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More on Regarding "How It Goes"

Gary Stringer

Readers of *JDJ* are surely among those most likely to use the Donne Variorum, and it is fitting that its merits and demerits be discussed in these pages. I was therefore happy to see publication of William Proctor Williams's "A Variorum: 'How It Goes'" and John T. Shawcross's "Using the Variorum Edition of John Donne's Poetry" in the previous issue (vol. 17, pp. 217-26 and 227-47, respectively). Both Williams and Shawcross have been generous supporters of the Variorum project down through the years, and I am grateful for their help here in interpreting to other scholars a complex body of material. Especially as regards the textual work in the edition, however, these reviews raise a number of issues that call for clarification; and I'd like to address them here, presenting my remarks as a series of numbered points and keying them to the pagination in the journal. I shall begin with Williams.

1. Page 223. Since accuracy of transcription is fundamental to our entire enterprise, I would begin by pointing out that Williams's account of the rendition of *Henry* 3 in B14 (BL Add. ms. 27407) is in error and ours is correct. The manuscript gives the fourth word in the line as "Center" (not, as Williams reports, "Centers") and follows it with a comma, as we noted. Williams is right that our apparatus doesn't explicitly distinguish between spellings ending in "er" and those ending in "re"—because we don't regard the difference as substantive—but a re-check of the microfilm confirms that B14 gives the word in the singular form and follows it with a comma.

2. Pages 222-23. Williams's remarks on the marginal note "*entrance*." (which is keyed to *SecAn* 1) and our handling of it contain

several errors. First, the siglum for the 1621 Anniversaries is c (lower case), not—as Williams reports—C (C is in fact the siglum for the 1639 collected *Poems*). Second, in asserting that our Historical Collation fails to report c's change to a period of b's erroneous colon after "*entrance*" (b is the siglum for the 1612 Anniversaries), Williams misinterprets the apparatus. As Williams says, we note in the list of Emendations of the copy-text that we have changed b's "*entrance*:" to "*entrance.*" (i.e., changed the colon to a period). Once we have done that, the emended form (with the period) becomes in the Historical Collation the lemma against which variants are recorded. The entry in the Historical Collation thus reads: *entrance.*] ~: b. What this means is that b records the variant "*entrance*:" (the use of the swung dash to represent the lemmatic word in such instances is conventional) while everything *not* listed agrees with the lemma; i.e., all texts except b—including c—give "*entrance.*" (with a period). The Historical Collation thus does in fact correctly denote the reading of c.

3. Page 222. A similar inadvertency leads to the complaint that in DV 8 the Drury monuments are imprecisely described as consisting merely of "black stone"; in fact, the commentary summarized in the latter half of the volume clearly stipulates that the material in each case is "black marble" (DV 8.429,432).

Most of Williams's other objections spring from his failure to appreciate (in both senses of the word) the limits that (necessarily, we believe) we have imposed on the reportage of variant material. 4. Page 222. The General Introduction to the edition (DV 6.L fn. 4; DV 8.LV fn. 6) explicitly takes up the question of reporting in the Historical Collation such typographical blunders as "Beddded" (*SecAn* 171) and offers a rationale for handling them (in fact, "Beddded" is the specific instance cited in explanation of the principle). 5. Page 224. And the section in the General Introduction headed Procedures for Choosing and Emending Copy-text (DV 6.XLVII-XLVIII; DV 8.LII-LIV) addresses what Williams describes as "perhaps, a problem with regularization." By definition, as I understand it, any conscious alteration of the copy-text—whether it involves words, pointing, or features of typography or calligraphy—is an emendation; emendations that are

cosmetic, global, and automatic are conventionally referred to as "regularizations" (we actually specify under this term the change of "ff" to "F" and "VV" to "W"). Following long-standing precedent, we have gathered all changes of whatever kind into a single list of Emendations. To concoct one list of Emendations and another of Regularizations would simply add another category of information to an already complex textual apparatus. I doubt that many users would find this added level of discrimination useful, and it would be more trouble to consult two lists than one.

The principles of reportage spelled out in the General Introduction (DV 6.L; DV 8.LV) cover most of the other instances about which Williams raises questions. For instance, our third category—to report "[a]ll semisubstantive variants from all seventeenth-century sources that may affect either meaning or meter"—explains (6. Page 223) why our apparatus doesn't distinguish between 1633's "we'have" and the 1613 *Lachrymae*'s "w'haue" in *Henry* 78. Our transcriptions (of course) record the "we'have" reading, but we understood this as nothing more than an alternate form of elision that produced the same metrical result as "w'haue" and thus declined to report it separately. The same principle explains (7. Page 224) our reportage of the variants "lirque" and "lyriquicke" against the copy-text's "Lyrick" in *EpEliz* 6. The first consists (probably) of one syllable, while the second has three—and thus both potentially affect the meter of the line. Variant spellings of "lyrick" are not *per se* what is at issue here. Finally, the criterion that variants "affect... meaning" dictates our refusal explicitly to report (8. Page 223) variant spellings of "Fayth"/ "Faith" in *Henry* 1 and explains why (9. Page 223) the apparatus doesn't record the variant spellings "me" and "mee" in that same line (though our transcriptions show these differences). With respect to "Fayth," the meaningful factors are whether or not it is capitalized (and thus possibly a personification) and how it is punctuated, not whether it's set entirely in caps or spelled with a "y" or an "i." And we didn't see what was to be gained by distinguishing "me" from "mee" in *Henry*, though we did systematically report the variants "she" and "shee" in the apparatus to the Anniversaries because this had been the subject of critical debate.

Typically—not to extend a tedious list of specifics—scholarly reviews of scholarly editions exercise one or both of two options: either they evaluate the work in terms of how successfully the edition follows the principles according to which it declares itself to have been constructed; or they criticize the principles themselves. From what I have said above, it will be clear that Williams has not followed option one. In enumerating the many details that we have failed to report, however, Williams implicitly throws the edition's underlying rationale into the balance and finds it wanting. The Donne Variorum, in his opinion, is not "what . . . a variorum [should] be" (pp. 217-21). His, however, is a stipulative definition, and even the survey of "variorum editing" with which his piece opens makes plain that the meaning of the term has evolved over the years and, even today, does not mean exactly the same thing to everyone who uses it. We have from the beginning called ours a "variorum" edition because—as I understand it— that term has historically implied, above all else, the inclusion of a comprehensive organized digest of critical and scholarly commentary. But we certainly present a "critical" text—one in which the editor exercises critical judgment in gathering, analyzing, and presenting the materials out of which the text in the edition is constructed. If the exclusion of certain kinds of detail from explicit reportage disqualifies the Donne edition as a "variorum" in Williams's mind, there's little we can do about it. I trust that other users, however, will find our principles intelligible and reasonable and will appreciate what we believe are the very real advances that this edition makes in Donne textual scholarship. In addition to being the first editors ever to gather, transcribe, and collate every known manuscript copy of every poem (an ongoing process), we are the first of Donne's editors ever:

a. to demonstrate authorial revision in "Epithalamion Vpon Frederick Count Palatine and the Lady Elizabeth marryed on St. Valentines day";
b. to demonstrate authorial revision in "Eclogue. 1613. December 26";
c. to recognize variant authorial versions of individual epigrams;
d. to demonstrate authorial sequencing of the epigrams;
e. to recognize that Donne wrote separate epitaphs for Robert Drury

and his wife Anne and to present these as two distinct poems;
f. to reproduce accurately the graphic form of Donne's "Epitaph for Himself in St. Paul's Cathedral";
g. to transcribe accurately the inscription in Michael Corvinus's "Album Amicorum";
h. to identify the edition of Angelin Gazet's *Pia Hilaria Variaque Carmina* that Donne used as the basis for his "Translated out of Gazæus: Vota Amico facta. fol. 160";
i. to print the "Stationes" from *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* in their correct form as hexametric verse (though we also present the verses in their traditional format as well); and
j. to print in an edition of the poetry the controverted "Sheaf of Miscellany Epigrams" (from the 1652 *Paradoxes, Problems, Essayes, Characters*).

Of course, every edition intended for serious scholarly use must be approached with care, but—in light of such distinguishing features as these—Williams's summary caveat that the Donne Variorum "must be treated with the same circumspection with which we have treated the Oxford and Shawcross editions" (p. 225) seems insufficiently discriminating.

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John Shawcross's review, an expansion of a paper he presented at the John Donne Society's annual conference a couple of years ago, focuses primarily on the variorum commentary and demonstrates the kinds of response which that material can stimulate in an agile and well-furnished mind. In this published version, however, Shawcross raises three points about the textual work to which I'd like to respond, again numbering my remarks and keying them to the pagination in the journal.

1. Page 230. In discussing "Pyramus and Thisbe," which appears in volume 8 as part of both intermediate and late authorial sequences of epigrams, Shawcross declares it "confusing" that we have keyed the

Historical Collation to the text of the Westmoreland ms. (NY3), which provides the copy-text for the intermediate sequence, rather than to the Dolau Cothi ms. (WN1), which provides the copy-text for the late sequence. He explains his confusion thus: "... one might assume [that the text in the late sequence] would be the 'best' text and the text to be employed in the collation." Closer attention to the General Textual Introduction to the Epigrams (DV 8.14-25), however, could have dispelled at least some of this confusion. Volume 8 prints the Epigrams in three separate sequences that (we argue) represent Donne's ongoing adjustments to and tinkerings with this work over the course of time. These sequences differ at both the macro and micro levels: the number (and consequently the overall arrangement) of poems changes in accordance with Donne's changing intentions for the work; and Donne verbally alters the texts of four individual epigrams as he adds poems to and subtracts poems from the sequence (but "Pyramus and Thisbe" is not one that we think Donne altered). We never suggest that the late sequence is "better" than the intermediate—just that it is different, reflecting Donne's alteration of the contents of the sequence in the interests of changed political and/or moral considerations. And we don't argue that the texts of individual epigrams in WN1 are especially "good" (i.e., free of error); we use WN1 as copy-text for the late sequence because, on balance, its texts are superior to those in any other artifact containing the late sequence. Anyone familiar with these matters would certainly agree that the texts of individual poems in NY3 are, poem by poem, the most reliable that have survived, being perhaps no more than once removed from Donne's hand. But the reason we used NY3 as the base text for the Historical Collation was not that its texts were "better." It was that—unlike any artifact containing the early sequence or any containing the late—NY3 includes *all* the English epigrams ("Faustinus" excepted); to key the Historical Collation to it thus enabled a degree of procedural consistency in the apparatus that would have been impossible had we used one of the artifacts that contained only some of the epigrams. And in any case, it might finally be noted, the Historical Collation for "Pyramus and Thisbe" (or any

other poem) will convey exactly the same information no matter which of the texts collated the variants are keyed to.

2. Page 234. With reference to "A Hymn to the Saynts and To the Marquesse Hamilton," Shawcross opines that the Variorum's use of the O'Flahertie ms. (H6) as copy-text is "an indefensible choice," apparently (though he does not say so explicitly) continuing to prefer for that purpose the 1633 *Poems*, which he followed in his 1967 edition. In support of this conclusion, Shawcross discusses instances of verbal variation in lines 11, 16, and 18 (which I will consider below) and the terminal punctuation of lines 8, 10, 12, 14, and 18. Several of the assertions in the middle paragraph of page 234 concerning the punctuation in the artifacts, however, are factually erroneous and/or misleading. I shall take these up in the order in which they occur. (a) The period after "slack" at the end of line 14 appears not only in O'Flahertie (H6), but also in LP1 and O29; it does not appear in Luttrell (C9), which gives a comma. (b) There is no "semicolon at the end of line 14 in the other manuscripts"; a semicolon appears only in the printed editions (A-G), having been introduced by the editor in 1633. (c) The punctuation at the ends of lines 8, 10, and 18 is as follows: line 8: five mss. (including H6) give a period, four have nothing, three give a comma, and the prints (only) give a semicolon; line 10: five mss. (including H6) give a period, three give a comma, four have nothing, and the prints (only) give a semicolon; line 18: six mss. (including H6) plus A and B give a period, two give a comma, three have nothing, one has a semicolon, and C-G have a colon. All this information is available in the Historical Collation accompanying the poem. (d) The assertion that "all . . . texts" other than H6 evince either "a comma, period, or semicolon" at the end of line 12 is wrong; in fact, six mss. have no punctation at this point. A numerical argument for or against certain points of punctuation must begin with an accurate tally.

As Shawcross himself recognizes, however (at least in certain circumstances), evidentiary value does not consist in sheer numbers—e.g., he joins every modern editor since Grierson in printing NY3's uniquely correct "dearth" in line 6 of "At the round Earths imagind

corners" (all other seventeenth-century sources record the trivialization "death"). Thus (3. Page 234-35), even were Shawcross accurate in asserting that "wants" (as opposed to "lacks") in line 16 and "loose" (as opposed to "lost") in line 18 appear "*only* [in] O'Flahertie and its cognate Luttrell," that fact alone would not automatically invalidate those readings (in fact, as our Historical Collation shows, "wants" appears in five manuscripts). Indeed, O'Flahertie (and its cognate Luttrell) evinces one unique variant that we think makes it the only conceivable choice for copy-text for the poem—"body" (for the otherwise universal "soule shall") in line 27. Curiously, though he comments at some length on the poem's thematic concern with the soul/body dichotomy (p. 235) and though both our Textual Introduction to the poem (DV 6.223) and the Schema of Textual Relationships (DV 6.232) highlight this crucial variant, Shawcross fails to mention it.

Shawcross's disagreement with us here arises from a fundamental difference of editorial philosophy. Spelled out in Ted-Larry Pebworth's "Manuscript Transmission and the Selection of Copy-Text in Renaissance Coterie Poetry" (*TEXT* 7 [1994]:243-61), the theory of copy-text selection we have followed values substantives over accidentals—words over punctuation marks. Shawcross, like Grierson and Gardner before him, favors a theory that lodges primary authority in the earliest printed edition, the accidentals of which (such as the semicolons at the ends of lines 8, 10, and 14) the editor follows closely even as he alters the words toward what appear to be more correct or later authorial readings. As we explain in the General Introduction to the edition (DV 6.XLVI; DV 8.LI-LII), however, we do not believe this theory—given its classic formulation by W. W. Greg in 1950 ("The Rationale of Copy-Text," *SB* 3:19-36)—appropriate to a poet like Donne whose poems were first set into print posthumously, from nonauthorial copies that subsist at indeterminate levels of remove from the lost holographs. We think it more responsible to present conservatively edited texts based on the artifacts that seem to preserve the least corrupted verbal structure.

4. Pages 239, 244-47. While preparing his paper for the John Donne Society panel mentioned above, Shawcross requested a copy of the Variorum text of and commentary on "The Bracelet" and has beat

us to the punch by pre-publishing our text, which is based on the Westmoreland ms. (NY3). With that text before him, he observes that "no one has pointed out the possibility of a pun in line 79: 'thy will be donne' (DONNE)." The probable cause of this oversight on the part of previous commentators, I would note, is that no prior edition—neither Shawcross's own nor even that of Bennett, who also claimed to be following NY3, but modernized its spelling—has ever printed "donne" at this point. I take pleasure in the thought that the Variorum text will enable many other such insights as this as scholars begin to use our volumes.

University of Southern Mississippi