DAVID FOXON

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UP TO FORTY YEARS AGO, the books of the eighteenth century were an almost uncharted zone; almost all catalogues stopped short at 1700. David Foxon's *English Verse 1701–1750: a Catalogue*, published in two fat quarto volumes by the Cambridge University Press in 1975, changed that. Not only did it take a long leap forward into a new century; it also provided a cross-section through the record of all British books and books printed abroad in English in a period in which the total number of books, periodicals and ephemera began to increase exponentially. If only a cross-section, it was one that was to provide a surprisingly accurate guide to the whole. The period, too, was one in which the whole concept of authorship and the relationship between author and book trade changed substantially, as a result of the *Copyright Act* (1709). The cumulative effect of these facts, if not unknown when he started work, could not be estimated; in this respect it was a venture into *terra incognita*. It was his achievement to set a standard for recording books of the later period that has determined the work of a whole generation of those who have followed him in the same field.

Why the eighteenth century, why verse? The first was an irresistible challenge, simply because it was uncharted, and his inventive mind was attracted to the task of extending techniques developed to meet the needs of cataloguing books printed up to 1700 into a century in which many traditional practices, and the rules for recording them changed substantially. But besides these technical attractions, he liked verse for its own sake, and the conventions and contrasts, the Latinate scansions and antitheses of the Augustan age appealed to him. But he saw, as others were only beginning to see, the importance of verse as the special medium of the age. Verse in the first half of the century was the natural, all-pervasive form of public

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expression—it captivated its age as TV does ours. Satire, flattery, love, drama, public events, the beauties of nature, all were expressed in verse. Verse was no light diversion; it could make or break public figures as journalism can now. Did not Pope, the greatest poet of the time, write 'Yes, I am proud, I must be proud to see | Men not afraid of God afraid of me'? He did not exaggerate, and it was verse as the mirror of the age that first drew Foxon to his period, and held him in thrall through all the years and travail that followed his first embarking on it.

English Verse 1701–1750 was the product of twenty-five years of work, most of it conducted before photocopying or collating machines, let alone digital catalogues, had come to make the comparison of what might or might not be two copies of the same book so much easier. Before that, to see the books it was not only necessary to go to the libraries that held them, but also, once there, to find them, and that took more time. Libraries were not so well catalogued then as now, and very often the best way to find out what was there was to go and look at the shelves (easier then than now). To record them accurately, Foxon had to see, hold in the mind's eye, and record on paper (no word-processors then) a multitude of details that no one had tried to describe before, such as precise forms of imprint, printers' ornaments, collation formulae that accurately recorded the course of printing, the relation of signature-marks to the words in the line above them, even press-figures. These facts had to be studied and put together with observations of other copies, and the whole organised into an accurate record of this or that book, and the record of all those books welded into an alphabetic catalogue, buttressed with all manner of indexes to help the reader identify otherwise anonymous works, all books issued by a particular printer or binder, and so on.

All this was done in the intervals of the work by which Foxon earned his living. As an inventive contribution to the methodology of recording bibliographical data, it was original in the highest degree. It required even more determination to carry through such a task over so long a period. Confronted with such an achievement, the natural question is to seek for its roots in the antecedents and upbringing of its architect.

David Foxon was born on 9 January 1923 in Paignton, the son of a Methodist minister. The Foxon family had been stocking weavers; Foxon's grandfather kept a couple of weaving-frames in his cottage. He had eleven children, of whom Walter, Foxon's father, was the youngest. After leaving school at twelve, Walter went to work in a stocking factory, but his intelligence and gift for preaching were recognised at Chapel and he was encouraged to go in for the Methodist ministry. He trained at

Didsbury College in Manchester, and married Susan Fairweather, the daughter of a well-to-do circuit steward in Clitheroe, Lancashire, whom he met when visiting the town to take services. Walter Foxon enjoyed a high reputation as a preacher ('a good preacher, slightly old-fashioned' was his son's verdict), and at one point in his career he turned down the prestigious post at Spurgeon's Tabernacle in South London. Susan Foxon, a firm advocate of women's rights and of total abstinence, was an active pamphleteer and campaigner. Walter Foxon's ability to attract and hold crowds led to his appointment to ministries at a series of seaside towns.

David Foxon did not share his father's religious beliefs, but he profoundly admired his father's compassion and sense of social responsibility. Looking back over his life, he believed that some attitudes from his early years had stayed with him: a liking for simple and direct truth-telling, with a corresponding anxiety to avoid equivocation; a distaste for the hypocrisy (particularly over sexual matters) that for much of the century oiled the machinery of daily living; and a dislike of violence and conflict. He also profited from his Methodist background by being brought up in a culture of improvised preaching. He took public speaking as a matter of course, enjoyed it, and throughout his academic career he was able to speak without notes and hold an audience.

He went to Kingswood School, near Bath, a Methodist foundation one of whose aims was to provide for the education of the sons of itinerant preachers. Foxon spoke of it with affection as a civilised society, tolerant and humane, with a strong record of academic achievement. E. P. Thompson, the historian, and A. N. Flew, the philosopher, were his contemporaries there. The school had resources that particularly appealed to Foxon, including a fine and well-stocked new library. It also had an outstanding headmaster in A. B. Sackett. Foxon was sixteen when World War II broke out, and it was clear that if the war continued he would be called up for active service when he was eighteen. Sackett, knowing and understanding Foxon's scruples, recommended him to the Government Code and Cypher School. At the outbreak of war this had moved from London to Bletchley Park, whither he went in 1942, after getting a classical scholarship at Magdalen College, Oxford.

Bletchley Park was a crucial experience for Foxon, socially and intellectually. He met a variety of gifted academics, some eccentric, mostly from Oxford or Cambridge, at an early age; it gave him training in code-breaking; and it introduced him to his future wife, June ('Jane') Jarratt. After five weeks in Aberdeen with the Gordon Highlanders (in theory

those at Bletchley were seconded from their units), Foxon was sent to Bletchley, where, after training, he eventually took over from Sydney Easton in charge of a small section deciphering Italian submarine codes; his future wife was a member of the unit. Intercepted messages were translated and then passed on to naval intelligence, which plotted the subsequent movements. The work was not exciting but the training was significant for Foxon's later career; he learned the habit of looking for minute but tell-tale traces of evidence and unexpected connections between them. A relish for puzzles (and for setting up puzzles), the ability to recognise and interpret patterns, the habit of working from established knowledge (a code book captured on a commando raid) to gain new knowledge, and the sense of intellectual activity as a cooperative venture, all stayed with Foxon and influenced his subsequent work. Coincidentally, across the Atlantic, Fredson Bowers, Charlton Hinman, and William H. Bond were members of a naval communications group engaged, as Foxon was shortly to be, in cracking Japanese ciphers.

His transfer to Japanese intelligence came after the fall of Italy. The major tasks in this operation fell to the Americans, with the British in a supplementary role, but one of the British responsibilities was an intercept station in Ceylon and Foxon was sent out there in the summer of 1944, just before D-Day. His was essentially a desk job as coordinator of cryptographic intelligence received largely from the Americans. During his time in Colombo, problems with Foxon's health that had plagued him at school resurfaced. He was capable of working very intensely for short periods but he rapidly became exhausted; it was as though he had difficulty in sustaining the high levels of energy and activity that demanding work generated in him. Although various specialists had been consulted, there was no diagnosis, and Foxon had to learn to manage his energies and ration their output. This was a matter of serious sympathetic concern to Hugh Alexander, later director of GCHQ at Cheltenham, when he came out to Ceylon on a visit in 1944, but there was no solution to the problem, and these periods of exhaustion continued throughout Foxon's working life, resisting treatment through drugs or psychoanalysis. Only in the mid 1980s, after Foxon's retirement in 1982, did a research programme incidentally reveal that he had an adrenalin abnormality, exceptionally high levels of adrenalin accounting for both the periods of high level activity and the subsequent exhaustion.

Colombo also allowed Foxon to develop his interest in music. Although never a star performer, and untrained in musical theory, Foxon had developed his enthusiasm for music at Kingswood School and played

the piano as a relaxation. When the War made the piano inaccessible, he bought a Dolmetsch treble recorder and took it with him to Ceylon. In Colombo, Ronald Johnson, later head of the Scottish Office, had become the focus of musical activity among local musicians and service personnel, and, through his friendship with Johnson, Foxon became involved in chamber music, lieder singing, and choral music. In particular, he was able to develop his interest in music of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (especially Purcell and Handel), which was particularly suited to his new recorder. Music became a life-long love, and record-collecting Foxon's major hobby. He returned from Ceylon at the end of the War, and in 1946 began a shortened degree course at Oxford where Jane Jarratt was already part of the Bletchley diaspora. The friendships made during the War continuing to exert an influence for the next ten years or so, not least through Theo Chaundy, Reader in Mathematics and Student of Christ Church, who had been part of Bletchley's reserve force. With Chaundy's son, Christopher, Foxon experimented with electronics and built his first loudspeaker in the Chaundys' workshop, establishing an interest in hi-fi that was to last until his death.

At Magdalen he read English under C. S. Lewis and Jack Bennett, and Lewis's catholic approach to English literature, to see it against the background of the society in which it was written, was as lasting as his forensic training at Bletchley. He joined in a discussion society, the Lyly Club, with other Magdalen men, and took Lewis's advice to sample Oxford lectures outside his subject. Egon Wellesz, composer and pupil of Hindemith (whose small audiences were particularly in need of Foxon's support), and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, diplomat and author of *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* (Oxford, 1939), made a particularly strong impression, as did Kenneth Clarke, who showed how a lecture could be constructed round illustrations. This example was something Foxon remembered in preparing his Lyell lectures in Oxford in 1976.

In 1947 David Foxon and Jane Jarratt married. Her background was very different from his. Her father, Sir Arthur Jarratt, had progressed from cinema pianist to manager of a national chain of cinemas; he was a friend of Lord Mountbatten's, and a film-producer in alliance with Alexander Korda, Herbert Wilcox, and Michael Balcon. Jane Jarratt had come to Bletchley from the Central School for Speech and Drama, and through his marriage Foxon became tangentially connected to a more glamorous social world, though Jane herself had little time for film society, he perhaps relishing the contact with the entertainment industry more than she did. They both shared an interest in the arts, particularly music,

and, as Jane brought with her a small private income of £200 a year, they were able to live in modest comfort, with a wide circle of friends. A daughter, Deborah, was born in 1952. Although the Foxons were divorced in 1963, they remained friends, sharing holidays and family occasions, until Jane's death in 1988.

After graduating with first-class honours Foxon started research for a B.Litt. on the relationship between words and music in the seventeenth century. Although he was given a supervisor from the Music Faculty, Jack Westrup, he was left very much to his own devices. He set himself to read every Restoration play for what it had to say about music and even settled on Purcell's ceremonial odes as a specific topic, but he felt little confidence in his progress with what was potentially a very large project. At this point, late in 1948, a circular appeared offering a final opportunity for ex-service men and women to apply for the civil service. Many of Foxon's Bletchley friends had taken that route and he now decided to follow them. He took the exam successfully (passing out second in mathematics) and was sent to Town and Country Planning, where he spent two rather dispiriting years. A casual meeting over lunch changed his career. Angus Wilson, a friend from Bletchley, was now back at the British Museum Library with Bentley Bridgewater, who had also been at Bletchley and was now secretary of the Library. These two persuaded Foxon that work in the Library would be more congenial to his temperament and talents, and he successfully applied for transfer to the Museum, where he got an assistant keepership in the Department of Printed Books.

On his first day, he was greeted by the then Keeper of Printed Books, Frank Francis, who showed him the desk where he was to sit, cataloguing until he got good enough to revise others' work, told him what the hours were, where to get a house-key, where the canteen and the gents were, how to apply for leave, and then asked, 'And now, what work will you do while you are here?' Those were the days when the academic staff got through their duties before lunch, and were expected to produce 'real' work thereafter. So the foundations of *English Verse 1701–1750* were laid, though it was some time before the shape of the eventual work became clear.

In the mean time, there were plenty of more mundane tasks, some more congenial than others, to be done. Immediately, he was involved in the recataloguing of the British Museum Library, a gigantic undertaking that had begun in 1929. Books were catalogued on their reception by the Library, following elaborate rules. Once revised, the cataloguers' slips were set in type and printed, and the printed slips cut up and pasted in the thousand-odd large volumes kept in the Reading Room and in two dupli-

cate sets. All previous published catalogues had been supplanted by the *General Catalogue of Printed Books* (1881–1900), known familiarly as GK1. GK2 had been undertaken to supplement and improve on this; a still credible task when begun, war-time delays and the continued annual growth of intake had made its completion an ever-receding *ignis fatuus.* It had now reached the letter D, and work on 'Defoe', one of Foxon's first tasks, was to prove useful later, but in 1955 the realisation that it could never be finished brought work on GK2 to an end. It was another lesson, never forgotten, of the need to keep any task within achievable limits.

Other routine work was more productive. In 1950 the flow of books from country-house and other libraries to booksellers and auction-houses was unabated. Although American university libraries were beginning the great sweep that took so many books across the Atlantic, shillings rather than pounds would still buy most eighteenth-century books. Reading catalogues and checking books offered for sale (always ordered 'on approval') was a regular task that brought thousands of English books through his hands, and gave him a thorough grounding in the distinguishing marks of books of any particular period. Foxon was not alone in finding new bibliographical prospects. Pioneering work on the eighteenth century had begun before the war, and Constable's 'Bibliographia' series had included Iolo Williams's *Points in Eighteenth-Century Verse* (London, 1934) and R. W. Chapman's *Cancels* (London, 1930), which had both dealt with eighteenth-century practice. R. B. McKerrow's *Introduction to Bibliography for Literary Students* (Oxford, 1928) had drawn attention to the need to study printing practice as a necessary aid to bibliographical description. First Herbert Davis at Oxford and then Philip Gaskell at Cambridge set up experimental presses where this practice could be studied empirically. Among booksellers, Peter Murray Hill's newly established shop set new standards for the description of books, with special emphasis on binding and provenance.

More influential than all these was the publication of Fredson Bowers's *Principles of Bibliographical Description* (Princeton, NJ, 1949). By offering a comprehensive rationale for the description of printed matter, Bowers created a yardstick by which to measure the efficacy of any descriptive formula, such as Foxon was to develop for *English Verse*. Immediately, he was conscripted by Francis, who as well as being Foxon's departmental superior was Secretary of the Bibliographical Society and Editor of *The Library*, and encouraged him to write for the latter. John Hayward, the crippled editor of *The Book Collector*, was equally quick to realise his potential, and 'Binding Variants in the Brontes' *Poems*'

appeared there at the same time as 'Notes on Agenda Format' in *The Library*. For those who had eyes to see, it was clear that here was a new and rising star in the bibliographical firmament. His reputation, already recognised in Britain, spread to America. In particular, W. A. Jackson, Librarian of the Houghton Library at Harvard, first in correspondence and then in person on his annual visits to Britain, became a close friend and admirer. By now, Foxon had moved on to another task in the Museum, cataloguing the Ashley Library, bought from the widow of T. J. Wise after his disgrace and death in 1937. It had originally been intended to incorporate this in GK2, but, that abandoned, it was necessary to catalogue it anew. Wise's own *The Ashley Library* (London, 1920–36) was an already suspect source since the publication in 1934 of *An Enquiry into Certain Nineteenth Century Pamphlets* (London) by John Carter and Graham Pollard, which convicted him of forging works by his favourite nineteenth-century authors.

'The Printing of *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798', read to the Bibliographical Society in November 1953 and published in *The Library* the following year, showed how necessary scepticism was in approaching Wise's descriptions. Foxon's paper dealt with four late changes, all misrepresented by Wise. 'I have tried to approach the whole subject afresh from the point of view of the printer', wrote Foxon, and proceeded to show, using the evidence of point-holes and watermarks, how the printing of the four changed elements interlocked. His conclusions were not final, but it was clear that he had mastered the new technological approach that he advocated. He had an equally sharp eye for any anomaly or anachronism that might betray a false imprint or a 'sophisticated' copy. So, when he came to compare Wise's copy of Ben Jonson's *The Case is Alterd* (1609), he found the last four leaves to be alien, heavily cropped and inlaid, with print missing at head and foot in pen facsimile. He then looked at the Museum copy of the same play; he found it cropped, and with the same four leaves missing. Comparing Wise's copies of other Elizabethan and Jacobean plays with the Museum's, he found leaves missing in them that also corresponded with those inserted in Wise's. Evidence came from a variety of other sources: torn edges; watermarks and chain-lines; stab-holes from original stitching, and the related phenomena of refolding and binding; the patterns of worm-holes and ink-stains; and the impressions of 'hickeys' (paper-flaws) and creases on adjacent leaves. The cumulative results of these researches revealed 206 leaves stolen from the Museum's copies, 89 now in Ashley Library copies, 60 passed on by Wise in copies sold to his dupe, the Chicago collector John H. Wrenn; 15 more were suspected lost,

their location as yet unknown; altogether, 47 plays had been mutilated, lost leaves from 41 now traced. Wise was convicted as thief as well as forger. These results were published by the Bibliographical Society as *Thomas J. Wise and the Pre-Restoration Drama* (London, 1959), and it made Foxon's name as a bibliographer of acute observation and expository power. He passed no moral judgements, but the case against the 'leaf-swapping' common a generation earlier (Wise was not unique in this practice) was implicit; that Wise, in his ignorance, sometimes 'discarded' leaves of greater interest than those he stole was an irony not missed. Years later, a packet of torn leaves bought at the sale of Wise's Hampstead house after his widow's death turned up; it proved to contain many of the 'defective' leaves that Wise had discarded to replace them with the leaves he stole from the Museum.

In 1957 Foxon was given charge of the Museum's purchase of older English books, a task made harder now by increased competition from abroad. He was remarkably successful in identifying and acquiring books missing from the collection.

One of these was a copy of Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749), the first edition of 'Fanny Hill', which the Museum had not previously possessed. This led to the publication of four important articles in *The Book Collector* in 1963 as a result of the accidental discovery of an advertisement for *The School of Venus, or the Lady s Delight* in the *Daily Advertiser* for 25 August 1744. Foxon recognised this as a reference to *L'Ecole des Filles*, a French pornographic work referred to in English literature but with no known English translation. The discovery that there had been a translation set off an enquiry into early English pornographic publications, their Continental antecedents, and finally, in an article requested by John Hayward, the *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* and *Fanny Hill*. The essays were subsequently issued together as *Libertine Literature in England, 1660–1745* (London, 1964), and then published, with an introduction by Foxon, in the United States (New York, 1965). This was a pioneer exercise in the scholarly history and bibliography of pornography, and one still referred to today. Using legal records, advertisements, bibliographical and literary analysis, Foxon was able to show the patterns of diffusion of the texts and estimate their potential importance as historica1 sources. Publication of articles on such a subject, even ones as scholarly as Foxon's, was still regarded as daring, and one distinguished bibliographer warned Foxon that it would ruin his career. But Foxon's period in psychoanalysis and a short research visit to the Kinsey Institute during his time in the States, gave him confidence to pursue these

intellectual puzzles like any others encountered in his work, and Hayward, who had been the editor of Rochester, encouraged him. Publication was timely, for it coincided with the new freedom in sexuality in the 1960s. Although Foxon had no programme of liberation in mind, he was bibliography's representative in this historical shift, and the measured tone of the writing goes alongside a conviction that old hypocrisies must be blown away and new moral judgements made.

In *Libertine Literature* Foxon interprets the advertisement for *The School of Venus* as a clue to a hidden vein of English culture. It had been assumed that there had been no pornography in the seventeenth century except for Rochester, and that the first legal proceedings had been against Curll in 1727. Foxon argues that, on the contrary, there had been rapid importation of French pornography and a willingness to risk prosecution. The first chapter is informed by his visits to the Public Record Office during his lunch hours, and lists government actions against pornography from 1660 to 1745. He paints a lively picture of the trade in pornography by printers, publishers, and hawkers, with a particularly telling glimpse of the Brett family, who sent out their children to buy 'The Complete Set of the Charts of Merryland' and *The School of Venus* for selling on to customers, and of George Spavan, who made a guinea a week from sales of *The School of Venus* alone. The account of gentleman purchasers includes Pepys, Wycherley, Learnerd, and Ravenscroft, but perhaps the most amusing episode is the attempt of the gentlemen of All Souls to print Aretine's *Postures* at the University Press. Sadly for them, Dean Fell turned up unexpectedly and confiscated the prints and plates; about sixty prints had already been distributed 'but Mr. Dean hath made them call them in again and commit them to the fire'. The second chapter dealt with the publication of pornography in England from Aretine onwards, while the third, on *Satyra Sotadica* and *Vénus dans le cloître*, examines a series of translations of the former, including a 'sucker-trap' from that most respectable of booksellers, Jacob Tonson. In the final chapter, on *Fanny Hill*, Foxon tells the story of its prosecution, printing a letter from its author Cleland for the first time, and then, partly on the basis of ornament evidence, clarifies the bibliography of the early editions. He shows that the version with the sodomitical episode is the first, and it was on this understanding of the textual history that Peter Sabor was later to base his edition for Oxford University Press in 1985. The proposal in the late sixties that Foxon should himself edit the text for the 'Oxford Novels' series was turned down on the grounds that the time was not yet ripe.

From early on in his career at the British Museum, the plan that eventually took form in *English Verse, 1701–1750* had been germinating in Foxon's mind. Its exemplars were *The Short-Title Catalogue of English Books, 1475–1640* by A. W. Pollard and G. R. Redgrave, published by the Bibliographical Society in 1926 and currently under revision under W. A. Jackson, and the similar *Short-Title Catalogue of English Books, 1641–1700* by Donald Wing, published by the Index Society in 1945–51. There were almost four times as many entries in the latter as in the former, 100,000 for sixty years as opposed to 26,000 for the previous one hundred and sixty-five. How many entries there might be for the next century was the most crucial question addressed by a working party set up by the Bibliographical Society after the publication of Wing to explore a continuation. The task of estimating it was given to Foxon, and although the idea of the continuation was dropped, it had put the seed of the verse catalogue in his mind. He had read all the entries for the eighteenth century in the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*, amplified by comparing them with the entries for each author in the BM catalogue. He extended the search to such author-bibliographies as existed, specialist booksellers' catalogues such as those of Elkin Mathews and Dobell, visiting the Bodleian at weekends to read the catalogues there.

Besides these practical steps, he continued to think about the theory of the enterprise. As he records in the preface, a stimulus for his work was Fredson Bowers's paper on his proposed bibliography of the Restoration drama, read to the Bibliographical Society on 18 November 1952. 'This lecture was my inspiration', he declared nearly twenty years later. Foxon decided that, like Bowers, he would consult multiple copies, but that, whereas Bowers intended to use microfilms, he would use the position of signatures as a means of identification:

> The points that impressed me most were the number of unrecorded variants, issues and even editions which could be found only by personal examination of multiple copies, and his argument that the more copies a bibliographer has examined, the more safely can his descriptions be condensed. It became clear to me that though my catalogue could not provide full bibliographical descriptions, any attempt to produce a reliable work must involve seeing as many copies as possible myself and not relying on published catalogues or other second-hand sources. As a check against concealed editions, reset sheets, and reissues. I decided to adopt Falconer Madan's practice of recording the position of signature letters relative to the text above them, a method of identification I had already come to trust and one which was far cheaper and easier than the use of microfilm. (*English Verse, 1701–1750*, vii)

Although Foxon recognised the limited precision Madan's method gave him, he continued to value its economy and utility.

His first task was to make a skeleton catalogue with pencil entries (including shelfmarks where available) in preparation for detailed information in ink when he had seen the copies. He used forms on pressure-sensitive pads of six slips each, ordered from the Stationery Office. The slips (8 ins. × 5 ins.) consisted of eight central boxes (four full-length and four half-length), with the borders forming larger boxes (1 in. deep at the top, $1\frac{1}{2}$in. wide at the side). In the centre top went the title; to the left the date; to the right the location. In the central division were recorded: imprint; collation; pagination; half-title, errata, frontispiece, advertisement, watermark, press-figures; ornaments; miscellaneous. The recording of first lines began later, proposed by someone during Foxon's stay at Harvard—he always regretted that he could not acknowledge his debt by naming the proposer. The top slip would be used to create the main entry in the catalogue, the five subsidiary slips to create the indexes.

Serious work on examining books had begun only in 1959–61, when Foxon was awarded a Harkness Fellowship from the Commonwealth Fund that enabled him to spend a year or more in America. In the event he stayed eighteen months, carrying his slips in a single large suitcase. Although nominally based at Harvard, where he was able to discuss his project at length and often with Jackson, and Yale, in between the two he was able to spend nine months travelling from Canada to California and back. In this time he was able to visit most of the major scholarly libraries in Canada and the USA. At Harvard he was able to use a Polaroid camera to record printers' ornaments, which he saw as a way of identifying the printers of pieces without imprint. In the event, a complete record of ornaments proved too large and expensive to be practicable, but in the process he also discovered that distinctive ornaments were a means of identifying Edinburgh piracies (his files on these have been given to the National Library of Scotland). Harvard was also the source of an important addition to the battery of information that he collected, the first lines of every work, whose value he was quick to grasp.

The British Museum to which he returned was not a happy place in the 1960s; space for books was desperately short, and the Library was overrun with readers attracted by the recent publication of its complete catalogue, GK3, printed lithographically from slips, like the Reading Room catalogue. Books missing from the collection, once easily affordable, were too easily identified (and priced) as such; worse, they were all too often snapped up by richer American libraries. In 1965 Foxon left, to

become Professor of English at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, whither Kathleen Coburn and George Whalley, regular visitors to the Museum as editors of the Bollingen edition of Coleridge, had encouraged him to go. Before he left, he spent several weeks visiting other British libraries, in order to add to his catalogue, both new titles and new locations for those already identified. These journeys were financed by a successful venture into publishing. He had brought back from America microfilm of mainly eighteenth-century broadsides, which he hoped to enlarge and print in facsimile. Unfortunately, the resolution was too poor for this to be possible. However, he had also been impressed by the then new Xerox photocopying system, recently introduced at the Museum. With this, he was able to create adequate originals for a reprint series, and with the support of his Hampstead neighbour, Peter Elstob, to print and distribute them through Gregg International. In all, three series were published, periodical lists of books published, publishers' lists of books in print from 1595 to 1696, and printers' manuals (1713–1841). All, especially the first, were familiar sources for the exploration of English verse, but as published now found a market among those who shared Foxon's view of the value of documentary evidence for the printing and distribution of books in his period.

Though he left for Canada with no thought of returning, Foxon's stay there was short. He relished the informality of Canada—returning to Oxford, he found it formal and stuffy by contrast—and he enjoyed both his teaching and the social life of the department at Queen's. The post in North America made him eligible to apply for a Guggenheim Fellowship, and he was successful, being given an award for 1967–8, spending the time in Oxford preparing *English Verse* for publication. During this period the Readership in Textual Criticism became vacant (it was perhaps the only post that would have tempted Foxon to return to Britain); he applied and was appointed.

Foxon's teaching time in Oxford was divided between giving general lectures and classes to postgraduate students and supervising research. The informal role of general bibliographical adviser to the university—and, of course, to interested visitors—which had been filled by Herbert Davis, and would have suited Foxon, was not available to him because he was not given space in the Bodleian. There were probably several reasons for this decision. Davis (Reader in Textual Criticism 1949–60) had been succeeded by Alice Walker (1961–8), who had worked to a different pattern. Foxon was not a printer as Davis had been, and he did not, therefore, teach printing classes, as Davis had done (Michael Turner had already

taken over that role), and the Bibliography Room, which had been Davis's headquarters, had passed back fully into the control of the Library. Unlike Davis, Foxon was elected to a college fellowship, at Wadham, but Wadham did not give him a room. His teaching room was behind the English Faculty Library, next to the Territorial Army headquarters. He used it very little, preferring to see his students at home or take them to the pub. Whatever the reasons for not encouraging Foxon to make his headquarters in the Bodleian, the decision played a significant part in his growing isolation in Oxford. From the start, he was semi-detached from the university.

In 1975 *English Verse, 1701–1750* finally appeared. Its publication was rightly hailed as a landmark, not merely in its subject but also in bibliographical technique.

Although he had decided to restrict his listings for each item to five locations in Britain and five in the United States, he made it clear that further information would be made available to enquiring scholars. Other important bibliographical information is provided: titles and summaries of imprints, collations (an important advance over other short-title catalogues), notes of watermarks, dates of publication, information from printers' records, and discrimination of editions, impressions and states. He suggests disarmingly in the preface that users might become impatient of notes such as 'apparently a re-impression' or 'sheet B is apparently reset', and acknowledges that they come from the method of recording the position of signature letters rather than using facsimiles. But he regarded the method as appropriate to his time and resources. It was notable that he abandoned semi-facsimile transcription of title-pages, a revolutionary step then for a full-dress bibliography. Always impatient of traditional practice, he thought other indicators a better way of distinguishing different editions or impressions. Others may defend semi-facsimile transcription for other reasons, not least as a standard label (even if repeated verbatim in a piracy), but Foxon was not doctrinaire in arguing against it here. He was always open to suggestion, publishing 'Defoe: a specimen of a catalogue of English Verse, 1701–50' in *The Library* in 1956 to invite it, writing 'I originally intended to say nothing about the subject-matter of the poems, but it became clear that when I did know the person or event concerned it was silly to exclude it, even if I could not undertake the work of identification in every case', a sentence that conveys one of his profoundest insights: that his was essentially a humane activity and that helpfulness to critics and historians was more important than consistency. This consideration also informed his six

indexes: first lines, chronological, imprints, bibliographical notabilia, descriptive epithets, subject. Foxon's account of his work is Johnsonian. He is ironically self-critical, but he puts forward standards of excellence beyond human attainment. As a result, the reader not only feels in personal touch with the compiler but comes away with a proper understanding of what the catalogue can and cannot do. It was no coincidence that next year, in 1976, after a conference on the subject, the British Library (as it had now become) undertook a full-scale re-cataloguing of its eighteenth-century British holdings, which became in time a world catalogue of English books 1701–1800.

Preparation of the catalogue completed, Foxon launched himself on another important project, the Lyell lectures on Pope that he was to give in March 1976. They were an immediate success. Much of their impact came from their illustrations. Foxon combined direct illustration of imprints and advertisements with ingenious parallel texts constructed of Pope's drafts and editions. A final lecture used some astonishing pictures of typographical innovations practised by authors. All of them were enlivened by Foxon's gift for histrionic delivery; the drama of Pope's self-representation was played out against a vivid backdrop of texts and illustrations. Although the Lyell Readership provided funds for publication, the predominantly visual form of Foxon's argument, and its intricacy in relating form to text, inhibited Foxon from converting into print, although he considered revising and printing the lectures in landscape format, pictures on the left, text on the right. In the end, it was the second of the present writers who undertook this task, with Foxon's help, and *Pope and the Early Eighteenth-Century Book Trade* was published in Oxford in 1991.

In these lectures, Foxon was the first to tell the full story of Pope's relation with printers and publishers, and to consider the consequences for editing. As Brean Hammond has since pointed out, Pope's stance was usually that of an opponent of professional writing, but the Lyell lectures showed the full extent of his own professionalism as a writer. If Pope was not a fraud like Wise, he was certainly an ingenious manipulator of booksellers and readers. Foxon is pleasantly ruthless in exposing him while, as usual, avoiding a censorious tone. The skilled uses of anonymity, the wily business deals and the taste for equivocation are all detailed and the detective work is characteristically accurate. The chapter on the Homer translations with its analysis of Pope's aesthetic choices and debts, and its reconstruction of the unfortunate Lintot's business problems, is a *tour de force* unequalled in discursive bibliography. Pope knew how books were

printed and how they were marketed: he ruled the printer, even down to fixing the size of an initial letter, and he did his best to block out the publishing middle men and take a larger share of the profits. He intervened at every stage and shaped his text himself.

Hardly had Foxon finished the Lyell lectures, than he began preparing to give the Sandars lectures at Cambridge in 1978 on 'The Stamp Act and the Periodical Press'. These grew out of his early reading of eighteenth-century periodicals, and subsequent interest in their printing and distribution. Only he, however, could have hit on the evidence of the impact of the *Stamp Act* on both as revealed in the appearance and position of the stamps themselves, charting these through from the beginning in the 1760s through the *Sedition Acts* (1790s) to their end on the eve of Reform. In both these series Foxon used visual imagery as well as the spoken word to depict with unforgettable brilliance a mass of evidence, typographical and textual, which illuminated not merely his subjects but the history of the book trade and society as a whole in the period. His delivery needed the widest screen and a dramatic performance; it got both. The Sandars lectures remain unpublished (copies were deposited in the Cambridge University Library and the British Library). In 1978 Foxon was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in recognition of his eminence in defining the methodology of enumerative and descriptive bibliography, and in 1980–1 he was president of the Bibliographical Society. His presidential address to the Society, 'Proofs as Evidence of Change in the Seventeenth-Century Printing House', provided an excellent introduction to the whole topic of proof-correction and used Plantin's ordinances of 1564 as a basis for discussing the timetable likely to be used in the printing house. Although he was encouraged, by Don McKenzie among others, to publish this paper, he declined to do so. In 1982 he retired from his Readership on grounds of ill health, and was elected to an emeritus fellowship at Wadham in the same year.

Late in life, he told his friends that he had never anticipated so long a retirement, and in retrospect his abandonment of his research seems premature. In particular, he decided not to continue work on an edition of the Stationers' Register, 1710–46, a project he had conceived before he went to Canada and to which he was uniquely suited. His proposal had been accepted by the Bibliographical Society and some preliminary work had been done on copying the entries on to slips, but the prospect of undertaking another complex work of annotation and indexing was too daunting.

His later years were much troubled by ill health, only now diagnosed as the adrenalin malfunction that caused the surges of energy that had carried him through his major work, alternating with periods of lassitude and depression. From now on he lived an almost reclusive life at Marston. Although a past President of the Bibliographical Society, he had to be persuaded to come to London to receive the Society's Gold Medal in 1985.

For a time Foxon attended various committees of which he was a member, including the British Academy's, and he would regularly attend the Lyell lectures. He took pleasure in the honours he was given. He was awarded the Bibliographical Society's gold medal in 1985 and was delighted to be elected as Honorary Member of the Bibliographical Society of America the following year. He continued to offer assistance to scholars; he was always willing to approach the problems of others with the enthusiasm that he brought to his own. To him answering queries was a pleasure and a duty, an activity central to his scholarly role. He never ceased to find the work exciting, perhaps too exciting. His curiosity was unresting, always seeking out patterns and anomalies, trying to reconstruct the narratives behind them. But increasingly he tended to withdraw from human contact. He was on good terms with his neighbours, enjoyed visits to his daughter and her family, tinkered with his stereo, read *The Times* every day, and was still capable of a short private correspondence if something caught his interest in the the *Times Literary Supplement*. He looked back on his life with pleasure tinged by perplexity. He became ill early in 2001 and died in a nursing home in London on 5 June.

'What's become of Waring, since he gave us all the slip?' his friends were apt to ask. He had been such an electric, vital figure in youth and middle age, and no one who knew him then will forget his speech, allusion and metaphor packed with wit, his delivery of a cynical phrase belied by a grin, corner of mouth turned down, eyebrow raised, the whole punctuated with sketches in the air by cigarette in well-worn holder. By the end of his life, if the wit and the grin remained, it was as if he had been worn out with the labour of getting his *magnum opus* out, his energy all gone. But no one could have guessed from the vivid lectures with which he followed it that they were his farewell to a subject that he adorned for so long.

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