The Haunting of Suckling’s

*Fragmenta Aurea* (1646)

The Clark Library has multiple copies of what should be the same book, at least, under my definition of what a book is: Sir John Suckling, *Fragmenta Aurea* (London, 1646), consisting of his collected poems and plays. The three copies are listed in the Clark catalogue with modified LC numbers as PR3718.A1 1646, PR3718.A1 1646a, and PR3718.A1 1646a(2). This follows Clark cataloguing conventions (I think), in that “variant copies” are indicated with a letter (thus 1646 / 1646a) and second copies of the same variant copy are indicated simply by “[copy] 2.” They differ in the order of their contents sections (1646a, copy 1 is eccentric); otherwise, the cataloguing distinctions are based on the standard distinctions in the Wing Catalogue regarding title-page variants, although Wing numbers, the basis for these edition distinctions, are not given in the electronic record.¹

The difference that distinguished the principal bibliographical variants of this book in the latest Wing catalogue and in earlier catalogues is reflected in ESTC: the title is set either entirely in upper case or in conventional upper and lower case, easily represented on a keyboard as FRAGMENTA AUREA vs. Fragmenta Aurea.

Figure 8a. Title Page of Suckling, *Fragmenta Aurea* (1646)
Figure 8b. Title Page of Suckling, *FRAGMENTA AUREA* (1646)
Basic cataloguing or collecting conventions require us to call these two separate editions or issues, even though they were clearly produced nearly simultaneously. A further title-page variant, identified in 1970, distinguished two forms of *Fragmenta Aurea*, with the result that there are now three Wing numbers for this book: S6126 (FRAG AUREA), S6126A (Frag Aurea), and S6126B.2

There is nothing out of the ordinary with this book or these copies; at least, there seemed to be nothing out of the ordinary when I first looked at them. The book is a collection of Suckling’s works, bound together, with separate parts printed by different printers; it is one of a series of small literary editions printed by Humphrey Moseley, all in standard format, and it was reprinted two years later page for page. The four parts are at least potentially autonomous, in that they contain half-title pages, and new signature and pagination series. That the order of parts differs in individual copies is thus not surprising, nor should it affect cataloguing decisions. The book was included in Greg’s scrupulously detailed *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*; copies exist in most major libraries; and it has also been subject to state-of-the-art scrutiny of ESTC bibliographers.3 It should thus present few bibliographical problems. But that turns out not to be the case, and instead of the three (or perhaps two) Wing numbers that should account for this book, there are now seven that refer to the entire book or to parts of it; ESTC gives eight.

There are two simple features that seem responsible for this. (1) It is a collection of pieces, with sections individually signed; the order of sections is not necessitated by the pagination or

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signature series, and thus the eccentric order of texts in Clark copy 1646a1. (2) The preliminaries contain both a blank leaf and a tipped-in author’s portrait, whose location is not necessarily fixed. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss what this fairly routine case suggests for our tabulation of bibliographical evidence. While it is challenging to make abstruse technical jargon fit the real world situation (the task of most cataloguers), it is also amusing to describe that same situation in such a way that non-initiates can understand it, and that is the goal here.

Ideal Copy

To describe a book in a bibliographical sense is to give what is called ideal-copy description—not the form of any material book-copy (copy-specific description), but rather the standard or ideal form of the book, one which Fredson Bowers described as reflecting printers’ intentions insofar as these intentions are manifested in actual books. In practice, however, the distinction between ideal-copy description and copy-specific description is often difficult to maintain. For manuscript descriptions, which rely on the same formulae and conventions of description used for printed books, there is generally no difference, or the distinction might be defined in a different way: for example, a manuscript sophisticated or rearranged in the modern period might be described in the hypothetical form it had prior to that sophistication. In the case of very rare books, or books with only a single surviving copy, there might be no difference even to define. Cataloguers might well be uneasy about constructing an ideal-copy description to which no surviving copy conforms,

since such a description would seem to oppose the material evidence on which it is based. The Gutenberg Bible poses a related problem. Although this book is very well studied and not particularly rare, individual descriptions in reputable catalogues vary so widely in their conventions that it is difficult to collate them. That is, there is no way to reference a page in one copy such that it is certain to be found in another. This is a point made by Paul Needham of the Scheide Library in numerous fora.

Another complicating issue is the dominance of single library collections, and the way copies are reported to large union catalogue projects. For incunable catalogues, individual libraries generally dominate: the most familiar example is the British Library catalogue of incunables (BMC); the form of the book-copy in the collection generally, and understandably provides the ideal-copy description for the book. For early English books, the STC project relied on a number of libraries, although again, privilege was necessarily granted to the particular copies in the British Library. Because of this, copy-specific descriptions have a way of blurring into ideal-copy descriptions. Considered historically, this means that the bibliographical peculiarities or even the accidental history of one copy (its provenance) is projected onto the origin of all copies, that is, the one epitomizing “printers’ intentions.”

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General Description

Although it is customary in articles and notes such as this one to include a magisterial collation formula stating precisely the ideal form (in all senses) of the book, since that is at issue here, I will begin instead with a less technical description of the book. I follow that with a survey of the catalogues and descriptions that have dealt with this book and finally a discussion of the principal variants found in these copies.

The book is a collection of texts by Suckling, with part-titles for each of four sections. Individual sections (sometimes containing more than one work) were assigned to different printers, and these sections appear with independent signature series and independent pagination. Most of the title- and part-title-pages have variants. The general title page and preliminaries do not specify what is to be contained in the book, nor the order in which the sections should be bound.

The preliminaries consist of one quire of four leaves (octavo, from a half-sheet folded in quarto) and include an engraved author portrait. The engraving is usually tipped in facing the general title page, but individual copies show many variants in its placement. The general title page reads *Fragmenta Aurea: A collection of all the Incomparable Peeces written by Sir John Suckling*, 1646. This is followed by a four-page “To the reader.” Following this initial quire, most copies contain the following potentially autonomous sections:

Section I:
Separate title page, printed by Ruth Raworth; Poems; Letters (full t-p); Account of Religion (full-t.p.), FINIS; A discourse (G4, p. 103; no tp.); “FINIS” (p. 119).

Section II:
Aglaura, separate title page, “printed for Tho Walkley” (this has variant forms); A2r/v prologues; epilogue FINIS; Aglaura (version performed at court) “printed Tho. Walkley”; “FINIS”
Section III:
Goblins (“private” version) separate title page, “Pr. for H. Moseley”; “FINIS”

Section IV:
Brennoralt (“private” version), separate title page “Printed for Humphrey Moseley”

The statements in the various title pages are straightforward and the printing history seems unproblematic. Moseley “has the book printed.” Some of that printing is assigned to Walkley, who assigned it to Warren (sections II–IV, as well as general preliminaries). The first section (Poems) was assigned to Ruth Raworth. These printing stints were apparently more or less simultaneous or continuous, since sections of part-title pages were kept in type and reused for others.

The frequency of this order of texts in extant copies likely indicates how the book was ordinarily distributed and sold, and this could also be described in Bowers’s terms as the form intended by Moseley. Other orders, however, are certainly possible, and nothing about the internal evidence suggests they are illegitimate (there is no feature in the book that alternative orders contradict). There might be some generic and aesthetic reasons to keep sections II–IV together (all are in the same type, and all are plays), but there is no reason, bibliographical or aesthetic, to keep these sections in the same order, and for this, descriptive bibliography must rely on the vague and problematic principle “majority rules.”

We thus know what the printer/publisher did, what the printing project entailed, and can predict the variants found in modern libraries. That is, analytical bibliography (defined as

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7 This is not an uncommon situation for the earliest printed books; the series of pamphlet volumes printed by Ulrich Zell in the 1460s were clearly meant to be bound together, but in no set official combinations or order; see Severin Corsten, “Ulrich Zells früheste Produktion,” Gutenberg Jahrbuch 2007, 68–76.
the recovery of printing procedures from the evidence of extant copies) and descriptive bibliography (the organization of copies into editions and states) has little more to say about this book. Given the number of books printed in the seventeenth century in England, it is, for the bibliographer, time to move on to the next one.

So to study this book beyond this is to focus not on printing history (imagined as a series of unmediated events that took place somewhere in the naive and unadulterated past), nor on a much grander cultural history, but rather on the means by which we speak of and understand that history. We are not looking at the moon; we are merely polishing lenses. And in that spirit, I am going to stay with this book a bit longer than most bibliographers, librarians, or cataloguers have the time or luxury to do. The problems I am finding seem not caused by the complexity or impenetrability of the history, but rather by the conventions of descriptive bibliography. Even simple, common, and expected variants have the effect of multiplying bibliographical variants (that is, entries in a catalogue) and confuse, if not the actual history of book, at least our conventional descriptions of this history.

Principal Catalogues

The relevant catalogues are W.W. Greg’s *A Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*, Wing, ESTC, and EEBO. Greg bases his catalogue on texts (plays), organized by date of first printing, and in a supplemental volume, “Collections,” organized by author. All the others are based on books and editions. These are all, at least theoretically, descriptive catalogues, in that they are based on or incorporate ideal-copy description.

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Each is nonetheless dependent upon the individual copies catalogued in individual libraries and these copies, however eccentric or inaccurately described, find their way erratically into the ideal-copy descriptions found in other catalogues.

Complicating this, Wing and ESTC are both union catalogues as well as descriptive catalogues. These two genres are not the same and their conflation occasionally leads to problems and inconsistencies: a union catalogue combines or lists the descriptions provided by the holdings of various libraries (there are far too many books for the bibliographers to have first-hand experience of all of them), and the provision of an item number at times tends to authenticate even faulty descriptions. A descriptive catalogue, on the other hand, is at least theoretically a critical catalogue; it relies on these individual descriptions (or the evidence they provide and sometimes conceal) in order to produce a standard that is itself reflective of what might be called original history (what took place in the printing house), not reception history (how the objects produced by that printing house behaved in history).

The most detailed of these is Greg’s *Bibliography of the English Printed Drama to the Restoration*. The nature of the catalogue and its very detail helped legitimize certain types of errors. Greg was cataloguing texts, and he regarded these texts as being represented in various editions, which his bibliography catalogued. “Othello” is an entry for the play, but “the Folio of 1623” appears as an entry only in vol. 3 (“Collections”). Greg was not concerned here, as he might have been elsewhere, with sorting out bibliographical editions. Thus, individual plays such as *Brennoralt* and *Goblins* catalogued (wrongly) by individual libraries as separate bibliographical items rather than as parts of the collection *Fragmenta Aurea* would tend to find illusory support in Greg (they were given a unique reference number in his catalogue).

Greg identified two principal variants of *Fragmenta Aurea* based on differences in the title page and also provided entries for each play that appeared in it, leaving aside the question of whether that constituted an edition in the bibliographical sense.
He identified the two principal variants with an asterisk and a dagger (these are sometimes referred to as Greg 626 and Greg 626a). He also noted the absence of a rule under the date in the second variant, the basis for the variants noted by Beaurline and Clayton in 1970, although he did not classify that as constituting a bibliographical variant.⁹

Wing’s *Short-Title Catalogue* came out in 1951. Wing did not take Greg into account and thus has only one entry for *Fragmenta Aurea*, but four items in all for this book and the sections within it. The entries for individual plays are the result of decisions and conventions of reporting libraries:

S6121 Aglaura (1646, 4o)
S6122 Brennoralt
S6126 Fragmenta aurea
S6129 The Goblins

The quarto designation for *Aglaura* is wrong, but legitimizes the notion that it is a separate edition from all the others.¹⁰ In its second edition, Wing distinguished seven items, with the variant forms of *Fragmenta Aurea* determined by Greg and the 1970 article of Beaurline and Clayton:

S6121 Aglaura (Walkley var.)
S6121A Aglaura (T.W. var.)
S6122 Brennoralt
S6126 FRAG AUREA (large caps)
S6126B [anr. ed] date underlined
S6129 Goblins

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¹⁰ Imposition by half-sheets, rather than full sheets, is always problematic in bibliography. Is a half-sheet folded once to be described as a folio (based on the folding), or a quarto (based on the relation to the original sheet)? Wing determines format by the orientation of chainlines, thus by the relation of paper in the book to the original sheet of paper. A book formed of half-sheets folded once is thus a quarto.
Aglaura, Brennoralt, Goblins (items 6121, 6122 and 6129) are retained from the first edition and 6121A added as a variant of 6121.11 They are considered independent, not based on analysis of production (internal evidence in books and external evidence in printing history), but because certain libraries contain independently bound copies of one of these units.

Wing I was intended at least in part as a finding guide, and Wing II expands the holdings section considerably for each entry. One of the consequences of this, at least for this entry, is that errors in Wing I are multiplied in Wing II, and thus inevitably find their way into ESTC. If Wing I considered a separately bound play (Brennoralt, for example) a separate edition based on the record in a reporting library, that entry reappeared, alongside copies reported by other libraries, even though the decisions of these libraries were likely based on different criteria of what constituted a real edition. S6121, S6122, and S6129 should be eliminated: they legitimize real or imagined variants, and because they are almost obligatory points of reference, they are or appear to be ineradicable in enumerative and descriptive bibliographies.

The most modern of catalogues, EEBO and ESTC, repeat (understandably) most of the errors of Wing, and (not so understandably) add more. In my most recent search, EEBO produced the following under the search “Suckling 1646”:

1. Aglaura = S6121A (T.W.)
2. Aglaura S6121 = Greg 541b “Walkley”
3. Brennoralt S6122 = Greg 621b
4. FragAur S6126 (Yale copy — gives full pagination but images are only to Poems)
5. FRAG AR = S6126B (collation only to poems)
6. FRAG AUR = S6126A (Agl. t.p. Walkley)
7. Goblins (Yale) S6129, Greg 628a Collation says 64p (But images show this is bound in immediately following Aglaura.)

11 For Goblins, see discussion below.
These are the same seven items found, rightly or wrongly, in Wing II, and it may well be that the unstated principle behind the selection of these entries was simply to provide images for every item in Wing. This is certainly a reasonable and useful basis, but I do not find it stated directly.

ESTC has eight items:

1. Aglaura (Walkley) Greg 541b, S6121
2. Aglaura (T.W.) (var. missigned A3)
3. Brennoralt, date underlined; S6122 Greg 621b, Yale edition (which is in fact a copy of the complete FRAG AUR)
4. Frag Aur S6126A
5. FRAG AUR S6126
6. Frag Aur S6126B
8. Goblins

We recognize in ESTC all the variants noted in Wing; that is, all Wing numbers are confirmed. Editions continue to multiply, but at least one of these so-called editions is a pure ghost, as can be determined from catalogue entries alone: Brennoralt (Greg 621b, Yale) is not a real book or even a real book-copy: when you trace this book, what you get is Yale’s FRAG AUR, and there is no reason to catalogue that separately, simply because some libraries happen to have a copy of a Brennoralt catalogued separately.12

These catalogues agree in most details, which ordinarily would indicate a consensus, particularly with a catalogue as good as ESTC. Here, however, the degree of consensus is just as likely to indicate a state of dependence. An error in one catalogue is given spurious support as the same error reappears in others.

12 The same is true of #8 Goblins. On #7, see below. It is a ghost edition, based on a library catalogue. Yale seems to have five copies: all conform to ordinary descriptions (none contains the blank).
Variants Real and Imagined

There are two types of variants we should account for when dealing with this book and the catalogue entries for it: the first are variants created (perhaps inadvertently) at press. The second are variants of provenance, that is, different forms various book-copies took after they were printed. For descriptive bibliography, only the first class of variants should be of any importance. Descriptive bibliographers and the cataloguers who depend on them (enumerative bibliographers) are only concerned theoretically with ideal copy — what the printer intended to produce or could reasonably have hoped to produce, and what variants (or failures?) took place at press while the book was being printed. Yet the second class of variants (pure matters of provenance and later history) have created variants in description as well. Accidental forms of the book have become catalogued forms and have worked their way into standard catalogues (ESTC). These produce what are commonly known as ghosts or ghost editions: the book-copies that evidence such editions are very real; the editions themselves are not.

Ideally, I would try to distinguish or classify these variants more precisely than I do in the list below: flat-out errors, irrelevancies, inconsequential variant, possible bibliographical significance, matters to be determined by intent of catalogue, and so on. Unfortunately, as I attempt to construct this obvious hierarchy of variation or error, I run into problems, since even the most inconsequential of errors can quickly rise to bibliographical significance. Note in the imagined scheme here, it is not clear whether my word error refers to something done by the printer, the binder, or the bibliographer: the history of catalogue intentions subsequently bears upon the production of variation, both real and imagined.

1. Gen. title page FRAGMENTA AUREA vs. Fragmenta Aurea
2. part-title page for Aglaura; printed by T.W. for Humphrey Moseley and are to be sold at his shop / Printed for Tho.
Walkley, and are to be sold by Humphrey Moseley at his shop\textsuperscript{13}

There are then some subsidiary variants, which may or may not be of bibliographical significance:

3. underline under imprint date of t.p.
4. the existence (real or inferred) of the initial blank
5. press variant allowed/allowed on A3v of gen. prel.
6. state of the engraved author’s portrait

These are all bibliographical variants, although in more or less descending order of importance: the state of the engraving would, in a bibliographical sense, be irrelevant.

Other more problematic variants include:

7. order of texts
8. the make-up of the preliminaries (prologue)
9. autonomy of individual parts

These last three variants are easily produced in the later history of the book: an individual copy might be broken up, parts re-ordered or bound separately, during which leaves might migrate from one location to another. If such things are unique to the later history of individual book-copies, they have no bibliographical significance. If they were produced deliberately at press (for example, the printer intended to distribute and sell sections individually), then they should be so catalogued. The two kinds of variants need to be distinguished, even though the evidence might not absolutely determine how to do so.

Certain variants are privileged: what is printed on the title page will generally lead to “bibliographical variants” (that is,

\textsuperscript{13} Thomas Warren’s name seems to be imported from 1648 edition: Letters t.p. (Printed by Tho. Warren for Humphrey Moseley). 93mm type is not the same as 92mm type used by Raworth. Tho. Warren in 1648 may be T.W. of 1646; I can’t confirm the identity of type or ornaments, but I don’t dispute it.
the things referred to or described in catalogues). A title-page variant will usually show up as two different entries in standard catalogues. A simple press variant (the variant on A3) is of no importance in and of itself to descriptive bibliography; that is, it does not result in a bibliographical variant, although it might constitute a point for a scrupulous collector. The word variant can refer confusingly to all these levels.\textsuperscript{14}

I begin with the variants of the preliminaries. The most basic ones are those of the title page; according to the rules of descriptive bibliography, these rightly or wrongly define editions.\textsuperscript{15}

Greg had identified two variants of the title page, easily distinguished typographically as FRAGMENTA AVREA vs. Fragmenta Aurea. Beaurline and Clayton's Studies in Bibliography article of 1970 described not two but three states, based on a detail earlier noted by Greg, but considered of no bibliographical import. These three states are unfortunately called A B and C, the same letters to be used in Wing II, but with entirely different meanings.

A: FRAG AUREA (most have error on A3v)
B: Frag Aurea (as above) without period after d, w/o rule under date (now = Wing 6216A)
C: Frag Aurea rule visible under date (now= Wing 6216B)

To Beaurline and Clayton, the “direction of variation” was A–C, and this is the opposite of what is implied in Greg and later in Wing’s second edition. According to their argument, when “FRAGMENTA AUREA” was reset as “Fragmenta Aurea,”

\textsuperscript{14} STC2 simplifies the language through use of the terminology: ed., anr. ed., and var. This avoids the overuse of the problematic term “issue,” or the even more bibliographically pernicious “re-issue.”

\textsuperscript{15} Bowers, “Definitions,” Principles of Bibliographical Description, 37ff., 113–15: the title page carries more weight in determining whether a “state” rises to the level of “issue” or “var. edition” than would a variant on any other page. But the reason is as much bibliographical as historical, in that individual copies are generally catalogued and thus defined primarily by what is on the title page.
slightly more space was required. The date was intended to be underlined on both pages, but this line moved below the frisket when the page was reset (the final d and final . were also obscured by the frisket). At some point in the print-run, this was corrected, and the error allowrd changed to allowed. Most copies thus show the underline.

Beaurline and Clayton claim they can see the uninked impression of the rule in the Huntington Library copy. I am certain they did: but I also say you can see almost anything when you have sufficient certainty it is there. I have the Huntington copy in front of me, and I cannot see what they claim is there; that may be because, certain though I am that the rule was indeed there on the forme (I agree with Beaurline and Clayton on this), I am less certain that such a rule would leave a visible impression on the printed paper through the frisket. I (thus?) see nothing.

Beaurline and Clayton do not discuss the implications of this for sorting out editions and catalogue entries (for example, the relation of this variant to the variation in part-title pages). Nor is there any direct statement as to how these title-page variants bear on the question of edition. Bibliographers usually refer to states as reflecting “what is on the typeset forme” and variation as indicated by a movement or change in type. I can’t come up with another example quite like this, where typographical state is defined by matters of imposition rather than type, although I’m sure such books exist. If Beaurline and Clayton are correct that the Huntington copy is set from a forme containing the rule (whose impression they claim to see and which I divine), doesn’t that mean it is typographically and thus bibliographically the same as S6126B? ESTC regards the variant title-page copies as variants of S6126B, but assigns them a new entry.16

16 I do not understand (nor do the cataloguers I have consulted) why Beaurline and Clayton in 1970 do not refer to Wing’s first edition at least in passing, which came out almost twenty years earlier. Contemporary reviews of the second edition referred to the first edition in much the same way — e.g., “an imperfect instrument but an indispensable one” (Robert Donaldson, rev. Donald G. Wing, *Short-Title Catalogue*, in *The Bibliothek* 6, no. 5 (1973): 203–4, at 203.
The variants involving this real or phantom rule and even the variant title pages do not suggest significant facts about the printing history beyond the order in which these sheets were printed: they do not indicate an act of re-publication or re-issue. These variants thus have collecting value and define bibliographical editions, but they do not reflect on printing procedures the way variants in the part-title pages might do in other books. Preliminaries are conventionally printed last, and it is difficult to argue for any further motivation (for example, that changes were made in order to make the style reflect that of part-title pages).

Structure of Preliminaries

ESTC now employs in its physical descriptions only a pagination or foliation statement, not a full collation. It is difficult to determine from an ESTC description what the initial structure for a book with unpaged preliminaries is or should be, and difficult also to determine how any particular copy described by a reporting library differs from an ideal copy; for example, the statement “[8]” describing a preliminary quire of four leaves (eight pages), doesn’t tell us what to expect of those leaves. Greg provided a standard collation formula, yet his descriptions are occasionally so abstruse, it is no less difficult for cataloguers to follow or even to understand his conventions. Even Greg seems to have lost sight of their implications.

Greg collates the preliminary quire as follows: A⁴(A₁ + 1). This means that the initial quire of the ideal copy is a four-leaf quire of a quarto (printed on a half-sheet) with the engraving tipped in between the first and second leaf. A₁, under this collation, is blank. Greg thus analyzes that quire as follows:

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17 Complete statement: 8o. pi A⁴ (A₁ + 1), A–G⁴, H⁴, 2A–E⁸ F⁴, 3A–D⁸, 4A–C⁸ D⁴ [3C⁴ misprinted “4”], 169 leaves, paged (2A₂) 3–199, (2A₄) 1–82, (3A₂) 3–64, (4A₃v) 2–52. Engraved portrait...pi A₁ + 1V (recto and pi A₁ blank) (Greg, Bibliography of Restoration Drama, 3: 1131).
pi $A^4(A1 + 1)$
[A1 is an unsigned blank leaf, theoretically conjugate with A4]

$A1 + 1$ — an inserted leaf with engraving (“$A1 + 1$” thus can refer to both a quire structure and a leaf, whereas “$A1 +1v$” refers to a specific page).

A2 — unsigned title page, theoretically conjugate (sewn) with A3 and part of same sheet as A1 and 4
A3 — signed “to the Reader”
A4 — end of “To the Reader”; verso blank

Since this is the standard description, any copy listed with no specific note to the contrary should conform to it. But this is not the case.

I believe Greg’s collation is correct, but reporting libraries might well have difficulty understanding exactly what he is saying (as I did when I first encountered this description, and as I believe any cataloguer pressed for time might as well). For many such formulae, the only sure way to critique them or at times even to understand them is to have the book-copies on hand that are the bases for both the ideal-copy description and its variants.

The variants one would expect are: copies lacking the initial blank; copies missing the author’s portrait; and author’s portrait misplaced or pasted in. These might be legitimately described as follows: $A^4$ or $A^4(-A1 + 1)$ or $A^4 (-A1)$, although one would be hard pressed to understand what these formulae mean without the books in hand (these would be used to describe the presence or absence of the initial blank and the tipped-in engraving). Greg lists three such variants, describing them as “(-pi A1, wants port.)” “-pi A1” “+pi A1” “wants port” “+pi A1.” I believe this implies that every copy is described either as containing or as lacking the blank A1 (that is, every copy either is $+A1$ or $-A1$).

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18 A1 is required in Greg’s formula even if no copies contain it, since under Greg’s conventions, all quires must have even numbers, and all parts of original sheet (or half-sheet) must be accounted for, even if they don’t exist.
But this is not the case. Most copies are simply listed without note, meaning that they conform to ideal-copy description. Does the note “wants port.” mean that all other copies contain it? And what to make of this: “New York (2, one +pi A1)” that is, New York has two copies, one of which lacks the opening blank? Why is that not designated “-A1”? I believe I know what Greg means with all these distinctions, but without the books in hand, I cannot determine whether the reporting libraries agree with him.¹⁹ I assume it is the complexity of collation statements that made ESTC opt for the easier pagination statements (pagination statements of reporting libraries are simply more reliable than collation statements). A common copy lacking the initial blank would have to be described by a cumbersome statement, such as, “A⁴(-A₁, +A₁ + 1) or simply (and ambiguously) -A₁. A pagination statement could state: [8, lacks initial blank] [8, lacks portrait]. Note, however, that ESTC’s pagination statements do not account for the structure of the preliminaries; all variants are listed as follows:

[8], 119, [7], 82, 64, [4], 52 p.

Any copy that was missing either the initial blank or the author’s portrait would seem to fit this formula (the ideal copy descrip-

¹⁹ For example, the following: “BM (-pi A₁, wants port.) [Why not: - A₁, -(A₁ + 1)?]

Worc. 1 A₁ Folger Harvard (one +A₁, one wants port.) Hunt. Prince (+A₁).

The Huntington copy does not have the blank; had Greg examined it (I assume the lack of a note suggests he had not), it should read (- A₁). The second Huntington copy (under dagger 1) reads (+A₁). I cannot determine from Greg the nature of Harvard copies: Houghton Reference tells me they have 3 copies: “A & B have second state t.p (=stc B); C is missing prelim. There is no portrait in B or C. A has two nineteenth-century blanks before portrait (thus missing A1). B and C have blank leaves, but also modern (thus also missing at least A1).”
tion), although as Greg’s collation makes clear, we can see that they do not.20

A basic problem with all these formulae can be seen by looking at the 1648 edition and Greg’s description. This is a page-for-page reprint of 1646 and is identical in structure (the paper is folded exactly the same way as in the 1646 edition). Nonetheless, Greg’s description of the preliminaries is completely different: “1648:…8º pi A4.” There are no references to variants in these preliminaries other than “wants port.” According to a strict interpretation of this, there is no such thing as a copy with an initial blank, although you do not have to search far to find that such copies do, in fact, exist. Furthermore, even if those copies did not exist, by Greg’s own rules, that blank would have to be accounted for. You cannot have a singleton unless it is pasted in or tipped in (+1). Any leaf that is letter-press must have a conjugate or must have once had one. And any copy without that conjugate must be listed as lacking it. The A⁴ designation of the preliminaries here implies that the portrait is engraved on the conjugate of leaf A⁴, not impossible, but not the way this book was made. The collation formula should be identical to that of the 1646 edition (ESTC’s pagination statement is in fact the same, and the problems with that are of course the same ones as in the 1646 edition).

Ghost Variants

Among further variants in the preliminaries is what I’ll call the ghost variant in a Harvard copy of S6126B producing ghost editions in both EEBO and ESTC. This presumed variant contains “different preliminaries”: it contains the Prologue, signed A2 fol-

20 The initial blank also poses a problem; bibliographers have always had difficulty in noting the difference between an original blank, its absence, or a blank added by a binder, even for extremely valuable books. See Joseph A. Dane, “Wanting the First Blank: The Frontispiece to the Huntington Library Copy of Caxton’s Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,” Huntington Library Quarterly 67, no. 2 (2004): 315–25.
lowing the unsigned title page, before “To the Reader,” which begins (as in all copies) on A3. This copy thus appears to have the following structure:

[portrait]
[A1] title page
A2 Prologue
A3–4 To the Reader

But this structure is illusory. The so-called “Prologue” is not to Fragmenta Aurea. It is rather to Aglaura, and the leaf containing it follows (or should follow) the part-title page there.

I cannot explain how or when this leaf migrated from its correct position to the preliminaries, and the implication in ESTC that more than one copy actually has this variant, point, or defect is clearly false. It is nonetheless easy to see how this was missed, even at Harvard, where other copies are available. A book-copy with a four-leaf preliminary quire including the author’s portrait, general title page, a prologue on a leaf signed A2, followed by a leaf marked A3, would be easily interpretable as a four-leaf quire with a tipped-in portrait. A2 would be interpreted (wrongly) as conjugate with A3. It is possible, although I don’t know the evidence for this, that a book-dealer was unscrupulously creating “points” here (with the hypothetical description “Lot 823, Fragmenta Aurea, with the rare variant ‘To the Reader’ in the preliminaries”). By the time any dealer could have done this, or owner be fooled by it, the bibliographical resources were easily available to determine that this was a simple binding mistake. But to do so would have required time and effort, which no one involved would have had the incentive to expend.

Other ghost variants are less due to library mistakes than to their conventions. Even a cursory glance at the various catalogue entries reveals several of the presumed editions listed singly seem to have no or only tenuous bibliographical autonomy. This proliferation of ghost editions is due to the material holdings in individual libraries. The British Library in its general catalogue lists the two principal variants as one printed
by “Walkley” and the other by “T.W.,” described as “anr. copy, imperfect wanting portrait.” These are the same two variants acknowledged in all modern catalogues, although the absence of the portrait is irrelevant. But the catalogue also lists an autonomous copy of *Goblins*: “another copy of pt. 3, containing ‘The Goblins’ … (imperfect, wanting pp. 17–32).” This “copy of pt. 3” then receives an independent entry: “The Goblins … 1646, wanting pp. 17–32” (shelfmark 644.c72).\(^{21}\) The imperfect copy of *Fragmenta Aurea* becomes an imperfect copy of *The Goblins*, where there is no cross reference to the earlier entry. This may not be technically a ghost, although if there is no evidence that it differs from bound copies in any way, and no evidence for its originality, there would seem to be no reason to catalogue it separately, other than the shelving conventions of the library. The British Library catalogue is in the business of pointing to or directing its users to book-copies, and they thus acknowledge two book-copies with different titles: Suckling *Fragmenta Aurea* and Suckling *Goblins*.

Looking at numerous extant copies as well as descriptions of them, I see no evidence that any of these books were sold separately, or that contemporary booksellers or their customers constructed anything other than the standard copy. If these texts were distributed independently, they would likely appear in *Sammelband* with whatever other texts an owner happened to have. And there certainly ought to be copies of individual plays bound in with other plays not by Suckling. Yet what we see here, as a general rule, is that whenever one of these texts is bound in with another text, those other texts are invariably parts of this collection.

These texts (or books) came into existence as individual items recatalogued or rebound as single copies, perhaps due to a damaged copy of *Fragmenta Aurea*. Any library owning one of

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these single texts certainly has to catalogue it that way: a holdings catalogue points to physical objects on shelves. This is fine for an individual library (provincial library X contains a complete copy of, say, *The Goblins*, not a partial copy of *Fragmenta Aurea*). Yet cataloguers or librarians are not justified in idealizing the copy in their collection (that is, moving from the level of enumerative to descriptive bibliography), just because history happened to put one there.

**Conclusion**

There are obvious complexities in this book, and when I first encountered it, I expected to find some of what I found here—a proliferation of editions based on the eccentricities and accidents of provenance. I assumed this would involve the order of parts, since the first copy I looked at had these parts misplaced, but that turned out not to be the case. There is nothing overly complicated about this book: its publication history is reasonably well stated by the internal evidence alone; it is re-edited, and it is part of a series of books (by Moseley) all in similar format. Given that, the errors in standard catalogues are somewhat surprising: Greg’s collations, the ghosts in reporting libraries, the obvious errors in EEBO, and more surprisingly, in the state-of-the-art bibliography ESTC.

Editions of this book proliferate as variant forms in individual libraries are reported and as analytical bibliographers do the work they are supposed to do.

The dependence on real copies rather than principles of bibliography is problematic, as a brief thought experiment can show, one that is very real in the minds of bibliographers, cataloguers, and collectors. Suppose, for example, that a library contained a copy with the general title page (“Fragmenta Aurea”), the preliminaries, then the first part (“Poems”). This would be regarded as an incomplete copy of *Fragmenta Aurea*, and essentially valueless. If the owner then tore out the preliminaries and the general title page, that owner would now own a perhaps “rare and
hitherto unrecorded” copy of Suckling’s Poems (beginning with the seemingly correct quire A). Perhaps that same owner could seek through the torn out sections of other books to complete the set: Poems, Aglaura, Goblins, Brennoralt. Anyone who has looked through book or auction catalogues or even the notes of an eager seller is familiar with examples of this.

ESTC bibliographers were at a great disadvantage in comparison with Pollard and Redgrave in their 1926 STC, on which the revised STC and now the ESTC is based. We can assume, given the small number of entries (ca. 30,000 English books printed up to 1640), that Pollard and Redgrave saw, or could be reasonably expected to have seen, actual copies or facsimiles of the books they were cataloguing, including many of the reported variants. ESTC includes books printed up to 1800 (roughly 400,000); their bibliographers, consequently, have to rely to a large extent on the descriptions sent in by librarians (who were not necessarily bibliographers) working in individual collections. And, as we have seen in the case of Greg, it is not always easy to coordinate one’s description of a physical book with the most detailed of bibliographical descriptions, a problem compounded by the use of simpler pagination statements.

The problems we encounter in enumerative and descriptive bibliography, trivial as they are, are simply too numerous to allow us to give enough attention to solve them. I can devote months to a single book if I am so inclined. A professional cataloguer or bibliographer, whose word carries much more authority than mine ever could, only has a few hours, if that, before being forced to move on to the next assignment. Furthermore, our bibliographical language often gets in the way of the things it is trying to describe, in just the same way as our historical narratives and theories get in the way of the material evidence that seems to support them. We already know as much as we would ever want to about the printing procedures of how this book came to be: history may be clear, yet our descriptions (the main source of my interest) remain murky. And yet even as this case shows, that murky tradition trumps the material details it is intended to describe; it is easier for all of us to accept and account
for Wing’s numbers (in fact, there seems little other choice) than to re-visit this corpus afresh.