



John Donne and the Conway Papers: Patronage and Manuscript Circulation in the Early Seventeenth Century

Daniel Starza Smith

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How and why did men and women send handwritten poetry, drama, and literary prose to their friends and social superiors in the seventeenth century—and what were the consequences of these communications? Within this culture of manuscript publication, why did John Donne (1572-1631), an author who attempted to limit the circulation of his works, become the most transcribed writer of his age? *John Donne and the Conway Papers* examines these questions in great detail. Daniel Starza Smith investigates a seventeenth-century archive, the Conway Papers, in order to explain the relationship between Donne and the archive's owners, the Conway family. Drawing on an enormous amount of primary material, he situates Donne's writings within the broader workings of manuscript circulation, from the moment a scribe identified a source text, through the process of transcription and onwards to the social ramifications of this literary circulation.

John Donne and the Conway Papers offers the first full-length analysis of three generations of the Conway family between Elizabeth's succession and the end of the Civil War, explaining what the Conway Papers are and how they were amassed, how the archive came to contain a concentration of manuscript poetry by Donne, and what the significance of this fact is, in terms of seventeenth-century politics, patronage, and culture. Answers to these questions cast new light on the early transmission of Donne's verse and prose. Throughout, *John Donne and the Conway Papers* emphasizes the importance of Donne's closest friends and earliest readers—such as George Garrard, Rowland Woodward, and Sir Henry Goodere—in the dissemination of his poetry. Goodere in particular emerges as a key agent in the early circulation of Donne's verse, and this book offers the first sustained account of his literary activities.

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