

THESE POST-PHILOLOGICAL DAYS...

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When I agreed in 2000 to review D.C. Greetham's book *Theories of the Text* for the journal of the Society for Textual Scholarship, *TEXT*, I knew I was in for a ride. Oxford University Press had published it the previous year. It is a massive tome that, I anticipated, would be the distillation of a couple of decades of close reading and high-flying critique. In this, I was not disappointed. The reviewing crystallised for me as a fact that we had reached a decisive turning point in the discipline. Like others, I had had inklings of this change for some years. Now I found the confidence to state it. The review-article, in the form that it appeared in *TEXT* in 2003 (vol. 13) follows. The Postscript, written late in 2005, is a reflection on what has happened since.

I

This book is surely the last word in the editorial-theory movement of the 1980s and 1990s. In its own way, it is a triumph. David Greetham has both painstakingly and brilliantly combed through most of the modernist and postmodernist theoretical positions for their possible relevance to textual criticism, editing theory and scholarly editing. Greetham is tolerant of what he finds, and is prepared to entertain the at-first unlikely parallel in an effort to prove, in a more philosophically wide-ranging way than has ever been done before, that no editorial operation or prac-

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tice is philosophically innocent, that the most natural-seeming editorial conclusion will have been naturalised in advance by its ideological, social or historical contexts. If this is the textual condition, then all textual practices need to be looked at through the lens of all other textual theories. It behoves editors (who claim to specialise in certain kinds of operation with text) to do so. This is what Greetham's book is about and what it comprehensively does.

The skilful intellectual gymnastics that lead to his conclusion, and the sometimes highly parenthetical syntax that embody it, leave the reader breathless at first: this is a text-critic's Wayne's World where crazy things happen, but then gradually impose their own kind of sense. The various theoretical positions are wheeled on-stage, rapidly disassembled and inspected, and then diagnosed to see if they can help resuscitate the ailing body of philology by understanding it anew. In one sense, the book is a lazy person's guide to the various inflections of post-structuralist theory, and their relevance to editing¹; but the lazy person had better get ready to do some work. There is a close, hand-to-hand tussle with ideas going on throughout. One goes round-for-round with Greetham as he pokes and prods the particular theory; one identifies with the fighter-inquirer now, with his opponent next; one is relieved when it is all over, glad one has gone there, but left feeling that *this* job need never be done again.

Greetham does not, I found, in all of this, push his conclusions too hard. He is content to exercise his curiosity, pursue the analysis (which he does with enviable agility, time and again), all the while indulging a *penchant* for irony, paradox and the fine distinction; and then to withdraw – for, after all, the *next* theory might just do the trick. And so the ailing body is turned over, and inspected anew from the other side. There is a constant danger in all of this of clog, of intellectual claustrophobia; but then, in each of the early chapters, a sense of release and shaped ordering materialises as polarised positions attract into their orbits all the ideas that have been rehearsed or appropriated. There is a danger of unfairness in this procedure (some writers will find themselves with strange bedfellows), but the approach has its rewards and satisfactions for the reader.

Many readers have doubtless felt called to start this work, but few (I suspect) have chosen to finish it. If so, this is understandable. The text is so frequently suspended in quotation that at times it feels as if it has a

¹ *Hint*: a good way in (and a possible route for a graduate course) would be to read chapters 2, 5 and 9. And a second hint (to the publisher) would be to get this title into paperback as soon as possible, as it deserves to be more widely accessible.

cast of thousands – whose credits erupt from the text in the hectic pimpling of MLA-style parenthetical citations. The author's tireless encyclopaedism makes the book both a chore and a liberation to read: I took my copy around the world twice, scarcely opening it. It is not bedtime reading: I should have known better. I have dropped it many times, finally in a backpack containing a good bottle of Hunter Valley semillon (I was taking both to a discussion group), which fell to the ground. The bottle smashed, and now my copy is an enriched bibliographic object – of whose manufacture Oxford can be proud. Well-made hardbacks, I have rediscovered, are durable².

But my understanding of it has also been enriched, in another sense, by the delay. It is clear to me now that the project that this work embodies (of which I had heard and read portions over the last dozen years or so), ought to be seen as an expression of the 1990s from which we can learn but must move on. I doubt that its author would disagree with either of these sentiments. *How* to move on, is the question. Here he is less helpful.

The rest of this review-essay critically examines some of Greetham's arguments with a view to offering the beginnings of an answer. It is undergirded by my belief that the moment of editorial theory (as we learned to call it in the 1980s) is over. I am not certain that we *are* securely in «post-philological days» (p. 441), even though literary theorists tell their students this with great confidence. Indeed, I suspect that the ailing body has been needlessly medicalised and the death certificate prematurely signed. Greetham's reading of the entrails conjures up a fate for editing and textual criticism, as yet unknown, but taking place within the context of an already achieved post-structuralist victory of 'literature' (taken in its widest, hermeneutic sense) over positivist 'science' – only that many editors have not recognised the victory yet³. My haruspicy, as we shall see, points in another direction; it offers a different reading of the vital signs: but of course, in doing so, it rests upon Greetham's formidable mastery of modernist and postmodernist theory, now so compactly and usefully available.

² Oxford (and the author) can also be proud of the fact that, in so densely argued a work, there are relatively few typos; but a small outbreak occurs in chapter 9, for some unknown reason.

³ Greetham quotes Clifford Geertz's famous statement of this in «Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture» (1973): «Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance that he has himself spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of a law but an interpretive one in search of meaning» (qtd p. 419).

Theories of the Text is a large book in every sense. Its chapters cut up the intellectual territory of text into sizeable and important dioceses: «Ontology: Being in the Text», «The History of the Text», «The Forms of the Text: Formalism, Modernism and Beyond», «Intention in the Text», «The Phenomenology and Reading of the Text», «The Psychoanalysis of Texts», «Structure and Sign in the Text: Structuralism and Semiotics», «The Deconstruction of the Text», «Society and Culture in the Text» and «Gender in the Text». Each diocese has its resident bishops, and to nearly every one Greetham does due obeisance, succinctly explaining their doctrines, before showing himself to be an independent and often heretical thinker.

«The History of the Text» is a *tour de force* of synthesis and analysis that surveys a nearly bewildering array of positions on the relations of texts and history taken by literary theorists, *histoire du livre* practitioners, editorial theorists, stylometricians and palaeographers. The survey gradually takes shape, however, and an argument emerges that marshals the various positions into one of two camps. The argument is ingenious and far-sighted; and it finds parallels where one would least expect them: for example, between Michel Foucault's idea of disruptions in discourse and Jerome J. McGann's idea that new, bibliographic embodiments of unchanged texts can represent new works for their successive readerships. And he shows that both McGann and Roger Chartier (who often writes against Foucault or to correct Foucault) are more Foucauldian in their thinking than perhaps either would care to admit. Greetham looks then for scholars of an opposite ilk who can be secured for the other corner (Paul Kristeller and James Hankins are so cast). Anyone maintaining a foot in both camps finds one being gently lifted. All this is done in good, inquiring intellectual spirit; it retrieves a clarity out of the desperate over-production of literary-theoretical books and articles of recent years; but it is tendentious and will have a confrontational quality for some readers.

It works, as a proceeding, because of the abstract level that Greetham's (valiant) reading in post-structuralism has allowed him to strike and in terms of which the polarisation makes intellectual sense. Relevance to the practical and workaday empirical level is not always obvious, and often in this volume the two are not serving to correct or qualify one another. This question of levels is my principal stumbling block in accepting the potentially profound implications of Greetham's central argument that editing must be reimagined in terms of those theoretical movements of the last twenty years especially, with the implication (one assumes) that editing be

methodologically reshaped in the light of the new understanding. Greetham himself does not pursue this implication: his book is a very extended commentary on the underexamined relations of editorial and literary theory, not a latter-day rationale of copy-text.

II

Greetham summarises the dilemma for philology thus:

The crisis for philology occurred when the tripartite foundations of its brand of historicism were challenged. The first pillar of the foundation was language, and a language arranged on diachronic terms, unlike Saussure's synchronic system. The second pillar was the critical medium, the concept of 'otherness', or the historical gap rejected by formalism in general and New Criticism in particular and then emptied of its power by the post-structuralist dictum that all writing (*écriture*) is 'always already written' and thus only a weaving of intertextual associations. This rejection denied any place for the individual, historical, authorial consciousness. And the third pillar was editorial method – the eclectic *divinatio* of the Lachmann programme, whereby the editor 'divines' the truth of a reading by a self-identification with the author across history, a method and belief called into question by the relativism, fragmentalism, and revisionism of much recent textual practice as well as by the concentration on the social rather than personal negotiation of text (pp. 78-9).

There are many implications to be drawn from this excellent summary, and Greetham does not fail us. He portrays Lachmannian stemmatics as operating in an unscrutinised diachronic, cause-and-effect mode, organised conceptually around the singularity of the work, the linearity of text, and the purity or corruption of readings. Greetham links this account to Sir Walter Greg's hope that analytical bibliography could rule out the study of meaning and concentrate instead (positivistically) on ink and paper, on the bibliographic object. If, on the other hand, the postmodern view of history is correct, then this 'scientific'-philological mode is deluded since there can be no event unchanged by the manner of looking at it, and no archival fact that is not narrativised by the historian in the act of citing it. As historians we are always locked in (Foucauldian) discourse: our subject matter is never securely objective and apart from ourselves. The dilemma therefore for those scholars editing texts from the past is that the pursuit is never innocent: editing is not an act of mediation, as we had perhaps believed, but one of transgression, of speaking for the dead.

The untenable pretence of objectivity is exposed, Greetham points

out, whenever an editor modernises old spellings and supplies punctuation: modernisation is ephemeral, as it ties the text to the period of the editor's contemporary audience. Equally, whenever editors – needing to justify a particular emendation – appeal to the 'facts' of history, they are deluding themselves. Their complicity is all the more obvious in annotation, which is clearly aimed at a present-day readership: the historical otherness of the text is not respected when it is spoken *for*. Editions, Greetham states, are «what the speech act theorists would call a parasitic, non-felicitous utterance, because it is never the thing itself» (p. 90). At best, editors are ventriloquists.

Here we begin to see the limitations of the polarising field-day Greetham is having: he arranges positions always insightfully at the level of abstraction he strikes; but, in so doing, he skirts other questions that editors would dearly like answered. Assuming that Greetham is right that these *are* post-philological days and that the above series of arguments fall nicely into place, what defensible methodology could (or should) editors adopt in their practice? If the assumed alterity-gap between editor and work is ultimately a mirage, then what is one to conclude? Don't edit? Leave readers to sort out as best they can the confusing typography, orthography and blunders of printed seventeenth-century playscripts? Let them struggle with late nineteenth-century allusions to contemporary events that are long forgotten and with slang that has fallen into disuse? Indeed, don't even produce facsimile editions since they, as bibliographic objects, could at best be misleading simulacra of counterparts from a lost past.

So Greetham is content, for instance, to pursue the dichotomy between the work being treated as a product of a «great, individual author as motivating consciousness» as against its being seen as a «cultural artefact» (p. 118), and thus (after Roland Barthes) to entertain Margreta de Grazia's distinction of the «author-produced "work" as against socially produced "text"» (p. 119). Yet he acknowledges that the New Historicists still gather around the carcasses of the great authors whose ideas they have supposedly translated into social circulation, and he has some damaging things to say about McGann's understanding of *his* (related) project too.

At first, though, McGann's approach to textuality seems to exempt him from any idealising appeal of the Bowers-Tanselle kind. For McGann «the ontology of the text [...] resides only in the materiality of its documentation and social manifestation [...] the "physical" is not "alien" to a message but its "only condition"»; and literary works, according to

McGann, «can be “known” only in the material» (p. 381). This is a response to the Marxist view whereby the material base and contradictions in its workings (which are objectively knowable) explain the existence of consciousness, to which there is no objective access. The paradox of Marx’s view, however, is that the so-called base (books, archival documents etc.) has been produced by the workings of consciousness – «by these very “authors” that are supposedly beyond such objective recall» (p. 381). The new historicist Louis Montrose’s well-known dictum acknowledged the problem: «the historicity of texts, and the textuality of histories» are inextricable (qtd p. 381). McGann’s argument seems to resolve the paradox by its concentration on the physical base. «But this pure phenomenology» of McGann’s, Greetham comments, «is difficult to keep pure» – as McGann’s concept of «bibliographic codes» implicitly admits. Once introduce semiotics (as a study of codes and signs, whether Saussurean or Peircean, whether synchronic or diachronic), once admit that «materiality does have [...] meaning, [then] if it is interpretable [...] it is interpretable by *someone*» (p. 382). If that someone is a historical addressee, then the alterity gap is reintroduced, one that is no larger than if one were dealing with an intending author. And so we revert to a legitimation, if not exactly a defence, of intentionalist editing.

The introduction of the historical someone was the basis of my objection, in an essay in *The Editorial Gaze*, to Jacques Derrida’s rejection of J.L. Austin’s speech-act theory⁴. Austin gave priority to spoken communication, where the intending speaker was necessarily present and therefore part of its controlling contexts. Shifting the centre of the discussion to written messages, Derrida pointed out that for the message to be iterable, it has to be able, as he says, «to function in the radical absence of every empirically determined addressee in general» and even if the author is absent or dead⁵. This is a structuralist point: the linguistic system (once one accepts it as a reality) works systematically. So Derrida rejects Austin’s claim that there can be determinable contexts of (written) communication since intention cannot be «totally present and actually transparent for itself and others»⁶: and of course, as editors who labour

⁴ Paul Eggert, «Social Discourse or Authorial Agency?: Bridging the Divide between Editing and Theory», in *The Editorial Gaze*, eds. Paul Eggert and Margaret Sankey, New York, Garland, 1998, pp. 97–116.

⁵ Jacques Derrida, «Signature Event Context», qtd in Eggert, «Social Discourse», p. 109.

⁶ Qtd in Eggert, «Social Discourse», p. 110.

over this problem know to their cost, especially not when the author is long dead.

Greetham's division of the kingdom of textuality (structuralist, historical, phenomenological etc.) helps one to clarify things here. The latter two bishoprics get shouldered aside in Derrida's argument. That is the problem. He has given us the limiting case; but its opposite (knowing the intention perfectly, in history or phenomenologically) is the counsel of perfection. So Derrida's argument has no application in editorial practice. Elsewhere Derrida (in his concept of *historia*) wonders «whether, when one is concerned with history [...] a strict structuralism is possible, and, especially, whether [...] such a study can avoid all etiological questions». He is commenting here on Foucault's mode of history-writing; he asks whether the «legitimate renunciation of a certain style of causality perhaps does not give one the right to renounce all etiological demands»⁷.

The demands that the bibliographic study of documents opens up prevent one from accepting explanation at the level of Foucauldian discourse (for it can never be fine-grained enough to yield the needed answer) or from accepting a purely structuralist explanation. Whenever a study of the workings of textuality neglects the existence of the carrying documents a partial and therefore misleading explanation is the inevitable result. The continuing role of bibliography is to ask the curious (even if unwelcome) questions that the physical embodiments of text beg: Who made them? Who changed them? Why? Under what conditions? Even if history-writing is shifted from examining the workings of individuals to those of discourse, we still need to be able to shed light on the repressions and blindnesses that this methodological move (like all methodological moves) will have enforced. All of Greetham's bishoprics have their textual mission; all have their benighted heathens to convert; but so too, in the other direction, does bibliography.

Leading up to the summary quoted above, Greetham considers the ways in which that most positivistic of pursuits, palaeography, can be seen as «irremediably textualised»: «the physical stasis of the document [can be] perceived as a “sigil” of the history that it helps to make» and thus subject to the common fate of philology (p. 77). Well, yes, it *can* be so seen; but acquiescing in this conversion assumes that nothing slips from sight in so doing; and taking the document as «always already written» vaporises the alterity that (from a philological point of view) may

⁷ Jacques Derrida, «Cogito and the History of Madness», qtd in Eggert, «Social Discourse», pp. 115-6.

be perceivable in it. Conflating an abstract principle of textuality with empirical procedures and focussed questions may shed light on their underlying assumptions (and in a sense Greetham's whole book is about this); but it is a methodological mismatch. Put more generally, my point here is that authorship is not *only* a discourse.

III

Chapter 5 on phenomenology is a fine one; it follows a chapter on intention. The two go together nicely. What gradually emerges (again with an achieved clarity) is a polarity in editorial theory between appeal to Husserl's intentional object on the one hand (E.D. Hirsch, and thus Tanselle and all other author-intentionalists) and to Heidegger's hermeneutics on the other (McGann and other historicists). Can we rightly assume a «permanent ontology» for the work existing beyond its varying manifestations (Husserl)? Or was Heidegger right in claiming that the «productive appropriation» of the past is not literally possible because «the most elementary conditions» are lacking: leaving us only to reconstruct it fictively, hermeneutically (qtd p. 208)? If the latter, then the editor is reduced to an archivist: «the provisioner for the phenomenological voyage of perception to be undertaken by the many and sundry travellers in text» (p. 244).

Is the former position defensible? Greetham argues that eclectic editors' appeal to the categories of transcriptional error or inconsistency as a justification for emending the text is not phenomenologically different from the aesthetic editor's returning the flawed text to the ideal condition in which (according to the editor's taste) it should have been (e.g. Bentley's Milton): both appeal to an ideal ontological state. The hermeneutic approach on the other hand gestures towards historic forms of the texts and their audiences. For Greetham, editing always gravitates between appeals to one form of phenomenology or the other: he refers to «[his] insistence on *both* transcendental [i.e. Husserlian-Kantian] and hermeneutic [Heideggerian] components in textual criticism [...] Phenomenology is [...] an eminently *useful* device for me, since it can either refer back to intention or forward to reception, or emphasize their natural complicities» (p. 213). But, if this is a sufficient explanation, then any reading is as good as any other, and editorial appeals to a standard (to justify the preference of one over another) are exposed as merely rhetorical. For example, eclectic editors typically look through the supposed deficiencies of the manuscript witnesses to divine an au-

thorial intention (and thus generate or amplify their sense of the author). But they then use that understanding as a supposedly external authority to adjudicate between competing readings of the witnesses. As Foucault remarks, «to adopt the voice of power is to speak beyond oneself, to ascribe one's powers elsewhere» (qtd p. 211): so, for Gary Taylor, editing is a rhetorical form of ventriloquism.

Gretham's polarising overview here is operating from a highly positioned level of generality (phenomenology). There is clarity here, but also (again) a potential mismatch since this is not the level on which editors are carrying out their operations with text. Although eclectic editors will be subscribing, probably without realising it, to a Husserlian phenomenology⁸, many will see themselves as working within one of Stanley Fish's gradually mutating interpretive communities. For them, the alleged circularity involved in adjudging emendations, mentioned above, is defensible as an attempt to bridge the gap between idea and performance. This is a more practical question – and the evidence messier – than the self-presence of the ideal object (the work) to the subject (the editor or reader)⁹.

Pressing this objection a little further, I fail to see why editorial practice cannot be other-*directed* without taking on the heavy, Husserlian baggage, and why it cannot be self-consciously aware that its operations are necessarily contextualised by the present. If that is our best access to a lost past; if editing is inevitably a belated, non-transcending activity; if critical editions must unavoidably (for now) be seen as a grandly ambitious, intricately organised act of postmodern quotation; if there is no stoutly defensible philosophical grounding for editing available but instead only more or less persuasive practices, then that is the case and we must get used to it – especially if now (as I suspect) the moment of editorial theory is over. This is a better dispensation than doing nothing at all. Many readers will be grateful for such editing, given that, as Gretham observes, «the originary moment of composition still holds its lure» (p. 238). Authorship, as a psychic unity and a singular voice, may be discredited; but authorial agency will in many cases still repay being distinguished from the 'cacophony' of voices that McGann's approach licenses editors to leave unresolved: what Foucault calls anonymous discourse (p. 197). New editorial practices emerged in the general loosen-

⁸ This is one clarifying point of Gretham's overview, and one that I also have discussed in «The Work Unravelling», *TEXT*, 11 (1998), pp. 41-60 [pp. 45-6].

⁹ For the lack of strict parallel between Husserl's intentional object and the quarry of the eclectic editor, see *ivi*, p. 46, n. 14.

ing-up and fresh air that the 1980s and 90s response to post-structuralist thinking brought to editorial debates. This has been a good thing. What we need now, I believe, are the practical responses: the reports from the editorial trenches, including the results of «versioning becom[ing] the dominant textual ideology» (p. 216). To look at things this way is to imagine an editorial future as being lived out somewhere between the icy poles of the phenomenological hemisphere that Greetham maps. Theory is far too important to be left to the theorists: the practitioners should have their say too.

IV

That loosening-up in the 1980s and 90s was needed. As Greetham points out in chapter 9, «Society and Culture in the Text», eclectic editing had become, in Louis Althusser's sense of *ideology*, «a cognitive system of representation, whereby the subject [...] freely internalized an appropriate "picture" of the phenomenological and cultural world»: it was an «internalized ideology», a product of editors' and readers' socialisation which saw it as more or less scientific and therefore outside history (p. 369). Editors working in universities who still resist this conclusion need only look around them. Although the study today of physics and chemistry is in a sadly depleted state, the 1960s were their glory days. The prestige rubbed off, and analytical bibliography flourished; its fate today parallels that of the hard sciences.

As a disciplined pursuit, bibliography needed an object of inquiry: the intentional object was the almost inevitable quarry. As Greetham points out, neither James Thorpe nor Philip Gaskell called for «a change in the *ideology* of Greg-Bowers intentionalism, only [for] a practical modification in how this intentionalism may best be [made] manifest» (p. 403). Equally, the newer, social textual-criticism of McGann and D.F. McKenzie, and the calls for versionist editing, reflected a social shift and will in due course be exposed as ideological, even though they seem natural to many people at the moment. Variance of every kind became the new orthodoxy in the 1990s; there was a scramble to be proven to be – socially, ethnically, sexually – on the margins; and in this situation, «clear-text pages [began to] smack of old-fashioned privilege and authority» (p. 374). It is a surely a (slightly belated) sign of the times that the *New Yorker* of 13 May 2002 was prepared to run (i.e. felt there was an audience for) a long article on variant readings in editions of *Hamlet*, drawing attention to the problems of eclectic editing and pondering the cultural

significance of the new, three-text Arden *Hamlet*¹⁰. Nobody is left holding the intentionalist banner, it seems, except G. Thomas Tanselle; and, in his compendious, five-yearly surveys of textual criticism and editorial theory in *Studies in Bibliography*, even he must attempt, as Greetham observes, «to de-historicize and de-socialize his own approach by an ever-expansive “accommodation” [of McGann, McKenzie etc.] » (p. 402).

The relationship between physical document and mentalised meanings will, I believe, remain at the centre of bibliographical pursuit. If there is to be, as Greetham prophesies, «a resurgent hermeneutic bibliography» (p. 422), it will not be one whose interest in the material condition of text has been reduced to the gestural or rhetorical. It will be one that retains this focus and that nurtures its capacity to ask the niggling question, to undeceive (say) the postmodern consensus. So McKenzie's attempt to broaden the boundaries of bibliography by challenging us to think of, not just maps as texts, but also (in Aboriginal cultures) the Australian land itself, is something that Greetham welcomes and that he can readily accommodate: «the intervention of textualization on any phenomenon, natural or otherwise, presupposes a social matrix in which that intervention has cultural meaning [...] all texts are socially constructed» (p. 418).

I wanted to believe McKenzie's account of the land in his otherwise inspiring work, even though I felt uneasy when I first read it¹¹. Now I realise why he was wrong. One of the enduring laments of post-white-settlement Australian literature is that the land is not readable, except as a site of alienation and existential suffering. It is not a *document* to its inhabitants of European extraction: they lack the key. Neither McKenzie nor I has any idea of how to see that land as documentary: the jump to see it as *text* is therefore (for us) an illegitimate pretence. Both McKenzie (and Greetham after him) run physical document and text together here. This points to a general problem: all too often one finds the passive voice of post-structuralist explanation («[...] are socially constructed») deserting the active voice of bibliography: the question of agency that the latter so minutely asks – the whodunnit question.

There is, I believe, a lesson here, one I have tried to expand on elsewhere in these pages by adapting Theodor Adorno's concept of the negative dialectic. The dimensions of text and document can be seen to con-

¹⁰ Ron Rosenbaum, «Shakespeare in Rewrite», pp. 68-77.

¹¹ *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, London, British Library, 1986.

stitute one another negatively: that is to say, they require one another to exist (physical matter is not a document if it is not potentially readable; mentalised text requires a document of some kind – whether printed, a virtual screen-visualisation or only sound waves in an act of vocalisation – to come into existence); but they do not lead to a higher-level synthesis in Hegel's sense (the dialectic is negative). The concept of the work emerges here as a regulative idea, not a robust ontological category. It puts a boundary around – it helps us to make sense of – the endless encounter of text and document¹².

If such is the basis of the textual condition, then the editor (like every other reader) can never get outside of it: but equally the editor will have a participatory role in the life of the work. The editor is a reader with a trained eye, a lot of patience and a willingness to put in long hours. This, I believe, is the basis of the editor's authority to speak (as we normally say) *for* the work, about which Greetham feels anxious, given that editing functions nowadays within splintered, multicultural societies rather than in monocultural nation-states. The problem rises to the surface, as he points out, particularly in the framing of explanatory notes, which presupposes an audience with a shared knowledge. I suspect that such notes have always been hit-and-miss: but, if the editor thinks of herself as an expert 'participator' rather than 'scientist', she may well be more sensitive than I was in the 1980s (when writing notes for a novel in the Cambridge D.H. Lawrence series) to the fact that what made the difference between profit and loss for the Press, and success or disaster for the series, were the good sales in Japan. In any case, if she is a participant, she will be speaking, as it were, *in* the work (since it is only a regulative idea), rather than *for* it. Importantly also, there will be a historical otherness to negotiate; and the gulf there is just as wide and epistemologically treach-

¹² See further Eggert, «The Work Unravelling», pp. 54-8: «Seen as a regulative idea [the 'work'] retains its function as a pragmatic agreement for organising our remembered experiences of reading documents that are closely related bibliographically and for delimiting the range of documents being investigated for their relevance to an editing project. Seen in action the 'work' unravels, in every moment of its being, into a relationship between its documentary and textual dimensions. If it can, then, no longer be imagined as a historical object (as in Tanselle's 'intended text'), then the idealist position that seeks to secure its self-identity must be abandoned. The dynamic principle I have proposed is offered as an alternative that answers to the richly various lives of the work – the multiplicities of its forms and encodings amidst the swirl of distending contextualities – to which editorial commentators have been drawing attention in recent years» (p. 58). Greetham in fact has relatively little to say about the Frankfurt School, from which Adorno comes.

erous as any ethnic, racial or religious divide in the present. One cannot as an editor bridge them all; one does one's best. The result is practical, not ideal; useful and usable, not perfect.

The editor's main work is textual; it leaves a documentary testament. Editions (as documents) represent the work by extending its life. They make possible further textual encounters: there can be no definitive closure to a negative dialectic. Thus, I suggest, did the new respect, that came out of a resurgent editorial theory, for the variant and historical forms of a work and for the processes of revision rather than their product, begin to enter the anglophone editorial tradition in the 1980s and 90s. The renewed engagement between the contrasting Anglo-American and German camps in the 1990s can also be seen in this light.

v

Greetham's chapters on psychoanalysis and structuralism are interesting but did not yield (for me at least) as much as some others towards justifying the book's «fundamental rationale» of «critically testing the cognitive “usefulness” of new vocabularies» (p. 275). Still, there are some insights to savour or to confront. The Freudian slip or the subconscious intention (as opposed to the final intention) may be the closest we can get to the source of creativity that the eclectic edition, under a Romantic dispensation at least, professes to retrieve. Yet slips of all kinds tend to be emended by editors whether by appeal to the *langue* of the historical period or to the *parole* of the text itself. The latter's (synchronic) system of internal relations is akin to the structuralist principle upon which the Hans Zeller and Siegfried Scheibe conceptualised the postwar German historical-critical edition. Versions, in contrast, occupy the vertical axis of diachronic change. But since, in semiotics, signs have no direct relation to the object, editions must therefore be second-order signings, condemned only to *represent* the work rather than present it. Greetham's conclusion is a nice one, but it fails to engage with the longstanding distinction between allographic and autographic works, and it is really only another appeal to one of those levels of basic generality (even if in a 'new' vocabulary) that passes editorial practice by with scarcely a glancing blow.

Lawrence Rainey's view is cited that «a particular strength of historical textual criticism [...] [lies] in conceiving of texts as utterance, as event» (qtd p. 292). But to develop that, I believe, would require a deeper interest in the material dimension of text than Greetham is willing to entertain. He can and does deal with document as a sophisticated, tex-

tualised conceit; but post-structuralist explanation is not tolerant of document (taken as part of that negative dialectic, described above) because it so immediately begs diachronic and agented explanations.

The chapter on deconstruction is a *jeu d'esprit*. It is a Derridean *Supplément*: notes upon notes upon notes that are themselves a variorum-style gloss on an (absent) chapter that Oxford would not allow Greetham to reprint. The chapter that we have is supposed to enact a challenge to the (phal)logocentric supremacy of text over footnote, to the bar between text and gloss: to enact a rejection of the editorial square bracket no less. Heady stuff! Because I read it more or less linearly, I found it to be, rather, a chapter of clever bits and pieces; some were intriguing nevertheless.

The deconstructive method usually involves putting pressure on an author's metaphors, or calling down medieval tropes in order to challenge the consciously intended meaning, or (more grandly considered) to upset Enlightenment categories. So it is here. For instance, Greetham describes annotation as having to «pretend to have no genre [...] its rhetoric [...] must be determinedly anti-rhetorical»¹³. Thus annotation is a form of what Ralph Hanna calls «“guilty knowledge”, a “repression” of the fact that, taken together, these dismembered pieces of apparatus are *critical* interventions, and their dismemberment is a sign of the “fear” that the annotator will in fact become an interpreter, impose his being, in a double attack, on the reader and on the text» (ivi, pp. 346-7). This kind of portrait presupposes a strictly scientific understanding of the critical edition. But if negative dialectic be entertained as an apt description of the textual condition, the guilt loses all of its fizz: *of course*, the annotator (who is necessarily a traveller inside the continuing journey of the work over time through people's hands and minds) is an interpreter. What else *could* he be?

This book is, then, the survey we had to have, one that is very much of its period and of its author. Brilliant, restless, endlessly curious, it is the last word for the editorial theory of the 1990s. The book reflects the until-recently prevailing spirit of inclusiveness and acceptance, of commentary rather than intervention: so one looks for practical direction in vain. This is a problem, particularly if one is looking ahead to a possible future for bibliography. The 'problem' is caused by an

¹³ Page 346, in n. 1c to n. 1 to the *Supplément* to the absent essay «The Deconstruction of the Text: [Textual] Criticism and Deconstruction».

acceptance – a typical acceptance in these allegedly «post-philological days» – of the theoretical move that sees *document* vaporised by a textual conceit.

Document-diachronics-agency has been the under-emphasised trio in the post-structuralist period. Maybe philology, old-fashioned and out of favour, still has, up its sleeve, a few practical reminders for us yet.

Postscript (2005): Signs of the times, signs of the future

‘Editorial theory’ was a term I was only just beginning to hear used unblushingly in the late 1980s. It was making excited leaps and bounds at STS and other conferences; there was a sense of liberation in the air. New forms of interest in the ‘lives’ of texts (another new term for editors to come to grips with) had been and were being legitimated by the writings of Jerome McGann, Donald F. McKenzie, Peter Shillingsburg and others. Editors were contemplating the effects this insight might have on editorial methodology, which for long-lived Complete Works projects usually harked back a decade or two to some original formulation. In Australia, however, the effect was immediate, since new projects were only just then getting underway¹⁴.

Editorial theory was emerging as a theoretical form of thinking about texts, its abstraction redeemed by its empirical connection to documents executed (i.e. agented) in a particular time and place. Of all the editorial thinkers, David Greetham put most distending pressure on this link, and his exhilarated thinking pays the price I have named. At the other extreme, Randall McLeod debunked editing while nevertheless bringing, in oh-so-beguiling a way, a most acutely focussed form of bibliographical scrutiny to bear. Editors were now facing up to the apprehension, or spectre, that the limitations of the book form itself inevitably led to a mis-recording, or at best a partial recording, of the works they were editing. So they flocked to hear of the new possibilities of the electronic medium. Its practical realisation has proved, since then, to be a long, hard and very expensive proposition in an environment where technical standards change rapidly but where authenticated texts must not change at all, while being simultaneously open to ongoing interpretation. Nevertheless, at the time in the early 1990s, there was excitement in the air.

¹⁴ The Colonial Texts Series (published 1988–2004: compare the general editorial foreword in the first as against the one in the subsequent titles from 1990) and the Academy Editions of Australian Literature (1996-): see www.unsw.adfa.edu.au/ASEC.

I was hoping for two results. First, that the new editorial theory would recruit the attention of mainstream postgraduate students in English departments in the anglophone world. It didn't, except for a minority. And second, now that the 'work' had been unfolded into its contexts of production and reception by editorial theorists, that the study of versions might prove fatally attractive. It didn't, once again except to a minority.

Students stood in need of theoretical frameworks for their dissertations and theses. The intellectual pyrotechnics of Deconstruction, the political-cultural tectonics of feminism (even though, by then, both were on their last legs), the suave allure of 1980s New Historicism, especially as it morphed into the new and politically charged postcolonialism, left little room for a form of theorising texts that had its origin in reaction to discredited assumptions about the scientific nature of bibliography. Editorial theory was interested in the lives of texts and their documentary embodiments, but this seemed beside the point for competing theoretical movements in which empirical contingencies of text were noticed only to be immediately swallowed up in analyses of socially-circulating discourse and counter-discourse.

And yet, as I argued in an essay written in 1997 and published two years later in the *Yearbook of English Studies*:

Paradigm shifts in scientific practice are rare, but thinking in the humanities is marked by the emergence of new perspectives and vocabularies which reconfigure the existing landscape of thought, introducing topographies which first alienate and then annex, by redefinition, parts of the old one until the entire territory be covered, and swamps and backwaters that were overlooked under the old dispensation are brought into connection with the new mainstream. A previously untapped power of explanation is enjoyed; intellectual muscles are flexed. But it all happens with too great a rush: as the older concepts are rejected much that had been accounted for is pushed aside. Enduring habits of thought, pockets of resistance, which the latest intellectual movement has overlooked sooner or later return, in a self-reinvented form, to disturb the new, always multi-faceted, potentially conflict-ridden, never-quite-achieved consensus. Bibliography has recently become one of these *revenants* haunting the shifting sands of that field defined by the literary and cultural theory that has gradually saturated the thinking encouraged in postgraduate education in the anglophone world over the last twenty years. Theory in its various forms has come to seem to many students simply the established and accredited way of producing knowledge rather than as the force that liberated its teachers from an earlier, restrictive form of literary criticism¹⁵.

What must now be changed, in view of what has happened since 1997, is the name one would give to the *revenant*: not so much bibliography (broadly considered) as book history. *Its* coming of age represents a significant shift in interest during the last ten years, at least in the anglophone world, and, in many ways, a return to emphasis on the empirical. There is a very active professional association for book history and print culture; and centres in universities, and postgraduates' choice of coursework and thesis topics, are beginning to follow suit. How far will this go?; and how fully will it alter the existing landscape?¹⁶

In the 1960s it made sense to consider what was then a nascent book history as an offshoot of another, more central concern, as for instance in the statement of aims of the Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand (BSANZ), established in 1969: «the new Society has as its province all the studies that form part of or are related to physical bibliography: the history of printing, publishing, bookselling, typefounding, papermaking, bookbinding; palaeography and codicology; [and] textual bibliography»¹⁷. Now the BSANZ is changing the title of its quarterly *Bulletin* to *Script and Print*, and STS is changing *TEXT* to *Textual Cultures*: both changes are, among other things, signs of the times.

A marriage of bibliographically inspired editorial theory with book history would surely be one made in heaven. Book historians are now going through a phase of self-conscious inspection of their existing methodologies, so one asks: will such a marriage eventuate? Bibliography is a powerful technology for analysing the production of text-carrying physical objects; and its organising conceptions are adaptable to the electronic domain¹⁸. Its traditional underwriting of the conception of the 'work', as well as its capacity to re-member the document-diachronics-agency trio, could be the fertilising source of a newly invigorated cul-

¹⁵ «Where Are We Now with Authorship and the Work?», *Yearbook of English Studies*, special issue «Text as Evidence», 29 (1999), pp. 88-102 [p. 88].

¹⁶ The first annual volume of *Book History* of the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP), itself established in 1991, appeared in 1998; volume 8 appeared in 2005. SHARP's large annual conferences in Europe or North America have been complemented since 2001 by a series of 'Regional' conferences, mainly addressing imperial and colonial aspects of the book trade, publishing and reading, held so far in Grahamstown, Sydney, Wellington and Kolkata, and with more planned for Cape Town, Tokyo and Brisbane.

¹⁷ *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, 1.1 (March 1970), p. 11. (The statement is untitled and unsigned.)

¹⁸ See Matthew Kirschenbaum, «Editing the Interface: Textual Studies and First Generation Electronic Objects», *TEXT*, 14 (2002), pp. 15-51.

tural analysis. The goal would be to conceptualise ways of studying the writing, production and reception of texts that could, at will, focus either intently on the lives of individual works or more broadly on quantitative and other book-historical indicators of wider cultural change.

So, is this coda really a ‘*Postscript*’? Can there ever be something *after* script? Hardly. Book historians and editors gaze into the past for their evidence, but they aim at informing or changing thinking in the present and future. In the same spirit, my haruspicy settles nothing, but it tries to read the signs, or some of them. The literary theory movement that grew up after 1968 and became very influential in the anglophone world, somewhat belatedly, by the early 1980s has had its day: and so, along with it, has the new editorial theory of the 1980s and 1990s. But new opportunities are with us now.