Renaissance and Reformation
Renaissance et Réforme

Stringer, Gary A., gen. ed. *DigitalDonne: The Online Variorum, vol. 6*

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qualified to judge the classical editions and translations, whose dates range from 1793 to 2005. Ultimately, my caveat is an endorsement of the project's future. Because scholars need *WordHoard* to serve us well beyond its fifteenth birthday, it will need to revisit and periodically update its editions.

In a footnote in 2008, Mueller quotes a response from Harold Bloom to Mueller's letter announcing *WordHoard*: "I am a throwback and rely entirely on memory in all my teaching and writing." The rest of us will have to rely on what Mueller calls "digital surrogates" to see features of these texts "that you could not discover by just reading [them]" ("Metadata"). Those who are humbler than Bloom are all the wiser.

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The text on the first page of this major digital resource for studying Donne—and for studying early modern poetry and manuscript culture more generally—begins "*DigitalDonne* constitutes volume 1 of T*he Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne*." This defines quite exactly what *DigitalDonne* seeks to do, if you know the *Donne Variorum* well. But its significance will not be evident otherwise, and many readers may find this resource odd in not being focused on Donne's writing in the way they might expect; it is certainly not intended as an online edition of Donne's poetry. Though the volume 1 program is most significant as a component of the *Donne Variorum*, this resource is still important on its own; at this point in its development, it is also doing something rather different from the original plan for that volume, something that makes very productive use of the digital medium to extend that plan.

Volume 1 of the *Donne Variorum* was always described (in the volumes published to date, somewhat more than half of the projected total) as an introduction, with no texts, and two major parts: a general commentary on Donne reception and a general textual introduction. The other volumes in the

series contain commentary on groups of poems (such as the elegies), and on individual poems, in general and line by line; a broader survey of "The Historical Reception of Donne's Poetry from the Beginnings to the Present" was reserved for the first volume. The textual introduction was to provide a description and analysis of the many seventeenth-century witnesses to the poems on which the edition is based. The other volumes identified these witnesses, briefly but adequately, and discussed textual relationships with respect to individual poems and groups of poems: volume 7, part 1 has a hair-raising stemma for seventeenth-century texts of the Holy Sonnets, for example. But there is only incidental discussion of the provenance and dating of manuscripts, because that was to appear in volume 1. In particular, the choice of copy-text for each poem depends in part on manuscript dates, but those dates mostly do not appear in the volumes published so far. There is, of course, existing published discussion of many of these manuscripts, in some cases very extensive; but one important contribution of the completed edition will be its study of the whole corpus.

This free, online volume 1 does not yet contain either the general commentary or the textual introduction; instead, it offers editorial working materials and other valuable resources in both areas. It amounts to a substantial extension of the original publishing program, far beyond what could have ever seemed possible in the early 1980s when this edition got going. All scholars using the *Donne Variorum* will find these new materials of great help in their work.

DigitalDonne may not have the general commentary at present, but it does offer one of the most essential resources for its creation, and for almost any study of Donne: the complete set of annotated bibliographies compiled by John R. Roberts, covering Donne criticism from 1912 to 2008. This takes the form of four PDF files, all with searchable text, and so often more productive for research than the printed volumes, and freely available to any scholar or student. The fourth volume deserves its own separate review: this is Roberts's bibliography for 1996 through 2008, available only here and only in digital form. It is a volume of 551 pages covering 1,514 items, a major contribution to scholarship that of course has not been reviewed, because it is published only online—though, because it is online, it will be used by far more people than a print-only version would have been.

Should the general commentary also appear on *DigitalDonne* eventually? Just like Roberts's bibliographies, it would surely constitute a substantial

contribution and deserve the kind of reviewing, discussion, and career benefit that the conventional academic publishing system produces, even if it also produces less visibility overall. Indeed, Dayton Haskin, who has long been involved with the *Donne Variorum*, has published both a brief version of such a general commentary—"Donne's Afterlife" in *The Cambridge Companion to John Donne* from 2006—and an important monograph of 2007 that tells one part of the story, *John Donne in the Nineteenth Century.* Even so, a general commentary that would have a breadth of coverage and completeness to match the commentaries in other volumes of the *Donne Variorum* would be wonderful to have.

On the textual side, although we still have only a bare list of witnesses, *DigitalDonne* offers a set of resources that extends the possibilities of the printed volumes significantly. In particular, there are full transcriptions of each poem in each witness for all the published volumes of the edition. The edition describes the Holy Sonnets as having "limited circulation in the seventeenth century," but that means there are only nineteen different witnesses of "Batter my heart" to consider; the number is much higher for many other Donne poems. The edition's apparatus makes it possible to work out what any particular witness says, but now you can simply consult a separate transcription of each on *DigitalDonne.* Those transcriptions always existed as part of the working materials of the edition, but their publication in print was unlikely due to their size; now it's possible to use the view of this textual material—transcription or apparatus—that best supports what you are trying to do. For anyone studying the contents of a particular version or the patterns of one manuscript miscellany, these transcriptions are a valuable supplement, and so is the collection of images and transcriptions of some manuscript and printed witnesses, including the 1633 *Poems* and the important and influential Westmoreland and O'Flahertie manuscripts. These digital facsimiles include concordances to help in exploring their language and habits, and there are bibliographical descriptions of the source materials that give a taste of what the general textual introduction will offer; beyond these resources, there are numerous other lists and indexes. Complete concordances to the poems and letters as published in the seventeenth century are easy to miss among everything else, although these are two more sizable resources that in another context would appear as independently-published books.

DigitalDonne is not as hypertextual as it might be: those concordances do not link to the transcriptions or facsimiles, and Roberts's bibliographies do not

link to anything else. Searching partly overcomes this and partly does not: it doesn't seem to penetrate into the bibliographies, for example. Using the online resource is like using printed resources, in that you need to go off and consult the different components separately. The terms for reuse are also not made very clear: Roberts's latest volume includes a copyright statement and Creative Commons license, but otherwise there are only a few informal statements about this. All of these are secondary issues, tiny next to the labour of scholarship that has gone into these materials.

If you're just going to read "Batter my heart" for the first time, you would surely prefer the Poetry Foundation's website, although if you move on to their page about John Donne, you will find a link to *DigitalDonne*. Using *DigitalDonne* requires an understanding of what the *Donne Variorum* seeks to do, and some time to explore what is offered and how it works. But anyone interested in Donne will find it rich in possibilities.

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