church which receives censure:

In religious dissensions the language of the weaker party is in favour of toleration, but it is generally the first to forget its own claims to an indulgent hearing, when any fortunate accidents have put it in possession of security or power.

On the contrary, the counter-Reformation is acknowledged:

The ancient church had not merely withdrawn some of its pretensions, and cast a decent veil over its more palpable abuses; a spirit of renovation, coincident with Protestantism, had arisen within its own bosom.

At the same time,

ecclesiastical authority was extended to some quarters where...it had occasionally slumbered', with consequences for the freedom of literature...in works of poetry and fiction the dangerous licence of Boccaccio and Ariosto, or the indignant declamations of those pre-reformers, Dante and Petrarca, would not have passed the censorship of the sixteenth century.

Another religious theme which unites Donne's look at the past with the situation of his own day was the status of the Catholic papacy:

The papal power was the most vulnerable quarter of the Romish church; it rested neither on apostolic nor patristic authority, and long before the Reformation, had been called in question by the Catholics themselves...the controversy, which is hardly extinct in our own times, divided the theological literature of the next century.

Nineteenth century England was, of course, to see significant developments and alterations in the legal standing of Catholicism. The 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act, passed under the Wellington ministry, opened most political and civil offices to Catholics and admitted them to Parliament, while the restoration of the English hierarchy under Wiseman in 1850 opened the way for a renewal of support for the papacy which led, world-wide, to the (controversial) doctrine of papal infallibility in 1870.

Donne turned eventually from the 'still-vext domain of theology' to the more peaceful regions of poetry and eloquence'. Recognising the impact of the Reformation on literature, he marvels that another feature of

the age, maritime discovery, appears to not to have affected works of imagination, with the possible, but contrived, exception of Camoens.

The great names are rehearsed – Shakespeare, Calderón, Spenser, with acknowledgement of those to whom they were indebted – Virgil, Ariosto, Tasso. The influence of Christian concepts is emphasised, and contrasted with that of the ‘ethnic’ world. ‘Ethnic’ is an adjective widely and interestingly used in the nineteenth century. Donne employs it constantly, as does his friend and correspondent, R C Trench. For them, it means the ancient pagan culture, prior to the impact of the new faith.

The rise and development of modern prose literature receives attention - ‘The massive grandeur of Hooker’s composition’; ‘the works of Taylor [Jeremy], the Cicero and Chrysostom of the English church’; Raleigh, whose *History of the World* ‘in style alone, is an extraordinary instance of genius’; while the language of Bacon ‘is the befitting garb of a colossal intellect’. This is Francis Bacon, of course, to whose life and works Donne’s friend, James Spedding, devoted himself in books admired and reviewed by Donne. Sir Thomas Browne, a great favourite, is praised for his ‘Urn-Burial’, ‘at once the most grandiloquent and the most chastised of his productions’.

Donne dates the gradual improvement of English eloquence to the reign of Charles [II]. ‘when the politest and most popular writers in the French language were studied and emulated’. Bossuet, Fénelon, Pascal, Rousseau, Montaigne, are among those whose eloquence Donne rates more highly than does Hallam, though Hallam does describe the last-named as ‘the earliest classical writer in the French language; the first whom a gentleman is ashamed not to have read’.

A foreign writer who ranks highly with Donne is the Spanish playwright, Calderón, to whom he would devote an 1857 review article.²⁴¹ Here, he confesses himself ‘somewhat disappointed in Mr Hallam’s cursory notice of the second great name of Spanish literature’. [The first is Cervantes]. Calderón is, for Donne, ‘a writer who, more perhaps than any

²⁴¹ See above, pp. 93-95.

other of his age, represents...one of the principal elements of the European mind’.

A passing reference by Hallam leads Donne to a theme not actually germane to the subject under discussion, but one of great moment to him, on which much of his writing was spent – the theatre. One of his pet themes, the necessity of accurate portrayal of historical characters, leads him to say

None but shallow observers will think it a matter of indifference whether Cato appears on the scene in a “bag-wig, flowered gown, and lackered [*sic*] chair”, or with the classic accompaniments and under the majestic impersonation of the elder Kemble.

Donne’s ‘Sephardim: The Jews in Spain and Portugal’,²⁴² was another of his contributions to Kemble’s short-lived editorship of the *British & Foreign Review*, offering a further example of the now familiar attribution to his readers of his own erudition – ‘The general features of the Arab dynasty in Spain are well known’. He nonetheless adds to the story told by Finn, the author whose work he is reviewing, much recondite material drawn from his own research. An attractive picture, poignantly different from the present day, is drawn of the relations between Jews and Muslims in mediæval Iberia:

The unitarian creed and simple ritual of Islam offended the prejudices of the Jews much less than the catholic creed and image-worship of the medieval church. In his oriental habits, his Semitic dialect, and in many of the principles of the Koran, the Mohammedan accorded with the Hebrew, and from gratitude or policy the western caliphs were mostly lenient rulers, and frequently bountiful patrons of the Sephardim.

A detailed and sometimes horrific account of the civil disabilities and compulsory conversion of Jews to Christianity gives Donne renewed opportunities to express his distaste for Catholic attitudes and practices, and his conviction that their results are still to be seen:

To her two completery [*sic*. ?complementary] acts of bigotry – the expulsion of the Sephardim and subsequently of the Moors – Spain is in no small degree indebted for the present decay of her inland trade, her industrial population, and for her general inferiority to the rest of Europe in the arts and enterprise that supply the sinews of war and the blessings of peace.

²³² WBD, ‘Sephardim: the Jews in Spain and Portugal’, *British & Foreign Review* vi (January 1838), 1-46.

A later article of similar nature was 'Recent Historians of Holland',²⁴³ in which the 'three stout and readable octavo volumes' of an English writer, Mrs C M Davies, are reviewed alongside works by a French priest and a German scholar. The lady, 'although relying rather too much upon Dutch sources alone, and too minute in her accounts' of battles and sieges, has conceived and compiled her narrative in a good spirit'. The statement that 'both in French and English indeed a history of Holland remains to be written' encourages Donne to offer his own introductory attempt to remedy the deficiency:

We shall therefore avail ourselves of the works enumerated at the head of this article as text-books only for exhibiting the characteristics and capacities of the subject; not indeed attempting to show *how* a history of Holland should be written, nor *why* out of Holland itself it is still a desideratum, but, from certain salient points and sections of Dutch and Flemish annals, alleging reasons wherefore it is worth writing.

Though there are no indications that Donne could read Dutch, he pontificates about the linguistic heritage of Holland, which, 'though rich in its vocabulary, is singularly harsh and uncouth in prosody and enunciation'. To this disadvantage is added that 'states owe their name with posterity as much to the great writers they have produced as to the great deeds they have done',²⁴⁴ and Holland suffers in this respect. This is a pity, for

To the student of English history the names of the first William of Orange, Olden-Barneveldt, and of John de Witt should be as household words: the deliverance of Leyden and the defence of Haarlem should be second only to the victories of Cressy and Agincourt; nor should it be deemed less unworthy to be ignorant of the discomfiture of Philip and Parma than of the flight of Xerxes and the fall of Darius.

Moreover, 'Holland and the Netherlands...are continuously inwoven into our own annals...Side by side, the English and the Dutch people have fought for all the dearest rights of mankind'.

Donne begins his own account of Dutch history with a departure from traditional methodology. 'A history of Holland usually opens with the year 1579...This epoch is, however, altogether erroneous'. His survey promises to mark three eras as especially characteristic of the people – 'her struggle with the sea, the revolt of the Netherlands from Spain, and their

²⁴³ WBD, 'Recent Historians of Holland', *British & Foreign Review* xxxv (December 1844), 179-217.

²⁴⁴ A sentiment with which Carlyle would have agreed. v. his encomium on 'this Shakespeare of ours' in *The Hero as Poet*.

collision with the French monarchy under Louis XIV'. He has no sooner completed the first section, however, than he is diverted into a discourse on the Dutch constitution, made necessary by the failure of other writers – 'We shall endeavour briefly to indicate one or two of the deficiencies in the constitutional chapters of Mrs Davies and the Abbé'.

Proceeding to a critique of the conflict with Spain, Donne describes the impact of the edicts of the Council of Trent, the tyranny of Alva, and the atrocities committed on the peasantry by the Spanish soldiers. His words are measured, sober and sound, but their expansion leads him in this article, as in not a few others, to abandon his declared structure. The third period of Dutch history is totally overlooked.

It will have caused his dear friend, Kemble, considerable satisfaction, but no surprise, when Donne favourably reviewed his latest offering in the field of Anglo-Saxon studies.²⁴⁵ The article, which also refers extensively to Kemble's *magnum opus*,²⁴⁶ the work of the previous nine years, begins by surveying the current state of scholarship and then justifies Kemble's unusual approach:

In place of kings and stirring incidents, we are introduced to the laws, ethnical or local, which prepared this one of the many homes of the Teutonic race for becoming the theatre of great developments. We are presented with the phenomena of the nation rather than with the accidents of the individual. Mr Kemble's method is however scientifically correct. For this is the order which nature prescribes to itself in developing the germs of national life; and it is in accordance with the practice of eminent historical philologists.

It is no dull catalogue of abstruse material that has been produced – 'We should be doing Mr Kemble great injustice if we led our readers to suppose that instruction only, and not entertainment, would be found in his pages'. His book is 'vital and practical; and therefore instructive and picturesque'. As the review proceeds, it is clear that Donne is handling material which, though outside his own field, and material of which he would not claim to be master, is nonetheless far from unfamiliar. The reason is not far to seek; he had read the proofs, as he did more than once for Spedding. Only two adverse criticisms maintain Donne's manifest honesty in treatment, even of the work of his friends:

²⁴⁵ WBD, 'The Saxons in England', *Edinburgh Review* 89 (January 1849), 151-184.

²⁴⁶ *Codex Diplomaticus Ævi Saxonici*, (1839-48).

We have nothing to suggest, except for the general reader's sake, that in a future edition some at least of the Anglo-Saxon and Latin citations be translated. They will lose little in Mr Kemble's version. Also, the narrative would be at times improved if some matters at present incorporated in the text were transferred to the notes or appendices. Where they now stand, the crude authorities or extracts sometimes obstruct the argument or mar the clearness of the statement.

(For present-day doctoral aspirants, the paragraph is too near home for comfort).

Still on English ground, three reviews²⁴⁷ of successive volumes of Froude's great history give scope for Donne's severe views on the demands and requirements laid on those who write history. A besetting sin in a historian is to measure the past by the standard of his own times. We shall return to this point at the end of this chapter:

This is neither the spirit nor the office of the historian, whose proper business is not to comment upon the past according to the light or the darkness of his own opinions, but to display it as it really was moulded and modified by the men who thought, acted and suffered in their generation.

In the first review, Froude is taxed with an over-generous appraisal of Henry VIII, but commended for a redress of balance in his portrait of the monarch.

We differ, as will be seen presently, in some respects from Mr Froude's judgment of this crowned and anointed Bluebeard...but our difference from him does not blind us to the fact that Mr Froude has studied the king, his character and times, in a much more intelligent and comprehensive spirit than any of his predecessors.

For example, Froude has shown that 'the Henry Tudor whom Wolsey and Cromwell served, although wilful and arbitrary, was a sovereign esteemed by his people, and held in high respect by Europe at large'. He is challenged when he 'gives the parliaments of the day credit for a sturdy independence of the sovereign's mandates'; on the contrary, Donne asserts that

The independence of parliaments may be estimated by the fact, that in no instance did they oppose the royal pleasure, whether he wished to be rid of a minister or a wife; and also by their occasionally receiving a hint, without pleading their privileges, that if they were not more speedy in voting what the king wanted, some of them should be shorter by a head.

²⁴⁷ WBD, 'Froude's History of England', *Fraser's Magazine* 54 (July 1856), 31-46.

- " " " " " " 58 (July 1858), 15-32.

- 'Froude's History of the Reigns of Edward VI and Mary', *Fraser's Magazine* 62 (July 1860), 1-17.

Despite his occasional lapses, 'Enthusiasm like Mr Froude's is, however, a better element in an historian's composition, than cold negation and apathy', while other qualities affirm his status – 'For language, indeed, we are disposed to place him in the very foremost rank of narrators'.

A survey of the economic state of Henry's England allows Donne a comment on the Henrician discouragement of idleness and mendicancy, of which 'the Poor Law Act of 1834 is little more than an echo of this wholesome sentiment of our forefathers'. The former Norfolk magistrate whole-heartedly agreed with the view that 'idleness was accordingly looked upon as both a crime in itself and the nurse of crimes'.

For the church of the day, Donne has nothing but censure, so that even the regrettable literal iconoclasm of the Reformers was outweighed by their discarding of idolatry:

If we have just cause to mourn for the wanton destruction of many a venerable pile, of many a precious work of mediæval art, of many a charter and record that now might be worth a king's ransom, we have as just reason to rejoice that the blind idolatrous spirit which 'buried the Father of heaven and earth in the coffins of the saints' was cast out of the land.

Moreover,

It [the church] had outlived nearly all that had rendered it either noble in itself or necessary for the nation; it was folding its hands in sloth; it was pampering itself with delicate living; it was no longer the steward or advocate of the poor; it heard neither the watchman calling it to awake, nor discerned the speck on the horizon that heralded the storm.

It should be said that this was a common contemporary Protestant understanding of the English church as it was at the time of the Reformation, which long outlived the nineteenth century, and was only to be effectively challenged in the closing decades of the twentieth.²⁴⁸

Donne does acknowledge Froude's own even-handedness in dealing with the progress of the English Reformation, saying, for example, of the treatment of the Pilgrimage of Grace and the Rising of the North, that

²⁴⁸ In such works as J J Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People*, (Oxford: OUP, 1984); C Haigh (ed), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1992).

For its fullness, its chaste yet luminous style, its clear arrangements, and its pertinent illustrations, this chapter has no superior and scarcely a rival in modern historical literature.

It is the 1860 review, from which the above quotation is taken, which so cheered Froude, at a time when his wife had just died, and other critics were savaging his work.²⁴⁹

‘What is deadlier than a door-nail?’ was asked by a writer in *Blackwood*. ‘Gilman’s *Life of Coleridge*’ was the reply to this funereal question’. So Donne exemplifies much biographical endeavour of the day – ‘As a class, indeed, English biographers belong to the *genre ennuyeux*’. The subject is ‘Biography Past and Present’²⁵⁰, a review of the French *Biographie Universelle*, then in its jubilee year. Donne prescribes the task facing the compilers of such dictionaries:

Biographical articles, whenever they admit of being so treated, should be abbreviated memoirs – ‘pictures in little’ – of all who by right or accident have a ‘name to live’.

The review ranges over the recorded lives of leaders in thought and action. In 1861 it is interesting to find Darwin, Lyell and Owen already included by Donne among those worthy of remembrance. Reflection on the then emergent apparent conflict between science and religion leads him to nail his colours to the mast:

In proportion as the power of man over matter has increased, and inversely in proportion as his attention has been diverted from the cloudy tracts of theology to the fertile grounds of physical science, pain has been alleviated, morals improved, the brotherhood of nations cemented, ignorance deprived of its prey, and reasonable service to the Creator exchanged for that blind and torpid homage which, originating with Judaism, was for so many centuries inculcated by Christianity. Reactionary priests may consistently deplore the decay of piety so profitable to themselves: but enlightened philosophy is beginning to arouse from its long slumbers, and to assert that belief is merely the condition of imperfect knowledge, and that the proper life of man is not faith but science.

There is more – ‘We are disposed to rank divines and speculative thinkers among the retarders and not the promoters of civilisation’. This is hinting at a wide-spread clerical reaction to the new scientific thinking of the mid-

²⁴⁹ Herbert Paul, *Life of Froude*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1905), p.113.

²⁴⁰ WBD, ‘Biography Past and Present’, *Westminster Review* 20NS (December 1851), 600-609.

nineteenth century. What is interesting is how early it is, and that it is expressed by Donne, whose concern with science appears, from all we know of him, to have been perfunctory.²⁵¹ It took another century, of course, for the wheel to come full circle, and for the sciences, particularly post-Newtonian physics, to realise and admit not only the limitations of their disciplines, but also their own foundation on faith.

To the strictures earlier pronounced on English biographers, Donne does allow exceptions. Notable among them is Carlyle, whose 'Life of Sterling'²⁵² is warmly received. Sterling, it should be remembered, was the instigator of English participation in that disastrous and tragic Torrijos affair, which involved Kemble, Trench and others (Thesis, pp.25-6). Donne knew them all well, and in later years was a member of a club, similar to the Apostles, which Sterling founded. His own analysis of one who was 'comparatively an obscure man' is sensitive and loving, but it is his tribute to Carlyle's memoir which is noteworthy here:

Mr Carlyle has, indeed, consigned the memory of his friend to a tomb at once solemn and gorgeous – a tomb whose most sombre recesses are at times irradiated with cheerful unexpected daylight, and whose lighter ornaments are mingled with 'myrtles brown and ivy never sere'. It is a monument well befitting...

An example of Donne's own biographical style is provided by the little cameo on 'Henry Thomas Buckle'.²⁵³ Two months earlier, Donne had contributed to *Fraser's Magazine* a review of Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England* which was more of an obituary than a critique (Buckle had just died), and in this later article he returns to his encomium on 'one of the heroes, if not one of the martyrs, of learning'. Like Donne's friend, James Spedding, Buckle offered 'a very rare example of devotion to a fixed object'; for Spedding, the life and works of Bacon, for Buckle, nothing less than a history of human progress. The magnitude of his self-imposed assignment led him to a 'recluse life',

²⁵¹ Though in his review of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (below, p.207), he gives impressive detailed criticisms of numerous scientific articles.

²⁵² WBD, 'Carlyle's Life of Sterling', *Gentleman's Magazine* 36 (December 1851) 600-609.

²⁵³ WBD, 'Henry Thomas Buckle', *Fraser's Magazine* 66 (November 1862), 337-345.

the disadvantages of which Donne has more than once claimed, and here rehearses:

The ingenuous arts are not more effectual in softening men's manners than intercourse with society...he formed, from his long commerce with books alone, harsh and one-sided opinions of classes, that earlier and more free intermixture with them would have softened or corrected.

Rarely for him, Donne champions the official representatives of the church against Buckle's indiscriminating attack, though he would have shared in a more focussed accusation:

Of the clergy he saw only one, and that not the more favourable side. He regarded them as writers or preachers alone, and not as active and humanizing elements in society. He is right in ascribing to dogmatic theology dark, cruel and ignorant theories, alike at variance with a divine Author and dishonourable to human nature. He is wrong when he represents the orator in the pulpit or the scholar in the closet, as hard, bigoted and severe as his doctrines.

Although the prolegomena to Buckle's work (all that Donne had available for comment) is criticised on various grounds, its author's sincerity and commitment are never doubted – 'In the cause of what he believed to be civilisation, his energy was unflagging, his sympathy intense'. Gifted beyond the norm, even among scholars, 'His command of ancient and modern languages, his bibliographical knowledge, were not less remarkable than Gibbon's or Southey's'. The final paragraph of the memoir is as accurate a description of its author as of its subject:

He sought knowledge for its own sake: for knowledge he gave up his youth, his talents, his fortune, and possibly his life. Truisms did not deter, nor shadows intimidate him; whatever, in his judgment, had hitherto retarded, or was likely to retard in future, the progress of men, he denounced; whatever, in his opinion, was likely to accelerate or secure it, he advocated. If we cannot inscribe it on the roll of historians or philosophers of the highest order, yet the name of HENRY THOMAS BUCKLE merits a high place on the list of earnest seekers for truth.

In 1848, Donne, now living in Bury St Edmund's, turned his thoughts to ancient Egypt, and in the review²⁵⁴ of 'Sharpe's History of Egypt', took occasion to expatiate on the Ptolemies and the city of Alexandria. Sharpe's qualifications and limitations are set out at the start:

Mr Sharpe is well known for his proficiency in some of the abstruser departments of philology, and for his contributions to the studies of hieroglyphics and numismatics...To the higher qualities of the historian he makes no pretensions.

²⁵⁴ WBD, 'Sharpe's History of Egypt', *Edinburgh Review* 88 (July 1848), 32-63.

His narrative presents no striking portraiture or brilliant scenes to delight the eye, no profound maxims or pregnant summaries to linger on the memory.

It is good that the book has appeared, for 'Until the appearance of the volume before us, no work in our language had been devoted to the era of the Ptolemies', nor had 'the very limited range of our studies in ancient history' found space for Egypt, whose annals 'are indeed the alpha and the omega of ancient civilisation'. Germany and France supply the deficiencies of English study (a frequent complaint of Donne's), only recently redeemed by the work of Thirlwall, Grote and Thomas Arnold.

There is an unusual defence of the Egyptian caste system:

To the restless European the institution of castes appears the device of a barbarous rather than a civilised people. The eastern man thinks differently: with him government, jurisprudence, science and the arts, are subjected to laws asserted to be divine and believed to be immutable. Even labour takes a religious form; and the destiny of his birth which assigns to one man a sceptre and to another a spade, extends its influence over their posterity also.

In this essay, as elsewhere, Donne expresses admiration for Alexander the Great – 'As the founder of a new era for the Hellenic race, and as the restorer of Egypt to the rank of a kingdom, he deserves to be placed among the benefactors of mankind'. His foundation of Alexandria is vividly portrayed, as is the difficulty he faced in holding together the discrete elements in its population:

He was the sovereign of the most fanatical and bigoted of the human race, the native Egyptians and their priesthood. He was the protector of the most scrupulous of ritualists, the Jews; and the commander of the best soldiers and the worst ruffians in the world, the Grecian mercenaries.

Alexander's beneficent treatment of the Jews gives rise to a cynical contrast with that dealt out by nineteenth century England:

More than twenty-three centuries have elapsed since the foundation of Alexandria, and we are still found squabbling about the wisdom of admitting the Hebrew exile to the position he held under the just and politic sway of the house of Lagus.

The theme is developed – 'Religious toleration, whether dictated by principle or policy, is an unquestionable duty and an unmixed good', but this was not exemplified throughout the ancient world – 'In his theory of religious toleration, Ptolemy was far above his age'.

In the pages given to a rhapsodic description of the famous Alexandrian library, it is surprising that Donne, champion of culture, does not mention its destruction by the Arabs in 641AD, one of the greatest losses of earlier times.

After Egypt came France, and a review²⁵⁵ which opens with a familiar Donne theme – the former curricular narrowness of Oxbridge. 'The History of France' by the former diplomat, Sir James Stephen, by then, professor of modern history at Cambridge, begins with a declaratory [sic] letter to Whewell, Master of Trinity College. Donne is not sure whether the letter is sincere, or tongue in cheek, for it purports to regret the passing of the Cambridge of Stephen's own undergraduate years and the incursion of new subjects and examination structures. Has he been persuaded 'that Barbara and Celarent are more genial nutriment for youth than moral and political science, or the lessons in them to be derived from modern history?'. ('Barbara' and 'Celarent' are two of the mnemonics by which the modes of logical syllogism are remembered. Their place in the classical curriculum is not clear, but they obviously lived in Donne's memory of student days, as they do in that of the present writer). The review cannot proceed until Donne has spelt out his concern at Stephen's seeming atavism:

In 1852 it is proposed that a graduate shall leave the university with some insight into the principles of moral philosophy, of English law, of general jurisprudence, of political economy, and of modern history, together with such classical acquirement to construe Homer and Livy, and sufficient mathematical science to solve a quadratic equation.

Donne cannot see anything but good to result from this. Turning at last to the history itself, he finds much to praise in a work

Sufficiently attractive to excite curiosity, sufficiently learned to demand and reward attention, excellent as a supplement to knowledge already gained, equally excellent as an introduction to knowledge for the beginner...

He could wish that it reeked less of the lecture-room, being most delightful when the professor 'forgets for the moment his cap and gown audience, and

²⁵⁵ WBD, 'Sir James Stephen's Lectures on the History of France', *Gentleman's Magazine* 37 (March 1852), 219-226.

launches forth, *more suo*, upon some striking description or some subtle disquisition'. On the commercial results of the Crusades, on the philosophical character and language of Descartes, Stephen is splendid, and the whole enterprise is bound to be successful – 'Of the popularity of these volumes we have no doubt. In their permanence as an auxiliary to the study of French annals we have much faith'.

As has been seen with respect to Froude's *History of England*, Donne took full advantage of works which appeared in successive volumes over a period of years. Such an one was Helps's 'The Spanish Conquest in America', which afforded him no less than five reviews, spread over seven years.²⁵⁶ Their distribution is interesting. The first, in *Fraser's*, deals with Helps's volumes I-II; the second, in the *National Review*, covers the same ground. The third, again in *Fraser's*, deals with volume III, while the fourth, in the *Edinburgh Review*, is a composite article on volumes I-III. Finally, with a return to *Fraser's*, Donne offers a survey of the completed work, in four volumes.

Certain themes, by now recognisable in his historical articles, re-emerge. There is the demand now made on historians, to include in their work material and elements ignored by their predecessors:

Mr Helps has fully discerned and submitted to the new duties imposed upon the historian. The ethnologist, the economist, the geographer, and the natural historian have been laid under contribution by him, no less than his direct authorities, in print or manuscript.

There is also, as stated and re-stated in these reviews, the need for the historian to stand apart from his subject, and not to confuse the narrative with his own anachronistic comments. Helps has sinned in this respect:

²⁵⁶ WBD, 'Helps's Spanish Conquest in America'. *Fraser's Magazine* 52 (September 1855) 241-256.

- 'The Spanish Conquest in America', *National Review* 2 (January 1856), 42-68.
- 'Helps's Conquest of Spanish America', *Fraser's Magazine* 56 (September 1857) 331-345
- 'Helps's Spanish Conquest in America', *Edinburgh Review* 119 (January 1859) 1-36
- 'The Spanish Conquest in America', *Fraser's Magazine* 65 (January 1862), 135-150.

Mr Helps, who has approved himself in former works a most accomplished essayist, has sometimes forgotten, in his present one, that the functions of the essayist and the historian are distinct, and should be kept apart...The historian may signify his presence occasionally...but he must never come forward as the assessor of kings and their councillors, or in any case assume to himself a contemporaneous position with the events which he relates.

Donne gives what he regards as 'the most peccant instances', passages in which Helps imagines the attitudes and gestures of the principals in events of which he can only have the knowledge of recorded facts – 'it is quite impossible that he should know whether Isabella smiled or Ferdinand winced on this or any similar occasion'.

In every article he sympathises with Helps for undertaking the thankless task of re-telling 'an oft-told tale'. As with other areas, historical or literary, Donne assumes, perhaps rightly, a degree of broad general knowledge in readers of the weighty journals which certainly did not persist into the following century. Reflecting, perhaps, the schooling and university studies of such as became Apostles, he frequently writes of every schoolboy knowing his Horace and his Virgil, he expects every reader to pick up his allusions to minor literary figures from England, France, Italy, Germany and, in this instance, to be familiar with the events of the Spanish conquest of America:

All persons who know anything of history have a general acquaintance with the career of Columbus, Cortez, Las Casas and Pizarro...no printed books have been more frequently perused than the narratives of Bernal Diaz, Oviedo and De Solis.

To make, hopefully not to labour, the point, let it be admitted that, whatever the reality of Donne's day and circle, at least one student reasonably well-educated during the twentieth-century, and knowing something of history, has not only not 'frequently perused' the above named authorities; he had never heard of them until reading Donne.

Helps wrote his history, as he declares, as the outcome of an enquiry into the origins of slavery and, as a side-issue, the causes of the distribution of races across the world. Donne has his own view of the latter, stating in a number of essays that philology and physiology (strange bed-fellows!) combine to suggest an origin of the human race in the heights of Armenia. What he cannot fathom, is how the inhabitants of the old

world spread to the new, nor took on the distinctive characteristics to be found there. In the mid-nineteenth century, of course, hardly anything was yet known either about continental shifts or of the ease of movement across the Bering bridge between Asia and North America.

His conglomerate survey of the Spanish conquest, derived from Helps and others, stresses one or two themes. The beneficent desires of Ferdinand and Isabella towards the Amerindians, often foiled by the length of time taken for their instructions to arrive across the Atlantic, so that events had overtaken expressed instructions; the mixed motives of the pioneer conquerors; the humane activities of the religious orders; the importation of negro slaves - all of these receive comprehensive and sensitive treatment in a more homogeneous presentation than might have been expected from scattered essays. He clearly thought and felt deeply about the issues raised.

It is in the context of his historical writings, of course, that extended attention has to be paid to his *magnum opus*,²⁵⁷ *Correspondence of George III with Lord North 1768-83*, the longest work he ever wrote (two volumes, 759 pages). As was pointed out in contemporary reviews, the title is misleading. Largely a record of one-way correspondence, all but two (Nos. 438, 729) of the 754 letters are from the king to Lord North. Three memoranda from the minister to his sovereign are also included.

The period covered by the *Correspondence* is one of the most momentous in English modern history. George III and Lord North will always be remembered by the general reader as the men who lost the Americas, but, of course, as the letters show, much more significance attaches to their governmental relationship, apart from the injustice of blaming them both or either alone for that loss.

The intimate involvement of George III in the administration of his country's affairs, his determination 'to rule as well as reign', brought a new

²⁵⁷ WBD, *Correspondence of George III with Lord North 1768-1783, Edited from the Originals at Windsor, with an Introduction and Notes, by W Bodham Donne*, (London: John Murray, 2 vols., 1867), hereafter cited as *Correspondence*.

pattern of sovereignty to England. The earlier Georges, always foreigners, incapable of conversing in English, concerned far more about Hanover than about England, and content to leave government in the hands of the all-powerful Whig oligarchy, were succeeded by a very different man. It soon became evident

That George III was not walking in the ways of his immediate predecessors. The transition from a passive to an active sovereign, important in itself at the moment, was yet more so in its consequences, since whether it were for good or evil there can be no question that the principles or prejudices of the king exerted much influence on his reign.

The position of the ruling parties was reversed, ministers became servants of the crown again, instead of controllers of policy, and the sovereign's interest and direction ranged over matters of state both momentous and trivial:

Not a step was taken in foreign, colonial or domestic affairs that he did not form his opinion on it and exercise his influence over it. The instructions to ambassadors, the orders to governors, the movement of forces, down to the marching of a single battalion in the districts of this country, the appointment to all offices in Church and state, not only the giving away of judgeships, bishoprics, regiments, but the subsequent promotions, lay and clerical. All these form the topics of his letters; on all his opinion is pronounced decisively; on all his will is declared peremptorily.

The work is an impressive piece of scholarship, supplanting two earlier collections, both of them partial in both senses of the word. Appearing in two volumes, each with a substantial introduction totalling 98 pages, the letters are frequently annotated and interspersed with copious explanations of such matters as the Rockingham coalition, the Gordon riots and the on-going saga of John Wilkes and the House of Commons. These are both exhaustive and, after a time, exhausting. Every appointment suggested, opposed, or made by the king is accompanied by a summary of the candidate's previous history and qualifications. No reference to individuals or events goes without comment; no outside source of information, in more languages than English, is left un-tapped. Hardly ever is the reader left wondering what might be meant by the *obiter dicta* of the royal writer.

Yet the treatment is scrupulously impersonal. Donne introduces his closing remarks by apologising, unnecessarily, for intruding into his narrative:

The reader of the preceding notes...may perhaps justly complain of my having too often forgotten the golden rule that an editor should regard himself as simply the servant of his author.

In the final pages of the book, it is true, he allows himself to characterise its two leading figures. Of George III, he claims that the letters here presented 'exhibit their writer under the least favourable aspect of his career'. He was unfortunate 'not only in aspiring to direct his ministers, but also in having ministers who submitted to his direction'. After the period covered by the *Correspondence*, he learned his lesson, and 'no longer interfered with the policy of his advisers'. North is described as 'his faithful but too compliant minister'.

The *Correspondence* did not attract a great deal of critical attention. An early and perfunctory notice in *Notes and Queries* stated that

Mr Donne...has edited these letters with great care and great ability, prefacing them by an admirable introduction, and accompanying them by most useful explanatory notes.

A week later it was the turn of the *Athenæum*, whose reviewer was not enamoured of the epistolary collection – 'six hundred letters, two-thirds of which may be said to be without interest or value'. Donne's intrusion into the narrative is both deplored and excused:

What proportion the annotation bears to that on which it throws light may be guessed by one fact. A letter of seven lines, large print, has tacked to it explanatory matter of a hundred lines, in small type. Thus the editor rides on His Majesty's shoulders, all but conceals him from the public gaze...

It must be confessed, as between the original author and his expounder, the latter is far the more amusing. The introduction, which occupies nearly a hundred pages, is of greater interest than the matter it ushers in; and the notes are better worth reading than his sacred Majesty's most exquisite dullness.

Finally, it was the turn of the two political heavyweight journals, which entered the ring within weeks of each other.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ 'Character of George the Third', *Quarterly Review* 122 (Jan-Apr. 1867), 286-310.

'The early Administrations of George III', *Edinburgh Review* 257 (July 1867), 1-43.

Like the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly Review* printed an unsigned assessment, but both authors have been identified. The Tory champion, for whom, not surprisingly, George III is painted in less than glowing colours, was Herman Merivale, older brother of Donne's great friend and fellow-Cambridge Apostle, Charles Merivale. Political economist, writer, sometime Under-Secretary for India, he takes Donne to task for an untoward imposition of his own liberal views into an admittedly able presentation of the correspondence:

Mr Donne has accompanied his edition with an exceedingly minute running commentary, identifying names and explaining allusions to the most satisfactory extent. But, as he has thought it necessary to superadd what we may term a political commentary also, after the manner of old-fashioned editors of the Bible, who favour their readers at once with an 'exegetical' and 'critical' exposition running along side by side; and as moreover Mr Donne, being a liberal in politics and a great admirer of American independence, differs from, and disputes with, his Majesty and his Tory minister all through; the result certainly, is a somewhat voluminous miscellany, in which the materials bear a very small proportion to the garnish.

Donne's portrayal of Lord North and his 'imperturbable good humour' finds favour, as does his account of 'the exceedingly affectionate and considerate terms in which the king's correspondence [with North] is couched'. It is the sadder, then, as both editor and reviewer state, that relations between the two principals should have so deteriorated after North resigned his leading role. Donne writes of 'a coolness' in the latter days of their relationship; Merivale describes it as 'hardness of heart' and as a good Tory, is far from condemning it:

Posterity has confirmed the verdict which the king passed in his heart on his 'grateful' servant; that the coalition with Fox was, on the part of Lord North, as profligate and shameless a measure towards the public as it was thankless towards his royal benefactor.

One or two of Donne's aphorisms are taken up with approval; the likeness of George III to Dr Johnson, as a 'good hater' is not disputed, neither is Donne's scorn of the royal epistolary style – 'he sometimes discarded the rules of spelling, and broke Priscian's²⁵⁹ head without remorse'.

²⁵⁹ Priscian ; Latin grammarian whose 18-volume *Institutiones Grammaticae* was highly thought of in the middle ages.

On the loss of the Americas, and the part played by the king, Merivale again unsurprisingly differs from Donne in evaluating the royal prerogative – ‘He claimed obedience and assistance from all honest people...because he was in his own estimation, thoroughly and always in the right’. Political reviewers are not always free from the indictment.

Equally unsurprisingly, Bayley, the *Edinburgh* reviewer²⁶⁰ takes a strong liberal line. He mentions Donne only three times, before launching into a defence of George III and, until his alliance with Fox, of Lord North. In its structure, indeed, the article is reminiscent of much of Donne’s own writing, in which the ostensible subject of a review is only cursorily dealt with, being a peg on which to hang the reviewer’s personal views of the subject under discussion, in this instance, ‘The Early Administrations of George III’. He threads together many quotations from the correspondence with narrative and judgements largely, and sometimes verbally, derived from Donne’s introduction.

In one particular Bayley disagrees with both Donne and the other writer, Jesse, whose history²⁶¹ is included in the review article. Referring to the ‘romantic passage in [George’s] youth with the beautiful Quakeress, Hannah Lightfoot’, which Bayley believes to be ‘an idle invention’, he writes:

Mr Donne and Mr Jesse have both treated this ridiculous story more seriously than it deserves. Mr Thomas has recently shown in a pamphlet republished from ‘Notes and Queries’ that the pretended narrative is a tissue of improbabilities and contradictions.

Recent writers on George III concur in dismissing the link.²⁶²

No evidence has been unearthed to show why, or at whose instigation, Donne undertook this meticulous work of scholarship. One

²⁶⁰ C J Bayley, barrister and colonial official.

²⁶¹ *Memoirs of the Life and Reign of George III*, by J Heneage Jesse (London: 1867).

²⁶² Peter Whiteley, author of *Lord North, The Prime Minister Who Lost America*, (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), responded to my enquiry – ‘I’m afraid I don’t have any views on Hannah Lightfoot...in the new book on George III by Christopher Hibbert the matter is relegated to a footnote, and it is clear the author does not set much store by it’. Whiteley > THJ, 6 January 1999.

reasonable speculation arises – that the task was commissioned by the Queen herself – arises from a curious reference in *Friends*:

It was a melancholy pleasure to W B Donne to compile at the command of the Queen a “Register of the burials of the Prince Consorts”. In acknowledgement of his trouble Her Majesty presented him with handsome prints of Herself and Prince Albert signed with Her autograph.

Donne had held the late Prince Albert in the highest esteem, though crossing swords with him over the direction of the Windsor Theatricals in 1859-60.²⁶³ The reference is curious in that no trace of this commission exists. The Royal Archives do not contain any such register; no signed prints have been found in the Donne memorabilia; and the question arises – how many burials of Princes Consort could there have been? Although Queen Anne’s husband, Prince George of Denmark, is usually referred to as her consort, the title of ‘Prince Consort’ was not conferred on him. The first regnant queen of England, Mary I, married Philip II of Spain, who certainly did not hold the title, while Mary II reigned jointly with her husband, William of Orange. Elizabeth I never married. Were there any other English princes consort apart from Albert?

Perhaps – one cannot be other than tentative – Donne’s relationship with Victoria and Albert in the two years before Albert’s death, over the Windsor Theatricals and the appointment of a royal librarian, combined with Victoria’s inconsolable grief, led to a request for the register. But what would it have contained, and where is it? If this thesis is indeed a ‘Portrait in a Landscape’, here is one part of the landscape shrouded in mist, and mystery.

Eight years after the publication of *Correspondence*, there was an unexpected outcome. It appears that the second Earl of Harrowby, who had had a distinguished political career, sent to Donne a packet of letters written to Lord Bute, George III’s early mentor and minister, wondering if they might be the subject of a similar editing and publication. Donne was discouraging, but a number of letters and visits ensued before the matter was closed:

²⁶³ Above, pp.79-80.

I have examined enough of the letters to enable me to form some opinion about their worth as historical or biographical documents; and the conclusion at present is, that very few of them are of value in that respect.²⁶⁴

Three months later, the Earl is still pursuing the project, and Donne has to spell out 'the real dilemma in this case. It is this. Of Lord Bute's, in the budgets [*sic*] I have and hold, there are only five letters from him...'. Nonetheless, the Earl has apparently gone so far as to canvass possible publishers, with whom Donne is willing to deal – at a price:

But do either John Murray [publisher of *Correspondence*] or Macmillan and Son know the kind and contents of these letters, that is, that they are not Butean, but letters to the Earl?...I have had some dealings in former days with both Murray and Macmillan, and as you decide will confer with either on the subject. Of course, I should have to say to them, like Nigger Mungo in the 'Cabinet' – "How much you gives me, Massa?", for labourers are worthy of their hire...Publisher found, and terms for editing agreeable, I shall not shrink from examining the entire batch in your possession.²⁶⁵

The quest continues, and two months latter Donne is ready to bring it to an end:

I have made a revisal of the most important letters to Ld Bute and do not see that I can do any more than has been done by me already in noting or examining them.

Donne has enjoyed contact with the Earl, and regrets that he believes there to be no market for the letters. One factor is that even if Bute autographs were to be made available, the most important of them have already been published in a memoir of Lord Shelburne – 'will Murray, Longman or Macmillan be disposed to print them again?'.

One sad piece of personal information emerges twice in Donne's letters, and goes towards explaining the cessation of his writing in this same year:

Even if your Lordship had or has obtained many more [letters], I could not at present undertake to read them, for I am suffering greatly from my eyes, and it would take me the best part of a day to read a dozen letters...

NB. It has cost me nearly an hour to write this note without blunder and with fair text!

²⁶⁴ WBD > Lord Harrowby, [?18] January 1876, *Harrowby MSS*.

²⁶⁵ WBD > Lord Harrowby, 10 April 1876, *Harrowby MSS*.

It is time to attempt an overview of Donne's historical writing, which will reveal a number of features which are to be found in other sections of his work.

Among them is that anti-Catholicism which has frequently been noted. Contrasting markedly with the general tolerance and liberalism found throughout his work, it requires an explanation, at which it is only possible to hazard guesses. Two events contributing to a general unease²⁶⁶ abroad in the country have already been mentioned,²⁶⁷ the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, and the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850. The conversions of John Henry Newman (1845) and Henry Edward Manning (1851) had sent shock-waves throughout the conventional Anglican establishment, both clerical and lay. Both men had been prominent leaders within the Church of England, Newman in academic Oxford and Manning as an archdeacon. Their story has often been told, never better than by Newsome.²⁶⁸

There was, too, a wide-spread ignorance, and therefore misunderstanding, of what Catholics actually believed and stood for. Few men like Donne would actually know any or number them among their friends. They had not been found in the universities (therefore they were not among the Apostles) and, due to previous persecution, tended to keep within their own social circles. Almost the only commendation of Catholics by Donne is that referred to in the reviews of Helps's *Spanish Conquest of America*, in which the selfless championing of the Mexican natives by the Dominicans is rightly praised.

A second feature of Donne's historical essays is the partial and anomalous nature of his liberalism. Not alone among intellectual liberals of his day, he had a distaste for radicalism and totally rejected democracy. This is explored more fully in the section on the clerisy (pp.5 ff.). Here it

²⁶⁶ A useful survey of the unease and its history, together with illustrative contemporary documents, will be found in E R Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1968).

²⁶⁷ Above, p.134.

²⁶⁸ David Newsome, *The Convert Cardinals*, (London: John Murray, 1993), also his earlier *The Parting of Friends*, (London: John Murray, 1966).

will suffice to say that there was in England a wide-spread fear and horror of political violence. The French revolution of 1789 and its aftermath still cast a long shadow, while the upheavals of 1848 on the continent and Chartism at home robbed the comfortable middle-class of any sense of security. That the under-classes deserved a better standard of living was admitted; that they could be trusted with self-government was doubted. In Donne's circle, a large extension of the franchise was not favoured. That such extension would include women was not even contemplated. Although the Christine Johnstones and Harriet Martineaus were actually writing at the same time, and often for the same journals, as Donne, there is no record that he ever took them or their crusade into his purview.

He was not reluctant to level specific accusations against some of the historians he reviewed; let one be levelled against him, that of a superfluity of matter in much that he wrote. This is not quite the same as an accusation of padding, even though the journals of his day paid, as some still do, by volume; it is rather that he was not sufficiently selective of examples, illustrations and authorities. It was not until 1918, long after Donne's death, that Lytton Strachey would urge, in the preface to *Eminent Victorians*, 'a becoming brevity – a brevity which excludes everything which is redundant and nothing that is significant', but such brevity would have vastly improved much of his work. *Caveat scriptor!*

That he was what he was, and not something else, should not be a ground for adverse criticism, so it is merely as matter of fact that we record him to have been, at his best, a faithful chronicler, and never a philosopher of history. Perhaps it is too much to hope that under the pressure of churning out his numerous essays on historical themes, he should have paused to ask, 'Why am I writing in this way? Why do I hold these views? What are the underlying convictions which lead me to applaud/damn this writer?'. All that can be stated with confidence is that he faithfully represented those whose work he reviewed, without any evidence that he ever reflected deeply on the task he was performing.

DONNE'S POLITICAL WRITINGS

In the year 1848 Donne developed a new interest, not to say passion, which would dominate his writing for the better part of a decade – the political upheavals in Europe. Until now, he had occupied himself with literary and historical exploration, often in the world of the ancient classics, remote from contemporary issues, but now he was roused by the injustices and atrocities daily coming to light and, liberal that he was, felt the need to alert his readers to them. Two movements in particular gained his advocacy – the Austro-Hungarian conflict and the Italian uprisings. Although his first essay was offered to and published in the *Edinburgh Review* ('Austria and Hungary')²⁶⁹ and a historical survey, 'The Rise and Progress of Diplomacy' appeared in the *Westminster Review*, both of them periodicals favourable to liberal causes, it was in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* that the bulk of his political writing saw the light of day. The reason is not far to seek, and reflects an interesting phase in the history of that journal.

Obviously a Scottish journal, its founding, in 1832, by the respected Edinburgh bookseller and publisher, William Tait, an associate of the notables of the early *Westminster Review*, was followed by a short period in which its owner/editor sought to contrast it favourably with its contemporaries. An avowedly liberal (not radical) organ, it rapidly and successfully held its own against its well-established rival, the Tory

²⁶⁹ WBD, 'Austria and Hungary', *Edinburgh Review* 90 (July 1849), 230-249.

- 'The Rise and Progress of Diplomacy', *Westminster Review* vi (October 1854), 506-522.

Blackwood's Magazine. Tait launched into the attack in his opening issue, with a poetic invitation to his readers to 'unharness [their] shoulders from EBONY'S yoke'. The magazine prospered and became substantially a political organ.

In 1834 Tait absorbed *Johnstone's Edinburgh Magazine*, giving its editor, the redoubtable Mrs Christine Johnstone, half the property in his own magazine in return for the advantage of gaining the readers of hers, and in addition, appointing her his 'active conductor' and 'working editor'. Mrs Johnstone was a remarkable woman, who 'deserves a fame she never achieved'. When Tait and Johnstone retired, in 1846, the magazine, refused by Jerrold, was sold to George Troup and Alexander Alison and moved to Glasgow.

In 1850 came the move which was to bring Donne into the fold. It was twofold, affecting ownership and location. Two new owners, John Smith Mansfield and John Hosack (a Scot), lawyers of the Middle Temple, took on the property, began to print in Fleet Street and, most significantly, appointed Mansfield's brother, Horatio, as editor. Very different from his predecessors, Horatio had been educated at Eton and Cambridge and was – an Apostle! With fellow-Apostles Lushington, Monckton Milnes and G S Venables, the strategy for the magazine was determined and other Apostles were drawn in as contributors, including Donne and James Spedding. By this time Donne, living as a widower in Bury St Edmund's, had more than twenty published articles to his credit, and would be an asset to Mansfield's venture. It was with the Hungarian revolt against Austrian oppression that he launched his political campaign.

In the review article of July 1849, 'Austria and Hungary', which, not uniquely for Donne, totally failed to mention the six works it was ostensibly reviewing, he introduced the subject of the iniquitous (his word) abrogation by Austria of the coronation oath and treaties which ensured the independence of Hungary within the joint monarchy. With chapter and verse from history, he demonstrated beyond dispute the right of the Hungarians to live in partnership with, rather than subjection to Austria:

After what we have stated, there can be no clearer fact in the history of modern Europe, than the constitutional independence of Hungary. Its present claims neither rest upon doubtful traditions, nor are buried in obscure and obsolete

documents. Hungarian institutions are not merely title deeds, as old as the connexion of Hungary and Austria: but both in their spirit and their letter they have been solemnly recognised and renewed at every election or succession to the throne.

The sinister influence of Russian intrigue is declared, the duplicity of individual Austrians exposed, and the special fellow-feeling that England should have for the Hungarians is based on her similar and earlier struggle against oppression:

We believe that sympathy with Hungary is rapidly spreading over Europe. But above all, we are confident that the spectacle of a people defending its ancestral rights and enlarged liberties, must be deeply interesting to that nation which contended against the Stuarts in 1640, and threw off their yoke in 1688.

That the spectacle was indeed not only deeply interesting but challenging to the English is demonstrated by a quaint bit of Leicestershire history.

In an obscure corner of the tiny church of St Michael & All Angels, Thorpe Satchville, there is mounted on the wall a wooden memorial tablet to John Paget (Janoš). It was placed there by the Hungarian government and is draped with ribbon in the national colours.

Paget was born, in 1808, into a wealthy Loughborough hosiery family. His parents sold their factories and became landed gentry, living in Thorpe Satchville Hall. Having qualified in medicine at Edinburgh, John Paget took the still popular grand tour of Europe, and in Rome met a Hungarian baroness, Polixena, whom he followed to Hungary, wooed, and married. In 1847 he became a Hungarian citizen, changed his name in 1848 to Janoš and, through his wife, became involved with the leaders of the uprising which began in that year. Equipping his own company of hussars and becoming aide-de-camp to a leading general, he had, on the failure of the venture, to flee the country with a price on his head. Leaving his family in the tranquillity of Thorpe Satchville, he set off again in 1853 for Europe, to meet those, including Garibaldi, who were still hoping to overthrow the Hapsburgs. It was of no avail, and in 1885, by then an old man, Paget settled in his adopted homeland of Transylvania and brought advanced English farming methods to the country.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ Perhaps his most lasting contribution was to introduce the red grape from which the Hungarian 'Bull's Blood' wine is made.

He was honoured by the French at the 1878 Paris exhibition, made a baron by the emperor Francis Joseph I, and died a national hero, two thousand miles from the England in which he is virtually unknown.²⁷¹

It is in 'Austria and Hungary' that Donne introduces his greatest revolutionary hero, Louis (Lajos) Kossuth, who occurs in all his Hungarian writings, and who is the subject of two eponymous articles, 'Louis Kossuth' (November 1851) and 'Kossuth on the Conduct of the [Crimean] War' (August 1854). While more recent historians have been even-handed in their description of the growing rift between Kossuth, the great civilian inspirer of the Hungarian revolt, and G(e)orgey, the equally great military leader, Donne will have none of it. His sympathies are all with Kossuth, and Gorgey is condemned for ungrateful jealousy and betrayal of the cause. Having, in July 1850, begun his survey of the Italian uprising ('The Patriotic War in Italy'), Donne returned the following month to the Hungarian war. 'Since the days of Napoleon, no event has awakened so lively a sympathy throughout the civilised world as the Hungarian struggle for independence'. A lengthy quotation from Kossuth's speech demanding funds to enable the creation of a 200,000 strong army is followed by a résumé of events involving the relations between Kossuth and Gorgey.

A new note is sounded which will echo in later articles – Donne's annoyance at the Austria-biased reporting in *The Times*.

The *Times* had, day by day, assured its credulous readers that this descendant of the mighty Wallenstein [the Austrian general, Windischgratz] was to march from one end of Hungary to the other without finding an enemy who should dare to oppose him.

The annoyance is voiced again in 'The Goth and the Hun' (1851) - '...the great Austrian army which, towards the close of 1848, the *Times* every day assured us would march unopposed from one end of Hungary to the other'. It is in this article, reviewing the work of one A A Paton, that the author is ridiculed for a slight and inaccurate account, despite his being 'own correspondent to the *Times*' and pretending 'from his connexion with the *Times* [to have] a certain authoritative stamp'.

²⁶¹ I am indebted to Mr John Smith, chairman of the Twyford and Thorpe Satchville parish council, for drawing my attention to the *Leicester Mercury* article (4 May 1984) in which this information is given.

Writing in 'The Blue Book on Hungary' (January 1852), Donne cannot resist another jibe - '...this ministry [led by Kossuth] which the *Times* has delighted to honour with its abuse'.

In 1851, Kossuth, exiled and interned, was set at liberty, and visited England en route for the United States. In both countries, where he addressed mass meetings, he received public acclaim, but could not obtain official support for the Hungarian cause. In 'Louis Kossuth' (November 1851) Donne gave an account of his hero's life and leadership, quoting again from his speeches and those of his followers. He can be objective about Kossuth's limitations ('he is more fitted to arouse an oppressed people than to devise the measures or procure the resources requisite for the successful assertion of their liberty'), but cannot resist another dig at the organ which has constantly belittled the man

That Kossuth is not without faults may pass for certain, seeing that he is a human being. But that anything he ever devised or did, justifies, or even extenuates, the gross and unblushing charges made against him by the *Times* newspaper, we vehemently deny.

Hungary was not the only European country whose conflicts aroused Donne's interest and support. The Italian uprising gave birth to two articles, both in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 'The Patriotic War in Italy' (July 1850) and 'Italia Militans' (September 1850). Basing them on the records of two patriots, General Pepe and Lieutenant Dandolo, he championed their rebellious cause and, in the former article, gave vent to a rare belligerence. Writing of the lack of support for Pepe from his superiors, 'who had no stomach for the fight', he writes 'To have hanged a few of these worthies, *pour encourager les autres*, was an idea which never appeared to have occurred to General Pepe, and we are astonished at it'.

The character of Pepe's sovereign is kindly dealt with:

...it was a gallant heart that risked all in the cause of Italian nationality. We are not prepared to claim for Charles Albert the character of a patriot whose motives were of the loftiest and purest kind, but we believe that the unprejudiced historian will be more disposed to applaud than to condemn his spirited attempt to rescue his country from the degradation of a justly hated foreign rule. We believe that, in the general estimation of enlightened Europe, he has amply redeemed, by his efforts and his sacrifices in the popular cause during the close of his life, the grave political errors of his earlier years.

The derring-do of the revolt, rehearsed in 'Italia Militans' (September 1851) from the first-hand narrative of Dandolo and including the poignant events of the battle for Rome, reinforces Donne's refutation of 'the insolent charge that [the Italians] are unfit for the enjoyment of political liberty. Such has been the tyrant's plea in every age'. The courage and self-sacrifice of the Lombard rebels gives it the lie.

The Crimean War.

The outbreak of this curious, and from a British point of view, unnecessary conflict, was strongly opposed by liberals like Cobden and Bright. More modern assessments have seen little need to contradict Fisher's description of '...a contest entered into without necessity, conducted without foresight, and deserving to be reckoned from its archaic arrangements and tragic mismanagement rather among mediaeval than modern campaigns'.²⁷²

Donne seized the opportunity to extol Kossuth once more, in 'Kossuth on the Conduct of the War' (August 1854: the war this time was the Crimean). The Hungarian's eloquence is praised:

...greater is Kossuth in Bayswater than in Buda-Pesth. In the hundred and fifty (or thereabout) orations which he has delivered in England and America, the Anglo-Saxon world has seen with astonishment all its living orators surpassed by a foreigner speaking in their tongue.

and his right to speak on the Eastern question upheld. Those peoples, like the Hungarians, whose subjection to Austria was aided by Russia, have not surprisingly a view of the latter power which should be shared by right-thinking Britons. The shirking of moral duty does our country no credit:

We suspect that more injury has been done to Turkey by our diplomacy than will ever be repaired by our arms, - and a taint of dishonour attached to our name, by our desertion of the continental races in their sorest need, which only the boldest and most devoted deeds can wash out.

In 'The War – Who's to Blame?' (January 1855: still the Crimean war), Donne reviews a book of the same title, in which Britain appears as the dupe of an aggressor France, and Russia as the injured party. Destroying the thesis on the grounds of logic and history, he nonetheless

²⁷² H A L Fisher, *A History of Europe*, 1 vol. (London: Edward Arnold, 1936), p.942.

has time for those, like John Bright, who take their moral stance against the legitimacy of the conflict. The stronger the conviction that the war is justifiable, the stronger the reasons to maintain liberty of speech for those who disagree:

The very strength of our conviction that it is the enemy who is guilty of provoking this war, disposes us to demand that respectable remonstrants against our part in it should not be suppressed. And when the remonstrant bears so honoured a name as that of John Bright – synonymous with great intellectual ability, high moral character and unimpeached political integrity – we protest, in the name of free speech and English fairness, against his being assailed with dishonourable epithets, and still more dishonourable imputations.

After analysing the English governmental vacillation and indecision which led to involvement in the war, Donne is led to declare himself as sharing Bright's view, and to answer the title question clearly:

Surely, *this* was conduct for which 'imbecile' is hardly the word! Mr Bright has suggested a truer epithet in speaking of this as a 'wicked war'. And, reluctant as we are to believe that English Ministers contemplated acquiescence in the piecemeal destruction of a European state, and were only shamed into a better intent by the action of premature events upon the public mind, - we are compelled to award to the statesmen who, though from a motive honourable as the love of peace, thus pursued a crooked policy, and were drawn into the straits of an awful alternative...to *them* we must make no light apportionment of blame.

Though blame for England's involvement in the war must be shared between the government and the public which concurred in, and even urged its declaration, the administration of events thereafter, the military bungling, the appalling conditions under which the troops lived and the wounded suffered - these are laid squarely at the door of the leaders.

With the close of the Crimean War, Donne's writing on world political events came to an end, though two other essays of the period are worthy of mention. In 'The Two Revolutionists – Conscience and Ambition' (August 1854), he again addresses the recent rebellions against oppression and, in the context of the current conflict, exposes the irony that while England, in 1848, failed to respond to the first of the 'Two Revolutionists' (Conscience), she is now forced to react under the impulse of the second (Ambition). Why did England not rush to the support of the Hungarians, the Poles, the Italians?

'Non-intervention' was the gospel of the day. 'We have nothing to do with the politics of Europe', virtually said our statesmen. 'Let them fight out their own battles', said the messengers of peace. We were happy and prosperous; we were

unattacked; our shores were not threatened; no demon-despot stalked across our land; and we would not stir a finger for all the poor wretches who were being so mercilessly crushed and slain. In short, *selfishness* kept us silent and inactive.

The reiteration of past failure is unwelcome, and Donne responds to the advice to let well alone. England is now active, in the Crimea; what good is done by dwelling on the inertia of 1848? Every good, is his response; for 'our rulers appear to be as averse to amendment as they are incapable of remorse'. Left to themselves, they will continue to vacillate, procrastinate and desert their duty. But they are not left to themselves; the country is aroused,

The national heart is sound: and we have, consequently, every assurance that though our statesmen may be irresolute, our country will be betrayed into no open dishonour, and will be driven, by the force of circumstances and of the popular instinct, into a position worthy of its traditions, its resources, and its name.

In the final article to be considered in this section, 'The Rise and Progress of Diplomacy' (October 1854). Donne reviews a new edition of the works of Grotius, the Dutch seventeenth-century scholar, and uses the occasion to survey the phenomenon of diplomacy between nations, its rise and characteristics.

He begins with an attack on the educational diet on which England's future diplomats are nourished, and by which they are starved of much that would strengthen their ability. 'From the dead languages a great deal of dead knowledge may be elicited'. This may seem strange, from the pen of one who predominantly fed (literally) on the proceeds of his classical knowledge and, of course, he is not denying the value of such study, merely seeking to remedy an imbalance:

We are not denying the worth of ancient literature. We agree with Fuller, that the man wholly unacquainted with it, and looking on the present world only, is like a fair gentleman with a crick in his neck; but we protest against such devotion to it as our great educational institutions enforce, to the exclusion of the more important and instructive records of modern annals.

It is something of a contradiction that he goes on to praise the English heritage of diplomats ('second to none in Europe'), whose formal education was exactly that, the shortcomings of which he has just deplored.

For an example 'of the union of profound learning with practical ability in one and the same person', he commends Grotius, jurist,

theologian, poet, historian, archaeologist, philosopher, but, not uncommonly, dismisses him in one lengthy and commendatory paragraph, thereafter to discuss the historical birth and progress of diplomacy in ancient Carthage (virtually non-existent), in Greece ('well adapted to the cultivation of diplomacy') and in Rome ('we know very little of the diplomatic policy of the Roman commonwealth. In general, it was of a very simple and peremptory character: and when the interests of the state required fraud, fraudulent in the extreme').

The major examination of diplomacy is confined to the three centuries intervening between Charles VIII's invasion of Naples and the year 1791. The diplomacy of the Church, of Henry VIII, who 'obeyed even in political affairs rather his passions than his interests', the empire of Charles V, Philip II and William of Orange, are all passed under review, in a first period of diplomacy in which Donne names religious dogmatism as the principal motive power. His second period 'may be denominated the military commercial', linking the ecclesiastical negotiations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the markedly different concerns of the nineteenth century, 'in which the territorial and commercial interests of countries are alone considered'.

The whole essay is stimulating and well documented, and represents Donne's final excursion into political theorising.

Minor articles relating to the European scene, also written for *Tait's*, were 'Laing's Notes of a Traveller in Europe' (November 1850) (two reviews); 'Bureaucracy and military systems in France and Germany' (January 1851); 'Baron Stein' (November 1850); and 'The Triumph of Despotism: Hesse Cassel' (February 1851).

After three intensive years and a dozen or so articles, he appears to have turned away from the unfamiliar²⁷³ ground of politics, returning to the well-trodden paths of literary and historical criticism.

²⁷³ Unfamiliar, but not entirely unknown.. He had been involved in Norfolk elections.

DONNE ON POETRY AND POETS

If a poet can be reviewed by an eminent politician and a Dean of Canterbury as Tennyson was (Gladstone in the *Quarterly review* and Henry Alford in the *Contemporary Review*), it is probably too much to expect a critical language to evolve. Spacious all-round thinkers such as Bagehot, aspiring polymaths such as Lewes, men whose interests were never exclusively literary, these were the journalists who reviewed poetry. Typical is William Bodham Donne, who wrote for the *British & Foreign Review*.²⁷⁴

...William Bodham Donne's range of interests is suggested by his contributions to the *British & Foreign Review*, where he wrote on ancient history and theology and contributed two outstanding articles on Coleridge and Shelley. His contributions to *Fraser's magazine* range from essays on Elizabethan drama, to Tacitus and Swedenborg.²⁷⁵

Armstrong's apparent decrying of the generalist approach to Victorian poetical criticism, personified in Donne, is modified by her approval of his Shelley and Coleridge articles, and by an earlier tribute to his appreciation of Coleridge, in her discussion of [Victorian] 'terms of the debate about poetry'. She finds such terms 'surprisingly free both from the vocabulary and concepts of Coleridge and of German criticism...until the sixties, apart from one or two exceptions such as Donne and Masson, it is almost as if Coleridge had never been'.²⁷⁶

Coleridge and Shelley will both be considered in due course. For the moment it should be noted in his defence against the charge of being a generalist, that Donne's contributions on 'ancient history' included assessments of the poetry of Virgil, Horace, Martial and Propertius, as well as an essay on sacred Latin poetry. In all, nearly a tenth of his

²⁷⁴ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies: Reviews of Poetry 1830-1870* (London:

Athlone Press, 1972), pp.5-6.

²⁷⁵ *op.cit.*, p.60, n.14. A knowledge of the range and volume of Donne's total output might have raised his literary stature in Armstrong's eyes. v. Appendix B.

²⁷⁶ *op.cit.*, p.14.

periodical writing was devoted to poets and poetry, containing some interesting and, occasionally, surprising judgements. The material falls into two groups, the first, from the short period when Kemble edited the *British & Foreign Review*, to which Donne contributed essays on Landor, Gray R C Trench and Monckton Milnes, together with the two commended by Armstrong, on Coleridge and Shelley. Apart from four articles commissioned by Sterling for the *Athenaeum* in 1829, just after Donne went down from Cambridge, these are among his earliest published works, and show a fluency and confidence surprising in a novice critic.

Eight years of literary inactivity followed the *Athenaeum* articles, and one is tempted to wonder why. A number of factors probably combined. Economically, Donne was being well supported by his widowed mother, and the support continued and extended as marriage (in 1830) was followed by the birth of five children in six years. Negatively, there is no evidence of other work being commissioned, and left to his own initiative, it is likely that he would have preferred to engage in the massive and eclectic reading which was to inform and illustrate all his later literary output.

Demonstrations of this erudition abound in his writing. In the essay on Landor (1837), for example, he draws on Schiller, Seneca, Blair, Burke, Lessing, Schlegel, and the historians, Niebuhr and Thirlwall. In that on Gray, he cites Shenstone, Akenside, Dryden, Pope, Prior, Mason, Collins, Addison and Rowe, showing familiarity with the work of not only those whose poetry has lasted, but also those familiar now only to doctoral researchers. The earliest essay was a piece of critical bravura.

'Landor's Imaginary Conversations'²⁷⁷ (1837). For Landor, both as poet and prose writer, Donne had the highest admiration. He states that

Mr Landor's name has long been associated with whatever is elegant and profound in scholarship and literature; he ranks high for his compositions, both in prose and verse, among the modern writers of Latin, and his English works have confirmed and extended his classical reputation. In both languages, in his poems and in his prose, he is distinguished for a rich imagination, for manifold erudition, and for his peculiar skill in the conception and impersonation of character.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ WBD, 'Landor's Imaginary Conversations', *British & Foreign Review* v (July 1837) 33-63.

²⁷⁸ 'Landor's Imaginary Conversations', 34.

Landor is praised for his skill in introducing ostensibly ancient poems into his *Pericles and Aspasia*, conveying an impression of their authenticity, though they are nineteenth-century inventions – ‘If to give a lively and faithful impression of antiquity be among the most difficult tasks of fiction, the difficulties increase ten-fold when the forms and properties of its poetry are to be represented’.

A year later, reviewing in the same journal Landor’s ‘Pentameron and Pentalogia’,²⁷⁹ he writes of ‘this remarkable man’, and perhaps of himself also, ‘his entire sympathies are with the ancient rather than with the modern world, in philosophy, politics and literature...he is “more an ancient Roman” than a poet or philosopher of the nineteenth century’. It is perhaps more due to Donne’s fondness for the epigram than to his evaluation of Landor that we owe the epitaph which so delighted Crabb Robinson:

Beneath this stone lies Walter Savage Landor,
Who half an Eagle was and half a Gander.²⁸⁰

‘The Poems of Richard Monckton Milnes’²⁸¹ (1838).

Milnes, later Lord Houghton, was an intriguing character and an Apostolic friend of Donne. With this essay, a second in the same journal issue, begins the long list of reviews, always complimentary, of the works of friends and, in one case (Cowper), a relation. Donne thought highly, perhaps too highly, of Milnes’s verse compositions. Introducing a review of two volumes, initially printed for private circulation, by the statement that ‘It is a privilege to live under the immediate influence of a time from which posterity will date the revival of English poetry’,

²⁷⁹ WBD, ‘Landor’s Pentameron and Pentalogia’, *British & Foreign Review*, vii (October 1838), 501-521.

²⁸⁰ Edith Morley (ed.), *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and their Writers*, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1938), p.813.

²⁸¹ WBD, ‘The Poems of Richard Monckton Milnes’ *British & Foreign Review*, vii (October 1838), 678-693.

Donne claims for the nineteenth century, already a third old, the replacement of eighteenth century formalism by 'A new school of poetry – that known as the poetry of reflection'.

While acknowledging the seminal influence of Wordsworth, 'the undoubted *eponymus*' of the school, Donne establishes the inevitability of such a change of emphasis, so that, in a sense, Wordsworth merely came upon his time. 'Then, and not sooner, might the mind of man, contemplated as an object, become to a great poet "The haunt and main region of his song"'. Poetry being 'not a thing separate from our daily life, but rather the expression of what is highest and best in it', the reflective element, now firmly established, is likely to continue in the work of future poets for some time to come. There is, of course, a danger inherent in the writing of reflective verse:

...it is important to remember, that though reflections may furnish us with proper materials for poetry, yet every reflection, when put in verse, does not necessarily become poetry. Where the object is to convey, in a forcible manner, pointed and antithetic thoughts, as thoughts only, without ornament, there verse recommends itself by the advantages arising from a terse, condensed and weighty form. Compositions, however, of this class, are not poetry; they may be epigrams or, as one who has excelled in them has modestly and justly designated them, "Thoughts in Verse"'.

The work of Milnes has escaped this danger. It exhibits 'at once considerable power of just and original reflection, and of transmuting reflection easily and gracefully into poetry':

There is much of that often-mentioned self-questioning consciousness, and hope beset with doubt, combined with that faith in man and in the existence of good everywhere, which so often is, as it deserves to be, the best means of its own fulfilment. If there is some melancholy in the view taken of life, there is not a thought expressed from which a well-regulated mind will turn away as unworthy of sympathy – no tinge of the Satanic school: from beginning to end there is not a single sneer.

Approbation is not uncritical. For one of his poems, *The Lay of the Humble*, Milnes is rebuked, 'not because it is deficient in passages of much beauty and feeling, nor because the original conception is not adequately worked out, but because we think there are strong objections to that conception itself'.

The poem professes to be a delineation of the state of mind of an individual cut off by external circumstances and personal disadvantages from the hope of meeting with perfect sympathy among his fellows, and forced to find a substitute for love, friendship and action, in their pitying kindness.

Donne deplores the feebleness and unmanly attitude revealed in the poem, belonging 'to a frivolous, shallow-hearted man, and to no other'. It is tempting to wonder whether, five years on, and living through widowhood, he might have had more sympathy for those who bend before the wind.

After the analysis of a number of poems, the essay ends with another note of warning and advice:

There are in these volumes a few passages in which a thought, clear enough in itself, is made difficult by some obscurity or carelessness of expression. If Mr Milnes sets upon his poems the value which he ought, he will not grudge the trouble requisite for the removal of these defects. An obscure stanza may mar the effect of a whole poem.

'Poems by the Rev. R C Trench'²⁸² (1841). This is another commendatory review of a friend's work, in which Donne sees no need, of course, to confess his close and long-standing friendship with Trench (they were elected Apostles in the same year, and each was godparent to a child of the other).

Despite having told Bernard Barton a year earlier (27 March 1840) that Trench's poems were 'too much of the "do-me-good" sort', a sentiment to which he would return in a later letter (25 March 1842), when he stated that Trench's verse was not to his liking, only a few reservations lessen the praise expressed in this essay. True, the 'do-me-good' motif is criticised, as frequently in Donne's poetic appraisals. The essay begins with Wordsworth and his influence on other poets, including Trench., though ambiguously – 'Mr Wordsworth is eminently the initiative poet of his age', but, 'had Wordsworth never written, Mr Trench would have been a poet...in no sense is he an imitator'.

²⁸² WBD, 'Poems by the Rev. R C Trench', *British and Foreign Review*, xii (May 1841), 180-197.

The laureate, as in the essay devoted to his work is again charged that he 'almost excludes from his works every epic and erotic element'.²⁸³ This contributes to a common deficiency in his work and that of other recent poets; 'they point a moral, but they have shown little skill in "adorning a tale"...[they] are apt to confound the logical relations with the imaginative affinities of ideas'.

This fault is exhibited by Trench, due to his desire to be morally didactic:

We could produce from Mr Trench's poems several instances of his postponing in the process of composition the desire of beauty, the artist's one and indivisible aim, to the desire of announcing a doctrine or impressing a truth. The result is false in art, however seductive to one who feels so earnestly as Mr Trench the moral vocation of poetry

This is a pity, because Trench's poetical power is beyond dispute – 'No one...will ever rise from a thoughtful study of these volumes unimpressed with a high idea of Mr Trench's qualities as a lyric poet'. Before citing a number of passages from the poems, Donne effectively sums up both his qualifications and approval of his friend's compositions:

We may indeed regret in portions of them that the outline is not firmer, the form more developed, the language more enriched, or that the subject is taken from the inner rather than from the outer world. We may lament that some of the finer perceptions of the poet's earlier productions have been sacrificed in the latter to a scrupulous care for subjection, accuracy, and purity of doctrine. But the moral earnestness, the intellectual discipline, the religious tone, the truthfulness and harmony of sentiment, will abide every test, and to the thoughtful reader will supply a source of permanent pleasure in these volumes..

'Mitford's Works of Gray',²⁸⁴ (1838). This review of a new edition of Gray is introduced by the cryptic statement that 'The eighteenth century, for the higher order of poetry and philosophy, was for the most part one of the "vacant inter-lunar" spaces of literature'. After the achievements of the preceding century, a remarkable decrease could be observed in the quality of poetry:

Literary history affords no other instance of a decline so sudden and complete...as that which took place in the creative mind of Europe at this period. In our own poetry Dryden is the best exponent of the change: he had in perfection

²⁸³ 'Wordsworth's Autobiographical Poem', *Gentleman's Magazine* 34 (November 1850), 460

²⁸⁴ WBD, 'Mitford's Works of Gray', *British & Foreign Review*, vi (April 1838), 397-420

all the secondary qualities of his art...yet how wide is the interval between him and Habington, one of the last who partook of the platonic spirit of Spenser, Surrey and Petrarch

(It speaks more for Donne's wide reading than for Habington's poetic standing that he should cite a man remembered, if at all, rather for his family connections to the Babington and Gunpowder plots than for his verse). He does not, fortunately for his own credibility as a critic, dismiss the period entirely: 'It would be rash...to assert that from the death of Milton to the close of the eighteenth century no poetical feeling existed'. It is more that 'under the influence of Dryden and Pope, poetry forwent its high office of dealing with essential truth, order and beauty alone, and descended to temporary modes and superficial varieties of being'. It was also 'a period of extreme self-complacency', in which 'poetry became a cloud-cuckoo land of personifications, outworn mythologies and misty generalities'.

Into this situation came Gray, bringing the beginnings of a new era for English poetry. The foreign influence upon him was French, rather than Italian – 'although the tessellated mind of Gray shows at times traces of Italian reading, yet we never could perceive in his writings any deep impression of Tuscan literature'. Indeed, 'though a sound and elegant scholar, and well versed in every branch of literature cultivated in his age, he seems to have imbibed the genius of none'. Donne believes him to have 'been extolled for qualities he did not possess – for invention, imagination and lyric sublimity', but to have 'never been overpraised for his knowledge and command of metre'. A similar verdict is passed on a much greater poet of an earlier era – 'Among poets in whom diction and embellishment surpass invention we are disposed to give Virgil the precedence'. There will be occasion under other headings to note Donne's qualified praise for Virgil.

Not for the first, or last, time we find, in this essay, Donne perhaps thinking of himself as much as of his subject, when he writes

It is not difficult to show that retirement and leisure, unmixed with the duties of active life, are too apt, with literary men, to produce a lassitude and fastidiousness of intellectual habits that give a pale and sickly cast to thought, instead of the buxom vigour of the sound mind in a sound body...The recluse, no less than the artist by profession, in his intellectual symmetry and strength of volition is unable

to compete with the man who, while unconsciously working out the great ends of his being, has honourably struggled with difficulties, and come forth their conqueror.

There is unquestionably a personal reference in the remarks concerning Gray's partial retirement from active life and its consequences:

In no country can the mere literary man, who does not make literature his trade, who is of no profession and limited means, live less conveniently than in England, if his residence be neither in the metropolis nor in one of the universities. In the country he is looked upon as an idler, and finds himself relegated from books and congenial society...'.

It would seem that the sage of Mattishall is finding it less than ideal to operate in his rural solitude.

When addressing Gray's method of composition, Donne tackles 'a much vexed question – the distinction between coincidence and imitation, and between imitation and plagiarism'. He has already introduced the subject in his remarks on Virgil, claiming a justification for the Mantuan's borrowing, in that the poet not only used the work of others, but transformed that work in the usage – 'Although he borrowed freely from his predecessors and elaborately copied Greek models, he had withal an observant eye and a fervency of spirit'. The point is made again:

In every great poem there will always be a residue of images and expressions directly traceable to books, or to some production of the sister arts – the poet legitimately availing himself of the world of intellectual creations, no less than of the world of nature, in the conception and progress of his work. But it is generally found, that whatever a great writer borrows, he recasts.

while two of England's worthies are contrasted in the same respect:

Jonson was a rich robber who wore his spoils openly and bravely, but had not, like Milton, the art of melting them down, and bringing them forth with new impresses and virgin lustre.

Donne is not an unqualified admirer of Gray, nor afraid to counter general opinions:

We never could agree with those who regard the "Progress of Poesy" as the most finished of Gray's compositions. To us it appears the one in which his own defects and those of his age are most conspicuous. It charms the ear, but its personifications come and depart like troops of shadows...The ode is also obscure in its plan.

According to the opening stanza and the concluding one, or *l'envoi*, it is not so much the "Progress of Poesy" as of *Lyric Poesy* that is traced, and the introduction of Shakespeare is thereby inappropriate.

In the *Hymn to Adversity*, 'though more accurately conceived, and in its diction less intricate and overlaid with ornament, the total effect of the images employed is indistinct'. The hymn is contrasted, to its disadvantage, with a Horace ode 'to which it has a near resemblance'. The *Ode to Spring*, with the unfinished *Ode on Vicissitude*, contains 'a little cluster of images gleaned from books only; they have the exquisite finish of the finest porcelain, not the pastoral beauty which the subject promised'.

Donne differs from Mitford (the editor of Gray, whose work he is reviewing) on the poet's ability to handle theoretical material:

We cannot agree with Mr Mitford in thinking that the poem "On the Alliance of Education and Government" would, when finished, have been a "fine philosophical poem". Besides the constant fault of didactic poems...of expressing in circuitous forms what plain prose sets forth more elegantly, the genius of Gray was ill-suited to the expanded meaning and continuous march of the heroic couplet. He moves more gracefully in the fetters of the recurring stanza and changing measures of the ode.

For the poem *On a distant Prospect of Eton College* the praise is less reserved:

With some vagueness of diction, and a few unnecessary personifications, such as "lively Cheer of Vigour born", it goes more directly to the affections, and touches more common springs of feeling than, the *Elegy* excepted, any other of his compositions.

Gray is defended against the charge of obscurity in the *Bard*, which receives acclaim, albeit in curiously negative form:

...the historic unity of the *Bard* has preserved its author from some of his besetting sins of vague and allegorical diction. His grouping is conceived with more boldness, and executed with a greater reliance on his own powers. He is not too pictorial, and his characteristic brevity is the effect of selection and condensation, not of verbal antithesis and elaborate contrasts.

A final tribute to Gray acknowledges the unfavourable circumstances of the age in which he wrote and speculates on what might have been if he had lived in another:

...it is due to such men as Gray and Mason to commemorate them as among the earliest and most intelligent reformers of literature, and to temper our judgments upon their works by reflecting how they would have written now, who wrote so well in an age unfavourable to poetry, and gone far astray after false gods.

'The Life and Writings of Coleridge'²⁸⁵ (1839). This is the first of the two essays described by Armstrong as outstanding, and it is not difficult to justify her use of the adjective. It will be recalled that she was deploring the almost complete disregard of the Goethe-Coleridge contributions to poetical theory, and commending Donne for taking cognizance of them both. This he does in more than one essay, but it is in this one on Coleridge, in particular, that we can trace his sympathy for the poet. Though much of its content is concerned with biographical matter, derived from Gilman and Cottle, commendation of Coleridge's verse compositions abounds.

Of the early *Real and Imaginary Time* we are told that the lines 'show a remarkable forwardness of the plastic mind, and a clear and smooth diction that his subsequent poems frequently missed of'. Though 'in the strict academical sense of the word, Coleridge was not a good Greek scholar', his rigorous training as a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital ensured a sensitivity to the best in literature:

He was taught to separate all that was merely the fashion of a time from the perpetual language of nature and passion, of logic and good sense, and to prefer in every literature the simple and hearty writers to the merely elaborate and elegant.

As Coleridge related in the *Biographia Literaria*,²⁸⁶ the retreat to a Somerset cottage afforded the opportunity for 'the study of the fontal truths of morals and religion', with results not altogether happy, though valuable not only for him but for the progress of literature:

At the very time that Coleridge was accused by his enemies, and even by his admirers, of wasting his extraordinary powers, he was laying solidly, if slowly, the great bases of a system, the principles of which are already visible in the current literature of the day.

Donne summons as a witness to the stature of Coleridge one who was himself no dwarf in the field of literature, nor over-given to the praise of others:

²⁸⁵ WBD, 'The Life and Writings of Coleridge', *British & Foreign Review* viii (April 1839), 414-451.

²⁸⁶ S T Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, (Dent, Everyman edition, 1960), p.111.

The intellectual homage paid by Mr De Quincey to Coleridge from his first meeting with the *Lyrical Ballads*, and avowed without reluctance or limitation when the grave had closed upon the poet, shows how deep was the impression, we had almost said awe, with which he regarded the author of the *Ancient Mariner*...Admission of superiority in his own line of study, metaphysics and psychology, from Mr De Quincey, must not therefore be interpreted as an act of grace only, but as a sure token of an inward reverential feeling towards its object.

To the defects of Coleridge's character Donne is neither blind nor indifferent, regretting particularly their intrusion into his work:

We lament that the querulousness of wounded self-love, which not even the personal opposition and misconstruction he met with can justify, should be so often heard in his works amid the music of nobler contemplations...there was wanting in him that catholic spirit of toleration which accompanies intellect under its most majestic forms, being most perfect in Shakespeare and Goethe.

Of the occasional oddity in Coleridge's own critical judgment he is quite dismissive:

He [Coleridge] ranks Boccaccio's "neglected romances" above "his far-famed Decameron" – an opinion that well nigh sets at nought all sane principles of discernment.

'The Poetical Works of P B Shelley'²⁸⁷. Donne begins this essay, commended by Armstrong (chapter heading above), with an analysis of the poet's mind, as illustrated in *Queen Mab*, a poem for which Donne has little time – 'To the poem itself indeed we attach no importance, neither do we believe it will find many readers'. It is, however, revealing of 'a mind whose disturbing forces were the speed, the intensity, and the depth of its own sensations and conceptions':

The seeds of the characteristic and kindred faults of Shelley's mind, as well as the rudiments of much that was excellent and singular in him, are to be found in *Queen Mab*; - his carelessness of consequences and its accompanying presumption; his metaphysical acuteness, and his political ignorance and rashness; his fine perception of the harmony of verse; his intuition of the truth and dignity of the poet's vocation; his inexperience in life, and in the laws of action and character.

Regret is expressed for the reticence of the editor of the publication under review (Mary Shelley), by which the public is robbed of 'the little that can

²⁸⁷ W B Donne, 'Poetical Works of P B Shelley' *British & Foreign Review*, x, (January 1840), 98-127.

ever be related of a life spent for the most part in solitary study and speculation'.²⁸⁸

Donne devotes his review essay to supplying the reasons 'why Shelley, more richly and variously endowed than perhaps any of his contemporaries with the elements of a great poet, has produced no great work, nothing which retains the impress of completeness'.

A comparison is drawn between Shelley and Byron, both as to similarities ('they resemble one another in the original elements of their poetry...both agreed in subordinating the universal man to the personal sensations and experiences of the poet') and as to differences ('the resemblance between them lies not in the forms they embodied, in their imaginative resources, or in the command of the materials of their art. In all these qualities they were dissimilar, and Shelley immeasurably superior').

One factor identified by Donne as diminishing the value of Shelley's work is the philosophical framework within which the poet wrote his earlier poems: 'A falser system of philosophy than that which Shelley derived from the French writers of the 18th century, and recommended in his earlier works, can hardly be conceived'. The characteristic feature of this false system was a rejection of existing boundaries and conventions, accompanied by a naïve and arrogant assumption that those who advocated such rejection were the first to do so. The lessons of history were ignored:

All the rich inheritance derived from their Teutonic ancestors, from the better parts of ethnic institutions and from Christianity, was rejected by them as something outworn and unmeaning...Miserable reasoners are they who...are insensible to the higher and more catholic civilisation by which Christianity, with all the abuses of ecclesiastical power and among all the fluctuations of evil, and despite of the fraud of kings and the madness of the multitude, has knit Europe together into one brotherhood.

²⁸⁸ The regret, which is stated at length, expresses surprise at the reticence which has denied the public its legitimate expectations. A recent explanation has been offered by Richard Holmes, in *Shelley: the Pursuit* (London: Flamingo, 1995) pp.xiv-xv. Apparently Shelley's father imposed an embargo on just such revelations as Donne desired.

This 'doctrine of political renovation', as Donne termed it, led Shelley to believe that 'the noblest use of poetic powers was the recommendation of philosophic truth, but he did not sufficiently distinguish between 'assertive truth, which is the province of the imagination; and discursive truth, which is the business of the understanding'. His later work is comparatively free from this defect, as 'the harsh reception his works met with from the public was not without salutary results to himself'.

Individual poems receive their appraisal: 'the *Cenci*, though deficient in incident, is severe in diction'; it is 'a tragedy which, had it even appeared in the days of Dekker and Marston, would have been remarkable for its mastery of passion and pathos'; *Alastor* 'requires an initiative faith, but its unity is apparent as soon as we step within its precincts'. Although the action of *The Revolt of Islam* 'proceeds heavily and feebly, and no human interest attaches itself to the mere personifications of good and evil that carry on the story', the poem 'as a metrical work of art can hardly be commended enough'. *Prometheus Unbound* is contrasted with its source in *Æschylus* and described as 'a chaos of poetic material without symmetry and without even formal unity'. The pressure under which the poem was composed explains some of its faults:

Conceiving, unfortunately, that his vocation as a reformer was superior to his vocation as a poet, that his days were few and numbered, and the urgency of the "disjointed times" he lived in great, he composed with the haste and anxiety of one who has a present end to secure.

The result is 'choral songs...loose in their structure, inexpressive, and not seldom unmelodious...beautiful thoughts and happy images are perpetually marred and lost in the obscure or glittering maze of the verses in which they are set'.

One of the poet's problems was that 'the faculties of construction and invention were not given to him in an equal degree' The latter characterised all his work, but the former was rarely equal to the task. Nonetheless, Donne's admiration for Shelley is sincere and immense:

We have reluctantly pointed out the defects of a poet who, beyond any other of his contemporaries, has filled us with wonder and delight, even where we found

most occasion to regret the obliquity of his moral theories, and condemn the haste and temerity of his political speculations.

A critique of the *Adonais* leads to an interesting comparison of Shelley and Keats:

With an intellect of larger range and of higher power, with a command of the materials of poetry beyond that of the author of *Endymion*, Shelley is inferior to him in truth of representation, in the art of giving life and reality, character and unity to persons and events; and though far more eloquent and versatile in his poetic measures, less simple and felicitous in his general language.

The essay, one of the most comprehensive written by Donne on poetry, ends by repeating the reluctance with which he has exposed Shelley's perceived inadequacies:

We have unwillingly dwelt rather upon the faults than the excellencies of Shelley, because we believe him more than any other poet of his age destined to operate upon the future poetical literature of England...in Shelley are visible the germs of a future poetry more intellectual, more nearly allied to the abstract truths of universal faith and philosophy, than any that has yet appeared.

(This sentiment is echoed in the essay on Monckton Milnes ; 'Shelley, the most ideal of idealists, whose works contain a larger proportion of unmingled, unalloyed poetry than those, perhaps, of any other writer').

With this essay, Donne ceased to write poetical criticism for nearly a decade, during which time the political essays noted elsewhere occupied most of his attention, along with a random selection of subjects written for a variety of journals. The second group of articles on poetry and poets dealt with Browning; Byron; his own relative, Cowper; Dryden; Gower; Milton; Southey and Wordsworth. We shall examine them in chronological order, as revealing something of Donne's critical development.

'Wordsworth'²⁸⁹. 1850 was the year of Wordsworth's death, and Donne marked the occasion by reviewing, in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the publication of *The Prelude* (Wordsworth's Autobiographical Poem, November 1850) and the memoirs, 'William Wordsworth' (August 1850)

²⁸⁹ WBD, 'Wordsworth's Autobiographical Poem', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 34 (November 1850), 459-468. *The Prelude* had been written 1799-1805.
- 'William Wordsworth', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 36 (August 1851), 107-116.

edited by the poet's nephew, Christopher Wordsworth. (This is that Christopher Wordsworth who became Bishop of Lincoln; scourge of the nineteenth-century Anglican ritualists and a virulent anti-Romanist). Of *The Prelude*, written half a century earlier than the review, Donne has ambivalent views. For example,

Its component parts...are at least equal to the best of Wordsworth's earlier published works, and, in our opinion at least, superior to all of them, except his best lyrical ballads, his best sonnets, and his *Ode to Immortality*.

In *The Prelude*, however, as well as in Wordsworth's poetry generally, there are peculiar and characteristic defects. There is an occasional laxity of phrase, there is a want of precision in form, and there is an absence of deep and vital sympathy with men, their works and ways.

This latter, surprising, clause is amplified and supported by the explanation that while Wordsworth was, as is well known, 'roused and enkindled in no ordinary degree by the events and earlier movements of the French revolution', it is as a philosopher, rather than as a fellow-citizen, that he was moved. 'His lyric emotion is brief; his speculative contemplation is infinite; he evinces awakened curiosity rather than spiritual fellowship'.

A comparison with Shelley detects a detached coolness in Wordsworth which contrasts with the 'heat and glare' of a 'yawning and roaring furnace' displayed by the younger man. This relates to another distinction between the two – the existence in Shelley's work, 'in its full vigour', of

The erotic element of poetry, the absence of which in Wordsworth is so remarkable, that of all poets of equal rank and power in other respects, he, and he alone, may be said to have dispensed with it altogether. The sensuous element was omitted in his composition.

Nor is this the only omission:

Neither was there ever any poet of his degree less dramatic than Wordsworth. All the life in his ballads, in his narrative poems, in his *Excursion*, is the reflex of his own being. The actors in his scenes are severe, aloof...His lovers do not whisper under moonlit balconies; his heroes are not the heroes of war or the tournament. To this exemption or defect in his mind may be ascribed, in some measure, the tardy reception of his earlier poetry.

What, then, is to be praised in the poet's work, and to what stature is he to be elevated? In his survey of *The Prelude*, Donne finds much to admire:

In the whole range of Wordsworth's writings, we have met with no individual portraiture which, to our feelings, can for an instant compare with his sketches of the royalist and republican officers of the garrison, we presume of Orleans...

It is seldom that we have the privilege of noticing so masterly a work as this poem, still less seldom do we meet with one so rich in both historical and psychological interest.

One particular passage in the survey is of interest in that it clearly reflects Donne's own Cambridge experience, and that of the early 'Apostles', (later, of course, than that of Wordsworth):

Of what Cambridge might in those days have taught him, there was little that Wordsworth cared to learn...[he] felt what so many intellectual but non-reading men both before and after him have felt at Cambridge – the flatness and unprofitableness of university life to all not actually engaged in the strife for college prizes and fellowships...Since Wordsworth was an undergraduate, indeed, Cambridge has widened its stadium, and latterly has thrown down most of the barriers that excluded from honours all who did not combine the soul of a ready reckoner with the strength of a coach-horse...But if the general effect of Cambridge studies be, as we believe it to be, to deaden the imagination, to enfeeble the intellectual energies, and to create even in active and ingenuous minds a mental, if not a moral apathy, there must be something rotten in the state of Alma Mater.

In the later article, on the Christopher Wordsworth memoirs of his uncle, Donne explores the view, much echoed in modern theoretical writing on literary biography,²⁹⁰ that the writer's life is only interesting and proper to be analysed, with reference to his work:

...Mr Wordsworth, among many other profound observations upon the duties of literary biography, maintained that "our sole business in relation to authors is with their books – to understand and enjoy them." He deprecated "Boswellism" in all its degrees...Upon this [request] as his guiding principle, Dr Wordsworth has acted in the composition of his uncle's memoirs, which are accordingly to be viewed as a record of the poetic rather than the personal history of the deceased.

Of this, Donne totally approves, suggesting that the link between writer and writings is so close that the memoirs should be read with the poetical works open alongside them, the one commenting on the other:

For emphatically "*poetic*", as regards its plan and details, Wordsworth's life deserves to be called. We doubt, if the ends and aims which he set before himself be kept in view, whether a more consistent life was ever led, or a happier or more honourable lot ever assigned to man...a propensity to speak of himself and his writings was not in Wordsworth an appetite for praise or a habit of self-complacency, so much as an unconscious betrayal of his efforts to realise his superb ideal of the life poetic.

²⁹⁰ E.g., John Batchelor (ed.), *The Art of Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) *passim*.

There may have been a touch of Donne family pride in one comparison, made without evidential support, in which Wordsworth comes off worst :

As regards harmony of sound, Wordsworth describes himself as "an Epicurean". We should not have accorded him this especial attribute, since his blank verse we think on the whole inferior to Cowper's, and his lyrical poems occasionally display both laxity and roughness of cadence.

Such inequalities are, however, thought by Donne to be deliberate, rather than accidental, and in accord with 'the doctrine of his critical prefaces'. The poet is acknowledged to be 'very deeply read' in English poetry and to 'have studied critically the most artistic of the Latin poets', so that 'whatever his scholarship may have been, he entered profoundly into the spirit of antiquity'. Wordsworth is stated to have spoken of contemporary poets 'with but cold approval, always, indeed, with the exception of Coleridge, whom he appears to us to overrate...Scott, Southey, and Crabbe, receive very slender praise from the oracle of Rydal Mount'. It is because of Wordsworth's recognised inferiority to Coleridge in 'the metrical faculty' that he ascribes to him, wrongly, 'other poetic functions in proportion'. The poet's silence on Keats is noted, with the comment that

We can imagine that the liberties he [Keats] took in *Endymion* with idiom, metre, and even words, would offend so zealous a purist in style as Mr Wordsworth was.

A depreciation of Goethe amazes Donne, 'but on this point the late Laureate was so pertinaciously heretical, that we must leave the reader to wonder at his verdict'.

Wordsworth's counsel to future literary critics and their readers may be sound, but it will not be heeded:

For to the end of poetic time the genuine poet will not be welcomed with instantaneous acclaim, but must discipline his age to his teaching. His triumph over adverse days and tongues is the very proof that his mission is authentic...does not *The Christian Year*, from causes independent of poetry. number impressions by tens, where *The Excursion* counts them by units?

So much for Keble! Donne's disparagement would have found no echo in Wordsworth himself, whose admiration for Keble was returned by the ecclesiastic. They visited each other; Keble gave the eulogy when Wordsworth received an honorary degree from Oxford, and the laureate thought highly of *The Christian Year* and *Lyra Innocentium*. Having surveyed the change in Wordsworth's political opinions – 'he entered manhood a republican, and in his senescence was a strenuous advocate of Church and State', Donne pays a final and handsome tribute:

Of Wordsworth...it is scarcely possible to speak with too much reverence. His integrity as a man, his sincerity as an artist, his exemption from the passions which so often deform, and from the follies which so often degrade, men of genius, his honourable poverty, his studious energy, his almost scriptural simplicity of life and demeanour, invest him, perhaps beyond any poet of the present century, with claims to the homage of his countrymen.

'Southey's Life and Correspondence'²⁹¹ (April 1851). It will be remembered that in the review of Wordsworth's memoirs Donne recorded the poet's slighting notice of Southey – 'Southey he accuses, justly enough, of a want of sympathy with the dealings and the passions of men'. Beginning this review with a comment on the prolixity of the poet's correspondence and reminiscences, he, not for the first time, draws a comparison with his own kinsman, Cowper, to the latter's advantage:

Southey did not possess Cowper's genial humour. He was less observant; he was less contemplative; and, from being irritably alive to literary fame, he deemed that no subject could be so welcome to his correspondents as the conception, progress and fortunes of his rapidly planned and nearly as rapidly finished quartos and octavos.

Writing on this occasion for the heavyweight *Edinburgh Review*, Donne states both agreement and disagreement with that organ of criticism:

The verdict of this journal on the works and intellectual position of Southey has been often and unreservedly delivered; and after reconsidering these former judgments, we find in them little to modify or reverse. In many important questions – literary, political and ethical – we differ as before. We thought him often arrogant in his treatment of contemporaries, and eccentric in his views of events and parties, and we think so still. We always bore cordial testimony to his private worth, to his manifold acquirements, to the excellence of some of his

²⁹¹ WBD, 'Life and Correspondence of Robert S Southey', *Edinburgh Review*, 93, (April 1851), 370-402.

writings, and to the singular beauty of his language; and so far, if there be any change in our former impressions, it is in his favour.

A résumé of Southey's antecedents and early career leads to his introduction, at Oxford, to Coleridge, with its significant consequences – '*Ex illo fonte* came Pantisocracy, Greta Hall, and literature as a profession'. The dream of a Utopian co-existence on the Susquehanna came to nothing, of course, and while Donne thinks the venture would have done no harm to Coleridge, for Southey it would have been 'the greatest misfortune'. In 1793, having resumed his poetical activity, Southey completed *Joan of Arc*, 'an extraordinary achievement for a youth in his twentieth year'.

The poet's first visit to Lisbon is approved by Donne, who more than once paid tribute to Iberian literature, and recognised in Southey 'that wide acquaintance with Spanish and Portuguese literature which he afterwards turned to much account'. Southey's appraisal of Shelley ('here is a man at Keswick who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794') is described as 'a curious specimen of self-recognition'.

Following the chronology of Southey's life, Donne picks up a theme which has been noted elsewhere, that of the deprivation which accompanies withdrawal from public life; a deprivation clearly felt by Donne himself:

We believe that his [Southey's] preference for a country life, even if favourable to literary fecundity, was prejudicial to his intellectual character. Mingling with the society of the metropolis he might have written less, but he would have known more of men and their ways...It is not good for man to be alone. It is especially dangerous for a literary man to listen only to the echoes of his own praises or his own dislikes.

Twelve months after writing this, Donne accepted the librarianship of the London Library, having allegedly refused the editorship of the *Edinburgh Review*²⁹² on the grounds that 'his habits were too remote to keep him in the current of public opinion'. The relative obscurity of Bury St Edmund's was exchanged for the bustle and contacts of central London.

²⁹² But for discussion of this doubtful matter, see above, p.43.

For Southey, despite the disadvantages hinted at above, residence in the Lake District brought its compensations. He was not 'indifferent to the poetic and pictorial accessories of his abode'. Though not, like Wordsworth, 'a student of nature at all hours and in every mood, nor familiar 'as Scott would have been, with the songs and legends of every dale, and with the weather-beaten features of every ancient crone and shepherd', nonetheless, 'his daily walks, his occasional rambles, and the prospect which hourly greeted him from his library window, refreshed and invigorated his spirit'.

Reference to Southey's commonplace books leads Donne to state that 'he read and wrote as incessantly as a candidate for university honours'. The fruit of the reading was a crop of prose writing, the value of which is assessed by Donne and Southey himself in diametrically opposite terms:

The periodical criticisms, which he deplored as labour unmeet for him, are still read with pleasure, and the biography of Nelson, which he designates as little better than an article, has become a British classic: while the elaborate metres and long narratives, on which the poet and historian expected his reputation was to rest, are seldom read, and less frequently cited.

Of Southey's station in English poetry, Donne is uncertain.

If there were ever, formally, a Lake School, he did not belong to it; since he disliked the *Lyrical Ballads*, and it was friendship for Wordsworth which seems to have reconciled him to the *Excursion*. As little did he appertain to the order of bards, of whom Byron was the coryphæus [chorus leader], passion and Southey being irreconcilable terms...Of still life Southey, indeed, is occasionally a skilful painter; but he was too dispassionate in himself, and too unversed in men's works and ways to inform his pictures with dramatic energy.

Having said which, he is still to be commended, albeit in precise and limited terms:

Yet we would recommend the youthful poetic aspirant to study Southey's poems; not indeed as he would study the masters of the great ancient and modern schools, but for the sake of their inexhaustible supplies of poetic materials. No writer, if we except Milton, has hived so much from the store of books, or has displayed happier skill in discovering veins of imaginative ore even in the most rugged and unlikely soils...nearly all his poems are as much works of research as of imagination. His notes are more entertaining than the text, and sometimes as poetical...Of his ballads we deem much more highly than of his epics. Their needful brevity constrained his habitual gyrations.

One charge levelled against Southey by Donne is that of harmful over-production; 'although in prose the more men write, the better probably they will write, it is not so with verse. "Poetry", says Milton, "is solemn, sensuous and severe"; and these are qualities earned only by excision, selection, and concentration'.

Returning to the theme of Southey's critical writings for the journals ('these ephemera'), Donne repeats his opinion that they, though of a second order of merit, are perhaps the poet's best contribution to printed matter:

We cannot regret that Southey should have added, by his enforced labour, so many beautiful chapters to the current and more consumable literature of his age. As a critic, indeed, he ranks below Lessing and the Schlegels. He was less analytic than Coleridge, less discriminating than Mr Hallam [Henry, father of Arthur Henry Hallam], and less pictorial than Mr Macaulay. But he possessed, in an unusual degree, the requisites for periodical composition. His clear, masculine, and harmonious style, it is superfluous to commend. His universal reading enabled him to adorn every subject that he treated. He passed from one topic to another with the versatility of an advocate passing from the Crown Court to Nisi Prius; and his fancy was never more happily employed than in enlivening the themes of another, whether dull and superficial or lively and well-informed, with his own pithy analogies or humorous allusions.

Recording, with approval, the award of the Laureateship to Southey, Donne once more adverts to his own circumstances when he writes

There is, perhaps, no other country in Europe so deficient as England in appropriate provisions for literary men who are not connected with the universities, or who have not taken refuge in the Church. Of literature itself the state takes little or no cognizance.

A closing paragraph is worthy not only of its subject, but of its author:

The over-toiled brain, the liberal and capacious heart at length rested in the bosom of the mountain land which he had adopted and loved to the last so well. After life's fitful fever he sleeps well, surrounded by the graves of the children and the wife who had passed away before him. Of the literary contemporaries who eclipsed or equalled his celebrity, Mr Moore and Mr Rogers are now, we believe, the sole survivors. A great cycle has nearly closed which a distant and reverent posterity will regard as second only to the Elizabethan era. On that bed-roll of English worthies, the name of Robert Southey will be indelibly inscribed.

‘Dryden and his Times’²⁹³ (April 1855). In the seclusion of the London Library, and perhaps after ordering them for stock, Donne reviewed two new editions of Dryden’s works and availed himself

of the opportunity...to cast a brief glance at the literature of which he [Dryden] was, if not exactly the creator, yet certainly the foremost writer, and to attempt, so far as our limits will permit, to gauge and define the qualities of an era of poetry, which a few years ago was unduly depreciated by critics generally, and by none more than by those who had gained for themselves a high reputation as poets or judges of poetry...In reviewing the literary character of an age, it is seldom we can meet with a more complete representative of its merits and defects, than Dryden was of the literature of the Restoration.

Dryden is examined as poet, critic and scholar. His poetical career is divided into three epochs:

When he was a writer of occasional verses, such as his panegyric upon the Lord Protector and his *Annus Mirabilis*; his contributions to the English drama; [and] when he gathered up all his powers, and was at once the most admirable of narrators in verse, and the most powerful and pungent of modern satirists.

Following the pattern of his essays on Wordsworth and Southey, Donne uses the same structure of introduction, biographical summary interwoven with a chronicle of literary output, and detailed criticism to complete his survey. Dryden’s *Panegyric on the late Lord Protector* is described as ‘his first memorable verses’. ‘Though not exempt from conceits, they exhibit a diminished admiration for Cowley, and a decided improvement in the art of versification’. The timing of the composition (the Restoration) could not, of course, have been more unfortunate, and Donne thinks it ‘greatly to his honour that he never recanted his eulogy of Cromwell, even when his enemies threw it in the teeth of the author of *Absalom and Achitophel*’.

The products of the earliest period, mostly elegies or panegyrics, are not highly thought of. ‘Dryden began to write late, and was long in discovering the natural bent and limit of his powers. Of his verses, whether in the ten syllable heroic measure, or in the quatrain stanza, few are remembered now, and few indeed deserve to be memorable’.

The dramatic writings receive short shrift:

²⁹³ WBD, ‘Dryden and his Times’, *Westminster Review*, NS7 (April 1855) 336-367.

We shall not expend many words upon Dryden's plays. A few of them attained an immediate popularity, a few were coldly approved, and others promptly condemned. Posterity, however, has included them all under one verdict, and they are never represented and seldom read.

The reasons are clearly stated. Dryden wrote in an age recovering from the Puritan suppression of drama, and afflicted by a moral corruption arising from 'an incapacity for relishing the great dramas that had entertained the Maiden Queen and her court' allied to 'a capacity for enjoying the bombast and licence of the French theatre'.

The intrigues of comedy were those of the court, and tragedy borrowed its fable and its heroes from Seneca and Euripides, from the declining eras of the Roman and Attic drama. From these debased or pseudo-classic types the theatre of the Restoration took its models. In tragedy, passion was superseded by rhetoric; in comedy, the follies of the day were represented by the vices of the day.

He is blameless of a deliberate attempt to demoralise his age; 'he merely followed a corrupt fashion, and owed his popularity as a writer for the stage to his subserviency'. Donne also admits that 'his worst plays are much less offensive than many which, at the moment of their production, were preferred to his'.

In 1681, with the publication of the first part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, Dryden is seen to emerge as 'the poetic chief of the Restoration era'. The circumstances of the time, both those personal to Dryden – ridicule, abuse, physical ill-treatment – and what Donne calls 'the offences of the time' – party antagonisms, plots and rumours of plots, and leaders who were 'hypocrites in religion or profligates in conduct' provided a rich source of material for satire. For the delineation of all of this, Dryden 'has a just claim to the praise of originality'. Quitting 'the beaten track of satire...he aimed his shafts at the great political questions, parties and leaders of the day'. The work was hugely successful. 'It was read with avidity: it passed through five editions in one year: and it established Dryden's reputation as the most formidable of antagonists, and the most effective of pleaders in verse.

Later efforts, such as *The Medal* and *Mac Flecknoe*, are thought by Donne to be less successful – 'their inferiority was in some measure due to the more restricted nature of their subjects'; but the appearance of the

second part of *Absalom and Achitophel* in 1682, followed a few days later by *Religio Laici*, causes Donne to hail the year as Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis*, in which 'his patent of perpetual remembrance was then signed and sealed'.

The poet's conversion to Rome is ascribed, without judgement being passed, to the broad hints issuing from the sovereign that there was an inconsistency in a Popish King keeping a Protestant poet as Laureate. The hints seem to have been taken, 'for in March 1685, Dryden received an additional 100l. a year, and the Romish Church one convert more. Faith does not appear to have been a profound conviction, and he 'intimates indeed pretty broadly, in his *Hind and Panther*, that he took his religion, even after his conversion to Romanism, pretty much on trust'. The poem is thought by Donne to be

On all accounts an extraordinary production. Its wit is sharp and pleasant: its diction singularly harmonious: its reasoning coherent and impressive, and as an *ex parte* statement it scarcely admits of improvement.

Having said which, 'its defects as a work of art are but too palpable. The allegory and the fable are throughout awkwardly blended'.

Such an allegory could not be preserved for ten lines together with any chance of consistency. Its absurdity is obvious: its weariness fatal. Yet the skill of the author is as conspicuous as the defects of the plan. The *Hind and Panther* is not only the most remarkable literary production of the reign of James II, but is also second to none of Dryden's works in energy, harmony, and pathos.

This ambivalent evaluation, amounting almost to self-contradiction, is a feature of Donne's critical work which will be met with elsewhere. If not simply a failure to remember what he has already written, (a fault with which one can sympathise), it indicates a desire for even-handedness which is sometimes achieved only at the cost of consistency and cohesion.

With the end of King James's Catholic reign, Dryden, far too committed to be acceptable to the new regime, fell on evil times, and Donne commends his resilience in the face of adversity. 'His remaining years were devoted to a variety of labours, prodigious in quantity, and yet more remarkable for the vigour and elasticity of mind which they displayed'. His translation of Virgil ('the most arduous of his labours').

half-a-dozen works for the stage, a memorial poem for the deceased wife of the Earl of Abingdon, and 'the most popular of his poems', *Ode on Alexander's Feast*, all bore witness to his tireless industry and inventiveness.

Age could not, it seemed, stale, nor variety wither him; with advancing years his powers were strengthened and his imagination became more alert.

The ambition to translate Homer did not get beyond one book of the *Tale of Troy Divine*, before he was diverted into a rendering of *Fables from Chaucer and Boccaccio*. Though highly praised by some, it appeared to Donne 'that in Dryden's hands, Boccaccio becomes prolix and Chaucer prosaic'. Detailed criticism seeks to vindicate the judgement, which is frequently harsh – 'Philemon Holland...never made a rougher piece of work than Dryden has done'; 'Dryden's *Temple of Mars* might have been "turned out" at Birmingham'; 'We are less surprised at the tardiness of the sale at first than at the reputation which these Tales have acquired since'.

The essay ends with a reiteration both of Dryden's shortcomings and of his strengths:

We believe that in an earlier or a later age his faults would have been infinitely fewer, and his name might have ranked second only to the very first. It was his peculiar misfortune to have fallen upon evil times, and to have lacked strength of will to resist their influence...But though...two-thirds of his numerous writings have become obsolete, his indefatigable industry, his various knowledge, his robust eloquence, and his unsurpassed powers of satire, will always entitle his name to respect, and afford motives, wherever English literature is cultivated, for cherishing the healthier and happier portions of both his verse and prose.

'Byron'²⁹⁴ (March 1858). In this review article, contributed to the *Saturday Review*, Donne perceptively seizes on the distinction between the glamour formerly attaching to Byron's personality and life-style and the current estimate of his poetical stature.

Lord Byron's fame now depends on his literary achievements, and he has consequently sunk from his post of unrivalled pre-eminence to the third or fourth place among the poets who were his contemporaries...Competent readers perceive that his rhythm and melody are thin and monotonous, that his descriptions are untrue to nature and inconsistent with themselves, and that his

²⁹⁴ WBD, 'Byron', *Saturday Review*, v, (13 March 1858), 268-270.

highest flights are rather masterpieces of rhetorical cleverness than spontaneous creations of the imaginative faculty.

Exemplary of Byron's second order ability is the poem *Don Juan*.

If skill, versatility and eloquence could supply the place of natural aptitude, *Don Juan* would have been a great poem...The happiest portions...are those in which he displays his aptitude for epigram and his native love of fun. The greater part of the poem is mere doggerel, possessing only the merit of facile fluency, and the more ambitious passages are, with few exceptions, visibly artificial

An interesting observation by Donne is that

a few years more, and Byron might have discovered that his strength lay in wit rather than in imagination, and that his proper element was prose. His letters might probably never have been published or read but for the celebrity of his poems; but with the exception of Horace Walpole's *Correspondence*, no collection in the English language contains so much variety, playfulness, and vigour. The intrinsic value of the letters is more remarkable when it is remembered that they are addressed to correspondents in whom he felt no interest, and that they generally relate to trivial and indifferent subjects.

A cynicism, rare in Donne, inspires the reference to one foreign expression of admiration for Byron – 'Goethe, himself, rewarded a flattering dedication by frequent compliments which may have been occasionally sincere'. Perhaps it also inspires Donne's final words:

It was a wonderful achievement to soar even for a time without wings; and Byron, like Euphorion, if he mistook his natural region, had a great earthborn power. A great satirist and prose writer, perhaps an orator and a statesman, lay concealed in the poet who always suspected the genuineness of his own wide-spread popularity.

'Gower's Confessio Amantis'²⁹⁵ (May 1859). 'There are fossils in literature as well as in chalk and clay; and Gower is one of them'. These words are interesting for having been written in the aftermath of Charles Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830) and Robert Chambers's *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation* (1844).²⁹⁶ With them, Donne begins an essay in which he compares and contrasts Gower with his better known contemporary, Chaucer. Although the latter is infinitely the greater, Gower's stature is by no means unworthy of respect, and in some respects

²⁹⁵ WBD, 'Gower's Confessio Amantis', *Fraser's Magazine*, 59, (May 1859), 571-586.

²⁹⁶ See, for a similar usage – 'Fossil poetry', 'fossil ethics', 'fossil history' - R C Trench, *On the Study of Words*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., 1925²⁹), p.5.

he outdoes Chaucer in the portrayal of their times. 'If the author of the *Canterbury Tales* were the historical painter of his age, Gower was its encyclopedist'. A survey of his life leads to a joining of the two poets and friends (Chaucer appointed Gower his attorney while abroad on diplomatic business) and a reminder that each acknowledged the other in his work – Chaucer, in *Troilus and Creseide* and Gower in some copies of the *Confessio Amantis*.

On the monument to Gower in St Saviour's church, Southwark, the poet's head rests on the three volumes for which he is known – *Confessio Amantis*, *Speculum Meditantis* (of which no copy has yet been discovered) and *Vox Clamantis*. Respectively, they were written in English, French and Latin, and Donne uses the fact for a discourse on the struggle between the three languages for supremacy in the literature of England. When he examines the *Confessio Amantis*, a work nearly twice the length of the *Canterbury Tales*, he does not disguise its inferiority to the latter – whereas

Chaucer's pilgrims are living at this hour...Gower's stories have as much vitality in them as the columns of Lempriere's *Dictionary*...To the modern reader...the entertainment will prove soporific.

It must be confessed that the entertainment value of Donne's own essay is little, containing as it does the second most turgid and convoluted sentence in all his writings – one hundred and fifty-four words long! There is some compensation; in the sly humour, for example, of such remarks as 'the virtues of the "good old time", a period even more uncertain than the good time that's coming', or the statement that Gower 'did not regard with an eye of favour the reform of the Church, nor would he, apparently, have been a supporter of the Bible Society, had there been one in that age'.

Of bibliographical interest, this essay, in *Fraser's Magazine*, is the only one signed, with Donne's initials.

'The Youth of Milton'²⁹⁷ (April 1860). The length of this *Edinburgh Review* essay (thirty-six pages), gives Donne scope for a leisurely survey of

²⁹⁷ WBD, 'The Youth of Milton', *Edinburgh Review*, 111 (April 1860), 312-347.

the early life of Milton, contrasting the approaches of the four books under review. Masson's biography is a 'goodly though somewhat tedious octavo'. Keightley's account, confined to the poet and his writings, is commended in words which all biographers should heed – 'There is nothing superfluous in it, nor is anything important to be known omitted'.²⁹⁸

Donne uses the essay to notice and refute 'what appear to us current mistakes as regards the Puritans generally and Milton in particular'.

It is too commonly assumed that *they* were, without exception, sour, splenetic, or fierce enthusiasts, and that *he* was of the strictest sort among them, a Pharisee of the Pharisees. We believe both these opinions to be unsupported by facts.

He distinguishes, as many do not, between the Puritans properly so-called, and other sectaries of the time. Even the latter are viewed 'through the partial sketches of Clarendon, through the distorting glass of Hudibras'. They are charged with immoderate attitudes to entertainment, and it is the Examiner of Plays who responds

It is made a crime to them that they shut up the playhouses; but the dramas which they prohibited would be equally excluded from the stage at the present moment.

To other charges, Donne has a defence: they 'thrust their lecturers into the pulpits'; yes, but only after those pulpits had been misused by the authorised clergy; they desecrated churches, but only removed the symbols of Laudian alterations to established worship. 'The Puritans, as a body, disdained neither learning nor the arts', and if they were grave and sober in demeanour, it was only in protest against the excesses of the court.

Nor, if Milton the younger may be admitted in evidence, was even the theatre under ban. He alludes in his *Allegro* to the stage as a lawful amusement for the cheerful man; and in his sonnets he is not averse to the pleasures of the table, or to such "mirth as after no repenting draws". In the masques of *Arcades* and *Comus* he sealed with approbation one of the most popular entertainments of the time; and there is ample evidence in his poems of familiarity with the writings of Shakspeare, Ben Jonson and Massinger.

A picture is painted by Donne of a happy Milton household, of a tolerant father, John Milton the scrivener, who, in his unsuccessful attempts to turn his son either to the Church or to law as a profession, had his hopes both

²⁹⁸ A precursor of Lytton Strachey! 'a brevity which excludes everything that is redundant and nothing that is significant' – *Eminent Victorians, Preface*.

disappointed and realised – ‘His elder son climbed neither bench nor woolsack; but earned a name more imperishable than either mitre or seals confer’.

Education is always a topic of interest and concern to Donne, and there are hints of his own Bury St Edmund’s schooling in what he has to say of seventeenth century classical training:

At the time when Milton was construing Homer or Thucydides, there were not in all England twenty eminent Grecians: and of the twenty not one perhaps could have produced such a copy of iambics as now yearly obtains the Porson prize.

The Cambridge of the ‘Apostles’ is perhaps in Donne’s mind when he writes, of the Cambridge of Milton’s day

It is...a serious disadvantage in university life, that there is so wide a gulf between its generations. Masters, fellow and tutors are seldom brought in contact with undergraduates, except in the way of instruction, reproof, or correction. They meet in chapel, hall and lecture-room, but their intercourse seldom extends beyond these official places of common resort; and many a youth quits college for ever without having exchanged three words in as many years with those who have had him under their charge.

Of Milton’s private and continuing studies, Donne has this to say:

There can be no doubt that he read both *multum* and *multa*, combining accurate scholarship, as his notes on Euripides prove, with that wide circumference of knowledge, which both his prose and rhyme exhibit.

An observation made in the essay on Wordsworth²⁹⁹ is repeated as true of Milton also:

One element, indeed, of the poetic mind was less apparent in Milton than in Herrick, Carew, Habington, or Suckling. In their erotic verses they raised a mortal to the skies...whereas love, as portrayed by Milton in his earlier poems, has few vestiges of the presence of an earthly passion, and deals with such general qualities of grace, beauty and purity, as Plato would have applauded.

Perhaps most contentious of Donne’s evaluations of Milton, certainly unacceptable to the present writer, is his claim for the superiority of the poet to that other portrayer of the world beyond this one, Dante:

It was [this] stern and tedious preparation that, in the end, nerved him for his excursions into the upper, middle and nether worlds, and enabled him, after long debating and late choosing, to leave far below him both in the wanderings of Æneas and the tale of Troy, and even to surpass the vision of the great Florentine in the universal interest and sublime mythology of his Christian epos.

²⁹⁹ See above, p.180.

'Cowper's Poems',³⁰⁰ (December 1861). In this review of Cowper's poems and letters, Donne does not reveal his family link with the poet (Donne's mother was Cowper's niece), but the unequivocally warm approval expressed throughout the essay is marked. The relationship between the poems and the letters is stated, as is the likely reluctance Cowper would have had for the publication of the latter:

...could he have foreseen his epistolary reputation he might have reckoned it among his infelicities and recoiled from it with dismay...His *Task* is a poetical narrative of his daily habits and customary meditations; his letters are prose sketches of them, often wanting only the accomplishment of rhyme to be as poetical as his occasional verses. Of no writer, indeed, is the verse less separable from the prose.

Of Cowper's biographers Donne is less than complimentary – 'with one exception [Southey] he has not been happy in his limners'. To redress the balance between earlier one-sided portrayals – suffering saint, latter-day hermit, one deserving of incarceration in Bedlam – is Donne's desire. His Cowper is a rounded personality, whose compliance with Newton's iron will does not imply an acceptance of Newton's narrow creed. His religious stance was sound, but not fanatical; 'if less sublime, he was more sound in doctrine than Milton...here was at length a sweet singer for the English Israel'

Concerning Cowper's fondness for his maternal line (which was also Donne's), the essay has some interesting revelations:

Her kindred in the second generation he received with open arms...of the native home of his mother he never writes without interest...in after years it was the female Cowpers and his relatives on the spindle side who ever had and held his affection.

Though no relevant documentation has been discovered, Donne's mother, one of the 'kindred in the second generation', may well have had and shared memories of a youthful acquaintance with her distinguished uncle (she was nineteen when he died).

³⁰⁰ WBD, 'Cowper's Poems', *Fraser's Magazine*, 64 (December 1861), 700-717.

The hidden years, some ten in number, of Cowper's legal employment, lead to idle speculation as to how he spent his leisure; 'There is only one inference, and that is, having enough to live on without exercising his wits, he dawdled away all this time'. During these years, Cowper came under the poetic influence of Churchill, who had been his protector and friend at Westminster school. Other contemporary poets appear not to have affected him at all:

Of the writings of Johnson and Goldsmith, of Mason and Gray, he seems to have known little; and he himself has told us that for years he had never read a line of verse more recent than the middle of the eighteenth century...

but for Churchill he had a great and imitative admiration, singing his praise in the poem *Table Talk*. To the emulation Donne ascribes 'a certain carelessness in phrases and metre' which 'rendered his [Cowper's] earlier poems less attractive'.

Despite a predilection to follow in Churchill's satirical vein, 'for satire Cowper had many grave disqualifications'. He was not a good hater, he held no particular grudges against individuals, he was not anxious as to his material future. The only occasion of his satire was 'the disappointment of a reasonable hope'. The first volume of his poems was coldly received by Colman and Thurlow, two long-standing friends from whom better things might reasonably have been expected. Donne's borrowed description of his kinsman – 'a deer whom the herd swept by' (*The Task* III.108) – finds a twentieth-century echo in David Cecil's biography of Cowper, *The Stricken Deer* (1929). For their offence, Colman and Thurlow are reproached in *The Valediction*, 'the strongest sample of his anger', which is, nonetheless, 'compared with the invective of Pope...like the south wind breathing over a bank of violets'.

Although dealt with early in the essay, Cowper's satirical verse is, of course, a late feature, and Donne now returns to events in the poet's life which shaped his outlook and disposition. The forbidding by her father of his marriage to his cousin, Theodora Cowper, the loss by death of his friend, Sir William Russell, lead into discussion of Cowper's 'three principal epochs' of madness. John Newton is blamed, with supporting

evidence from Lady Hesketh, for at least creating the uneasiness of mind which led to the second period of instability – ‘there can be little doubt that Newton’s injudicious treatment precipitated, if it did not actually produce, the second accession of madness’. In Olney, along with the now widowed Mrs Unwin, whose family had been so supportive, ‘the laws of a hard taskmaster’ bound Cowper.

For Newton, in a not surprising reaction against his own former dissolute life, ‘the world was Satan’s proper demesne’, and ‘literature and the arts...Satan’s nets for ensnaring souls’ The sensitive poet was restricted, in composition of which his mentor would approve, to one species of verse – the hymn. ‘Some of Cowper’s best lyrical effusions were of this kind’, but on the whole, the ‘Olney Hymns’ are ‘tinged either with doctrines or sentiments of despair’. Newton was the worst possible influence on a man of Cowper’s temperament, though Donne reiterates that he, and his religion, were not responsible for Cowper’s insanity:

He was mad at fourteen; he was mad at twenty-five, when the application of a quack medicine drove an eruption on his face into his system; he was mad when Newton was buying slaves on the Gambia and selling them at Kingston in Jamaica. But whether Mr Newton was the person to deal wisely with such a case as Cowper’s, is another question.

Southey, whose ‘admirable biography’ of Cowper Donne has already praised, is quoted as having ‘somewhat roundly pronounced him to be the best of English letter-writers’. Though Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Horace Walpole and Gray, might be preferred by some, Donne can see why Southey makes the claim. If not *the* best, he ‘may be securely pronounced to be one of the best of English letter-writers’.

His language is always easy, racy and idiomatic...he thought not of style, and therefore he wrote naturally...without reserve...His powers of observation and description were of a high order. His sentiments, unless when tinged by religious gloom, are noble and generous; and he possessed, even in his dark hours, an inexhaustible fund of subtle and genial humour, which occasionally even amounted to *fun*.

Letter-writing is the next subject, with ‘Rowland Hill and his inventions’ being blamed for turning letter-writers into ‘a sort of fossil curiosity’. The art and practice of composing leisurely epistles are now disappearing, and with them the relating, not only of ephemera and trivia,

but the more lasting sentiments which formed their substance. The most frequent topic in Cowper's correspondence, after the publication of *The Task*, was his projected translation of Homer.

Of his original compositions he writes with a good deal of shy apprehension, and only to his more intimate friends. But when he took Homer in hand, either bashfulness had given way before literary fame, or the poet had found, in his own opinion, the true vocation of his pen. It was a delusion, but there was specious ground for it.

He thought 'that Pope predominated too much in English poetry', and longed to produce a worthier version of the Homeric epics. With a description of Homer's robust and action-packed writing, Donne roundly claims that 'it is scarcely necessary to say that neither Pope nor Cowper were the men for this sort of work'.

Of Cowper's original poetry, Donne has little room to write, and that with a sad cynicism. 'He is an English classic, and will remain so; but we suspect that already, like many other classical writers, he is more praised than read'.

'Browning's Poems'³⁰¹ (February 1863). In this short account, published in the *Saturday Review*, Donne attempts to explain the relative unpopularity of 'a man of very remarkable faculties'. Recognising that Browning has 'a manner which his friends describe as "marked and peculiar", but which we should speak of in terms somewhat more unfavourable', he contrasts him favourably with the much more popular Longfellow. 'In our judgment...Mr Browning contains in himself a mass of solid metal which might be beaten thin into a couple of Longfellows at least'. Nonetheless, he is his own worst enemy, being one of those who manage

by lingering too long over subtle reproductions of characters not generally interesting, to darken his poetical gifts, and to deprive himself of a reputation, his right to which, if it depended upon talent alone, no one would dream of disputing.

It is not only Browning's disinclination to adapt himself to the taste of the day which lessens his impact on the public mind:

³⁰¹ WBD, 'R Browning's Poems', *Saturday Review*, xv ((7 February 1863) 179-180

There are also, we think, certain defects of manner and taste in his compositions, which the indolent and luxurious readers of the nineteenth century will not tolerate...One of these faults of form, as it appears to us, is an ineradicable passion for every contorted and unimaginable rhyme which the English language, turned inside-out, can be coaxed or tortured into supplying.

Though, in Donne's estimate, 'the faults of Mr Browning...are the faults of a powerful and deeply original mind', faults they remain, diminishing the stature of the poet, whose distinguishing characteristic is his unusual and bewildering approach to his work:

We doubt whether the extraordinary genius which these compositions display is poetical genius, or metaphysical; but that it is extraordinary we have no doubt whatsoever.

Summing up Donne's poetic criticism, a number of points deserve elaboration. That he appreciates and enjoys poetry is clear, and his harshest strictures are reserved for those who debase it, whether by making the form secondary to the moral content (Trench) or, conversely, by wasting it on immoral themes (Dryden). For language he has a sensitivity, and must have enjoyed reading Trench's two volumes on the subject.³⁰²

The repeated lament over the lack of erotic content in the work of some poets (Wordsworth, Trench) is not to be read in the light of today's obsession with sexual explicitness. Donne, the classicist, is concerned with *eros*, the physical but pure expression of human affection, and regrets that some poets fail to give it voice, thus rendering cold and impersonal such reference as they may make to the experience.

In his assessment of contemporary poets, he is rarely at variance with other critics of the day. Browning is given short shrift for his often impenetrable and tortuous language, though praised for the profundity of his perception; Byron, at last evaluated for his work, rather than his flamboyant life-style, accordingly drops in the ratings; Wordsworth, the father-figure of the age, is hailed as the pioneer of reflective content against previous emphasis on form.

Perhaps surprisingly, and with no clues to explain the fact from elsewhere in his writing, Donne devotes no essays to a number of not insignificant figures on the poetical scene – Kingsley, Palgrave, Meredith,

D G Rossetti, Thomson, Clough, Matthew Arnold or, most remarkably, Tennyson. Nor does he take any note of women poets – Emily Bronte, George Eliot, Elizabeth Barrett, Christina Rossetti. (Incidentally, a growth point from this thesis, requiring more specific research, would be Donne's attitude to women, probably not greatly different from that generally displayed at the time).

Finally, we return to Isobel Armstrong's commendation of Donne for his awareness of Coleridge and Goethe, and his essay on Shelley. (v. this chapter-heading, p.166). While the 'generalist' approach to poetic criticism of Donne and his like renders unlikely the creation of a distinctive specialised and technical critical vocabulary, it does have its advantages. Armstrong acknowledges that theories and generalisations about poetry conveyed in periodical criticism have an immediacy and sharpened application to an individual work which contrasts with abstract treatises on poetry as an art form, and asserts that 'In the best discussions, poetry is seen in a broad cultural context'³⁰³

It could be argued that the 'generalist' approach personified by Donne and others is precisely one which is seeing poetry 'in a broad cultural context', and that it is a 'specialist' approach, exemplified by much twentieth-century professional criticism, which has eviscerated poetry of its quintessential character. While there can be no valid objection to structural, or de-structural, analyses of poetry, it is to the heart as well as to the mind that it is written.

There is an all too familiar parallel for this writer to the business of Biblical studies, in which he was once professionally engaged. So much of what used to be called 'higher criticism' lost the message and spiritual challenge of Scripture in a sometimes barren dissection of sources, patterns and methods. At least, when Donne and his fellow generalists had finished their work, it was still poetry that was left.

³⁰² *On the Study of Words* (1851); *English Past and Present* (1855).

³⁰³ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies*, (London: Athlone Press, 1972), p.5.

Twenty years later, Armstrong returned to this theme,³⁰⁴ contrasting radical Utilitarian writers such as William Johnson Fox with Cambridge Apostles such as John Mitchell Kemble and Arthur Hallam - 'both groups explored a theology which transgressed orthodoxy and both saw literature and politics as inseparable from one another'.

The contribution of Donne to poetic criticism was to reject a Benthamite utilitarianism for a Coleridgean emphasis on the value of poetry in itself and on the values, literary, aesthetic, conceptual, which made verses more than a structural device, and actual poetry. As has been seen in more than one review, he believes intentional didacticism to be destructive of the highest, just as the absence of the erotic, where appropriate, robs poetry of an essential ingredient.

Though no iconoclast, Donne is very much his own man, unafraid to run counter to long-accepted assessments of the great and the good. He brings to his poetical criticism the fruits of wide reading and a sensitivity to the use of language. It is perhaps a pity that, due to geographical isolation at many stages of his life, he seems never to have sharpened his ideas by engaging in debate with his peers.

Little needs to be said of his own incursions into verse. Only one composition deserves the name of poem. Written in 1831, and enclosed in a letter to Trench (WBD > Trench, 13 July 1831, *JP*), it appears to have been called forth by the receipt of some of Trench's own poems:

Now I am going to keep my promise, and trust to your tender mercies. I am a verse-writer only at intervals, and by no inheritance of birth a poet, remember.

Too long for full reproduction here (66 lines), *The Gypsy* describes its eponymous subject both physically and contextually:

In some far land, her tropic home
Haply she might have joyed to roam
With fearless step and free;
On Asian hills a huntress might
Or rover's bride have watched at night
Beside the Indian sea

³⁰⁴ Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.9ff

Apart from Bernard Barton, with whom the exchange of doggerel was constant during their short-lived friendship, Trench was the only recipient of Donne's verses.

Nothing he wrote can match the poetic tribute paid to him in one of Trench's best cameos,³⁰⁵ and he remains a personification of the mystery that poor performers may yet be sensitive and valid critics of the production of their betters. Let his admired Coleridge express the thought cynically:

Reviewers are usually people who would have been poets, historians, biographers, etc., if they could; they have tried their talents at one or at the other, and have failed; therefore they turn critics. (*Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton*)

while Anatole France encapsulates more kindly the best critical experience:

Le bon critique est celui qui raconte les aventures de son âme au milieu des chefs-d'œuvre. (*La Vie littéraire*, 1, Preface).

It is hoped that the survey here completed has demonstrated that Donne did indeed narrate the adventures of his soul among masterpieces, and that he was, for all his inability to reproduce their talents, *une âme sœur* with those whose work he reviewed.

³⁰⁵ Appendix D

RANDOM HARVEST

Like Nanki-Poo, in *The Mikado*, Donne could claim that his catalogue was long, and that he could perform a variety of 'ballads, songs and snatches', of which the following items are but a small selection. The motivation for their composition must be guessed at, and may well be both complex and composite.

For example, there is little doubt that until his successive appointments as librarian of the London Library (beginning in 1852), and then the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays, he had no steady income on which to support, after 1838, a wife (until her death in 1843) and five children. They all lived initially in Mattishall with his mother, and were certainly supported by her, out of reasonably adequate means.³⁰⁶ Self-respect and ever increasing needs, however, demanded that he contribute significantly to the family budget

Then, again, there were the topics of the moment, which seized his imagination or concern. Such were the revolutionary events of the mid-century, which called forth the sequence of political writings (Ch. 'Political Writings'). Such also were the literary productions of his friends, for which he was always happy to provide a supportive review. Few direct commissions have been unearthed, though there still exists the general invitation issued by Kemble when he assumed the editorship of the *British & Foreign Review* (above, p.27).

It would appear, then, that the huge and heterogeneous collection which has been identified (Appendix B) reflects the output of a literary

³⁰⁶ Donne's father's will left all to his wife in trust for 'the children' (WBD was the only one). The total quoted in the Stamp Office document is 'Clear Residue £8447.16.3¼d'.

polymath, welcomed by the prestigious journals for his unquestioned expertise in some fields – the theatre, the classics –and for his enthusiasm and versatility in others. It is indeed a random harvest that we shall now reap from the abundance of his unclassified work.

One of the most curious articles he penned happens also to be the earliest. Written at the age of twenty-two, ‘Sir Thomas Browne’,³⁰⁷ the first of a series of four articles on ‘The Humourists’ is a remarkable *tour de force*. Trench complimented him on it in a letter from Florence on Christmas Day, 1829, writing on the same day to Kemble to say

You have probably seen his [Donne’s] articles on the humourists. I have seen but one, on Sir T Browne. It is wonderful. I did not dream that he possessed such power. Admiring, as I always did, his genial criticism and perception of beauty, which I believed was unerring, I yet believed his mind was rather for the interpretation than creation of beauty; however, I joyfully recant my heresy.

The present writer has to admit sharing Trench’s heresy, rather than his recantation. That Donne is, even at this early date, showing signs of the discernment which characterised all his later criticism, is clear. The article begins with an analytical distinction between humour, the grotesque, and wit, including a statement on the sources of humour.³⁰⁸

Melancholy, pathos, the lofty and impassioned, as well as the level and ordinary, certain seasons and temperaments, epidemic maladies of mind or body, and sudden changes in mode of life, are principal sources of the humorous. But that condition or crisis of the animal spirits which we term joy, is seldom the source of humour. It is of too simple and transient a nature to accompany the continuous and composite progress of the humorous; and if by any combination of accidents it becomes invested with a degree of permanency, it expatiates and dwells rather with the ludicrous.

That the writing is a ‘creation of beauty’, as Trench alleges, is at least open to question. For one reader, at least, it exhibits a striving after effect and artificiality of style which were never quite eliminated from Donne’s work, though much diminished in later years.

The London Library years (1852-7) afforded ample opportunity for reading in and writing on new fields, and while we should discount the canard of his being always withdrawn in his office (above, p.47) he certainly took advantage of the facilities available. ‘A dispute at Canton’ was his description of the beginnings of the 1857 opium war with China,

³⁰⁷ WBD, ‘Sir Thomas Browne’, *Athenæum*, 5 August 1829, 487-8.

³⁰⁸ Echoes of this analysis will be found in the articles on Aristophanes and Molière, q.v.

leading into a typical thirty-pages essay on China,³⁰⁹ its climate, wealth and population, physical geography and civilisation. He frankly admitted the resources at his disposal: 'If we look to the number of the books which have been written about China since our permanent establishment at Canton, we have no reason to complain of the scantiness of our information. On the contrary, we feel the embarrassment arising from riches'. Many a researcher shares that same embarrassment, and joins him in realising that 'the *labor* and the *opus* are to construct from the materials in hand a clear and consistent picture'.

Donne's admittedly brief and sweeping survey of the land and its people is dull, peppered with statistics and losing the broader picture in a mass of sometimes unhelpful detail. There are, however, isolated apophthegms – 'Custom in China has been nearly as prohibitory as law in Egypt' – 'the system of government...is the most astounding monument of conscious duplicity on record' – 'it might be thought, indeed, that Jeremy Bentham derived his idea of a panopticon prison from the theoretical position of the Chinese autocrat' – 'Confucius, like Plato and the Sophists, believed the multitude incapable of enduring the exposition of mere truth'.

Donne ends his survey by admitting the impossibility of coming to an understanding of China through the reports of officialdom, citing a name known to him and disliked for other reasons. 'Neither blue books nor Sir John Bowring³¹⁰ will afford a just or probable picture of this great stationary empire'.

China and the 'Coffee-houses of the Restoration' are worlds apart, but Donne shows himself as adept in mastering and presenting the latter theme as the former.³¹¹ In these establishments, popular in the reign of Charles II, he sees the equivalent of the theatres of ancient Greece – 'the *foci* of intelligence, opinion and sentiment'.

Their sobriety and decorum are rehearsed in his quotation of the versified rules published in one of them, and generally received by all:

³⁰⁹ WBD, 'China and the Chinese', *Westminster Review* 11 (April 1857), 526-557.

³¹⁰ Above, p.35, n.78.

³¹¹ WBD, 'The Coffee-Houses of the Restoration', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* 26NS (January 1855), 104-111.

To keep the house more quiet and free frome [*sic*] blame,
We banish hence dice, cards, and every game;
Nor can allow of wagers that exceed
Five shillings, which oftentimes much trouble breed.

So much for the licentious Restoration! The coffee-houses were, according to a contemporary scribbler – ‘the sanctuary of health, the nursery of temperance, the delight of frugality, and the free school of ingenuity’. Their number was legion; their variety of customary dress, liquid refreshment (coffee was only one of many drinks on offer) and clientele was as wide as their locations in and around London. In the City, their influence was enormous. Typical was the George, in Ironmonger Lane – ‘where City preferments were disposed of, and Lord Mayors elected for one hundred years to come’. In 1695 a Mr Salter founded a coffee-house, based on the shop in which he displayed a large collection of curiosities, some contributed by Sir Hans Sloane, and still to be seen, according to the *Gentleman's Magazine* a century later.

Chief among them, was Will's Coffee-House, famous as the establishment where John Dryden held court and in which he set the scene of the *Hind and the Panther*. Donne paints a vivid picture of them both. Their eventual downfall is ascribed by Donne to developments in some of which he was himself much later involved:

They were rendered redundant by the essayists and journalists, by the organisation of party in Parliament, and by the professional establishments and scientific societies whose place they had almost alone previously supplied.

The essay is one of Donne's most attractive pieces, and a revealing cameo of the later Stuart era.

In 1850 began Donne's connection with *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, which was to last for five years and produce thirty articles for the journal. The story is interesting and has already been told.³¹² It was for *Tait's* that Donne wrote most of the articles noted in the chapter on ‘Political Writings’, but they include also, such diverse offerings as ‘Leith and its Antiquities’, ‘Statues of Sir Robert Peel’, ‘The Sorrows of Thespis’, “‘Legitimate Drama” on the Banks of the Ganges’, two articles on Molière,

³¹² See above, pp. 157-158.

and the pair of essays on 'Old Roads and Old Travellers' which were turned into a well-received book.

In 1862, Donne reviewed the new (8th) edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*:

The good ship Argo, which in the course of nearly a century has circumnavigated the globe of knowledge, has expanded and multiplied itself into the splendid convoy of instruction now before us, and has numbered on its books not a few obscure authors...

The article³¹³ – forty pages long – begins by reviewing the history of encyclopædias, showing that the ancient world was unlikely to produce such works, deriving its shared knowledge largely by word of mouth. There were men like Aristotle, who 'took knowledge for their province', but as they were the exception, and 'since they knew all that could then be learned, they needed not such collections of learning'. A rapid survey of Arab initiatives and mediæval developments leads to mention of early English forerunners of *Britannica*, which on its publication in 1771 immediately led the field in scientific areas and led to an enhancement of the esteem in which such areas and their practitioners were held. Such enhancement was badly needed – 'the college of Laputa and its professors show the estimation in which science was held by the greatest of our prose-satirists'. Even political economy was regarded with suspicion and aversion by those who regarded eloquence as the acme of intellectual merit:

To write like Johnson, or to speak like Burke, were regarded as fairer claims to immortality than to speculate on the wealth of nations [Adam Smith] or on political justice [William Godwin].

By 1859, and the eighth edition, the range and volume of *Britannica*'s content has expanded exponentially, though Donne is disappointed to be able to demonstrate glaring deficiencies in the material on astronomy, physics and biology. Chapter and verse are given for details both of omission and inaccuracy, and with our awareness of Donne's preference for non-scientific subjects, we might fairly hazard a guess that his life membership of the London Library was exploited in order to

³¹³ WBD, 'Encyclopædia Britannica', *Westminster Review* 22NS (October 1862) 394–433.

supplement his basic knowledge. In the year that the *Origin of Species* was published, it is interesting to read

All recent zoological research seems to tend towards the establishment of a theory of evolution of species from one another; whether in accordance with the complex system of laws propounded by Mr Darwin under the comprehensive name of "Natural Selection", or upon some other and perhaps more simple principle, still remains to be seen.

The Apostolic network is evidenced when Donne turns from his strictures on the scientific shortcomings of the work to the more familiar and satisfying fields of the humanities:

Into the departments of history and biography we remark with pleasure the infusion of new life. The Rev. Charles Merivale's "Compendium of Roman History" leaves us nothing to desire beyond the vain wish that more space had been allotted to him...

Merivale was, of course, a frequent recipient of Donne's supportive reviews, as was an even closer Apostolic friend, Richard Chenevix Trench.

'English, Past and Present', was the title under which Donne reviewed Trench's little book of the same title,³¹⁴ hailed as an example of the important and desirable historical study of the language. Important, because – 'Geographically, English is becoming the most widely diffused of languages' used in colonies which might one day be severed politically from the mother country, but remaining united by the bond of language:

In the year 1955 there may possibly exist a great Indian or Australian Empire united with England solely by commercial treaties; but Shakespeare will still be read by the native English of Bengal, and Milton and Taylor will be the delight of the studious in the great Pacific continent.

The review is short, less than seven hundred words, but in it Donne is able to characterise not only Trench's prose works, both theological and philological, but also the progress of the English language. We may, however, be forgiven for not sharing Donne's belief that it is a book likely to 'be carried in the pocket, and read in the intervals of business or amusement'. Anyone who has ploughed through the first chapter, with its hundreds of words used to demonstrate their origin in other languages, will marvel to recall that the chapter (twenty-three close-packed pages!) was originally a lecture delivered to schoolboys. Our admiration goes out to the

³¹⁴ WBD, 'English, Past and Present', *Saturday Review* 1, 86 (1 December 1855), 86.

pupils of the King's College School, London, or is it to their masters who ensured their attendance and attention?

Donne was not one to attach his heart to the end of his pen, but the death of his closest and earliest friend, John Mitchell Kemble, called forth a printed memoir³¹⁵ which showed how highly he valued both the man and the scholar.

While eschewing highly personal references – Kemble's unhappy marriage is never mentioned – the pen-portrait of John's childhood clearly draws on Donne's shared experience of Bury St Edmund's schooldays, revealing facts otherwise unknown:

The analytical powers which he was destined to concentrate upon Teutonic philology and archæology, were at first attracted to chemical researches. Even while yet a student at King Edward's Grammar School, in Bury St Edmunds, he had made considerable proficiency in a science which Davy and Wollaston then adorned. Had he persevered in this study, it is possible that his name might eventually have occupied a niche beside theirs.

His Cambridge career is described out of the personal knowledge of his contemporary, who champions his hero against charges of academic failure. The truth is, that he could not bear the constraints of the narrow curriculum, nor the need to conform to the accepted evaluation of the household gods. None knew better than Donne what was meant by

His own pursuits impaired his allegiance to the *genius loci*. The Union Club, the private Debating Society [the 'Apostles'], the discussions of friendly circles, had irresistible attractions for him...

Kemble's all-round abilities and prowess – athlete, singer, social companion – are all related with a manifest affection and gratitude for what he was and gave to his circle.

His remarkable achievements in the field of Anglo-Saxon studies, both in the burgeoning field of philology and all related matters; his field-work as an archæologist and bibliographical exhumations of cartularies and the *incunabula* of legal procedures; are admiringly recorded by his *fidus Achates*. One special skill is commended:

Perhaps, with the exception of Porson, there has never been a more acute decipherer of manuscripts than John Kemble. It was marvellous to see what he could

³¹⁵ WBD, 'John Mitchell Kemble', *Fraser's Magazine* 55 (May 1857), 612-618.

make out of the most time-worn and illegible documents; neither damp nor the worm, nor mutilation nor obsolete characters, defeated him.

Despite his own earnest efforts, it was Donne's hope that 'some friendly hand should draw a more complete portrait of a scholar so fully and variously accomplished'. The task is still unfulfilled, but attracts one Kemble admirer as a possible next project.

DONNE THE LECTURER

At irregular intervals between 1845 and 1872, Donne delivered a number of lectures, some single, some as a series. Though little primary information has survived, they deserve mentioning, as contributing to the overall picture of one who can be seen as a member of that ‘clerisy’ dealt with elsewhere in this thesis.³¹⁶

His debut, just before he left Norfolk for Suffolk, was locally, in the recently established Norwich Athenæum. To celebrate its second anniversary, he was invited to address the members on *Literature, as a Pursuit Honorable and Beneficial both to Nations and to Individuals*.³¹⁷

Delivered 17 October 1845, under the chairmanship of the Bishop of Norwich, the printed version fills twenty-seven pages of octavo, and must have tested the endurance of the audience. With a modest disclaimer of his adequacy for the task – ‘Could I truly effect what I truly wish, our respective relations this evening would be alike profitable to you and gratifying to myself’ —he defines the parameters within which he will speak to his brief.

There will be no consideration of science, ‘which, though sometimes employing literature as an adjunct, is distinct from it in its laws, its objects, and its processes’. Apart from which, far abler lecturers are scheduled to visit the Athenæum and deal with scientific subjects.

³¹⁶ Above, pp. 5-14, *passim*.

³¹⁷ The printed copy presented by Donne to the Norwich Public Library was lost in the twentieth-century fire which destroyed most of the local history collection, but mercifully, not before I had copied it and was therefore able to re-supply the library.

With typical Donne inconsistency, he disavows any intention ‘to inquire what degree of civilisation the existence of literature in a nation pre-supposes’, and then proceeds to make, at some length, precisely that enquiry.

He comments on the sad lack of literary remains from such ancient civilisations as Egypt and Carthage, quoting an earlier distinguished Norvician, Sir Thomas Browne, subject of his first venture into print – “‘Oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy”, and its only potent enemy and antidote is literature’. Because literature in its highest forms coincides with the noblest periods of national life, it follows that it is ‘a measure and standard of national character’; it is the only sure depository of national renown:

It is the arch which spans the silence of centuries and rescues from the oblivious and unsparing flood of time, the deeds, the thoughts, and accumulated wisdom of departed heroes and sages

By far the greater portion of the lecture is devoted to an earnest commendation of mental discipline and good habits of study. The advice is curiously reminiscent to the reader of Samuel Smiles’s *Self-Help*, which would actually not be published for another fourteen years, but which would echo much of what Donne was urging and advocating:

habits of mind are of much greater importance than any amount of acquired knowledge...mental inferiority is not seldom a result of bad intellectual habits or misdirection of our faculties...An hour or two of daily industry, under the guidance of method, will in the course of a year accomplish more than an idle and desultory person can imagine...The hoarder of moments is the owner of hours.

Four years later, he ventured from Suffolk into the neighbouring county of Essex, to deliver the opening address for the Colchester Literary Institution, and thereafter, so far as the records show, the rostrum gave place to the desk again, until 1854.

By this time he was London based, at the London Library, and responding to overtures from the Reverend I Barlow, of the Royal Institution. Flattered by the invitation to perform – ‘I am much obliged by your thinking of me at all’ – he explains his preferred mode of delivery:

Lectures I think should be read: but to country audiences [more than one!] I have generally found them more effective spoken: a reader, however, who knows his business will give much of the effect of a spoken address to a manuscript. I should give numerous extracts from books in any course of literary lectures, whether they were oral or written.

A wide selection of sample subjects is offered, from a three lectures course on 'Cavaliers and Puritans', by way of a similar length course on 'The French Revolution', to single lectures on 'Charles V and his Life', 'Gustavus Adolphus and the Thirty Years War', 'Wordsworth', 'the Hearing and the Reading Ages' and 'Alfred the Great and the Anglo-Saxons' [courtesy of J M Kemble?].

In the end, a course of eleven lectures on 'English Literature' was delivered, between 18 January and 29 March 1855. The public paid one guinea for the course, wives of members and their offspring paying half that. The historical survey ran from Chaucer to Wordsworth, being introduced by – 'Extent and necessary limitations of the subject; definition of literature; the diversified character of English literature; its distinctive eras and representative men'. Donne was paid £63 for the course, or c. £5.15- per lecture.

He must have been acceptable to the Institution, because in 1856 he was back, this time for a single lecture *On the Works of Chaucer, considered as Historical Illustrations of England in the 14th Century*. No records, other than the text of the lecture, survive, and it is difficult to determine whether the reportage manner of its reduction to print – 'Mr Donne commenced his discourse...the speaker then briefly surveyed...etc.' – has given us the *ipsissima verba*, though that is the likelihood. Like any prudent writer, particularly of ephemera, Donne incorporated some of this lecture's material in his 1859 essay on Gower's *Amantis*.³¹⁸

Although Donne clearly did lecture during his time at the London Library, there is an undated letter from Trench apparently offering a course of lectures at King's College, London. The offer is refused, Donne being afraid that 'the scheme would not be palatable to the Committee or the subscribers generally'.

In the history of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Newcastle upon Tyne, it is recorded that in the 1872-3 season, Donne lectured on 'English Literature in the Time of the Commonwealth'. Only

³¹⁸ Appendix B.

one tiny reference to this has survived,³¹⁹ but it would seem to be Lecture VI of the 1855 Royal Institution course.

The Royal Institution was the scene of Donne's last venture (in 1872) into lecturing – a six lectures course on 'The Theatre in Shakespeare's Time'. Again, no details are available, so one can only guess whether Lecture III – 'The Rival of Shakespeare – Ben Johnson' – borrowed material from the 1860 essay on Jonson.³²⁰

It is futile to wish that sound recording apparatus, then in its infancy, had been used to preserve these spoken items, but it would have been good to hear the voice, as well as to read the script.

³¹⁹ WBD > Trench, 3 June 1873. 'I am going to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in a few days to give some lectures [more than one?]there' *JP*.

³²⁰ Appendix B.

ENVOI

We have already seen that in 1874 Donne retired from the Examinership of Plays. His departure was marked by gestures of goodwill from all concerned:

...my abdication is not without its pleasures. The Queen, by the pen of her Privy-Purse-Keeper, Sir T M Biddulph, has sent me a very kind message of regret at my resignation and of satisfaction with my jurisdiction during my reign of 17 years. The Managers of theatres are sending very kind tokens of regret and goodwill, and I am awarded for life a larger retiring pension than I looked for, viz., £350 per annum.³²¹

Fitzgerald was delighted at the news – ‘I am very glad you are well out of the Examiner’s Office, which I am sure will grow more and more troublesome to the holder’.³²²

Another problem had of late been growing more troublesome to Donne, one affecting not only his office. Fanny Kemble writes³²³ - ‘I am grieved to hear of anything ailing your eyes’. Later photographs show him wearing spectacles, and it may be that he was paying the price for years of intensive reading and writing, although, curiously, he could claim, in 1875, - ‘Purblind as I am, and have long been so as regards any distance of view, I am able to read without glasses’. A year later, however, the year in which he wrote his last essay, he would complain to Lord Harrowby of the same problem.³²⁴ By then his sight had obviously deteriorated badly. Nor was sight the only problem.

³²¹ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 25 August 1874, *JP, Friends*, pp.298-9.

³²² Fitzgerald > WBD, 4 September 1874, *Friends*, p.299.

³²³ Fanny Kemble > WBD, 6 November 1874, *Friends*, p.303.

³²⁴ Above, p.154.

He was apparently under doctor's orders to withdraw from social engagements – 'dinners, 'swarries', late hours and hot rooms do not agree with me...Wherefore I obey and laud the doctor'. Mental powers, too, were declining, though no more than was to be expected at his age:

'What am I doing?'. Labouring to recollect what I once knew, for my memory is becoming very treacherous...Be it known to you that on the 29th of last July I completed my 69th year.³²⁵

The support and companionship of his daughter, Valentia, was coming to an end, with her marriage in 1877. Her older sister, Blanche, never married, and remained with her father until his death. Fanny Kemble writes in 187[??] of his heart condition and worsening sight ('The loss of your letters is a *huge* loss to me'), though the sight problem is variable ('I can read much').³²⁶

On the 26th January 1878 he wrote, to Blakesley, the last letter recorded in *Friends*, of which Catherine Donne (the editor) writes

...In it one notices the first indications of failure of memory, in the slight mistakes in spelling, and in words erased and re-written, but the decline in power was very gradual, although none the less distressing to those who loved him.

Clearly, some sort of senile dementia steadily took over, though

His love of books lasted to the end, and he would sit with one of Scott's novels in his hands, fingering the book lovingly, long after the power to read it had passed away.

During the spring of 1882 he became very feeble. His death came on the 20th June, a month short of his seventy-fifth birthday. He is buried at Shooter's Hill cemetery, alongside his mother and third son, Frederick, who had been severely wounded as a soldier in India and never really recovered.

R.I.P.

³²⁵ WBD > Fanny Kemble, 12 October 1876, *Friends*, p.320

³²⁶ WBD > Trench, 20 December 1877. *JP*.

APPENDIX A

DONNE'S LINEAL DESCENT

Richard Donne n.d. -1633	=	Praxides n.d. - 1640
Thomas Donne 1589 – 1654	=	Unknown
Thomas Donne 1615 – 1685	=	Anne Roberts 1618 - 1687
William Donne 1645 – 1684	=	Mary Flynt n.d.
Roger Donne 1678 – 1722	=	Catherine Clench 1675 - 1733
William Donne 1712? – 1782	=	Mary Sayer 1708? - 1755
William Donne 1735 – 1803	=	Anna Maria Barnwell 1736 - 1819
Edward Charles Donne 1777 – 1819	=	Anne Vertue Donne 1781 - 1859

William Bodham Donne
1807 – 1882

APPENDIX B

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF DONNE'S PUBLISHED ARTICLES

KEY TO JOURNAL ABBREVIATIONS

Arch	Archæologica	LA	Living Age
A	Athenæum	LG	Literary Gazette
BQR	Bentley's Quarterly Review	Mac	Macmillan's Magazine
B & FR	British & Foreign Review	NR	National Review
CA	Christian Advocate	P	Parthenon
DB	Dark Blue	QR	Quarterly Review
DUM	Dublin University Magazine	SR	Saturday Review
ER	Edinburgh Review	TEM	Tait's Edinburgh Magazine
EX	Examiner	WN	Weekly News
FM	Fraser's Magazine	WR	Westminster Review
GM	Gentleman's Magazine		

DATE	TITLE	JNL	REFERENCE
1829 Aug 5	Sir Thomas Browne	A	487-8
" " 19	Hebrew Prophets	"	517-8
" Sep 9	Burton	"	557-9
" Oct 21	Montaigne	"	653-4
1837 Jul	Landor's <i>Imaginary Conversations</i>	B & FR	v. 33-63
1838 Jan	Hallam's <i>Introduction to Literature...</i>	"	vi. 1-46
" Apr	Mitford's <i>Works of Gray</i>	"	vi. 397-420
" Jul	Athens: its Rise and Fall	"	vii. 36-85
" Oct	Landor's <i>Pentameron</i> and <i>Pentologia</i>	"	vii. 501-521
" "	<i>Poems</i> of Richard Monckton Milnes	"	vii. 678-693
1839 Apr	The Life and Writings of Coleridge	"	viii. 414-451
1840 Jan	<i>Poetical Works</i> of P B Shelley	"	x. 98-127
" Jun	Milman's <i>History of Christianity...</i>	FM	xxi. 633-647
1841 Jan	Hallam's <i>Introduction to Literature...</i>	B & FR	xi. 355-416
" May	<i>Poems</i> by the Reverend R C Trench	"	xii. 180-197
" Sep	Milman's <i>History of Christianity...</i>	"	xii. 336-384
1842 Jun	The Jews in Spain and Portugal	"	xiii. 459-486
1843 Apr	Histories of the Reformation	"	xv. 101-151
" Jul	Macaulay's <i>Lays of Ancient Rome</i>	"	xv. 479-501
1844 Apr	Life & Writings of William Taylor...	"	xvii. 214-270
" Jul	Modern English Dramatists	"	xvii. 501-541
" Dec	Recent Historians of Holland	"	xxxv. 179-217
1846 Jan 3	<i>Writ of Summons</i>	EX	[untraced]
1847 Oct	Napier's <i>Florentine History...</i>	ER	86. 465-493
1848 Jul	Sharpe's <i>The History of Egypt...</i>	"	88. 32-63
1849 Jan	J M Kemble's <i>The Saxons in England</i>	"	89. 151-184
" Jul	Austria and Hungary	"	90. 230-249
" Nov	Annalists of the Restoration I	DUM	34. 612-626
1850 Feb	Sir T Fowell Buxton	WN	
" Mar	Annalists of the Restoration II	DUM	35. 333-345
" "	Beaumont and Fletcher	FM	41. 321-332
" Jun	Merivale's <i>...Rome under the Empire</i>	GM	33.590-597

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>JNL</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
1850 Jul	Mure's <i>Greek Literature</i>	"	34. 19-26
" "	Merivale's... <i>Rome under the Empire</i>	ER	92. 57-94
" "	The Patriotic War in Italy	TEM	17NS. 408-412
" Aug	The Hungarian War	"	17NS. 510-516
" Dec	New Translations of Horace	FM	672-678
" Dec	Donaldson's <i>The New Cratylus</i>	GM	34. 573-581
" Oct	Horace and Tasso	ER	92. 533-574
" Nov	Laing's <i>Notes of a Traveller</i>	TEM	17NS. 649-658
" Nov	Baron Stein	"	" . 668-673
1851 Jan	Music, Drama and Fine Arts	"	18NS. 55-59
" "	Bureaucracy and Military Systems...	"	" 1-10
" Feb	The Triumph of Despotism	"	" 113-117
" Feb	Statues of Sir Robert Peel	"	" 117-120
" Apr	Southey's <i>Life and Correspondence</i> ...	ER	93. 370-402
" May	Borrow's <i>Lavengro</i>	TEM	18NS. 270-276
" Jul	Pulszky's <i>Tales & Traditions of Hungary</i>	ER	94. 127-139
" Aug	The Goth and the Hun	TEM	18NS. 495-502
" "	C Wordsworth's <i>Life of Wordsworth</i>	GM	36. 107-116
" Sep	Italia Militans	TEM	18NS. 570-574
" Oct	The Sorrows of Thespis	"	" 600-604
" Nov	Louis Kossuth	"	" 692-699
" Dec	Playbill Reminiscences	TEM	18NS. 760-762
" "	Carlyle's <i>The Life of John Sterling</i>	GM	36. 600-609
1852 Jan	The Blue Book on Hungary...	TEM	19NS. 37-41
" Mar	Stephen's <i>Lectures on... France</i>	GM	37. 219-226
" May	Memoirs, Letters, Papers & Histories	FM	45. 485-501
" Jul	The Marquis of Rockingham...	ER	96. 110-142
" "	Old Roads and Old Travellers I	TEM	19NS. 398-402
" Aug	" " " " " " II	"	" 475-479
" Sep	Leith and its Antiquities	"	" 561-564
" Oct	The Games of the Ancients	"	" 623-7
" "	Edward Gibbon	FM	46. 438-452
" Dec	Memorials of the Author of <i>The Chase</i>	TEM	19NS. 746-8
1853 Jan	An Unborn Epic Poem	TEM	20NS. 22-28
" Feb	Molière I	"	" 65-9
" Mar	" II	"	" 129-134
" "	The <i>Octavius</i> of Minucius Felix	FM	47. 288-297
" Apr	Martial and his Times	WR	3NS. 408-450
" Jun	Merivale's ... <i>Romans under the Empire</i>	FM	47. 657-669
" Aug	Aristophanes	TEM	20NS. 449-456
" Sep	Plays and their Providers	FM	48. 342-9
" Dec	Greek and Roman Philology	"	" 623-632
1854 Jan	Propertius and his Contemporaries	WR	5NS. 40-71
" Jun	The Drama	QR	95. 71-88
" Jul	'Legitimate Drama' on the banks...	TEM	21NS. 428-430
" Aug	Kossuth on the Conduct of the War	TEM	21NS. 487-491
" "	The Two Revolutionists...	"	" 498-501
" Oct	The Rise and progress of Diplomacy	WR	NSvi. 506-533
" Nov	Songs from the Dramatists	FM	50. 583-594
" Dec	Charles Kemble	"	" 607-617
1855 Jan	The War – Who's to Blame?	TEM	22NS. 45-51
" "	The Old Civilians	FM	51. 105-115
" Feb	The Coffee-Houses of the Restoration	TEM	22NS. 104-111
" Apr	Dryden and his Times	WR	7NS. 336-367
" Jul	The Drama, Past and Present	FM	52. 96-104
" "	Printing and Printers	TEM	22NS. 390-8
" Sep	Helps's <i>Spanish Conquest in America</i>	FM	52. 241-256
" Oct	Marcus Tullius Cicero	WR	8NS. 353-377
" "	Haxtenhausen's <i>Transcaucasia</i>	ER	102. 520-541
1856 Jan	Helps's <i>Spanish Conquest in America</i>	NR	2. 42-68
" "	Athenian Comedy	WR	9NS. 188-205
" Feb 9	Milman's <i>Latin Christianity</i>	SR	I.

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>JNL</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
1856 Feb 23	Milman's <i>Latin Chritianity</i>	SR	I. 324
" Mar 22	Motley's <i>Rise of the Dutch Republic</i>	SR	I. 418
" Apr	Sunday in Great Britain	WR	9NS. 426-456
" May 3	Merivale's... <i>Rome under the Empire</i>	SR	II. 14
" Jul	Froude's <i>History of England i-ii</i>	FM	54. 31-46
" "	Grote on Alexander the Great	NR	3. 50-80
" "	Popular Amusements	WR	10NS. 163-188
" Dec 6	Trikoupes's <i>History of the Greek Rev.</i>	SR	II. 707
" " 13	" " " " " "	"	" 731
1857 Mar	Notice on the Rev. W Manning	GM	364-5
" Apr	Calderón	FM	55. 455-470
" "	China and the Chinese	WR	11NS. 526-557
" May	Memoir of J M Kemble	FM	55.612-18
" Jul	Merivale's... <i>Romans under the Empire</i>	ER	106. 157-194
1858 Feb 27	Shelley's <i>Poetical Works</i>	SR	v. 215
" Mar 13	Byron	SR	v. 268
" Jul	Froude's <i>History of England</i>	FM	58. 15-32
" " 24	Walton's <i>Lives of the Poets</i>	SR	vi. 89
" Oct	The Great Rebellion	NR	7. 382-415
" " 2	Conington's <i>Virgil</i>	SR	vi. 331
" Nov	Studies of the Great Rebellion	FM	58. 618-630
1859 Jan	Help's <i>Spanish Conquest in America</i>	ER	109. 1-36
" Mar	Horace Walpole's <i>Letters</i>	BQR	1. 227-258
" " 5	Dyer's <i>Shakespeare</i>	SR	vii. 277
" " 19	" "	"	" 345
" Apr 2	" "	"	" 406
" " 9	" "	"	" 438
" "	Morley's <i>Memoirs of Bartholomew Fair</i>	NR	8. 425-441
" May	Gower's <i>Confessio Amantis</i>	FM	59. 571-586
" " 7	The Drama of the Day (Fitzball's <i>Life</i>)	SR	VII.569
" Jul	The Drama of the Day	BQR	1. 227-258
" Aug 20	Cole's <i>Life & Times of Charles Kean</i>	SR	viii. 230
" Oct	Shakespearian Literature	BQR	2. 33-68
" Dec	Donaldson's <i>New Cratylus</i>	GM	34. 573-581
1860 Jan	Ben Jonson, His Life and Works	BQR	2. 404-433
" Apr	Plutarch and his Times	WR	17NS. 430-456
" "	Masson's <i>The Youth of Milton</i>	ER	111. 312-347
" Jul	Froude's <i>History of England v-vi</i>	FM	62. 1-17
1861 Jul	Watson's <i>Life of Porson</i>	ER	114. 130-144
" Oct	Biography Past and Present	WR	20NS. 335-360
" Dec	Cowper's <i>Poems</i>	FM	64. 700-717
" "	" "	LA	72. 259ff.
1862 Jan	The Late Prince Consort	WR	21NS. 225-230
" Feb	Help's <i>Spanish Conquest in America</i>	FM	65. 135-150
" Sep	Buckle's <i>History of Civilisation...</i>	FM	66.337-345
" Oct	<i>Encyclopædia Britannica</i>	WR	22NS. 394-433
" Nov	Spedding's <i>Life & Letters of Bacon</i>	FM	66.528-548
1863 Feb 7	R Browning's <i>Poems</i>	SR	xv. 179-180
" Jul	Tacitus and his Times	FM	68. 102-114
" Aug 15	R Browning's <i>Poems</i>	SR	xvi. 222
" " 22	Conington's <i>Virgil</i>	SR	xvi. 260
1864 Jan	The Flavian Caesars & the Antonines	ER	119. 26-61
" " 16	<i>Passages of a Working Life I</i> (Chas. Knight)	SR	xvii. 83
" Feb 20	Columbines and Casualties [conjectured]	SR	xvii. 227-8
" Jun 4	Tacitus	SR	xvii.697
" Oct 15	Sacred Latin Poetry	SR	xviii. 489
" Nov 5	<i>Passages of a Working Life II</i> (Chas. Knight)	SR	xviii. 574
1865 Mar 25	Napoleon III's <i>Histoire de Jules César</i>	SR	xix. 347

<u>DATE</u>	<u>TITLE</u>	<u>JNL</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
" Apr 1	" " " " " "	"	" . 377
" " 8	" " " " " "	"	" . 409
1865 Apr 15	Janus	SR	xix. 439
" May	Napoleon III's <i>Histoire de Jules César</i>	FM	71. 655-670
" Jul	Watson's <i>Life of Bishop Warburton</i>	ER	122. 1-36
1866 Jun 2	Napoleon III's <i>Histoire de Jules César</i>	SR	xxi. 658
" " 9	" " " " " "	"	" . 691
" " 16	" " " " " "	"	" . 724
" " 29	<i>A New Codex Diplomaticus</i>	SR	xxii. 789
1867 Oct 26	Sir Walter Scott	SR	xxiv. 544
" Dec 21	The Westminster Play	SR	xxiv. 781
1868 Jun	Emmanuel Swedenborg	FM	77. 679-699
" Dec 12	The <i>Plays</i> of Philip Massinger	SR	xxvi. 776
" " 19	The Westminster Play	SR	xxvi. 800
1869 Jan	Caesarian Rome	ER	129. 68-102
" Jun	Spedding's <i>Life and Letters of Bacon</i>	FM	79. 747-762
" Oct	Henry Crabb Robinson	FM	80. 522-536
1871 Mar	Dramatic Art Representation	DB	1. 70-81
" Dec 23	Westminster Play	SR	. 810-12
1875 Apr	<i>Reminiscences</i> of William Macready	ER	141. 416-447
1876 Feb	Ward's <i>English Dramatic Literature</i>	Mac	33. 314-325

APPENDIX C

DONNE'S PUBLISHED BOOKS

History of Rome...Division II, BC390 – AD31, Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1841-2

Moir, George, *Magic and Witchcraft* (ed.), London: Chapman & Hall, 1852

Old Roads and New Roads, London: Chapman & Hall, 1852.

Reprint, in expanded form, of 'Old Roads and Old Travellers' (2 articles),
Tait's Edinburgh Magazine, July/August 1852.

Excerpta a Carminibus Catulli, Tibulli...edited, with notes, London:
Virtue, 1860¹, 1864².

Forming part of 'Weale's Classical Series'.

Essays on the Drama, London: J W Parker & Son, 1858¹.

London: Tinsley & Jones, 1863².

Reprint of eight journal articles, published between 1850 and 1856.

*Correspondence of George III with Lord North 1768-1783, edited from the
Originals at Windsor Castle, with Introduction and Notes*, London: John
Murray, 2 vols., 1867.

*Excerpta Latina e Scriptoribus Romanis Qui ab Augusto ad Trajanum
Floruerunt. Latin Prose Selections from the Writings of M Terentius
Varro, L Junius Columella, M Vitruvius Pollio...edited, with English Notes,
By W B Donne*, London: Virtue, 1869.

Forming part of 'Weale's Classical Series'.

Euripides, London/Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1872.

(In 'Ancient Classics for English Readers', ed. W Lucas
Collins). Numerous reprints.

Reprinted Philadelphia: J B Lippincott, 1875.

Tacitus, Edinburgh/London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1873.

(In 'Ancient Classics for English Readers', ed. W Lucas Collins).
Numerous reprints.

APPENDIX D

R C TRENCH'S TRIBUTE TO DONNE

Like Merlin or some gentler wizard I,
By the most potent rod of memory,
Now conjure up your form. Before you lies
Some antique volume, learned, quaint, and wise –
Browne or Montaigne, with hidden meaning good,
And riddles worthy to be understood.
Hard nuts, but with rich kernels, such as grow
But rarely on the tree of knowledge now.
For ours is the late autumn of old Time;
The tree is sapless, and has past its prime,
And we pick up blind windfalls. Or, again,
You are beholding o'er the grassy plain
The West, that is o'erflown with golden streams
Of sunlight and the occidental beams,
Which pierce like shafts of fire the burning clouds
That lie beneath, while others, like the shrouds
Or biers of their dead selves, are borne away,
Emptied of light and glory from the day.
Or, better still, you listen to the fall
Of gentle voices that are musical,
Because the music of all gentle thought
Attunes them there. Thus wisely you have wrought.
These are the triple fountains, whence doth flow
All that is beautiful below.

(Trench adds: 'You see that even my present subject cannot
prevent me from rhyming as villainously as ever.')

CLASSIFIED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PERIODICALS CONSULTED:

Archæologia
Athenæum
Annual Register
Bentley's Quarterly Review
British & Foreign Review
Christian Advocate
Dark Blue
Dublin University Magazine
Edinburgh Review
Era
Fortnightly Review
Fraser's Magazine
Gentleman's Magazine
George Borrow Bulletin
Illustrated London News
Journal of Victorian Culture
Living Age
Library Association Record
Literary Gazette
Macmillan's Magazine
Nation
National Review
Norfolk Archæology
Norfolk and Norwich Notes & Queries
Pall Mall Gazette
Parthenon
Quarterly Review
Review of English Studies
Saturday Review
Studies in English
Tait's Edinburgh Magazine
Theatre Notebook
Theatre Research
Theatre Review
The Times
University of Texas Studies in English
University of Toronto Quarterly
Victorian Institute Journal
Victorian Periodicals Newsletter
Victorian Periodicals Review
Victorian Studies
Weekly News
Westminster Review

1. UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

Harrowby MSS Trust: Harrowby MSS Trust, Sandon Hall, Stafford. Eight letters from WBD to The Earl of Harrowby and one to Raglan Somerset concerning a possible editing and publication by Donne of Lord Bute correspondence. Cited as *Harrowby MSS*.

Johnson Papers: An uncatalogued collection, belonging to Mrs Margaret Sharman (great-great-grand-daughter of WBD), of letters and other memorabilia relating to the Donne family in general and to WBD in particular. Cited as *JP*.

Joseph Williams Blakesley Archive: Trinity College, Cambridge, Add. Mss. a.243/4. Contains seventy-four letters from WBD to Blakesley. Cited as *Blakesley*.

London Library records: 114 St James's Square, London. Minutes and correspondence relating to WBD's years (1852-57) as Secretary and Librarian.

Public Records Office, Kew: Lord Chamberlain's Office papers relating to WBD's term (1849-1857) as Deputy Examiner; later (1857-1874) as Examiner of Plays.

Royal Archives, Windsor Castle: Correspondence relating to WBD's direction (1859-1860) of the Windsor Theatricals. This material examined and used by the gracious permission of Her Majesty The Queen.

Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge: forty-eight letters concerning WBD's projected volume in the Society's Roman History series. Held in the SMS Watson Library, University College, London.

2. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allibone, *Critical Dictionary of British & American Authors, Supplement 1*, (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1965).
- Altholz, Josef L, *Victorian England 1837-1901*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1970).
- Altick & Matthews, *Guide to Dissertations in Victorian Literature 1886-1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1960).
- Bevington M B, *The Saturday Review 1855-1868: Representative Educated Opinion in Victorian England*, (New York: Columbia UP, 1941).
- Brake, Laurel, Jones, Aled & Madden, Lionel (eds.), *Investigating Victorian Journalism*, (London: Macmillan, 1990).
- British Union-Catalogue of Periodicals*, (London: Butterworths).
- Chandler G, *How to Find Out about Literature*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1968).
- Clark, G Kitson, *Guide for Research Students working on Historical Projects*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1958).
- Copinger, *On the Authorship of the first hundred numbers of the Edinburgh Review*, (privately printed, Manchester: Priory Press, 1895).
- Ellegård, Alvar, *The Readership of the Periodical Press in Mid-Victorian Britain*, (Göteborg: Göteborg Universitet, 1957).
- Grant, James, *The Newspaper Press, its origin, progress and present position*, 3 vols., (London: Tinsley Brothers, 1871-2).
- Graham W J, *English Literary Periodicals*, (New York: Octagon Press, 1930).
- Houghton W E (ed.), *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1966-).
- Madden, Lionel, *How to Find Out about the Victorian Period: A Guide to Sources of Information*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1970).
- Newspaper Press Directory*, (London: Mitchell & Co., 1846-)
- Palmer's Index to The Times Newspaper*.
- Oliphant M O W & Oliphant F R, *The Victorian Age of Literature*. 2 vols. (London: 1892)
- Poole W F, *Poole's Index to Periodical Literature*, (Boston: Houghton, reprinted Gloucester, Mass.: P Smith, 1963).

- Price, Warren C, *The Literature of Journalism*, (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota, 1959).
- Sampson & Low, *Index to Current Periodicals*, 1860-62.
- Shattock, Joanne, 'Spheres of Influence: the Quarterlies and their Readers',
Review of English Studies, 10 (1980), 95-104.
- Shattock, Joanne & Wolff, Michael, *The Victorian Periodical Press; Samplings and Soundings*, (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1982).
- Vann, J Don & Van Arsdell, Rosemary T (eds.), *Victorian Periodicals, A Guide to Research*, vol.1, (New York: MLA of America, 1978, vol.2, 1989).
- *Victorian Periodicals & Victorian Society*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994).
- Ward, Wm S, *Index and Finding List of Serials Published in the British Isles 1789-1832*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1953).
- Watson, George (ed.), *The New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, vol.3 1800-1900, (Cambridge: CUP, 1969).
- White, Robert B, *The English Literary Journal to 1900: A Guide to Information Sources*, (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1977).
- Woolff, M, North, John S, Dearing, Dorothy, *Waterloo Dictionary of Victorian Periodicals 1824-1900*, (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier UP, 1976).

3. BIOGRAPHY

- Annual Register*, 1761 -
- Boase F, *Modern English Biography*, 6 vols., (Truro: Netherton, 1892-1921).
- Bouwens B J (revd. Camp A J), *Wills and their Whereabouts*, (Chichester: Society of Genealogists, 1963).
- Burke, *Landed Gentry*, (London: Burke's Peerage, various dates).
- Clifford J L, *Biography as an Art: Selected criticism 1560-1960*, (Oxford: OUP, 1962).
- Dictionary of National Biography*, 63 vols., (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1885-1900).
- Edel, Leon, *Literary Biography*, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1957).
- Haydn, Joseph, *The Book of Dignities*, (London: Allen, 1969, 1894¹).
- Holmes, Richard, *Coleridge: Early Visions*, (London: Flamingo 1999).
- *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*, (London: Flamingo, 1999).
- *Footsteps: Adventures of a Romantic Biographer*, (London: Flamingo, 1995).
- *Shelley: The Pursuit*, (London: Flamingo, 1999).
- *Sidetracks*, (London: Harper Collins, 2000).
- Hyamson, Albert M, *A Dictionary of Universal Biography*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952²).
- Kunitz, Stanley J & Haycraft, Howard, *British Authors of the Nineteenth Century*, (New York: Wilson, 1936).
- Maurois, André, *Aspects of Biography*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1929).
- Newey, Vincent & Shaw, Philip, *Mortal Pages, Literary Lives: Studies in Nineteenth-Century Autobiography*, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996).
- Pachter, Marc (ed.), *Telling Lives: The Biographer's Art*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981).
- Pratt A T C (ed.), *People of the Period*, 2 vols., (London: Neville Beeman Ltd., 1897).
- Strachey, Lytton, *Eminent Victorians*, (London: Folio Press 1979, 1918¹).
- Ward, Thomas H (ed.), *Men of the Reign*, (London: Routledge, 1895).

4. FAMILY BACKGROUND & NORFOLK

- The Ames Correspondence*, (Norwich: Norfolk Record Society, vol. xxxi, 1962).
- Armstrong B J, *A Norfolk Diary: Passages from the Diary of the Rev. Benjamin John Armstrong*, (London: Harrap, 1949).
- Bell, Sheila (compiled), *Index to Bishops' Transcripts from the Diocese of Norwich*, (Norfolk & Norwich Genealogical Society, nd.).

- Bibliotheca Norfolciensis; A Catalogue of the Writings of Norfolk Men and of Works relating to the County of Norfolk*, in the Library of Mr J J Colman, (Norwich: 1896).
 Boston N A & Puddy E, *Dereham, the biography of a County Town*, (Dereham: Coleby, 1952).
 Bryant T H, *Norfolk Churches, the Hundred of Launditch*, (Norwich, 1903).
 Dampier, J Smith, *East Anglian Worthies*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949).
 Dutt, *East Anglian Associations*, 1910?
 Farrer, *Church Heraldry of Norfolk*, 3 vols., (Norwich: Goose, 1887-93).
 Howard J J & Crisp F A (eds.). *Visitation of England & Wales*, (privately printed by Crisp, 1897).
 Hudson Wm, compiled & edited with Tingey J C, *The Records of the City of Norwich*, 2 vols., (Norwich/London: Jarrold, 1910).
Index of Wills proved in the Consistory Court of Norwich 1751-1818, (Norfolk Record Society, vol. xxxviii, 1969).
 James C W, Chief Justice Coke, His Family and Descendants at Holkham (London: 1929).
 Johnson C B, *William Bodham Donne and His Friends*, (London: Methuen, 1905).
 Johnson M B (ed.), *Letters and diaries of the Norfolk Families of Donne and Johnson*, 3 vols., (privately printed Sheringham, 1987).
Kelly's Directory of Norfolk, (Norwich: various dates).
Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica, 3rd series, vol.i.
 Rye, Walter, *An Index to Norfolk Topography*, (Index Society, 1881).
 - *Norfolk Families*, (Norwich, Goose & Son Ltd., 1913).
South Norfolk Poll Book 1868, (Norwich: Matchett Stevenson, 1868).
 Stirling A M W, *Coke of Norfolk and his Friends...* 2 vols., (London: John Lane, 1908).
 Waters W G, *Norfolk in Literature*, (London: Jarrolds, 1923).
 White's *History, Gazetteer and Directory of Norfolk*, (Norwich: 1845²).
 Woodforde, James, *Diary of a Country Parson 1758-1802*, ed. John Beresford, 6 vols., (Oxford: OUP, 1924-31).
 Woodward H B, *Memorials of John Gunn*, (Norwich: 1891).

5. SUFFOLK

- Biographical List of Boys Educated at King Edward VI Free Grammar School, Bury St Edmund's, from 1550 to 1900*, Suffolk Green Books, No. XVI, (Bury St Edmund's: Poole & Matthew, 1908).
 Dampier, J Smith, *East Anglian Worthies*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1949).
 Elliott R W, *The Story of King Edward VI School, Bury St Edmund's*, (published by the Foundation Governors of the School, 1963).
 Glyde, John Jnr., *Suffolk in the Nineteenth Century: Physical, Social, Moral, Religious and Industrial*, (London: Simpkin Marshall, 1856).
 Hayter, Alethea, *Fitzgerald to his Friends*, (London: Scholar Press, 1979).
 Jenkins, Herbert, *The Life of George Borrow, compiled from unpublished official documents, his works, correspondence, etc.* (London: John Murray, 1924).
 Jobson, Allan, *Victorian Suffolk*, (London: Robert Hale, 1972).
 Knapp W I, *Life, Writings and correspondence of George Borrow*, 2 vols., (London: John Murray, 1899).
 McCutcheon, Elsie, *Bury St Edmund's, Historic Town*, (Bury St Edmund's: Alastair Press, 1987).
 Shorter, Clement K, *The Life of George Borrow*, (London: Dent, 1919 (first published as *George Borrow and his Circle*).
 Tymms, Samuel, with additions by Thompson J R and Barker H R, *A Handbook of Bury St Edmund's in the County of Suffolk*, (Bury St Edmund's: F T Groom & Sons, 1916⁹).
 Walling, R A J, *George Borrow, the Man and his Work*, (London: Cassell, 1919).

6. CAMBRIDGE AND THE 'APOSTLES'

- Allen, Peter, *The Cambridge Apostles: The Early Years*, (Cambridge, CUP, 1978).
- Annan, Noel, *The Dons: Mentors, Eccentrics and Geniuses*, (London: Harper Collins, 1999).
- 'The Intellectual Aristocracy' annexed to *The Dons*, *supra*.
- Brookfield Frances M, *The Cambridge Apostles*, (London: Sir Isaac Pitman, 1906).
- Brose, Olive J, *Frederick Denison Maurice: Rebellious Conformist*, (Ohio UP 1971).
- Christie W D, 'The Cambridge "Apostles"', *Macmillan's Magazine*, XI, November 1864, 18-25.
- Deacon, Richard, *The Cambridge Apostles: A History of Cambridge University's élite intellectual secret society*, (London: Robert Royce Ltd., 1985).
- Everett, William, 'The Cambridge Apostles' [review of Brookfield *supra*], *The Nation*, 28 February 1907, 205.
- Heyck T W, *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*, (London: Croom Helm, 1982).
- 'The Judges of England' *Fraser's Magazine*, LXX, July 1864, 96.
- Hughes, Thomas, *Tom Brown at Oxford*, (London: Routledge, 1864³).
- Knights, Ben, *The Idea of the Clerisy in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1978).
- Levy, Paul, *G E Moore and the Cambridge Apostles*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979).
- Letters and Memorials of Richard Chenevix Trench, Archbishop*, ed. by the author of "Charles Lowder", 2 vols., (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1888).
- Life and Letters of F J A Hort*, ed. by his son, (London: Macmillan, 1896).
- Lubenow W C, *The Cambridge Apostles 1820-1914*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1998).
- Maurice, Frederick (ed.), *The Life of Frederick Denison Maurice chiefly told in his own Letters*, 2 vols., (London: Macmillan & Co., 1884).
- Maurice, Frederick Denison, *Subscription No Bondage*, (1834).
- Thirlwall, Connop, *A Letter to the Rev. Thomas Turton DD...on the Admission of Dissenters to Academical Degrees*, London Library Pamphlets 105.
- Winstanley D A, *Unreformed Cambridge*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1935).

7. BONDSMAN TO THE READING PUBLIC

- Founders and Followers: Literary Lectures given on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Founding of the London Library*, (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992).
- Harrison, Frederic, *Carlyle and the London Library*, (London: Chapman & Hall, 1907).
- Gillam, Stanley, *The Library Association Record*.
- Grindea, Miron (ed.), *The London Library*, (Ipswich: The Boydell Press, 1977).
- London Library Records*.
- Magnus, Philip, *Gladstone: A Biography*, (London: John Murray, 1963 pb.).
- Minute Books of the London Library*
- Oldman C B, Munford W A, Nowell-Smith, Simon, *English Libraries 1800-1850, Three Lectures delivered at University College, London*, (1958).
- Symons, Julian, *Thomas Carlyle: the Life and Ideas of a Prophet*, (London: Gollancz, 1952).
- Wells, John, *Rude Words: A Discursive History of the London Library*, (London: Macmillan, 1991).
- 'Some previous librarians' in *Founders and Followers; Literary Lectures given on the occasion of the 150th Anniversary of the Founding of the London Library*, (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1992).
- Wilson, D A C, *Life of Carlyle*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1927).

8. THE THEATRE AND DRAMA

- Archer, William, *About the theatre: Essays and Studies*, (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1886).
- Arnott, James Fullerton & Robinson, John William, *English Theatrical Literature*

- 1559-1900, (Society for Theatrical Research, 1970).
- Baber, Blanche M, *Theatre and Allied Arts*, (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1952).
- Baeish J A, 'Antitheatrical Prejudice in the Nineteenth Century', *University of Toronto Quarterly*. 40, (1971).
- Booth, Michael R, 'Theatre History and the Literary Critic', *Year Book of English Studies* 9 (1979), 15-27.
- Burnand, Sir Francis C, *Records and reminiscences, Personal and General*, 2 vols., (London: Methuen, 1904³).
- Butterworth, Philip, *Theatre of Fire: Special Effects in Early English and Scottish Theatre*, (Society for Theatre Research, 1998).
- Cheshire, David, *Theatre History, Criticism and Reference*, (London: Bingley, 1967).
- Connolly L W & Wearing J P, *English Drama & Theatre 1800-1900: A Guide to Information Sources*, (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1978).
- Cole J W, *The Life and Theatrical Times of Charles Kean FSA, including a Summary of the English Stage for the last Fifty Years and a Detailed Account of the Management of the Princess's Theatre from 1850 to 1859*, 2 vols., (London: Richard Bentley, 1859).
- Cook E D, *Book of the Play*, (London: Sampson Low, 1876).
- Davis, Jim (ed.), *The Britannia Diaries 1863-1875: Selections from the Diaries of Frederick C Wilton*, (Society for Theatre Research, 1992).
- Davis, Jim & Emeljanow, Victor, *Reflecting the Audience: London Theatregoing 1840-1880*, (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Pr., 2001).
- Davis, Tracy C, *Economics of the British Stage 1800-1914*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2001).
- De Jongh, Nicholas, *Politics, Prudery and Perversion*, (London: Methuen, 2000).
- Dickins, Bruce, 'Two Kembles'; *John and Henry*, Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture, 15 March 1939, (printed privately, Cambridge: 1974).
- Filon, Augustin, *The English Stage*, (London: Kensiket Press, 1970 (1897¹).
- Findlater, Richard, *Banned: A Review of Theatrical Censorship in Britain*, (London: Panther Books, 1968; McGibbon & Kee, 1967¹).
- Fitzgerald, *World Behind the Scenes*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1881).
- Foulkes, Richard, *Church and Stage in Victorian England*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1997).
- *Teach Yourself Theatre*, (London: Hodder Headline 1999).
- Fowell, Frank & Palmer, Frank, *Censorship in England*, (London: F Palmer, 1913).
- Ganzel, Dewey, 'Patent Wrongs and Patent Theatres: Drama and the Law in the Early Nineteenth Century', *PMLA* LXXVI (1961), 384-396.
- G G M, *The Stage Censor: An Historical Sketch 1554-1907*, (London: 1908).
- Isaacs, S C, *Law relating to Theatres*, (London: Stevens & Sons, 1927).
- Jackson, Russell, *Victorian Theatre*, (London: A & C Black, 1989).
- Knight J, *The History of the English Stage during the Reign of Victoria*, (London: 1901).
- Knight, William G, *A Major London 'Minor': The Surrey Theatre 1805-1865*, (Society for Theatre Research, 1997).
- Morley, Henry, *Journal of a London Playgoer: Sixty Years of Theatre*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974, Routledge, 1891¹).
- Nicholson, Watson, *The Struggle for a Free Stage in London*, (1906).
- Palmer, John Leslie, *The Censor and the Theatres*, (London: T Fisher Unwin, 1912).
- Planché J R, *Suggestions for establishing an English Art Theatre*, (London: Wyman, 1879).
- Rees, Terence, *Theatre Lighting in the Age of Gas*, (Society for Theatre Research, 1978).
- Robinson H C (ed. Eluned Brown), *The London Theatre 1811-1866*, (Society for Theatre Research, 1966).
- Rowell, George, *Queen Victoria Goes to the Theatre*, (London: Paul Elek, 1978).
- *Victorian Dramatic Criticism*, (London: Methuen, 1971).
- *The Victorian Theatre 1792-1914*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1978², 1956¹).
- Russell, W Clark, *Representative Actors*, (London: Frederick Warne, nd).
- Scott, Clement, *The Drama of Yesterday and Today*, 2 vols., (London: Macmillan, 1899).
- Schoch, Richard W, *Not Shakespeare: Bardolatry and Burlesque in the Nineteenth Century*, (Cambridge: CUP, 2002).
- Skeat T C, *Catalogue of Additions to the Manuscripts: {Plays submitted to the Lord Chamberlain 1824-1851}*, (London: British Museum, 1964).
- Stedman, Jane, *W S Gilbert's Theatrical Criticism*, (Society for Theatre Research, 2000).

- Dobrée, B, (ed.), *The Letters of George III*, (London: Cassell, 1935).
- Dunn, Waldo Hilary, *James Anthony Froude, A Biography*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963).
- FitzGerald, Edward, *Miscellanies*, (London: Macmillan "Golden Treasury Series", 1900).
- Hannay, Neilson Campbell, *A Fitzgerald Friendship, being hitherto unpublished Letters from Edward Fitzgerald to William Bodham Donne*, edited with an introduction and notes in collaboration with Mrs Catherine Bodham Johnson, (New York: William Edwin Rudge, 1932).
- Heyck T W, *The transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*, (London: Croom Helm, 1982).
- Holloway, John, *The Victorian Sage*, (London: Macmillan, 1953).
- Hutton, Richard Holt, *Literary Essays*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1888).
- Jenkyns, Richard, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980).
- Jones, Edmund D (ed.), *English Critical Essays: Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford: OUP, 1916).
- Kemble, Fanny, *Records of Later Life*, 3 vols., (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1882²).
- Landor, Walter Savage, *Imaginary Conversations*, (London: Walter Scott, 1886).
- Martin, Robert Bernard, *Tennyson: The Unquiet Heart*, (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1980).
- *With Friends Possessed: A Life of Edward Fitzgerald* (London: Faber & Faber, 1985).
- Raleigh, Sir Walter, *Some Authors; A Collection of Literary Essays*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1923).
- Reid, T Wemyss, *The Life, Letters & Friendships of Richard Monckton Milnes, First Lord Houghton*, 2 vols., (London: Cassell & Co., 1891³).
- Robinson, Ian, *The English Prophets; a Critical Defence of English Criticism*, (Norfolk: Edgeways Books, 2001).
- Shannon, Edgar Finley Jr, *Tennyson and the Reviewers; A Study of His Literary Reputation and of the Influence of the Critics upon His Poetry 1827-1851*, (London: Archon Books, 1967).
- Spedding, James, *Reviews and Discussions, Literary, Political and Historical, not relating to Bacon*, (London: C Kegan Paul & Co., 1879).
- Stephen, Leslie, *Hours in a Library*, (London: Folio Society, 1991, Smith Elder, 1909¹).
- Strachey, Lytton, *Queen Victoria*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1918).
- Terhune A McK & A B (eds.) *The Letters of Edward Fitzgerald*, 4 vols., (Guildford: Princeton, 1980).
- Thorn, Michael, *Tennyson*, (London: Abacus, 1993², (1992¹).
- Trench R C, *Letters and memorials*, edited by the author of "Charles Lowder", 2 vols., (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co. 1888).
- Waugh, Anthony, *Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Study of His Life and Work*, (London: Heinemann, 1894³ (1892¹).
- Whiteley, Peter, *Lord North: The Prime Minister Who Lost America*, (London/Rio Grande: The Hambledon Press, 1996).
- Wiley, Raymond A, 'Anglo-Saxon Kemble. The Life and Works of John Mitchell Kemble 1807-1857, Philologist, Historian, Archaeologist' in *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology & History*, BAR British Series 72, 1979, 165-273.
- Woodham-Smith, Cecil, *Queen Victoria, Her Life and Times*, 2 vols. (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972).
- Wolff, Robert Lee, *Gains and Losses: Novels of Faith and Doubt in Victorian England*, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977).