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An Introduction to the Donne Variorum and the John Donne Society

After considerable preliminary discussion and correspondence about the feasibility and usefulness of such a work, the project to produce *The Variorum Edition of the Poetry of John Donne* was formally announced at the 1980 meeting of the Modern Language Association of America in Houston, Texas. In September of 1981, supported by a grant from the Office of the Executive Vice President of the University of Southern Mississippi, I invited a group of scholars to USM's Gulf Park Campus for an initial organizational meeting. These included the following seven scholars, who were constituted as an Advisory Board for the edition: William B. Hunter, Jr., University of Houston (Emeritus); Albert C. Labriola, Duquesne University; Paul A. Parrish, Texas A&M University; Ted-Larry Pebworth, University of Michigan–Dearborn; John R. Roberts, University of Missouri; John T. Shawcross, University of Kentucky; and Ernest W. Sullivan, II, Texas Tech University. Shortly thereafter this group was expanded to include M. Thomas Hester, North Carolina State University, and C. A. Patrides, University of Michigan, who sat on the Advisory Board until his death in 1986. (As is to be expected in a long-range enterprise of this sort, of course, the constitution of this board has changed somewhat over the years, and the 1990s have seen the addition of Dennis Flynn, Bentley College, and Jeanne Shami, University of Regina, to the Board, while William B. Hunter and John T. Shawcross have resigned.) By the spring of 1982 editorships had been assigned, initial plans laid, and an agreement reached with a publisher. By January of 1984 these plans had been refined in ten meetings and working sessions of the Advisory Board and groups of editors (including three MLA special sessions), and work was well under way. As of this writing at Christmas of 1997, 44 scholars from the United States, Canada, England, Japan, and South Africa hold or have completed formal editorial assignments in the project, and numerous other colleagues the world over have contributed in particular ways to specific parts of the work. We have averaged about three editorial meetings and workshops per year (many of them focusing specifically on the textual work), and the total number of such sessions now exceeds 60. In 1986 the project received a 3-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and has competed successfully for four additional awards, the most recent of which will extend support through May of 1999. In addition, our editors have received a number of grants from other governmental and philanthropic agencies (both in this country and in Canada), and the project has enjoyed solid support from the editors' home institutions. The

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first two volumes – Vol. 6: The Anniversaries and the Epicedes and Obsequies and Vol. 8: The Epigrams, Epithalamions, Epitaphs, Inscriptions, and Miscellaneous Poems – were published by Indiana University Press in 1995, and two volumes (one on the Elegies, the other on the Holy Sonnets) will appear in 1998. With volumes on the Satyres, Verse Letters, Songs and Sonnets, and the remaining Divine Poems to go (all told, there will be 8 volumes in 12 books), we expect the project to extend well into the first decade of the new century.

Briefly stated, the justification for this vast expense of time, energy, and money lies in the place as a poet and cultural figure that John Donne (1572–1631) has come to occupy over the past four centuries and in the present state of textual and critical scholarship in Donne studies. If we may judge by the frequency with which his contemporaries copied his poems into their private commonplace books and poetical collections, Donne was the most popular poet in early 17th-century England, and he has long been recognized as the chief poet of the "metaphysical" school and one of the most important English writers of the Renaissance. Over a period of about 40 years, from the early 1590s up to his death in 1631, as he migrated socially and politically from the position of a Roman Catholic outsider to the very heart of the Jacobean establishment (as Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral), Donne wrote about 200 poems, ranging in length from one to just over 500 lines. In kind, they range from epigrams to love elegies, satires, and love songs, from verse epistles and philosophical meditations to funeral laments, epithalamions, holy sonnets, and hymns.

With the exceptions of the Anniversaries – a pair of long commendatory poems on the deceased daughter of one of Donne's patrons – and a scattering of shorter pieces, however, Donne "published" his poems only in manuscript, circulating copies (sometimes singly, sometimes in groups) among members of a coterie of friends, patrons, and prospective patrons, who in turn circulated them to others. And virtually none of Donne's holographs survive: of poetic materials in the poet's own hand, we have only 4 brief inscriptions, a Latin epitaph on his wife, and a single, 63-line verse epistle. The remaining scribal copies of Donne's poems, however, total over 5,000 exempla in about 240 separate manuscripts, and many poems survive in over 50 separate copies. While in manuscript, of course, these texts were vulnerable to virtually infinite alteration – not only by inattentive, officious, or censorious copyists, some of whom mangled poems almost beyond recognition, but also by Donne himself, whose revisions are evident in the variant states in which many of the poems survive.

Several distinct strands of textual transmission were in existence by the time of the poet's death. The first collected printing, the posthumous *Poems, by J. D. with Elegies on the Authors Death* (1633), was apparently based on manuscripts from two of these strands, and the second edition (1635) added some poems from and altered the text toward other strands. Study of the manuscripts clearly indicates that the printer of 1633 "modernized" spelling and punctuation, and the extensive revision in 1635 indicates that he had developed serious reservations about the reliability of the manuscripts used in setting the prior edition. Though five subsequent 17th-century editions (in 1639, 1649, 1650, 1654, and 1669) added another 30 poems from other

printed or manuscript sources, the editions of 1633 and 1635 essentially determined what was accepted as Donne's text and canon up to the 20th century; and other surviving manuscript strands, no matter how authoritative their texts might be, were largely ignored. In his Boston edition of 1855, for example, James Russell Lowell reproduced Tonson's 1719 edition, recording only a handful of textual variants, and these are attributed to the 1633 and 1635 printings. When he took a second run at Donne's text forty years later (1895), Lowell remained almost wholly bound to the print tradition, ignoring the pioneering efforts of A. B. Grosart (1872-73) to introduce manuscript evidence into editorial practice, as did his contemporary E.K. Chambers, who brought out a two-volume edition the following year (1896).

Herbert Grierson thus appeared to strike out in the right scholarly direction when he determined to consult the manuscripts in producing his edition of 1912 – a work central to the Donne "revival" of the twentieth century. Grierson, however, knew fewer than 40 manuscripts, only 1/6 the total now identified; and his listing of their variant readings was incomplete and inaccurate. Most significantly, Grierson, like every modern editor except Grosart, took as an unquestioned article of faith the superiority of the early printed texts (especially the edition of 1633) to the manuscripts and explicitly set out to verify this assumption in his edition, citing manuscript variants only at points of crux and tending to credit only those variants that occurred in multiple sources. In this privileging of the 1633 edition, furthermore, Grierson engaged in what might be termed the monolithic fallacy, assuming not only that *1633*'s texts were preferable to those of the manuscripts, but also that the text of every poem in *1633* was equally authoritative. Countering this assumption, of course, is the fact that every significant manuscript collection – and this was undoubtedly true of those (now lost or unidentified) from which *1633* was set – is a composite artifact containing texts at various removes from holograph. Such an approach also contains no provisions for dealing responsibly with poems that exist in multiple authorial versions. The more recent Oxford editors, Helen Gardner and Wesley Milgate, consciously restricted themselves to the study of far fewer manuscripts than were then known to exist – Gardner, for example, over 50 years after the appearance of Grierson's work, still consulted only 43 manuscripts in preparing her edition of *The 'Elegies' and The 'Songs and Sonnets'* (1965). Like Grierson before them, furthermore, these editors reported only selected variants from those relatively few manuscripts consulted, also assuming *1633*'s general and monolithic superiority (Gardner in particular accommodated this supposed commitment to *1633* by a readiness to emend the copy-text at any point where a particular manuscript reading seemed to her logically or esthetically superior). The most comprehensive citation of manuscripts in an edition so far (159 in all) is that in Shawcross's 1967 Anchor Books volume, but the format of that series precluded a complete listing of variants and detailed discussions of textual histories (and Shawcross, too, remained committed to *1633* as copy-text). Furthermore, a great deal of additional manuscript evidence – most of it first noted in Peter Beal's monumental *Index of English Literary Manuscripts* (London 1980) – has come to light since Shawcross produced his (now out-of-print) edition. The most recent editions – those of Patrides (1985) and Carey (1990 and 1996) – are designed as

one-volume student texts, lacking textual apparatuses and including little information of any sort about the text.

The textual work in the Donne Variorum is thus predicated on the conviction that Donne's poetry has never before been properly edited – partly because previous editors have been unable and/or unwilling to carry out an exhaustive study of the pertinent textual artifacts, but more fundamentally because no previous editor has recognized the theoretical implications of the circumstances under which Donne wrote and distributed his poems. In consequence, the primary artifacts upon which an edition ought to be based – hundreds of non-holographic manuscript copies of the poems, in scores of 17th-century commonplace books, poetical miscellanies, and collections of Donne's poetry – have never been respected and studied for what they are; and the Donne we have always known is essentially the Donne institutionalized by the printer of *1633*, not the Donne who composed his poems one at a time, distributed them individually or in small groups (sometimes revising them for redistribution in altered circumstances), apparently maintained no comprehensive personal archive of them, allowed only a handful of them to enter print (and perhaps proofread only one), and scarcely seems to have conceived of them in terms of a canon at all. This – a manuscript poet of whose work only a single real poem survives in his own hand – is the Donne whose texts are presented in this Variorum.

In order to present a text that is consistent with the bibliographical circumstances described above, we have undertaken to transcribe (from originals) and collate (by computer) every copy of every Donne poem in every early manuscript, as well as similarly to collate the texts that appear in the early print tradition (including those in both corrected and uncorrected states of the 17th-century editions); to study all these texts and the physical artifacts that contain them in order to construct a textual history for each poem (or group of poems) that will allow the identification of the least corrupted surviving exemplum for use as copy-text; and to append an apparatus containing not only a discursive analysis of the textual history of each poem (or group), but also a schematic filiation of all copies of each poem and a comprehensive listing of all substantive and semi-substantive variants in all early sources, as well as of verbal variants in significant editions of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. As will be briefly illustrated below, some of our reading texts differ markedly from those in all previous editions, and in cases where our text is substantially the same as that in prior editions, the accompanying apparatus greatly expands the range of materials available for informed critical interpretation, making it possible for a user to reconstruct in all essential respects every surviving text of every poem. A general textual volume, prepared at the end of the project, will provide first-line indices, physical descriptions, and information on provenance and interrelationships for all textual artifacts used in the edition.

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Notwithstanding that certain of our post-modernist brethren find the history of criticism irrelevant to current critical practice, we believe that a variorum commentary – the survey and meaningful organization of the vast body of critical material that has grown up around Donne's poetry over the centuries – is also of

paramount importance for the study of Donne and 17th-century literature at this juncture. And although the material we have presented will undoubtedly lend itself to other uses as well, our unabashed aim in compiling this commentary is to facilitate further understanding of Donne's poetry by situating it squarely within the tradition of critical and scholarly discussion that has grown up around it over the past 400 years. In comparison to writers like Milton and Shakespeare, it is true, Donne was relatively neglected in earlier centuries, though A. J. Smith's *John Donne: The Critical Heritage* (London, 1975) contains some 458 pages of comment and reference from sources dating between 1598 and 1889. (A second Critical Heritage volume of materials compiled by Smith before his death in 1991, extending coverage up to 1922, has recently appeared.) After the appearance of Grierson's edition in 1912, however, Donne shortly achieved "major poet" status, inspiring several generations of modern poets and provoking a stream of critical and scholarly studies that has now reached a flood tide. In his first bibliography of modern Donne criticism (Univ. of Missouri Press, 1973), which covered the years 1912 to 1967, John R. Roberts listed and annotated almost 1,300 items. An update extending coverage through 1978 (Univ. of Missouri Press, 1982) added another 1,044, excluding book reviews, references, and doctoral dissertations – an annual average during that 11-year period of approximately 100 books, essays, and notes published on Donne. In addition to the sheer bulk reflected in these figures, the corpus of Donne commentary exhibits two further features that make it difficult to master: much of the material, both that identified in existing bibliographies and that which we have discovered, is dispersed throughout the pages of obscure or inaccessible editions and periodicals, and a good bit of it is written in languages other than English. The result of these circumstances is that scholarly or critical works of our own time frequently fail to align themselves distinctly within the critical tradition, and the continuing interpretive enterprise is marked by repetition and fragmentation.

We also believe that availability of a variorum will particularly facilitate the writing of the kind of comprehensive studies that are sorely needed in Donne scholarship. Though we have good books on Donne, they have tended not to deal with the full range of the poetry. Many concern themselves with single genres or sub-genres (and such genres as the epigrams, verse letters, and epicedes remain generally ignored), and those that aspire to broad coverage commonly proceed by synecdoche, concentrating on a relatively few poems taken to be representative. The scarcity of good, inclusive studies of the entire canon is no doubt partly owing to the difficulty in mastering the vast body of commentary within which a responsible scholar would wish to locate his or her own contribution, and the variorum commentary will contribute substantially to the solution of this problem. Whether or not anything like a body of generally acceptable overall conclusions and dominant critical patterns ever emerges, it seems legitimate to expect that the critics we read will understand how their writing engages with the critical tradition and will document this relationship in their work. Publication of the Variorum commentary will pave the way for such an advance, not only enabling Donne studies specifically to move forward with more direction and purpose, but also enhancing our general understanding of the seventeenth century. And since Donne's poetry has engaged

some of the best and most representative minds of the past three centuries, we believe this material will help to index the intellectual and esthetic history of the entire modern period.

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I should like now to turn to our first two volumes to illustrate briefly some of the concrete results of our work on the text. The first example, taken from Volume 6, concerns Donne's commemorative poem "A Hymne to the Saynts and to the Marquesse Hamilton," written on the occasion of the death of James Hamilton, who died on 2 March 1625. The first 18 lines of the poem develop the conceit that, whatever heavenly rank or order is enhanced by the arrival of the Marquesse's soul there, "by his losse growe all our [earthly] Orders less." Then lines 19–28 chronicle the utter devastation that befalls the body when the soul flees, but discern in this devastation a lesson in Christian hope, which Donne develops in Platonic terms:

> Never made Body such hast to confesse
> What a Soule was. All former comelynesse
> Fledd in a minute when the Soule was gon
> And hauing lost that beauty would haue none
> So fell our Monasteryes in an instant growne
> Not to lesse houses, but to heapes of stone;
> So sent his body that fayre forme it wore
> Vnto the Spheare of formes, and doth (before
> His body fill vp his Sepulchrall stone)
> Anticipate a Resurrection.
> For as, in his fame, now, his Soule is heere:
> So in the forme thereof his bodye's there.

The argument developed in lines 25-30, though typically intricate, is not incomprehensible: at death the "forme" (the soul) of the Marquesse's body instantaneously ascended to the "Spheare of formes" (heaven), thereby prefiguring the body's eventual "Resurrection" and assuming a position as the body's representative in heaven, just as the Marquesse's "fame" remains with the body on earth as a representative of the departed "Soule."

The Variorum text printed above is based on the O'Flahertie ms. at Harvard University, a copy-text selected after careful study of the poem's complete transmissional history in the seventeenth century. Until the publication of our edition, however, Donne's readers have never had access to the stunning conceit in these lines because every prior printing of the poem – from 1633 down to Carey's Oxford edition in 1990 – has read line 27 as: "His **soule shall** fill up his Sepulchrall stone." Amongst all Donne's editors only Shawcross and (following him) Patrides even record "body" as a variant to "soule shall"; and though (as our survey of the commentary shows) various critics have valiantly tried to explain this passage, their efforts have been doomed by the nonsensical text with which they have had to work. This poem comes relatively late in Donne's career, and it survives in only 12

manuscript copies. The crux in line 27 divides the manuscripts into two independent lines of transmission, with O'Flahertie and its cognate the Luttrell ms. (now in the Cambridge University Library) preserving the correct "body" and those in the second line recording the erroneous "soule shall." Unfortunately, the first printed edition (1633) was set into type from a manuscript containing the error, and all subsequent editions derive from that corrupted line of transmission. Only when the manuscripts had been analyzed and a complete textual history of the poem had been developed as part of our work on the Variorum was it possible to restore the line to its original form.

Besides the greater accuracy of verbal and accidental detail in individual poems, two issues of broader interpretive significance have emerged in the course of our study of the Donne textual materials, and these issues may be illustrated from our work on Donne's epigrams in Volume 8. First, we have recognized the desirability of presenting multiple versions of poems that survive as more than one distinct poetic entity, and this desideratum has become a practical necessity in cases where the alternate versions are authorial. In the 1633 edition, for instance, Donne's epigram "Antiquary" appears thus:

Antiquary.

If in his Studie he hath so much care
To hang all old strange things, let his wife beware.

This is the form in which this poem had invariably been printed from 1633 to 1995, the one exception being Wesley Milgate's Oxford edition of 1967. Analysis of the full body of 17th-century data, however, showed that this first printing was merely the end product of a 3-stage evolutionary process through which this poem passed while circulating in manuscript between its initial composition in the early 1590s and its posthumous publication in 1633. This evolution may be schematized as follows:

Early Text (8 mss.)

If, in his study, Hamon hath such care,
To hang all old things, let his wife beware

Intermediate Text (5 mss.)

If in his study Hammon hath such care
To hang all old **strange** things, lett his wife beware

Late Text (9 mss.)

If in his studdie **hee haue** soe much care
To hang all, old strange thinges let his wife beware

The critical implications of this information are exciting and far-reaching, especially in light of the fact that each of the successive manuscript texts of this epigram can be shown to be authorial, that Donne – probably for political reasons – deliberately revised this poem at least twice over the course of the years. The same is true of a number of the other epigrams; yet no prior edition has even recognized the existence of multiple authentic forms of these poems, much less presented textual data sufficient to enable informed appreciation of this phenomenon. We remedied this deficiency by printing in full the alternate versions of this and other epigrams that survive in multiple authentic forms, and we intend to proceed similarly in subsequent volumes.

A second broad issue that may be clarified by comprehensive examination of the textual evidence is the matter of poem sequence. Again, our recent work on the epigrams provides an example. The seven seventeenth-century editions and issues of Donne's Poems (1633-1669) present the following sequence of 16 epigrams: "Hero and Leander," "Pyramus and Thisbe," "Niobe," "A burnt ship," "Fall of a wall," "A lame begger," "A selfe accuser," "A licentious person," "Antiquary," "Disinherited," "Phryne," "An Obscure Writer," "Klockius," "Raderus," "Mercurius Gallo-Belgicus," and "Ralphius." This ordering persists in the editions of Tonson (1719), Bell (1779), Anderson (1793), Chalmers (1810), Lowell (1855), and Lowell (1895). In 1872, however, Grosart added the recently discovered "The Liar" to the end of this group, and Chambers (1896) followed Grosart in making this addition. In 1912, Grierson reproduced the order of 1633, except that he appropriated "Cales and Guiana" and "Sir John Wingfield" from the highly important Westmoreland manuscript (then owned by Edmund Gosse) and interpolated them into the sequence in accordance with their positioning in Westmoreland (between "A lame begger" and "A selfe accuser"), adding (like Grosart and Chambers before him) "The Liar" at the end. Grierson's practice was imitated exactly by Hayward (1929) and Bennett (1942), except that Bennett also extracted from Westmoreland "The Juggler" (an epigram previously suppressed in 20th-century editions because of its homosexual subject matter), positioning it between "Antiquary" and "Disinherited," as in Westmoreland. Subsequently, Milgate (1967), while denoting *1633* as his copy-text, actually printed the 20 epigrams of Westmoreland in Westmoreland's order, and Shawcross (1967), the first editor ever to print the epigram "Faustus" as Donne's, gives 21 epigrams in an editorially constructed sequence found in no 17th-century source. Smith (1971) and Patrides (1985) generally follow 1633, appending or interpolating the epigrams not found in 1633 as they see fit.

Readers may be excused if they find themselves confused by the preceding paragraph, for editorial handling of the epigrams – with respect both to the texts of individual poems and to the question of sequence – has itself been confusing. Indeed, the possibility that the epigrams might form an authoritative sequence – though such structuring would be taken for granted if, for instance, we were talking about sonnets – has never been seriously addressed by critics; and one reason for this is that no edition prior to the Variorum had presented textual information sufficient to guide an investigation of this question. Our study of the manuscripts containing the epigrams (295 separate transcriptions in 67 different manuscripts),

however, yielded clear proof that Donne worked on his collection of epigrams in three major phases over a period of perhaps 25 years. In the early 1590s he circulated a group of some 8 to 10 poems, and these were subsequently subsumed into a reorganized and expanded sequence comprising, in the fullest manifestation (that of the Westmoreland ms.), 20 epigrams and put together no earlier than 1602. In the last phase, impossible to date precisely, he circulated the slightly reduced sequence of 16 poems that found its way – with one minor adjustment – into the 1633 edition. What points to the author's controlling hand in this development is not only the continuity observable in the ordering of the poems at the points of major expansion or contraction of the work, but also – as illustrated above in the discussion of "Antiquary" – the existence of distinct forms of the individual poems at the three separate stages through which the larger whole evolved. Printing these three sequences of epigrams in full, our Volume 8 presents this information clearly, enabling users, for the first time ever, not only to study Donne's revision of the texts of individual epigrams, but also to address the interpretive question of sequence with confidence that what they are interpreting is Donne's. At this point in the project we do not know how many similar instances of authorial revision and/or sequencing may turn up as we work our way successively through the various genres and groups of poems. In the already-published Volume 8, however, we have shown how Donne revised two of his epithalamions, and work forthcoming indicates that he revised at least some of the satires ("Satyre III" in a major way); furthermore, our volume on the Holy Sonnets will demonstrate not only his revision of the texts of individual poems but also his hand in successive variant arrangements of them.

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In retrospect it seems inevitable that the interest in Donne reflected by the almost simultaneous foundation of the Variorum project and the *John Donne Journal* (at North Carolina State University in 1982) should have resulted in the formation of a Donne Society. Indeed, the idea began to be talked about at meetings of the Variorum editors and other congregations of Donne aficionados very early in the 1980s; and the proto-meeting of what would eventually be the John Donne Society of America occurred at the March 1984 meeting of the Variorum editors at USM's Gulf Park campus in Gulfport, Mississippi, when I decided to break up the agenda of business meetings and work sessions by adding a single session of scholarly papers. These were presented by Dan Doerksen, Dennis Flynn, and M. Thomas Hester, and the success of the session encouraged us all to think of getting on with the business of holding a full-fledged Donne Conference and founding a John Donne Society. Eugene Cunnar and M. Thomas Hester took the lead in scheduling a planning session at the 1984 MLA Convention, and by February of 1985 a meeting date in February 1986 had been set, a program committee established, and plans drawn up for a constitution and set of by-laws. I subsequently included a short notice of plans to form the Society in the April 18, 1985, issue of *The Donne Variorum Newsletter*, and a call for papers went out that spring as well. At the MLA convention in 1985 the proposed constitution and by-laws were tentatively approved and the first slate of officers was nominated.

The first formal John Donne Society conference was held at Gulf Park on February 20-23, 1986. It was hosted by the University of Southern Mississippi and The Pennsylvania State University, and the program listed the Variorum Project and the *John Donne Journal* as sponsors. Invited guest speakers at the first conference included the distinguished 17th-century scholars Annabel Patterson, William Kerrigan, Stanley Stewart, and Raymond Waddington, and the first President of the Society, elected at that meeting, was John R. Roberts. Also elected to office were Eugene Cunnar, as Executive Director (a position he still holds), and Edward Sichi, who served as secretary-treasurer until his death in 1990. Subsequent presidents of the Society have included John T. Shawcross, M. Thomas Hester, Ted-Larry Pebworth, Claude J. Summers, Diana Treviño Benet, Albert C. Labriola, Ernest W. Sullivan, II, Dayton Haskin, Paul Stanwood, Achsah Guibbory, and Paul Parrish. Mary Arshagouni Papazian was elected secretary-treasurer upon the death of Ed Sichi in 1990 and, with the support of her home institution (Oakland University), continues in this office.

As noted above, the Society succeeded in lining up a distinguished group of invited speakers for its inaugural conference and has had the good fortune to enlist invited speakers of similar distinction for subsequent meetings. These include A. J. Smith, Tony Low, John Shawcross, Mary Ann Radzinowicz, Louis Martz, Tom Hester, Carol Kaske, A. B. Chambers, Ted-Larry Pebworth, Ernest W. Sullivan, Janel Mueller, Claude Summers, Ilona Bell, Mario Di Cesare, Diana Benet, Dennis Flynn, Barbara Lewalski, Albert Labriola, Regina Schwartz, Leah Marcus, Dayton Haskin, Jeanne Shami, Ann Coiro, Peter Beal, Paul Stanwood, Bryan Gooch, Helen Wilcox, Achsah Guibbory, Anne Prescott, Blair Worden, and Paul Parrish. In addition to invited speakers, of course, 15 to 20 other scholars, chosen on a competitive basis, present their work at the February meeting each year. For a number of years now, the Society has been an Allied Organization of the Modern Language Association and has sponsored two sessions at the annual MLA convention.

At the conclusion of the first meeting the attendees were so pleased with the experience that it was decided to return to Gulf Park the following year, and that venue has become the annual conference's permanent home. USM's Gulf Park campus is right on the beach of the Gulf of Mexico, and the weather in February usually presents a balmy relief from the snow and ice of northern climes. The center where the conference is held provides inexpensive, comfortable accommodations in a beautiful, isolated environment that permits relaxed discussion and fellowship. Annual attendance has averaged about 60, with scholars coming from all parts of the U.S. and Canada, and every year there are scholars from as far away as England, Scandinavia, Australia, and Hong Kong. The society particularly welcomes graduate students and frequently includes them on the program. I am happy to have this opportunity to describe it for European readers who have not known of its existence, and I extend all a warm welcome to join and come to our meetings. For further information, anyone can contact me, or Gene Cunnar or Mary Papazian at the addresses listed below.

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