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## Trying to be Diplomatic: Editing *The Humorous Magistrate*

23 November 1950 ... Sun still shining: yet I am left with a faint sense of dissatisfaction, hard to analyse ... a sense of having been rebuffed remains with me, perhaps because the cow in the record shop wouldn't let me — or didn't want to let me — look through a pile of *Jazz Collector & Tempo* records she had just unpacked — cow of Hell! I have never seen any before, & Belfast is the last place I expected to find them: I'm sure they will never sell them. They are the Real McKoy, fantastic private dubbings of entirely irrevocable records: the Malone Reprint Society in terms of Jazz.<sup>1</sup>

Scholarly awareness of the two extant manuscripts of *The Humorous Magistrate* throughout the better part of the twentieth century might be characterized in terms of occasional sightings. The collector, Edgar Osborne, found the manuscript now named after him at a sale at Watnall Hall in 1947; it surfaced again twenty-five years later when it was bought by the University of Calgary, but then disappeared into their Special Collections until 2004 when Jacqueline Jenkins and Mary Polito began investigating the play and its provenance. The Arbury miscellany was first sighted even earlier when an anonymous contributor wrote to the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1906 to describe a manuscript play he or she had discovered entitled *The Twice Chang'd Friar*. The correspondent, however, withholds the volume's whereabouts — 'I have now before me a seventeenth-century MS volume from a Warwickshire library ("but I did not tell you where, my boys," as the Lincolnshire poacher slyly sang)' — and so the miscellany slipped out of view for another seventy years.<sup>2</sup> With Peter Beal's rediscovery of the miscellany in the Newdigate library at Arbury Hall in 1976, the play's existence was confirmed but still not advertised, as Beal did not receive permission to publish his findings. Only in 1988 did the volume's location become generally known, but as is often the case with material from the period that survives not only in

manuscript, but in private collections, the miscellany became only marginally more accessible to the scholarly community.<sup>3</sup>

The plays are now beginning to appear as Malone Society editions, finally allowing scholars without proximity to the manuscripts the opportunity to read (rather than merely read about) the drama. Siobhan Keenan's edition of *The Emperor's Favourite* appeared in 2010, and was followed in 2011 by the simultaneous publication of both versions of *The Humorous Magistrate*.<sup>4</sup> *The Twice Chang'd Friar* and *Ghismonda and Guiscardo*, the last two plays in the miscellany, both await modern editions.<sup>5</sup> As the twentieth-century appearance — and more frequent disappearance — of these manuscripts suggests, study of this drama has long been hindered by scholars' inability to come at the documents, or even to learn of their whereabouts. It is fitting, then, that the Malone Society should now first publish these manuscripts, since it was a society founded by A.W. Pollard in 1906 in order to 'make more accessible the materials essential for the study of English Renaissance drama'. As though anticipating the fortunes of these manuscripts, Pollard (as W.W. Greg reported) believed that although 'every generation will need to make its own critical editions to suit its own critical taste, ... work of permanent utility can be done by placing in the hands of students at large such reproductions of the original textual authorities as may make constant and continuous reference to those originals themselves unnecessary'.<sup>6</sup>

The phrasing is modest, but the ambition is huge. To consider the specific case of the Arbury drama, the goal is to allow scholars without ready access to the miscellany the opportunity to conduct intensive study of these manuscript plays, research that otherwise might well be frustrated. I have edited the manuscript with a minimum of intervention since one of the key features of the Arbury *Humorous Magistrate* for researchers, especially after the discovery of the later (and much tidier) Osborne version, is the process of composition preserved in its marked-up pages.<sup>7</sup> The reading text, which remains unemended, retains original manuscript spellings and punctuation, and presents all deletions and revisions in the body of the text; its collation records peculiarities such as overwritten letters, variant inks, and blottings. My priority as I set out on this project was to maintain what the Malone Society's typically understated publicity blurb describes as the 'high standard of accuracy' for which its publications are renowned, a reputation for excellence captured by Philip Larkin's description of *Jazz Collector* and *Tempo* records quoted in the epigraph to this essay as 'the Real McKoy ... the Malone Reprint Society [sic] in terms of jazz'.<sup>8</sup> However, a seemingly straightforward

desire to reproduce the readings of the manuscript fully and accurately in print became mired within the first six pages in issues of potential information loss and interpretive mediation.

Leah Marcus has written of the challenges manuscripts regularly offer at the level of the single reading, illustrating how even relatively clear hands generate impenetrable cruces. A squiggle might be *m* or *ni*, or perhaps even *n* with an extra minim; a terminal letter might be *e* or *d*, or a badly-formed *ed*; and whether a letter at the beginning of a verse line or speech prefix is majuscule or miniscule is frequently an open question. When confronted with this sort of difficulty, one is pushed towards interpretive strategies such as comparison of letter forms elsewhere in the document, consideration of context, and aesthetic sensibilities. Editions inevitably normalize such indeterminacy — an *e* in a printed edition, for example, will look like any other printed *e*, even when that particular manuscript *e* closely resembles (and might even be) a manuscript *d*. Marcus, with a nod to Fredson Bowers, characterizes this textual condition as ‘the veil of manuscript’, and the uncertainty of the examples she cites from the Northampton manuscript of Queen Elizabeth I’s 19 December 1601 Parliamentary speech ‘highlights the degree to which our choices in transcribing are plastic and interpretive rather than simply a mechanical application of paleographic principles’.<sup>9</sup> I want to build on Marcus’s discussion of the resistances manuscripts present to editorial procedure by turning from local readings to consider more specifically the transfer from manuscript to print, and the interpretive restrictions imposed by this change in medium, especially when working with documents that show extensive correction and emendation.

The Arbury manuscript of *The Humorous Magistrate* is an authorially fouled transcription: it not only includes copying errors, but also contains passages of extremely heavily revised dialogue. The hand itself, a mix of secretary and italic forms, presents reasonably few difficulties, but the textual alterations are extensive enough to make easy reading impossible. Revisions are frequently squeezed tightly between existing lines of text in a much-reduced script (sometimes encroaching on interlined revisions of words further along a line of dialogue), while blocks of text are scored out or otherwise obscured by blots and hatchings. Although adjustments to words, phrases and even whole speeches are scattered throughout the manuscript, the most sustained reworking is found in the opening scene prior to the exit of Kit Spruse, the male romantic lead. These six pages (folios 105r–107v) are filled with cancellations and interlined revisions, with many of these revisions in

turn cancelled and revised again. There are also marginal notes explaining that the pages are a reworking of an earlier version ('Hitherto [ie, thus far] corected in this <b>ook from this place in the other'), and expressing continued dissatisfaction with some of the phrasing ('D<sup>r</sup> S. this speech not so cleare & *perspicuous*').

Reproducing manuscript as printed text inevitably involves some normalization: gaps between letters and words, and the spacing between lines are standardized, and letter sizes are rendered uniform. A diplomatic edition might preserve unusual manuscript spacing that signals, for example, idiosyncratic forms and spellings or, in the case of a letter squeezed into the available space between words, late revision. Determining in every instance whether a space 'really' exists is one of the interpretive challenges of this sort of edition (it is sometimes a question whether one sees, for example, 'a while' or 'awhile', while transcribing as four words a stage direction that clearly reads 'atthe other dore' feels more like emendation than regularization). But to try to replicate the fluid way letter forms and the spaces around them stretch and narrow over the course of a page or document would be to insist, after the manner of Borges's cartographers, on a level of accuracy that would seek to reproduce the thing itself. Not only would one be left with that somewhat fake effect one gets with print editions that try to do what photographs achieve much better, but a type-facsimile might misleadingly imply that this edition is 'just like' the manuscript, when it is not. The limitations of type-facsimile for both editors and readers are widely acknowledged.<sup>10</sup> Writing about documentary editing more generally, Mary-Jo Kline acknowledges 'the discouraging fact that the printed version of an unprinted source text ... will always be an inexact copy. One can hope to do nothing more than choose those conventions of print publication that best communicate the significant patterns of the source text at hand.'<sup>11</sup> Although the practical editorial problems are evident, and to some extent inescapable, there has been as yet little discussion of the interpretive consequences of manuscript features therefore lost to print reproduction.

The suppression of spatial details, in particular, leads to immense problems for a diplomatic edition of a document as heavily worked over as the Arbury manuscript. The part-speech at the top of folio 106v is a case in point (see Plate 2). Although this passage is visually dense, there is little trouble discerning in the manuscript its stages of revision. This is the end of a monologue in which Spruse rails at his lover's obstructive father, likening father and daughter to an ugly mussel with its 'curious waterd' pearl. To read the



So vgly that they are not worth the touching  
 [When [in a] o<sup>r</sup> consideracón repeates]  
 much less a carefull eyes inspection [lustre]  
 [From whence they came] [Cleare starr thy glorious]∧  
 But for [thy] their [cloud] rich child's worth, 10  
 [pierces a muddie ∧ & will appeare]  
 Appeare thy selfe,  
 [At noone in Sun shine]

Stripped of the manuscript's spatial information, this extract renders even the distinction between original composition and interlined revision uncertain, as line 6, preceded by two consecutively cancelled lines at 4–5, indicates. In terms of the layout's information, line 6 is comparable to lines 2–3; a glance at the manuscript, however, reveals that 'So vgly that they are not worth the touching', awkwardly fitted between existing lines of text and in a slightly cramped hand, is a late reworking of line 5.

An obvious way to deal with this problem is to introduce editorial coding such as corner brackets to signal interlined words. Readers still have to work fairly hard to make sense of the passage, but the square and corner brackets of the following extract should allow one to grasp which lines constitute later revision:

'to yo<sup>u</sup>'  
 Be slighted by yo<sup>r</sup> father who's[is] [so]  
 As mustles are to curious waterd pearles  
 ['vgly themselues yet are in some esteeme']  
 [W<sup>ch</sup> shine[s] farr more *perspicuously* faire] 5  
 'So vgly that they are not worth the touching'  
 [When [in a] o<sup>r</sup> consideracón repeates]  
 'much less a carefull eyes inspection' [lustre]  
 [From whence they came] [Cleare starr thy glorious]∧  
 'But for [thy] their [cloud] rich child's worth,' 10  
 [pierces a muddie ∧ & will appeare]  
 'Appeare thy selfe,'  
 [At noone in Sun shine]

The corner brackets, however, merely announce a passage's position between two previously written lines — there is no attempt to reproduce the whole system of manuscript signals that permits a reader of the manuscript to



six-foot line ('yo<sup>r</sup> selfe a foole for in this tone yo<sup>u</sup> spoke & I'), '& I' was in turn cancelled and repositioned in the left margin at the beginning of line 15. The short phrase 'yo<sup>u</sup> spoke' was then also cancelled and repositioned after 'in this tone' at line 8, probably simply to clarify that 'in this tone' falls before, not after, 'yo<sup>u</sup> spoke'. Two carets after the cancelled 'thus' make the same point, but they are hard to notice, especially when the positioning of the insertion (slightly after the *y* of 'yo<sup>u</sup> spoke' rather than directly above 'thus') encourages a reader to finish the original line before glancing up to collect the interlineation.

The extract above tries to represent the passage exactly as it appears in the manuscript, but the information loss that results from uniform letter size and standardized spacing creates a fragmented text that is difficult to navigate. In the manuscript there are, in effect, three lines between 8 and 10 on the left-hand side of the page. However, on the right-hand side of the page these three lines are condensed visually into just two lines, so allowing 'in this tone yo<sup>u</sup> spoke' to appear just above the cancelled 'yo<sup>u</sup> spoke & I'.

Readers of this extract might eventually discern from context that 'in this tone' 'yo<sup>u</sup> spoke' are separate revisions to cancelled phrases two lines down and not continuations of material already interlined at line 8, but the process of composition is by no means obvious. The information lost in the transfer to print can be approximated editorially by positioning the last two interlineations of line 8 where they belong within the interlined material at line 10:

'To manifest by serious protestation'  
 [w<sup>th</sup> earnestnes to make a dilatation]  
 'yo<sup>r</sup> selfe a foole.' 'for [thus]^^ 'in this tone' [yo<sup>u</sup> spoke] [& I]'^ 'yo<sup>u</sup> spoke'

This editorial layout clearly presents 'in this tone' as a revision to 'thus', and although it is difficult to intuit why 'yo<sup>u</sup> spoke' should be repeated at the end of the line, there remains no doubt about its position relative to 'in this tone'. It is perhaps significant, however, that such a layout builds into the fabric of the transcription an implicit editorial micro-narrative about authorial composition and revision. Moreover, while it provides enough reading clues to compensate in part for the reader's lack of access to the manuscript, one hesitates to describe it as an 'accurate' reproduction. The phrase 'in this tone yo<sup>u</sup> spoke', which as one can see in Plate 2 reads as a single continuous insertion despite probably being composed in two separate stages, is divided

in the print edition, the two parts separated by what feels like a sea of editorial coding.

A similar trade-off is found in the passage, already discussed, that appears at the top of the page. The word ‘cloud’ in the interlineation ‘But for [thy] their [cloud] rich child’s worth,’ (line 10) seems unaccountable unless one posits that it was a one-word interlined correction (see the caret after ‘muddie’ in the following line), later cancelled along with the whole of line 11 to which it belongs and around which the final revision, ‘But for [thy] their rich child’s worth’ was positioned. The passage may not represent a serious problem to a reader, but earlier and later stages of revision are more easily disentangled if one instead arranges the passage as:

‘But for [thy] their rich child’s worth,’  
[pierces a muddie^cloud] & will appear]

A visually alienating sequence is made (slightly) more readable, but at the cost of departing from the document in order to introduce an implicit editorial account of the process of composition. Supplementing one’s transcription with photographic plates serves as something of a corrective to the interpretive tensions caused by this transfer of media. Photographs of manuscript pages (especially pages that are densely overwritten) are insufficient for purposes of transcription, but as visual illustrations they at least permit readers to approach the features of a manuscript that cannot survive print reproduction.

Henry Woudhuysen quotes A.E. Housman’s dry comment that, for editors, ‘Accuracy is a duty, not a virtue’, and enjoinders of this sort are recurrent in discussions of documentary editing.<sup>15</sup> What I have discovered since beginning this project, however, is that the issue is less the need for accuracy (a principle with which I expect everyone would agree), than how one chooses to define accuracy. T.H. Howard-Hill, for example, judges Greg to have wilfully misrepresented documentary evidence by omitting from his Malone Society edition of *The Second Maiden’s Tragedy* marginal markings that can be attributed to the censor, Sir George Buc. Woudhuysen plausibly argues, however, that Greg considered such marks extraneous to his edition since they were ‘later, modern additions which were not part of the play’s original purpose or function’.<sup>16</sup> Publishing a manuscript in print necessarily occasions a certain amount of editorial translation, but there is less agreement than one might expect about which features of the original document are interpretively significant. Michael Hunter, for example, and to my mind

controversially, recommends modernizing *u/v* and *il/j* usages, and further advocates the silent expansion of manuscript abbreviations such as ‘w<sup>ch</sup>’ for ‘which’ since ‘it would never have occurred to a seventeenth-century compositor or author that these should appear as part of a printed text’.<sup>17</sup> Other scholars consider cancellations presented in the body of the text intrusive, but Tanselle, for one, defends the practice on the grounds that it helps to convey the ‘texture’ of the document.<sup>18</sup> Where does accuracy end and visual noise begin? And how does one balance the responsibility ‘accurately’ to reproduce a manuscript authority with the imperative to produce an edition that readers can navigate?

As these passages from *The Humorous Magistrate* illustrate, the resistances one encounters when translating manuscript to print generate types of information loss for which the new medium cannot fully compensate. The edited versions of the two extracts from folio 106v discussed above are all, in their ways, ‘accurate’, but each of them also marks a significant departure from the manuscript. Repeatedly, one is forced to choose between introducing to one’s print edition ambiguities that are not features of the manuscript, or editorially shaping the reading experience in light of one’s critical interpretation of the manuscript evidence. In all but the most straightforward cases, a shift from manuscript to print thus implies compromises. To repurpose Bowers’ famous metaphor in terms of modern editorial treatments of early modern manuscripts, there is no escaping the veil of print: once the page’s visual dynamics reach a certain level of complexity, accuracy is less an absolute criterion one meets, than a subjective set of procedures one defines for the purposes at hand.

The publication of both manuscripts of *The Humorous Magistrate*, one located in Calgary, Canada, the other in a private collection in Warwickshire, England, is testament to the scholarly service provided by Pollard’s vision to put into circulation editions of rare documents that ‘may make constant and continuous reference’ to the originals ‘unnecessary’. That said, the opening scene of the Arbury version equally forcefully reminds readers of a point that Pollard’s (or Greg’s) careful phrasing already recognizes, that such editions are an invaluable aid to research, not a substitute for the manuscript itself.

## Notes

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- 1 Anthony Thwaite (ed.), *Philip Larkin: Letters to Monica* (London and Oxford, 2010), 23. Many thanks to Noeleen Kerry and Sonia Massai for bringing this passage to my attention.
- 2 “‘The Twice Chang’d Friar. A Comedie’: (ms temp. Charles I)”, *The Gentleman’s Magazine* 300 (1906), 285.
- 3 The miscellany is part of the permanent collection at Arbury Hall, but Lord Daventry, its owner, has kindly and frequently deposited the volume on temporary loan with the Warwick County Record Office in order to facilitate research. I am grateful to Lord Daventry for his permission to publish images of the manuscript. T.H. Howard-Hill summarizes the plots of all four plays and attributes them to John Newdigate III (1600–42) in ‘Another Warwickshire Playwright: John Newdigate of Arbury’, *Renaissance Papers* (1988).
- 4 The Osborne version is edited by Jenkins and Polito, and I am editing the version as it appears in the Arbury miscellany.
- 5 There is also a fifth manuscript play in the Newdigate library, separately bound, that seems to be an early draft of *Ghismonda and Guiscardo*; see Howard-Hill, “Boccaccio, *Ghismonda*, and its Foul Papers, *Glausamond*”, *Renaissance Papers* (1980), 19–28. A third, still later manuscript version of the ‘Ghismonda’ play is housed at the British Library (Add. ms 34312), which Herbert G. Wright edited as *Ghismonda: A Seventeenth-Century Tragedy* (Manchester, 1944). Although its hand differs from the one(s) found in the Newdigate drama, the BL manuscript shows bibliographical links to the miscellany version of the tale; see Margaret Jane Kidnie, ‘Near Neighbours: Another Early Seventeenth-Century Manuscript of *The Humorous Magistrate*’, *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700* 13 (2007), 187.
- 6 Reported by W.W. Greg in “Facsimile” Reprints of Old Books’, *The Library*, 4th series, 6 (1925–6), 321, as quoted in Henry Woudhuysen, “Work of permanent

utility”: Editors and Texts, Authorities and Originals’, Lukas Erne and Margaret Jane Kidnie (eds), *Textual Performances: The Modern Reproduction of Shakespeare’s Drama* (Cambridge, 2004), 37. Woudhuysen’s article offers a lucid discussion of the history and theoretical implications of the Malone Society’s changing editorial practices.

- 7 The readings of the Osborne manuscript are not in every instance consistent with the revised Arbury text. The Osborne version omits and further revises Arbury passages, recasts and repositions scenes, adds new dialogue, and entirely writes out one character. Analysis of these manuscripts indicates a complex process of revision (perhaps informed by performance), and textual circulation.
- 8 Quoted from the Malone Society homepage at <http://ies.sas.ac.uk/malone/index.htm>.
- 9 Leah Marcus, ‘The Veil of Manuscript’, *Renaissance Drama* 30 (1999), 128. See also Barbara Mowat’s discussion of the inherent indeterminacy of manuscripts in ‘The Problem of Shakespeare’s Text(s)’, Laurie E. Maguire and Thomas L. Berger (eds), *Textual Formations and Reformations* (London, 1998), 131–48.
- 10 See Michael Hunter, ‘How to Edit a Seventeenth-Century Manuscript’, *The Seventeenth Century* 10.2 (1995), 287–8.
- 11 Mary-Jo Kline, *A Guide to Documentary Editing*, 1987, 2nd edn (Baltimore and London, 1998), 140. The intellectual premises and sometimes widely divergent conventions of diplomatic editing are helpfully outlined in Kline, *A Guide to Documentary Editing*, and Michael E. Stevens and Steven B. Burg, *Editing Historical Documents: A Handbook of Practice* (Walnut Creek CA, 1997).
- 12 Manuscript abbreviations, preserved in the Malone Society edition, are here expanded and italicized; ‘who’ in the first line was at some point altered to ‘who’s’ by squeezing ‘s into the gap between ‘who’ and ‘is’.
- 13 This interlineation is perhaps separately crossed out, but the possible mark of cancellation (along with the second letter) is obscured by a blot.
- 14 The *e* of *knew* is written over *o*, and was presumably introduced with the cancellation of ‘did’.
- 15 Woudhuysen, *Editors and Texts*, 39. See also Hunter, ‘How to Edit’, 286, and Stevens and Burg, *Editing Historical Documents*, 82.
- 16 Woudhuysen, *Editors and Texts*, 39.
- 17 Hunter, ‘How to Edit’, 291–3.
- 18 G. Thomas Tanselle, ‘The Editing of Historical Documents’, *Studies in Bibliography* 31 (1978), 50–1.

