In 1906, having been assigned Izaak Walton's Life of Donne to read for his English class, a Harvard freshman heard a lecture on the long disparaged ‘metaphysical’ poets. Years later, when an appreciation of these poets was considered a consummate mark of a modernist sensibility, T. S. Eliot was routinely credited with having ‘discovered’ Donne himself. This book tracks the myriad ways in which Donne was lodged in literary culture during the Romantic and Victorian periods. The early chapters document a first revival of interest when Walton's Life was said to be ‘in the hands of every reader'; they explore what Wordsworth and Coleridge contributed to the conditions for the 1839 publication of The Works, which reprinted the sermons of ‘Dr Donne’. Later chapters trace a second revival, when admirers of the biography, turning to the prose letters and the poems to supplement Walton, discovered that his hero's writings entail the sorts of controversial issues that are raised by Browning, by the ‘fleshy school’ of poets, and by self-consciously ‘decadent’ writers of the fin de siècle. The final chapters treat the spread of the academic study of Donne from Harvard, where already in the 1880s he was the anchor of the 17th-century course, to other institutions and beyond the academy, showing that Donne's status as a writer eclipsed his importance as the subject of Walton's narrative, which Leslie Stephen facetiously called ‘the masterpiece of English biography’.

‘Sensuous Things’
Dayton Haskin

in John Donne in the Nineteenth Century
By the 1860s the desire to look into John Donne's writings that had started in the English Romantic period had spread to the western side of the Atlantic. In Britain the revival of interest in Donne was dissipating. A lingering undercurrent of interest in Donne's poetry resurfaced when, in the period 1872-1873, the Rev Alexander B. Grosart published his two-volume edition of The Complete Poems of John Donne, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's. The edition offered an exuberant concatenation of materials. It framed them, first, in ways that entangled Donne's poetry in the contemporary debates about ‘sensuous things’ that had been newly inflected by the publication in the Contemporary Review in 1871 of R. W. Buchanan's article on Rossetti and the ‘fleshly school of poetry’. In order to gauge the broader cultural effects of the Grosart edition, it makes sense therefore to provide an account of Grosart's contributions on three specific fronts: his attempt greatly to augment the canon of Donne's poems; his use of manuscript materials as copy-texts; and his extensive glossing of words and phrases in the poems.

Donne in the Hands of Biographers
Dayton Haskin

in John Donne in the Nineteenth Century

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The publication of Rev Alexander B. Grosart's edition of The Complete Poems of John Donne, D.D., Dean of St. Paul's intensified interest in developing an integrated account of Izaak Walton's preacher and Grosart's poetic 'Imaginator'. Because nearly all the poems added by Grosart had not been accepted as genuine, it is easy underestimate the short-term significance of this expanded canon: late Victorian readers were taken in by Grosart's claims. Some, regarding a historic person's domestic life as too insubstantial to matter in the important work of writing the biography of the nation, dismissed the augmented body of love poetry as irrelevant to understanding Donne's significance. Chief here was Augustus Jessopp, who contributed the entry on Donne to The Dictionary of National Biography. Others felt excitement, however, at the prospect of drawing on long hidden materials, as Edward Dowden sought to do, to develop ‘a true and sufficient idea of John Donne’. Both groups agreed that the popular account by Walton warranted serious revision.
In the decade before T. S. Eliot matriculated at Harvard University, several graduates who had studied with Dean Briggs brought John Donne into the curriculum of other US colleges. By the time that Eliot heard Briggs’s lecture in 1907, however, the study of Donne at Harvard was on the decline. These developments — the spread of Donne studies beyond Harvard and the waning of Donne’s reputation in the University where he had been made a substantial academic subject — created apt conditions for Eliot to display his individual talent a decade later as he began engaging in a neglected literary tradition in which Donne had played a central part. As Anne Ferry has shrewdly observed, even before Eliot began writing about Donne, he had imagined a future anthology, in which readers would discover in a poem such as ‘Whispers of Immortality’ a long delayed coupling between the dead writers of the 17th century and the living modern verse in which they assert their immortality.

Letters

Dayton Haskin

in John Donne in the Nineteenth Century

Of the thousands of decisions, large and small, taken in the 19th century by persons seeking to make John Donne’s writings available in print, few were as influential as the publisher and the editor of The Works of John Donne, D.D. in the 1830s. John W. Parker published six volumes, instead of the requested four, for a new edition of the sermons. His liberality made it possible to include the sermons in their entirety. He also had to make a number of unexpected decisions. The most important was what to do with the additional space. Henry Alford chose to include works that had a conspicuously biographical interest: the Devotions, which according to Izaak Walton contained Donne’s ‘most secret thoughts,’ poems mostly on religious subjects, especially holy dying, and virtually
all the letters in prose and in verse. As it turned out, the prose letters became the most widely read section of the Works.

Donne at Harvard
Dayton Haskin

in John Donne in the Nineteenth Century
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The tercentenary anniversary of John Donne's death was celebrated during the year before T. S. Eliot inaugurated the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard University. Eliot's essay, ‘Donne in Our Time,’ proposed that the vogue for Donne was probably over and that readers would be moving on, as he had, to reading other poets. In fact, through the rest of his life Eliot continued to distance himself from Donne. In the essay ‘To Criticize the Critic,’ he repeated his dissatisfaction with having been ‘credited with starting the vogue for Donne and other metaphysical poets’; and he insisted that he ‘did not discover’ them. Whatever Eliot's personal and professional reasons for attempting to break the connection that others routinely made between him and Donne, the telling point in the tribute that he paid to Dean Briggs is that Donne's place in English literature was already taken for granted in the English curriculum when Eliot matriculated in 1906.

Doctor Donne
Dayton Haskin

in John Donne in the Nineteenth Century
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In the early 19th century there were three overlapping interpretative communities in which John Donne's name had currency. One was made up of readers who, although they were familiar with Dr Donne from Alexander Pope's satires and Samuel Johnson's Life of Cowley, dismissed his poetry without actually reading it. Another consisted of a growing number of admirers of Izaak Walton's Lives, of which ‘The Life of Dr John Donne’ proved the most popular. There were also the writers whom we now call the Romantics, several of whom read Donne's sermons and poems with pleasure, often in one another's company. In bringing out an
edition of the Works in 1839 Henry Alford and John W. Parker sought to unite the interests of these three groups and to make available a more ample picture of the writer than any living person had glimpsed. This chapter looks at Donne's poetical works and their interpretations by different personalities, notably Samuel Taylor Coleridge who read the poems with theological insights.

**Walton's Lives of Donne and Herbert**

Jessica Martin

in Walton's Lives

Published in print: 2011 Published Online: October 2011

In Daniel Featley's Life of Jewel, it is asserted that the 'truth of love' in biography should not 'prejudice' the 'love of truth'. As this suggests a preference toward information that is truth-led as opposed to that that is love-led, it is also emphasized that love entails its own truth and this is the kind that is able to challenge the truth associated with intractable fact. The tensions between the two types of information that a biographer has to rule over are modified by Walton, specifically in the biographies discussed in this chapter. He had to give emphasis to the affectionate relationship that he shared with the subject to establish his credentials for making these biographies. This chapter looks into Walton's biographies of both John Donne and George Herbert that justify the 'truth of love'.

**A Thinker and a Writer**

Dayton Haskin

in John Donne in the Nineteenth Century

Published in print: 2007 Published Online: September 2007

In the English-speaking world of the 1830s, most readers, if they knew of John Donne at all, knew chiefly about the life portrayed by Izaak Walton: Donne's lineal descent from Sir Thomas More by way of his mother's family, his romantic marriage and its trying aftermath, his reluctance to take holy orders and his eloquence as a preacher, his grief upon the death of his wife, and his holy dying. By the early 1840s the situation was changing. More of Donne's own writing was available in print than
at any time since the mid-17th century: almost all the extant sermons, 130 prose letters, nearly one hundred poems, three new editions of the Devotions upon Emergent Occasions, and an unprecedented volume of nearly 300 pages titled Selections from the Works of John Donne, D.D. Interest in Donne began to owe something to a festering impatience with Walton's having cavalierly dismissed the poetry and with his having failed to appreciate Donne as a restless and probing thinker.

The Rhetoric of the Conscience in Donne, Herbert, and Vaughan

Ceri Sullivan

Early modern theologians such as William Perkins, William Ames, Jeremy Taylor, and Richard Baxter see the rectified conscience as a syllogism worked out in partnership with God, which compares actions to the law, and comes to a conclusion. It is thus a linguistic act. John Donne, George Herbert, and Henry Vaughan focus on the points where the conversation breaks down. In their poems, hearts refuse to confess, laws are forgotten or mixed up, and judgements are omitted. Between them, God and the poets take decisive action, torturing, inscribing, fragmenting, and writhing the heart in a set of tropes (turnings of meaning) which get the right response: subjectio (answering your own question), enigma, aposiopesis (breaking off speech), antanaclasis (altering the meanings of words), and chiasmus (redoubling meaning).

Donne's Domestic Muse: Engendering Poetry in the Early Verse Letters

H. L. Meakin

This chapter examines John Donne's representations of his relationship with his Muse in his poetry and early verse letters. Almost half of the twenty-two references to a Muse occurred in the verse letters Donne wrote during the 1590s. This may indicate that his adaptation of the Muse figure during the Renaissance may be connected with generic experimentation and the self-conscious definition of a specifically English
poetry. This chapter also analyses Donne's gender-related images of poetic creation in his early poems.

Donne, By Hand
Tom Lockwood

in Proceedings of the British Academy Volume 167, 2009 Lectures

This chapter presents the text of a lecture on John Donne's poetry given at the British Academy's 2009 Chatterton Lecture on History. This text analyses the claims made in H.J.C. Grierson's The Poems of John Donne that John Donne is a manuscript poet for the twentieth century and a poet of, and for, the new university discipline of English. It argues that subsequent understandings of Donne and his works, in manuscript and print, and by different audiences, are necessary elements of the poet we read today.

‘The Mother in the Hungry Grave’: Marriage, Murder, and the Maternal
H. L. Meakin

in John Donne's Articulations of the Feminine

This chapter examines John Donne's articulations of the maternal feminine or ‘woman-for-man’ in some of his writings on marriage. It analyses Donne's references to verse twenty-four of the second chapter of the Book of Genesis in his sermons related to marriage and to verse eighteen in his wedding sermon. It attempts to explain who Donne constructed the feminine as in his interpretation of the creation of the first woman as the Mother of All Living and in his representation of the subsequent transformation and engendering of Eve's daughters.
Any politic body
Kathleen Lynch

in Protestant Autobiography in the Seventeenth-Century Anglophone World

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This chapter examines the contests between Protestants and Catholics over the filial claims to Saint Augustine’s religious authority, as they played out in the competing translations of the Confessions into English in the 1620s. This was a constituent part of the battle that raged near the end of James I’s reign to establish religious orthodoxy and to maintain state control over it. The Confessions was not a useful polemical tool, but the chapter details the responsive confessional statements of one of its expert readers, John Donne. The two publications that framed his public life were Pseudo-Martyr (1610) and Devotions upon Emergent Occasions (1624). In them, Donne challenged Augustine’s resolution of a spiritual crisis with a change of church. Donne complied, but only in respect of the body politic. He became an improbable literary spokesperson for the Protestant nation.

Introduction: The Variorum as a Window onto Cultural History
Dayton Haskin

in John Donne in the Nineteenth Century

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This introduction looks at the Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne in relation to other features of literary and cultural history. The Donne Variorum serves as a window onto literary and cultural history, enabling us to take an intelligent interest in criticism from earlier eras, which otherwise we might dismiss as ‘wrong’ or uninteresting. The discussion ends with a hypothesis: as the aims of a secular interpretative community collided with the interests of readers who were looking into the writings because they valued the Dr Donne of Izaak Walton, a larger, more fluid interpretative community emerged. Its members found in Donne an intriguing site at which to explore their own cultural contradictions. The various interpretations of the poems being reported in the Variorum attest to a struggle over the identity and significance of John Donne that took on an unprecedented urgency at the end of the 19th century.
God's Grammar
Brian Cummings

in The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace
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This chapter explores the religious writing of John Donne, a figure caught in the crossfire between opposing theologies. Donne's writing from the death of Elizabeth to the eve of the English revolution forms a summary and archetype of English religion in its most difficult century. The chapter starts by presenting Donne's Conversion of St Paul. Campion's Brag and Campion's Bloody Reasons are shown. In addition, the noise of the Holy Sonnets is explained. The dating of the Holy Sonnets has undergone the same vicissitudes as the timing of Donne's conversion: the two have moved hand in hand. The chapter also considers Donne's dangerous question. Donne's writing shows the paradox of religion and literary culture in the wake of Reformation.

Coda
H. L. Meakin

in John Donne's Articulations of the Feminine
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Item type: chapter

This chapter sums up the key findings of this study on John Donne's articulation of the feminine in his prose and poetry. It suggests that Donne is more than the masculine monolith which has been part of the almost casual observance in criticism of his prose and poetry. It argues that there are valid grounds for extending Donne's reputation for originality and iconoclasm to his construction of gender. This is particularly true in his exploration of lesbian love and the fluidity of gender boundaries in his poems and early verse letters.

He Sings the Body Electrum: Re-membering Elizabeth Drury
H. L. Meakin

in John Donne's Articulations of the Feminine
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This chapter examines the epitaph, elegy, and the poem Anniversaries, An Anatomy of the World written by John Donne on the occasion of Elizabeth Drury's death. It suggests that these works map out the problematics of writing and reading about the female body for Donne. It proposes a possible strategy for tackling Donne's difficult poems and suggests that the present absence of the feminine is what lies at the centre of Donne's Anniversaries.

Introduction

H. L. Meakin

This introductory chapter explains the coverage of this book, which is about the articulation of the feminine in the prose and poetry of English poet John Donne. This book analyses a number of Donne's more neglected works including his early verse letters, an epithalamium, a wedding sermon, the heroical epistle Sappho to Philaenis, and the epitaph and funeral elegy written for Elizabeth Drury. It examines Donne's portrayal of the individual feminine figures in his works and his representations of the relations between gender positions.

‘The Desire for the Proximate’: Lesbian ‘Likenesse’ in ‘Sapho to Philaenis’

H. L. Meakin

This chapter examines John Donne's lesbian love poem Sappho to Philaenis. It discusses the possible reasons for and implications of this poem's near invisibility and its relegation beyond the margins of Donne's canon. It suggests that Donne's representation of lesbian love arises out of a desire to synthesize the unitive perfections of the marriage relationship and the Renaissance ideal of friendship between equals.