The Varieties of Scholarly Editing

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When the great bibliographer A. W. Pollard wrote "Shakespeare's Text" in 1934, he remarked that Alexander Pope "might be ranked high among Shakespeare's editors had he not relegated passages he disliked to the margin, and even omitted some offending lines altogether" (282). Pollard thought it unnecessary to explain why such actions were unsuitable, taking for granted his readers' concurrence; no doubt many of those readers have in fact agreed. But the point of view implied by his statement is not now, and probably never has been, universally held; it is one of a range of possibilities. The primary assumptions underlying the statement are that editing is an activity of historical scholarship and that an editor's own preferences are subordinate to historical accuracy. There is also the implication that the historical text to be focused on is one that reflects its author's intentions. Pollard is evidently objecting not to the fact that Pope removed passages from surviving texts of Shakespeare but to the perceived rationale for their removal; further, he is objecting not to the fact that Pope's literary judgment played a role in the editorial process but to the specific role it appears to have played. Editorial activity of some kind is necessary for the very reason that the texts of the quartos and Folio may not accurately reflect Shakespeare's intentions; but the alteration of the texts that are thus preserved, Pollard implies, must involve a channeling of the editor's literary sensitivity into the attempted reconstruction of what Shakespeare wished the texts of his works to contain.

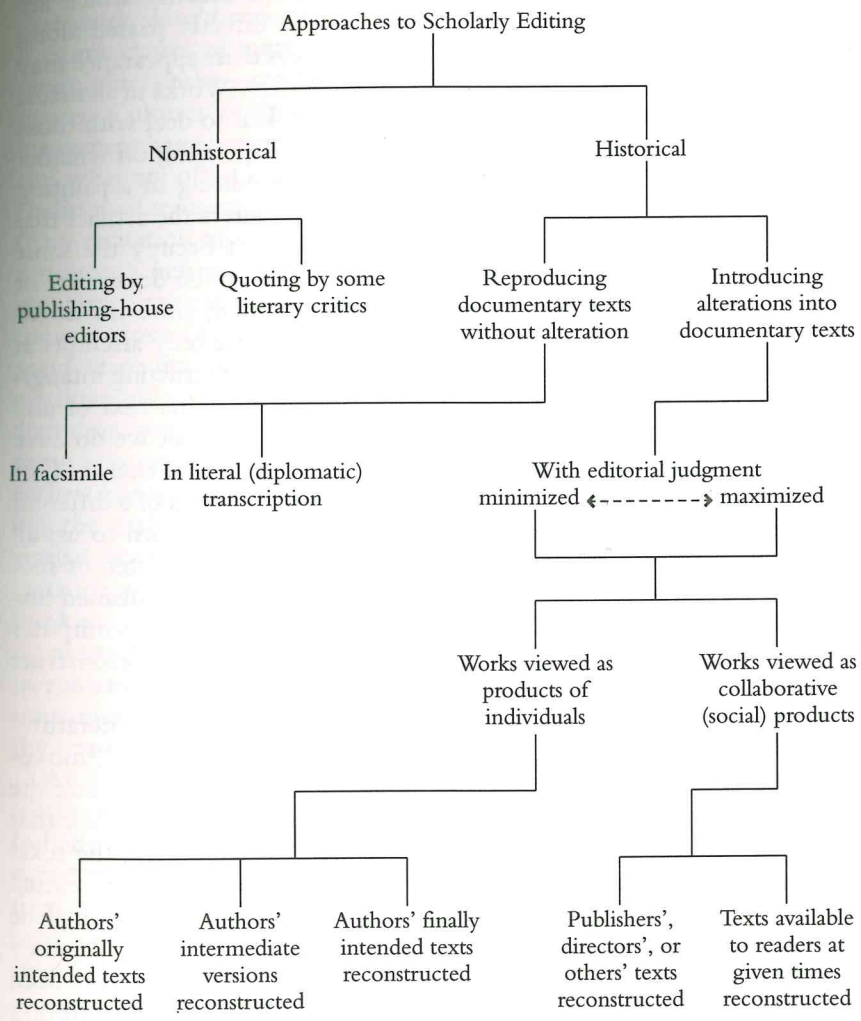
Every statement about editing—like this one of Pollard's—reflects, directly or indirectly, an attitude toward certain fundamental questions, and various families of editorial approaches have grown up over the centuries because these questions have been answered in different ways. The first question is whether to approach texts historically—whether, that is, one's aim in working with the texts of printed and handwritten documents is to receive communications from the past. If it is, a related question ultimately follows: Is one primarily interested in verbal

messages as the products of particular individuals at particular times in their lives, or is one more interested in messages as they have been shaped by social forces not amenable to the control of single individuals? Whichever way this question is finally answered, still another question—this time a procedural one—arises in connection with it: What role do judgment and evaluation play in reconstructing the past? Specifically, is one's historical aim better accommodated by accepting, with little or no intervention, the documentary texts that have come down to us or by altering those texts to rectify what are judged, by one standard or another, to be errors? Although editors have frequently embarked on their tasks without giving such questions systematic thought, their actions can always be analyzed in terms of these questions, which thus provide a useful framework for classifying the varieties of editing that exist. (The diagram opposite offers a schematic rendering of this framework.)

I

If we define editing as the considered act of reproducing or altering texts, the first thing to be decided by anyone proposing to engage in this activity is whether the goal is historical understanding. And that decision, in turn, involves considering the relation of texts to artifacts. Texts, after all, are preserved primarily in artifacts (indeed, they have physical substance as parts of artifacts), and our treatment of every artifact we encounter implies a stand on this issue, for in each instance we see the artifact either as a witness to the past or as an object of current utility. Texts, in a broad sense, are the arrangements of elements in artifacts, and we can speak about the texts of vases and paintings as well as the texts of pieces of paper inscribed or imprinted with words or with musical or choreographic notation. (Some texts can also be transmitted orally, and I comment on this point later.) The most common use of the word *texts* in the past has been in reference to arrangements of words and marks of punctuation, and in what follows I am primarily concerned with texts in this sense. But we must recognize that such texts constitute only one class of texts and that the issues they present are common to a number of other classes.

All those forms of human expression that employ intangible media (language or sound, for instance) share one set of issues, and those that employ tangible media (paint on canvas, for instance) share another. The products of the first, which involve sequential presentation, can be transmitted only through instructions (which may be imprecise or


Approaches to Scholarly Editing
Nonhistorical
Historical
Editing by publishing-house editors
Quoting by some literary critics
Reproducing documentary texts without alteration
Introducing alterations into documentary texts
In facsimile
In literal (diplomatic) transcription
With editorial judgment minimized maximized
Works viewed as products of individuals
Works viewed as collaborative (social) products
Authors' originally intended texts reconstructed
Authors' intermediate versions reconstructed
Authors' finally intended texts reconstructed
Publishers', directors', or others' texts reconstructed
Texts available to readers at given times reconstructed

incorrect) for their repetition; the products of the second, which are stationary, exist as physical objects and can be directly passed along from one person to another (though in the process their appearance may change through intentional actions or natural forces). Works in all media therefore pose textual problems, but any steps taken to deal with those problems by altering texts have different effects depending on whether the works use tangible or intangible media. The editing of a painting (which occurs whenever a painting is "restored") alters the artifact that preserves the work, since the work and the artifact occupy the same physical space; the editing of a poem need not alter the document or documents that preserve particular texts of the poem, since the documents do not constitute the works themselves but are only attempts at transmitting in physical form the instructions for reconstructing intangible works. We can never know with certainty what the text of any painting looked like at any given moment in the past, but we do have the work itself in front of us, however altered by time and chance. Our uncertainty about the texts of works in intangible media is of a different order, for the works themselves can never be handed down to us; all we can have are documents (such as paper bearing handwritten or mechanically printed notation, motion picture film bearing emulsified images, sound recording disks bearing contoured grooves, or computer tapes bearing electronic codes) that purport to tell us how to reconstruct the works.

In thinking about works in intangible media—works of literature, music, dance, cinema (the media of which are language, sound, movement, and light)—we must keep in mind the fundamental fact that the artifacts we work with cannot be the works themselves and thus that we must constantly distinguish the texts of documents from the texts of works. This distinction has been the basis of the discipline of textual criticism throughout its long history: the reason for questioning the texts of documents is that they are not the texts of works and that they may be faulty witnesses to those texts. That a document may have been inscribed or printed centuries after the date of the work it is attempting to transmit exacerbates the problem but is not the essential problem. Even when manuscripts in the hand of the author and proof sheets corrected by the author survive, the reconstruction of the text of a work from the texts of such documents can never be accomplished with certainty. However much evidence survives, the production of the texts of works always involves critical judgment. It is in the nature of works in intangible media that the very constitution of those works is a matter of conjecture. The questioning of the texts of documents—the traditional province of textual criticism—is thus part of the activity of reading. Any attempt to extract meaning from a verbal work is inseparable

from the attempt to determine what words and punctuation the text of that work should consist of.

Some classes of texts—essentially those of verbal, musical, and choreographic works—can be transmitted without the use of tangible documents. Cultures without written notations for language, sound, and movement have preserved their literature, music, and dance in this way, and what are often called folktales, folk music, and folk dances have a tradition of transmission that is independent of their being written down. (Any recitation of a poem or performance of a tune or dance of course produces a new text.) Renditions of such texts are analogous to documentary texts: each represents a particular moment in the history of the transmission of the work, and each may depart in various ways, through accident or design, from its predecessors. But because past renditions are intangible, they cannot be recovered directly, and any written transcription, sound recording, or film of them must be evaluated in the same way as any other documentary text. An editor listening to the earliest known recording of an American Indian tale and an editor reading the earliest known manuscript of an ancient Greek poem are in similar situations, though the long series of antecedent texts in the first instance was oral and in the second primarily written. Most of the thinking about textual matters has, understandably, been directed toward works traditionally transmitted in documents, but it is important to remember not only that oral tradition has been the major form of transmission for some works but also that it may have played a role in the transmission of any verbal, musical, or choreographic work.

All these considerations form the background for the decision whether to approach a verbal text historically. Every text is a product of the past (whether it is from centuries or minutes ago), but our interest in any given text need not be historical. For example, an editor in a publishing firm who is working with a contemporary author's manuscript, typescript, or computer printout is not concerned with preserving or reconstructing the text as it stood (or as the author wished it to stand) at a particular time; instead, the editor's aim in altering it is to improve it, according to one or another standard of literary excellence or marketability. The document supplied by the author, which presents not the work itself but one physical text of it, may contain some words or spellings or punctuation not intended by the author; but the publishing house editor's aim in questioning the text is normally not to locate unintended readings but to find readings that are inappropriate under the standards being followed (which may, of course, include some unintended readings, such as typographic errors). This kind of editing, in which the editor attempts to collaborate with the author to improve the work, may be thought of as "creative," in an effort to distinguish it from the

kind of editing, frequently undertaken by professional scholars, in which the aim is to preserve or reconstruct a text as it existed at some prior moment. Such creative editing is not necessarily unscholarly, however, if by "scholarly" we mean "learned and following a set of rigorous procedures." Publishing house editors can (whether or not they commonly do) bring to their task great learning and cogency of argument, and their approach to their work could then be called scholarly even if not historically oriented.

Another group of persons who take a nonhistorical approach to texts consists of some of the literary critics who follow those schools of critical thought that emphasize readers' responses over authors' intentions or that deny the past as a useful concept. Such critics, notably those influenced by a series of twentieth-century movements ranging from New Criticism in the 1940s and 1950s to deconstruction in the 1970s and 1980s, have varied considerably among themselves in the extent to which historical considerations have entered into their work. But whenever they have felt obliged to accept the texts provided to them—whenever, that is, they have accepted texts unquestioningly, as they often have—they have been linked by their failure to deal satisfactorily with a difficult conceptual problem: how to justify taking some historical considerations as relevant and others as not relevant. New Critics, for example, were inclined to dismiss authors' intended meanings but often accepted texts as products of particular periods and authors—sometimes texts that were prepared by scholarly editors to reflect authorial intention. Their action assumed no connection between editing and criticism: it overlooked the fact that textual decisions made by an editor inevitably reflect some approach to literature and that the resulting text may be inappropriate for certain purposes. They neglected, in other words, to recognize that the act of reading necessitates a critical approach to the text as well as to the meaning. The same failing is regularly found in the work of those deconstructionists who see texts as fragments in an all-enveloping text, as groupings of words precipitated from the totality of language, not as communications from the past, and who believe that any attempt at communication is undercut by the ancient lineages of the words. Such critics rarely question the makeup of a text or propose alterations in it, but by accepting a text as it comes to them, they are tying themselves to the historical moment in which the document containing the text was produced. Whatever hesitation they feel about altering documentary texts implies a concern with historical preservation (the preservation of a particular moment of human history) that is incompatible with their general approach to the analysis of those texts.

These criticisms are not meant to question the validity of nonhistorical

approaches to texts. One is free to use a text, like any other found object, as the basis for a display of intellect, to find meanings or incoherences in it that could not have been contemplated by the person or persons historically responsible for its production. But the results can be satisfying only if the analysis is coherent in its own terms. Those who proceed in this direction run into trouble when they have not thought through the meaning of textual authority within their scheme. If a critic is not interested in a text as a statement from the past, there would seem to be no reason not to alter it at those points that analysis shows to be ineffective; the text found in a document would carry no authority (even if the document were a scholarly edition) against the critic's claims, and the critical analysis would result in a text more satisfying to the critic. When such critics, not concerned with the past, fail to carry through the insights of their analysis in this way, one must ask them to explain what authority, for their purposes, attaches to historical texts. They, like publishing house editors, are dealing with texts in a way that allows them to make textual alterations on the basis of their own personal literary preferences. In practice, however, they have commonly proceeded (except in some instances of what has come to be called "mispri-sion," or literary appropriation) as if they were constrained to preserve preexisting texts, thereby implying a concern with the product, if not the intentions, of human effort in the past—a respect for found texts as historical evidence. Historical approaches to texts are not necessarily incompatible with the belief that language thwarts all attempts at individual expression, but if one's chosen goal is not historical, the constitution of inherited texts carries no authority simply because it exists. The root of the problem is a failure to understand that anyone who wishes to read or comment on a text, or on the work it purports to represent, must make textual decisions—must, that is, engage in a form of textual criticism—whether or not the work is being thought of as a communication from the past.

II

Although nonhistorical approaches to texts do entail criticism of the makeup of texts, textual criticism as it has been practiced over the last twenty-three centuries in the West has been historical in orientation. Not only have editors regarded texts as clues to verbal statements from the past; the particular past moment to which they wished a text to lead them in each case, practically without exception until quite recently, has been the time when the author considered the work finished. From

the editions of Zenodotus of Alexandria in the third century BC to those of the Center for Editions of American Authors (CEAA) in the 1960s, the aim of textual investigation was to move toward the texts that were intended by their authors. Occasionally the fact that an author may have had different intentions at different times would come up in discussion, but for the most part the focus was on authors' last intentions. Textual criticism, the attempt to determine the relations among surviving texts of a work and the evaluation of their reliability as witnesses, has generally been undertaken with a view to reconstructing, as accurately as possible, the text finally intended by the author. Even if a work had no identifiable author (or group of authors), the focus was still on the intention of its creator (or creators) as implied by the language itself and the historical context.

If this matter seemed settled, what remained decidedly unsettled was how best to pursue the task. The two basic positions that have been taken were represented to some extent by the first two editors of the first printed series of edited classics. Giovanni Andrea de' Bussi, the first editor for Sweynheym and Pannartz (the earliest printers in Italy), kept his own intrusions to a minimum, choosing to present texts largely as artifacts; Niccolò Perotti, who succeeded him in 1472, emphasized the detection and removal of the corruptions that had accumulated in texts. In the first approach, the editor has the relatively passive role of preserver and purveyor; in the second, the editor is the active repairer of the damages wrought by time. The controversy between these two men has, with variations, been reenacted many times since. And it was, of course, not the invention of Renaissance humanists: a scholar in the Alexandrian library or a monk in a medieval monastery could either attempt to copy a text as it stood in the exemplar or strive to improve it in the process of copying. The history of textual criticism and editing is really the history of shifting attitudes toward the role of human judgment in bringing present-day readers in touch with the past. The essential dilemma is whether to offer readers what is known to have come from some point in the past, even though the editor can often be relatively sure (and sometimes certain) that it is inaccurate, or to present a text as faithful to the author's intention as the editor's evaluation of the evidence and literary insight can make it, even though such a text is necessarily a product of present sensibility. Editors, like everyone else interested in the past, must decide whether we know the past better through artifacts or through our trained imaginations.

The position that documentary texts should be altered as little as possible is usually called "conservative." It is, of course, literally conservative, advocating the preservation of what has been inherited; but the

term is regularly used in this connection to mean "wisely cautious," suggesting that there has perennially been a predisposition in favor of what was written down or printed in the past over what an editor with informed judgment thought of in the present. This position, though it has been widely held, has a logical flaw at the heart of it. Editing is necessary in the first place because we acknowledge—given the intangible medium of verbal works—that documentary texts may be (indeed, are likely to be) inaccurate guides to those works. Second, editors undertake their task because they believe that their knowledge (of existing texts; of the nature of transmissional errors; of an author's life, works, and times) and their insight may enable them to construct more accurate texts than any of the producers (scribes, printers, even authors) of previous texts were able to do. Third, errors that seem obvious to most people can be corrected by those people; the contribution of a learned and perceptive editor is the correction of errors that are not obvious. It follows from these three observations that there is no rational justification for elevating a documentary reading that makes sense, simply because it is a documentary reading, over an editor's conjecture. To do so is the easier course, because everyone can usually agree on what the documentary reading is (though sometimes even that is in dispute), whereas there is not likely to be unanimity of opinion on the merits of the editorial conjecture. But this uncertainty is the price that must be paid for the possibility of a more accurate text. The texts of verbal works, as opposed to the texts of documents, are always uncertain anyway, and if the works are what we are interested in, we cannot avoid contending with uncertainty.

Although editorial debates have characteristically been between those who favor strictly limited editorial intervention in documentary texts and those who are open to more extensive alteration, the difference between these positions is one of degree, not kind. The fundamental dichotomy is actually between making no alterations at all and making some (whether many or few) alterations. An editor whose goal is to reproduce a handwritten or printed documentary text is focusing on the text of a document, not on a work; an editor who incorporates alterations, however few, can no longer claim to be presenting the text of a document but is going beyond the document to focus on something else, normally a work as intended at some past moment. The first approach results in photographic or other facsimiles or in literal ("diplomatic") transcriptions, the second in what are generally called "critical" editions (because their texts are the products of the critical judgment of editors). Both kinds of editions can be scholarly, and both can be useful. The function of facsimiles and diplomatic editions is in part to make

more widely accessible some of the textual evidence present in unique manuscripts and scarce printed editions. There can be no substitutes for the originals, of course, because every physical detail of the original documents is potentially relevant for interpreting the texts they contain. Those details that cannot be reproduced (such as the paper and ink or, for transcriptions from handwriting, the characteristics of the hand) must, in a scholarly edition, at least be described; and the places where a photographic reproduction is misleading (as when ink shows through from the other side of the original leaf) must be annotated. The primary scholarly value of facsimiles and diplomatic editions, however, lies in the contribution made by the editor: in a transcription, the decipherment of the script; in a facsimile of a printed text, the choice of which copy—of the whole or of each page—to reproduce (along with the recording of variants in other copies of the same edition). These activities require critical judgment, even if the resulting editions are not usually called "critical," and the worth of the editions depends on the editors' learning and judgment.

The dividing line between such editions, in which the goal is to present specific texts without alteration (except for the compromises entailed in presenting them in a new physical form), and critical editions, in which the aim is to offer newly constructed texts based on the critical examination of earlier texts, ought to be distinct but is frequently blurred by confused thinking on the part of editors of both kinds of editions. Surprisingly often, those whose goal is transcription have introduced alterations in punctuation (and sometimes in spelling), claiming that the changes are for readers' convenience. They seem not to have recognized that their actions undercut their avowed aim—and, indeed, make their projects nonhistorical (since the purpose of the alterations is not historical reconstruction but modernization). They are the counterpart of those editors whose goal is the correction of texts but who have nevertheless argued that a text selected as generally the best should not be altered except for the correction of obvious errors. In both situations such editors have not carried through logically the implications of their announced programs. Yet they have generally believed that they were being rigorously methodical in their editorial procedures, having stated in their prefaces how limited their own intrusions into the text had been.

The search for properly "scientific" methods has been perhaps the dominant thread running through the history of textual criticism, and historians have variously nominated Aristarchus of Alexandria, Politian, Joseph Scaliger, or Karl Lachmann, among others, as the founder of systematic textual scholarship. Too often, however, rigor of method

has been equated with the minimization of human judgment; instead, the two must be carefully distinguished. When a medieval monk conflated two manuscripts, choosing readings from each in an effort to improve the text (in the direction of what the author of the work intended), the procedure could not be called systematic if—as was apparently the usual case—the monk did not evaluate the relative authority of the two manuscripts or consider how his own preferences might relate to those of the author. Richard Bentley and Richard Porson were doing the same thing on a more sophisticated level in the eighteenth century, though perhaps more freely adopting emendations from their own heads rather than from documents. Both were learned and brilliant men, and many of their emendations remain convincing; but their methodology—which failed adequately to consider the comparative authority of manuscripts—cannot now be regarded as satisfactory for historical scholarship. The remedy, however, is not the elimination of editorial conjecture, for the flaw in this approach was not the magnitude of the role played by editorial judgment but the lack of definition of a framework for its operation. A coherent rationale of approach is properly a desideratum of textual scholarship, as of other fields, but any rationale of critical editing that seeks to limit (rather than to systematize) the role of judgment is not coherent, since by definition critical editing exists to draw on the strengths of human judgment as a means of correcting the defects of documentary texts.

The idea that textual conjectures should be grounded on a knowledge of the relations among the extant texts of a work could not have produced practical results until the worldwide corpus of surviving manuscripts and printed books was brought under sufficient control to make access to relevant materials feasible. For the first twenty-one centuries of editorial activity, editors were generally able to see only a portion of the surviving evidence; it is not surprising that the first concerted emphasis on the use of all relevant documents and the first systematic approach to establishing their relations did not occur until the nineteenth century. Although Lachmann had some eighteenth-century predecessors (notably, J. A. Bengel, J. S. Semler, and J. J. Griesbach), his name is traditionally linked with the establishment of a "genealogical" approach to textual criticism—in which internal evidence is used to work out family relations among extant texts of a work, resulting ideally in a stemma, or family tree, showing all of them. Never again, after Lachmann, could an editor be excused for not recognizing the importance of assessing all surviving evidence and of proposing relations among the extant texts; this much of what Lachmann advocated must now be considered a

requisite first step in any historical textual investigation. His particular method, however—though it is often regarded, especially in its twentieth-century codification by Paul Maas, as the classic method of textual criticism—has properly been criticized for the artificiality of the situations it presupposes, particularly the absence of conflation between lines of descent.

A problem less remarked on is the logical status of what has become, following Lachmann, the standard distinction between recension and conjectural emendation. Recension is the effort to construct the text of the common ancestor of the surviving texts by choosing among the variants in those texts in the light of the postulated stemma; conjectural emendation is the effort to improve the recension by the introduction of editorial conjectures, readings not present in any documentary text but proposed by the editor as what the author intended. Operationally this distinction is natural enough, but conceptually it has sometimes been misunderstood by editors, who have taken it to reflect degrees of certainty, as the traditional application of the word *conjectural* to emendation—but not to recension—implies. Recension is, of course, as thoroughly conjectural as emendation, being based at every step on human judgment; and to believe that judgment applied to readings from documents produces surer results than judgment applied to readings from editor's minds is to believe that editorial insight is always less reliable than even the most unreliable documents. There have been instances in which readings supplied by an editor have been found to exist in a newly discovered document, and those readings are then said to have been "confirmed." The mere presence of the readings in a document, however, proves only that someone else once thought of them and adds no weight to the editorial conjectures unless the document is judged to be authoritative. The tradition we now call Lachmannian has been conducive to a way of thinking that—in the urge to place editing on a foundation of scholarly rigor—exaggerates both the need for and the attainment of objectivity in the reconstruction of texts.

This tradition has manifested itself in two principal forms. In one, quasi-mathematical or statistical methods are employed to analyze variants, in an effort to provide a mechanical underpinning for the establishment of stemmata and recensions. The best-known early-twentieth-century attempts of this kind are those of W. W. Greg (1927), who called his approach a "calculus," and Henri Quentin (1922); they were followed from mid-century on by such scholars as Archibald Hill, Antonín Hrubý, Jacques Froger, Vinton A. Dearing, and Michael Weitzman. All were motivated by the belief that textual variation must be amenable to scientific analysis; they differed not only in the details of

their systems but also in their readiness to recognize the points at which subjective judgments had to be resorted to. In every case judgment was necessary to bring a closed deductive system into contact with an actual situation. The problem was epitomized in one of the principles stated by Dearing: "The fewest possible readings are treated as something different from what they really are" (88). If the limited range of applicability of these approaches is recognized, they may offer editors some help in analyzing complex sets of variants, but editors who believe that, by using such systems, they have arrived at truth without the exercise of individual judgment are either failing to recognize judgments actually made or blinding themselves to the concessions their systems require.

The other approach that has resulted from the desire for objectivity is less idealistic and is in some ways a counsel of despair. Often called the "best-text" approach, it holds that an editor should—by whatever means—settle on a single documentary text as the "best" one (or at least a good one) for the purpose at hand and then follow it except in those places that are obviously faulty. Judgment is, of course, required to select the text and to identify obvious errors in it, but the role of judgment is restricted by regarding all of a text (or at least all of its words) except the obviously erroneous readings as fixed, not subject to emendation. To those persuaded of the validity of this approach, eclecticism is an undesirable principle: the emending of a text by incorporating variant readings from other texts produces, they would say, an unhistorical mixture based on subjective judgments. A classic and much discussed instance of this view is Joseph Bédier's 1913 edition of *Le lai de l'ombre*. Although Bédier was motivated by dissatisfaction with Lachmannian genealogy, the procedure he recommended was like that of Lachmann in springing from the urge to reduce subjectivity in editing. Other medievalists followed, a notable example being Eugène Vinaver, who in 1939 made the overconfident pronouncement that Bédier's line of argument had helped "to raise textual criticism to the position of a science" (351). The best-text approach was by no means limited to medieval studies or to manuscript texts; even before Bédier, R. B. McKerrow's influential edition of Thomas Nashe (1904–10) had enshrined the same approach for Renaissance English literature. It became in fact the dominant editorial procedure in the first half of the twentieth century. Yet in its common form it is one of those inherently illogical attempts to minimize the role of editorial judgment. The aim of correcting errors in a documentary text is sabotaged by the refusal to consider alterations at points that are not obviously erroneous, for it is inconceivable that a text could never be erroneous except at places that are obviously wrong. There can be no justification for automatically preserving

the readings of a documentary text, unless one's goal is to do so thoroughout; if one's aim is to produce a critical edition, all parts of the text are open to question, and there is no virtue in striving to avoid mixing readings from different documents. The best-text approach, incorporating a disapproval of eclecticism, is a confused combination of two incompatible procedures: it is a critical approach that embodies a distrust of critical judgment.

The fallacious reasoning underlying this approach was most wittily exposed by A. E. Housman in the celebrated preface to his 1903 edition of Manilius; and half a century later Greg, in "The Rationale of Copy-Text," brought to the field of English Renaissance drama a similar emphasis on judgment over mechanical rules and provided a fuller theoretical basis for such a position than Housman had done. Although these two men produced the most influential twentieth-century statements of the value of critical judgment in editing, the developments in their two fields—in the classics and the modern literatures—were largely independent of each other. Greg's position derived not so much from Housman's as from the attitudes that were evolving among the leading textual scholars of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama (who were simultaneously creating the methods of analytical bibliography for examining the physical evidence in printed books). McKerrow, by the time of his death in 1940, had cautiously modified his earlier aversion to eclecticism; as his *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare* (1939) shows, he was by then willing to emend an early text with the variants in a later authoritative edition, if all those variants were accepted as a unit. Greg's "Rationale" (foreshadowed by his *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare* [1942]) took the natural next step by removing that conditional requirement and allowing editorial judgment to operate on each variant individually. The basis for his "Rationale" was his observation that compositors in Renaissance printing shops took greater liberties with the spelling and punctuation (the "accidentals") of their copy than with the words (the "substantives") and that authors themselves were inclined to pay less attention to accidentals than to substantives in marking copy for revised editions. He concluded that an editor would best approximate an author's finally intended text by adopting as "copy-text" the text closest to the author's manuscript (which would be likely to preserve more of the accidentals of the manuscript than a text farther removed from it) and by emending that copy-text with any later variants (particularly substantives) judged to be authorial, as well as with the editor's own corrections. Although Greg's copy-text is a text to be followed at any point where an editor finds no basis for choice among the variant readings and has no other reading to substitute, it is very different in concept

from the "best text" of Greg's predecessors. A copy-text is a text to fall back on when all else fails, in a system that encourages the use of judgment; a best text is a text to accept for the most part unquestioningly, in a system that restricts the use of judgment. Greg placed critical judgment in as central a position as it had held in the days of Bentley, but he defined more rigorously its operation in historical scholarship.

III

The period since Greg—the second half of the twentieth century—marks a departure in the evolution of editorial thinking. In previous periods, debates over editorial principles and procedures—and there has never been a shortage of such debates—were concerned with how best to accomplish an agreed-on goal, the establishment of texts as finally intended by their authors. If other goals—focusing on works as social, not individual, products—were sometimes considered, it was assumed that diplomatic transcriptions or facsimile reproductions, presenting the texts that were received by readers, would serve the purpose. For post-Gregian textual theorists, however, the goal of critical editing is not a foregone conclusion. To analyze the causes of this shift would be to assess the reasons for the emergence, during the same years, of such critical movements as structuralism and poststructuralism, of literary sociology and the new historicism. Although literary critics and textual critics have for the most part worked independently, their approaches have inevitably reflected the shifting concerns of the larger intellectual community; it is not surprising, therefore, in a time of challenge to the idea of language as individual communication and to the emphasis on canonical figures, that the concept of the authorially intended text would also come under attack.

The conceivable historical goals of textual reconstruction can be thought of as forming two clusters, with the focus in one on the versions of works (or parts of works) that have been envisaged by their authors and in the other on the texts that have been presented to the public (or intended for such presentation by persons other than the authors). The range of goals, in other words, runs from those that assume works to be the products of single individuals to those that assume works to be the collaborative products of a number of people. This spectrum is not a simple chronological sequence of the successive stages in the life history of a work, for an author's revised version might be relatively late in that sequence and a first published edition relatively early. An editor's choice among these goals does, it is true, amount to deciding which

historical moment in the life of a work is to be reconstructed, but that decision reflects an underlying view of the nature of the production of verbal works. Indeed, all works in all media, all human artifacts, may be viewed either as the products of individual creators or as the results of the collaborative effort of all the persons required to bring them to the attention of the public. The choice between these points of view is a basic decision that all editors must make, and the reconstructed texts that result are likely to be considerably different depending on which view is taken. Both approaches are obviously valid, for the study of the past legitimately encompasses both the activity of individual minds and the results of group action. Over much of the past, editors chose to focus on the individual creator almost without realizing that a choice was being made, but as a result of the theoretical discussions of the late twentieth century, these choices will henceforth have to be made in a more deliberate and reasoned way.

What was being questioned in these discussions, at least initially, was not so much whether authorial intention was the proper goal of critical editing as how intention relates to expectation and how to choose among successive intentions. The impulse for dealing with these issues at this particular time was furnished by the extension of Greg's rationale to post-Renaissance literature. Under Fredson Bowers's leadership, Greg's approach was applied to Restoration drama, eighteenth-century English fiction, and nineteenth-century American fiction, and it became the official policy of the CEAA—later the Center for, and now the Committee on, Scholarly Editions (CSE)—of the Modern Language Association of America. Clearly Greg's general guidelines (the reliance on judgment, along with the use of a copy-text as a presumptive authority for otherwise insoluble cruxes, particularly in accidentals) are applicable to any period; but controversy arose over the precise details of how to apply his rationale to situations where authors' manuscripts as well as printed editions survive—as they do with increasing frequency in successive centuries. Greg's own concern was with Renaissance drama, for which there is very little manuscript material—hence his general rule to select as copy-text the printed edition closest in line of descent to the missing final manuscript. Bowers reasoned that, if a fair-copy manuscript does survive, Greg would have urged its use as copy-text in preference to the first edition set from it, except in cases where there is cause to believe that the author treated the printer's proofs as another manuscript stage and revised them heavily. Others objected to the institutionalization by the CEAA of this interpretation of Greg, arguing that a first edition is often a better choice than a manuscript because authors frequently expected publishers to take care of certain details of their writing and did

not wish to see all the details of their manuscripts appear in print. The debate, though ostensibly about the merits of Greg's rationale, was really concerned with the extent to which an author's intention can be usefully thought to incorporate what the author expected others to do—and thus ultimately with whether a work is to be conceived of as a collaboration between the author and others.

This issue would in due course have become a pressing question for editors whether or not Greg had formulated his rationale of copy-text, as more textual attention came to be paid to works of recent centuries. For most of the history of textual criticism, the works dealt with came from the ancient world, and the surviving texts of those works, even if numerous, were generally found in documents that postdated the times of the authors by considerable periods. Under these circumstances, there was no practical necessity for refining the definition of authorial intention: it was enough to say that one's recension and emendations in each case moved in the direction of reconstructing the text intended by the author. Not that the questions taken up more recently were irrelevant: obviously the goal of eliminating scribal "corruptions" implies a focus on works as products of single individuals, and some of the variant readings may reflect different authorial versions rather than scribal alterations or errors. But it is understandable, given the distance of the manuscripts from the authors, that these matters were not much considered. For medieval and Renaissance works the situation is not markedly different, even though the surviving manuscripts and printed editions are more likely to be contemporaneous with the authors, because little holograph manuscript material has survived. For works of the last three centuries, however, authors' manuscripts are much more common, and for some nineteenth- and twentieth-century writers there is a wealth of material documenting nearly every step of the composition process. The late twentieth century has been unprecedented in the amount of editorial endeavor directed to authors of the immediate past, and this activity has naturally given urgency to the double question of whether to choose a private or a public document as copy-text and whether to select an early, intermediate, or late version as the form of a work to reconstruct.

Greg's emphasis was on the "final intention" of authors, but he recognized that there are instances where versions are so distinct that they have to be edited separately. To him these situations seemed rare exceptions, but some critics since then (European theorists such as Hans Zeller and a group of Shakespearean scholars represented in Gary Taylor and Michael Warren's anthology *The Division of the Kingdoms*, for example) have been more ready to see variants as evidence of authorial revision and have cautioned against mixing versions by combining readings from

different documents. They have produced a new wave of criticism of eclecticism, but arguments like this do not always avoid the fallacy of confusing versions of works with texts of documents. There is reason to be interested in the text of any individual document, but editors of critical editions aim to go beyond documents, to works or versions of works. The works, or versions, are what they try to reconstruct, not what they find in documents. An eclectic process, drawing readings from different documents, can serve the goal of reconstructing an early or intermediate version just as well as a "final" version. There is no question, however, that intentions shift as a work develops and that insufficient attention had previously been paid to intentions other than final intention. Some editors of the genetic school now make the point that a work encompasses all its authorial versions and that all of them should be read in order to experience a work fully. But when these editors proceed to say, as they often do, that this approach places a special emphasis on the apparatus, they can be referring only to the form of the apparatus, not to its content, for a scholarly edition is in any case obligated to present a record of variant readings, which are—under any historical approach—indispensable to a serious reading of the text. Furthermore, one must remember that the presence of a thorough record of variants (even in editions that seem to stress such records, as in some of those called "variorum" in the past or in electronic "hypertext" editions) does not eliminate the need to decide whether a critical text (or more than one) should be prepared. The usefulness of critical reconstructions of intended versions is not lessened by the accessibility of documentary variants. Since versions cannot be equated with the texts of documents, the critical task of judging which groups of variants create discrete versions of works and which documentary readings require editorial correction is central to the study of textual genesis.

These various challenges to the dominance of final intention still assume that authorial intention of some sort is the goal of critical editing. In a second phase of the post-Greg discussions, however, the supremacy of that goal was questioned, and a link between the two clusters of opinion is provided by the issue of authorial acquiescence or expectation. If, for instance, there is evidence that an author expurgated a work at the request (or expected request) of the publisher, or else expected the publisher to make such changes and then professed satisfaction with the published result, the question whether the expurgations should be accepted would be answered differently by editors of these two orientations. Those who limit authorial intention to uninfluenced intention would reject the expurgations as the product of duress, not of the author's artistic judgment; those who consider intention to include expectation and the results of outside influence would accept the expurgations

because the author did. It is a short step from the second concept of the author's wishes to the view that they form only one of several factors to be taken into account by editors. Donald Pizer, for instance, makes a case for preferring to read some works in the texts that were originally published and that have since "accrued a rich public responsiveness and role" (160), even if those texts incorporate authorial "self-censorship." The most vocal proponent of this general viewpoint in the 1980s was Jerome J. McGann, who considers that works do not exist apart from the conditions shaping their public texts and that attempts to reconstruct texts reflecting uninfluenced authorial intention are therefore misguided. In the previous decade Morse Peckham had similarly criticized what he regarded as the "hagiolatry" of the author and had maintained that the author is only one of a succession of people (including scholarly editors) who are responsible for the constitution of utterances. D. F. McKenzie has also been an influential spokesman for the social view of literature; his "sociology of the text" emphasizes typography, format, and other physical characteristics of the presentation of texts, which he sees not only as part of the social context of a work but also often as part of what the author intended.

The discussion generated in the 1970s and 1980s by the advocates of such approaches to textual study has served a valuable function in drawing attention to a wider range of goals than has traditionally been considered for critical editing. What it has not accomplished, however, is to analyze whether critical editions have advantages over facsimile editions in making readily available the text (and many of the other physical details) present in the manuscripts and printed books that have conveyed particular texts to the public in the past. Facsimile editions have long been recognized to serve this purpose, and one reason that critical editions have been associated with authorially intended texts is the assumption that those wishing to read the texts produced by the publication process would be better served by facsimile editions. It is true, of course, that what was published is not necessarily in every respect what the publisher (or printer or scribe) intended, and one could construct critical texts that more nearly fulfill those intentions. This option should be kept in mind, but it may not generally seem to produce texts of as much practical usefulness as those that show what was actually available to the reading public. In any case, clear thinking about editorial goals requires that all these alternatives be weighed. Each focuses on the past in a different way, and the editing of a work according to one goal does not preclude the production of other editions of the work according to other goals.

A consideration of the various approaches that can be taken to editing makes clear its place as a critical activity and its inseparability from

literary criticism. Although the traditional term for the evaluation of the makeup of texts, "textual criticism," suggests the fundamental role of judgment, readers and critics in modern times have predominantly regarded textual criticism (and the editing that emerges from it) as a relatively objective and mechanical activity anticipatory to literary criticism. The inseparability of editing and literary criticism has been more evident in recent debates, but there is not as yet any widespread recognition of textual criticism as a part of the process of reading. The many critics who speak of works as "texts" are displaying their lack of understanding of the distinction that makes textual criticism and editing necessary. Yet the necessity of questioning the constitution of the texts of documents is sensed, at some level, by all thoughtful people. The antiquity of textual criticism and the prominent position it once held in humanistic scholarship are testimony to the elemental fascination exerted by the mystery of how verbal messages are passed across time. And the ubiquity of editorial controversy, with the resulting proliferation of editorial theories, indicates the complexity of the phenomenon of intangible works being perpetuated by physical means. The questions this phenomenon raises will never be answered with finality and will forever be debated. As we create still more variations on previous varieties of editing, we take our places in an unending chain, extending back across the centuries and into the foreseeable future, made up of individuals who struggle to solve the enigmas of textual transmission.

Further Reading

Two useful concise accounts of the history, rationale, and methods of textual criticism are provided by E. J. Kenney in the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica* and by D. C. Greetham in the 1991 edition of the MLA's *Introduction to Scholarship*; Greetham covers this ground at greater length in his *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction* (295–346). Admirable fuller treatments of the classical and biblical fields, which have been the main concern of textual criticism for most of its long history, are Kenney's *The Classical Text*, L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson's *Scribes and Scholars*, and Bruce M. Metzger's *The Text of the New Testament*; a good manual of procedure is Martin L. West's *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique Applicable to Greek and Latin Texts*. A succinct history of editorial approaches to medieval works appears in Alfred Foulet and Mary Blakely Speer's *On Editing Old French Texts*, and more extensive coverage is provided by Paul G. Ruggiers's anthology *Editing Chaucer*. In a 1983 essay in *Studies in Bibliography* I offer a critical survey of these

traditions and relate them to the editing of postmedieval writings, and in *Textual Criticism since Greg* (supplemented by a 1991 essay in *Studies in Bibliography*) I examine in more detail the various approaches to editing modern literature that have been debated since 1950. The earlier treatment of modern literature has been looked into by Thomas R. Lounsbury and by R. B. McKerrow ("Treatment"), focusing on Shakespeare, and by Donald H. Reiman, focusing on the nineteenth century; a landmark in this area is Samuel Johnson's 1765 preface to his edition of Shakespeare. A basic sampling of the classic twentieth-century contributions to textual criticism would include writings by Housman (1903, 1922), Bédier (1913, 1928), Kantorowicz (1921), Quentin (1922), Maas (1927), McKerrow (1939), Greg (1942, 1950–51), Pasquali (1952), Bieler (1956), Timpanaro (1963), and Bowers (1964, 1972, 1978). Some of the prominent participants in the recent discussions have been Dearing, Foley (on oral transmission), Gaskell, Greetham, Kane, McGann, McKenzie, McLaverty, Parker, Peckham, Reiman, Shillingsburg, Stillinger, Thorpe, and Zeller. The general approach of the accompanying essay is derived from my *A Rationale of Textual Criticism*.

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