

The Making of the Variorum Text of the *Anniversaries*

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John Donne's poems usually labelled the "Anniversaries" should recall three separate poems: "The First Anniversary," subtitled, "An Anatomy of the World"; "A Funeral Elegy"; and "The Second Anniversary," subtitled, "Of the Progress of the Soul." Frequently the 106-line elegy is forgotten. It is generally dated December 1610, the date of Elizabeth Drury's death, although it is printed after "An Anatomy of the World" in the first edition of 1611. This order is maintained in the second edition of both poems in 1612, which adds "Of the Progress of the Soul," thus placing the elegy between the two longer poems. (Only Roger Bennett reverses the order.)¹ The second edition added the title "The First Anniversary" to the first poem and thus called the new poem "The Second Anniversary." "The First Anniversary" is usually dated in early 1611, some months after Elizabeth's death; "The Second Anniversary," usually in December 1611, the first-year anniversary of her death and while Donne was in France with the Drurys. The first edition was published, it would seem, in November 1611, some months after Elizabeth's death; the second, by the beginning of April 1612. There is an errata sheet for the 1612 printing, with errata for both long poems. The three poems were reprinted in 1621 and 1625, and in the collected editions of 1633-69. Marginal notes are omitted in the first edition as well as the collected editions of 1635-69. Various marginal notes in both poems are omitted in 1625 and 1633. That is to say, the marginal notes are complete in the early editions only in 1612 and 1621. A study of the text indicates its deterioration from the 1611 and 1612 editions and makes clear that 1633 is based on 1625 alone. Wesley Milgate writes of the 1633 edition

that "Attempts were made to correct its [1625's] errors, so that in addition to preserving misprints from previous editions the text of 1633 includes a number of editorial sophistications, where a more or less intelligent guess has been made at what would give a required sense. . . . Inclusion of its readings makes it necessary to include the readings of the intermediate editions of 1621 and 1625, since many of the readings of 1633 derive from them or are attempts to correct them" (p. lxi).² The editor shows care and good sense by making obvious corrections which restore original readings or which agree with the errata slip; at other times his guesses are wrong.

I recently disturbed some Donne scholars by asserting that "At best, 1633 is another version of text, not only with no real authority, but in certain ways with less authority. For between what might have been the copy manuscript text and the printed text has come a printer who frequently has sophisticated the text or otherwise altered it."³ Here the evidence of the text of 1633, though based on that of 1625 rather than a manuscript, reaffirms that statement, despite improvement upon the copy text. For example, in "A Funeral Elegy," 1625 omitted *as* in line 33 ("Except the world it selfe, so great as shee"); the 1633 editor recognized an error but corrected it by inserting *was*, which became the reading of all subsequent seventeenth-century editions. That 1633 was based on 1625 can be seen, among other places, in line 96 of "The Second Anniversary" where 1625 "pach'd" becomes "patch'd" instead of the correct "parch'd" as in 1612 and 1621. 1635 follows 1633, but 1639 ff. make the correction, an obvious one for the line ("Thinke thy selfe parch'd with fevers violence").

The problem of text can be seen by the following examples. In "The First Anniversary," line 130, 1611 and the errata slip for 1612 read, "Whether a new made clocke runne right, or lie," but 1612 and all subsequent editions read "true made clocke." At times 1612 changed 1611 and no reversion is given on the errata slip; for example, line 259, "And in those constellations there arise" in 1611, but "these constellations" in 1612 and all following editions. But it should be noted, though I am not aware that it previously has been, that the *o* of 1611 is broken and could hurriedly be misread as an *e*. The errata slip changes "Towres" which is given in all editions in line 262 to "Townes." Line 2 reads "Whom all they celebrate, who know they haue one" in 1611 and 1612, but "Whom all do celebrate" in 1621 and subsequent editions. Lines 153-54 have "'Tis shrinking, not close-weaning, that hath thus, / In minde and body both bedwarfed us" in editions of

1611-25, but 1633 made the logical change to "close-weaving." In line 273 "And seeming weary with his reeling thus" was altered in 1635 and subsequent printings to "weary of his reeling." The question of text is a complicated one obviously: we may, for "The First Anniversary," print as the "best" text (a) that of 1611 corrected by the errata sheet for 1612 and any other arguable changes, or (b) that of 1612 corrected by the errata sheet and any other arguable changes including those from 1611, or (c) we can forget "other arguable changes."

It is clear that the texts of 1621 and 1625 are not "best" and are not reliable, nor are the texts of 1633 or 1635. Yet there were errors in 1611 and 1612, and the errata sheet may or may not have caught all needed corrections, and so my phrase "any other arguable changes." One of those changes would seem to be 1633's change of "weaning" to "weaving" in line 153, and thus there may be others, including some not made in any seventeenth-century text. Two examples of needed change lie in the spelling or rather prosodic form of the words "disfigured" in line 302 and "widowed" in line 449. Both words appear in the editions with the preterite ending "-ed" rather than "-d" as the prosody demands; such elision occurs elsewhere in 1611 and subsequently, for example, in line 122 where we have two elisions: "Mans grouth confess'd, and recompenc'd the meat." Should a modern text make these corrections? Should a variorum text? Should there at least be a note indicating that these should have been elided? Anyone who thinks that any printed text of the seventeenth-century is sacrosanct in these matters does not know very much about texts. We cannot be certain that the errata sheet caught all errors in 1612, and indeed evidence such as that in line 153 indicates it didn't. The word "demolish'd" in line 9 of "A Funeral Elegy" is spelled -d as the prosody demands in 1611; but 1612 changed it to -ed and there is no citation in the errata slip. Therefore, 1621 and 1625 give -ed, but the careful 1633 editor changed it to -d on his own. In other words, there is good reason to correct the faulty printing that might occur in one's copy text, as here if one had used 1612. (Manley's collation does not include this kind of variant.)⁴ I believe that a modern text should make such changes (and indicate them by a note) but that a variorum text should not. I should also point out that "grouth" in line 122 just cited is spelled with a "u" as it is in line 189 but with a "w" in line 414. 1633 spells it with a "w" in all three instances. Does the 1611 text indicate Donne's spelling—that is, both forms indiscriminately—or the

printer's? Or does it mean that Donne wrote one form (whether with "u" or with "w") and the printer changed it inconsistently to "w" or "u" because that is the way he spelled it or because type got mixed up (foul case) or because of mere accident? While one could argue that the spellings need not be consistent, I suppose, it is more likely that they exist in 1612 because the printer followed 1611 closely and the corrector (probably the printer himself) did not catch the inconsistency when he was proofing.

A rundown of the treatment by editors⁵ of some of the items noted before in "The First Anniversary" is interesting. But it is to be remembered that the errata sheet was only first discovered in 1946 and so only the last four editors noted (Manley, Shawcross, Smith, and Milgate) had benefit of it. (It is reproduced in facsimile in Sir Geoffrey Keynes's bibliography.⁶) Its discovery implies the questions, What if the corrector had had benefit of modern techniques of proofing? and, What if we had errata sheets for other poems?

In line 2, the first "they" found in 1611-12 is given by Bennett, Manley, Smith, and Milgate, who have returned to the first edition and apparently have not questioned that reading in 1612 since no change is given in the errata sheet. Further, "do" is first given in 1621, and that is not a particularly reliable source, but it becomes the source for all further texts. The syntax of the line with "they" is uncertain and the change in 1621 may simply have been a guess to make it clear. I assume a variorum text would reproduce the "they" of 1611-12 and in the textual notes record the change from 1621 onward. But I do not think we should uncritically assume that this is necessarily a "good" text, though the "best" that can be produced. In line 130 "new" is the reading of 1611 and the errata sheet, and this is followed by Bennett, Manley, Shawcross, and Milgate. Others have relied upon the reading of 1633, which originated in 1612, but it is most curious that Smith has followed this since he should have referred to the errata sheet. In line 153 all editors follow the correction in 1633. In line 259, only Bennett, Manley, Shawcross, and Milgate return to the 1611 reading. In line 262 the reading of the errata sheet (discovered in 1946, as I say) is given by Manley, Shawcross, and Milgate. Again, curiously Smith would seem not to have been aware of the existence of the errata. In line 273 only Chalmers and Dyce follow the alteration in 1635; it is clear that that or one of its copies was their copy text. In line 302 only Chalmers, Shawcross, and Milgate introduce the prosodic correction to "disfigur'd"; and in line 449, only Chalmers,

Chambers, Bennett, and Shawcross introduce "widow'd." I should note also that Chalmers and Dyce do not give marginal notes, because they are following 1635 or one of its copies; and that Norton and Chambers give partial notes because they are following 1633.

"A Funeral Elegy" leads to additional realizations about the difficulties of a text and some other interesting matters about what has come down to us. Alternate lines of the poem are indented in 1611 and 1612, and because that second line thus became too long for the rather narrow printing space, there is a lot of runover to a next line. 1621 and all the other editions give no indentations except for Manley, Shawcross, and Smith. Manley's statement (p. 169) that "All editions before 1633 indent every other line" is incorrect: 1621 and 1625 have a lot of runover but the lines are not indented. The poem is given in italics in 1612, 1621, and 1625, but in Roman in all other editions, apparently because 1612 added "The Second Anniversary." The point is, 1611 gives "The First Anniversary" in italics and "A Funeral Elegy" in Roman. Now adding another long poem, the printer of 1612 obviously decided to give both long poems in Roman and thus the middle poem, the elegy, in italics. No one seems to have observed this before, even though things have been written about the format. The different type faces, of course, set off the three conjoined poems for contrast with each other. The middle poem is not an "anniversary"; it commemorates the event that gives rise to the two "anniversaries." Line 1 read "lost" ("Tis lost, to trust a Tombe with such a ghest") until 1635 when it became "losse" with final redundant "e." 1669 typically modernizes the text by omitting that "e." Such "modernization" happens over and over again in 1669, and thus it is a most questionable guide to Donne's text. Chalmers and Dyce again follow 1635, but so do Norton and Chambers. Line 13 reads "aborted" ("Sickly, alas, short-liv'd, aborted bee") until 1635 again when it became "Abortive"; Chalmers, Dyce, and Chambers follow suit, but Norton does not. Line 18 reads "a house" until 1635 when it is "an house," repeated by Chalmers, Dyce, and Chambers, but also by Grosart though not by Norton. Line 33 as indicated before has "as" in 1611, 1612, 1621; is omitted in 1625; and is "corrected" in 1633 by the insertion of "was," which is the reading of 1635-69, Chalmers, Alford, Dyce, and Norton. In line 64, 1633 changed "worth" to "worke" (probably through some kind of supposed correction of a supposed error due to misreading of the sense); 1635 and all other editions return to

"worth" except for Alford who gives "worke." In line 76 ("For marriage, though it doe not staine, doth dye") "doe" is changed to "doth" in 1633—and this is the reading then of 1635-69, Chalmers, Alford, Dyce, Norton, and Chambers. In line 83 ("He which not knowing her sad History") has the reading "said History" in 1612, 1621, 1625, and 1633, and because of its appearance in 1633 it is given by Alford, Grosart, Norton, Grierson, and Hayward. Because they follow 1635 Chalmers and Dyce inadvertently print the original 1611 "sad." It should also be noted, particularly for the texts of other poems by Donne, that 1635 evidences an often indefensible text.

A variorum text should agree with 1611 and all the modern editors since Bennett in these seven verbal instances, but, let it be noted, it will be in disagreement with Grierson and 1633 and 1612 in the last instance. Did 1612 make a correct change? The errata sheet for 1612 does not correct its reading, and so should we conclude that "said" is the right word? It can be explicated meaningfully enough, but the tone, for me, asks for "sad," and that word becomes—if it truly is what Donne wanted here—a richer comment on Elizabeth Drury's history. If we accept the 1611 "sad" as the reading intended, then we must recognize that we cannot hide behind the 1612 errata sheet as being without error of omission at least. And what of format? 1611 and 1612 indent alternate lines, but only three modern editors do; the variorum text should also. "A Funeral Elegy" is italicized in 1612, and as we noted before, it appeared in Roman in 1611 apparently because "The First Anniversary" was in italics; yet no modern editor has published it in italics. I assume that the variorum text will print the poem in italics. (Of course, I have said almost nothing in these previous remarks about spelling or punctuation or capitalization, all of which present multiple problems.)

The only manuscript copies of these poems that have been discovered are lines 1-8 and 75-76 of "A Funeral Elegy" and lines 463-64 of "The Second Anniversary" in Harleian MS 3991 in the British Library, and the full elegy in English Poetical MS e.37 in the Bodleian Library. Harleian MS 3991 contains a group of selecta headed "Donnes quaintest conceits." Page references alongside the three quotations indicate that they have been taken from the edition of 1635 (or its reprint in 1639 only); the text—giving "loss" in line 1 and "doth" in line 76—confirms this. The manuscript is therefore of no importance in establishing a text; but it should be collated and reported in a variorum edition. Along with the other

selecta these quotations offer us what struck at least one reader as worthy of remembrance. But these quotations also serve to indicate what may occur to a text in manuscript; after all, they were copied out of a clearly printed text, with no questions about letters or capitalization or, for the most part, punctuation. And yet points of punctuation are generally omitted, letters at the beginnings of lines are usually in small letters, words are differently spelled ("soe" and "pris'd" for instance) as well as differently capitalized or not capitalized. It is manifest as to what might happen to a text copied from a manuscript.

Keynes (p. 171), Manley (p. 50), and Milgate (p. lvii) all say that the text in the Bodleian MS is taken from the 1621 edition. It is not 1611 because it gives "sayd" (l. 83); it is not 1625 because it has "as" in line 33, and thus it is also not 1633 (it does not have "work" in line 64 either); and it is totally different from 1635 and subsequent texts. That leaves 1612 and 1621, but they both read "doe" in line 76 and the manuscript reads "doth," which became the version in 1633. Did the scribe here and the printer of 1633 just accidentally both make an identical unnecessary change? Or is there some connection? I don't know, of course, and I can't guess, but it would seem that Milgate merely followed Keynes and Manley, who merely followed Keynes, and Keynes had not checked it out thoroughly. The spelling and capitalization and punctuation are nothing like those matters in 1621 (despite the probability that the scribe made lots of changes in such things), but they are not dissimilar at times to the text of 1612. In the first line, for example, the spelling "ghest" occurs in the MS and 1612; it is given as "guhest" in 1621. But why must the text of the elegy have been taken from a printed version? The manuscript also has copies of "Marry, and love thy Flavia," "Valediction forbidding Mourning," "The Message," "Go and catch a falling star," and the "Epithalamion on St. Valentine's Day," which show readings found only in the so-called Group III MSS, like the Dobell and O'Flahertie MSS, not in printed versions and definitely not associated with Group I or Group II MSS. It is much more probable—but we cannot be really sure until a full collation of all texts of all poems has been prepared—that the text of "A Funeral Elegy" in English Poetical MS e.37 comes from a manuscript in the same tradition as that of the Dobell and O'Flahertie MSS, even though they do not contain a copy of it. I suppose Keynes assigned it to a printed tradition because there is no known manuscript tradition for the poem (even though its spelling, punctuation, and such matters are not like what

generally appears in printed Donne texts, for example, "Rubeies," "Indeies," "annother," and "hir," the latter seeming to be a characteristic of this scribe here and in other poems). Of course, it is possible that the other poems were taken from a Group III MS tradition (there is no printed tradition until 1633, and none of the texts of any of these poems agree with 1633 or the subsequent editions) and that this one poem was taken from what was available in print.

And so we have considered a few textual problems which even the "Anniversaries" pose. I say *even* because they probably offer the fewest problems, since the texts come from editions during Donne's lifetime and since one of those editions was gone over for errata (although not without error of omission). Manley calls the 1611 text "careful" with "very few typographical errors," but the 1612 text "is shot through with a great number of obvious typographical errors that would have been corrected by any conscientious printer." While 1611 may not have obvious errors, we cannot be sure it is a careful text without some other evidence. It does give us "weaning" for instance, which surely is wrong; it gives us a period at the end of line 244 which is clearly wrong and which Manley replaces with a comma; it gives us "hom-borne" in line 80 (repeated in 1612, 1621, and 1625; 1633 makes it "homeborne") and "Counsaylor" in line 420 ("Counsellors" in 1612, 1621, and 1625; "Counsellers" in 1633), not unusual spellings for the times perhaps, but are they Donne's? We do not change the spellings because no one wants to be accused of tampering with the text; still, both may show the printer in typographical error and in error of commission. Manley wants to believe that Donne was responsible for the errata sheet himself and he points to three corrections of 1611—one being the Towres/Townes reading in line 262,⁷ the others being "there" for "then" in lines 217 and 259—which a corrector reading against 1611 as copy text only could not have made. But what of all the noncorrections? and was not Donne on the continent in April 1612? and did authors correct their own work at that time? Manley supposes that the errata were made up after Donne returned in September for the few remaining copies, since it is found in only one today. The cause is thus seen as Donne's annoyance with the poor text of 1612, but is that logical in view of the many noncorrections? In any case, "The errata slip considerably improves the text of 'The Second Anniversary,'" Manley writes, "but it does not perfect it," and he discusses a number of specific inaccurate readings.

What are we left with? A text reproducing 1611 for the first two poems and 1612 for the third, both corrected by the errata sheet and perhaps by any other arguable changes such as changing "safe-fealing" in line 46 of "The Second Anniversary" to "safe-sealing" as the edition of 1649 gives it, or "herself, . . . state" to "herselfe . . . state," as in 1633. But should we change other similar accidentals even when there seems to be no "authority" for the change? For example, in lines 220-21: "To'aduanee these thoughts, remember then, that shee / Shee, whose faire body no such prison was," is a comma added at the end of the first line after the first "shee"? Or do we play the rather illogical game of exact duplication of a text even though we have admitted often that the copy text is erroneous and even though we have changed "feal'd" to "seal'd" and "weaning" to "weaving" because some early text did also? (Actually 1633 did finally add the necessary comma in line 220.) Should "my" be made lower case in line 383 ("But pause, My soule, and study ere thou fall")? Should the word be respelled "barr'd" or "barrd" in line 204 ("Nor is by loue, nor by his father bard;")? 1633 does give "my" but then changes the comma after "soule" to a semicolon and capitalizes "And"; all texts spell "bard."

Part of the problem in presenting texts is, of course, the users of those texts: we all know Donne's Holy Sonnet 14, because that is the number Grierson gave it, although there is no other association of that number with "Batter my heart"; we all know how the orthography of "She" or "Shee" in the "Anniversaries" can bring forth rather silly arguments about each having a distinct reference; we can understand how theories of prosody and language and meaning can be colored by the specific word used, as in "The Extasie," line 9: "So to'entergraft our hands," or "So to engraft our hands." The textual committee for the Variorum Edition of the Poems of John Donne has not yet made many decisions about all these things, because it has not yet accumulated all the collations, made descriptive statements about each edition and manuscript, or built full stemmata. Investigations so far, however, have led to such matters as suggested here, such as the source for Harleian MS 3991 (not previously noted) or the question of source for English Poetical MS e.37 (in disagreement with what has been repeated) or the format and at times the specific readings of the three poems

called the "Anniversaries," despite the discussion and most competent work of Frank Manley. The variorum text offered, a fully defensible text, it is hoped, is going to be different in some way from any other text there has been.

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Notes

- 1 Roger Bennett, ed., *Complete Poems of John Donne* (Chicago: Packard, 1942).
- 2 John Donne, *The Epithalamions, Anniversaries and Epicedes*, ed. W. Milgate (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978).
- 3 John T. Shawcross, "A Text of John Donne's Poems: Unsatisfactory Compromise," *John Donne Journal*, 2, No. 1 (1983), 7.
- 4 Frank Manley, ed., *John Donne: The Anniversaries* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1963).
- 5 Alexander Chalmers, ed., *Works of the English Poets* (1810); Henry Alford, ed., *Works* (1839); Alexander Grosart, ed., *Complete Poems of John Donne* (1872-73); Alexander Dyce, ed., *Poetical Works of John Donne* (188-); Charles Norton, ed., *Poems* (1895); E. K. Chambers, ed., *Poems* (1896); H. J. C. Grierson, ed., *Poems* (1912); John Hayward, ed., *Complete Poetry of John Donne* (1929); Bennett (1942); Manley (1963); John T. Shawcross, ed., *Complete Poetry of John Donne* (1967); A. J. Smith, ed., *Complete English Poetry of John Donne* (1971); Milgate (1978).
- 6 Sir Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of Dr. John Donne*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973), opposite p. 172.
- 7 One must question whether the erratum *townes* is correct. The lines of *The First Anniversary* are:

It teares
The Firmament in eight and fortie sheeres,
And in those constellations [there/then] arise
New starres, and old do vanish from our eyes:
As though heav'n suffred earth-quakes, peace or war,
When new [townes/towres] rise, and olde demolish'd are.
They have empayled within a Zodiacke
The free-borne Sunne. . . . (257-64)

"They" refers to the "Men," l. 255, who "finde out so many Eccentrique parts." The imagery preceding the uncertain line suggests divisioning of the sky above such as towers might make, and following the line, the sun is *empayled*, primarily made less bright but suggesting also pierced by a pointed object, which meaning is underscored ironically by its having been "free-borne." Certainly *towres* is a meaningful reading and the erratum may represent an in-house corrector's interpretation. The other two alterations could easily have been made by an in-house corrector who, rightly or wrongly, since either "then" or "there" makes sense, created explicit subjects for the verbs.