

## Notes and Observations on the Text of “A Valediction of the Booke”

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My first intention was to provide a complete historical collation, textual apparatus, and stemma of the manuscripts, leading up to a compelling argument for adoption of a particular copy text. I underestimated the length and difficulty of such a task for this poem. Instead, I will offer some observations and tentative conclusions about the text of “A Valediction of the Booke” (*ValBook*).<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, I want to point toward the work of the *Variorum* editors and underscore how good it will be to see their opinions on the text of this poem when their work is finished.

For this presentation, I collated thirty-five texts, including twenty-eight manuscripts and seven seventeenth-century printed editions. Using the *Variorum* Sigla, these are B7, B30, B32, B47, B51, BR1, C2, C8, C9, CT1, DT1, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, HH1, HH4, HH5, O20, O21, NY1, SN4, SP1, VA2, WN1, Y2, Y3, A (1633), B (1635), C (1639), D (1649), E (1650), F (1654), and G (1669).

At present, I have essentially eliminated BR1 from the collation because of extensive damage to the manuscript, which is missing about 180 words or parts of words for this poem. Other texts contain smaller omissions: H7 and Y2 omit lines 8, 9, and 43 (H7 has 43 inserted in a second hand); WN1 omits lines 28–36; and B51 includes only the last

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<sup>1</sup>I want to thank Theresa DiPasquale for inviting me to participate in the panel discussion of *ValBook*, and Gary Stringer, Maia Fallesen, and the editors of the *Variorum* for providing transcriptions of the poem. I could not have completed this presentation without their assistance in providing the computer files and the *Donne Variorum* collation program (DV-COLL).

8 1/2 lines of the 63-line poem. I have, however, included these texts in the collation. I am not ready to offer a definitive edition or emended version based on a specific copy text. I have provided a transcription of the poem as it appears in DT1 (Trinity College, Dublin, MS 877), which for the purpose of this presentation is unedited except for the removal of catchwords and page numbers.<sup>2</sup>

A Valediction of the Booke

Ile tell thee nowe Deare Loue what thou shalt doe  
 To Anger Destiny, as shee doth vs  
 Howe I shall staye though shee esloyne mee thus  
 And howe Posteritie shall knowe it too  
     Howe thine may out-endure  
     Sibills Glorie, and obscure  
     Her whoe from Pindar could allure  
 And her, through whose help Lucan is not lame  
 And her whose Booke they<sup>3</sup> say Homer did finde & name

Studie our Manuscripts, those Miriades  
 Of Letters w<sup>ch</sup> haue pass'd twixt thee, and mee  
 Thence write our Annalls, and in them will bee  
 To all whom Loues sublimeing fire invades  
     Rule, and example found  
     There the faith of any Ground  
     Noe Scismatique will dare to wound  
 That sees howe Loue this grace to vs affords  
 To make, to helpe, to vse, to bee these his Records.

This Booke as long liu'd as the Elements  
 Or as the worlds fforme, This all Graue's Tome  
 In Ciphar writt, or newe made Idiome

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<sup>2</sup>I have read the transcription against an image of the manuscript. Any errors are mine and should not be attributed to the *Variorum* project. As I will argue toward the end of this presentation, DT1 is a likely candidate for the copy text. Donald R. Dickson recently selected it to serve as his copy text for the *Norton Critical Edition*, but, as the transcription shows, the text will likely require some extensive emendations for a modern reader. (See *John Donne's Poetry: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Donald R. Dickson [New York: Norton, 2007].)

<sup>3</sup>The scribe has changed an unidentified letter to the "y" in "they."

Wee for Loues Clergie only are Instruments  
 When this Booke is made thus  
 Should againe the Rauenous  
 Vandalls, & Gothes invndate vs  
 Learning were safe in this our vniuerse  
 Schooles might learne Sciences, Sphers,<sup>4</sup> Musick, Angells verse

Here Loues Diuines (since all Diuinity  
 Is loue, or wonder) may find all they seeke  
 Whether abstract spirituall loue they like  
 Their soules exhal'd w<sup>th</sup> what they doe not see  
 Or doth soe to amuse  
 ffaithless Infirmitie they chuse  
 Somthing w<sup>ch</sup> they may see, and vse  
 ffor though minde bee the heau'n where Loue doth sitt  
 Beauty'a conuenient Type may bee to figure it.

Here more then in their Bookes may Lawyers find  
 Both by what titles Mistresses are ours  
 And howe Prerogatiue those rites Deuoures  
 Transferr'd from Loue himself to womankinde  
 Whoe though from heart, & eyes  
 They exact great Subsidies  
 fforsake him who on them relyes  
 And for the Cause, Honour, or Conscience giue  
 Chimera's raigne as they, or their Prerogatiue

Here Statesmen, (or of them, they w<sup>ch</sup> can read)  
 May of their occupation finde the Grounds  
 Loue, and their Art alike it deadly wounds  
 If to consider what t'is one proceede  
 In both they doe excell  
 Whoe the present gouerne well  
 Whose weaknes none doth, or dare tell  
 In this thy Booke, such will their nothing see  
 As in the Bible some can finde out Alchymie.

Thus vent thy thoughts; Abroad Ile studdy thee  
 As hee remoues farr off y<sup>i</sup> great heigths takes

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<sup>4</sup>The scribe has inserted the "h" in "sphers" above the line, with a caret in the appropriate place below the line.

Howe great Loue is, presence best triall makes  
 But absence tryes howe long this loue will bee  
     To take a Latitude  
     Sunn, or Starrs are fittest view'd  
     At their Brightest; But to conclude  
     Of Longitudes, what other way haue wee  
 But to marke when, & where the Darke Ecclipses bee|

In DT1, the text is formatted as seven nine-line stanzas. Lines five through eight of each stanza are indented, each line a little less than the one before it, so that the beginning of these lines run along a diagonal line, ranging from an indentation of twelve spaces in the fifth line to no indentation in the ninth line. I have attempted to reproduce the format in the copy above.

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There are a number of other interesting and potentially significant variants. I will list a number of them, suggest some possible implications, and then conclude with a brief discussion of possible copy texts.

The manuscripts offer a variety of headings (titles) for *ValBook*:

A Valediction of the Book	B32 B47 CT1 H4
	H5 DT1 HH1 HH4
Valediction of the Book	C2 C8 O20 SP1
A Valediction of this Book	B7
Valediction: 3	C9 H6
A Valediction of a Book left in a window	NY1 VA2
The Book	H3 O21 Y3
A Valediction to his Book	H7 A-G
<i>Omitted</i> (no heading)	B30 B51 HH5 SN4
	Y2

The headings are not particularly remarkable, except to note that the various groupings of manuscripts that we will discuss later are already beginning to appear, especially C2 and C8, C9 and H6, NY1 and VA2, O21 and Y3, H4 and DT1.

In line 3, DT1 reads, "Howe I shall staye though shee esloyne mee thus" (3). A problem must have occurred fairly early in the transmission

of the text. The manuscripts present at least eight distinct readings for “esloyne,” more if you include variant spellings that may or may not be substantive.

<i>omitted</i>	B7 CT1
eloyne	B30 B32 C2 C8 C9 H3 H5 H6 HH1 (eloingne) HH5 O20 SN4 SP1 A (eloygne) G (elaigne)
purloyne	B47 H7 (Parloyne)
esloyne	DT1 H4 (>>esloignes<<) B–F (esloigne)
estrang	HH4
essoine	NY1 VA2 (essoyn)
claim	O21 Y3 (claime)
cloye	WN1

It would be fairly easy for a scribe to mistake the initial letters (*e*, *c*, *el*, and *cl*), especially if one were unfamiliar with the word in question. I suspect that early in the transmission an unintelligible or illegible word was introduced and copyists scrambled in an attempt to make some sense of it. Perhaps they skipped it and hoped to fill it in later (as suggested by the omissions in B7 and CT1, and the insertion in a second hand in H4). I admit the words “esloyne,” “eloyne,” and “essoine” were not familiar to me. I located “essoyn”/“essoign” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (but none of the variants of “esloyne” or “eloyne”), and both “esloyne” and “essoine” within a three-line span in *The Faerie Queene*.<sup>5</sup>

I located “eloin” in the *Etymological Dictionary of the English Language* and “eloyne” in the *Middle English Dictionary*. All of these words seem to share similar roots from French and mean something like “remove” or “withdraw”—though “essoyn” is a legal term meaning to plead an exemption or get an excuse for failing to appear at a specific time. These meanings seem to fit the line well enough.

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<sup>5</sup>Spenser is describing Idlenesse as Redcrosse watches the parade of the seven deadly sins in the House of Pride with Duessa:

From worldly cares himselfe he did esloyne,  
And greatly shunned manly exercise,  
From euery worke he chalenged essoine,  
For contemplation sake. . . . (1.4.20.1–3)

I quote these lines from Thomas P. Roche’s edition of *The Faerie Queene* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981).

In lines 32–33, DT1 reads, “. . . doth soe to amuse / ffaithless Infirmitee.” The short phrase has two substantive variants that will likely impact the choice or emendation of the copy text:

doth	DT1 B7 CT1 H4 (>>loth<<)
soth	HH4
loaths	H7 Y2
loth	Σ
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Faithless	DT1 H4
Faithes	H3
Faithes	Σ

“Doth” appears in DT1, B7, CT1, and H4. A second hand changes “doth” to “loth” in H4. I can see how a copyist could misread one for the other. The charge of these words is complicated by the second variant on “faithless”/“faith’s.” DT1 and H4 both contain “doth” and “faithless.” The lines are framed in the stanza by the affirmation that the lovers will, in fact, find both spheres of experience in the book, so “doth” seems right to me. However, I think we could have some difficult discussions about various meanings of “faith’s infirmities” versus “faithless infirmities.” To begin the discussion, I suppose we should acknowledge that “faithless” seems to be extra-metrical, introducing an eighth syllable on a line that is only seven syllables long in the corresponding lines in the other stanzas.

The number of syllables again becomes an issue in line 60. The texts read “fittest,” “fittlyest,” or “fitly”:

fittest	DT1 B7 CT1 H4 H7 HH5 WN1 Y2
fittlyest	B30 B32 B47 B51 BR1 C2 C8 O20 H5 HH1 NY1 SN4 SP1 VA2 A–G
fitly	C9 H3 H6 HH4 O21 Y3

I think “fittest” fills out the line correctly. Unless “faithless” is correct in line 33, the corresponding lines in the other stanzas (the sixth line of each stanza) have seven syllables. I suppose one might argue for the adverbial superlative on the basis of grammar, but I’m not sure how that argument would work. The gist of the sentence, whichever form of the word is adopted, requires the word to mean “best,” and “fittest” seems to fit the poetic structure.

In line 39, a similar grouping of texts occurs, adding WN1 to the four that read “doth” in line 32.

those rites	DT1 B7 CT1 H4 WN1
those states	B30 B32 B47 BR1 C9 H3 H5 H6 HH1
	HH4 NY1 O20 O21 SN4 SP1 VA2
these states	C2 C8 H7 HH5 Y3 A–G

I see little reason to prefer either “rites” or “states” based on meaning. One might suggest that “rites” is the more difficult or unusual word in this context, and I think I prefer that reading, but the surrounding context doesn’t seem to offer much support either way.

The collation confirms what we already know about the close connection between H3, O21, and Y3. These texts are often the only representatives of a particular reading in at least ten different places in the poem. Only these three have the heading “The Book” for this poem. They omit “now” in line one. They have “claim” for “esloyne” in line 3; “not endure” for “out-endure” in line 5; “sublime” for “subliming” in line 13; “in us this grace” for “this grace in us” in line 17 (along with BR1); “I” for “In” in line 21; the complete omission of line 22; “words” for “wonder” in line 29, “Tradsmen” for “Statesmen” in line 46; “wee” for “one” in line 49, omission of “can” in line 54. Further cementing the connection are instances where O21 and Y3 agree, against all the other readings found in other manuscripts. Included in these readings are “secure” for “obscure” in line 2; “frame” for “name” in line 9 (along with SN4); “all ground tomb” for “all Grau’d Tome” in line 20; “what” for “howe” in line 39; and “one” for “on” in line 43; “something” for “nothing” in line 53. This final instance, interestingly, shows up also in A and G. On the whole, however, few, if any, of these readings are likely to be part of a final copy text, but they are significant for tracking the transmission of the text and in our efforts to construct the stemma.

We see similar agreements between C2 and C8, between C9 and H6, and between NY1 and VA2.<sup>6</sup> C2 and C8 read “olld” (“old”) instead of “could” in line 7; “looke” instead of “Booke” in line 9; and omit “soe” in line 32 and “in” in line 37. Each of these readings is unique to these two manuscripts. C9 and H6 exhibit idiosyncratic readings in the heading

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<sup>6</sup>I appreciate the assistance of Beth Melles who helped me compile many of these correlations.

("Valediction: 3."), at line 34 ("that" instead of "which"), and at line 40 ("by" instead of "from"). In addition, they use parenthesis in identical ways, setting off phrases and entire lines in the same locations at lines 13, 22, 31, and 32–33. NY1 and VA2 offer unique readings in the heading ("A Valediction of a book left in a window"), and in a number of minor verbal instances: line 10, "these" for "those"; line 25, "or" for "and"; line 29, "what" for "all"; and line 31, "the" for "their." In addition, NY1 and VA2 use exclamation marks twice in the same way (line 1, "Love!"; line 28, "Diuines!"). A full study of *ValBook* is likely to provide more evidence of the relationships between the manuscripts because the texts contain interesting anomalies and shared readings.

I focused on some likely suspects for a copy text in the early stages, including C2 (group 1), DT1 (group 2), H4 (group 2), H6 (group 3), and WN1 (which appears to be a group 2 for this poem based on agreements with DT1 in, for instance, lines 19 ["help" rather than "keep"] and 45 ["raigne" rather than "vain"]). Tentatively, I think I find myself agreeing with Dickson in his selection of DT1 for the *Norton Critical Edition*.

Selection of a copy text is complicated by a number of problems with the texts. C2 omits words on lines 7 ("Pindar") and 8 ("her") and contains some oddities: for instance the two words "try all" for "trial" in line 57. WN1 agrees with DT1 for the most part, but it also lacks the fourth stanza (lines 28–36), making it problematic as a copy text. H4 omits words in lines 3 ("esloignes" is inserted in a second hand) and 9 ("say") and omits the *s* on "Is" at the beginning of line 29. It also shows evidence of correction in the second hand: in addition to the word in line 3, "help" is changed to "keep" in line 18, "doth" is changed to "loth" in line 32, and the "lesse" of "faithlesse" in line 33 is underlined. H4 and DT1 read the same on this line: "faithless Infirmities they chuse." As noted above, "faithless" will likely need to be emended if DT1 serves as the copy text.

In addition to "faithless" in line 33, the most obvious problems with DT1 that will need emendation if it is the copy text are (1) "Chimera's raigne as they" in line 45, and (2) a lack of consistent punctuation throughout the text. The *Variorum* attempts to produce the text arguably most like Donne's while resisting the urge to create some new text out of sundry others. That will be a tall order if DT1 is the copy text. A quick comparison of the punctuation in DT1 to a couple of print versions



shows the problem: Compared to the text in A (1633), *ValBook* in DT1 has forty fewer commas, eight fewer semi-colons, and five fewer periods. Compared to the editions by Shawcross and Dickson, the text in DT1 has some eighty fewer punctuation marks of all sorts in the sixty-three lines. I think the modern reader likely needs to be pointed in the right direction.

I look forward to seeing what the editors of the *Variorum* do with the poem.

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