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A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare: As You Like It. Ed. by Richard Knowles, with a Survey of Criticism by Evelyn Joseph Mattern, IHM. New York: The Modern Language Association of America 1977. XXVIII + 737 S. Gbd. \$ 50,-.

More than a century after its inception in 1871, the New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare is being carried forward with renewed impetus by American Shakespeareans. Robert K. Turner Jr. is the new General Editor, and Richard Knowles, Associate General Editor, is the main volume editor of *As You Like It*, the present manifestation of the series' resuscitation. For a multiplicity of reasons internal and external — not least among which may have been the difficulties of upholding traditional editorial scholarship through the years of overwhelming public dominance of New Criticism in the United States — there has been a hiatus in the progression of the series greater even than may appear from publication dates. The last volumes published before *As You Like It* of 1977 were *Troilus and Cressida* of 1953 and *Richard II* of 1955. But these, in fact, were the last of the original volumes of the 1930s which H. H. Furness Jr., dynastic successor to the series' founder, farmed out to younger scholars according to his father's and his own master plan for the progression of the edition. *Troilus and Cressida* was one of the volumes whose delayed post-war publication was due to a change of editors in the course of the work.

The appearance of the new volume in 1977 therefore constitutes a public revival after an interruption of close to forty years. Upon H. H. Furness Jr.'s death, the MLA assumed sponsorship, providing for the series' completion as well as renewal. The present *As You Like It* is the first full-scale replacement volume for a play edited once before by the elder Furness. It was initially taken in hand by Matthias A. Shaaber, tried editor of *2 Henry IV* (1940). Thus yet again an inherited volume, it is the work of a team of executors in the fourth generation of New Variorum scholarship. Demonstrating the pertinacity of a concept and the self-perpetuating powers of an institution, it marks the return to a time-honoured model of textual scholarship whose Shakespearean beginnings date from the 18th century. Sustained, it may be, by the canon strength of a Shakespeare, or a Milton, the edition type appears to have survived in America, while in Great Britain and elsewhere in Europe mutations of scholarly temperament, as well as a lack of funds and manpower, have long rendered it obsolete.

But just how viable is the New Variorum Shakespeare today? What is its editorial, what its critical rationale and *raison d'être*? Remarkably, the new editors do not indicate what basic attitudes to such fundamental questions should condition a critical perspective on their enterprise, nor indeed do they reveal the depth of their own reflection on the edition's principles. Presenting without the 'meta-commentary' of explanation a volume which in its basic arrangement of text, textual notes (*variae lectiones*), line-by-line commentary, and Appendix essentially conforms to that devised by H. H. Furness for the *Romeo and Juliet* volume of 1871, they leave it to the user to go to the pre-war Variorums to familiarise himself with the edition type and thence pragmatically to discover the internal modifications of format and shifts of emphasis introduced. An analysis of the premises of constants and variables within the framework of the old edition form may therefore help to assess the potential and achievement of a present-day Variorum Shakespeare.

For *Romeo and Juliet* in 1871, H. H. Furness had deemed it feasible to establish a critical text. The series thus began as a text edition in the tradition and climate of 19th century Shakespearean textual scholarship with its lack of understanding and consequent low regard for the earliest Shakespeare texts. However, the incipient reassessment of the proximity to authorial or theatrical manuscripts, and hence authority, of the original editions had its effect on the New Variorum. Subsequent volumes in the series were no longer furnished with a critical text of their own but began to appear with the text of the First Folio in type facsimile as their reference basis. This basis has since remained constant for all edited plays except *1 Henry IV* which, despite H. H. Furness Jr.'s recorded misgivings, was judiciously founded on the text of Q 1. It is naturally maintained in the present edition of *As You Like It*, for which no quarto edition exists to contend the authority of F 1. The reproduction of the Folio text in diplomatic reprint rather than type facsimile involves a degree of purely typographic normalisation which facilitates the reading while in no way compromising faithfulness to the copy in anything remotely bearing on the substance of the text. The advance of Folio scholarship is duly acknowledged in the addition of Charlton Hinman's Through Line Numbering to the traditional reference systems (Folio columns and Globe text).

In Furness's text edition, the textual notes, or *variae lectiones*, had a rationale, and served a function. He compiled the readings of the old editions "to note the adoption or rejection of them by the various editors", thereby adding "an important element in

estimating these readings". For "however uncouth a reading may seem at first sight, it ceases to be a 'sophistication' of a printer when we learn that men so judicious as Capell or Dyce had pronounced in its favour; and in disputed passages it is of great interest to see on which side lies the weight of authority" (*Romeo and Juliet*, "Preface", p. VII). The textual notes were furthermore related to the establishment of the edition text by critical (as opposed to bibliographical) eclecticism. But with the adoption of the F 1 reference basis they lost their main function in the edition. Yet this fact seems even to this day never to have been duly reflected upon. The editors of the new *As You Like It* certainly — and Richard Knowles in particular, among whose specific responsibilities are named the text and the textual notes — have not felt it incumbent upon themselves to explain or justify the circumstance that, with an exhaustiveness outrivalling that of most of the earlier volumes in the series, they have covered the field of the older editions. Textual variants have been gathered from 51 editions in full, from another 15 in part, and from a further 21 'occasionally', without any indication that the compilations no longer follow from the elder Furness's notion of authority residing in historical collation listings.

Giving the present editors the benefit of the doubt, we may assume that, in the light of the advances in editorial thinking over the past century, they do not indeed now subscribe to that notion. But the fact remains that, no more than any of their predecessors, do they appear to have consciously realised the implications of the New Variorum's early adoption of the First Folio as its reference basis. That move decisively reduced the text-editorial emphasis of the edition. Significant changes in the recording and notation of the historical variants ought to have followed from it. In the inherited manner and scope of presentation, the textual notes become reduced to so much dead matter amassed without a focus on their value in historical terms. It is true that they, or rather a number of the editions from which they are assembled, mark essential stages in the history of Shakespeare understanding and reception. However, this history can hardly ever be grasped from the traditional fragmentised presentation of the historical variants, but only from judicious scrutiny of them as embedded in invariant contexts. Yet a printing, say, of long passages of the texts from the 18th and 19th century editions in parallel for comparison is not something one would, or indeed should expect from a Variorum edition. Unless the new generation of Variorum editors are satisfied that sufficient justification for maintaining the textual notes in their traditional scope and format resides in the one purpose for which they still seem to be good — namely that of serving as a storehouse for the textual editors of commercial or study editions of a given play — they should consider scrapping this section of the Variorum volumes altogether; or else radically reduce it to a narrowly defined minimum.

A possible criterion by which to limit a historical collation is contemporaneity, broadly defined. Recognising that theatrical texts such as those of Shakespeare's plays are always in some measure communally written, the texts broadly contemporaneous with those of the author's papers, or their closest derivatives, are those of F 1 and F 2, and perhaps of F 3 and F 4. But the latter mark the furthest limit beyond which a textual history sets in which, taken a whole, has only a very indirect bearing on the Shakespeare text — the one as close as possible to the putative original — which today we endeavour to understand. Of course it happens that older editors' notes and comments which are still felt to contribute to such understanding in fact spring from historic

variants beyond the scope of systematic variant recording as here suggested. But they should be noted *ad hoc*, and individually, together with the commentary in question. The same would apply to the stable, though after all quite limited, body of commonly accepted conjectures and emendations which have become integral to our present-day closest critical approximations to the lost original Shakespeare texts. A textual collation of the broadly contemporaneous editions, in short, would seem to be the matter for the textual notes. Beyond, only variants revealing the fruitful historical instability of Shakespeare's text would merit recording; and the place of their record should be the line-by-line commentary.

When the idea of the edition's own critical text was abandoned in favour of the adoption of the First Folio reference basis — which today should, and no doubt will, be interpreted as the reference basis of the most authoritative first printing, be it Folio or Quarto — the step taken was one away from a variorum edition and towards a variorum commentary. This should now be fully realised. For it is not as a text edition, but as a critical and highly condensed volume of commentary alone that a New Variorum Shakespeare may hope to hold its own in the landscape of present-day Shakespeare criticism. This is not to advocate the exclusion of the play texts from the Variorum volumes. For the works of John Milton, it is true, we have the example of a variorum commentary without an accompanying text. But in the vastly complex situation of the Shakespeare texts and their editions, it would appear a dictate of common sense, if nothing else, to provide the first-printing reference text as a co-ordinating link between the variorum commentary and whatever edition of his own a given user may be bringing to his research. Moreover, for the compilation of a Variorum volume as such, the physical presence of the Shakespeare text in a specific shape may be seen as the liveliest incentive, and at the same time the strongest controlling force, in the selection of the materials for the line-by-line notes as well as for the discursive commentaries in the so-called "Appendix". Every word of Shakespeare's, or claimed as Shakespeare's in the textual transmission, may act as a stimulus for clarification, for 'notes of recovery' and 'notes of explanation'¹. And no more wholesome test for the near-limitless amount of criticism and comment on Shakespeare can be imagined than that of being measured word by word against the text of the work itself. Nevertheless, it is not the text that justifies the Variorum edition's existence. Only the scope and quality of its notes and commentary, and the discriminating comprehensiveness of their principles of selection, do so.

The critical activity of literary annotation has no one stringent and commonly recognised rationale. But the sub-genre of the variorum commentary has a tradition from which to derive guidelines for inclusion and exclusion. By definition, the variorum commentary digests existing annotation. Its source material is the textual exegesis of editors and critics in aggregate. To condense this and make it available in one location is, for the works of Shakespeare, still not only a legitimate, but a highly desirable scholarly service. But the problems of realisation today are formidable beyond comparison to the situation a hundred years ago. Originally, a variorum edition was an edition also in the sense that it collected the notes of previous editors of the text. Exegetical criticism sim-

¹ Most recently, we have been reminded by Martin C. Battestin (*Studies in Bibliography* 34 [1981], 1—22) of this useful distinction first introduced by Arthur Friedman (*English Institute Annual* 1941 [1942], 115—128).

ply happened mainly in the editions. But the circumstances which, with the advent of academic study of modern literatures, had begun to change even as the elder Furness was embarking upon his enterprise, have fundamentally altered in the meantime. The field to draw upon for a variorum commentary today comprises the entire range of scholarly and critical writing, as well as the complete note materials from previous editions.

It is in this situation that the firm basis of a reference text holds out the single most important principle of selection. For into the line-by-line commentary, in particular, can be assimilated only what has been remarked in editions and criticism about specific words, phrases, lines and passages of the text. A cursory survey of the annotations in the new *As You Like It* shows a justifiable bias towards notes from previous editions. But a copious bibliography testifies to the range of critical writings — mainly written in English, with a relatively broad selection in German, a narrower one in French, and few if any items in other languages — scrutinized for material to be admitted into the line-by-line commentary. Since it stands to reason that complete coverage can neither have been aimed at nor achieved, criteria of relevance must have governed the selection. Again, these have not been named and, short of extensively retracing the editors' steps, a reviewer cannot hope inductively to ascertain them; nor would possible faultfinding be his objective. It is important to notice that controversial stands on the text and its possible meanings have usually been brought out, and not disguised or harmonised, in the annotations. Numerous spot-checks induce an over-all confidence in the judicious selection and representative comprehensiveness of the notes.

Yet special mention ought perhaps to be made of the fact (once more, it is nowhere specifically advertised) that the single most proliferous source of annotations appears to be the *Oxford English Dictionary*. By the strictest definition of a variorum commentary, admittedly, dictionary citations should lie outside its field of reference. They do not constitute specific commentaries on given words or phrases of the text, although they sometimes happen to use them as examples to illustrate meanings defined. Also, it should be borne in mind that, rather than being confirmed by an OED entry, a Shakespearean instance may in fact invalidate a dictionary definition. But with this caveat, and given our 20th century distance from Elizabethan English, it is an eminently justifiable decision to extend the variorum commentary concept sufficiently to include copious and systematic quotations from the OED.

In a volume of 677 text pages (excluding the preface and introduction, the bibliography and the index), the play with the line-by-line commentary occupies 304 pages. After one blank page, 372 pages fall under the general heading of "Appendix". Even on subtraction of the reprint in full of Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde* extending over some 90 pages, "Appendix" appears to be something of a misnomer for half of the book's contents. As a heading it is an anachronistic survival from early Variorum days. In fact, it is under its guise that the most momentous innovation is taking place. In discussions of the strategies and format of commentaries it is becoming increasingly recognised that line-by-line progression alone cannot hope to meet all requirements of literary annotation. The demand is for 'block commentaries' to cover such aspects relevant to the understanding of the text that transcend the line-by-line framework and cannot easily be discussed within it. Among traditional edition models, the New Variorum Shakespeare may be seen as a prototype of such a commentary in complementary sections. The edi-

tors of the new *As You Like It*, it is true, do not appear to have been much concerned with the principles involved. They have obviously been intent, in the main, on quite pragmatically fulfilling the expectations of the inherited form. But they have done this with shifting emphasis of realisation, and their practice, varying as it does between the several sections of the discursive commentary, carries the potential of important advances and developments.

Most closely in the series' tradition is Sr Evelyn Joseph Mattern's survey of critical opinion about the play. It is assembled on the pattern of the line-by-line annotations, strictly citing excerpt upon excerpt from the critical writings. What gives the survey momentum and weight is the cumulative force and stringency of the citations in the breadth of space allowed them in aggregate. Richard Knowles's section on the text and its problems of authority, transmission and integrity, by contrast, which is an apt counterweight to the criticism section, assumes much more the tenor of a critical survey of the relevant scholarship. Firmly maintaining a commentary character, it yet admits the voice of the compiler and writer as much as the several voices of the scholars quoted. The sections on the sources, and on the stage history of the play, are similarly devised. Each of these incorporates matter proper to appendix presentation: in the one case, the full diplomatic reprint of Thomas Lodge's *Rosalynde*, collated against several source editions; and in the other, one subsection on "The Music", and another on "The Text of *As You Like It* on the Stage".

This latter, substantially the work of Matthias A. Shaaber, the original editor, is perhaps the most exciting individual section of the volume. Of course such judgement is not to belittle in the least the over-all achievement of the editorial team. But their complex and demanding task, accomplished on the whole with high competence, discernment and precision, has been to survey and digest for present-day readers the critical history of a book text in a bookish tradition. The discussion of the play text on the stage, by contrast, though purposely and rightly designed to be representative and not comprehensive, helps to keep the living text of the play from withering in the thin air of scholars' and critics' erudition. In a sense, the poles of backward-looking and forward-looking scholarship in the new *As You Like It* of the New Variorum Shakespeare may be seen to be defined by its inert body of textual notes, on the one hand, and its suggestive survey of 'The Text on the Stage' on the other. If it is a main function of textual and critical scholarship — as surely it is — to uphold an author's text by guarding over its purity in transmission and elucidating it afresh to every new generation, it has developed for the purpose in editions of variorum notes and commentary an aid to readers eminently worth preserving and developing. The new *As You Like It* is proof that the New Variorum Shakespeare is still a viable type of edition even after a hundred years of the series' existence. But the essentials might be realised the better with fewer incursions into progressive irrelevancies for the sake of mere traditionalism, as instanced in the extensive recording of textual changes in the bookish transmission of that text. On the other hand, if the service to the author, the text and its readers is asserted as a central function, it follows that an all-out pursuit of the text in its theatrical metamorphoses must similarly be eschewed. Nevertheless, a basic recognition that, in the life and after-life of dramatic texts, theatrical traditions rank higher in the end than do editorial ones, may serve as a wholesome, if tangential, corrective to academic works of such broad and exacting scholarship as the volumes of the New Variorum Shakespeare.