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JOHN DONNE

Poetry and Prose

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Songs and Sonets § 54

And werke on them as men, and so preferre
Your murder, to the name of Massacre.

Poore victories! But if you dare be brave,
And pleasure in your conquest have,
First kill th'emormous Gyant, your Disdain,
And let th'enchantresse Honor, next be staind,
And like a Goth and Vandall rize,
Deface Records, and Histories
Of your owne arts and triumphs over men,
And without such advantage kill me then.

For I could muster up as well as you
My Gyans, and my Witches too,
Which are vast Constancy, and Secretness,
But these I neyther looke for, nor profess;
Kill mee as Woman, let mee die
As a more man; doe you but try
Your passive valor, and you shall finde then,
Naked you have odds enough of any man.

THE DISSOLUTION

Shee' is dead; And all which die
To their first Elements resolve;
And wee were mutuell Elements to us,
And made of one another.
My body then doth hers involve,
And those things whereof I consist, hereby
In me abundant grow, and burdenous,
And nourish nor, but smother.

My fire of Passion, sighes of syre,

1.7 preferre: promote.
1.12 Honor: charity.
1.13 Kill . . . die: As so often in Donne's poetry, the verbs kill and
die carry the contemporary colloquial meanings: to experience sexual
climax.

12-10 fire . . . despair: The reference is to the four elements of
classical science—earth, water, air, and fire—which were believed to
make up the entire physical world, including the body of man.

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Water of teares, and earthly sad despaire,
Which my materials bee,
But neere worse out by loves securitie,
Speer, to my losse, doth by her death repaird,
And I might live long wretched so
But that my fire doth with my fuel grow.

Now as those Active Kings
Whose foraine conquest treasure brings,
Receive more, and spend more, and sooner breake:
This (which I am amaz'd that I can speake)
This death, hath with my score
My use encreas'd.

And so my soule more earnestly releas'd,
Will ourstrip heres, as bullers flower before
A latter bullet may o'raile, the powder being more.

A JEst RING SENT

Thou art not so black, as my heart,
Nor halfe so brite, as her heart, thou art;
What wouldst thou say? shall both our properties by
thou bee saked,
Nothing more endless, nothing sooner broke?

Marriage rings are not of this stuffe;
Oh, why should ought these precious, or lose rough
Figure our loves? Except in thy name thou have bid
it say,
Tis cheap, and ought but fashion, fling me away.

Yet stay with mee since thou art come,
Circle this fingers top, which didst her thombe.
Be justly proud, and gladly safe, that thou dost dwell
with mee,
She that, Oh, broke her faith, would soon breake
thou.

1.7-9 Thou . . . broke: Implicit in this stanza is the traditional concep-
tion of the circle as the symbol of perfection. (See Nicolson.)
1.20 Circle . . . thombe: Thumb-rings were common in Donne's Eng-
land.