



Variants

The Journal of the European Society for Textual Scholarship

14 | 2019
Varia

Editors' Preface

Wim Van Mierlo, Wout Dillen and Elli Bleeker



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/variants/1544>

DOI: 10.4000/variants.1544

ISSN: 1879-6095

Publisher

European Society for Textual Scholarship

Printed version

Number of pages: iii-iv

ISSN: 1573-3084

Electronic reference

Wim Van Mierlo, Wout Dillen and Elli Bleeker, "Editors' Preface", *Variants* [Online], 14 | 2019, Online since 10 July 2019, connection on 14 October 2021. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/variants/1544> ;

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/variants.1544>

The authors

Editors' Preface

From production to transmission, from genesis to reception, text is an infinitely complex object of study that we can approach and represent from a wide range of perspectives. Influenced by technological inventions and transnational trends, the field of textual scholarship continues to evolve: we refine or alter our methodologies and we broaden our research focus. Technological developments have become a research topic in and by themselves, as we study how digitality affects modes of presentation, or influences how we conceptualize “texts”, “documents” and “works”. At the same time, the core business of textual scholarship — to investigate text in all its manifestations — remains unchanged. The diverse nature of contemporary textual scholarship is reflected in the contents of the fourteenth issue of *Variants*.

In the opening essay, Paul Eggert sets the tone by epitomising the fluidity between the concepts “archive” and “edition” brought about by digital devices. How to relate oneself to the seemingly contradicting impulses to archive or to edit is a familiar issue for textual scholars, but the growth of both digital archives and digital editions has intensified this dichotomy. To help us imagine the wide range of possibilities to (re)present textual material digitally, Eggert proposes a horizontal slider or scroll bar, with the archive and the edition at opposite ends. He concludes that the expansion of editorial activities may come to include literary criticism as well. Our writing practices become increasingly digital too: scholarly editors of contemporary materials are confronted with an overflow of digital documents that may require an entirely different definition of a version. Christopher A. Plaisance looks at Aristotelian philosophy and establishes an ontology of fundamental concepts like “work”, “text”, “document” and “version” suitable for a textual scholarship framework. The transformative effects of technology on scholarly editing are also central to the contribution by Merisa Martinez, Wout Dillen, Elli Bleeker, Anna-Maria Sichani and Aodhán Kelly. Together, they carried out a large-scale survey among the international editorial community in which participants were asked about their position on access and accessibility of digital editions. The survey results show us that for many important issues, such as Open Access and web accessibility, no agreed-on, clear-cut

solutions as yet exist. Should digital editions provide access to the underlying code? How can scholars exploit the full potential of the digital medium to disseminate their findings? Although the most suitable approach to these and related questions will differ per editing team, the scholarly community will undeniably benefit from guidelines and the sharing of best practices. Building upon the methodological value of giving users insight into the workings of a software program used for text analysis, Elisa Nury examines the visualization of collation results using the tool PyCoviz. Nury aptly illustrates how to implement and refine an open source tool to examine the manuscript tradition of Calpurnicus Flaccus in greater detail. In doing so, she also demonstrates how visualization can function both as a research instrument and as a means of communication. Claudia Tardelli presents a fascinating report of the challenges that arise when editing Francesco da Buti's commentary on Dante's *Commedia*. Da Buti's manuscript has a complex tradition that includes authorial revisions on some — but not all — documents as well as numerous contaminations. Tardelli therefore makes the case for a critical edition that is based on a single, most authoritative manuscript with an *apparatus fontium*. This paves the way for a proper contextualisation of Da Buti's work and see how it relates to other Dante commentaries and additional historical sources. Peter Groves, then, identifies an increasing neglect of the metre in scholarly editions of early modern texts like Shakespeare's plays. This subtle yet significant change in editorial policy has important consequences for the way contemporary readers experience those texts. Groves calls for action and proposes a new standard for representing metrical information in texts that would uncover and illuminate an essential feature of Shakespeare's verse. We move from Britain's bard to the national poet of Lithuania, Kristijan Donelaitis, whose poem *Metai* is the topic of Mikas Vaicekauskas' contribution. Vaicekauskas gives an insightful overview of the various editions of the poem and beautifully illustrates how editorial strategies are shaped by sociocultural and political circumstances.

Much along the same lines, the review essay of André Goddu offers an in-depth study of the various editions of Copernicus's most famous work *De revolutionibus orbium celestium*, first published in 1543. Since then, a number of editions have appeared based on (a combination of) the first publication or the surviving autograph. Goddu thoroughly reviews the latest edition (2015) and at the same time synthesizes the extant scholarship on this historical text that forever changed the way we think about our planet and the solar system. The final section of *Variants 14* comprises of seven reviews of innovative and remarkable scholarly editions, research volumes, and monographs that have appeared in recent years.

May 2019

Elli Bleeker, Wout Dillen, and Wim Van Mierlo