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John Donne's *Biathanatos*: Authenticity, Authority, and Context in Three Editions

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Michael Rudick and M. Pabst Battin, eds. *Biathanatos: A modern-spelling edition, with Introduction and Commentary.* New York: Garland, 1982. Pp. 288.

Ernest W. Sullivan II, ed. *Biathanatos.* Newark: Univ. of Delaware Press, 1984. Pp. 280.

William A. Clebsch, trans. and ed. *Suicide: Biathanatos transcribed and edited for modern readers.* Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983. Pp. 114.

The appearance of three new editions of John Donne's prose treatise on suicide, *Biathanatos*, in as many years (1982, 1983, 1984) is an event of some note. Written *ca.* 1608, later transcribed and presented to Sir Edward Herbert, the treatise was published 16 years after Donne's death by his son, in a quarto that itself was not reprinted until the octavo edition of 1700.[1] The next edition—a facsimile of the 1647 quarto—was not published until 1930.[2] A generation later, scholarly interest in Donne issued in three dissertations on *Biathanatos*: A. E. Malloch's critical study (Toronto, 1955), Charles Thomas Mark's critical edition based on the 1647 Quarto (Princeton, 1970), and Ernest W. Sullivan II's old-spelling edition based on the Herbert manuscript, now at the Bodleian (UCLA, 1973). In addition to Sullivan's edition, now published by the University of Delaware Press, Michael Rudick and M. Pabst Battin have edited a modern-spelling edition, and the late William A. Clebsch has "transcribed and edited [it] for modern readers." Quite apart from the interest of the text itself and its topic, these three editions provide an illuminating spectrum of the options available to the editor of Renaissance nondramatic texts.[3]

The composition and early publication history of *Biathanatos* may be briefly recapitulated. Evelyn Simpson dated the composition of *Biathanatos* in "the period of [Donne's] poverty and distress after his marriage, and it must have been written between 1602 and 1609."[4] Bald thought it was "written about 1607 or 1608,"[5] but Rudick and Battin assign its completion "to the year 1608" (p. x), and Sullivan narrows the date to "between 1607 and 8 July 1608."[6]

Donne himself was understandably ambivalent about the piece. In its Preface, he writes:

> And therefore without any disguising, or curious and libellous concealing, I present and obiect it [place it before the eyes or the mind], to all of candor, and indifferency, to escape that iust taxation, h. *Nouum Malitiae genus est, et intemperantis, scribere quod occultes* ["This is a new style of intemperate malice, to write what you wish to keep secret"]. . . . so do I wish, (and as much as I can effect) that to those many learned and subtile men, which haue trauayld in this poynt, some charitable and compassionate men might be added [as a result of reading *Biathanatos*]."
>
> (Sullivan, pp. 31-32; Rudick/Battin, p. 206)

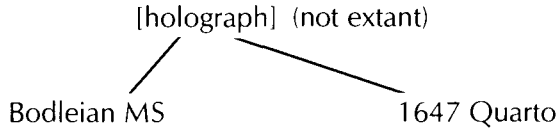
Yet in a letter "usually thought to have been written in 1607 or 1608 . . . [Donne] wrote: 'I onely assure you, that I have not appointed it upon any person, nor ever purposed to print it'" (Bald, p. 201). When he went abroad in 1619 and feared he might not return, he sent a copy to Sir Robert Ker (Sullivan argues that the copy was the holograph) with the following instructions:

> But besides the Poems, . . . I send you another Book to which there belongs this History. It was written by me many years since; and because it is upon a misinterpretable subject, I have always gone so near suppressing it, as that it is onely not burnt: no hand hath passed upon it to copy it, nor many eyes to read it: onely to some particular friends in both Universities, then when I writ it, I did communicate it: . . . Keep it, I pray, with the same jealousie; let any that your discretion admits to the sight of it, know the date of it; and that it is a Book written by *Jack Donne*, and not by D. *Donne*: Reserve it for me, if I

> live, and if I die, I only forbid it the Presse, and the Fire; publish it not, but yet burn it not; and between those, do what you will with it. (Simpson, *A Study*, p. 145)

What he had wished to communicate when he wrote the Preface he later wished to conceal. Donne subsequently had the work copied for Herbert, and Herbert presented that copy to the Bodleian in 1642. The holograph itself, which was not found in Ker's papers (Sullivan, p. xli and n. 9), must have been returned to Donne sometime after his return from abroad in 1621, for it apparently provided the copy for the 1647 quarto, Donne's son having inherited it; in 1644 it was licensed, in 1646 entered in the Stationers Register, and in 1647 published. Printer's copy was discarded after the volume was printed.

In its simplest configuration, then, the text exists in two extant exemplars, each at one remove from the lost original:[7]



In constructing a critical text, therefore, each witness is of equal authority. Yet, if the editor is trying to recover the readings of Donne's original, he or she must obviously confront quite distinct transformations of it: the first, a manuscript copied after 1608 and before 1629, when Herbert became Lord Herbert of Cherbury;[8] the second, a printed text composed (and, in effect, copy-edited) in the mid-1640s.

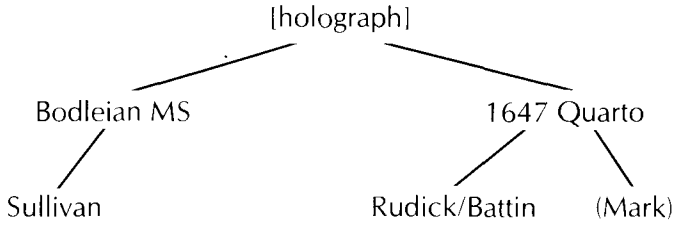
Since the publication of Greg's "The Rationale of Copy-Text" in 1950,[9] orthodox copy-text theory dictates that copy-text, which is authoritative *only* for accidentals and indifferent variants (that is, variants that cannot be confidently distinguished as transcriptional or compositorial error and so to be rejected from the critical text, or judged to be authorial revisions and so included) be that exemplar that is closest to the nonextant authorial original, on the grounds that, however imperfectly that exemplar will reflect authorial usage in spelling, punctuation, font (or hand), or other formal features, such a text is still closer than any derivative text would be. Greg's theory was offered to resolve the dilemma of the editor faced with a text in which there was clear evidence of authorial revision in editions beyond the first, but who wished, in a "critical" edition, to retain as much of the accidental "texture" of the nonextant authorial original, without sacrificing

authorial revisions contained in subsequent editions. Fredson Bowers, who early championed Greg's "Rationale," immediately adapted it for cases just such as that of *Biathanatos*; that is, where there is divided or "multiple authority."[10] But the Greg-Bowers principle that the choice of copy-text—as regards its authority for substantives—is simply a matter of convenience obtains for texts that "radiate" as well as texts that descend linearly.

The editor of *Biathanatos* faces the dilemma of the choice of copy-text in a particularly acute form. If the Bodleian MS is chosen, the text will fix in print a host of features acceptable in an early seventeenth-century manuscript but intrusive in a modern printed text; if the editor elects the 1647 quarto as copy-text, its accidentals will be those of a book printed at least a generation after the text it reprints was composed. In theory, at least, the substantive readings chosen should not vary in either case beyond a fairly narrow range of normal editorial disagreement as to what constitutes indifferent variation attendant upon the transmissional process (these readings will be chosen, in effect, when copy-text is selected), outright error (rejected), and authorial revision (incorporated as emendations).

The editor will naturally weigh the evidence of authorial involvement in each extant text in order to claim it as more accurately reflecting authorial intention and practice, for logically each text is equally a witness to the lost holograph. Sullivan chooses the Bodleian MS, to which great prestige attaches itself because of Donne's supervision of it. He argues that "Donne wrote the introductory letter to '*S*^{r} *Edward Herbert*' . . . , the marginal annotations, a sixteen-word correction, and may have corrected 'prayed' to 'p^{r}saged'" (pp. xxxvi-xxxvii). Ruddick and Battin credit Donne with an additional six corrections: two "single-word substitutions and four insertions of omitted matter" (p. xcvii). The case for Donne's involvement in the 1647 Quarto, chosen as copy-text by Rudick/Battin (and by Mark in his dissertation), is inferential. Numerous lacunae in the Bodleian MS are repaired in the 1647 quarto, there are readings of individual words for which Donne could only be responsible, and the process of annotating Donne's numerous sources continues, all suggesting that the holograph continued to be worked on by Donne subsequent to the time it was copied for Herbert.

Our stemma now looks as follows:



Although there is disagreement as to the date of the Bodleian MS, there is no question that it is closer in time to the composition of the original. It has the status of an authentic relic: Donne's hand is present in the marginal notes, the text is corrected throughout (though not by Donne), it is accompanied by a letter of presentation, and it was copied for a trusted and close friend—uniquely, it would seem. Nonetheless, despite his later disclaimer that the work is a "Book written by *Jack Donne*, and not by D. *Donne*," Donne evidently continued to work on the holograph. Arguing that it was "this revised and expanded version of the original holograph [that] then became the printer's copy and afterwards was destroyed" (p. xli), Sullivan chooses the Bodleian MS as his copy-text and corrects its readings only when manifestly in error. Rudick/Battin choose the 1647 quarto, but as theirs is a modern-spelling edition, the issue of the accidental texture of copy-text is moot.

The weight of current and authoritative textual theory and practice clearly endorses Sullivan's choice: the Bodleian MS was closer in time to the original, and its preparation was overseen by Donne. Simpson described it as "the only work of any length by Donne of which we possess an authoritative manuscript" (*A Study*, p. 145) and argued that its careful punctuation was Donne's own.[11] The quarto postdates the original by nearly forty years. Q. E. D.

But is the case so clear cut? Copy-text is authoritative for accidentals only, and its choice, in the case of multiple authority, is a matter of convenience. The whole thrust of Greg's "Rationale" was to free the editor from the "tyranny of copy-text" exercised by the overreaction of McKerrow to the undisciplined eclecticism of earlier nineteenth-century editors. Are the accidentals of the manuscript indeed more

authoritative? The editors of both *critical* editions (Clebsch's is not) agree they are. Sullivan demonstrates that in punctuation, the quarto mispunctuates Donne's long periods with their multiple and nested subordination (pp. lix-lxvi). Simpson argued that "the copy used by the printer must have been punctuated in substantially the same manner, as a collation of the printed text will show" ("A Note," p. 297). Rudick and Battin acknowledge that "reflected in the scribe's work in M [the Bodleian MS] are a number of Donne's characteristic spellings, forms, and elisions, . . ." (p. xcviii). Sullivan concludes: "the demonstrable superiority of M's accidentals absolutely establish it as the proper copy text" (p. lx). The iterated emphasis of the repeated modifiers, "demonstrable . . . absolutely . . . proper," suggest that Sullivan, anticipating disagreement with his choice, is moving swiftly to discredit the alternative. At the same time, as he acknowledges, "exactly duplicating M's accidentals is neither desirable nor possible" (p. lxvi), instancing manuscript abbreviations and the use of brackets to indicate quotations, which "are more characteristic of manuscripts than of texts printed in the early 1600s" (p. lxvi).

But if we grant that the editorial theory under which Sullivan has produced his edition is currently authoritative, and if we acknowledge that Sullivan's application of that theory to this particular text is factually accurate and plausibly argued, why is the edition that results so unsatisfactory? Leaving aside for the moment the practical problems of the production of his specific volume (by Associated University Presses for the University of Delaware Press), which are substantial but which cannot be charged to Sullivan, is there a flaw in the theory or in Sullivan's application of it?

The experience of Greg and Bowers (though not of McKerrow) was almost exclusively in dramatic texts typically printed in quarto editions rarely supervised by their authors, and the editorial theory that emerged from the frustrations of trying to extract from such unauthoritative prints evidence of authorial usage insisted that, however "veiled" and distant that authorial usage was, it was still more present in the earliest print and progressively less so in subsequent reprints.[12] Such authorial usages as spelling and punctuation were of prime importance in reconstructing how lines of dramatic verse were meant to be scanned and spoken. That is, accidental "texture" is thought of as an essential part of the literary texture and individual style of the author.[13] Reference to external standards of correctness was neither possible nor appropriate. This argument has carried the day in the editing of Renaissance texts, particularly dramatic texts, though the victory is something of a pyrrhic one, for the

expense of editing, producing, and publishing old-spelling texts of lesser Renaissance dramatists and the restricted market such editions find have combined to sink a number of such projects, whereas the frankly modernized Oxford Shakespeare has forged ahead and is in print.

Donne's reputation rests on his poetry and, to a lesser extent, on his prose, especially his sermons; that is, on works we, at least, regard as imaginative literature, where nuances of style—the intonation of a line of verse, the shaping of a rhetorical period actually spoken or imaginatively meant to be spoken, a pun or rhyme revealed in original spelling but concealed by modernization—are features of the text a serious student would want at least to be aware of. Sullivan and Rudick (but not Clebsch or Battin) are professional students of literature. Sullivan has treated *Biathanatos* as a literary text deserving of editorial treatment as such, remarking that "Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers approached *Biathanatos* as a treatise on suicide rather than as imaginative literature" (p. xxi). Most other readers will find that *Biathanatos* is *not* literature. Joan Webber described it as "uninteresting as literature," though "most important to an understanding of his prose style."[14] It is a carefully reasoned, highly structured, and meticulously documented quasi-legal brief. Rudick and Battin quite accurately describe it as "a seventeenth-century treatise in moral theology" (p. civ). This is not to say that Donne's personality, so salient in his poems and his more public prose, is absent from this text. Clebsch argued that "the author's personality and personal sensibilities shine through even the duller sections" (p. xi), comparing *Biathanatos* favorably with such contemporary tracts as William Ames's *Marrow of Divinity* or Jeremy Taylor's later *Ductor Dubitantium*. John Carey likewise discerns the writer behind the argument: "His trailing, jumbled sentences, now bafflingly elliptical, now sardonically explicit, retain, among all the jeering and wit, a heated, breathless air, fiercely compassionate."[15] But wit and compassion are not typical of the text (though irony is), and it is no accident that *Biathanatos* has waited for over three centuries for a modern edition. Only a devoted Donnean will work through this text for its *literary* pleasure.

Given the nature of the text to be edited, the coterie of intimates for which it was originally intended, and the audience for whom it is being now edited, an old-spelling text based on a manuscript copy-text raises to prominence precisely those accidental features that impede comprehension of its argument, without—at least in Sullivan's edition—a measurable gain in literary or stylistic appreciation.[16] Here, author and reader—at least the contemporary reader—are at odds.

Take, for example, the documentation, an essential feature of the text, substantively and formally, though Donne himself dismissed it as merely a "multiplicity of not necessary citations" produced "onely for Ornament, and Illustration" (Sullivan, pp. 32, 5). Donne himself lists 173 authors (or works) at the outset, and a typical page in Sullivan's edition records as footnotes the following marginalia—all entered by Donne in the Bodleian manuscript:

> a. *Carbo. Summ: to:* 3. *l.* 3. C. 9. b. *Syluest: Verbo Martyrium.* c. *Nauar Manual:* C. 15. *N.* 16. d. *phil:* 1. 23. e. *in* 2. *Cor:* 5. 1. *Marlorate.* f. *Aphor: Confes: ver: Charitas.* g. *fo:* 284. (p. 90)

Turning to the commentary, the reader will learn that the reference in note a. is to "Carbone, *Summae*, 3: sig. M7," or, more fully, to Ludovico Carbone à Costacciaro's *Summae Summarum Casuum Conscientiae sive Totius Theologiae Practicae*, published by Robert Meiett at Venice in 1606 (pp. 192-93). The initial note on Carbone in the commentary points out that he was described by Donne in a sermon as a man "who hath written learnedly *De legibus*, of the bond and obligation of Lawes."[17] Pursuing Carbone further, we find him listed in Sullivan's introduction as "an important example of casuistry" and as one of a number of "scholastic theologians of many nations" whom Donne consulted (p. xii). The *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* being silent on just who Carbone (or, as anglicized, Carbo) was, we find by consultng the index and introduction of Rudick/Battin that he was "an Italian layman" and his *Summae* "almost entirely derivative from the prevailing fashions of casuistry in the early seventeenth century" (p. xxviii). The point of Donne's note, incidentally, is to document his assertion (quoting Sullivan's text), "*That it is lawfull to wish the death of Tyran, or of a fauorer of Heretiques, though he dy in Mortall sinne*" (p. 90), a statement that Rudick/Battin explain "as an example of the legitimacy of wishing a sinner ill if a spiritual good or a communal benefit will result; one does this 'from charity'" (p. 246). All this for one note. There are hundreds like it.[18]

The scholarly reader will have no difficulty in recognizing the genre to which such of writing belongs: it is his own. *We have met the enemy and he is us.* Donne's anxiety to offer irrefutable authority for a (then) heterodox view of what he delicately refers to as "a misinterpretable subject" accounts for the multiplication of authorities and their marginal itemization in the Bodleian MS, a process continued in the holograph

that underlies the later quarto. Are we meant to understand the references? Probably not, at least in any detail. But we *are* meant to be impressed with them, to sense that here is a man of serious purpose, who is not so emotionally involved with his subject (as he patently was) that his arguments do not carry objective and authoritative weight. None of us verifies each reference in every scholarly article we may happen to read; nonetheless, we note them—some from more familiar sources than others. Some such process Donne likewise anticipated, for the original of his note, which says simply (if in abbreviated form) that the statement paraphrased (not actually quoted, despite the italics in Sullivan's text reflecting the bracketing in the Bodleian MS) occurs in the third volume ("*to:* 3"), book 3 ("*l.* 3."), chapter 9 ("C. 9.") of Carbone's *Summae* ("*Carbo. Summ:*"), does not readily admit of verification. Donne assumes that there is only one edition of Carbo (a safe assumption, as it was published in 1607, a year before *Biathanatos* was completed), and doubtless the scholarly audience of the early seventeenth century did not need to be told that Carbo was an Italian lay casuist. Inescapably, the twentieth-century reader reads the same note with a different pair of eyes. He or she *needs* the information that Rudick/Battin supply, and, indeed, in tracking Donne's sources to their original, Sullivan's location of the passage in question on sig. M7 of volume 3 is only marginally more helpful than Donne's own location by the internal reference of the work itself, for Carbo's *Summa* is not a volume that comes readily to hand in most of our professional libraries. More likely, however, the modern reader will want to know the general character of Donne's references and will leave it to the editor to confirm that Donne is quoting or paraphrasing accurately.

What is the gain, then, of preserving Donne's own *form* of citation when the original *context* for that form is irretrievably lost? The two are reciprocal phenomena, two halves of the same process. The twentieth-century reader, however scholarly, either needs or will certainly welcome the expansion of "a. *Carbo. Summ: to:* 3. *l.* 3. C. 9." to "[20]Carbo, *Casuum conscientiae summa summarum*, tom. 3, lib. 3, cap. 9." As the reference is part of the documentation, the clarity and readability of the modernized form are a clear gain; if there is a loss of authenticity in not preserving the form of Donne's original, it goes unmourned—that is, unless (Webber's thesis) Donne is pulling our legs. The look of an artifact has usurped the functionality of the reference. And yet the artifact is not *itself* authentic: a marginal reference, originally abbreviated so as to fit within a margin, is now printed at the foot of the page, where there are no constraints as to its length; a reference meant to be glanced at out of the

periphery of one's vision is signaled by the superscripted [a.] in the text, to which we respond by breaking off contact with the text to read the footnote. Very soon, however, one learns to ignore such superscripted references, for the glance at the bottom of the page scarcely repays the effort. The argumentative logic of *Biathanatos* is difficult enough to follow without the interruption of Donne's cryptic marginalia. (The manuscript itself keys such references within the body of the text, but inconsistently; Sullivan has regularized them and supplied them when needed.)

But, you say, surely the text, not the notes, is where the authentic Donne will be found, the Donne we all know and teach in *The Extasie*. The following passage begins the third main subdivision of the treatise. I quote first from Sullivan's text, then from Rudick/Battin's:

> That Light which issues from the Moone doth best represent and expresse that which in our selues we call the Light of Nature; For as that in the Moone is permanent and euer there, and yet it is vnequall, various, pale, and languishing, So is our Light of Nature changeable. For being at the first kindling at full, it wayned presently, and by departing farther, and farther from God, declin'd by generall Sinne, to all most a totall Eclipse: till God coming nearer to vs, first by the Law and then by Grace, enlightened, and repayrd it again, conveniently to his ends, and further excersise of his Mercy and Iustice. And then those artificiall Lightes which our selues make for our vse and seruice here, as Fires, Tapers, and such, resemble the light of Reason, as we haue in our second part accepted that word. For though the Light of these fires and tapers be not so Naturall, as the Moone, yet because they are more domestique, and obedient to vs, we distinguish perticular obiects, better by them, then by the Moone, so by the Arguments, and deductions, and conclusions, which our selues beget and produce, as being more seruiceable, and vnder vs, because they are our Creatures, perticular cases are made more cleare and evident to vs. For these we can behold withall, and put them to any office, and examine and proue theyr truth, or likelyhood, and make them answere as long as we will aske; whereas the light of Nature, with a solemne

> and supercilious Maiesty, will speak but once, and give no reason, nor endure examination. . . .
>
> (p. 109; the paragraph continues)

> (1) That light which issues from the moon doth best represent and express that which, in ourselves, we call the light of nature; for, as that in the moon is permanent and ever there, and yet it is unequal, various, pale, and languishing, so is our light of nature changeable. For being at the first kindling at full, it waned presently, and by departing further and further from God, declined by general sin to almost a total eclipse, till God, coming nearer to us, first by the law and then by grace, enlightened and repaired it again, conveniently to His ends, for further exercise of of His mercy and justice. And then those artificial lights, which ourselves make for our use and service here, as fires, tapers, and such, resemble the light of reason, as we have in our second part accepted that word. For though the light of these fires and tapers be not so natural as the moon, yet because they are more domestic and obedient to us, we distinguish particular objects better by them than by the moon; so, by the arguments, and deductions, and conclusions which ourselves beget and produce as being more serviceable, and under us because they are our creatures, particular cases are made more clear and evident to us. For these we can be bold withal, and put them to any office, and examine and prove their truth or likelihood, and make them answer as long as we will ask, whereas the light of nature, with a solemn and supercilious majesty, will speak but once, and give no reason, nor endure examination. (end of paragraph, pp. 145-46)

The first thing we note is the relative transparency of the second passage: it reads as if a modern writer—perhaps a bit old-fashioned in his syntactical fullness and overpunctuation—were writing. This impression is patently inauthentic, but at least we can follow the argument, a relatively simple one as *Biathanatos* goes.[19]

Having sorted out the argument with the help of a modernized text, let us return to old-spelling, authentically old-punctuated version. The first thing we notice (or try not to notice, for it is irrelevant to the sense of the passage) is that the "F" of "For" after the first semi-colon is a capital (we

might notice that the "L" in "Light" and the "M" in "Moone" are capped too, but capping nouns for emphasis is such a common feature of printed texts of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century printed books that we readily accept it and read on). A capital after a semi-colon is not uncommon in seventeenth-century printed texts, but it is quite common in manuscripts. Perhaps, though, there is a justification for it, for "S" in "So" is likewise capped, after a comma, and the sentence does enunciate a simile ("For as . . . So . . ."). We read on. The comma after "farther" makes us pause; we wonder why, cannot assign a reason, dismiss the query, and forge ahead until we come to "declin'd," a verb that wants a subject, glance back (in our mind's eye) to the "it" of the previous line. The prepositions "by" and "to" are meant to follow one another in grammatical sequence but are separated by a comma, so the brain tries first to read them as somehow independent and parallel, rejects that hypothesis, and concludes they *are* in sequence. Similarly delaying us, though less confusing, is the comma after "enlightened," which obscures the parallelism of "repayrd," and the similar one after "ends," which veils the parallelism of "ends" and "further excersise."[20] The preservation in print of the manuscript convention that u/v is u medially and v initially (euer/vs) is so common that we can ignore it, though it contributes nothing to either the meaning or the style of the passage, being a carry-over in early type design of feature of handwriting of the period, a bit of archaizing so that the new medium of print would not look *too* new.[21] The y/i substitution and dropping of the e before d in "waynd" and "repayrd" offer no problems so long as we sound the word in our mind's ear. Of course, skilled readers learn quickly, but there is a cost, in mental fatigue, annoyance, and finally an inability to attend to the substance of a difficult text. We put the volume down and resolve to do better the next day.

The next day.

Perhaps we should go at this text differently. Can we argue that the pointing, if not demonstrably logical or intended to reflect the syntax, is rather rhetorical, intended to indicate breath pauses as one reads the passage aloud?[22] If we try to, we find the excess of commas from, "Sinne, . . ." through "ends, . . ." has slowed down our progress—however light the pauses we make at the commas—so that the climactic pair, God's "Mercy and Iustice," falls limply and anticlimactically from our lips. (Webber's thesis, that no auditor/reader *could* or was expected to "follow its sense," that there is a deliberate and radical disjunction between logic and truth in the prose of *Biathanatos*, is gaining plausibility.)[23]

On whose authority, then, is it that we should have to work our way through Donne's text (at least in Sullivan's edition) in this penitential fashion? Both current theory and established opinion argue that it is Donne's, and I would agree, as it is highly unlikely that a scribe in 1610 and a compositor in 1647 would each independently punctuate a text in the same manner.

In choosing to modernize, Rudick and Battin side-step this issue. They choose Q, not for the authority of its accidentals, but for "the greater, though not absolute, reliability" of its "variation[s] that affect meaning in substantial ways: substitutions, where the texts differ consequentially in wording, and variations involving one text's omission of words found in the other" (p. ci). On both these grounds, they find the quarto superior. Accordingly, they "adopt Q as the base text on the principle that, where choices between variants must be arbitrary, Q will more regularly preserve what Donne wrote" (p. cii). Their edition, however, is critical in every sense of the term other than its modernization of spelling (carefully described, p. civ), punctuation, capitalization, italicization, and paragraphing. Choice of the substantive reading where there is disagreement between the witnesses is made on the basis of context and usage within the text. They list their principles for correcting the text as follows, and state that they are "applied in the following order: (1) what the process of Donne's immediate argument requires; (2) what consists with Donne's argument elsewhere in the treatise; (3) what the style Donne is using demands; (4) what consists with the phraseology elsewhere in the treatise; for borrowed material, (5) what the source he is using says" (p. ciii). Otherwise, "where the choice cannot be made on one or more of these principles, we adopt Q's reading" (p. ciii). Choice of copy-text, then, is not merely a matter of convenience: the quarto constitutes a more accurate and a more reliable text than the Bodleian MS. Exactly who is responsible for that authority is unaddressed. Rudick and Battin conjecture an intermediary scribal transcript of holograph between the holograph and both M and Q. Either Donne corrected that transcript more carefully than he did M, or (Sullivan's view) Donne continued to correct the holograph before his death. In either case, the compositor of Q had before him a more authoritative text to set than M, although in setting it, "some modernization must have occurred" (p. c).

Rudick and Battin's analysis of the superiority of the 1647 quarto carries conviction, both in summary form in the introduction (pp. c-cii) and as detailed in their textual notes. Furthermore, because the formal details of the treatise have been modernized, the notes are restricted to substantive variants between the two authoritative texts. One might

argue that such a note as "2547 punishes] punisheth *M*" is not substantive, in that it simply records the compositor's modernization of what seemed to him an archaic form, but these editors argue that "in a great many variations [Q's] reading gives a more 'archaic' form than does M's" (p. c). Such variants are ignored in Sullivan's apparatus (though evidently supplied in the dissertation itself; p. 151). But the ease of reference, the economy of expression, and the selective nature of the textual notes in the Rudick/Battin text are welcome.

By comparison, Sullivan's apparatus is unusable. There are no line numbers on the text page; the apparatus is relegated to the back matter so that checking it involves photocopying it in order to collate it with the text; the occasional correction of M by Q (Sullivan's text is essentially a corrected reprint of the Bodleian MS) is buried in a thicket of emendations to accidentals, a large proportion of which have to do with transposing the conventions of quotation/paraphrase. A typical page's notes goes as follows:

> 85:2 And] *Q,O; no indication of a new paragraph in M.* 7-9 *Though . . . will*] [Though . . . will] *M; [Though . . . will] Q,O* (Dominium; Vsum). 14 *That . . . we are*] that . . . are] *M; [that . . . we are] Q,O.* 18 For] *Q,O;* for *M.* 19 *Cedere Iure suo*] *Q,O;* Ceder Iure suo *M.* 35 *Non*] [~ *M,Q,O.* 36 *emenda*] ~] *M,Q,O.* 38 And] *Q,O; no indication of a new paragraph in M.* (p. 164)

Once one has mastered the conventions, one can determine that the reading "*we*" on line 14 of the following quote/paraphrase, "*that is no more Lord of our Life, then we are,*" is supplied by the quarto (and also by the 1700 octavo, which is textually irrelevant, being a reprint of the quarto). But that correction is buried within a note whose principal purpose is to signal that the italics of the quote are from the quarto and that the manuscript does not signal a quote (or paraphrase) by a change of hands. The only other substantive variant is that the "*Cedere*" in line 19 corrects the "Ceder" of the manuscript. The note at 7-9 indicates that the italics of the text replace the bracketed roman of M and have as their authority the italics of Q and O, though Q retains the brackets and puts "Dominium" and "Vsum" in roman (reverse font), which distinction Sullivan reports but does not adopt, though he does italicize such names in a roman context, citing Donne's own practice. The two notes for 35 and 36 divide between them a single change, the removal of brackets for quotation. Because the brackets of Sullivan's own note are

typographically identical to those itemized in his variants, the notes are doubly difficult to read.

For the equivalent block of text in Rudick/Battin (pp. 112-13), the Notes are as follows:

3sc8	we] *omit M*
3172-73	*cedere iure*] *Cedere in re Q*, Ceder Iure M
3174	the state] it *M*
n.3	*7 . . . 9 Ed.*] *9 . . . 7 Q M*
3182	their] this *Q*
3183	that] the *M*
3192	*emenda*] *emanda M*

Not only are these notes easier to read because of their typographic design (and to consult because of their placement at the foot of the text page), they distinguish significant from nonsignificant textual data. The omission of "we" in M is clearly and economically expressed. The confusion of both scribe and compositor with the legal tag, *"cedere iure"* ("to yield its right," unglossed by Sullivan) is likewise clear: it usefully suggests the phrase was as unfamiliar then as it is now. The omission of "state" in M is ignored by Sullivan, who regularly omits variants from Q judged indifferent from his apparatus—that is, any variants not accepted into his text. Similarly omitted is Q's reading of "this" for M's "their." Yet both, however trivial in themselves, suggest the nature of the differences between the two substantive texts. (Incidentally, Sullivan's text reads *"emanda,"* surely an error, though his note reads *"emenda."*) Finally, Rudick and Battin take responsibility for the transposition of numbers in the reference to Sayre's *Thesaurus Casuum Conscientiae* and emend their text to read "lib. 7, cap. 9"; Sullivan retains M's erroneous "*I.* 9. C. 7.," and only by consulting his notes do we learn that it should be "More correctly . . . 'Liber VII, Capvt IX'" (p. 216).

Whose responsibility is it that Sullivan's apparatus is so unsatisfactory? I raise the issue in these terms less to assign blame as to identify the forces that bear on each of us as scholarly editors (and purchasers of scholarly editions) and because the pairing of these two editions raises such basic questions as to what scholarly editions ought to consist of in our academic culture.

Sullivan's edition began as a doctoral dissertation. Its commentary notes were, one assumes, exploited by Rudick and Battin in order for them to find the reference they correct in "n. 3" above. In seeking a

publisher, Sullivan doubtless learned that a rival old-spelling edition had been contracted for by Oxford University Press (so Clebsch reports; Mark's dissertation preceded Sullivan's by three years). Whoever else may have considered it, the University of Delaware Press accepted it for publication; they publish through Associated University Presses, a consortium of small university and academic presses. Because the market is so small for such editions, and because the production of scholarly editions is so costly, A.U.P. was (and remains) under pressure to keep production costs down so as not to price the book out of its assumed market. How else to explain the lack of line numbers on the margins of the text and the banishment of the textual notes to end-matter? Unless Sullivan did not wish his text page to *look* like an edition, but the thing itself: "My intention has been to come as close as possible to reproducing in a print format what Donne actually wrote" (p. lxvii).

But in publishing an edition that will sit usefully on a scholar's bookshelf, it is not sufficient simply to prune a dissertation (800 pages in typescript) down to the barest minimum (350 pages in print), to copy-edit it, typeset it, and publish it. Oxford University Press does not produce handsome and useful (if costly) editions for no reason. Behind Clarendon Press editions (where *Biathanatos may* eventually appear) lie centuries of publishing experience, unrivaled typographical resources, exquisite editorial skills, and a freedom from time-pressure possible only in a centuries-old institution. If a scholarly old-spelling edition is to be undertaken, it is important for a publisher to have resources equal to the task. A trivial example: if æ's and œ's are to be preserved, the typeface must have necessary ligatures; A.U.P.'s typesetter did not, so an a and an e are simply set with no space between them (in roman and italic in the text; they seemed to have been available in italic for the notes); they look like blobs, not digraphs. Another: if running heads are to be used that mimic the manuscript form ("*Part 1. Dist: 4. Sect: 1.*"), they need enough white space between them and the text so that the eye can pick up the text at the top of a page without having to suppress the running head. A.U.P.'s do not. (Garland's designer normalized the form to "I.iv.1," which is easier to read yet can be ignored except when being consulted.) If superscripted letters are to be used to key footnotes to the text, they need to be such that the eye can skip over them when it wants to but locate them when it needs to. A.U.P.'s are in a font only marginally smaller than the text and are set in roman like the text, followed by periods—again, a manuscript convention. In print the effect is of clutter and confusion: ". . . consider $^{d.}$a Canon . . ." (p. 70.20). In italic and a smaller font, sans the period, the eye could readily distinguish them when needed and ignore them when not. Garland uses superscripted

numbers, *after* the text being referenced; because this is the modern convention, one quickly adapts to it. T. S. Healy's Oxford edition of *Ignatius His Conclave* retains the seventeenth-century convention of actual marginalia whose placement obviates the need for a referencing scheme in the text itself. In short, because an old-spelling text is itself an artifact, especial care needs to be spent on presentation so that the additional attention demanded of the reader by the older formal conventions functions to enhance the experience of reading the text, not as a constant subliminal antagonist to reading comprehension and pleasure.

By contrast, the production of the Garland edition shows great care and thoughtfulness for the reader. The typeface, Baskerville, is familiar and quite readable (A.U.P.'s Century is nondescript). The work has through-line-numbers, by 5's, in italic in the left margin. Donne's notes appear above a rule below the text; the textual notes appear below. The commentary notes are separated by leading so the eye can readily pick them up; they are referenced by TLN; the information they supply is clear and to the point.

An example. At the end of the Preface, Donne is apologizing for the excess documentation: (I quote Rudick/Battin's text):

> If, therefore, in multiplicity of not necessary citations there appear vanity, or ostentation, or digression, my honesty must make my excuse and compensation, who acknowledge as Pliny doth, that to choose rather to be taken in a theft than to give every man his due is *obnoxii animi et infelicis ingenii.*

Their note reads:

> 1225 *obnoxii . . . ingenii.* "Mean minded and ill-natured," the character of a plagiarist, according to Pliny the Elder; Donne cites the prefatory epistle to the *Naturalis historia*, where Pliny exonerated himself of that charge, as Donne does here, by pointing to his long catalogue of sources and authorities. (p. 203)

Sullivan's note reads as follows (it is keyed to Donne's):

> 32:31. e. *Epistol: Tito vespas. / Plinie.* Gaius Plinius Secundus (Pliny the Elder), *Natural History*, Loeb Classical Library 6 vols. (London: William Heinemann,

1938), "Preface" (a letter to Titus Vespasian Caesar), 1:14. (p. 188)

First of all, Rudick/Battin translate the Latin tag (as Donne did in his sermons, which he himself prepared for the press[24]), supply its context ("the character of a plagiarist"), and point out the analogy with Pliny which prompted Donne's quotation and citation. They tell us exactly what we need to know to read the passage intelligently. Sullivan gives Pliny's full Latin name, distinguishes him from Pliny the Younger, supplies the source in his *Natural History*, tells us that he is using the Loeb Classical Library's text and translation, that it was published in 6 volumes by the London publisher William Heinemann in 1938 and that the quote comes from the "Preface," a letter to Titus Vespasian Caesar (explaining the note's "*Epistol: Tito vespas*"), and supplies the page and volume reference (1:14). What the tag *means* or why Donne chose it require us to find a copy of the Loeb *Natural History* and look up the reference. Meanwhile we are told (but have no use for) the publishing data for the Loeb (which everyone who would read an old-spelling edition of *Biathanatos* would know), what Pliny's full name was, and that he is to be distinguished from his nephew. None of the information Sullivan supplies is incorrect, but none of it is really pertinent. The example is paradigmatic.

But who supplies the paradigm, and on what authority is it adopted? Originally, in the case of Sullivan's edition, the university which bestowed his degree upon him and the doctoral committee acting as its agent. But in accepting the edition for publication, the University of Delaware Press acceded in its use. Garland, which also publishes *as dissertations* editions that began as dissertations, has started here with a different paradigm, for their modern-spelling edition is called "Garland English Texts *Number 1*." Its *raison d'être*, as the introduction states, is to prepare a text "for as wide a readership as may have reason to appreciate the work—for those whose interest is in Donne, in the renaissance, in the moral issues bearing on suicide, and in ethical and religious philosophy. Its object is to make the text accessible and to present the commentary and annotation necessary to bring it out of its undeserved obscurity" (pp. ix-x). Targeted, then, is an audience well beyond specialists in seventeenth-century English literature. Accordingly, commentary on the text is supplied by a scholar not identified with literary study as such, but who has a special interest in the subject matter, suicide.[25] The Clebsch text goes farther still: his is frankly an adaptation in which many "terms commonly used in Donne's day have been changed to our equivalent (if debased and inflated) coinage" for the benefit of the

twentieth-century undergraduate; for example, the "slightly garbled Greek—*Biathanatos*, which means to die violently," Clebsch translated by the "simple, current, ambiguous term *Suicide*," not Donne's own term "self-homicide," which he acknowledges "heighten[s] the paradoxical character of the very concept [Donne] was discussing, since homicide denotes causing another's death" (p. ix). Such concessions to the limitations of the modern reader—Clebsch acknowledged that "keeping up with Donne's plays on language shortly becomes demanding" (p. ix)—disqualify such "reader's edition[s]" as textual scholarship, and only a scholar whose professional reputation was as secure as Clebsch's can afford to make them. Bowers is particularly severe with such "practical" editions, and much of G. Thomas Tanselle's argument with the historians' treatment of texts simply extends the logic of the Bowers position.[26] The younger the scholar, the more conservative the text: the senior authority of the Greg-Bowers-Tanselle position establishes the paradigm, and the junior scholar accepts it.

A university press of modest resources and reputation such as the University of Delaware acts similarly. It is not then a question of fault. Each party to the system operates with the best will in the world: the individual scholar, his university mentors, the authorities in the field, the publisher, the reviewers. But the result—while marginally more useful to specialists who will tolerate the idiosyncracies and inconsistencies of a *printed* manuscript—is off-putting to nonspecialist readers (or otherwise highly qualified specialists in other disciplines) who might otherwise be attracted to Donne's text. (Transelle is unmoved by such considerations: "the reader's convenience is surely not the primary consideration"; *Selected Studies*, p. 460).

Are there alternatives? Yes. One is to be published by Oxford (or Cambridge, or Harvard, etc.), but scholarly editions—however well produced—whose primary market will be the 1,461 members of MLA who currently list themselves as professionally interested in "17th-Century English Literature" (5.47% of a total membership of 26,726) are scarcely being published at all by American university presses and not much more frequently by their English counterparts. Another is to offer it to an intermediary, such as the E.E.T.S. or its more modest American counterpart, the R.E.T.S. A third would be to seek the seal of the MLA's CSE (Committee on Scholarly Editions, successor to the CEAA, Center for Editions of American Authors), a useful check on editorial quality but itself no guarantee of publication. In the first case, an editorial committee would have supervised the edition; in the second, an inspector would have asked searching questions about choice of copy-text, audience, presentation of textual data, and the like.[27] Not all CEAA/CSE editions

are model editions, and R.E.T.S. editions have yet to establish themselves as E.E.T.S. or Malone Society editions have.[28] But they do supply established paradigms that are themselves the products of careful thought, offer useful guidance to the individual editor and/or publisher, have modest influence with the publisher when economic choices are to be made, and help to establish and define the expected audience.[29]

But let us take the argument a step further. In the Greg-Bowers-Tanselle view,[30] an edition that modernizes spelling, punctuation, font, paragraphing, etc., is not—*by definition*—a "scholarly" edition: "the position that the text of a *scholarly* edition of any material can ever be modernized is indefensible" (Tanselle, *Selected Studies*, p. 498). Garland's venture, then, entails some risk, for they have taken it upon themselves to construct, as a paradigm, "Garland English Texts," editions influential scholars repudiate as unscholarly. Why? To increase the audience (and market) for their edition, to pay for the more costly production and typography (simply putting textual footnotes at the foot of the text page requires paging galleys by hand to accommodate two levels of notes; that is something that some typesetting software can now do but could not in the early 1980s), and—though this argument is only implicit in their paradigm—not only to make the text more saleable, but to make it "available" in a now obsolete sense, "availing," "efficacious," "capable of producing a desired result" (*Shorter OED*). That is, by accepting that the context of the actual readers of their edition is in fact the late twentieth century, Rudick and Battin are saying that *Biathanatos* deserves to be read on the basis of the originality and force of its argument, not because it—or more properly, the particular form in which one version has survived, its manuscript—is a treasured relic of a canonized poet of seventeenth-century England.

Aha! you say. Who's this jerk that doesn't know that style and substance are inextricably interwoven, that you can't have the *echt* Donne without the authorial punctuation, spelling, style of documentation, etc., that "an author's accidentals [are] an integral part of *his* expression" (Bowers, *Essays*, p. 458)? Well, whoever he is, he is not Donne. Doubtless Donne did care about his punctuation, because the alternative was scribal fragmentation of the text into phrases easy to memorize and transcribe. And doubtless too he had his personal preferences within the generally more flexible orthography of his day. But I remain unconvinced that he attached an over-riding sense of *significance* to such formal (or "accidental" features) of the text, just as I find it hard to believe that Hooker attached any intrinsic importance to *his* personal orthography.[31] Renaissance conceptions of style derived from classical rhetoric

emphasized its independence of personality and insisted that it was properly dependent on subject matter, occasion, genre, audience, etc.

In publishing his father's treatise, the younger Donne was evidently convinced that this was the only alternative to the work's loss or destruction in the social upheavals of the civil war. It achieved only a precarious cultural viabilility as a treatise on suicide, not being reprinted until 1700 and not thereafter until 1930. Its meager publication history is itself testimony to the tenacity of the traditional condemnation of suicide it sought to overturn. Not until the more general decay of the larger Judaeo-Christian tradition in which it was originally published has its message begun to be attended to, its argument analyzed, its original context(s) reconstructed. Editions such as Clebsch's and Rudick and Battin's, then, treat the text as itself authoritative, as saying something worth attending to on a painful topic long taboo. Old-spelling texts such as Sullivan's treat the text as a seventeenth-century relic, to be observed behind glass, displayed in the museum of the mind.[32]

To what end, then, editorial scholarship? To recover from the past works of current interest and present them in a way that makes them (doubly) "available"? Or to fix that work in the past from which it came, extracted from the human transaction of which it was once a part and encapsulated in an apparatus that insures that *only* specialists of a particularly determined character will use it?[33] When Bowers (and Tanselle, and CSE) insist that any scholar worthy of the name will want each emendation of each accidental itemized, the position has a logical rigor that is irrefutable. But how many scholars will in fact track the editor's collations with that sort of care? Only reviewers (and only some of them) and other editors, but any subsequent editor of *Biathanatos* will send for a microfilm of Ms. e. Musaeo 131 and perform his or her own collations.

Ah, you say, of course no one *reads* the apparatus, but we all *consult* it. Fine. Then put that apparatus where it *can* be consulted, make it *readable*, include variants from *both* authoritative texts, and either generalize as silent such changes as are systematic (dropping the brackets that Donne himself used, italicizing the quotations/paraphrases) or put them in a separate schedule.

Am I arguing against old-spelling editions? No. My point is that old-spelling editions present such challenging problems for their editors and publishers that it is difficult for undercapitalized academic presses like A.U.P. to do them justice. Here Oxford has no rival: but then it is not attempting to replicate an older tradition so much as maintaining a tradition that is, after all, its own. And yet, however skillfully produced, even Clarendon Press old-spelling editions freeze a text in time, fit that

text into a context of historical scholarship distinct from the one to which it was originally addressed. Such an edition confers enormous prestige on the text,[34] even as it distances us from it: what is authentically antique to us was quite contemporary in the original.

The choice is invariably put to us in terms of *echt* old-spelling vs. *ersatz* modernization. But the melancholy truth is that the original purity has been contaminated by its temporal existence. *Every* edition is an artifact; none is the real thing; the context has shifted and continues to shift: none of us can read Donne's *Biathanatos* with other than twentieth-century eyes, whichever text we read. None of us can claim we are Donne's "particular friends in both Universities." With respect to history and our own mortality, our failures are absolute; our successes can only be relative.

This suggests why Jerome J. McGann's *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* has had an impact on contemporary textual scholarship far beyond its slim size. It is difficult to quote briefly, but consider the following passage, from the chapter, "The Ideology of Final Intentions":

> Having learned the lesson that Authors who wish to make contact with an audience are fated, by laws of information theory, to have their messages more or less seriously garbled in the process, textual critics proposed to place the reader in an unmediated contact with the author. This project is of course manifestly impossible, a Heisenbergian dilemma, since some form of mediation is always occurring, not least in the editions produced by critical editors of various persuasions. Nevertheless, though everyone today recognizes this inherent limitation on all acts of communication, the idea persists in textual studies that a regression to authorial manuscripts will by itself serve to reduce textual contamination.
>
> (p. 41)

One edition under review subscribes to the latter view, whose origins, as McGann points out on the page previous to this quote, is "the concept of the autonomy of the creative artist," a central plank in romantic mythology of the artist's isolation from society. The other accepts the fact that "some form of mediation is always occurring" and attempts to render that mediation as unobtrusive and as transparent as possible. The interest of the third (the Clebsch adaptation is hardly an edition) is willingness frankly to carry this process to its logical conclusion. The alternative is an exercise in vanishing point perspective where the ideal autonomous

author, whose style and substance are inextricably married, and the ideal editor/edition, which has stripped that author's text of every trace of contamination, meet at the horizon, where authorial purity is an invisible point infinitely far in the ever-receding distance.

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Notes

[1] The quarto exists in two issues, the first undated, the second dated 1648; for the dating of the first issue, see Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne: Dean of Saint Paul's*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), p. 113.

[2] Ed. J. William Hebel (New York: Facsimile Text Society), rpt. New York: Arno Press, 1977.

[3] Clebsch noted that "through correspondence with editors at Oxford University Press I have learned that yet another scholarly edition was being prepared for publication by Dr. Mark and Helen Peters" (p. xvi). Rudick and Battin also state that "Professor Mark is currently preparing an old-spelling edition to be published by the Clarendon Press" (p. cix, n. 14). However, Professor Mark wrote me in February 1986 that his doctoral dissertation "bears virtually no resemblance to a typescript which is not presently under consideration at any press."

[4] *A Study of the Prose Works of John Donne* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924), p. 144.

[5] *John Donne: A Life* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 201.

[6] Evidence of such a precise *terminus ad quem* is supplied by a presentation copy of the 1647 quarto, which contains a letter from John Donne the Younger identifying the recipient, William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle, as one of the "particular friends in both Universities" (from a letter written to "*S*[r] Robert Carre [Ker] *now Earle of* Ankerum, *with my Book* Biathanatos *at my going into* Germany" written in the spring 1619; p. xxxv), to whom Donne had circulated the manuscript in holograph, and Cavendish, Sullivan argues, had "probably received the M.A. on 8 July 1608" (p. xxxvi).

[7] Rudick and Battin assume an intermediary scribal transcript of Donne's original, citing the unlikelihood that "Donne wrote 'external' for 'eternal' at 1428, or 'reditus' for 'reditum' at 1791, or 'celeritas' for 'sceleritas' at 2501" (p. c). The evidence that these are the readings of either the holograph, or its scribal transcript, lies in the agreement of the two witnesses in them. However, it is by no means implausible that in a 150-page manuscript Donne himself would have been responsible for such errors, or that two witnesses, in an attempt to read Donne's hand, made similar (but wrong) guesses.

[8] Sullivan dates the Bodleian MS between 1621, when Donne had returned from abroad, and 1629, when Herbert became Lord Herbert (the letter of presentation is addressed *S*[r] *Edward Herbert*"). Simpson dated it before the letter to Ker, in which Donne asserted, "No hand hath passed upon it to copy it," because Donne signed the presentation letter to Herbert, "yo[r] uery true and earnest frinde, and Seruaunt and Louer," "a form used characteristically by Donne in letters written to good friends before his ordination in January 1615, but not at all like the forms he regularly used afterwards to the same friends, which are represented by the close of the letter sending *Biathanatos* to Ker, 'Your poor servant in Chr. Jes.'" (Rudick/Battin, p. xcviii, citing Bald, *Life*, p. 184). It seems more plausible that Donne would have had *Biathanatos* copied in the years immediately after its composition (and before his ordination) and that in writing Ker in 1619 forgot about the earlier copy (so Keynes, p. 112) than that he would have taken the trouble twenty years later to have had *Biathanatos* copied, to annotate that copy, and to present it to Herbert. Sullivan notes that the same paper found in the text of the Bodleian MS is found in two letters in Magdalen College, Oxford, dated 1628 and 1629 from and to "Lord Pembroke," but watermarks—presumably the basis for the identification of the paper—are not always reliable as evidence for dating manuscripts.

[9] *SB* 3 (1950), 19-36; it has been widely reprinted, e.g., in *Collected Studies*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Oxford: Clarendon, 1966), and in *Bibliography and Textual Criticism: English and American Literature 1700 to the Present*, ed. O. M. Brack, Jr., and Warner Barnes (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 41-58.

[10] "Current Theories of Copy-Text, with an Illustration from Dryden," *MP* 48 (1950), 12-20, rpt. Brack and Barnes, pp. 59-72, and Fredson Bowers, *Essays in Bibliography, Text, and Editing*

(Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia for the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1975), pp. 277-88; and "Multiple Authority: New Problems and Concepts of Copy-Text," *The Library*, 5th ser., 27 (1972), 81-115, rpt. *Essays*, pp. 447-87.

[11] "A Note on Donne's Punctuation," *RES* 4 (1928), 296.

[12] An important analysis of the limitations of this position is offered by Jerome J. McGann in *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983), see below, p. xxx.

[13] The point is made so repeatedly by Bowers (and by G. Thomas Tanselle) that particular citation is otiose, but see *inter alia* "Practical Texts and Definitive Editions," in Charlton Hinman and Fredson Bowers, *Two Lectures on Editing: Shakespeare and Hawthorne* (Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1968), rpt. *Essays*, pp. 412-39, esp. p. 437:

> If scholarship consists in getting things right, in being accurate, ... how can we trust the standards of critics who in wilful ignorance care so little about the exactness of the texts whose contents they are evaluating for our benefit that they pick up any edition that comes to hand, with no regard for its editorial authority and exactness of representation of the author's wishes. This representation (for informed criticism) must extend down to the very last minute detail of sentence cadence the author heard in his mind as transmitted by the precise punctuation he placed in his manuscripts as a guide, whether conscious or unconscious, to something more than overt meaning.

[14] *Contrary Music: A Study of Donne's Prose Style* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1966), p. 5.

[15] *John Donne: Life, Mind and Art* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1981), p. 206.

[16] Webber dismissed the traditional view that reads *Biathanatos* "as a serious defense of suicide": it "appears to be ... a somewhat half-hearted, somewhat unsuccessful satire on scholastic and casuistical reasoning"; such a dismissive stance would presumably have welcomed, on grounds of literary authenticity, an edition that made no attempt to clarify the unclarifiable, for in *Biathanatos* Donne is "presenting a problem to which there is no solution" (p. 5). None of the editors of the editions under review subscribe to Webber's subversive reading.

[17] The citation is to George R. Potter and Evelyn M. Simpson, eds., *The Sermons of John Donne* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1953), VII, 125.

[18] Compare Webber: "his continual references to sources and his excessive use of various typographical devices are purposely employed, together with the unwieldy and inadequate syntax, to mock the kind of writing that *Biathanatos* imitates" (p. 7). If in *Biathanatos* Donne were merely mocking "the sort of formal reasoning employed by Catholic logicians and casuists," he must be chuckling posthumously at the enormous effort he has put his latter-day editors to in tracking him to these sources.

[19] The argument goes as follows: arguments from the law of God (with which the third major subdivision of the treatise will be concerned) are to arguments from the law of nature (with which the first part has been concerned) as the light of the moon, "unequal, various, pale, and languishing," is to the light of the sun; by inference, the arguments that follow will be that much stronger than those that have preceded. Secondly, arguments drawn from the "law[s] of reason," with which the second part has been concerned, that is, arguments derived from and based on the formal discipline of logic ("the arguments, and deductions, and conclusions which ourselves beget and produce") are more serviceable than arguments based on nature, for "the light of nature ... will speak but once, and give no reason, nor endure examination." In short, the arguments in part one were less strong than those in part two, and those in part two will be, in turn, less strong that those in part three. The traditional hierarchy of nature, man, and God forms the basis for this pair of linked analogies.

[20] Webber remarked: "to advance through the often tangled syntax of Donne's qualifying phrases and clauses is rather like climbing over boulders, boulders sometimes designedly high enough to obscure the view" (p. 7).

[21] According to McKerrow, the "modern" distinction goes back to "Giangiorgio Trissino, Italian poet and spelling-reformer, in his books printed in 1524 ... the reform was next taken up by Pierre de la Ramee or Ramus, whose *Grammatica* of 1559 distinguishes i and j, u and v according to the modern system throughout, both in capitals and lower-case" (*An Introduction to Bibliography: For Literary Students* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1927], p. 311). As the modern system was all but in place by 1630, the 1647 quarto looks just that much more modern than the manuscript.

[22] Potter and Simpson summarize: "The use of commas, semicolons, colons, and periods is ... on a rhetorical rather than a grammatical basis, ... those four punctuation marks were simply indications of four degrees of pause, and the distinctions among these four degrees were not fixed by any set rules ... but were in large measure determined by the writer's, and often by the copyists's

or printer's, sense of what was fitting" (I, 75). For a fascinating account of the problematic character of reading in earlier eras, see Robert Darnton, "Toward a History of Reading," *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, 87.15 (April 8, 1987), 19-24, 32. Darnton suggests that reading was more oral/aural and less visual than now: "for most people throughout most of history, books had audiences rather than readers. They were better heard than seen" (p. 21).

[23] Is it possible that the system of pointing the scribe has bequeathed to us is a function, not of how he (or Donne) would have wanted us to *read* the passage but of the scribe's task of transcribing the original, and that they represent simply units of text he memorized from copy to be transcribed? The first such unit is quite long—two lines in Sullivan's text; they decrease in length as the passage unfolds, and the final phrase is notably shorter, 8 words as opposed to 23. Such a practice would account for the excess of commas, for the scribe could not keep longer phrases in his head as he copied, and Donne would not have corrected this punctuation by deletion, for that would have spoiled the appearance of a presentation copy.

But such an argument, while plausible, would be more convincing if we could be sure that this punctuation was scribal and not authorial. Simpson, however, argued that as both the quarto and the manuscript are similarly punctuated (unverifiable in Sullivan's edition as nonsubstantive variants in Q are unrecorded, but Mark agrees), the punctuation in M must derive from Donne's original. "The manuscripts of Donne's works show that Donne . . . was scrupulous about punctuation, and that in most of his books it is the author rather than the printer who must be held responsible. . . . If Donne did not punctuate his own work, . . . his copyists would either imitate his lack of punctuation or each scribe would be at liberty to introduce variations of his own. The elaborate and beautiful punctuation of *Biathanatos* and of the *Poems* of 1633 would be due to the printers alone, and we should find no resemblance to it in the manuscripts. But this is not the case. The manuscript of *Biathanatos*, annotated and authorized by Donne, is most carefully punctuated" ("A Note," pp. 295-96).

[24] Potter and Simpson, I, 46-47.

[25] Battin has co-edited a volume of essays, *Suicide: The Philosophic Issues* (New York: St. Martin's, 1980), and surveyed the *Ethical Issues in Suicide* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1982).

[26] See "The Editing of Historical Documents," *SB* 31 (1978), 1-56, rpt. *Selected Studies in Bibliography* (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia for the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1979), pp. 451-506.

[27] See the Committee's "Guiding Questions" (New York: MLA, 1982).

[28] One might add Mario A. Di Cesare's *Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies*, which specializes in "scholarly works which ought to be published, but which academic publishers have been avoiding or which, published, cost so much that most scholars and many libraries simply cannot afford them." I have no direct experience of the editorial quality of their editions.

[29] My understanding is that Sullivan offered it to R.E.T.S., which did not accept it because Oxford had staked out its claim to the text, in an edition which as of 1986 remains something of a ghost.

[30] The *locus classicus*, repeatedly cited by Bowers, is Greg's "Note on Accidental Characteristics of the Text," appended to the Prolegomena to *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare: A Survey of the Foundations of the Text*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954), pp. l-lv: "modern opinion is unanimously in favour of preserving the spelling and punctuation of the original authority, at least so far as they are not actually misleading" (p. l).

[31] See W. Speed Hill, "The Calculus of Error: or, Confessions of a General Editor," *MP* 75 (1978), 247-60, esp. p. 258.

[32] In fairness to Sullivan, it is clearly not his *intent* to preserve merely the formal qualities of a relic; his stated aim is to make "this important work accessible to modern readers by providing first, a reliable text . . . and second, an identification of, and guide to, Donne's sources" (p. vii).

[33] Mark chose the Quarto as copy-text in part because the history of *Biathanatos* begins with its publication in 1647, "to which [edition] all reference by Donne's critics has been made for the last three hundred years" ("John Donne: *Biathanatos*, A Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary," Diss. Princeton University 1969, p. cxcviii).

[34] Compare Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender*, "the form of [whose] first publication . . . was intended to impress the reader with a sense of the importance of the work. This collection of English poems by an unknown author was equipped with apparatus proper to an edition of a Latin classic: an introduction pointing out the singular merits of the poem, a disquisition on the nature and history of its genre, a glossary and notes. No English poet had ever been announced so pretentiously" (William Nelson, *The Poetry of Edmund Spenser* [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1963], pp. 32-33).