

# A Brief History of Textual Scholarship

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# This lecture

- Brief history of textual scholarship
- A. E. Housman's critique
- Editing as history
- Varieties of editorial practice

# Brief History: Classical texts; *Textus receptus*

- Peisistratus (560–527 BCE) orders the 'official' text of Homer. The primary challenge was to build a coherent text from myriad versions spoken by the rhapsodes. This could be a viable beginning of textual criticism, i.e., being aware of variance and attending to authenticity and authority (whatever those terms mean). (Discuss!)
- Lycurgus (c. 390–324 BCE) arranges for single texts of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides to be deposited into Athenian archives.
- The history of textual editing is a history of arguments about the meaning of terms such as authenticity and authority. It is also a record of humans grappling with the contingencies of cultural imagination, tradition, and artifacts.
- What is the *textus receptus*? When mistakes in a received (published) edition prevail: E.g., Falstaff "babbl'd o' green fields" (Shakespeare, *Henry V*); "soiled fish of the sea" (Melville, *White-Jacket*).

# Brief History: Copying, Collation, Bibliography

- Library of Alexandria: Any manuscripts declared would then be copied and deposited in libraries. Their copies were only labeled differently if they had differences. Sometimes the copies were returned and the originals kept in Alexandria.
- The birth of collation as an editorial practice; and dealing with analogy versus anomaly: the Alexandrians sought to emend texts that had corruptions. Their practice was idealistic: the best text is not based on any actual document but rather a new document that seeks to bring out the best readings from all the extant texts.
- Pergamum, the other civic rival to Alexandria, switched to using parchment (animal skin) after Alexandria banished papyrus exports during a trade conflict. Generally, the Pergamanian scholars accepted the necessity of corruption and sought to identify the "best text" based on a careful examination of all surviving witnesses.
- Texts from neither of these epochs survive, but citations of them exist in medieval scholias.
- Descriptive Bibliography. Callimachus (c. 305–240 BCE) created the first record of Greek manuscripts, *Pinakes* (Tablets).

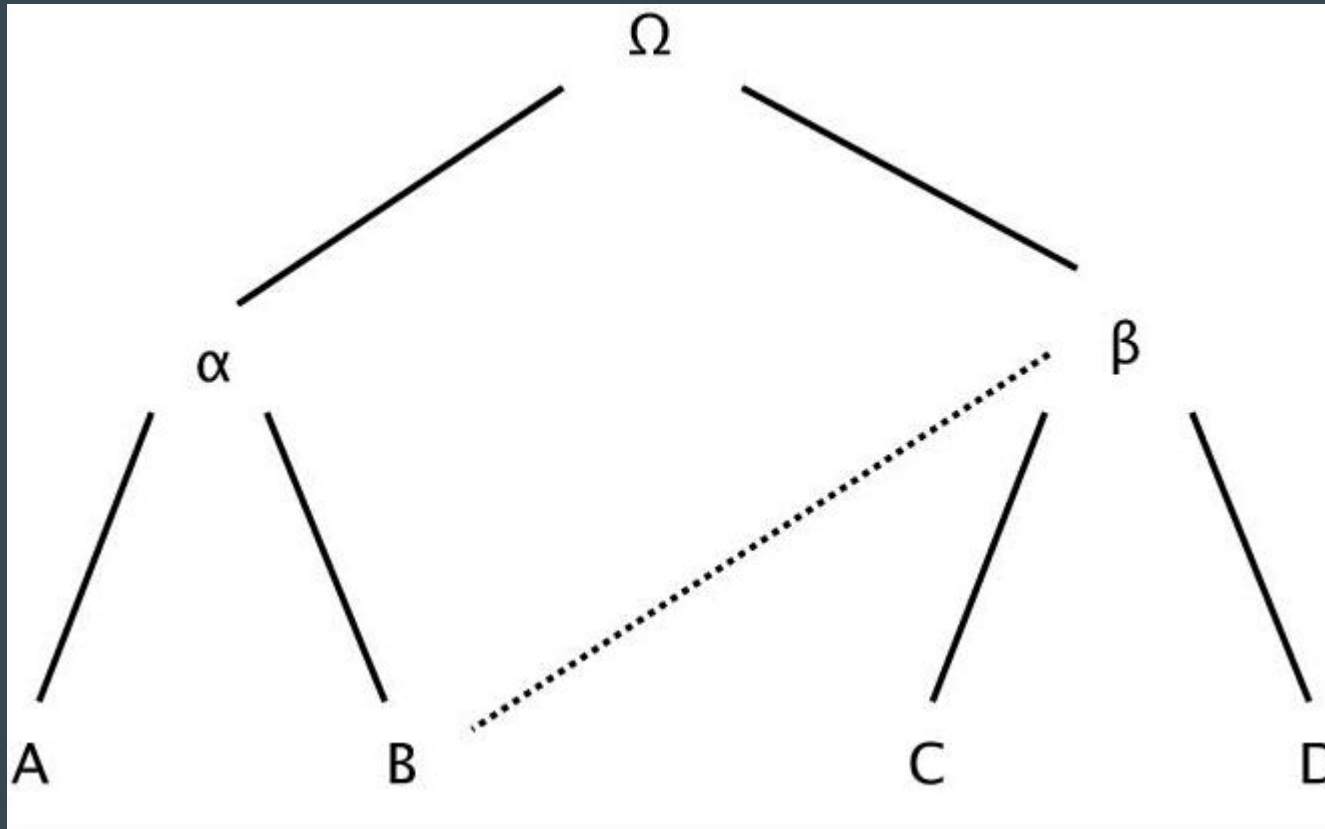
# Brief History: Commentary and Biblical scholarship

- Late classical era: the birth of textual commentaries (Servius Honoratus on Virgil, for example), including quotes of important works and other cultural and historical information that have been otherwise lost. Hugh Cayless offers a good primer on Servius, as well as some thoughts on digital editing, [on his blog](#).
- Biblical scholarship: problems of vocalisation, accentuation, and word-division in consonantal Hebrew.
- Jerome's *Vulgate*, commissioned by Pope Damasus I in the late 4th century CE, was the first Latin Bible that was based on surviving witnesses (~8000 manuscripts!).
- Medieval period saw a period of conservation, copying mostly religious works and trying to reconcile them, as much as possible, with classical (pagan) works.
- The Caroline Reformation led to a standardised script that made various European national scripts consistent—a significant portion of surviving manuscripts of classical literature is the result of copies made in monasteries with Carolingian script.
- Meanwhile, Constantinople's holdings of Greek manuscripts were crucial to Italian humanists' serious return to Greek study in the late fourteenth–early fifteenth century.

# Brief History: Enter the scribes

- Copying work transferred from the hands of monks to those of professional scribes, often in universities.
- Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), acting as papal secretary, found manuscripts all over Europe of prominent classical thinkers. Bracciolini even invented a new humanist script that was far more clear and readable than the prevailing *textura* (i.e., gothic) script of the day.
- Lorenzo Valla (1407–57), the great debunker of forgeries: the *Donation of Constantine* and the letters of Seneca and St. Paul, e.g. He also sought to emend Jerome's *Vulgate*.
- Politian derived the method of *eliminatio codicum descriptorum*, the removal of "descriptive" or derived copies as witnesses to an authentic version. This led to the method (very much in use to this day) of *stemma codicum*, the "family tree" of textual versions.
- Stemmatics: building a family tree by examining scribal errors in multiple manuscript copies. Aldine editions. Example of the Erasmus New Testament.

# Stemmatics



(Source: <https://chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/4742.1-textual-criticism-as-applied-to-biblical-and-classical-texts>)

# Brief History: Philology

Philology (*OED*):

1. Love of learning and literature; the branch of knowledge that deals with the historical, linguistic, interpretative, and critical aspects of literature; literary or classical scholarship. Now chiefly U.S.
3. The branch of knowledge that deals with the structure, historical development, and relationships of languages or language families; the historical study of the phonology and morphology of languages; historical linguistics. See also comparative philology at comparative adj. 1b.



# 19th-century philology: Lachmann v. Bédier method

- Karl Lachmann (1793–1851) identified and evaluated bibliographic sources with a critical awareness. The goal is generally ‘reconstruction’. His 1850 edition of Lucretius claimed that the three extant manuscripts descended from a single archetype. Later witnesses have more errors. Interestingly, Lachmann’s *Nibelungenlied* edition involved more speculation.
- Joseph Bédier (1864–1938) doubted the binary nature of stemmatics. He proposed the ‘best-text’ theory, which called for a lightly emended version of the best version of the text (“witness”).
- Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1753–1824) and his monumental claim that there was no possibility to find or reconstruct the original or best text in biblical texts, because of all of the layers of copying and linguistic shifts (*Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 1780–83).
- Friedrich August Wolf (1759–1824) similarly argued in his *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795) that it would be impossible to recover Homeric texts.

## A. E. Housman's Critique: 'Application of Thought to Textual Criticism'

- Where do science and art meet? "Textual criticism is a science, and, since it comprises recension and emendation, it is also an art."
- A matter of reason and common sense, but also not "an exact science at all ... fluid and variable ... neither mystery nor mathematics" ... It deals with human frailties---errors.
- Editorial problems should be treated as individuals: "must be regarded as possibly unique."
- Learning principles from instances: "P]ublic opinion is now aware that textual criticism, however repulsive, is nevertheless indispensable, and editors find that some presence of dealing with the subject is obligatory; and in these circumstances they apply, not thought, but words, to textual criticism. They get rules by rote without grasping the realities of which those rules are merely emblems, and recite them on inappropriate occasions instead of seriously thinking out each problem it arises."

## A. E. Housman's Critique

- Editors should "look all facts in the face" and avoid sectarianism of thought: "This I cite as a specimen of the things which people may say if they do not think about the meaning of what they are saying, and especially as an example of the danger of dealing in generalisations. The best way to treat such pretentious inanities is to transfer them from the sphere of textual criticism, where the difference between truth and falsehood or between sense and nonsense is little regarded and seldom even perceived, into some sphere where men are obliged to use concrete and sensuous terms, which force them, however reluctantly, to think."
- What does he mean by sincerity of a manuscript? "When you call a MS. sincere you instantly engage on its behalf the moral sympathy of the thoughtless ... Our concern is not with the eternal destiny of the scribe, but with the temporal utility of the MS.; and a MS. is useful or the reverse in proportion to the amount of truth which it discloses or conceals, no matter what may be the causes of the disclosure or concealment."

## A. E. Housman's Critique

- Sincerity and recension; the importance of *building*. "[E]ven the traditional rules must of course be tested by comparison with the witness of the MSS... if we build structures on our trust we are no critics."
- A paradox: "The MSS. are the material upon which we base our rule, and then, when we have got our rule, we turn round upon the MSS. and say that the rule, based upon them, convicts them of error. We are thus working in a circle, that is a fact which there is no denying; but, as Lachmann says, the task of the critic is just this, to tread that circle deftly and warily"
- "To be a textual critic requires aptitude for thinking and willingness to think; and though it also requires other things, those things are supplements and cannot be substitutes. Knowledge is good, method is good, but one thing beyond all others is necessary; and that is to have a head, not a pumpkin, on your shoulders and brains, not pudding, in your head."

# The Copy Text and Beyond

- R. B. McKerrow coined the phrase ‘copy-text’ in his 1904 edition of Thomas Nashe.
- Term popularised by W. W. Greg’s essay “The Rationale of Copy-Text” (1950).
- A copy-text is just the version that forms the base text of the edition (the text you will copy for the edition), and it is expected to be emended.
- Fredson Bowers took the idea further: the copy-text is the one that comes closest to the author’s final intentions (manuscript is best, next-best is proof sheets, then first edition, and so on).
- Jerome McGann, *Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*: focus not on final intentions but on ‘social processes’ of composition and publication.
- D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*: bibliographic codes. The meaning of a text is determined by its physical manifestations.





# Varieties of Editorial Experience

- Editing is a form of preservation (copying), but it is also a product of analysis.
- It is an act of historical scholarship which requires an answer to this question: "What role do judgment and evaluation play in reconstructing the past?" (G. Thomas Tanselle 1994).
- Texts of **documents** v. text of **works**.
- Editing is also mediation. The editor intervenes in two basic ways:
  1. Modernisation through emendations
  2. Publish original text either
    - i. diplomatically (as precisely as possible), or
    - ii. critically (creating a new text text from multiple authorities or 'witnesses')



## Learn More

*Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, ed. D. C. Greetham (MLA, 1995).

Gaskell, Philip. *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oak Knoll, 1995).

Greetham, D. C. *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (Garland, 1994).

McGann, Jerome. *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (UVa Press, 1992).

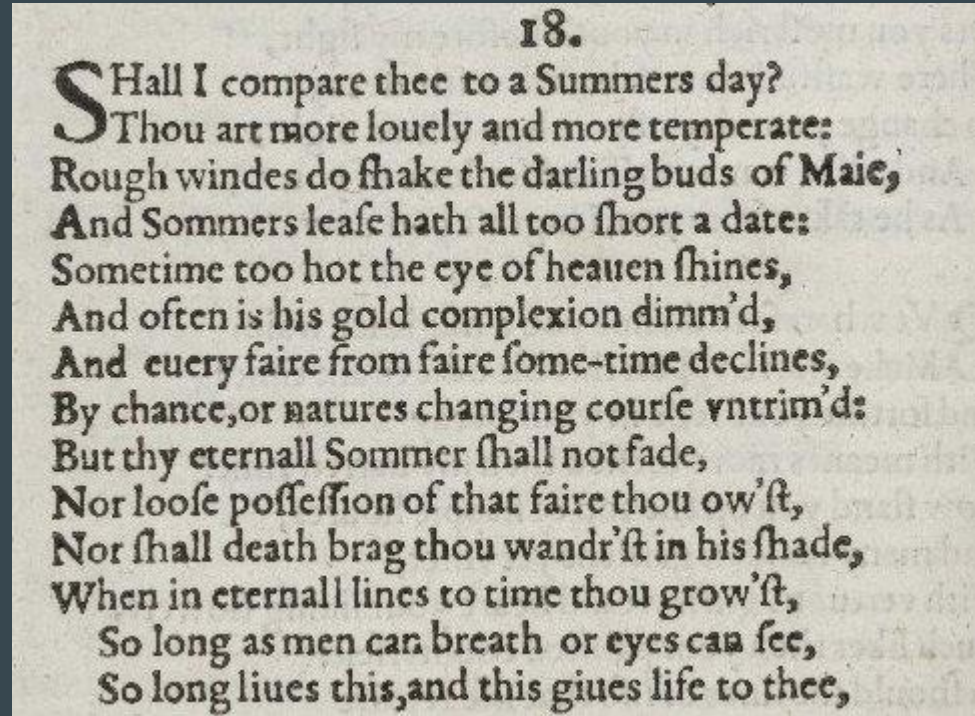
Pierazzo, Elena. *Digital Scholarly Editing* (Ashgate, 2015).

Tanselle, G. Thomas. *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (UPenn Press, 1989).

# Group Exercise: How would you edit this text?

Shakespeare, Sonnet 18

(*Sonnets* 1609)



18.  
SHall I compare thee to a Summers day?  
Thou art more louely and more temperate:  
Rough windes do shake the darling buds of Maie,  
And Sommers lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometime too hot the eye of heauen shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd,  
And euery faire from faire some-time declines,  
By chance, or natures changing course vntrim'd:  
But thy eternall Sommer shall not fade,  
Nor loose possession of that faire thou ow'ft,  
Nor shall death brag thou wandr'ft in his shade,  
When in eternall lines to time thou grow'ft,  
So long as men can breath or eyes can see,  
So long liues this, and this giues life to thee,

# How would you edit this text?

## Henslowe's Diary (1592)

### Check out originals at your own peril:

<https://www.henslowe-alleyn.org.uk/essays/henslowediary.html>

[7]

In the name of god A men 1591  
 beginge the 19 of febreary my  
 lord stranges<sup>(2)</sup> mene A ffoloweth  
 1591

- Rd at fryer bacvne the 19 of febreary . . . satterdaye<sup>(3)</sup> . . . xvij s iij d  
 Rd at mvlomvrco the 20 of febreary . . . . . xxix s  
 Rd at orlando the 21 of febreary . . . . . xvjs vj d  
 Rd at spanes comodye donne oracioe<sup>(4)</sup> the 23 of febreary . . . . . xiijs vj d  
 Rd at sy<sup>r</sup> John mandevell the 24 of febreary . . . . . xij<sup>a</sup> vj d  
 Rd at harey of cornwell the 25 of febreary 1591 . . . . . xxxij<sup>a</sup>  
 X Rd at the Jewe of malltuse the 26 of febrearye 1591 . . . . . ls  
 —Rd at clorys & orgasto the 28 of febreary 1591 . . . . . xviijs  
 Rd at mvlamvlluco the 29 of febrearye 1591 . . . . . xxxiijs  
 Rd at poope Jone the 1 of marche 1591 . . . . . xv<sup>a</sup>  
 Rd at matchavell the 2 of marche 1591 . . . . . xiijs  
 ne—Rd at harey the vj the 3 of marche 1591 . . . . . iij<sup>1</sup> xvj<sup>a</sup> 8 d  
 Rd at bendo & Richardo the 4 of marche 1591 . . . . . xvjs  
 —Rd at iiij playes in one the 6 of marche 1591 . . . . . xxxjs vj d  
 Rd at harey the vj<sup>(5)</sup> the 7 of marche 1591 . . . . . iij li  
 Rd at the lockinglasse the 8 of marche 1591 . . . . . vij<sup>a</sup>  
 Rd at senobia the 9 of marche 1591 . . . . . xxij s vj d  
 X Rd at the Jewe of malta the 10 of marche 1591 . . . . . lvjs  
 Rd at harey the vj the 11 of marche 1591 . . . . . xxxvij<sup>a</sup> vj<sup>d</sup>  
 —Rd at the comodey of doneoracio the 13 march 1591—x— . . . . . xxviijs<sup>a</sup>

(1) *xij.<sup>d</sup> J. ha* xi is written over J, d over h, and a stands free. The letters *J. ha* appear to be in the ink of the opposite page, which is dated 1591; they occur again on f. 7.

(2) *stranges* ] *strangers* Greg. (3) *satterdaye* ] interlined.

(4) *oracioe* ] so Malone; *oracoe* Greg; i and o are run together.

(5) *harey the vj* ] *hary vj* Greg.

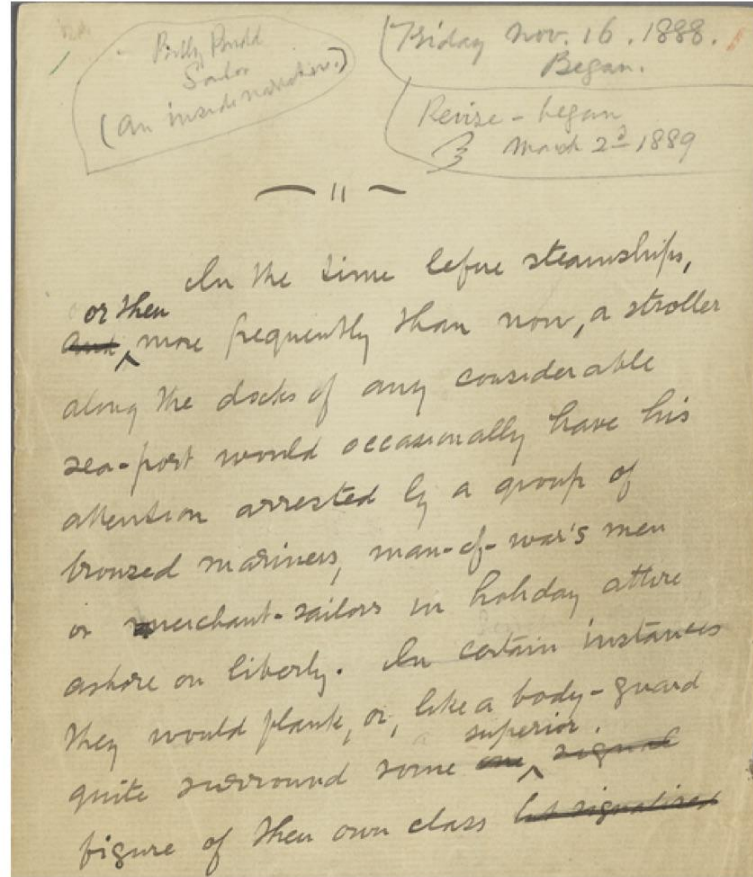
# How would you edit this text?

Herman Melville,

*Billy Budd*

(unfinished,

c. 1886–1891)



# How would you edit this text?

Letter from

Paul Bowles to

William Burroughs,

subject to Burroughs-Gysin

Cut-up method (1962)

2137 Tanger Secco, Tanger.  
14/vii/62

I'm lying here coping a fine Indian tape for Alan Sil-  
t since it's with jack and the hour is advanced, the pro-  
forward in complete silence except for the humming of the  
. Tomorrow I'll take it to him at lunch. He has rented the  
in Tanger, on the old mountain, with a vast forest-  
t belongs to Marguerite McBey. Or is it MacBey? The films  
fairly well in England. He's hard at work in terraced splendor.  
eary's friends arriving tomorrow from Bombay. Harold Norse  
nd one of his cosmographs which has been in front of me for  
two evenings. Daytimes it looks like my mother. Not really,  
but enough to become her. By electric light it is a fat  
an with bushy blond hair, leaning toward a large cat with  
tail. Always the same two images. At night I can't discover  
image of my mother at all, nor imagine where the features  
is in the hospital for the third time in three years, hav-  
er operation. Each day I go out through the eucalyptus for-  
he Clinique Californie and see how she is. Esta bien, they  
, and she looks well. The real problem for Jane was to organ-  
ass excursion to Sidi Qadhem the day before she went in to be  
on. There were about fifteen people to be carried about  
the amara and shepherds continually escap-  
proved more than she could follow. "Where are you going?" she would  
ing into dark recesses in the night. "Where are you going?" she would  
cry. "Oh, they've gone toward the tomb." "Where are you going?" she would  
There was no way of knowing where they had gone near the tomb,  
for it was a considerable distance. "They've disappeared. I can't see  
"They've gone," I would tell her. "Where are you going?" she would  
them. It's dark out there." She was not placated. "Send Mokhtar or  
Abdeslam or Larbi after them and tell him to make them come back.  
They've got to stay down on the main thoroughfare. Where is Mokhtar?  
Where's Cherifa? Oh, my God, Cherifa's gone! Where is she? Oh, why  
Where's Cherifa? Cherifa! Where is she? Where is she? Where is she?  
haven't they? What's the matter with you? What's the matter with you?  
But that's all right. Hadchi is screaming all the time? Sit down  
grunt and say: Chama bhrhiti? Sit down and never you want." Then Jane  
that you should be sitting there and and Larbi, (the manservants of three  
with your head and talk, laugh, and Stewart Church and Pam Stevenson  
of Jane's: Mira Vorkepi and at once, and often none of them  
to wit) they were never all present all night, resting a moment near  
was there. They flitted in like a moment, I must say. It was Mokhtar who  
the light, and then the next time I looked they were gone again.  
But Jane did her best to hold the guard for five hours. An amara  
eventually said to me: "I've been sent then fifteen minutes of freedom, poor boy,  
needs freedom." He never got me of sight, so she had to grovel slower-  
because Larbi and Abdeslam were witted than they in keeping out to advantage.  
We had a very satisfactory night. John Crosby, the columnist on the  
Tribune, was with us, as were several other people from the Costa del  
Sol. Ferlinghetti wrote me that ten copies of A HUNDRED CAMELS IN THE  
COURTYARD had been posted me that had arrived. thanks for news. Paul  
and today I telephoned. Nothing.