

# TEXTUAL CULTURES

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# Rethinking Scholarly Commentary in the Age of Google

Some Preliminary Meditations on Digital Editions

*Sarah Neville*

## ABSTRACT

*Recently theorists have suggested that the lens of the social text demystifies an editor's role, positing that texts may be most profitably constructed as a collective conversation between all of the various agents involved in their production and reception. This paper considers these theories in light of studies of group cognition to suggest that modern readers' new relationship to digital information upsets an editor's traditional position as an authority while simultaneously offering a valuable opportunity for reframing discussions about the reliability and accessibility of scholarly evidence.*

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I have bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,  
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,  
Not cast aside so soon.

— *Macbeth* (1.7.32–5)

HAROLD BLOOM: I was thinking all day, what questions will you ask?  
You're recording?

JOSHUA COHEN: I am. I'm recording on my phone — and we might as well begin with that, because one of the things I wanted to speak with you about was memory. Everyone calls this “a phone,” but my generation in particular considers it as something more like an external brain. It stores our sounds, our images, our books. I need this extra storage space, this extra memory, to compensate for my own. But, famously, you don't. You remember everything.

— From a 2018 interview

THE MODERN ENGLISH VERB *TO EDIT* DERIVES FROM THE LATIN *edare*, ‘TO PUT FORTH’ or ‘to give out’. The first accounts of the word in the *Oxford English Dictionary* suggest that the English term began with definitions that made the verb’s indirect object clear: as well as ‘to publish’, *to edit* originally meant to ‘give to the world’ (*OED*, edit, v., 1). The work of the editor is thus to make available something that was hitherto unavailable, to provide access where once there was none. Because *to publish* derives from the Latin *publicare*, ‘to make public’, the *OED*’s definition further inscribes the editor as someone who serves as a gateway between a text or an artifact and a wider community. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century editors have taken this role as a *raison d’être*: for example, from its founding in 1864, the Early English Text Society relied on its individual editors’ access to the rare book libraries of Oxford and Cambridge in order to produce its myriad volumes of Medieval and Renaissance texts.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, W.W. Greg’s theory of copy text and Fredson Bowers’s extensive systems of collation notation and bibliographic description were designed to enable users of scholarly editions to reconstruct the accidental and substantive features of the physical documents that lay behind editions.<sup>2</sup> As researchers and scholars with access to the remote archives and libraries that contain rare documentary materials, editors are thus able to put forth new forms of texts that make it easier to study unique or rare documents like British Library Cotton MS Vitellius A XV (the manuscript containing *Beowulf*) or the first quarto text of *Hamlet*. Gary Taylor, general editor of the *Oxford Middleton* and the *New Oxford Shakespeare*, makes this privileged, disseminating position of the editor quite plain: “How can you love a work, if you don’t know it? How can you know it, if you can’t get near it? How can you get near it, without editors?” (1993, 133).

1. For a history of the EETS, I am indebted to COWAN 2012.
2. Like all other forms of human pursuit, editorial activities work within the technological affordances of their particular historical moments. For example, the theory of “accidentals” laid out in Greg’s “Rationale” of 1949 and further developed by Bowers meant that any copy text can be reconstructed by working backwards from a scholarly edition — creating a practical bibliographic resource in an age before scholars were easily able to fly across oceans to check variant copies. To put it another way, the technologies of twentieth-century travel influenced the technologies of twentieth-century texts. On the rise of leisure air travel, see LYTH 1993.

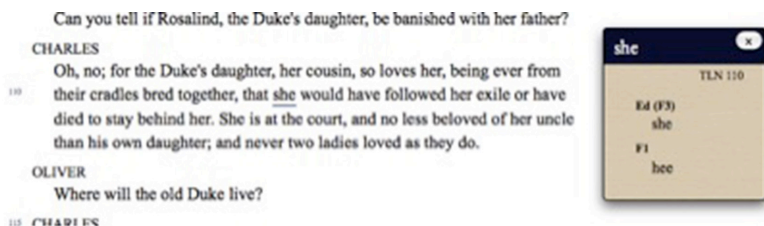
This essay offers some preliminary reflections on editorial authority in scholarly editions of English Renaissance works in light of recent developments in both digital media and studies of cognition. The first section assesses claims that scholarly editions have become more democratic in light of their ability to provide readers with access to facsimiles of the printed and manuscript copy texts that lie behind edited documents. Finding instead that the presence of facsimiles actually reinforces editorial authority, I argue that digital editors can take a different approach to user engagement. By turning their attention towards the production of a networked commentary, digital scholarly editions can use the affordances of digital media to demonstrate explicitly how editors' credibility with readers has always been contingent and intertextual. Such a process will inform an edition's readers not only of the scholarly provenance of a given author or text, but also of editorial and citational practices more broadly. In other words, the technologies of new media offer an opportunity to showcase the ways in which scholars have always made and defended their knowledge claims. To bolster this account, the second section of this paper explores models of group cognition known as "Transactive Memory Systems" and considers the impact of these systems upon established notions of editors' privileged position as those "subjects presumed to know".

## I

While editors have always sought to use their access to unique or restricted documents to bring isolated works to wider scholarly attention, the advent of digital technologies has altered the editorial landscape. Chief among the changes is the apparent shift in the status of editorial authority that results from the ease with which digital scholarly editions are able to present facsimile images of archival materials in order to bolster, rationalize, or legitimize their editors' activities in constructing an edited text. The limited form of analog archival access that Martha Nell Smith (2002, 837) calls "By Experts-Only" has, in the age of digital scholarly editions and thematic research collections, made way for a more capacious and egalitarian sort of access that enables other would-be scholars to engage with copies of these materials.<sup>3</sup> On the surface, the reproduction of archival material

3. "Thematic Research Collections" is a term coined by John Unsworth in a paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Modern Language Association of America in 2000 to describe resources that serve as "digital surrogates for physical

seemingly eliminates the need for the function of an editor as an intermediary: while in a pre-digital world, the edited copy of an archival document may be recognized as mediated by virtue of its new form, a photo-facsimile of a document is able to offer readers a seemingly unmediated experience. In the case of an edited scholarly edition, ready access to a photo-facsimile of the document that the editor used as copy text offers readers the capacity of checking up on an editor's activities by looking behind an edition's emendations; for example, David Bevington's edition of *As You Like It* for the Internet Shakespeare Editions is accompanied (as are all ISE texts) by facsimiles of the play in two copies of the First Folio, as well as by facsimiles of the play as it appears in the second (F2), third (F3), and fourth (F4) folios (ISE texts that also have authoritative quarto editions likewise feature facsimiles of quartos).<sup>4</sup> As a result, in his modernized ISE edition, when Charles explains Rosalind's failure to follow her banished father from the court, Bevington adds a textual note illustrating his adoption of the F3 correction to Charles' speech:

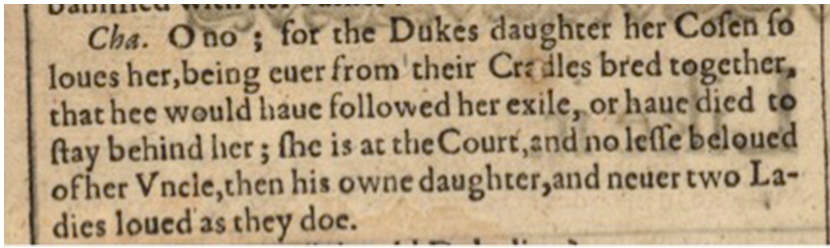


**Figure 1.** David Bevington's online edition of *As You Like It* for the Internet Shakespeare Editions. Screenshot by the author.

Because of the ISE's mandate to offer access to Shakespeare's texts in multiple versions, a reader interested in investigating Bevington's insertion of the F3 correction can easily inspect the speech as it appears in either the New South Wales or Brandeis University (shown) copies of F1:

artifacts" or "born-digital evidence for a secondary resource"; for an exploration of the genre, see PALMER 2004.

4. The Internet Shakespeare Editions can be accessed at <http://internetshakespeare.uvic.ca/>.



**Figure 2.** Detail of Q3<sup>v</sup> from the Brandeis University copy of Shakespeare's First Folio, as rendered by the Internet Shakespeare Editions. Screenshot by the author.

The ISE's facsimile collection means that Bevington's reader can immediately see the error in William Jaggard and Issac Blount's 1623 text of F1 that her editor has corrected; it also allows her to see the first time that the error was caught and corrected in print in the text of Philip Chetwind's third folio of 1664. Similarly, *A Social Edition of the Devonshire MS* (BL Add. MS 17492), a scholarly and largely diplomatic edition of a Henrician verse miscellany written in multiple hands, features both facsimile images of the manuscript itself as well as "hand sample tables that open our paleographic attribution process to public scrutiny" (CROMPTON et al. 2014, 146).<sup>5</sup> I will return to *A Social Edition* further below.

It bears mentioning that despite superficial appearances to the contrary, what *A Social Edition of the Devonshire MS* and the ISE offer is not unmediated access to specific copies of their copy texts but access to *digital images* of them (which are themselves mediated and translated). In some cases, the facsimiles are digitizations of microfiche films of specific copies, putting them at quite a far remove from the original artifacts: some copies are smudged, cropped, and/or rendered only in a high-contrast black and white that eliminates crucial details of the page. But the purpose of the present essay is not to dwell on the mutations that can occur as works are translated between media, as excellent accounts of this phenomenon can be found elsewhere.<sup>6</sup> Instead, what I am interested in interrogating is the

5. *A Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript* is published in multiple forms including a digital edition on Iter: Gateway to the Middle Ages and Renaissance (<http://dms.itercommunity.org/>), a print edition published in 2015 through the *New Technologies in Medieval and Renaissance Texts* series, and the publicly-editable form in Wikibooks: [https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/The\\_Devonshire\\_Manuscript](https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/The_Devonshire_Manuscript).

6. Among the best of these is TANSSELLE 1989.

effect of the expansion of documentary access on an editor's traditional forms of textual and scholarly authority as such authority is refigured in the new medium of the digital scholarly edition. Whereas in printed scholarly editions an editor's authority to speak of the text as an expert may have depended on his or her position as a gatekeeper with access to restricted documentary material, the easy distribution of facsimile images in digital editions means that electronic editions have exposed the mechanics of an editor's textual work while simultaneously undercutting an editor's restricted access as the primary means of establishing his or her authority over documentary evidence. Such a new state of affairs has the effect of making an editor's work seem fulfilled by reproducing primary documents in a more accessible and more easily distributed form; a once-restricted textual artifact is now widely available on the web either freely or with a paid subscription, and users may simply evaluate what has been presented.<sup>7</sup>

Though the documents that contain a Renaissance text exist in an archive regardless of an editor's ministrations (and though the form of those documents may ultimately be traced back to the originating principle of the author), the reader's experience of an author's work in a scholarly edition is necessarily mediated first by the editor's decision to edit and secondly by the editor's translation of the documents into a new textual form. The addition of reproductions of the documents the editor used to construct her edition does not fundamentally change this hierarchy, as the editor's access to the restricted document is still required in order to bring the edition into being. Even in a scholarly edition of a multi-authored, "social" text like the Devonshire MS (which in its Wikibook form may be altered or affected by the activities of the "community of users participating in collective and collaborative knowledge building using social technologies"), the digital edition is still literally effected not by users, but by its editors' originating hands.<sup>8</sup> As the authors of a recent white paper of the Modern Language Association's Committee on Scholarly Editions suggest, an edition functions as a "mediation [. . .] a medium through which we encounter some

7. More than fifty years ago John Russell Brown anticipated the makeup of current digital scholarly editions, advocating that the needs of most readers would be served best by "a photograph *and* a fully responsible, modernized, critical text" (1960, 67).

8. Ray SIEMENS et al. 2012, 453. For a discussion of the crucial distinction between 'affect' and 'effect' and its relationship to social theories of textuality, see NEVILLE 2014, 98 n11.



text or document and through which we can study it”.<sup>9</sup> The white paper observes that editions therefore have a responsibility to be upfront with readers about the ways that they have chosen to represent their mediated text so that they can be subject to informed criticism. Because scholarly editions make their “representational apparatus” visible to their readers, readers are able to consider the textual object separately from the interpretive lens through which it has been seen.

But while the new digital medium has not fundamentally changed the nature of the relationship between editors and readers, an editor’s authority over the text *appears* to have shifted. Because the inclusion of copies of the copy text(s) used in the construction of a digital edition can assist a reader in verifying an editor’s accuracy in collation and textual representation, the presence of facsimile images in a digital scholarly edition enables readers the ability to scrutinize — and to criticize — editors’ choices. Some scholars have even suggested that while editors’ access to restricted documents led their conflated editions of Shakespeare’s *King Lear* to long remain unquestioned, “[p]hotography, by holding the mirror up to the copy-text, has ended their status as an elite”; now that *Lear*’s textual kingdoms have returned to their proper divisions, “a more appropriate role for [editors] now is as commentators on the icon of the text rather than as atomizers of it, and as manipulators of its fragments” (McLEOD 1983, 189). However, claims that the affordances of digital scholarly editions mean “students of a text will more readily than was ever the case in print editions be able to confront textual cruxes for themselves” are exaggerated (SHILLINGSBURG 1996, 166).<sup>10</sup> In order to interrogate an editor’s account of a copy text, a reader of a digital edition, like the reader of a print edition, is still required to be not only literate in the processes of textual transmission but also motivated to investigate textual transmission in the first place. Though ready access to the building blocks of eclectic editions can serve to demystify the process of scholarly editing with all of its emendations and

9. “Considering the Scholarly Edition in the Digital Age: A White Paper of the Modern Language Association’s Committee on Scholarly Editions” (2015) can be accessed at <https://scholarlyeditions.mla.hcommons.org/cse-white-paper/>.

10. The online advertising copy for the third and latest edition of the *Norton Shakespeare*, which identifies as a “born-digital” text, likewise offers students “additional versions of many texts for comparison. Students are able to compare the Folio and Quarto texts of *King Lear* and scenes from other plays using an innovative side-by-side scrolling view option. Students can also compare the text to corresponding facsimile pages from the Hinman First Folio and from the quartos” (<http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad.aspx?id=4294987060>).

substitutions, what such a recourse to digital facsimiles actually and implicitly displays to most readers is the high degree of editorial interference that transforms an archival document into a modernized readers' edition. To put it another way, the accompaniment of facsimiles and transcriptions of an edition's copy text means that the reader of a digital scholarly edition can see at a glance that an editor's job does not end with the reproduction of primary documents to make them available to readers. Editorial labor also involves a series of interpretive and organizational actions designed to make texts more intellectually accessible. The authority of the editor to speak on behalf of the text is therefore not diminished by the affordances of the new technologies that enable documentary reproductions: it is intensified.

In the case of English Renaissance texts like the First Folio, readers of the ISE can use its F1 facsimiles to see that one of Bevington's first steps towards accessibility was the modernization and standardization of early modern spelling. Like all modern Shakespeare editions, Bevington's *As You Like It* removes extra *e*'s, substitutes the modern *s* for the perplexing and outdated grapheme of the long-*s*, and adopts current orthographic conventions for *u/v* and *i/j*. He also re-punctuates the text. Though to most scholars these changes are minor, non-specialist readers can see them as significant and necessary modifications (it is the alienating effect of early modern spelling and orthography on a general reader that leads to the convention of modernization in the first place). The facsimile enables a reader to see the magnitude of the changes that occurred in an editor's translation of an old document into a new but more familiar linguistic form, and such an effect can easily overshadow a reader's potential for interrogating a crux like Charles's "hee" and "she". In the same way, *A Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript*'s transcriptions render that document's difficult hands legible for its users using their modern graphic equivalents. While the texts of the poems aren't modernized, they are nonetheless made more accessible by the collective efforts of the team of expert paleographers whose work undergirds the edition, a fact that is unchanged by the editors' willingness to offer users access to facsimiles.

The appearance of facsimiles in a modernized scholarly edition of an English Renaissance work thus reinforces an editor's authority to act as a textual agent; however, it does so in very general terms. These transcriptions and modernizations of the texts of canonical authors are so common that it can be difficult to locate any individual editor's specific contributions within their remit. This is especially true in the case of Shakespeare, where

modernized editions are the norm rather than the exception.<sup>11</sup> While some series do incorporate new textual scholarship to produce new solutions to old cruxes and thereby establish fresh texts, many series simply reproduce existing texts and, in so doing, uncritically accept the textual scholarship that informed their original production. What this means is that often the only thing that is truly new about a “new” Shakespeare edition is its envelope of scholarly commentary designed to supply the difference between the world of Shakespeare’s very-long-ago-then and our very-modern-now. It is this aspect of an editor’s job that I am interested in investigating further.

In a scholarly edition, an editor’s assumed authority to speak of the text in her role as a scholar with a proximity to limited documentary material (access to copies of the First Folio or to manuscripts in an archive) is often extended to provide her with authority to speak *for* the text as a commentator, to interpret its significance for less informed readers and mediate the way that they experience its meaning. As the MLA white paper authors note, a scholarly edition is “typically prepared with an audience of scholars and students in mind” and “may also have pedagogical aims related to how it presents information and supports learning” (Modern Language Association of America 2015). The editors of the Devonshire MS agree: “The work of the editor of the social edition is to make this kind of [interpretive] curation possible for members of the community of practice to undertake. By acting as a facilitator for community enrichment, the scholar or scholars heading up a social edition project must demonstrate considerable editorial skill in identifying possible avenues for interpretation and technological sensitivity in finding ways to make this kind of editing work” (SIEMENS et al. 2012, 460 n 22). As part of the process of creating a scholarly edition, then, editors imagine the particular needs of their readers and supplement the newly edited text with a paratextual commentary designed to accommodate them.

On the surface, scholarly commentary seems to endorse a hierarchical model similar to the one for editorial access that I described above; however, instead of documentary access, the foundation of a commentator’s authority to interpret a text has traditionally been found in her ability to draw on the highly specialized linguistic and historical knowledge that

11. The standard authority on modernizing Shakespeare’s texts, which is often adopted to accommodate the modernization of the texts of other Renaissance dramatists, remains Stanley Wells’s “Modernizing Shakespeare’s Spelling” in WELLS and TAYLOR 1979.

allows her to explain the text for an audience who is believed to require such guidance. Consequently paratextual features like introductions and glosses have become critical battlegrounds: as they attempt to signal their improvement over competing editions, editors have offered increasingly larger and more copious notes in the margins, conspicuously indicating their ability to better contextualize and explicate.<sup>12</sup> For Clayton J. Delery (1991, 63), this paratext enables editors to position themselves as “subjects presumed to know”, scholarly elites who can decode the slips in both textual transmission and the vagaries of historical accident in order to present fragmented historical texts as knowable and unified wholes: instead of textual cruxes, antiquated references, and obscure language, an editor provides her text with standardized spelling, interpretable syntax, and a clarity of meaning. This ethos of “presumed knowing” holds regardless of an edition’s medium: even though the affordances of hypermedia can enable the reader of a digital scholarly edition to jump around a text in a non-linear fashion, the affordances of the scholarly edition itself are designed to filter a reader’s experience of a text through an editor’s informing gaze. As Laurie Maguire notes, “[w]hen one buys one’s first Shakespeare (whether individual volume or complete works), the editor’s textual collation, glosses, and introduction, helpful and interesting though they may be, are ancillary to the text; in subsequent purchases, *they are the reason for buying the text*” (1999, 60, emphasis added).<sup>13</sup>

12. This reframing of old texts within new and improved paratextual contexts was also particularly important for Renaissance printers and publishers who needed to distinguish their offerings from those of their competitors. For example, two of Robert Wyer’s three editions of the extremely popular little English herbal known as *Banckes’ Herball*, in print from 1525, copied much of the text of its predecessors but (erroneously) reframed the herbal as the work of Aemilius Macer (STC 13175.8c; STC 13175.13c). William Powell followed a similar strategy in his publication of 1550, advertising his book as *A lytel herball of the properties of herbes newly amended and corrected, with certayne addicions at the ende of the boke [as] appoynted in the almanacke, made in M.D.L. the xii. day of February by A. Askham* (STC 13175.13).
13. The advertising copy for the third edition of *The Norton Shakespeare* again offers an example: “*The Norton Shakespeare* brings to readers a meticulously edited new text that reflects current textual-editing scholarship and introduces innovative pedagogic features. Created by an expert international team of textual editors, the digital edition offers early authoritative texts for each of Shakespeare’s works in editions free from excessive emendation and intervention [ . . . ]. Every play introduction and all notes, glosses, and bibliographies in this edition

New Shakespeare editions come out with such regularity that it is necessary for scholars to highlight the differences between one edition and another, but an attempt to use new commentary to remedy the deficiencies of previous editions can be found even in the defenses of less frequently published texts. The editors of *A Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript* quote Arthur F. Marotti in explaining that while some of the manuscript's verses have appeared in scholarly editions of the collected works of Sir Thomas Wyatt, these editions "'distort [the] character' of the Devonshire Manuscript. [ . . . ] The Devonshire Manuscript is much more than an important witness in the Wyatt canon; it is also a snapshot of the scribal practices of male and female lyricists, scribes, and compilers in the Henrician court, as well as the first example of men and women writing together in sustained fashion in English". *A Social Edition* will therefore "move beyond the limitations of an author-centered focus on Wyatt's contribution in isolation, and concentrate on the social, literary, and historical contexts in which the volume is situated as a unified whole" (SIEMENS et al. 2012, 135).

Printed editions have long used paratextual elements like appendices or marginal commentary to signal editorial intervention or critical dispute. But because all editorial praxes create meaning, readers benefit when editorial labor is made explicit to users, and new media offers opportunities for rendering old information — and old forms of scholarly authority — in new ways. Hans Walter Gabler asserts that digital scholarly editions should consist of "a relational interplay of discourses, dynamically correlated both among themselves and with an edition's readers and users: that is, to a paradigm once again of text and ongoing commentary" (2010, 43). What I've argued above is that though it may seem like the digital scholarly edition has enabled affordances that democratize the relationship between editors and readers, some of these affordances can actually reinforce traditional modes of editorial authority, even in editions that espouse egalitarian ideals. Though the editors of *A Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript* insist that Web 2.0 technologies are an important step in leveling the intellectual playing field between traditional scholars and a larger public, their work is supported by the very same forms of citation and scholarly credit that traditionally accompany printed scholarly editions. The project's editors may write that "[i]ncorporating social media and web 2.0 practices into scholarly editing recasts the primary editor as a facilitator rather than

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have been reconsidered to incorporate reviewers' detailed suggestions, and new textual introductions and performance notes preceding each play reflect new scholarship in these fields".

progenitor of scholarly editions”, but their efforts are bolstered by a bibliography of more than five hundred items of peer-reviewed scholarship (SIEMENS et al. 2012, 153). Though the medium of delivery has changed, the traditional signaling of authority via demonstrated access to long lists of specialized scholarly material has not. Fortunately, the other discourses of digital scholarly editions that Gabler identifies as having specific user- and reader-directed functions are better able to make editorial and critical work legible to readers. When figured not as a traditional list of works cited but as a relational web of knowledge, a digital scholarly edition’s use of citation, annotation, and commentary can transform editorial authority from a traditional top-down hierarchy into a lateral and contingent arrangement that makes room for readers’ participation in the production of knowledge.

The chief means through which digital editions can enhance reader engagement with textual transmission is through the reframing of editorial work. Making editorial labor visible to users of a scholarly edition is valuable because few readers intuitively understand editors’ mediating role. Without an explicit intervention that clarifies how the makers of documents shape and present texts, authors and their creative genius quickly become the organizing principle that structure readers’ understanding of textual agency. This ideal of an author’s genius is furthered by an “ethic of invisibility” that subsumes editorial and publication labor under the banner of an author’s name.<sup>14</sup> To counteract such impressions, instructors working with early modern texts often familiarize their students with print and manuscript media by visiting rare book collections, or, when these are unavailable, making use of printed facsimiles or electronic resources such as ProQuest’s *Early English Books Online (EEBO)*, the British Library’s *Shakespeare in Quarto*, or the Folger Shakespeare Library’s Digital Image Collection (LUNA) in order to illustrate the non-authorial agents attendant on the materialities of textual transmission. But there are costs to these methods: though they are helpful in demonstrating the collaborative nature of book-making in the early modern period, the chronological or collection-specific limitations placed upon such resources can mean they often stop short of exploring the translation of early modern books from their original incarnations to their modern classroom equivalents, thereby

14. I lift the term “ethic of invisibility” from Leah Vosko, as quoted in CULLEN 2012, 7.

contextualizing textual transmission and editorial interference as a past event rather than as a continuing one.<sup>15</sup>

There is a solution: the lens of the social text is able to highlight the persistent nature of an editor's mediating role by conceiving of texts as the products of a collective conversation between the various agents involved in their production and reception. Editors can use the affordances of digital texts to reframe their assumption of authority in two ways: firstly, by explicitly exposing the amount and nature of the editorial labor that lies behind their editions, and secondly, by recognizing readers' crucial place within the meaning-making process. In other words, rather than simply assuming the mantle of "subjects presumed to know" because of their access to restricted documentary texts, digital editors can highlight the ways that scholars use others' research to construct the credibility necessary to speak authoritatively about a text and its authors.<sup>16</sup> My earlier model of editorial authority based on documentary access suggested a causative relationship between editors, authors, texts, and readers in which editors begin and influence the meaning-making process. Such a top-down teleology inadvertently implies that readers don't influence editorial behavior, though readers' anticipated needs are what determines an editor's choices for scholarly commentary and other forms of paratext. A more recursive model, in contrast, accepts that editors' authority to speak on behalf of their edited texts in their commentary derives from readers being able to *recognize* that authority.<sup>17</sup> The question for editors of digital scholarly editions rests in

15. While some archival resources, such as the ISE, *Shakespeare in Quarto*, and LUNA are open access, many electronic archives are locked behind pay walls that limit their adoption and therefore their utility. As recent news coverage of 'ProQuestGate' suggests, subscription to electronic archival databases such as EEBO is largely limited to those students and faculty affiliated with large research universities, adding an additional restriction of access to archival material for the majority of students and scholars (see STRAUMSHEIM 2015).
16. Theories of reader-response have long insisted upon the primacy of the experience of reading; as D. F. McKenzie argues, "readers inevitably make their own meanings. In other words, each reading is peculiar to its occasion, each can be partially recovered from the physical forms of the text, and the differences in readings constitute an informative history" (1999, 19).
17. My thinking about the ways that truth is constructed via testimony and cultural practice is indebted to SHAPIN 1994.

how they can use their new medium to better show editors' traditional position within a wider ecology of scholarship.<sup>18</sup>

## II

Recent studies in cognitive psychology can help editors better understand the ways that readers of digital texts construct and evaluate systems of knowledge. The redistribution of textual agency and interpretation I have highlighted above is bolstered by studies of "Transactive Memory Systems" (TMS), models that conceptualize group cognition as knowledge sharing and retrieval processes that empower individual users to access subject-specific information from knowledgeable experts.<sup>19</sup> While businesses are beginning to use theories of TMS to inform their building of management software or policies to better enable, for example, international and trans-continental collaboration between employees, the psychology is rooted in long-established structures of human interaction. Transactive Memory Systems are behind, for instance, relationship dynamics in which one partner is responsible for issues pertaining to the car and garden, while the other partner handles matters relating to the dog's health or the dates of future family celebrations. The success of TMSs depends upon acknowledging the affinity between multiple individuals who are each responsible for maintaining separate branches of knowledge; the systems work not because one person knows everything, but because knowledge is recognized as provisional, distributable, and mutually beneficial. Through transactive memory, individuals externalize a significant percentage of their knowledge, arrang-

18. The MLA white paper offers a related perspective in its authors' assertion that a scholarly edition is "motivated to support further scholarship" and is "understood to be part of larger scholarly enterprise, ultimately taking its place alongside and possibly in combination with similar works and allowing forms of analysis and engagement beyond those of its editorial intention, supporting further (re) mediation, (re)construction, and (re)mix in the advancement of scholarship in acts that allow, for example, the construction of other editions that may explore alternative hypotheses or challenge notions of authorial intention and editorial authority". The modalities of digital editions are particularly enabled for easy networking and linking of data, facilitating "environments within which the user can occupy the role of a contingent editor, examining less-traveled editorial paths and their interpretive consequences".
19. The notion of transactive memory was first explored in WEGNER 1987. Much of the following information about transactive memory is indebted to JACKSON 2011.



ing recall of the *location* of stored information rather than the information itself. In such a model, the “where” or “whom” is prioritized in memory, allowing much of the “what” to be forgotten.

The science of Transactive Memory Systems offers implications for the design of digital editions to better enable users to recognize the contingencies and dependencies of scholarly labor. The means by which individuals recognize others as potential knowledge resources is the TMS “directory”, which describes a shared mental model of labels that outline the responsibilities for individuals within a given system. The directory stores information about the various roles played by experts in the group as well as offers a dataset that reflects the accuracy of information, allowing users not only to locate expertise within a given information system, but also to review evaluations that explain why such experts may be trusted.<sup>20</sup> According to cognitive theorists, such TMS evaluations work most efficiently when the assessments of expertise are objective rather than self-declared (BRANDON and HOLLINGSHEAD 2004, 639). It is clear that authority over a knowledge domain is something that has to be recognizable by users rather than something that is simply assumed by a would-be expert.

The implications of the TMS directory model for editors of scholarly editions are clear: users benefit when editors take pains to demonstrate the ways that their expertise functions within a broader credentializing system. The difficulty, however, arises in the fact that scholars typically operate with a different directory model than do the users of their editions. An editor often writes her commentary notes on the basis of information that she receives from another scholar, whose work in turns relies on others. Systems of print citation have traditionally served to acknowledge these scholarly affinities and dependencies, and printed affordances like bibliographies list all of these dependencies in a single place. A listing of publisher information helps to identify experts who have been credentialized through peer review and enables scholars to make judgments about those who have not. But while editors may be sufficiently conversant in early modern scholarship or strategies of peer review to know whom to consult as a trusted expert on, say, issues like the modernization of Shakespeare’s language or the censorship of Elizabethan playbooks, non-specialist readers may not even be aware that such specialized knowledge exists in the first place, which prevents them from seeking it out. The system does not work

20. Historian Steven Shapin likewise locates early modern understanding of scientific “truth” to group dynamics. In his words, “practical epistemology was embedded within practical social theory” (1994, xxvii).

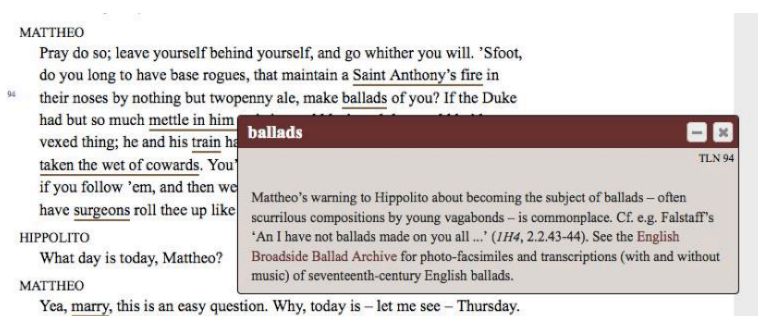
as efficiently as it could.<sup>21</sup> Editors might therefore consider the ways that they can use the affordances of their digital editions to make readers better aware of the networks of scholarly and intellectual labor that underwrite their projects. These structures may take various forms, including more thorough and more self-conscious commentary notes, annotated bibliographical listing of resources, and greater and more explicit consultation with librarians and other experts in information literacy.

Other implications of TMSs are more challenging of established editorial practice and suggest that digital editions would also benefit from considering ways of integrating the experiences of newcomers or end users into their directory systems in ways that demonstrate that readers' activities are not only desired, but also relevant to a project's outcomes. Though digital projects often envision popular reader engagement taking the form of "comment threads" appended to the ends of articles or pages, this is not the only way that users can participate in the meaning-making process. (In their Iter edition, *A Social Edition* offers the opportunity for users to leave comments on individual paragraphs.) For example, in much the same way that Google changes the ranked order of web pages as a result of folksonomic linking, algorithmic web design enables alternatives that can change the order or appearance of editorial paratexts in response to readers' activities. Further, editors of digital editions may want to conspicuously demonstrate to their users that their projects are attentive to the ways in which their texts are used and reused.<sup>22</sup> Such attention might include updates that demonstrate how an edition's data elements have been sampled or reused by other projects for distinct purposes and goals, as the MLA white paper suggests. These changes may be viewed as challenges because enabling readers and fellow users to take part in a shared knowledge model requires editors to give over some of their powerful subjectivity, particularly to those users who are not themselves scholars. Editors can find themselves resistant to the notion that there are other potential agents beyond those

21. "Until members understand which members possess what expertise, they will be less efficient at retrieving information and communicating about task elements that had been previously organized as shared higher-order information. Members must again develop shared higher-order concepts before they can efficiently retrieve and coordinate what members know" (LEWIS et al. 2005, 587).
22. Eric Johnson, creator of the *Open Source Shakespeare*, added a Text Search Statistics page to the site in September 2012 to enable users to parse not only the most-searched keywords, but also the rate and frequency of searches in the past hour, day, week, month, and year.

of the scholarly and credentialed who have an interest in the establishment of a text and its author(s).<sup>23</sup>

Scholarly editors can also benefit from this research into Transactive Memory Systems by considering the ways that such distributed knowledge and retrieval processes might shift technical presentations of editorial and critical activity. Instead of being cloaked in an “ethic of invisibility” by assuming that editorial labor and traditional citation practices are self-explanatory, editors can make use of digital affordances to provide not only textual and scholarly commentary, but also to direct readers’ attention to the ways an editor was able to provide such information in the first place. In some cases, an affordance as simple as a hyperlink can enable readers to see the source of a commentary editor’s claims. For example, instead of merely stating that the phrase “make ballads of you” (TLN 94) is a warning to avoid infamy, Joost Daalder’s edition of Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton’s *The Honest Whore, Part 1* for the Digital Renaissance Editions directs its readers outwards to investigate how ballads serve as “scurrilous compositions by young vagabonds” for themselves:



**Figure 3.** Joost Daalder’s edition of *The Honest Whore, Part 1*, for the Digital Renaissance Editions. Screenshot by the author.

TMS processes bolster the acknowledgement of the contingencies of scholarly and editorial work because a necessary condition for the development of transactive memory is cognitive interdependence: individuals

23. Studies of Shakespeare’s role in popular culture have long affirmed, in Marjorie Garber’s terms, that “Shakespeare makes modern culture and modern culture makes Shakespeare” (2008, xiii). For a comprehensive look at this phenomenon, see LANIER 2002.

within the network recognize that their outcomes are dependent on the knowledge and expertise of others, while simultaneously recognizing that others' outcomes are similarly dependent on their own knowledge and expertise. But while scholarly editors working within traditional systems of acknowledgement and accreditation may themselves understand the implications of their use of standard peer-reviewed sources of information such as the *English Short Title Catalogue*, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, or the *Oxford English Dictionary*, students and general readers are by definition less conversant in such norms. They benefit from the provision of additional context that can be provided by resources as straightforward as an annotated bibliography that clarifies the status of these kinds of watershed tools.

Research shows that Transactive Memory Systems require three characteristics to function effectively: specialization, coordination, and credibility. Specialization is the most basic feature of a TMS, as it is through specialization that knowledge differentiation is enabled: "if there is no knowledge differentiation between group members, there is no need for a directory containing knowledge location and access information: one can ask anyone anything" (JACKSON 2011, 418). As I've noted above, experts usually work with a directory that is distinct from the directory used by non-experts, and so reconciling the needs of both scholarly editors and the readers of an edition requires deliberate and thoughtful effort as each group identifies specialization differently. Fortunately, this complication has advantages. Because knowledge of textual scholarship is somewhat limited even amongst scholars who regularly use edited texts, editors who provide additional information about editorial processes as part of their editions' pedagogical aims will establish the *bona fides* not only of a particular editor or editors, but also of textual editing more generally. In addition, because digital scholarly editions often require collaboration among numerous agents who are responsible for distinct elements of an edition, the specialization requirements of Transactive Memory Systems suggest that the functions of individual roles need to be fully described in order to be effective. Publishing strategies that rely merely on acknowledgement and credit without such explanations will be much less useful to non-specialist users.

The second TMS characteristic of coordination refers to the effective use of the knowledge directory in order to retrieve information with speed and accuracy. This TMS requirement clearly depends on effective specialization, as users must first understand the roles possible within the knowledge system of the digital edition before they can seek out their various

services. (Readers need to be told, for example, how the responsibilities of a general textual editor of a project like the Internet Shakespeare Editions or Digital Renaissance Editions differ from the responsibilities of a play's individual editor.) Coordination in digital scholarly editions can best be served by interface design that clearly delineates not only the affordances of digital media, but also of the valuable resources appended to the complex texts of *all* scholarly editions, regardless of their medium. Design interfaces should ideally reinforce the value of all seven strands of Gabler's (2010, 46) editorial discourses: text, emendation apparatus, historical collation, textual notes, textual introduction, annotation, and commentary. Rather than diminish or hide some of these elements such as collation notes or lists of works cited (which are all-too-frequently relegated to an appendix), digital scholarly editions can use thoughtful design to reinforce the myriad activities of editors and editorial teams, as in the upcoming redesign of Daalder's edition of *Honest Whore, Part 1*, which will distinguish between his contributions and those of collaborator (and DRE coordinating editor) Brett Greatley-Hirsch.

The third and final necessary characteristic for effective Transactive Memory Systems is credibility. Credibility "reflects the group's members' perceptions about the reliability of other members' knowledge, but also of other sources of information such as reports or databases" (JACKSON 2011, 419). In a TMS, credibility is vital not only because it determines the quality of the information output, but because the credibility of an expert influences whether or not TMS group members attempt to retrieve information from that expert in the first place.<sup>24</sup> As self-declared proficiency is found to have little correlation with users' willingness to accept such expertise, cognitive theorists surmise that "expertise should, as much as possible, be decoupled from self-assessment", as otherwise "without an objective benchmark, people may fetch advice from an inferior source and have misplaced

24. Cognitive psychologists have also begun to research the way that cultural stereotypes associated with race and gender extend into assumptions about domain specialization; for example, women are frequently associated with expertise in affairs pertaining to children or domestic affairs irrespective of their actual affinities, while men are often similarly associated with technology and mechanics. Because the assumption of such roles gradually enables individuals to become experts in their respective fields, these stereotypes become self-fulfilling prophecies that re-inscribe hegemonic social norms. Similar inadvertent endorsements of hegemony can play out in editing as well; for an exploration of this issue, see MAGUIRE 1999 and TAYLOR 1989.

confidence in its value” (JACKSON 2011, 419, 420). The TMS model suggests that a project’s assumption of *de facto* editorial authority may be insufficient or even counter-effective — because the performance of editorial authority needs to be visible to be understood, editors will benefit from shedding the cloak of invisibility so that readers can better evaluate editors’ crucial role in knowledge-making.

Interdependency and intertextuality have always been a part of scholarly labor, signaled in both print and manuscript in the form of citation of previously published works. What is different in the case of digital scholarly editions is that in this medium, modern readers’ sense of the credibility of a cited source is bolstered when they are readily able to encounter the resource upon which expertise the current text depends. Though the physical limitations of books constrain their ability to “network” or otherwise use their forms to highlight their dependencies on other works of scholarship, digital editions are subject to no such restrictions. Daalder’s scholarly authority in his note on ballads is therefore reinforced by the appearance of a hyperlink regardless of whether a reader chooses to investigate it further. The affordance explicitly radiates outward to imply that digital projects are part of a larger ecology of knowledge relative to their analog forebears. Scholars may understand that forms of traditional citation function in much the same way to direct readers to supporting works of scholarship, but users of digital media are primed to value resources that exist online over those that do not.

These studies in cognition and editorial interventions could not come at a better time. Even though commentary notes and other paratextual materials previously signaled editors as authoritative subjects with access to limited documentary materials and to experts in specialized information, modern readers’ ever-present smartphones allow them their own, nearly constant access to folksonomic Web 2.0 platforms like Wikipedia and algorithmic search engines such as Google. As Joshua Cohen muses in my second epigraph, those of us who are not Harold Bloom tend to rely on our phones as extensions of our memories. Likewise, our present circumstances in the information age have diminished much of editors’ traditional elite status as “subjects presumed to know”. The convenience of Internet resources and online search engines offers readers the expectation of an external and artificial Transactive Memory System that can be accessed at any time or in any place. While much of the publicly accessible material available on the web lacks the peer review and other forms of legitimation that back up scholarly claims to authority, the web’s ubiquity with modern readers eager to learn more about a particular subject should give modern

commentary editors pause.<sup>25</sup> Though Wikipedia-founder Jimmy Wales's claim that "if it's not on Google, it doesn't exist" is demonstrably untrue, such a view accurately articulates the beliefs of many modern readers of hyperlinked media, who expect immediate access to cited material as a signal of its legitimacy.<sup>26</sup> This immediate access stands in the former place of a commentary editor's traditional authority to declare certain pieces of information legitimate — for many readers today, if they can get access to such data by hyperlink, it must therefore be accurate. For those engaged in the slow work of editing, the ubiquity of Google and its effects on transactive memory makes losing the cloak of invisibility even more crucial. In an age when the term *book* has moved beyond a description of a bound, ink-based codex to include e-readers, born-digital materials, and user-produced content, editors can no longer rest secure that their readers will simply accept claims to authoritative knowledge, nor will online readers necessarily understand the assumptions of legitimacy packed into a long works cited page of printed sources. Because on the web hyperlinks serve as their own form of legitimization, alternative and traditional forms of scholarly citation now need to be explicitly constructed and contextualized in ways that are highlighted for users, not hidden from view.

The aforementioned requirements of effective Transactive Memory Systems (cognitive interdependence, credibility, specialization, and coordination) — particularly the former two — can serve to fill the gap between editorial labor and modern readers' expectations. Studies of Google's effects on memory seeking to locate the "cognitive consequences of having information at our fingertips" have noted "when we are faced with a gap in our knowledge, we are primed to turn to the computer to rectify the situation" (SPARROW et al. 2011, 776). When people believe that they will not need information later, they tend to forget it; in other words, people do not make an effort to retain information if they believe that they can readily access it again: "Because search engines are continually available to us, we may often be in a state of not feeling we need to encode the information internally. When we need it, we will look it up" (SPARROW et al. 2011, 777).

25. The MLA's Committee on Information Technology has long asserted the validity and credibility of electronically published scholarship; however, even scholarly digital projects provide challenges to traditional systems of peer review and assessment; for an overview, see HIRSCH 2011.

26. The quotation was ascribed to Wales in a 2006 article in the *New Yorker* by Stacy Schiff, where it was clearly taken out of context; however, the phrase has since become aphoristic.



Though human memory systems are unquestioningly adapting to new technologies, it is perhaps more accurate to say that new technologies are being built in response to the norms of human memory systems. The distinction, however, is in the fact that whereas information-sharing processes were once exclusively social and clearly subjective, the advent of Web 2.0 and wireless technologies has served to extend our dependency on the superficially objective Internet. As we become, in one cognitive theorist's terms, "symbiotic with our computer tools, growing into interconnected systems that remember less by knowing information than by knowing where the information can be found", we increase the degree to which we need to learn to evaluate critically the locations from which knowledge may be retrieved (SPARROW et al. 2011, 778). Such conclusions have repercussions for scholarly editors: in order to construct the credibility needed for the establishment of effective cognition-based trust, editors need to explain the terms of the simplifications, clarifications, and elisions of ambiguities that they use to construct their editions, thereby going beyond the traditional forms of bibliography and citation found in earlier media. While these additional responsibilities are beyond the affordances of scholarly editions in print, digital editions are well positioned to accommodate these new demands on editors. Such role-identification behavior serves to disclose the division of responsibilities that leads to the creation of an edited text and is "positively related to the emergence of shared team mental models and transactive memory" (JACKSON 2011, 411).

Essays such as this one often conclude with a series of recommendations designed to suggest that the issue at hand can be attended to by observing a select group of protocols; however, because the research into transactive memory is still new, and because studies of the long-term social effects of the omnipresence of the web in our daily lives are still underway, it is perhaps too soon for editorial theorists to issue guidelines as to the way digital scholarly editors should proceed. So, in lieu of a set of recommendations, I offer a short series of interrelated questions for scholarly editors engaged in digital projects:

1. Does the culture of your project engage in an "ethic of invisibility" by hiding editorial interventions? Is this invisibility truly necessary? What would happen if you did away with all or some of it?
2. Does your project make the contingencies of editorial and scholarly decision-making visible and interpretable to non-specialists? If it doesn't, why not?



3. Does your project assume that its users already understand the history of the scholarly networks that have traditionally powered editorial labor? Does it explain the mechanisms of textual editing or literary and historical scholarship as a series of choices dependent on the work of predecessors?

In the preceding pages I've suggested that modern readers' new relationship to information problematizes an editor's traditional authoritative position while simultaneously offering a valuable opportunity for reframing discussions about the reliability and accessibility of scholarly evidence. The insights of cognitive theorists on transactive memory systems have repercussions for all editors, but especially for those constructing digital scholarly editions of texts — the old model, Delery's editor as a "subject presumed to know", does not serve the particular needs of readers using an online edition as a part of their extended TMS network. When looking for information from experts within a TMS, readers of digital editions require the cognitive interdependence that enables them to view their research activities as part of a larger ecology; while they may not have as much expertise as the editor-scholars whose work they seek out, these readers nonetheless evaluate the information they have been provided. But they need tools in order to do so.

The presentation of citation information within a scholarly edition offers a valuable opportunity for editors to demonstrate to users that their authority is not absolute but contingent, reliant on a larger and integrated scholarly ecology that extends backwards through decades, and sometimes through centuries, of scholarship. But even the most innovative and self-aware scholarly editions such as *A Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript* miss the opportunity to reframe editorial and scholarly authority, falling back on traditional systems of print citation such as works cited lists and bibliographies, even as they attempt to "shift [. . .] power from a single editor to a community of active readers and mediators" (SIEMENS et al. 2012, 153). While *A Social Edition of the Devonshire Manuscript* admirably demonstrates the provenance and social circumstances of the original documents that serve as copy for the edition, it nonetheless falls short of its stated goal of modeling "a new kind of scholarly discourse network that hopes to eschew traditional, institutionally reinforced, hierarchical structures and relies, instead, upon those that are community-generated" (SIEMENS et al. 2012, 154). It is true that Web 2.0 is defined by its ability to allow users to generate content that can be shared with other users. But

as physical documents, material texts have always allowed this — as handwritten marginal notes to printed works, palimpsests, or even the socially networked nature of the multiple hands in the Devonshire MS itself widely attest. Without a deliberate re-conception of the ways that intellectual authority is manifested in the longstanding citation practices associated with both manuscript and print culture, the tools of Web 2.0 will merely re-inscribe existing social and scholarly hierarchies. My proposal requires that we take the theories of social editing one step further to foreground the networked contingencies of the endeavor of scholarship — and scholarly editing — itself.

By characterizing their work through the four specific dimensions of Transactive Memory Systems (cognitive interdependence, specialization, credibility, and coordination), commentaries in scholarly editions can call attention to scholarly networks of peer-reviewed knowledge that are usually not accessible through Google searches, broadening the pedagogical function of scholarly editions to dovetail with recent studies in information literacy. As a result of the World Wide Web, algorithmic searching, and omnipresent smart phones, we are now in a position where more of us — indeed, potentially *all* of us — are subjects presumed to know.

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# “Christian Charity”, A Sacred American Text

Fact, Truth, Method

*Jerome McGann*

## ABSTRACT

*The ideological status of “A Modell of Christian Charity” as a foundational American document began in 1838 when its existence was first made public. For the subsequent 150 years its character and in particular its authorship was a settled matter. But some 25 years ago Hugh Dawson began to raise questions about the work when he undertook an examination of the original document, a focus that previous scholars had neglected. It turns out that more searching documentary inquiries expose a whole set of anomalous features of the MS itself as well as its historical transmission. Because the status of this famous work is now quite unsettled, its case highlights why archival and philological method are the source and end and test of interpretation.*

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The hardest thing of all is to see what is really there.

— J. A. Baker, *The Peregrine*

## I.

AS WE BEGIN TO APPROACH THE TWO-HUNDRED-YEAR ANNIVERSARY of the discovery of this famous document, it is time to face up to its legend. This is important because the work occupies such a fundamental place in American Memory. Perhaps even more urgent is what we have to learn, or re-learn yet again, about the relation between cultural truth and the ways we seek for it, and about the responsibility that scholars owe the community at large to preserve a clear view of and commitment to both.

“A Modell of Christian Charity” gave a local habitation — the Bay Colony settlement of New England — and a name — John Winthrop — to one of the foundational statements of the American ethos. Its argument climaxes in a bravura expression that remains resonant to this day: “Wee

shall be as a Citty upon a Hill, the eies of all people are uppon us".<sup>1</sup> The Virginia and the Plymouth plantations were founded well before Winthrop brought his fleet of ships and some 1000 settlers to what would become the Massachusetts Bay colony, and both earlier colonies produced founding documents of great importance. But since George Folsom and James Savage introduced it to the public in 1838,<sup>2</sup> no colonial text has been more influential than this work which, by its own account, was

Written / On Boarde the Arrabella! / On the Attlantick ! Ocean! By the Honrble John Winthrop. Esqr. / In His passage. (wth the great / Company of Religious people of wch Xtian Tribes / he was th. Brave Leader & famous Gov.r!) from the Island of Great Brittain, / to New-England in the North America. / Anno 1630.

The headnote describes the objective status of the document, naming its author, its date, its occasion, and its genre. In addition, the headnote offers an implicit interpretation that the event it records was a glorious one. Two of the interlinear insertions — "Xtian Tribes" and "Brave Leader & famous" — underscore the headnote's interpretive view. That view is re-emphasized, surely if also sparsely, by its exclamation points, which to date have gone unnoticed in any editorial or critical commentary, and which are publicly recorded only in the New York Historical Society's online facsimile. But as we shall see, the entire headnote has to date not been examined with the care it requires. The number "22" at the top, as we shall see, is important.<sup>3</sup>

1. The sermon has been a regular focus of readers and scholars since its first appearance in 1838, most recently in RODGERS 2018. Given the textual problems that continue to bedevil readings of this work, my point of reference and citation is the online facsimile made available by the New York Historical Society: <http://cdm16694.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16124coll1/id/1952>.
2. For the first 1838 printing of the New York Historical Society's MS edited by Folsom and Savage, see the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, Third Series, 7, 31–48. The volume is available online through the Hathi Trust: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101076467495;page=root;seq=7;view=image;size=100;orient=0>. The Society's improved and annotated (1929) edition of the *Winthrop Papers*, also available online (2019), corrects all but one of the text's errors: <http://www.masshist.org/publications/winthrop/index.php/view/PWF02d270>.
3. A parenthetical note at the foot of the page was added in 1838 or soon afterwards by an archival agent of the New York Historical Society.



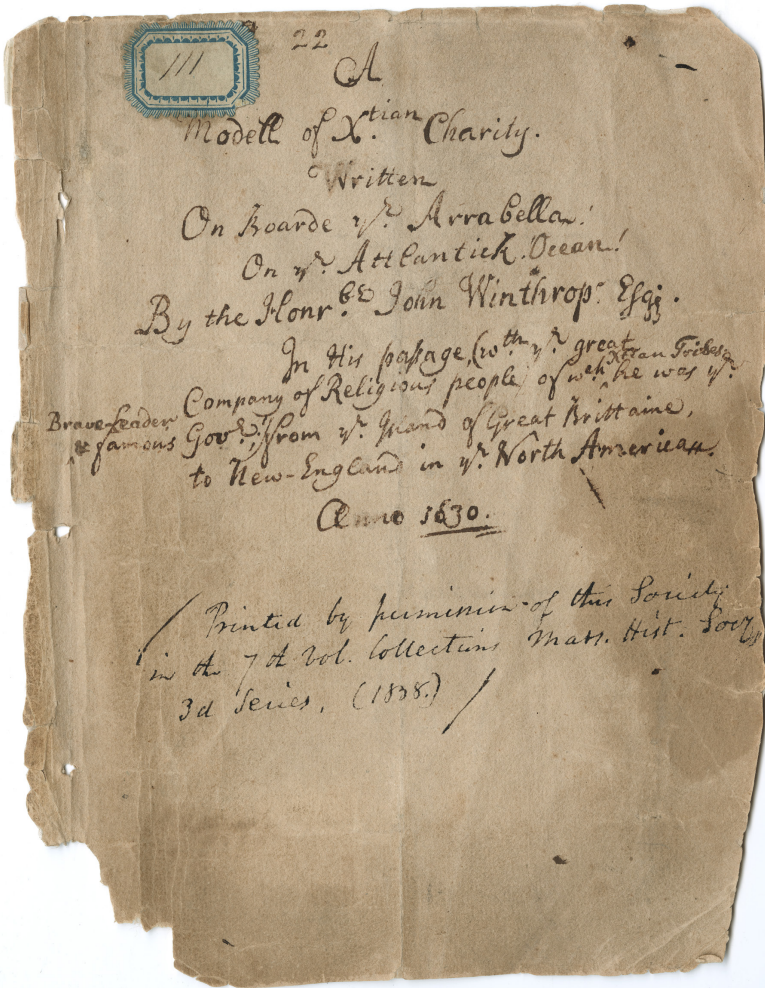


Figure 1. "A modell of Christian charity", Cover page, New York Historical Society MS; reproduced with the Society's permission.

Since 1838 that headnote account and the facts it alleges have passed as settled truth largely because no one before 1991 thought to reflect on the problematic character of the document. And so a rich set of critical commentary arose — it persists still — that gets reified through numerous school and scholarly editions. Yet none of this scholarship accurately reflects the truth of the document, which is at once very simple and very

difficult. Crucially, that truth is a function not only of what we know or think we know about the document, but of what we know (or don't know) that we don't know about it.<sup>4</sup>

Those inconvenient truths began to be seriously addressed only in 1991 when Hugh J. Dawson pointed out that the headnote was not written by the scrivener who copied the body of the text.<sup>5</sup> Before Dawson, scholars judged that the entire document was “apparently contemporary” with the founding years of Massachusetts Bay.<sup>6</sup> Inquiring more closely, Dawson called on the expertise of paleographers familiar with early colonial text production. The watermarks and other textual evidence place the body of the scrivener's text in the seventeenth century, probably but not certainly early. As for the headnote, it clearly postdates the scrivener's text and the lifetime of John Winthrop. Because it casts such a retrospective glory around the enterprise of 1630, it reads like a third-generation Puritan text and might well be even later. Its antiquated orthography was conventional well into the eighteenth century.<sup>7</sup> One correction in the body of the text is definitely late — the change from the original word “Massachusetts” to “New England” on MS page 39.<sup>8</sup> The correction may reflect the 1686 Crown move to undo the Massachusetts Bay Colony by incorporating it in the newly created “Dominion of New England”.

4. Daniel Rodgers has the most recent study of the *Arbella* sermon; see RODGERS 2018, chapter 1, especially 18–20, 22–23, 29. Based on verbal similarities between one passage in the sermon and John Winthrop's “Address . . . to the Company of Massachusetts Bay”, and a short list of biblical citations in an appended page in Winthrop's *Journal*, Rodgers speculates that the work was written in four sections at different times. He develops his theory in order to avoid certain contradictions that arise from the bibliographical and historical evidence. See also *Winthrop Papers* II. 174–7 and Winthrop 1996, 726.
5. See DAWSON 1991.
6. “Apparently contemporary” is the judgment made in the Introductory editorial note to the 1929 text of the *Winthrop Papers*: see the online edition, *op. cit.* n. 2 above.
7. See DAWSON 1991, 228–9, n. 6. Those 1991 judgments about the paper have been recently corroborated for me by Heather Wolfe, Curator of Manuscripts, Folger Library. In addition, Fenella France, Acting Director of Preservation, and her staff at Library of Congress have completed a thorough analysis of the inks used in the MS. Except for the 1838 notation at the bottom of the title/headnote page, all the ink is iron gall, which was in common use throughout the West, even into the twentieth-century; see FRANCE ET AL. 2018, 1–30.
8. See a discussion of the revision in a New York Historical Society blog posting: <http://blog.nyhistory.org/21991-2/>.



Dawson's inquiry produced a further significant revelation about the document. He showed that if Winthrop delivered a "Christian Charity" sermon, the "famous Governor" must have done it, as the MS text declares, "heere in England".<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, that crucial phrase in the MS did not make it into the 1838 *Massachusetts Historical Society* printing.<sup>10</sup> Although, as Dawson pointed out, the mistake was corrected in some later reprintings, the error is to this day disseminated in most of the widely available reprintings.<sup>11</sup> Noting it, Dawson argued that the sermon must have been written before the *Arbella* and the rest of the fleet sailed.

The plain textual evidence ("heere in England") is corroborated by all of the pertinent contextual evidence. As Dawson wrote, the Winthrop *Journal's* meticulous account of the emigration "makes no mention of the discourse" (1991, 223), nor do Winthrop's other autograph papers and associated documents from the time, which are extensive. The surviving MS copy was kept among Winthrop's papers until it was donated to the New York Historical Society in 1809. We know that Winthrop had a copy, perhaps the autograph, from the founding years of the colony: in 1642 or soon thereafter, Henry Jacie asked the governor's son John to send it to him. Besides, delivering a lay sermon would have been unusual for the governor. In his lifetime we know for certain that he delivered one lay sermon, at Ipswich in 1634, an event he mentions in his *Journal*. Non-separating Congregationalists, which is what Winthrop was, delivered lay sermons only under special conditions — typically, if a minister were unavailable, which was not the case on the *Arbella* but which was the case at Ipswich.<sup>12</sup>

9. In 1991 Dawson accepted Winthrop's authorship. Seven years later he was less certain: see DAWSON 1998.
10. Dawson (1991, 229n) notes that this transcription error was corrected in some later reprintings, but it has nonetheless been perpetuated in much of the literature, not least in the standard online and often cited Massachusetts Historical Society version. Even the most distinguished Puritan scholars continue to insist that the sermon was delivered at sea (e.g., COLACURCHIO 2006, 151).
11. See DAWSON 1991, 229n. The persistence of the error is largely the result of its presence in the important *Winthrop Papers*, where a variant of the mistaken 1838 text is reprinted. Of the available school texts — in print or online — that print the document, the only anthology with the correct reading is JEHLLEN and WARNER 1996. All the other general American or specialized Puritan anthologies either do not print the relevant section or, when they do, misprint it.
12. See DUNN, SAVAGE and YEANDLE 1996, 114 and LOVEJOY 1985, 57. For Winthrop as lay sermonist, see BREMER 2015, 76–83.

Neither is such a sermon noticed by any of the other emigrants, whether they sailed on the *Arbella* or on one of the other ships. Was it perhaps delivered before the fleet sailed? The distinguished Winthrop scholar Francis Bremer believes it was, but no such event is mentioned by anyone who participated in the momentous undertaking.<sup>13</sup> By sharp contrast, John Cotton's farewell sermon *Gods Promise to His Plantation* (1630), delivered at Southampton, was printed, commented on, and broadcast widely.

As Dawson remarks, the secretary copy might indicate that it was intended for MS circulation rather than print. But no MS copies are extant, and the work seems to have been mentioned only twice in the seventeenth century, once by Henry Jacie and then later by Roger Williams, though Dawson regarded the Williams reference as dubious.<sup>14</sup> From that point until 1809, when the MS was donated to the New York Historical Society, the work was invisible, and of course it only came to public notice in 1838. What is most remarkable here is the fact that Winthrop's papers were made available to, and were used by, two of the most consequential seventeenth-century Puritan historians, William Hubbard and Cotton Mather. If either they or, later, Ezra Stiles, who also worked with the Winthrop Papers, were aware of the MS, they would certainly have used it.<sup>15</sup> It could have escaped their notice because of the secretarial hand, but not if it had that arresting headnote.

Dawson's examination of the MS showed that a third hand, "perhaps [. . .] a scrivener's assistant" (1991, 222), went back over the transcript to correct various errors. Twenty-two years later Abram Van Engen, keying off Dawson's work, made two further important discoveries about the sec-

13. See BREMER 2003, 174–5; he discusses the work at length 173–84.

14. Jacie mentions "Christian Charity" in his letter to John Winthrop Jr. printed in the online archive *Winthrop Papers* III, 188–9, where it is dated, incorrectly, ca. 1634–1635. See below for further discussion. Roger Williams, writing to John Winthrop Jr. on 28 May 1864, refers to "the Winthrops and their Modell of Love" in drawing an invidious contrast between the first- and second-generation puritans; see LAFANTASIE 1988, II, 527–8.

15. See FREIBERG 1968, 80: 55–70. Edward O'Reilly of the New York Historical Society pointed out to me that in a letter to Nathaniel Green (18 March 1780) John Adams wrote that "America is the City, set upon a Hill". He must have been thinking of the source text in Matthew 5:14, for it is unimaginable that he would have seen or read the Winthrop MS. It is nonetheless striking that he would have made the same connection the sermon makes of America to the city on a hill.

retarial document.<sup>16</sup> First, he showed that the reference text for its biblical citations was the Geneva bible, not — as might be expected — the English KJV (2013, 549–50).<sup>17</sup> Second, while the document shows various interesting lacunae and errors, it “has suffered a much more significant corruption: it has lost its beginning”.<sup>18</sup> Because “A Modell of Christian Charity” “does not match the usual form of a Puritan sermon” (2013, 557), Van Engen

argues that we should see it as a truncated sermon. That reasonable suggestion seems to mean, however, that the MS we have is a copy made from another now lost and similarly imperfect copy.<sup>19</sup>

So then the question arises: why (and when) would someone want such a fragment copied, and who would that be? Van Engen does not question Winthrop’s authorship — indeed, he asserts it — but he doesn’t try to explain what it might have been that Winthrop thought he was writing, if in fact he was the author of the copy from which our extant MS was made. These questions become even more provoking when we remember a crucial further fact that Van Engen brought to attention but then forgot to consider: that when Winthrop quoted scripture, his reference point was not the Geneva bible but, as we would expect, KJV.<sup>20</sup> If Winthrop wrote the discourse on Christian Charity, why was he quoting from the Geneva bible?

16. See VAN ENGEN 2013.

17. Van Engen (2013) observes, “It matters which Bible — which particular physical object — Winthrop held and read when he composed his sermon, and it is no accident that the Geneva, not the KJV, stands behind his text. His was ‘an adversarial Bible,’ the Bible of both resistance and renewal” (555–6). Van Engen’s work here revised the received view that “Christian Charity” quotes from both Geneva and KJV; see also STOUT 1982, 19–38 and, in particular, 29.

18. Van Engen (2013) notes, “Puritan sermons were typically composed of six elements — scripture, elucidation of the verse, doctrine, reasons, application, and exhortation. The last four are elaborated in ‘Christian Charity,’ but the first two parts — the opening verse and its initial elucidation — are lacking” (557).

19. Others who have noted the truncated character of the MS have decided to think of the document not as a sermon but as a “discourse” — the term used in the MS itself; see GAMBLE 2012. As Professor Van Engen notes in personal correspondence (4 May 2018), “the reason Gamble and others want it to be a ‘discourse’ is in part because they want a governor, not a minister, to be the author of it.”

20. See WILSON 2011: [http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/religion\\_pubs/2](http://scholarworks.wmich.edu/religion_pubs/2); see also BREMER 2016, 1–17.

Before considering these key questions further, let me close this part of the inquiry by clearing up some related factual matters that have a significant bearing on the disappearance of “Christian Charity” from public notice. The only certain reference to the work that we have before 1838 comes in an early letter from Henry Jacie (1603–1663) to John Winthrop Jr.<sup>21</sup> Jacie was a dissenting minister who became leader of the semi-separatist Jacobites in 1637. He was close with the Winthrops and, staying in England after the 1630 emigration, he worked on their behalf and kept them abreast of the ongoing religious and political struggles in England and Europe. Here is the pertinent section of his letter:

Now Sir since your going to york, I have found H. Kingsburies letter (which I could not light on) the bookes he desired me to procure him were these 3. 1 A Treatise of Faith. (I suppose The Doctrine of Faith by Mr. Jo. Rogers would be as useful for him, and about the same price.) 2 Perkins Principles. 3. The sweet Posie for Gods Saints (2d a peece, the 1 about 18d.) He writ he would pay for them. We shal be further indebted to you if you can procure the Map, the Pattents Copie, the Model of Charity, (also what Oath is taken) Mr. Higgisons letter, and the Petition to our Ministers for praying for them, made at their going, which is in print. Which of these you can best, with your letter, give to Mr. Overton Stationer in Popes head Alley, my good friend, and receive money of him for them. (*Winthrop Papers* III, 188–9)

In printing Jacie’s letter, the *Winthrop Papers* do not annotate its references. If they had, the date they assign to the letter, ca. 1834–1835, would have been pushed forward.<sup>22</sup> It cannot be earlier than 1642, when *A sweet*

21. Most records now spell his name “Jessey”. I have retained the spelling he used when he signed his letters.
22. H. Kingsburie is either Henry Kingsbury, from Groton, Suffolk, who emigrated in 1630 with his wife and son, or his father (see *Winthrop Papers* II, 188). *A Treatise of Faith* could be any one of four possible works, all bearing this title: John Ball’s (1631), Ezekiel Culverwell’s (1625), George Throgmorton’s (1624), or John Fisher’s (1605); Ball, Culverwell, and Fisher were multiply reprinted, as was John Rogers, *The Doctrine of Faith* (1629). The other books mentioned are William Perkins, *The foundation of Christian religion: gathered into sixe principles* [ . . . ] (1591) and *A sweet Posie for God’s Saints* [ . . . ] *gathered out of* [ . . . ] *the Holy Scriptures* (1642), by J. O. As for the materials specifically related to Winthrop, Mr Higginson’s letter is Rev Francis Higginson’s *True Relacion of the Last Voyage to New England* (1629) (or perhaps his *New England’s Plantation* [1630]). The

*Posie for God's Saints* was published. The significance of the change is difficult at this point to assess with certainty, but it is not at all difficult to recognize. By 1642 the Long Parliament had been convened, Bishop Laud impeached and imprisoned, Strafford tried and beheaded, and the King and Parliament were in open conflict. Second, the reference to "Mr. Overton Stationer in Popes head Alley" and the request to give those key emigration documents to Overton suggests an intention to get them printed (or in the case of the last, reprinted). Overton was either the fiery Puritan pamphleteer Richard Overton (fl. 1640–1664) or, more likely, his son John (d. 1713), who had recently set up a stationer's shop that went on to specialize in maps and operated well into the eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> But in the 1640s it was publishing semi-separatist works.

The most provocative fact revealed through this letter, however, is the connection between *A sweet Posie* and the Overtons and what it suggests about Jacie's request for the emigration documents. The title page of *A sweet Posie* identifies its author simply as J. O. and then gives this imprint information: "printed by R. Cotes, for Benjamin Allen dwelling in Popes-head-Alley, 1642". Is the author of the book John Overton, do the Overtons have anything to do with Cotes and Allen who are operating in the closest proximity — a tiny street, still extant, just south of the Royal Exchange? And is Jacie asking for those colony documents because he has some plan in mind to have them printed? Was the plan aborted because of the tumultuous events unfolding in England?

As Jacie's letter indicates, one of those documents — *The Humble Request of His Majesties Loyall Subjects* (1630) — was prepared at Southampton just before the fleet sailed to the new world. It was left behind and printed in London shortly thereafter. The intention of *The Humble Request* was to make an open declaration that the emigrants were not Separatists but loyal subjects who recognized Crown authority. In 1630 such a semi-separatist position was for many of the emigrants problematic — Plymouth was already a Separatist colony — but by 1642 the dissenters still in England were openly seeking far greater power at the very center of English

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"Petition" requested is *The Humble Request of His Majesties Loyall Subjects, the Governour and the Company Late Gone for New England; to the Rest of Their Brethren, in and of the Church of England* (1630) (in the *Winthrop Papers* II, 231–3). The "Map" is probably Winthrop's "Chart of the Coast from Gloucester to Marblehead", reproduced at *Winthrop Papers* II, after page 280, 281. Finally, Jacie mentions the "sermon".

23. See the records of the British National Archives; online citation: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/results/r?q=Overton+stationer>.

power. Printing “Christian Charity” and reprinting *The Humble Request* in 1642 or later would have been vigorously opposed by many, perhaps even most, Puritans in both new and old England. And by 1660, when the documents might have been made public, their political significance for second generation Puritans was long past. By 1838, however, the communitarian message of “Christian Charity” would have had real importance in Congregationalism’s ideological struggles with Unitarianism and, even more, its Emersonian overflow.

## II.

Let’s be candid here. What I’ve just proposed is a rationale for explaining why “Christian Charity” remained virtually unknown between 1630 and 1838. It’s an interpretation extruded from certain facts, some of them not previously recognized. The rationale does not solve the problems raised by the “Christian Charity” MS, but it can help us see more clearly the shape and conditions of our ignorance. So it is a provocation to try for greater understanding. As such, I also think it puts us in a position to appreciate and go further with the provocation that Dawson initiated in 1991 and that he expanded with his essay of 1998.

The 1998 essay proceeds from a recognition of the importance of a particular passage in “Christian Charity”: the reference to “the *Church of England*, from whence wee rise, our deare Mother”. That is a notable remark for a dissenting work, and it is a view with which some — perhaps most, certainly many — in Winthrop’s company would have had serious difficulties. It is not a view that Winthrop himself expressed before he set the embarkation plans going, as Dawson argued in 1998. But for Dawson, “Christian Charity” reflects how the colonial undertaking itself changed Winthrop’s mind.<sup>24</sup> The work is directed at two audiences, the emigrants as well as those “who had committed themselves to Massachusetts but who were staying on in England” (DAWSON 1998, 122). Looking “to England as much as to America”, “Christian Charity” enlarges its argument by making a “conservative reaffirmation of established ways. Rather than being an environment hospitable to the release of new initiatives, the ‘Citty vpon

24. “Within a few months of sailing [i.e., late 1629], he had employed in private correspondence the same maternal figure later favored by [John] Cotton and [John] White in telling of his trust that, by their migration, the ‘members of that Church [in America] may be of better vse to their mother Church heere” (*Winthrop Papers* II, 132).

a Hill' would be an extension of the metropolis" (Dawson 1998, 135). "Christian Charity" was not calling in question the "legitimacy" of the established church.

In laying out that view of the matter, Dawson rightly points to John Cotton (1585–1652) and John White (1575–1648) and especially to the semi-separatist Henry Jacob (1563–1624), who in 1616 had founded (in Southwark) what is regarded as the first Congregational Church in England. These "Jacobites", as they were called, organized around a group of ordained Anglicans who had fallen out with the established church because of its corruptions. They were firmly Calvinist in theology and hence worked out of the Geneva bible, but they were unusual — "semi-separatist" — in holding that the established church was legitimate despite its grievous lapses from sanctity. Jacob and his sect are relevant here because, after Jacob's death, direction of the group was assumed by John Lathropp (1584/8–1653), and when Lathropp was imprisoned by Bishop Laud and eventually expelled from England, leadership of the group passed in 1637 to another important semi-separatist, Henry Jacie.<sup>25</sup>

A basic pair of very specific questions need to be pressed for this famous work: who wrote the headnote and who commissioned the scrivener copy? We still do not have answers to those questions. Their critical pertinence for understanding "A Modell of Christian Charity" is scarcely appreciated even today, and until Dawson's and Van Engen's work, they were hardly raised. Dawson in particular comes close to asking them directly. But he stops short even in 1998 when his doubts about the document's authorship had intensified.<sup>26</sup>

Let's look again at the work's documentary problems, starting with the contradiction between what is asserted by the headnote's "Written / On Boarde the Arrabella! / On the Attlantick ! Ocean!" and what is declared by the scrivener's "heere in England". Dawson reads "heere in England" as evidence about an historical event that happened in 1630. Assuming, reasonably, that the scrivener's text is telling the truth about itself ("heere in England"), Dawson argues that the headnote is mistaken, that the sermon wasn't "written on board the *Arbella* on the Atlantic Ocean". But the tex-

25. For a good account of the Jacobite Church, semi-separatism, and its relation to the colonial Congregational movement, see Tolmei 1977, Chapter 1 ("The Jacob Church"), especially 12–19 ("The Jacob-Lathrop-Jessey church"). For an earlier look at the English and the colonial scene, see Miller 1933, especially chapters III–V.

26. See Dawson 1998, 141 n. 1. But here Dawson still writes as if Winthrop were the author of "Christian Charity".

tual situation here reveals something far more disturbing about the headnote. Assuming, again reasonably, that the headnote isn't simply lying, we have to wonder how it arrived at that judgment, and, more pertinently, *who* made the judgment. The headnote presents itself as a factual account of the scrivener's text, but it happens that its facts are wrong. When we realize that truth, that fact, about the headnote, we want to know what it means. If we knew who wrote the headnote or even when it was penned, that would help.

So before worrying about if, when, or where a sermon was delivered in 1630, and by whom, we have to know much more than we now know about the New York Historical Society manuscript. The problematic headnote is a good place to start. Its author's interpretive designs, as we've seen, are clearly marked by the exclamation points and the interlinear insertions "Xtian Tribes" and "Brave Leader & famous". But let's look further.

We begin by trying for a clearer picture of the provenance of the MS, which was donated to the New York Historical Society in 1809 by Francis Bayard Winthrop (1740–1817) along with a collection of early colonial printed documents. "A Modell" was the only MS in the donation and was listed last — and numbered "22" — in the donation list (see Figure 2).<sup>27</sup>

Note the title given here to the document: "A Modell of Christian Charity written on Board the Ship Arrabella by John Winthrop . . .". The congruences with the MS headnote — the first ten words, the spelling "Arrabella", and the final ellipsis — show that Winthrop's donation list echoes the MS text. But equally remarkable are the divergences between the two: the extra word "Ship" and the absence of the headnote line "On the Atlantick! Ocean!".

Because the final ellipsis shows that Winthrop wanted to indicate missing text at the end, one wonders why he didn't give a medial ellipsis for the dropped line. The answer seems to be that the line wasn't there when he copied the title into the donation list. Indeed, if one examines the headnote MS closely one can see what its design and orthography discloses. First of all, the headnote was consciously scripted to imitate the typical layout of title pages of colonial pamphlets and sermons — sermons, for instance, like John Cotton's 1630 farewell *Gods Providence for His Plantation*:

27. It is numbered "22", which is the number written at the top of the MS page bearing the document's title/headnote. But Bayard Winthrop's final note on the donation list referring to "61 Sermons dating from 1561 to 1724", does not specify whether they are MS or print documents.



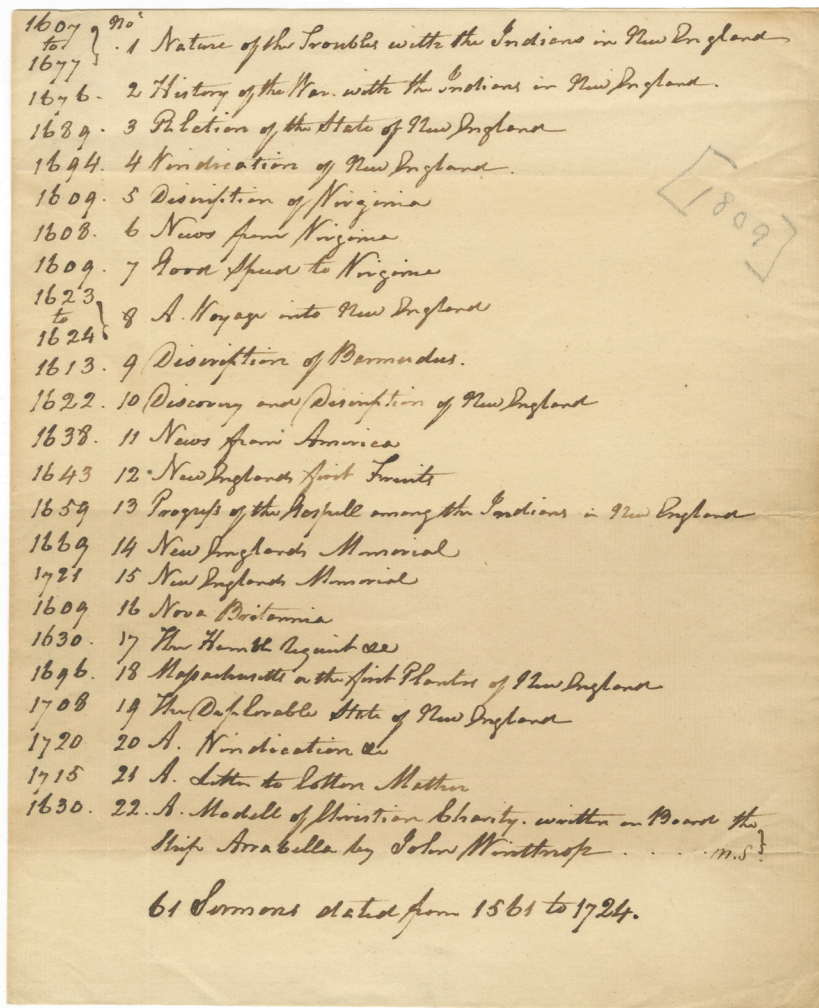


Figure 2. Francis Bayard Winthrop's 1809 "Donation List", New York Historical Society MS; reproduced with the Society's permission.

# GODS PROMISE TO HIS PLANTATIONS

2 Sam. 7. 10.

*Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Iſracell,  
and I will plant them, - that they may dwell in a  
place of their owne, and move no more.*

*As it was delivered in a Sermon,*

*By IOHN COTTON, B. D.  
and Preacher of Gods  
word in Ballaw.*

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PSALME 22. 27. 30. 31.

*All the ends of the world ſhall remember and turne unto the  
Lord, and all the kindreds of the Nations ſhall worſhip  
before thee.*

*A ſeede ſhall ſerue him, it ſhall be accounted to the Lord for  
a generation.*

*They ſhall come, and ſhall declare his righteousneſſe unto a  
people that ſhall be borne, that he hath done this.*

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LONDON,

*Printed by William Jones for John Bellamy, and  
are to be ſold at the three Golden Lyons by the  
Royall Exchange, 1634.*

Figure 3. Gods Providence for His Plantation [. . .] by John Cotton  
(London: Printed by William Jones for John Bellamy, 1634),  
reprint of the original 1630 edition; reproduced with permission of  
the University of Virginia Library (electronic image).

There's a good example of the most common format for the title pages of early seventeenth-century Puritan sermons. That is to say, in addition to giving the immediate occasion of the sermon, the title page set down the scriptural passages that supplied its homiletic point of reference. Later in the seventeenth century the conventional format changes slightly, as one sees in this example from an Isaac Ambrose sermon of 1674:

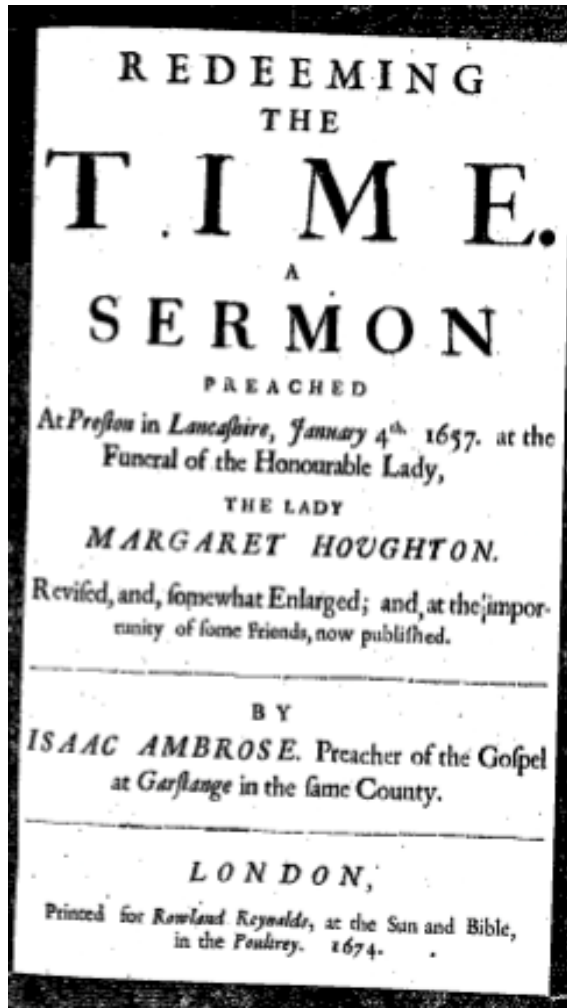


Figure 4. *Redeeming the Time. A Sermon* [ . . . ] by Isaac Ambrose (London: Printed for Rowland Reynolds, 1674); reproduced with permission of the University of Virginia Library (electronic image).

While this is much closer to the layout that is echoed in the “Christian Charity”, we can see that the MS headnote was certainly composed and designed with these print models in mind. Recognizing the presence of that model, however, we may notice as well how the headnote’s lineation deviates. A printer would not have broken the lines in the way they are broken in the New York Historical Society manuscript. But the appearance of the headnote as we see it now is different from the way it appeared when it was first written. Then it mirrored very nicely the balanced form of a seventeenth-century title page.

That fact becomes apparent when we realize that the headnote was built up in three compositional stages, thus:

First stage: A / Modell of X.tian Charity. / Written / On Board th. Arrabella / On th. Attlantick. / By the Honr.bl John Winthrop Esqr. / In his passage / to New-England in th. North America. / Anno 1630.

Second stage: A / Modell of X.tian Charity. / Written / On Board th. Arrabella / On th. Attlantick. / By the Honr.bl John Winthrop Esqr. / In his passage , (w.th th. Great / Company of Religious people of w.ch he was th. / Gov.r,) from th. Island of Great Brittain, / to New-England in th. North America. / Anno 1630.

Third (final) stage: A / Modell of X.tian Charity. / Written / On Board th. Arrabella !/ On th. Attlantick. Ocean! / By the Honr.bl John Winthrop Esqr. / In his passage , (w.th th. Great / Company of Religious people of w.ch Xtian Tribes he was th. / Brave leader & famous Gov.r!,) from th. Island of Great Brittain, / to New-England in th. North America. / Anno 1630.

The revision process helps us grasp the importance of those exclamation points. The general form of the headnote signals that it wants to be read as a true account of the following document — a statement of relevant contextual facts. But the headnote’s documentary features reveal that an aggressive interpretive view has shaped — and in one crucial respect, has misshaped — the explanation it offers. The author of the headnote is far removed historically from the events that it represents — mistakenly in at least two respects — as fact.

Our inquiry has left us with the essential questions about the New York Historical Society manuscript still unanswered: Who wrote the headnote? Who commissioned the secretarial copy? Who made that copy? And of

course, who wrote "A Modell of Christian Charity"? But now our ignorance has turned to a kind of scholarly bliss. Now we know more about what we don't know. Now we know that without an answer to the first question we can't begin to have confidence about an answer to the last. "A Modell of Christian Charity" will remain a textual version of what Churchill called Russia in 1939: "a riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma".

But the documentary evidence allows us to propose an answer to that first question: who wrote the headnote. Because it was consciously scripted to imitate the title page format of a seventeenth-century sermon, identifying its authorship through the handwriting is seriously compromised.<sup>28</sup> But we don't need to identify the headnote script with a specific person's calligraphy. The answer to the question is supplied by another script on the cover page — the number "22" at the top. That number above the headnote was written by the person who wrote the headnote, and as we can see from the donation list, that number was apparently written by the man who donated the MS to the New York Historical Society, Francis Bayard Winthrop.<sup>29</sup>

So perhaps Governor Winthrop did not write the work. He was a lawyer and an administrator, not a minister, and no lay sermons by Winthrop are extant. On the other hand, perhaps a "Christian Charity" sermon was actually written "heere in England" and even delivered "On Boarde the Arrabella! / On the Attlantick ! Ocean!" if the author was someone other than the "Brave Leader & famous Gov.r!". And perhaps Governor Winthrop himself actually commissioned the secretarial document that lay undiscovered in his papers until the nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup>

28. That is to say, the title/headnote parodied such a design in its first stage. The changes made in the stage two and stage three revisions obscured the initial design structure.

29. The scripting of the numbers on the two documents is the same, and the donation list was prepared by Francis Bayard Winthrop perhaps as late as 1809. Spectral curve analysis of the iron gall inks on the title/headnote page and the donation list corroborate the relation: According to the 2018 report prepared by the Library of Congress (see FRANCE ET AL.) both "have the same shape and inflection points, though we cannot definitively say it is the exact same pen/author, just similar type of ink" (12). The report concludes that "Given the similarity of the curve [ . . . ] there is a high probability" that they are the same (12).

30. Remarking on the biblical citations in Winthrop's journal (WINTHROP 1996, 726), Van Engen first thought what Rodgers thinks (VAN ENGEN 2013, 557): that Winthrop was sketching out the texts for his sermon. He now judges that

Those surmises gain purchase when we resurrect the likely authors of such a sermon: the two ministers who sailed on the *Arbella*, John Wilson (1575–1648) and George Phillips (1593–1644). Both were known semi-separatists and both would figure prominently in the Bay colony, Wilson at Salem where he served as assistant minister, Phillips at Watertown where he led the congregation. Phillips was curate at Boxted in 1629 when, late that year, he determined to emigrate and asked John Maidstone, Winthrop’s nephew and an important figure in Boxted, to recommend him to Winthrop, which Maidstone did (*Winthrop Papers* II, 164–5). When they met, Winthrop must have been impressed with Phillips since he installed him as the presiding minister on the *Arbella*.<sup>31</sup> He called Phillips “our minister” and praised his preaching and catechetical work on the voyage.<sup>32</sup>

Soon after landing in the new world Phillips left Boston with Sir Richard Saltonstall and a small company of separatists and semi-separatists to found Watertown, where he served as the settlement’s minister and continued his much-admired preaching. He remained in close contact with Winthrop and, at the outset of the voyage, was one of the signatories to *The Humble Request* letter that declared allegiance to “the Church of England [. . .] our dear mother”.<sup>33</sup> That Phillips and not Wilson was signatory

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“it makes better sense to see him sitting there *listening* to a sermon and jotting down the scriptural verses that Phillips is using to preach. We have loads of sermon notes from the seventeenth century, and these could be Winthrop’s shipboard sermon notes as he listened to Phillips preach. This actually seems to make more sense, especially since while on board the ship, the journal was very much a journal still (not the ‘History of New England’ it later self-consciously became)” (personal correspondence, 4 May 2018; see footnote 19 above). See also NEUMAN 2013.

31. Maidstone’s recommendation is effusive: “His exelency in matters of divinity is such (as I make noe question but experience will make good,) as that hee is inferiour to very few, if to any: for prooffe wheareof, I stande not vpon mine owne slender conceipte, but refer my selfe to the iudgemente of all the eminenteste Christians that ever have exercised familiarity with him: of whome many are encouraged to goe for his sake, and others to follow, so soone as god shall so dispose: neyther doe I at all doubt, but your owne iudgemente (good sir) is so sounde and peircinge, as it will with shorte experience finde out the truth of this relation. If therefore I may bee so bolde, I desire that in the choyce of your pastor, you would bee mindefull of him, if your selfe shall see it meete. I seeke not any thinge herein (if my worde may bee credited) but the promotion of Christes cause” (*Winthrop Papers* II, 165).

32. See WINTHROP 1996, *op. cit.* 10, 730 and n.

33. *Winthrop Papers* II, 231–3.



is important. Although William Hubbard long ago named John White as the author of *A Humble Request*, Phillips is far more likely, as his biographer Henry Wilder Foote plausibly argued.<sup>34</sup> White did not sign the letter, never actually emigrated, and he was not associated with the *Arbella* at all, but with the *Mary and John*, whose passengers he recruited. Phillips was thus far and away the best positioned signatory to express the ecclesiastical and theological issues at the heart of *A Humble Request* so as to persuade the Crown and established church authorities of the loyalty of Winthrop's emigrants. The same is even more true for *A Humble Request's* cognate work, "Christian Charity", since Phillips' homiletic skills were so celebrated. What Foote says of *A Humble Request*, then, might as well be said of "Christian Charity": "Winthrop might have written it, but Phillips, as the only minister on board, would have been the person to whom the task [. . .] would naturally have fallen" (1930, 199). Though Wilson was also aboard the *Arbella*, he was not a signatory. Did Phillips write and perhaps even deliver the sermon "heere in England"? Did Winthrop possess an imperfect copy and have that copied? What are the other possibilities? What difference would it make to know?

As Watertown's minister, Phillips would have written that church's eloquent covenantal decree, as Foote argues he did (1930, 206–7). Though himself semi-separatist, his congregation had many separatist members, and some were not pleased that Phillips was preaching "that the churches of Rome were true churches" (FOOTE 1930, 211). Protesting to the Boston authorities, they called Winthrop and other Boston authorities to Watertown in 1631 to adjudicate their charges. Although the committee ruled that Phillips was "in error", the decision had no practical effect on Phillips' ministry or semi-separatist convictions. He remained close to Winthrop and was Watertown's elected minister till his death.

Besides the documentary evidence of authorship, stylistic evidence sheds some light on the matter. Two signal features of "A Modell of Christian Charity" align it with Winthrop's most important commitments. The first is its insistence on establishing "a place of Cohabitation and Consorteshipp vnder a due forme of Government both ciuill and ecclesiasticall". But the sermon avoids any detailed discussion of institutional issues and makes only a brief declaration of Crown allegiance. In this connection, two of Winthrop's works are particularly revealing: his exploration of the *Reasons to be Considered for* [. . .] *the Intended Plantation in New England* (1629),

34. See FOOTE 1930, 197–201. As Foote points out, the subscription to *A Humble Request* implies that it was "written on board ship" (199).

written at the outset of the venture, and the so-called “Little Speech on Liberty” (1645), which he delivered after the General Court acquitted him of malfeasance in a dispute about a militia election.<sup>35</sup> Both of these works illustrate how Winthrop expresses himself on public occasions and questions and they differ sharply in point of style from “A Modell of Christian Charity”. Winthrop was a lawyer and a magistrate, not a minister and a theologian, and his formal prose reflects an executive and managerial attitude toward colonial issues and problems that is far from the clerical and strongly pastoral approach of the sermon. A severe man, he was also notably generous because he knew the duty he owed to those in need. But nothing he ever wrote handled the issue of community love as it is dealt with in the sermon, and the sermon’s final inspiring appeal is the pastoral rhetoric of a minister, not a brave leader and famous governor like Winthrop.

All of Winthrop’s 1629 “Reasons” fall under the following general purposes: “to help on the coming of the fullness of the Gentiles [i.e., Reformed Religion], and to raise a bulwark against the kingdom of Antichrist which the Jesuits labor to rear up in those parts” (1629, 138). Emigration is driven by the political conditions in Europe and England that “are grown to that height of Intemperance in all excess of Riott [. . .] that all artes & Trades are carried in [. . .] deceitfull & unrighteous course” (1629, 139). Like “A Modell of Christian Charity”, “Reasons to be Considered” looks forward to the founding of uncorrupted civil and ecclesiastical institutions. But unlike the “Modell”, “Reasons to be Considered” frames the issues in pragmatic and worldly terms.

Starting with the legal question of what right the emigrants have to the land in America, Winthrop proposes a series of ten “Objections” to the “enterprise” and then gives multiple “Answers” for each one. The land claim is established in the standard European way: “That which lies common, and has never been replenished or subdued, is free to any that possess and improve it” (1629, 140). The other objections are similarly either ethical or instrumental: “It [is] wrong to our Church and Country to take away the good people” (1629, 141); “We have feared a judgment a great while, but yet we are safe. It were better therefore to stay till it comes” (1629, 142); “The ill success of the other Plantations may tell us what will become of this” (1629, 142); the adventure “is attended with many and great difficul-

35. See *Winthrop Papers* II. The large body of the *Reasons to be Considered* for [. . .] MS materials, including drafts, revisions, and related copies, is collected and edited at II, 106–42.



ties" (1629, 142), and so forth. Thinking in particular of Virginia's "ill success" Winthrop doesn't mince words:

for first their mayne end which was proposed was carnal and not religiouse they aymed chiefly at profitt and not the propagation of religion: secondly they vsed vnfitt instruments viz: a multitude of rude and misgoverned persons the very scumme of the land: 3. They did not establysh a right forme of gover[n]ment.<sup>36</sup>

When he passes to the objection that "It is a work above the power of the undertakers" (1629, 143) he appeals to historical examples that would resonate with the Puritan company:

The Waldenses weare scattered into the Alpes and mountaines of Piedmont by small companies but they became famous Churches whereof some remaine to this day, and it is certaine that the Turckes, Venetians, and other States weare very weake in their beginniges. (*Winthrop Papers* II, 143)

The emigrants are to be inspired by the (oft-cited Reformers') example of the proto-Protestant twelfth-century Waldensians, on one hand, and on the other shamed by the example of the "paynim" Turks and papal Venetians.

Even more interesting is Winthrop's "Little Speech on Liberty" (1645), which he addressed not just to the General Court but to the entire colonial company.<sup>37</sup> In it he goes to the pith of the matter that caused the people of Hingham to bring charges against him. The central issue involves "the Authoritye of the magistrates & the Libertye of the people" (WINTHROP 1996, 586). Winthrop declares his view that once the magistrates are chosen by the people, the authorities' judgments, if wrong or even "evill", have to be accepted as legitimate: "if your magistrates should erre here, your selues must beare it" (1996, 587). He then proceeds to explain that the foundation for this rule is established in a legal distinction between two kinds of liberty, "Naturall (I mean as our nature is now corrupt) & Civill or foederall" (1996, 587). The former, he argues, "is common to man

36. *Winthrop Papers* II, 114.

37. Winthrop's "Little Speech on Liberty" appears in his *Journal*; citations are to WINTHROP 1996, 584–9.

with beastes & other creatures” whereas the latter has “reference to the Covenant betweene God & man, in the morall Lawe, & the Politicke Couenantes & constitutions among men themselues” (1996, 587):

This Libertye is the proper ende & obiecte of Authoritye, & cannot subsist withoute it, & it is a Libertye to that onely which is good, just & honest: this Libertye you are to stand for, with the hazard (not onely of your goodes but) of your lives, if need be [for] it is of the same kinde of Libertye wherewith Ch[r]ist hath made us free. (1996, 587–8)

The argument is formally the same as the one advanced by all Congregationalists who, swearing to the Oath of Supremacy (1534), acknowledged — as the Separatists did not — the authority of the Crown. As Perry Miller pointed out more than seventy-five years ago, however, the argument proved a continual source of conflict and tension for the colonists who — and Winthrop was a pre-eminent example — were seeking religious and political independence from England while at the same time maintaining a formal acknowledgement of Crown authority.

But from the outset Winthrop wanted to shift the seat of administrative control and policy-making to the colony’s civil and ecclesiastical leaders and their “right forme of government”. That was the whole point of Winthrop’s stratagem to carry the king’s charter with him to Massachusetts, conceal it from the settlers, and then require that citizenship in the colony be determined by church membership. The king’s charter did not make that requirement.

When the General Court met at its second session in May 1631 and promulgated the “Oath of a Freeman”, sharp controversies immediately arose.<sup>38</sup> The problem was that the magistrates and assistants declared one had to be “regenerate”, that is, admitted to church membership, in order to be a freeman. To accommodate the widespread dissent, an explicit declaration was added to the oath in 1634 declaring that it would not abridge freedom of conscience: “when I shal be called to give my voyce touching any matter of this State, in which Freeman are to deal, I will give my vote and suffrage as I shall judge in mine own conscience may best conduce and tend to the publike weal of the body” (EVAN 1922, 32). But the Bay Colony would continue to be whiplashed by the unresolved juridical contradiction implicit in that revision, as we know from the antinomian crisis and the

38. Citations to “Oath of a Freeman” are to EVAN 1922.

founding of the independent colonies of Rhode Island, Connecticut, and New Haven.

That oath — the colonial equivalent of the Oath of Supremacy — gave to the freemen of Massachusetts Bay the kind of “Libertye” that Winthrop’s “litle speech” called “the proper ende & obiecte of Authority”. The exact import of what he was arguing is exposed in a small but telling change he made to the text of the speech he copied in his *Journal*. He changed “this Libertye we are to stand for” to “this Libertye you are to stand for” (1996, 588 n. 3). Certain persons do not “stand for” such liberty, they define and administer it.

These contentious issues do not surface in “A Modell of Christian Charity” because its discourse is shaped by a ministerial (religious) rather than a managerial (administrative) point of view. That intentional perspective underwrites its overriding emphasis on “Justice and Mercy” and the rule of Christian love. In sharp contrast with the secular distinction Winthrop draws in “A Little Speech on Liberty” between natural and civil liberty, “A Modell of Christian Charity” is grounded in a theological distinction between “the lawe of nature and the lawe of grace”:

There is [. . .] a double Lawe by which wee are regulated in our conversation one towards another: in both the former respects, the lawe of nature and the lawe of grace, or the morrall lawe or the lawe of the gospel [. . .]. By the first of these lawes man [. . .] is commaunded to loue his neighbour as himselfe [. . .] the former propounds one man to another, as the same fleshe and Image of god, this [latter] as a brother in Christ allsoe, and in the Communion of the same Spirit and soe teacheth vs to put a difference betweene Christians and others. (283–4)

## Concluding Unscientific Postscript

All of the scholars who have engaged with this work have, it seems to me, acted in good faith, and not least of all Folsom and Savage in 1838. Our hindsight throws the context of their work into relief. The rise of Unitarianism in the early nineteenth-century seriously exacerbated the critique of Puritan Congregational history and religion that had begun in the early eighteenth-century. Given that cultural situation, one can appreciate the enthusiasm with which the discovery of “A Modell of Christian Charity” was greeted by scholars sympathetic to the legacy of Puritanism. Their attention was understandably focused on the dramatic occasion of the

work, its remarkable discovery, and its message of love, rather than on its documentary status.<sup>39</sup> The sermon projected a view of John Winthrop and the Puritans that would stand against the voices of William Ellery Channing and William Cullen Bryant, the critical fictions of Lydia Child (*Hobomok*, 1824) and James Fenimore Cooper (*The Wept of Wish-Ton-Wish*, 1829), and especially against severe works like John Neal's *Rachel Dyer* (1828). It was a reminder that if the Puritan adventure climaxed in the bad eminence of 1792 Salem, it began very differently.<sup>40</sup> That early antiquarian approach to "Christian Charity", as we know, grew and prevailed through the next 150 years, mutating into the important recent work of scholars like Perry Miller, Sacvan Berkovitch, and Andrew Delbanco.

But the success of that approach came at a cost, though not to the ideas presented in "Christian Charity", however we assess those ideas and whoever wrote the work. For 150 years scholars — literary scholars in particular — did not give their undivided and unbiased attention to a foundational work of American cultural memory. Enspelled by the local (Puritan) ideological conflicts preserved in that memory, we neglected what has always been our special vocation: philological truth, the source and end and test of all historical and cultural interpretation. And in neglecting to seek that truth we have failed to appreciate the significance, the *meaning*, of the work's 200-year disappearance on one hand, or, on the other, the meaning of the meanings it acquired when it was finally made public.

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39. See FOLSOM and SAVAGE 1838, 31–2.

40. For useful discussions of these matters see DICUIRCI 2010, 565–592; GOULD 1995, 58–82; CARAFOIL 1988, 605–22; BAYM 1989, 459–88; SCHULTZ 1973; VANDERBILT 1986. Two key works of antiquarian defense were HOLMES 1805 and GRAHAME 1827 — both, like BANCROFT (1844–1875; see especially vol. 1, chapter 12, "The Pilgrims") later, unabashedly pro-Puritan.

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# “Old, Old Words, Worn Thin”

On the Manuscript of Borges’s “El inmortal”

*Daniel Balderston*

## ABSTRACT

This essay examines a probable second draft of the Borges story “El inmortal”, originally published as “Los inmortales” in *Los Anales de Buenos Aires* in February 1947, and subsequently included as the lead story in the short story collection *El Aleph* in 1949. The manuscript, which is now in Special Collections at Michigan State University Libraries, includes late revisions, though it seems to have been the copy sent to the compositors for *Los Anales*. There are several printer’s marks that indicate where to place the illustrations, two by Amanda Molina y Vedia and one by the writer’s sister, Norah Borges. This manuscript does not contain bibliographical references in the left margin, a feature of some other Borges manuscripts from this time, although the story itself includes acknowledged and unacknowledged quotations from a variety of sources.

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IN MY RECENT BOOK *HOW BORGES WROTE* I STUDY IN SOME DETAIL a variety of Borges manuscripts, from reading notes and outlines to first drafts (often with numerous alternatives above and below the line and in the margins), through second drafts, and extending to revisions on published versions. The project extended over ten years, and the corpus of manuscripts to which I had access grew and grew, eventually topping two hundred. Needless to say, in the course of preparing and revising the book for publication, I had to leave out quite a number of interesting manuscripts. One, which I mention only in passing in *How Borges Wrote*, is what I believe to be a second draft of the famous story “El inmortal”, first published in *Los Anales de Buenos Aires* as “Los inmortales” in February 1947 and then included, as the lead story, in *El Aleph* in 1949.

With “El Congreso”, published much later, it has the distinction of being Borges’s longest story, divided into an introduction, five chapters and an epilogue. It is also one of his most complex stories. Ronald Christ studied it in some detail in *The Narrow Act: Borges’ Art of Allusion* (1969), and many

## LOS INMORTALES

Salomon saith. *There is no new thing upon the earth. So that as Plato had an imagination, that all knowledge was but remembrance; so Salomon giveth his sentence, that all novelty is but oblivion.*

FRANCIS BACON: *Essays*, LVIII.

EN Londres, a principios del mes de junio de 1929, el anticuario Joseph Cartaphilus, de Esmirna, ofreció a la princesa de Lucinge los seis volúmenes en cuarto menor (1715-1720) de la Iliada de Pope. La princesa los adquirió; al recibirlos, cambió unas palabras con él. Era, nos dice, un hombre consumido y terroso, de ojos grises y barba gris, de rasgos singularmente vagos. Se manejaba con fluidez e ignorancia en diversas lenguas; en muy pocos minutos pasó del francés al inglés y del inglés a una conjunción enigmática de español de Salónica y de portugués de Macao. En octubre, la princesa oyó por un pasajero del Zeus que Cartaphilus había muerto en el mar, al regresar a Esmirna, y que lo habían enterrado en la isla de Ios. En el último tomo de la Iliada halló este manuscrito.

El original está redactado en inglés y abunda en latinismos. La versión que ofrecemos es literal.

Figure 1. *Los Anales de Buenos Aires*, February 1947, p. 29.

others have worked on one aspect or another of it.<sup>1</sup> No one, however, has studied the manuscript of this story, which recently entered the Special Collections at Michigan State University Libraries. It offers a fascinating look at Borges's compositional process, though the genetic dossier is incomplete, making it impossible to reconstruct previous stages in the writing of the story. Even though incomplete, this genetic dossier permits us to see Borges's obsessive rewriting of certain elements of the story, particularly those that have to do with place names, languages and the idea of destiny. Also, as we shall see, he labors to provide a precise translation of a hidden quotation.

As I observed above, the "El inmortal" manuscript is a second, not a first, draft.<sup>2</sup> Several formal features of the manuscript justify this assertion. First of all, it offers relatively few variants when compared to Borges's

1. Other studies of "El inmortal" include ALONSO ESTENOZ (2011), CASTILLO DE BERCHENKO (1989), CÉDOLA (1987, 135–50), JULLIEN (1995) and MEJÍA (2009).
2. Elsewhere I have studied multiple drafts of several stories, including "La espera", "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan", "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" and "Emma Zunz" (as well as two drafts of *Evaristo Carriego* and four drafts of the poem "A Francisco López Merino"); see, for example, BALDERSTON 2014a, 2014b, 2015.



first drafts, which generally propose many. This pattern is exemplified in Borges's first and second drafts of a paragraph of "Tlön":

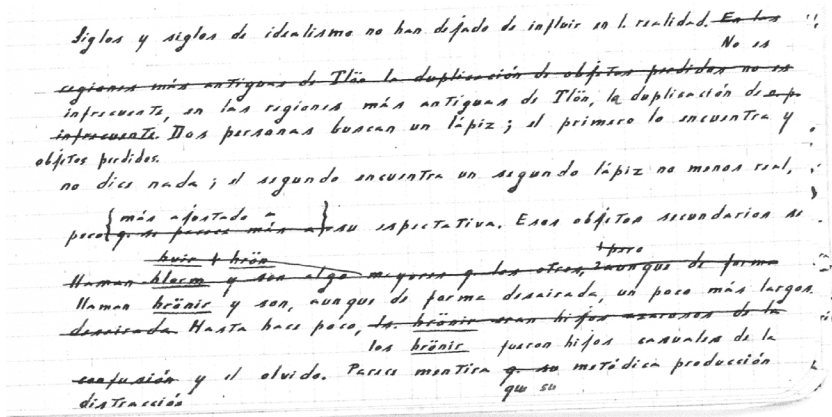
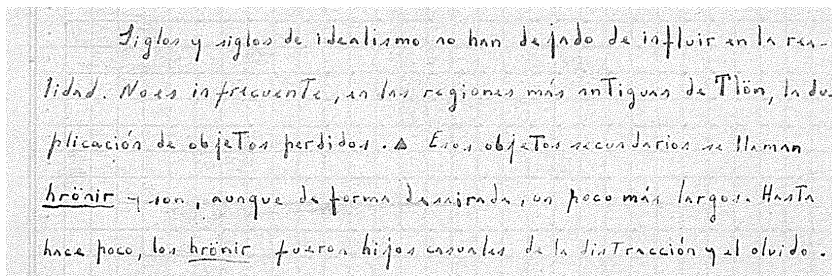


Figure 2a. Fragment of first draft of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius" (private collection).

Siglos y siglos de idealismo no han dejado de influir en l. realidad. En las  
 No es  
 regiones más antiguas de Tlön la duplicación de objetos perdidos no es  
 infrecuente. en las regiones más antiguas de Tlön, la duplicación de o. p.  
 infrecuente; Dos personas buscan un lápiz; el primero lo encuentra y  
 objetos perdidos.  
 no dice nada; el segundo encuentra un segundo lápiz no menos real,  
 —{más ajustado a }  
 pero {q. se parece más a} su expectativa. Esos objetos secundarios se  
 huir + hrön ————— 1 pero  
 llaman hlorm y son algo mayores q. los otros, 2 aunque de forma  
 llaman hrönir y son, aunque de forma desairada, un poco más largas.  
 desairada. Hasta hace poco, ls. hrönir eran hijos azarosos de la  
 los hrönir fueron hijos casuales de la  
 confusión y el olvido.  
 distracción

The second draft of this passage looks quite different:

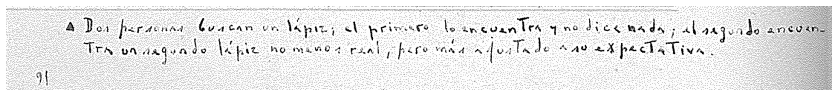
Siglos y siglos de idealismo no han dejado de influir en la realidad. No es infrecuente, en las regiones más antiguas de Tlön, la duplicación de objetos perdidos. ▲ Esos objetos secundarios se llaman hrönir y son, aunque de forma desairada, un poco más largos. Hasta hace poco, los hrönir fueron hijos casuales de la distracción y el olvido. Parece mentira que su metódica producción cuente apenas cien años, pero así lo declara el Onceno Tomo. (Bodmer MS 16)



**Figure 2b.** Fragment of page 16 (Borges's numbering) of the second draft of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", published in Michel Lafon, ed., *Deux fictions* (p. 99).

Here the triangle indicates an insertion upside down at the top of the page, with the missing bit that Borges had apparently forgotten to copy from the earlier draft:

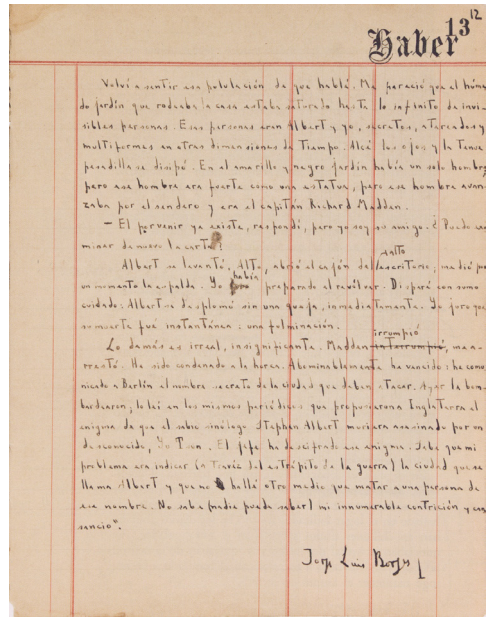
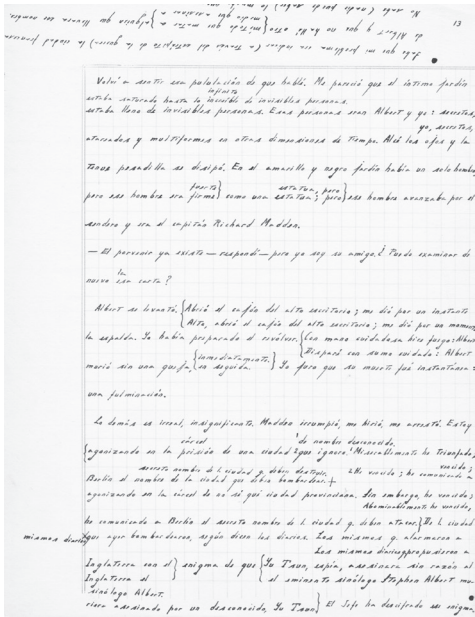
▲ Dos personas buscan un lápiz; el primero lo encuentra y no dice nada; el segundo encuentra un segundo lápiz no menos real, pero más ajustado a su expectativa.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 2c.** Fragment of page 16 (Borges's numbering) of the second draft of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius", published in Michel Lafon, ed., *Deux fictions* (p. 99).

3. James Irby's translation is as follows: "Centuries and centuries of idealism have not failed to influence reality. In the most ancient regions of Tlön, the duplication of lost objects is not infrequent. Two persons look for a pencil; the first finds it and says nothing; the second finds a second pencil, no less real, but closer to his expectations. These secondary objects are called *hrönir* and are, though awk-

Similarly, in the two drafts of "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan", the first draft of the story is composed on graph paper, while the fair copy is on the Haber (Credit) page of a Cuadernos Caravela accounting ledger (often used in the early 1940s for fair copies)<sup>4</sup>:



Figures 3a & b. First and second drafts of the end of "El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan": first draft at Michigan State; second reproduced in an auction catalogue of Bloomsbury Auctions (p. 45).

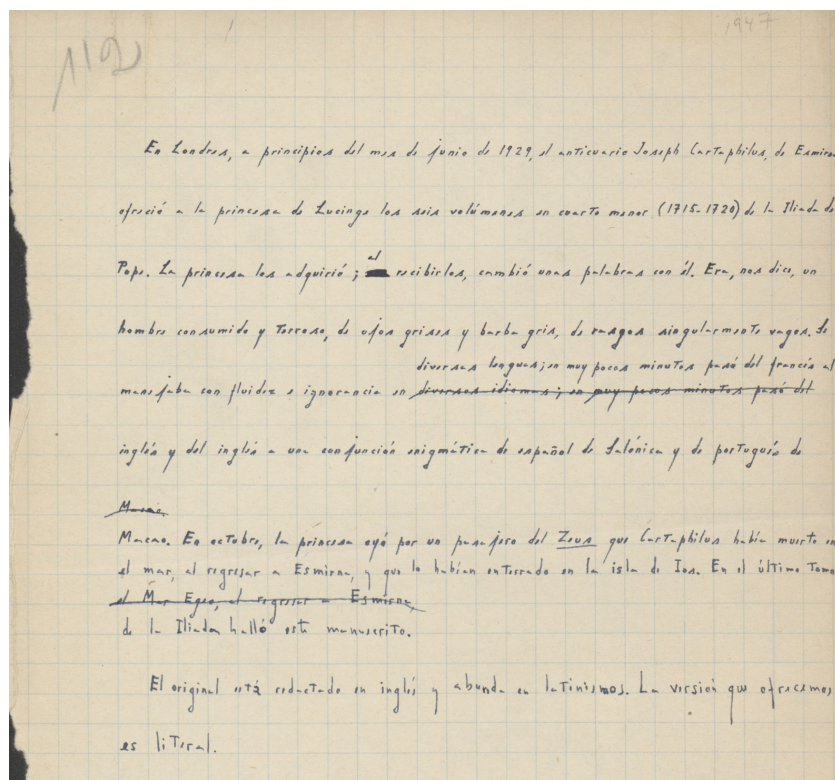
Second, in the draft of "El inmortal" under our gaze Borges has copied his story neatly onto graph paper, something typical of his attempts to tame his unruly (and often tiny) handwriting, and the writing is often quite a bit larger than that of the first drafts. In addition, the handwriting in first drafts slants more to the right, whereas here the letters are more upright.

ward in form, somewhat longer. Until recently, the *hrönnir* were the accidental products of distraction and forgetfulness"; see BORGES 1964, 37–8.

4. I discuss these two manuscripts in detail in "Senderos que se bifurcan" (2015), where I contrast several passages from the two stages of composition of the story, and also in *How Borges Wrote* (2018, 169–82).

Third, there is a printer's mark on the first page of the story, which implies that it was this manuscript that was delivered to the compositors of *Los Anales de Buenos Aires*. Borges did not know how to type, and many second drafts that survive have printer's marks and sometimes notes by Borges identifying the periodical to which he was sending the fair copy. His printers must have been very patient, as this is not a true fair copy: there are portions that are extensively rewritten, notably in the first and last paragraphs of the story.<sup>5</sup>

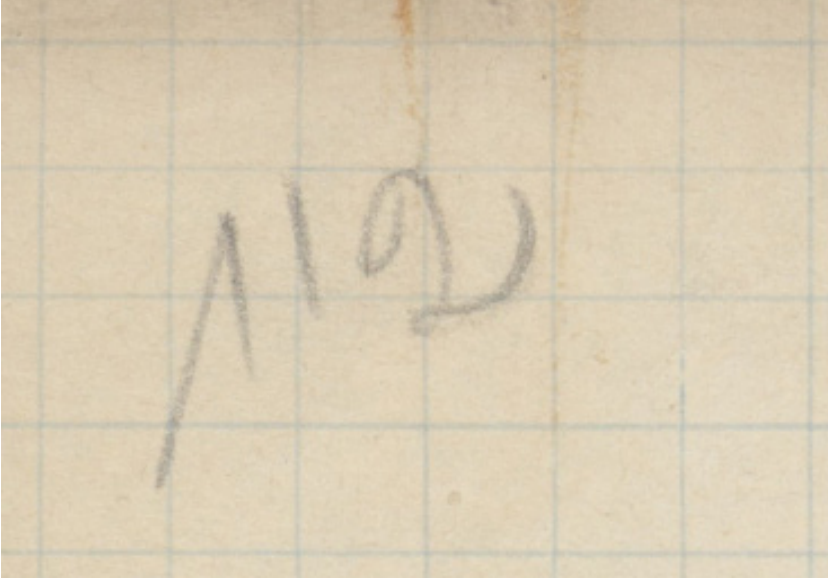
Here is the first page of our manuscript:



**Figure 4.** First page of manuscript of “El inmortal”, reproduced with the permission of the Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries.

5. Nora Benedict studies the relation of Borges to his printers in the section “Borges Behind the Scenes: Crafting the Physical Book” (51–8) of her forthcoming book manuscript *Borges and the Literary Manuscript*.

The printer's mark I referred to is at the upper left corner:



**Figure 4a.** Detail of the first page of the manuscript from Michigan State; reproduced with the permission of the Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries.

While this first page includes a fair amount of rewriting (which is also true of the last one), much of the rest of the manuscript is close to a fair copy, as we shall see. This is fairly typical of second drafts; in *How Borges Wrote* I study rewritings of crucial passages of “La muralla y los libros” (141–3) and “El pudor de la historia” (143–5). But rewriting continues even after publication (BALDERSTON 2018a, 203–9), suggesting that Borges did indeed believe that there is no such thing as a definitive text (BALDERSTON 2018a, 20, 210).

Many of Borges's first drafts, by contrast, have notes in the left margin that show what sources he consulted as he was writing.<sup>6</sup> For instance, the first draft of “El hombre en el umbral”, besides showing that “Christopher Dewey” is a fictional character, not “nuestro amigo”, and that there was no need to refer to Bioy Casares in the reference to a particular kind of short sword from Indostan because there was an image of that kind of sword in

6. See for instance the manuscripts of “La secta del Fénix” and “El hombre en el umbral”, both discussed in BALDERSTON 2018a, 36–40 and 45–9.



the article “Sword” in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, also shows that there is indeed an interpolation from Kipling in the story, and that the interpolation is drawn from the Kipling poem “Evarra and His Gods”.<sup>7</sup> If what we had before us were a first draft of “El inmortal”, we would surely find here the precise reference — a title and a page number — for the allusions that Borges explicitly tucked into the story: those from Pliny, Descartes, Shaw and De Quincey.<sup>8</sup> It was Borges’s practice to check quotations and references, and the system of bibliographical references in the left margin of the manuscripts of many of his essays and a few of his stories are tightly tied to the notes he kept in the back of the books he read, as revealed by Laura Rosato and Germán Álvarez in *Borges, libros y lecturas*.<sup>9</sup> If this were a first draft, a note would appear not only next to the explicit allusions (those made explicit, I should note, in the epilogue to the story) but also to a variety of others. The most interesting of these is the last line of the story: “Palabras, palabras desplazadas y mutiladas, palabras de otros, fue la pobre limosna que le dejaron las horas y los siglos” (BORGES 1974, 544). This is an unstated translation of a line from an important Conrad preface, that to the novel *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”*, which reads:

[I]t is only through an unremitting, never-discouraged care for the shape and ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to colour; and the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words; of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage. (1979, 146)

Since the plagiarized defense of plagiarism is, like the interpolation from Kipling in “El hombre en el umbral” or the reference to John Stuart Mill’s

7. See BALDERSTON 2018a, 45–9.

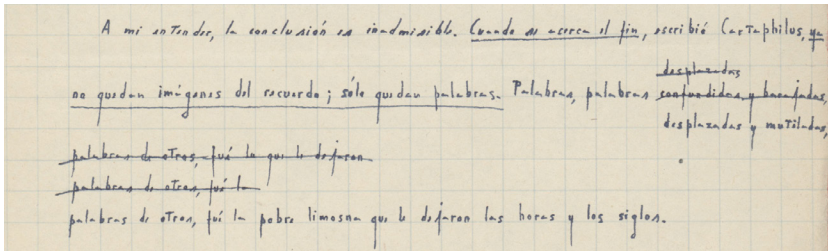
8. These are the allusions that Ronald Christ studied in his book, although he also makes passing reference to a variety of other works, including Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, a poem by Ben Jonson, a reference to Conrad’s *Lord Jim*, and an obscure source, *Marcus Flaminius; or a view of the military, political and social life of the Romans: in a series of letters from a patrician to his friend; in the year DCC.LXII. from the foundation of Rome to year DCC.LXIX* by Ellis Cornelia Knight, a work mentioned by De Quincey in a review; see CHRIST 1969.

9. See ROSATO and ÁLVAREZ. [2010] 2017. For instance, the reference to Juvenal in the first paragraph of “El hombre en el umbral” is connected to a note in Borges’s copy of a bilingual (French-Latin) edition of the satires; see also BALDERSTON 2018a, 45–8.

A *System of Logic* in "El escritor argentino y la tradición", not explicitly marked in the published text, the manuscripts allow us to recover parts of Borges's use of his sources that would be difficult to recognize otherwise.

In the Conrad passage we can see that Borges had not quite finished the story when he copied it into this second draft. The version of this sentence in the manuscript reads:

A mi entender, la conclusión es inadmisibile. Cuando se acerca el fin,  
escribió Cartaphilus, ya no quedan imágenes del recuerdo; sólo quedan  
desplazadas  
palabras. Palabras, palabras confundidas y barajadas,  
 -desplazadas y mutiladas,  
~~palabras de otros, fué lo que le dejaron~~  
~~palabras de otros, fué la~~  
 palabras de otros, fué la pobre limosna que le dejaron las horas y los  
 siglos.<sup>10</sup>



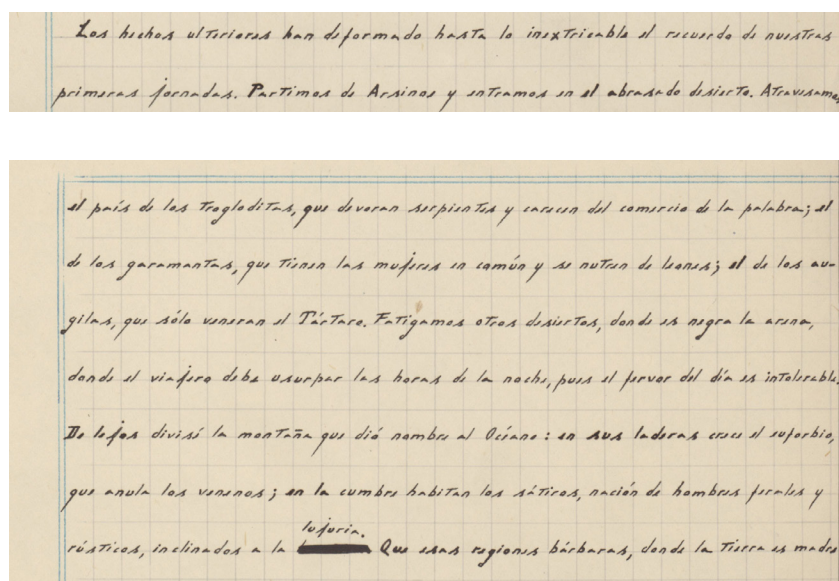
**Figure 5.** Second draft of "El inmortal", initially numbered 2 by Borges, then struck through, then renumbered 18, though the pages numbered 17 and 18 come after the page numbered 23 in the manuscript (and in the story).

When this passage is compared with other passages in which Borges is translating from a printed source — e.g., the quotation from Goethe at the beginning of "El pudor de la historia" or the quotations from Paul Deussen

10. Irby's translation is as follows: "In my opinion, such a conclusion is inadmissible. 'When the end draws near,' wrote Cartaphilus, 'there no longer remain any remembered images; only words remain.' Words, displaced and mutilated words, words of others, were the poor pittance left him by the hours and the centuries"; see BORGES 1964, 149.

in “Historia de la eternidad” — we can see that the series of alternatives here show Borges considering how to refashion the Conrad quotation to provide a fitting conclusion to an epilogue about plagiarism. In Borges’s translation practice there is a consistent tendency toward the proliferation of textual possibilities: he proffers many alternatives, resisting pressure to close a text during the process of composition.

Now, to show that the manuscript in our sights is a second, not a first, draft, let’s look at one of the “intrusiones, o hurtos” that are named in the epilogue. As Ronald Christ has shown (1969, 216–19), the first of these is an extensive borrowing from Pliny’s *Natural History*. Here is the relevant portion of pages 3 and 4 of the manuscript:



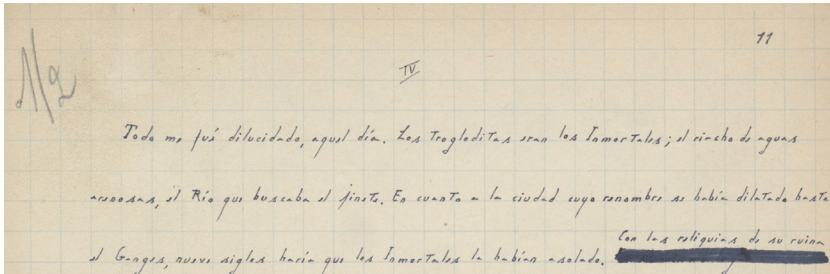
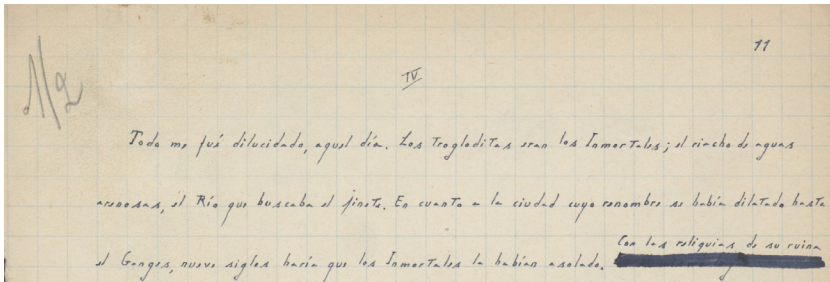
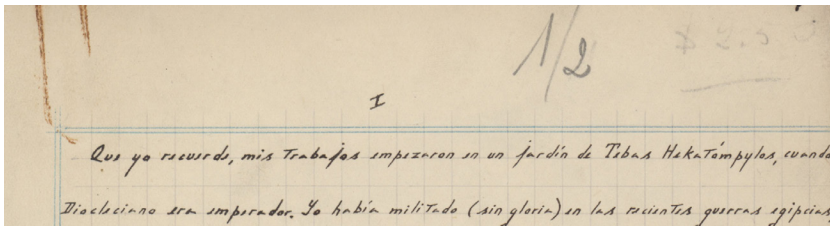
**Figure 6a and 6b.** Second draft of “El inmortal”, numbered pages 3 and 4 in Borges’s hand.

It is easy to see how different the treatment of this “borrowing” is from Borges’s translation from Conrad: the sentences concerning the Troglodytes, the Garamantes and the Augilae are a fair copy from an earlier draft, without any annotations in the left margin about the sources (Pliny, but also, as Christ has shown, De Quincey on Pliny [1969, 218]). In fact, the



only correction in this passage is a change from a word that is probably "lascivia" to its synonym "lujuria". Borges's manuscripts are still surfacing, so perhaps the first working draft exists somewhere. Still, that a story that consists famously of a web of quotations should only survive in a manuscript that is shorn of all the references is fascinating: were we to have access to the first draft there would surely be clues to more hidden quotations than the ones discovered so far, since this is a story about originality and plagiarism.

There are similar printer's marks at the beginnings of sections I and IV of the story and at the beginning of the epilogue:



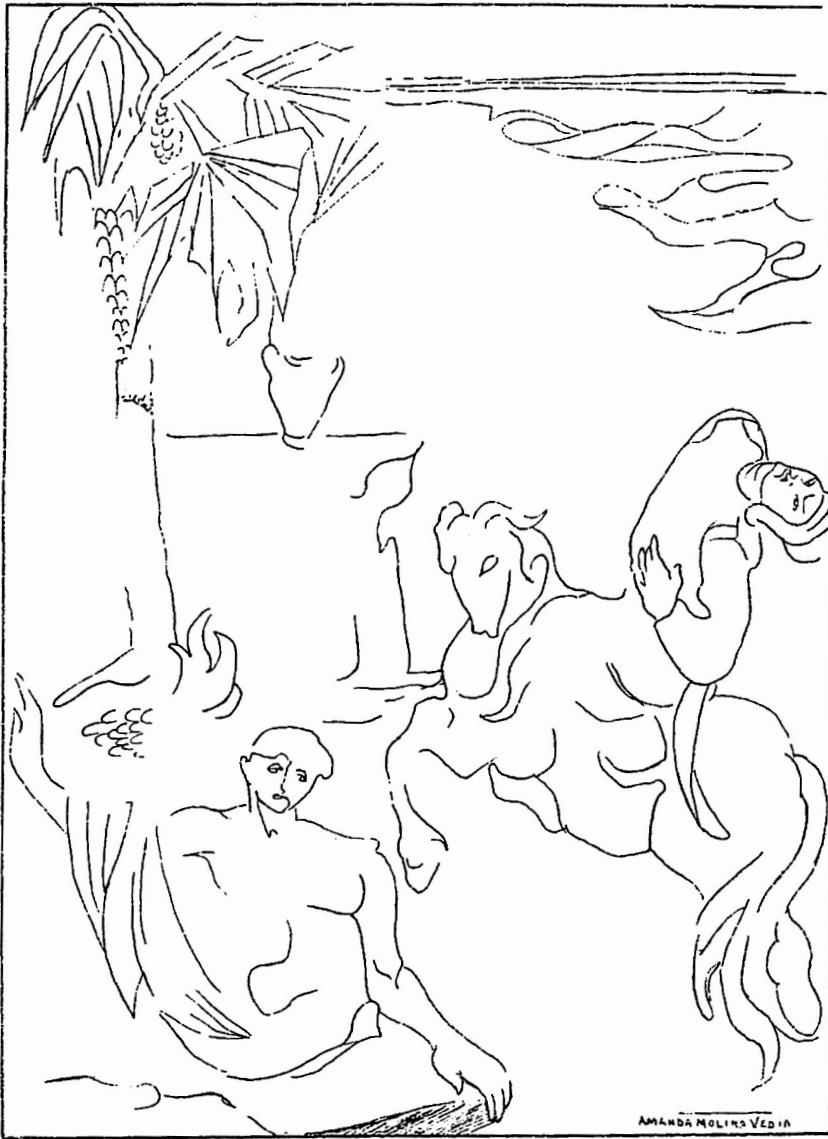
Figures 7, 8 and 9. From the second draft of "El inmortal", pages numbered 1, 11 and 17 in Borges's hand.

Since these marks do not correspond to page breaks in the story as it was published in *Los Anales de Buenos Aires* — all three of these sections begin in the middle of pages of the *Anales* publication — they most likely indicate the need for spacing within the pages.

As noted earlier, the version of the text published in 1947 in *Los Anales de Buenos Aires* was titled “Los inmortales”, not “El inmortal”. The two titles play with the idea of the one and the many (as the titles of “Tema del traidor y del héroe” and “Historia del guerrero y de la cautiva” play with the motif of the double). In fact, near the end of the story the narrator wonders whether he is one or many: “postulando un plazo infinito, con infinitas circunstancias y cambios, lo imposible es no componer, siquiera una vez, la Odisea. Nadie es alguien, un solo hombre inmortal es todos los hombres” (BORGES 1947, 541).<sup>11</sup> The bits of interpolated text from Pliny, Descartes, De Quincey and Shaw (all of which are explicit), and the hidden bits of Conrad and others, suggest that authorship is decentered and called into question.

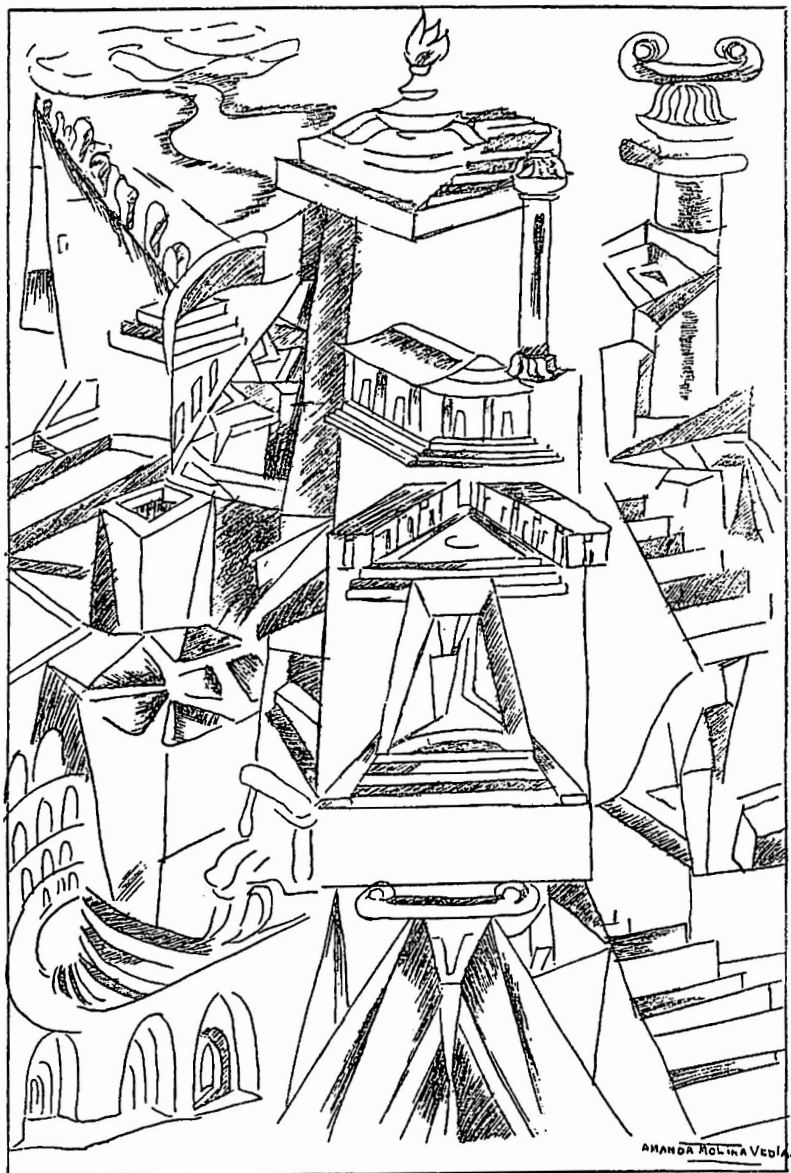
Borges was seriously interested in the visual arts: he was a skilled draughtsman.<sup>12</sup> In the case of *Los Anales de Buenos Aires*, as editor he was at liberty to commission illustrations; in this case there are two illustrations by Amanda (Mandie) Molina y Vedia that accompany the text. The first is a Roman centurion speaking with a man on horseback: a direct illustration of the dialogue near the beginning of the story when Marco Flaminio Rufo first gets news of the City of the Immortals:

11. Irby’s translation is as follows: “if we postulate an infinite period of time, with infinite circumstances and changes, the impossible thing is not to compose the *Odyssey*, at least once. No one is anyone, on single immortal man is all men”; see BORGES 1964, 145.
12. I discuss this in “Borges: Portrait of an Unexpected Artist”, a contribution to a festschrift for the late Donald Yates; see LABINGER and YATES 2019.



**Figure 10.** Illustration by Amanda Molina y Vedia, "Los inmortales", *Anales de Buenos Aires*, p. 31.

The second illustrates the dizzying labyrinth that is the City of the Immortals:



**Figure 11.** Illustration by Amanda Molina y Vedia, “Los inmortales”, *Anales de Buenos Aires*, p. 35.

Finally, one more drawing appears at the end of the text, just after the final paragraph of the story and below the name of the author. This one, however, is signed by Norah Borges, not by Amanda Molina y Vedia, and it picks up on the Hellenic theme of the story:



**Figure 12.** Illustration by Norah Borges, "Los inmortales", *Anales de Buenos Aires*, p. 39.

These collaborations between the writer and his sister, and with Amanda Molina y Vedia, show Borges's close relation to the visual arts. Indeed, many of Borges's manuscripts contain drawings made by him that are of a high quality; I have surmised elsewhere that he never published any of his drawings so as not to compete with his sister. In any case, "El inmortal" is a story full of what Robert Louis Stevenson, so important to Borges's ideas about narrative, called "visual scenes",<sup>13</sup> so it is unsurprising to see that it was illustrated in its first publication.

To return, for a final time, to the manuscript. Most pages of the manuscript are fair copy, with few or no corrections. So, for instance, is the page numbered 23, which tells of the recognition of "Argos":

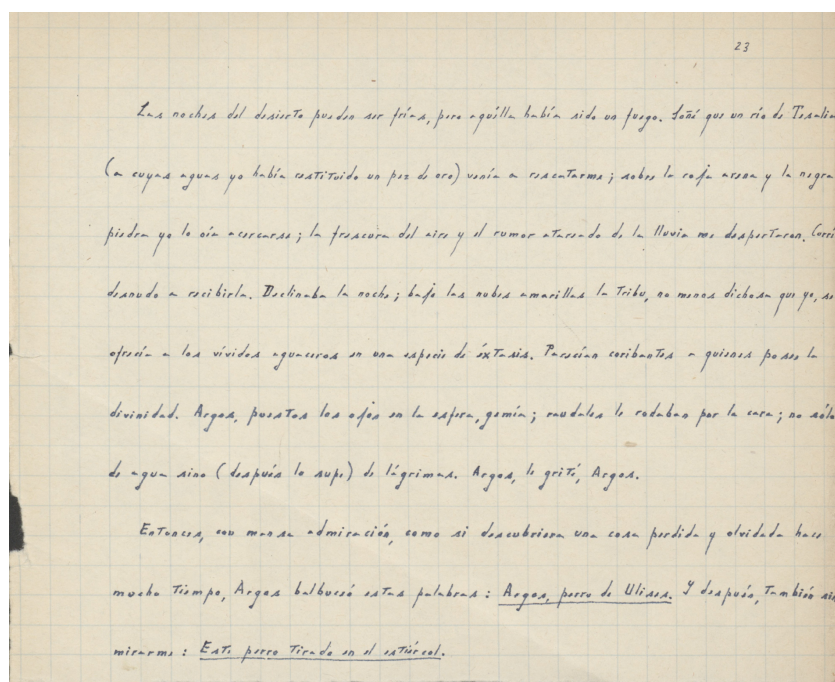


Figure 13. Second draft of "El inmortal", numbered page 23 in Borges's hand.

Others have corrections in black rectangles of ink that are impossible to decipher from a photocopy, which is all I have been able to work with thus

13. On Stevenson's influence on Borges, see BALDERSTON 1985.



far. This means, of course, that it is not possible to see the verso of the pages, to decipher words that have been struck through (as the first alternative to "lujuria" was, as already mentioned), or to try to guess at the brand of the notebook and its probable number of pages (before Borges cut out the fragments of pages that are left now). For example, here is the page that comes just after, numbered 24:

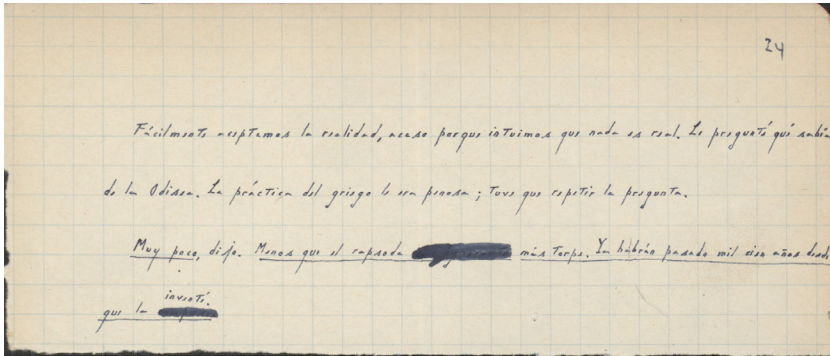


Figure 14. Second draft of "El inmortal", numbered page 24 in Borges's hand.

Here Borges blotted out words in a way that only can be deciphered with a light table or, as Nora Benedict has shown, with multispectral imaging. Another characteristic of several manuscripts of Borges's stories, observed for instance in the New York Public Library's manuscript of "La lotería en Babilonia" and the University of Virginia's manuscripts of "El muerto" and "La casa de Asterión", is that he cut many of the pages to eliminate evidence of some hesitation or change of mind. Another moment in the fifth part of the story shows his concerns again with places and dates:

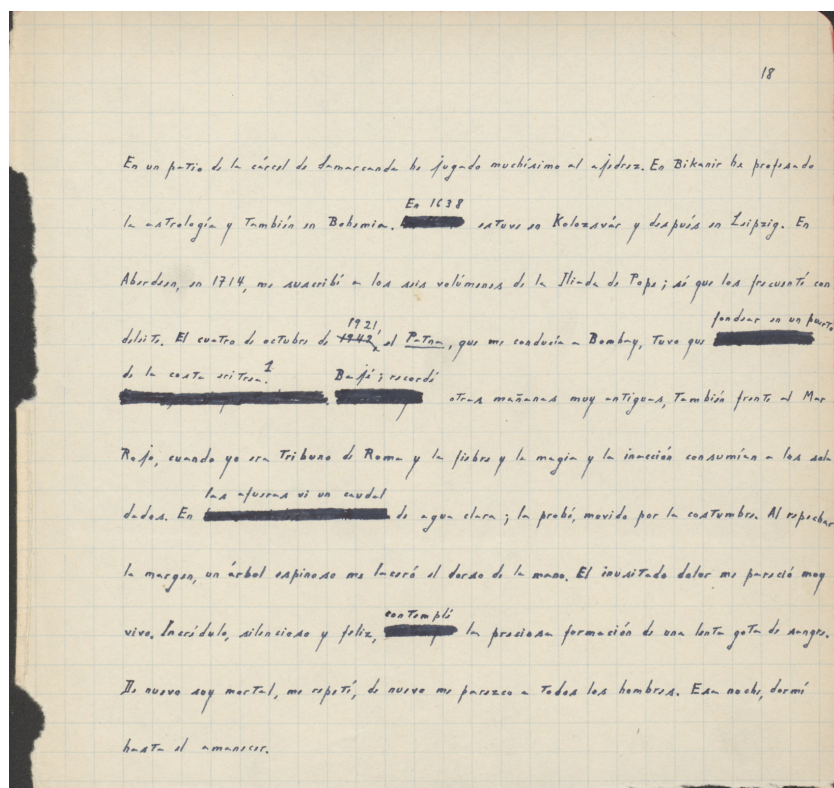


Figure 15. Second draft of “El inmortal”, numbered page 18 in Borges’s hand.

The places and dates mark Cartaphilus’s journeys, defining his identity by where he was and when. And the Patna, of course, is the ship in Conrad’s *Lord Jim*, confirming that connection.

In three places Borges notably departs from his practice of blotting out text, a practice that renders it unrecoverable, and elects instead to cancel words and phrases with strikethroughs that leave the canceled text at least still partially visible.<sup>14</sup> The first instance appears at the opening of the story, in the initial description of Joseph Cartaphilus:

14. See BENEDICT 2018. Nora Benedict has studied Borges’s strikethroughs and blottings in “Digital Approaches to the Archive”, in which she uses multispectral imagining to recover some of the canceled text in “El muerto” and “La casa de Asterión”.



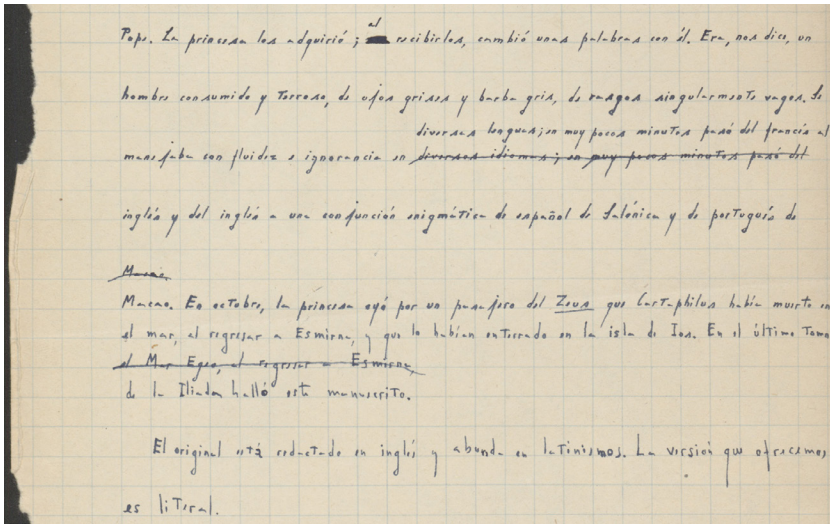


Figure 16. Unnumbered first page of second draft of "El inmortal".

The vacillations here have to do with whether to call the various languages that Cartaphilus mixes together "idiomas" or "lenguas", a moment's hesitation about the place name Macau, and the hesitation between "había muerto en el mar, al regresar a Esmirna", or whether to name that sea, "el Mar Egeo". As on numerous other occasions, he writes "mar", then considers "Mar Egeo", then crosses the latter name out: "mar" will be the definitive reading. The second moment of uncertainty comes at the end of the fifth part of the story, the end of Cartaphilus's narrative (which is also his expression of uncertainty about whether he is both Homer and Marco Flaminio Rufo):

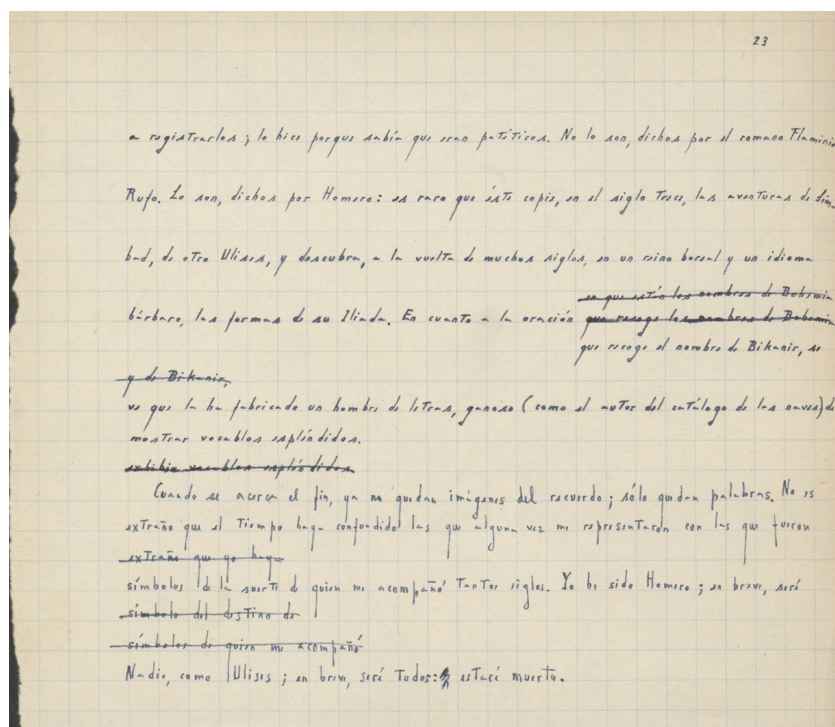


Figure 17. End of second draft of “El inmortal”, numbered page 23 in Borges’s hand.

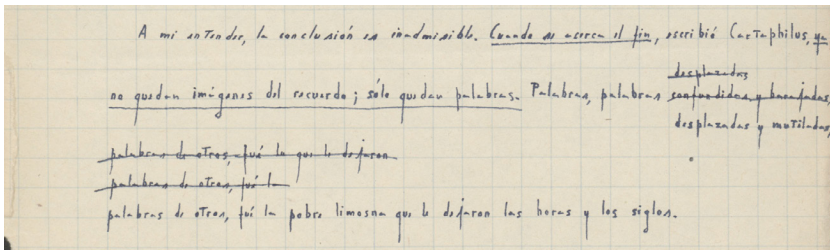
Here the uncertainties have to do with how to name Bikanir as one of the places that Cartaphilus visits, whether the man of letters desires to “exhibit” or to “mostrar vocablos espléndidos”, and how to name his strange “destiny” and its “symbols”. The third and last moment of great hesitation comes, as we have already seen, at the end of the story, with Borges’s translation from Conrad.

By itself, this manuscript would not tell us enough about Borges’s composition practices: the first drafts tend to tell us more about Borges’s use of his sources, his radical uncertainties about particular segments of a text (often including the beginning and the end), changes in place names and personal names, reordering of sections, and rewriting of some sections on separate sheets. In the second drafts much of his radical uncertainty as a writer is concealed. A similar problem was faced by Michel Lafon when he edited, for the Fondation Martin Bodmer and Presses Universitaires de France, the manuscript of “El Sur” and what he knew to be the second

draft of "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius":<sup>15</sup> he mentions that he knows of the existence of an earlier draft but was not able to study it. That also meant that he did not have sufficient knowledge of Borges's compositional practices to recognize features of the manuscript of "El Sur" that are common, not anomalous (BORGES 2010a, 28).

Suffice it to say that Borges had to provide legible handwritten copies for his printers, since he did not know how to type and did not have a typist at hand (except on rare occasions, such as the typescript of "Emma Zunz" that is at Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas<sup>16</sup>). In this case, the printer clearly worked directly from this manuscript, marking it in several places. Even so, the continued care that Borges shows at several moments is reminiscent of the poetics of possibility that he discusses in "La supersticiosa ética del lector" and "Las versiones homéricas", and even in what is close to a fair copy we see him hesitate, consider several possibilities, and revise.

This manuscript does not have the title of the story. It is impossible to know whether it was "El inmortal" or "Los inmortales" in the first instance. It also has no bibliographical references in the left margin, but enough is known about Borges's writing practices in the late 1940s for us to imagine an earlier draft, one full of uncertainties and possibilities, and one that gives a clear account of the sources in the left margin.



**Figure 18.** End of the second draft of "El inmortal", initially numbered page 2 by Borges, then renumbered 18.

The "palabras confundidas y barajadas", then "desplazadas", then "desplazadas y mutiladas", are his own words but they are also "palabras de

15. I have discussed the first draft of "Tlön" at length; see BALDERSTON 2017.

16. On this typescript, see BALDERSTON 2018a, 184–9.

otros”, emphatically, three times, in the final paragraph of the story. Muddled identities, muddled languages: the uncertain itineraries and dates that mark Cartaphilus’s journeys, taking him from his initial identity as Marco Flaminio Rufo, then back to Argos and Homer, and then forward to the Christian legend of the Wandering Jew, confirm that this is a story concerned intimately with space and time, and one that suggests that any imprecision about those coordinates will result in uncertainty about personal identity itself.

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# The Maps That Killed Alexander Posey

*Matt Cohen*

## ABSTRACT

Nineteenth-century struggles over mapping concepts and techniques yielded the forebears of digital humanistic data visualizations today, staging the political tensions of the deep map's entry into the humanities. The careers of educational reformer Emma Hart Willard and Creek poet and critic Alexander Posey, who were both map-makers in their ways, exemplify the entanglements of the history of deep mapping. Willard was a feminist innovator in her work with historical visualization, but at the cost of solidifying a regime of indigenous vanishment. Posey fought for his people's cultural survival, but he did so from within a bureaucratic engine made possible in part by Willard's widespread pedagogy linking the American map with a vision of settler dominance. These two figures left us provocative maps, but also offer a way to reflect on the justness of map-making — on the difficulty of deepening the map wisely, or even ethically.

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Roll on, ye Prairies of the West,  
Roll on, like unsailed seas away!  
I love thy silences  
And thy mysterious room.  
— Alexander Posey, "Prairies of the West"<sup>1</sup>

ALEXANDER POSEY DIDN'T DIE IN PARTICULARLY DEEP WATER when he was swept away by the swollen Oktahutche river on May 27, 1908. The famous Muscogee Creek writer, editor, and educator had a lifelong fear of drowning. Perhaps that fear shaped one of his poetic depictions of a beneficent landscape saving humans from the dangers of the current:

1. POSEY 2008, 87. For the first publication of Posey's poems, see POSEY 1910.

Why do trees along the river  
Lean so far out o'er the tide?  
Very wise men tell me why, but  
I am never satisfied;  
And so I keep my fancy still,  
That trees lean out to save  
The drowning from the clutches of  
The cold, remorseless wave.  
(2008, 74)

From one perspective, it was a river he loved, an axis of Creek culture in Indian Territory and Oklahoma that he wrote into poetry and prose, that took his life. From another, we might say it was two deep maps that killed Alexander Posey.

This essay indicates the parallel enthusiasms in the humanities today for new visualization technologies and for new ways of telling scholarly stories. “Deep mapping”, in its digital instantiation, is one of a number of transmedia experimental methods that leverage the maturity of electronic techniques for transforming complex humanities information into machine-readable layers — GIS, force vector graphs, topic modeling, immersive environments, dynamic or crowdsourced digital archives. Born of writers and artists who felt an ecocritical, reparative urge, the deep map can be textual, visual, digital, physical, virtual, *in situ*, portable — a freeing of format, medium, and apparent accessibility that is exhilarating to many scholars. Given recent rapid advances in markup technology, algorithm development, and interface design, it appears possible to introduce into digital knowledge representations the kind of ambiguity and fuzziness on which the humanities thrive. All this seems to warrant experimentation, innovation, and exploration with deep mapping as a humanities framework.<sup>2</sup>

Yet those three terms — experimentation, innovation, and exploration — are keywords of Western colonialism. If we are to test the promises of the deep map against history, the place of mapping in the settlement of North America and the dispossession of its Native people is a good place to

2. John Corrigan defines a deep map as a spatial narrative; for an overview, see BODENHAMER, CORRIGAN, and HARRIS, eds. 2015. See also RIDGE, LAFRENIERE, and NESBIT, 2013, 176–89; and on the larger context of the transformation of cartographic philosophy and technique, see KITCHIN, PERKINS, and DODGE 2009, 1–25.



start. The deep map concept's deprivileging of Cartesian cartographicism in favor of experientialism and multiplicity can distract us from the processual dimensions of mapping (or the generation of any other kind of cultural representation) and their ethics. "The history of the mistranslation and misrepresentation of Indigenous cartographies into Western cartographies virtually defines the history of Western colonization and coercion of Indigenous peoples", argue Margaret Pearce and Renee Paulani Louis (2008, 110).<sup>3</sup> Consider that cartography has since the 1970s been increasingly used by Indigenous people to defend their political and economic self-determination, and the application of digital technologies plays a key role in these efforts to maintain both cultural heritage and political self-determination.<sup>4</sup>

Pearce and Louis call for a creative, multicultural use of cartographic language (a metaphor for the processes and representational techniques of mapping) "as a potentially useful means of incorporating Indigenous and non-Indigenous conventions in the same map" (2008, 107). Even then, as Matthew Sparke has argued, Western cartography, interwoven with regimes of authority as it is, can both give and take away, from an Indigenous perspective: if judges or courts refuse to recognize its competing representational ontology, a map's respect for Native processes or cosmology won't accomplish the end of protecting legal sovereignty.<sup>5</sup> This link to authoritative regimes of power, whether in the courtroom or the academy, entails an attention to methodology and ethics in scholarly discussions of deep mapping outside the professional realm of cartography.

Here, I offer a look at deep mapping neither in a celebratory nor a tragic mode, but in the elegiac mood. The story that follows, I argue, is part of the history of digital humanities. I tell it not to dismiss or celebrate the advent

3. For further contextualization, see PEARCE and LOUIS 2008, 107–26.

4. Ethnohistorical scholarship on Indigenous American mapping suggests that resistant cartography has been employed since at least the era of Columbus; see for example MUNDY 1996; and LEWIS 1998. For a range of approaches to digital representations of Indigenous space, see for example, The Ways (<https://the-ways.org/>); the Penobscot Nation's map site (<https://www.penobscotnation.org/departments/natural-resources/gis-mapping/maps-for-download>); RITTERBUSH, ET AL., [https://tourbuilder.withgoogle.com/builder#play/ahJzfmd3ZWltdG91cmJ1aWxkZXJyEQsSBFRvdXIYgICAoM78\\_QgM](https://tourbuilder.withgoogle.com/builder#play/ahJzfmd3ZWltdG91cmJ1aWxkZXJyEQsSBFRvdXIYgICAoM78_QgM); and the ongoing Indigenous Mapping Workshop, <http://imwcanada2015.earthoutreach.org>. See also BASSO 1996; RUNDSTROM 1991, 1–12; RUNDSTROM 1998, 1–9; and CHAPIN, THRELKELD, and CENTER FOR THE SUPPORT OF NATIVE LANDS 2001.

5. See SPARKE 1998, 463–95.



of new visualization opportunities, but to stage the ethical tensions of the deep map's entry into the digital humanistic scene. Inquiry into the history of mapping's practice and a genealogy of ethical concerns have to be taken up as we think about deep mapping projects going forward. In looking at the history of deep mapping and its entanglements, I turn to Emma Hart Willard and Alexander Posey, who were both map-makers, in their ways, in America's long nineteenth century. Willard was a feminist innovator in her work with historical visualization and pedagogy, but at the cost of solidifying a regime of indigenous vanishment. Posey fought for his people's cultural survival, but he did so from within the bureaucratic engine made possible in part by Willard's widespread pedagogy linking the American map with a grand settler colonial vision of dominance. These two figures have left us maps of different kinds, but they also give us more: a way to reflect on the justness of map-making, on the difficulty of deepening the map wisely, or even ethically.

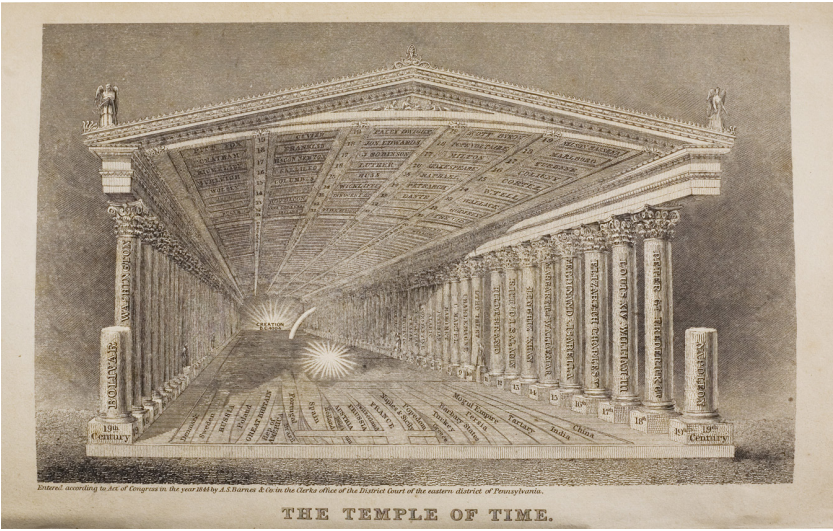


The first map that killed Posey was the universal history map. Long before Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel* or Yuval Noah Harari's bestseller *Sapiens* came the nineteenth-century's epic universal histories of the human race. Emma Willard's works exemplify the excitement over the potential of what was then a new form of visualization. Willard was an activist and educator, founder of the Troy Female Seminary in New York, and creator of textbooks and atlases of wide and enduring popularity. One of her early American history books opens with an engraving of the conceptual "American Temple of Time", a foreshortened version of her data visualization of the broader human "Temple of Time"<sup>6</sup> (see figs. 1 and 2).

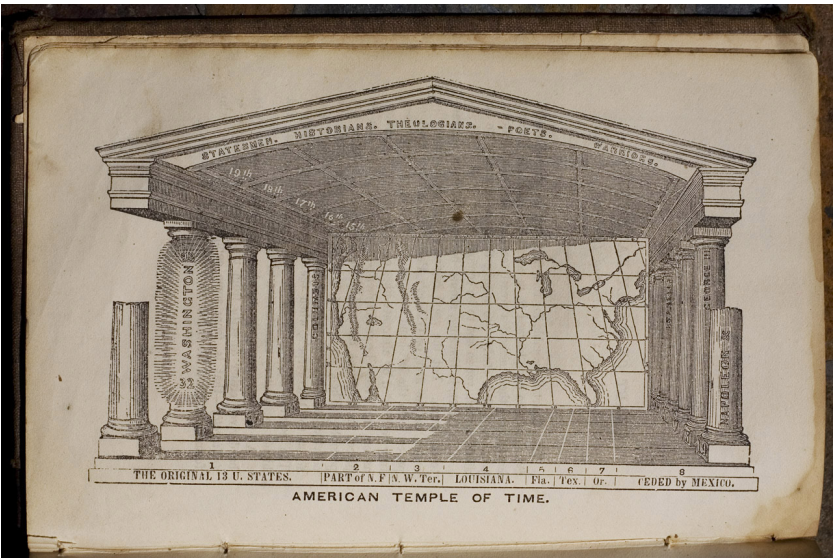
Lining the floor of the temple is a visually compelling diagram, deep with respect both to chronology and historical nuance. Ribbons — or better, streams — of cultural, political, economic, and military power flow across each other and strikingly minimize the overall importance of the United States (see fig. 3).

But there are no indigenous Americans represented here, no aboriginal civilizations that count, only a vaguely hinted-at darkness, a shadowy uncivilization that undergirds all of time back to "Creation" in 4004 B.C.E.,

6. See WILLARD 1866; see also WILLARD 1829 and WILLARD 1845. Susan Schulten (2007, 542–64) argues that the ribbons of civilizational development image can be traced back to the designs of William Playfair, the eighteenth-century English data visualizer.

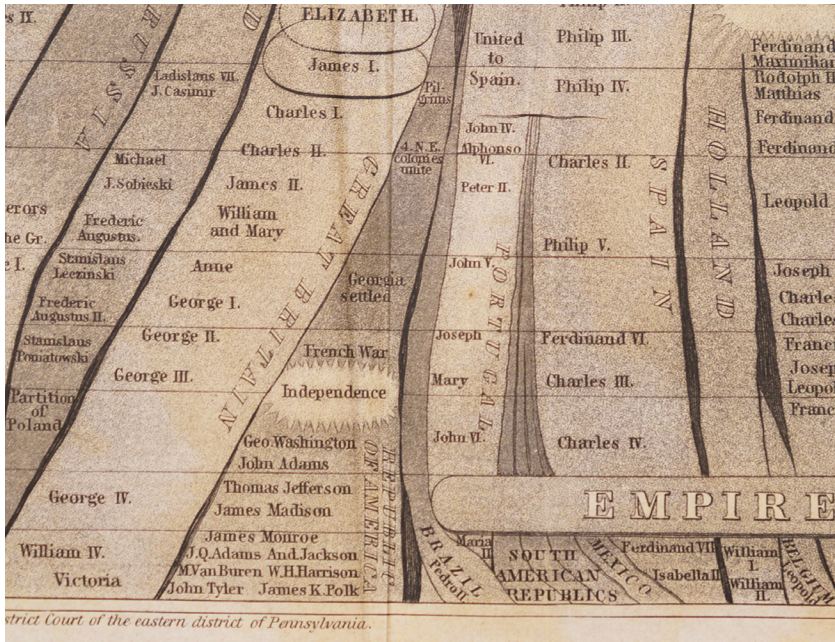


**Figure 1.** The history of civilization, represented as “The Temple of Time”, a Christian temporal map housed in classical architecture. From Emma Willard, *Universal History in Perspective* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1845).



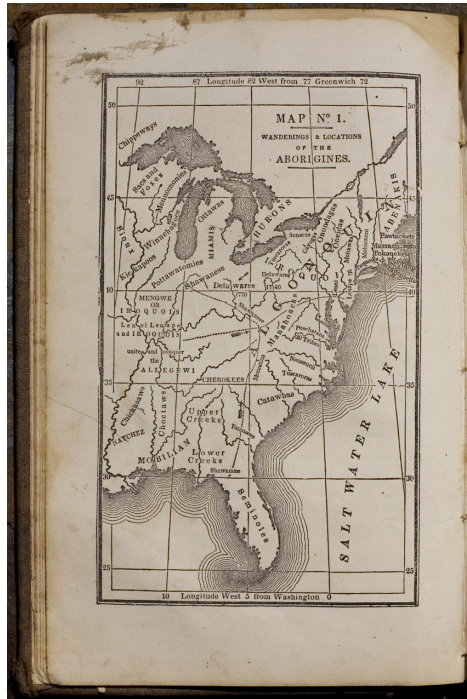
**Figure 2.** The incomplete Unites States map and “American Temple of Time”. From Emma Willard, *Abridged History of the United States, or Republic of America*, new and enlarged (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1866).





**Figure 3.** The minor advent of the United States, and the murky background shades of indigeneity. Detail of “Perspective Sketch of the Course of Empire”, from Willard, *Universal History in Perspective*.

**Figure 4.** The chaotic landscape of Indigenous America in Map No. 1, from Willard, *Abridged History of the United States*.



a beginning to which no indigenes appear to trace their origins. Indeed, this history of the United States, which helped bring Willard's work to national significance, contains but two short and inaccurate chapters about American Indians and a map of the "Locations and Wanderings of the Aborigines". Susan Schulten (2012, 25) observes that Willard's loose, "introductory" map of Indigenous nations places them, stereotypically, in a "timeless space prior to human history".<sup>7</sup> Willard's visualized streams of time were cold, remorseless waves, Posey might say.

Willard's many maps and chronometric visualizations shared ideological assumptions with other universal histories of the time. China, we are told in Israel Smith Clare's 1878 *Illustrated Universal History*, "is supposed to have been founded by Noah soon after the dispersion of mankind from the Tower of Babel" (22), neatly folding it into the Christian origin story. "She 'mapped' history", Schulten writes of Willard, "in order to create a national past that would translate the fact of the country as a territorial entity into the much more powerful idea of the country as a nation" (2012, 543). Inscribed here is a national past, to be sure: but the "American Temple of Time" emerges from a deeper and broader context of racial discourses of civilization underwriting indigenous dispossession and genocide across the world. Its design equates a certain understanding of deep time with the spread of a certain kind of empire — Christian, Western, "civilized".<sup>8</sup>

Willard's images are undeniably striking. To many readers, then and now, they have offered memorable experiments in the representation of deep human space and time. Lauren Klein, among a number of scholars working on feminist visualization techniques, has recently argued for a humanistic attention to data visualization and its histories as a way not only to move beyond narrative modes of making knowledge but also of calling attention to the "process of scholarly research". She advocates for humanistic experiments with data visualization that "present concepts, advance arguments, and perform critique".<sup>9</sup> Certainly Emma Willard's visualizations were doing

7. See also the striking contemporaneous frontispiece illustration to S. Augustus Mitchell, *A System of Modern Geometry* (Philadelphia: Thomas, Cowperthwait, 1845), depicting the "Stages of Society" from "Barbarous" and "Savage" to "Civilized and enlightened". I am grateful to Abram Van Engen for sharing with me his forthcoming research on Willard and the institutionalization of American nationalism.

8. For reviews of Willard's American history and an account of her defense against "trespasses on my literary property", see WILLARD 1847.

9. The passages from Klein cited above are from her (unpublished) 2014 public lecture "Feminist Data Visualization" given at the HUMlab, Umeå University,

those things, and Klein's attention to the feminist dimensions of these images is important.

An extension of feminist visualization, however, might attend to the way in which interactive frameworks have been enabled by hierarchical and teleological dynamics peculiar to settler colonialism. Willard's visualizations invite students to interact with them, as part of a larger strategy in her textbooks, involving interrogation, dialogue, and a sort of fill-in-the-blank approach in which history is something unfinished, as you can see in the frontmost pillars of the temple of time. "This sketch", the description of the "American Temple of Time" says, "may be enlarged and filled up by the pupil, by a drawing of his own" (WILLARD 1866, xiii). Willard also adapted past timeline-rendering techniques, which were often angular, to introduce a sense of the receding sharpness of history, the atmospheric quality of the distant past, the fluid, bending shape of a historical tributary. But while Willard's methods destabilize binaries, the boundaries between the western subject and history as authoritative narrative, they do so by maintaining other binaries, particularly the concepts of civilization, nation, and race. Willard's plan for female education was profoundly nationalist and explicitly expansionist. Her progressive claim about female education was rooted in the insistence that the course of history "points to a nation, which, having thrown off the shackles of authority and precedent [. . .] would rather lead than follow, in the march of human improvement", bringing that "race of men [. . .] unparalleled glory" (1919, 25).<sup>10</sup> History is unfinished, Willard's *oeuvre* suggests, but you may be sure it will not be finished by Indigenous people.



This would perhaps have been enough to kill a man, but Alexander Posey was subject to another map as well. He was born in 1873 at Tuskegee Cana-

Sweden. In the same lecture, Klein, speaking of nineteenth-century data visualizers like Willard, her sister Almira Phelps, and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, observed, "As women they were more attendant to the contingent position of the viewer of the visualization because it mirrored their own contingent status in that culture"; Klein further suggested that these women's work hints at an important theoretical understanding of the relations between data and interface: that "it is through the visual form selected or created by the designer that the underlying data is reshaped" to the point that "at times the data's initial meaning or significance is overturned altogether". See also JOYCE (2015, 80), who refers to the "Temple of Time" as "a conceptual masterpiece".

10. On Willard's life and fame, see LUTZ 1929.

dian, on the Canadian River, the town where Posey's family had settled after the Civil War. His family hailed from both Confederates and Union sympathizers, but largely on the Creek side (his mother's) from White Town and Wind Clan people who were known as peacemakers and political mediators. The contemporary Mvskoke /Creek poet Joy Harjo conveys a sense of the Wind Clan's role with a line in her poem "Once the World Was Perfect". Having lost the originary perfect world, the poem's speaker says, "We were bumping into each other / In the dark":

Then one of the stumbling ones took pity on another  
And shared a blanket.  
A spark of kindness made a light.  
The light made an opening in the darkness.  
Everyone worked together to make a ladder.  
A Wind Clan person climbed out first into the next world. . . .  
(HARJO 2015, 14)

*First into the next world.* Posey graduated from Bacone Indian University in Muskogee, and served as a school superintendent, politician, and newspaper editor. Across his work, he laid explicit claim to his role as an indigenous intellectual, drawing on Creek oral traditions and ways even as he advocated for the pragmatic adoption of the regimes of the United States. He is most famous as the writer of the satirical "Fus Fixico Letters".<sup>11</sup> But he is also notorious as an agent of the Dawes Commission, involved in shady land deals as a functionary of the U.S.'s attempt to "allot" (privatize) Indigenous land, fracture American Indian communities, and strengthen U.S. sovereignty. Given allotment's strategy of removing collective ownership and establishing single-tribe lineages, it might seem Posey was riding the remorseless wave, not surrendering to it.

Certainly, Posey had been no stranger to Western-style spatial entrepreneurship. When a neighbor laid claim to a piece of land he had previously staked out, Posey staked off an even larger area around the culprit, isolating him. "I pay Boone back in his own coin", he said, "and in some of my own."<sup>12</sup> The logic that underlays Willard's depictions of civilization's progressive flow appealed to him, seemed to present an inevitability to which American Indians must adapt. Posey's first job with the Dawes Commission was as an interpreter, starting in 1904. He was quickly appointed clerk of a

11. See POSEY 1993.

12. Posey quoted in LITTLEFIELD 1992, 99.

field party, charged with getting as many Creeks on the allotment rolls as possible. The work involved over eighteen months of extensive and sometimes difficult travel across the entire Creek territory, including parts of other nations' territory in which Creeks were rumored to be living. Still more difficult was navigating the intense resistance from those who disagreed with the policy of privatization. One of Posey's news reports in the *Indian Journal* chronicled the opposition of Wacache, one of the Creek traditionalists termed "Snakes" during the allotment period. Daniel Littlefield describes dramatically how Wacache, a well-off farmer,

refused to enroll for an allotment, and when the land his home sat on was selected by someone else, he burned his house piece by piece, along with most of his possessions. He kept a fire burning there constantly, held dances, became a 'prophet,' and acquired a great following among not only the Creek Snakes but those of the Choctaw Nation as well, whom Alex labeled "ignorant" and "credulous".

(1992, 147)

Posey's progressivist judgments notwithstanding, his documentation of the forms and acts of resistance by the Snakes both in his journalism and in his reports for the Dawes Commission (figs. 5 and 6) stands side-by-side with his bureaucratic acts of property management on behalf of settler colonialism.



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,  
COMMISSION TO THE FIVE CIVILIZED TRIBES.  
DUSTIN, INDIAN TERRITORY, April 22, 1905.

In the matter of the application for the enrollment of  
certain new borns as citizens of the Creek Nation.

Alex Posey being duly sworn, testified as follows:

By Commission:

Q What is your name, age and post office address?

A Alex Posey, 31 and Muskogee.

Q Are you a citizen of the Creek Nation? A Yes sir.

Q Got your land, have you? A Yes sir.

Q You have been engaged recently in the field for the Dawes  
Commission securing evidence about Creek citizens or new borns?

A Yes sir.

Q Have you a list of children for whom application could not be  
made and about whom you have succeeded in obtaining some information?

A Yes sir.

Q You may state the conditions and the names of these children?  
You desire to make application for them? A Yes sir.

Q Name them.

A Span Hopiye, Tuckabatchee, Jennie Hopiye (or Barnett), Tuckabatchee  
have a female child about two years old. Post Office, Wetumka, Indian  
Territory.

Jim Davis, Kialigee, has two new born ~~children~~ children--one  
about two years old (boy); another (a girl) about one year old.  
Post Office, Mellette, Indian Territory.

Sam Butler, about three years old. Parents: Myron Butler, U.S.  
citizen and Lydia Fields, Quassarte No. 2. Post Office, Dustin,  
Indian Territory.

Billy Barlow, Quassarte No. 2 and Lydia Fields, Quassarte No. 2  
have a child about a year old. Post Office, Dustin, Indian Terri-  
tory.

Q This is the information you received from relatives right around  
Dustin, on April 22, 1905? A Yes sir.

Q Were you informed that the parents of these children were unwill-  
ing to make application for their enrollment? A Yes sir.

Q This was the only way that the rights of these children would be  
saved? A Yes, sir. I made every effort to obtain direct information  
from the parents but in every instance they refused to give their  
testimony.

Lona Merrick, being duly sworn, states that the above and  
foregoing is a true and correct transcript of her stenographic notes  
as taken in said cause on said date.

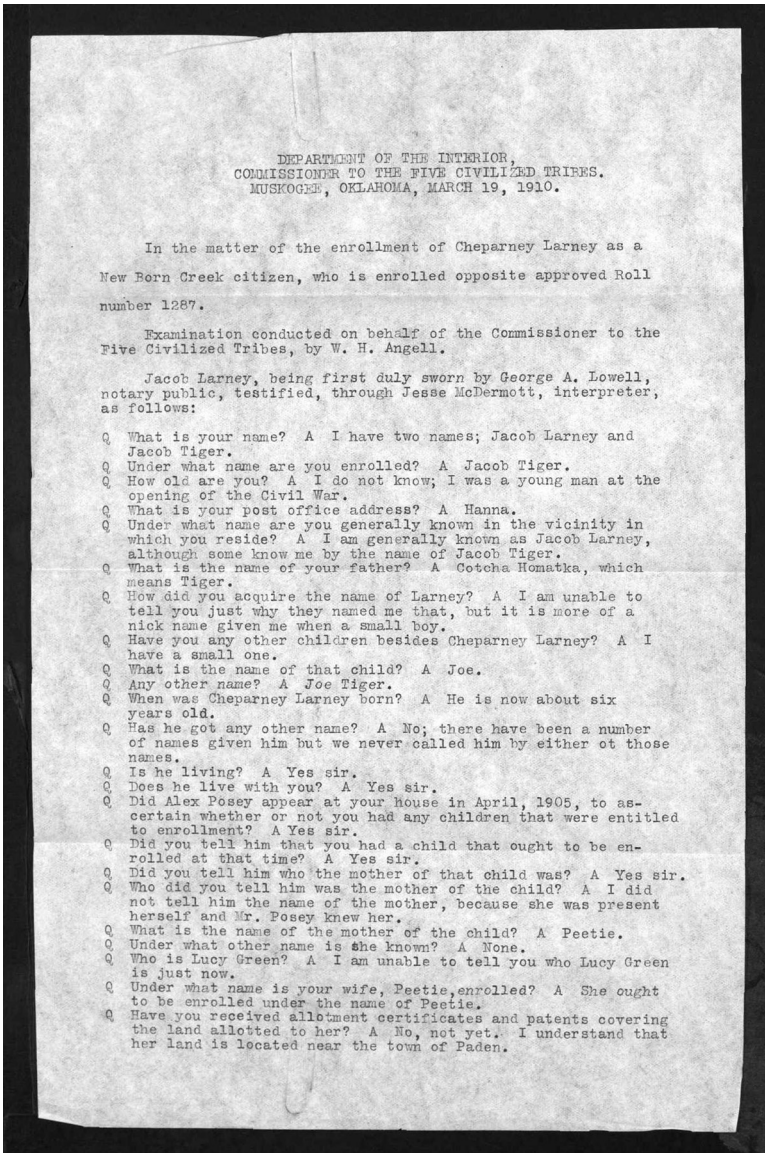
*Lona Merrick*

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 7 day of May, 1905.

*Edw. B. B. B.*  
Notary Public.

Figure 5. Alex Posey testifies on behalf of Creek "Snake" children, for the Dawes Commission. Dawes Enrollment Jacket for Creek Newborn, Card #981, National Archives Identifier 45183630. <https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=Alex%Posey&f.ancestorNalds=617283&offset=20>.





**Figure 6.** An account of one of Posey's visits to a Creek family during allotment. "Oklahoma Applications for Allotment, Five Civilized Tribes, 1899-1907", National Archives and Records Administration, Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas. Database with images available at [FamilySearch](https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3SHY-61CS-CBT?cc=1390101&wc=MXHG-G29%3A967440501%2C967463101); <https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/3:1:3SHY-61CS-CBT?cc=1390101&wc=MXHG-G29%3A967440501%2C967463101>.

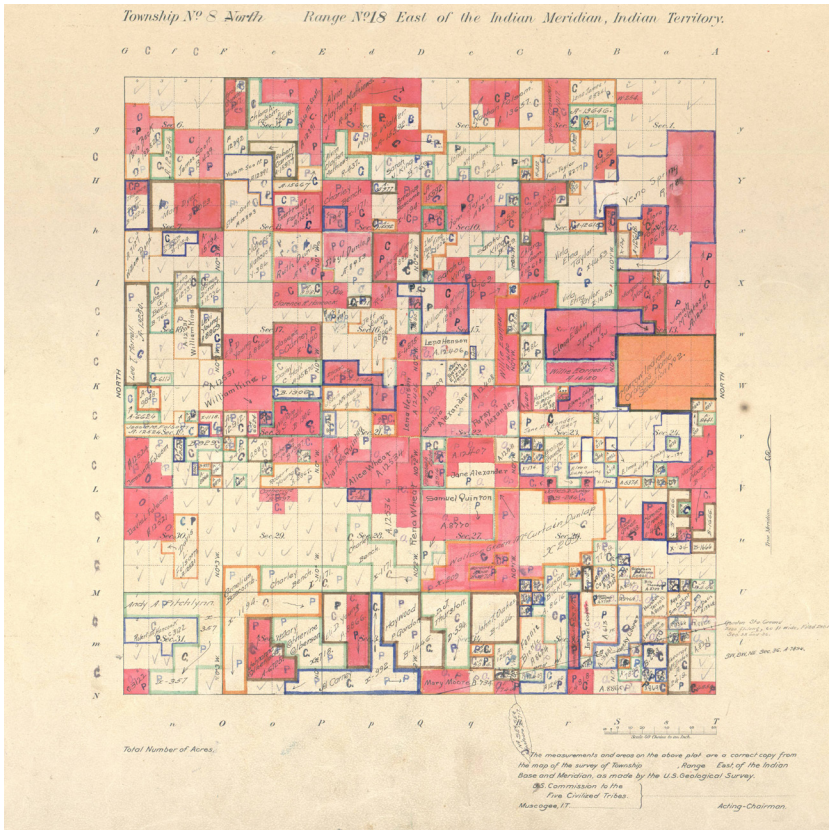
This deep map captures acts of mutual justification that destabilize the cartography, archives, and histories of both the United States and the Creek Nation.<sup>13</sup> Posey was making, or extending, a deep map of Creek territory and culture with his stories, collections of Creek objects, poetry, and journalism. He was doing so by way of, rather than in contradistinction to, his work verifying the brutal appropriative maps of the Dawes Commission (fig. 7).

“Alex Posey has sung the beauty and glory of his Indian country in verse that will live as long as the name of Oklahoma shall endure on her monuments”, his journalism colleagues wrote upon his passing. “He has woven the names of the rivers, mountains, valleys and plains into song and story which will inspire the young patriots of other generations and brighten the pages of the nation’s literature.”<sup>14</sup> And so Posey’s fame was depicted as dependent upon the same project that launched Emma Willard’s mapping career. Yet the immersive environment that killed Posey — a river he dearly loved, apostrophized in poem after poem — was part of another, fatal map, derived from the spiritual cosmography of the Creek people. “As the red men say”, his Creek friend Charles Gibson said, “it was in the beginning ordained that he should retire from this life as he did.”<sup>15</sup> The land grabs and allocation that Posey got caught up in were products of an understanding of space that Willard’s maps gave a kind of cosmological warrant. But a Creek deep map — the haunting prescience of drowning in the river, the spirits sending a message to Creeks who would sell off space, Posey’s own commitment to compromise, to being first into the next world, rooted in his Wind Clan and White Town origins — this deeper map, some Creeks still claim, took his life.<sup>16</sup> Even in the absence of his allotment dealings, they might still be saying the same.



Posey never made it into major anthologies of American poetry, but Emma Willard did. “Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep” appears in Edmund Clarence Stedman’s *American Anthology* and was widely loved. It defies the terrors of drowning that haunted Posey’s verse:

13. For more on Posey’s work with the Dawes Commission, the Snakes, and the “lost Creeks”, see LITTLEFIELD 1992, especially chapter 8.
14. *Indian Journal*, 5 June 1908; quoted in LITTLEFIELD 1992, 258.
15. Gibson quoted in LITTLEFIELD 1992, 251.
16. See discussions of Posey’s reputation among Creeks in LITTLEFIELD 1992 and WOMACK 1999.



**Figure 7.** Allotment Map of Township 8 North of Range 18, East of the Indian Meridian, in Indian Territory. National Archives Identifier 652462. Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1793–1999; records group 75. [https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=\\*&f.parentNaId=652462&f.level=item&sort=naldSort%20asc&offset=380](https://catalog.archives.gov/search?q=*&f.parentNaId=652462&f.level=item&sort=naldSort%20asc&offset=380).

When in the dead of night I lie  
 And gaze upon the trackless sky,  
 The star-bespangled heavenly scroll,  
 The boundless waters as they roll, —  
 I feel thy wondrous power to save  
 From perils of the stormy wave:  
 Rocked in the cradle of the deep,  
 I calmly rest and soundly sleep.

(STEDMAN 1900, 29.)

The trackless sky, the boundless waters: the imagery is anti-cartographical, but the map is still there, underlying berth and rhyme. The sublime power of God to sink her ship is counteracted by the assurance of immortality. The depths she had labeled — briefly playing Indian — as the “Salt Water Lake” in her map of the “Locations and Wanderings of the Aborigines” did not take Emma Willard.

Posey and Willard stand both together in a genealogy of colonialist mapping and in juxtaposition — despite each in a sense having started from the cultural margins — as two figures affected in different ways by that genealogy. If data visualization is as much or more about method than about content, then the premises and preclusions of the universal map as an archetype are hazardous, for it is not merely a matter of inclusion at the level of the dataset, but something more social, more ontological, that must be addressed. Of course, we know that maps are dangerous for Indigenous people, for the dispossessed. But this does not preclude considering the seemingly utopian aspect of deep mapping, its appeal to nuance and complexity, to an appreciation of the past and diversity, and the degree to which that too may be wrapped up in the history of colonization. In taking seriously the metaphor of depth in the term deep mapping, I suggest that the deep history of deep mapping across epistemologies ought to be a starting point for us. And an entailment of moving across epistemologies, is that we maintain a real sense of the conflicting sociocultural values that can attach to the visualization and narration of data, to the relation of data to geographic visibility. For, the Creek Snakes might remind us, not all fatal maps are Western.

There may be ways to decouple our cartographic impulses from the feelings we get from the rapid technological and bureaucratic transformations we are experiencing, which are both inheritances from and resonances of those of Willard and Posey’s world. If we are to continue to think by way of the metaphor of the map, one healthy path might be to regard deep mapping from a decolonial perspective. Post-custodial approaches to archival preservation and community protocol-based access policies for data offer provocative models for how to implement such perspectives practically.<sup>17</sup> The creation of deep maps would thus not only be fundamentally a collaborative endeavor with communities represented in the map, but one

17. For a range of examples, see CHRISTEN 2012, 2870–93; KELLEY and FRANCIS 2005, 85–111; HEATH, KELLEHER, SANGWAND, and WOOD 2010, 165–78; and BOADLE 2004, 242–52.

whose protocols and products were created to enhance the activities those communities prioritize.

Sometimes even in the best of collaborations the communities involved cannot agree on priorities, and sometimes — perhaps often — with a decolonial approach no map, drawn, narrated, or otherwise, will result. Perhaps even, as in the case of sacred Navajo sand paintings, old designs must be erased. The academy has tended to take as its priority the creation of resources and narratives that are valuable precisely because they are not restricted by local priorities. Revelation may come at the cost of inducing conflict, the thinking goes, but in the name of truth, sometimes there must be conflict. But Indigenous thinkers, who often prioritize community cohesion and the generation of wisdom, and more recently the “post-critical” or “reparative” schools of cultural criticism, agree that this is a mode of work worth calling into question. And if the map is to be drawn from more than one perspective, then the ontology of each map’s generation must be put to question, its necessity into doubt. The very attempt to make a deep map might then encourage connectedness across the different interests in a place, without merely creating what many maps in the Western tradition have been: a record of the failure of one group to relinquish real or imagined authority over another.

Water doesn’t have to be deep for you to drown in it, and when you are drowning, a map can’t help you. The historical banks of the river that took Posey’s life are themselves drowned, in the waters of Lake Eufaula. Posey’s Muscogee Nation maintains a Geospatial Department, whose projects include GIS mapping the allotments Posey helped to create.<sup>18</sup> What does the ancient technique of deep mapping look like from Indian Country? What might Posey’s work and fate offer to the emerging poetics and ethics of “immersive environments”? What would it mean to embrace the “silences” and “mysterious room” that Posey loved about the plains? Or to begin a mapping exercise by thinking about Willard’s and Posey’s relationships with water? It is not that indigenous epistemologies can “save” us or offer a “better” or more perfect version of the kinds of spatial histories we want to tell. It is rather that the process of creating deep maps or even thinking about what they can bring us might do more than just confront and embrace those epistemologies and their implications. That process can include people who have competing epistemological investments in deep

18. See Muscogee (Creek) Nation Geospatial Department: Geographic Information Systems, Projects page, <http://mcngis.com/index.php/projects>.



mapping — people whose conceptions of mapping, of depth, and of history may carry us beyond the star-spangled scroll and the rocked cradle.

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# Deep Mapping in Edward Hitchcock's Geology and Emily Dickinson's Poetry

*Joan R. Wry*

## ABSTRACT

*The vernacular of deep mapping provides a valuable resource for comparing Edward Hitchcock's geology textbooks — particularly Elementary Geology — with select geology-based poems by Emily Dickinson. Although Dickinson's poems that reveal a clear understanding of nineteenth-century science (especially geological findings) have already been critically analyzed by scholars such as Richard Sewall, Hiroko Uno, and Robin Peel, Dickinson's verse has not yet been assessed from the vantage point of the complex layerings of literary deep mapping. Moreover, Dickinson's poetic explorations of distinct timelines and phenomena in both human and natural history can be aligned in many instances not only with the language of Hitchcock's textbooks, but also with the drawings, maps, charts, and cultural contexts embedded in these volumes. The language, imagery, inquiries and conjectures in poems by Dickinson that are explicated in this essay all have clear (as well as more nuanced) ties to Hitchcock's Geology. My study proposes that even with their different genres and diverse authorial intentions, both Hitchcock and Dickinson engage in similar rich and multivalent approaches to what is clearly an incipient version of modern deep mapping.*

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“TO FILL A GAP / INSERT THE THING THAT CAUSED IT —”, EMILY Dickinson affirms in poem Fr647A, for “You cannot solder an Abyss / With Air —” (1–2, 5–6)<sup>1</sup>. In a number of Dickinson's poems, the “things” that fill gaps are solid, impermeable and often geologic in origin. And in some measure, poetic process (at least in Fr647A) can be seen in light of the nineteenth-century process of “solder[ing]”, a widespread method of uniting similar or disparate objects using ores and mineral deposits, especially

1. Citations to Dickinson's poems are to FRANKLIN 1998. The transcriptions provided here are of the fascicle or “record” version of the poems, unless otherwise noted.

lead ore, found in the earth's crust.<sup>2</sup> Writing in the age of Emersonian transparency — when the “true poet” was marked by the ability to transcend opacity and “turn the world to glass” (EMERSON 1844, 456) — Dickinson instead often seems to generate visionary insights and ontological convictions through opaque images and “adamant” mediums. Even the void and vacancy of “the Abyss” can perhaps be counterbalanced by the mind's attempts to think through the limitations of time and mortality; as Dickinson states in Fr1397A, the stone certainty of “eternity” is “The only adamant Estate / In all Identity —” (3–4). Known for their complexity of disparate layers and timelines, deep maps can be understood through this same analogy of soldering; they uncover and unite the earth's varied substances (including ores and minerals), with the many stories embedded within them over time. Through a wide variety of narrative forms, deep maps present the “multiple histories of place, those cross-sectional stories of natural and human history as traced through eons and generations”; they “engage in the artful braiding of deep past, scientific knowledge, cultural history, and personal participation in a spatial milieu” (MAHER 2014, 10).

Long before the vernacular of deep mapping was coined, Edward Hitchcock, close friend of the Dickinson family and long-time geology professor and college president at Amherst, offered a similar complexity of layers (addressing deep past, scientific knowledge, and personal and cultural history) in his textbooks. Dickinson not only knew Hitchcock's various mappings of the world's geology, but she also mined his narrative forms for their geologic diction and phrasings, and she used this exact language in a number of her poems. Hitchcock's textbook, *Elementary Geology*, was assigned reading for Dickinson at the Amherst Academy in 1842, but the many references to the world's mountain ranges, volcanoes, rocks and minerals in her poems (as well as the processes that formed them) suggest that her interest in geology was deep and abiding.<sup>3</sup> My essay proposes that Dick-

2. The Geoscience News and Information website *Geology.com* notes that “prior to the early 1900s, lead was used in the United States primarily in ammunition, burial vault liners, ceramic glazes, leaded glass and crystal” and in the soldering processes to seal or repair various objects.
3. Richard Sewall was perhaps the first critic to study Dickinson in the context of her scientific education, and his widely quoted recognition of Dickinson's deep understanding of various sciences bears repeating: “[. . .] her poems show a knowledge of chemical process, of botanic and especially geologic lore far beyond the usual nature poet's stock in trade. There are more earthquakes and volcanoes in her poems — phenomena which were central in all geological inquiry, especially Hitchcock's — than in the poetry of Keats, Emerson, Browning, and Shelley combined” (1974, 345).

inson understood the incipient technique of deep mapping that Edward Hitchcock and other nineteenth-century geologists embedded into their texts, and she engaged in a similar process in select geological poems that reflect — with “artful braiding” (MAHER 2014, 10) and skillful soldering — her own unique inquiries and perceptions of both human and natural history.

Deep mapping in the nineteenth century was in many ways a natural response to the cultural fascination with what Robert Macfarlane calls the “dramatic hidden past of the earth” (2004, 44), now more fully understood through Hitchcock’s texts, published between 1840 and 1861, as well as the earlier work of master geologist Charles Lyell, whose contributions are widely acknowledged in Hitchcock’s *Elementary Geology*. Lyell’s three volume *Principles of Geology*, published between 1830 and 1833, first ignited widespread interest in new discoveries in geology for a non-scientific audience; in many respects his approach provided the narrative model for nineteenth-century deep mapping, one followed by the “dozens of popular geological works [including Hitchcock’s] which soon afterwards sought to emulate its success” (MACFARLANE 2004, 44).<sup>4</sup> Lyell’s narratives deepened the cultural awareness of time; they made “irrefutably wondrous — and terrifying — the age of the earth: its inexpressible antiquity” (MACFARLANE 2004, 44). “Lyell’s brilliance lay primarily in his marshaling of detail”: as Macfarlane notes, “He won over his audience with a combination of irresistibly accumulating facts — in this respect his writing resembled the processes it was describing — and illuminating anecdotes” (2004, 37). Edward Hitchcock used a similar approach in his explication of world geology, but he added an expressly regional emphasis to the discourse, weaving in inter-related stories, drawings and anecdotes from New England regions — especially western Massachusetts — to explain formations above and beneath the earth’s crust: graphic granite in Goshen; trap rocks from Titan’s Pier at the foot of Mount Holyoke; fossil plants from a coal mine in Mansfield. Readers of Hitchcock’s texts — including students at Amherst College and Amherst Academy — were not limited to text-based research for their own greater understanding of geological phenomena (even though these deep maps included a rich layering of scientific data, stories, anecdotes, and histories, as well as multiple drawings, charts, and illustrations), but in

4. As Macfarlane notes, “A late developer among the sciences, during the nineteenth century geology rushed on precociously fast, naming and labeling as time unrolled further and further behind it. Popular geology handbooks proliferated. [ . . . ] Everyone was made privy to the secrets of the earth’s past” (2004, 53).

many cases they could also, if desired, be eye-witnesses to the phenomena described.

But even with its decided regional emphasis, Hitchcock's *Elementary Geology* begins with the expected foundational elements of "A General Account of the Constitution and Structure of the Earth", the title of Section I in all editions of the text.<sup>5</sup> The first definition found in this opening section addresses "constitution" by noting that "Geology is the history of the mineral masses that compose the earth, and of the organic remains which they contain" (1844, 13); a page later, Hitchcock provides a broad assessment of "structure", noting that "[t]he surface of the earth, as well beneath the ocean as on dry land, is elevated into ridges and insulated peaks, with intervening vallies [*sic*] and plains. [ . . . ] [T]he highest mountains are about 28,000 feet above the ocean level" (1844, 14). The materially massive "elevated ridges" and "insulated peaks" predictably became a pronounced focus of study in nineteenth-century geology; as Robert Macfarlane notes, "After the 1820's [ . . . ] it was realized by increasing numbers of people that the mountains provided a venue where it was possible to browse the archives of the earth — the 'great stone book', as it became called" (2004, 49).

Dickinson's poems with mountain references mostly address higher peaks found outside of her native New England, and in two notable examples, Fr108A and Fr129A–B, "the great stone book" of the igneous Alps provides a venue for "brow[sing] the archives of the earth" (MACFARLANE 2004, 49). "All the older unstratified rocks, as granite, syenite, porphyry, and greenstone, are found in the Alps", Hitchcock notes in *Elementary Geology* (1844, 310); the Alps are clearly a massive stone paradigm for the study of geology. In poems Fr108A and Fr129A–B, however, Dickinson's deep map solderings include a pronounced focus on human and cultural history instead of geological history, although her inspiration for both poems may have included non-scientific stories, anecdotes and other forms of deep mapping provided by Edward Hitchcock. In Fr108A, Dickinson admits that she is describing alpine vistas "In lands I never saw", but she may well have been influenced by accounts of the lands that Edward Hitchcock and his wife Orra *did* see in their well-documented trip to Europe in 1850, where they were most memorably affected by their experiences in the Swiss Alps. As Robert L. Herbert suggests, "In Switzerland, Orra and Edward were

5. Originally published in 1840, *Elementary Geology* went through a total of 31 print editions; the 3rd edition (1842) was the one used by Emily Dickinson at Amherst Academy; it was also the edition owned and signed by Edward Dickinson that was found in the Dickinson Homestead.

particularly drawn to the mountains. A life-long devotion to landscape attached this couple closely, she as an artist who had drawn the river and slopes of the Connecticut River Valley, he, as a geologist with a passionate love of landscape for itself and divine revelation" (2008, 100). Edward Hitchcock made several references to "mountaintop sublimity" in his texts and lectures before and after the 1850 trip to Europe, and the language he uses in one vivid reference from *Religion and Geology*, "nature everywhere is fitted up in a lavish manner with all the elements of the sublime and the beautiful" (1857, 157), suggests a familiarity with Edmund Burke's then still popular late eighteenth-century analytic of the sublime.<sup>6</sup> Orra Hitchcock's travel diary of her 1850 trip to Europe includes similar rapturous references to alpine sublimity, descriptions she may well have shared in conversations with the Dickinson family: "Alps on Alps in wild array, enough to satisfy even the most romantic mind. [ . . . ] Some two or three hundred people collected & waited for the mist to roll away, nor did we wait in vain, for it soon passed by & a most magnificent & glorious prospect was presented which exceeded anything I had ever seen or expected to see again" (ed. HERBERT 2008 101, 106). The sunrise descriptions are echoed in nuanced ways in a playful reference in one of Dickinson's letters: "I saw the sunrise on the Alps since I saw you", she reports matter-of-factly in November 1866 (L321); "to shut our eyes is Travel", she announces in a later missive composed in 1870 (L354). Various local reports of the Hitchcock's experiences in the Alps may have been very familiar to Dickinson, but she also probably drew from a range of cultural associations for her alpine poems, as she lived during what William Howarth refers to as "the great era of mountain climbing in Europe, when the Alps swarmed every summer with athletic tourists" who hoped to see breathtaking vistas and possibly experience transcendence in thin mountain air (1983, 7). Dickinson, like her contemporaries Thoreau and Emerson, may have read about the climbs of early Swiss naturalists like Gessner and de Saussure, and she had in her father's library John Ruskin's descriptions of alpine scenery in *Modern Painters*, especially the two famous chapters on "Mountain Gloom" and "Mountain Glory". Both Fr108A and Fr129A–B were most likely composed in the decade following the Hitchcocks' return from Europe, and Dickinson would have also seen Orra Hitchcock's wood engraving of the "View of the Glacier of Viesch" when she was a young student at Amherst Academy, as it was included in

6. Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* was first published in 1757.

the second (1841) edition of Edward Hitchcock's *Elementary Geology*, and in every edition thereafter.



**Figure 1.** Orra Hitchcock, “View of the Glacier of Viesch”, in *Elementary Geology*, 1841.



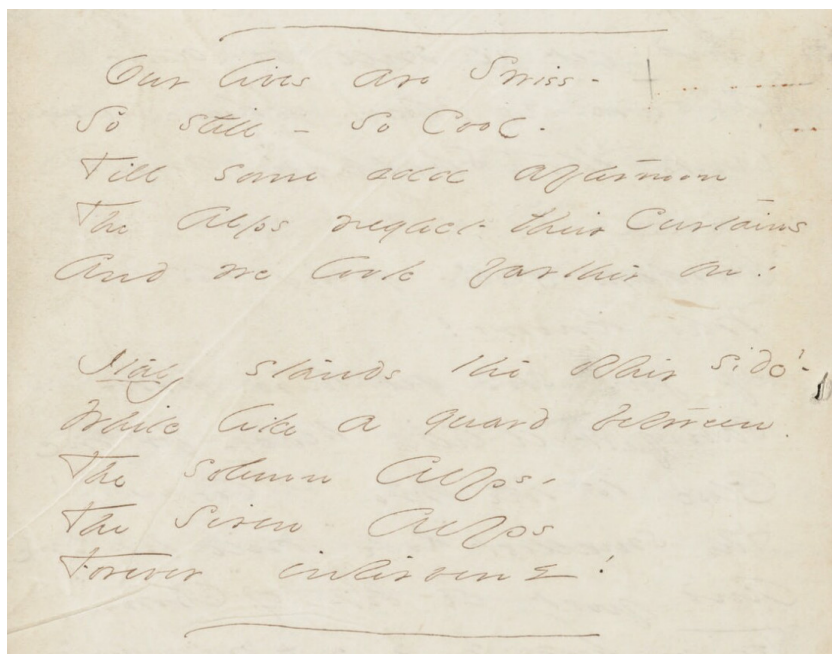
This engraving, with its provocative glimpse of gleaming mountains rising literally in a “country beyond”, may have been — at least in part — an inspiration for Dickinson's poem Fr129B:

Our lives are Swiss –  
So still – so Cool –  
Till some odd afternoon  
The Alps neglect their Curtains  
And we look farther on! (1–5)

The next stanza features a vivid exclamation and emotional intensification: “*Italy* stands on the other side!” (6), almost as if the speaker of the poem has visually “crossed over” in a transformative rite of passage. The precision of this specific, even if imagined, transition stands in contrast to the imprecision of Dickinson's reliance on cultural stereotyping, for the poem juxtaposes well-known geographic and cultural contrasts between countries separated by the Alps, making use of then popular associations for “cool” and reasoned Switzerland and warm and sensuous Italy.<sup>7</sup> And at the line of demarcation stand the “solemn, siren” Alps, liminally alluring and fascinating, but also forbidding, “like a guard between” the two contrasting cultural paradigms:

While like a guard between –  
The solemn Alps –  
The siren Alps  
Forever intervene! (6–9)

7. See PATTERSON (1979) and EBERWEIN (1996) for a more complete explication of these geographic and cultural contrasts. I am indebted to Karen Sanchez-Eppler's observation on the “imprecision” of cultural stereotyping in this poem, a comment she made to me in a workshopping session at the 2015 Dickinson Critical Institute in Amherst.



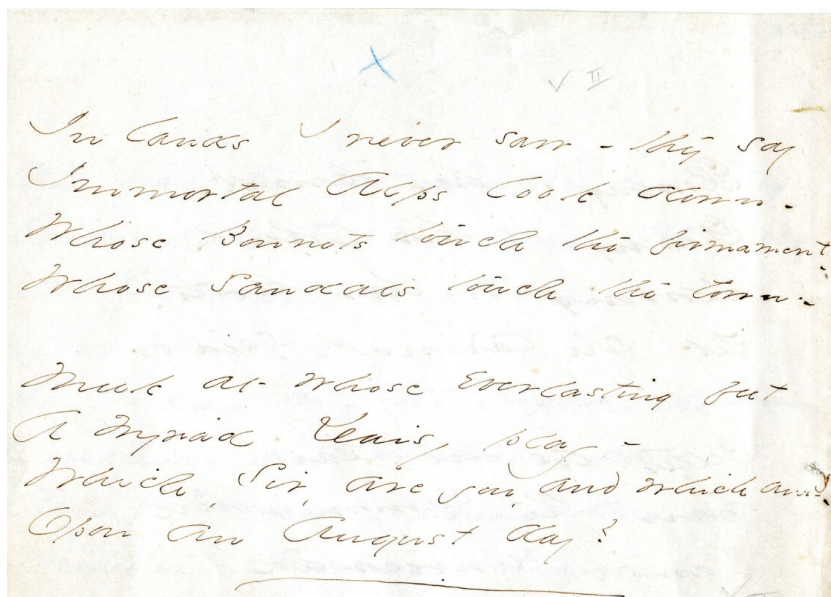
**Figure 2.** Emily Dickinson, “Our lives are Swiss –” (H 12), Fascicle 6, about late 1859. Reproduced courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

Dickinson’s Lexicon (WEBSTER’S DICTIONARY, 1844) lists the word “solemn” as “grave, serious”, but also “sentient” and “sacred”. In this sense, the rare experience of being able to “look farther on” from Switzerland into Italy in spite of the “intervening” Alps is a version of sublime experience, the visionary passage from the “still” and “cool” into unveiled and unanticipated enchantment.

In poem Fr108A, “In lands I never saw – they say”, Dickinson gives another insight into her understanding of alpine sublimity in lines that assert both the “Immortality” of the Alps as well as a more familiar, even playful, personification of their physical features. In this poem the stone surfaces of the mountain peaks are instead snow-capped “Bonnetts” that touch the celestial “firmament”, while their “sandals” touch the town that lies literally at their feet; these descriptors are tactile and engaging in one sense, while also affirming of a link between the “immortal, sacred, everlasting place” — the “firmament” of Dickinson’s Lexicon — and a multitude of daisies in the town at the base of the mountain, where mortals live their lives beneath massive “Immortal” towers of stone:

In lands I never saw – they say  
Immortal Alps look down –  
Whose Bonnets touch the firmament –  
Whose sandals touch the town –

Meek at whose everlasting feet  
A myriad Daisy play –  
Which, Sir, are you, and which am I –  
Upon an August day?



**Figure 3.** Emily Dickinson, “In lands I never saw – they say” (A 83-7/8), Fascicle 5, about 1859. Reproduced courtesy of the Amherst College Archives & Special Collections.

Clearly, Dickinson includes the deep map layer of a general cultural knowledge with the phrase “they say” in line 1, but she also invites a beguiling ambiguity in the closing lines of the poem by speculating on where (and with whom) “immortal” identity is assigned. Just as Shelley never “saw” Mont Blanc through the clouds when he contemplated its existence from the bridge over the River Arve, Dickinson has never seen “the lands” of

the Alps; her rhetorical question in the final lines of Fr108A echoes (albeit slantly) the challenging and ambiguous inquiry in the closing lines of Shelley's *Mont Blanc*:

And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,  
If to the human mind's imaginings  
Silence and solitude were vacancy? (V; l. 16–18)

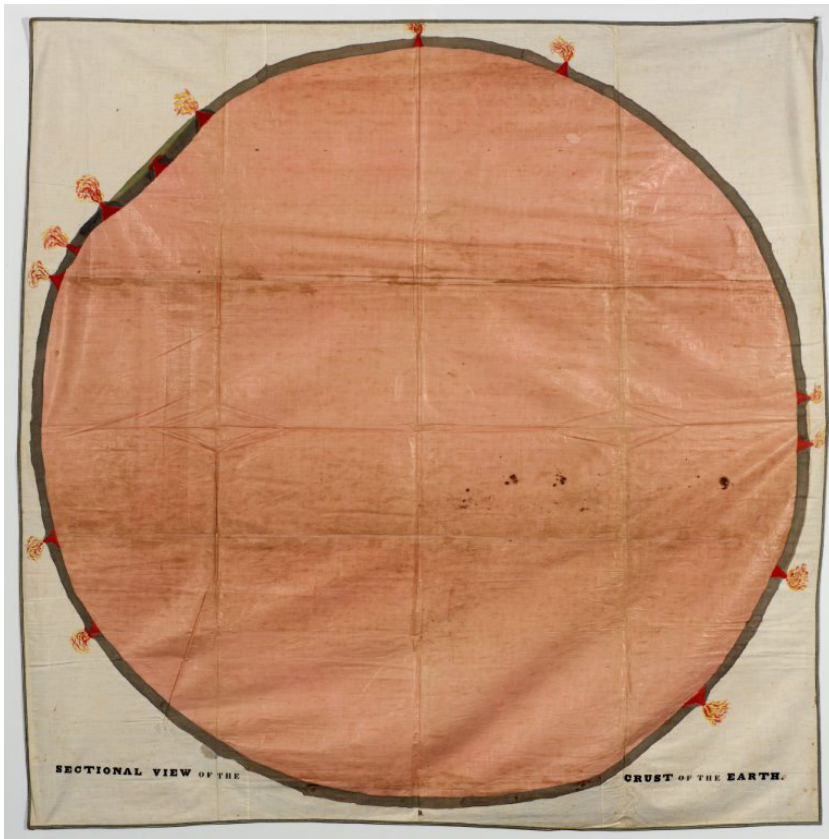
Writers in the nineteenth century thought the Alps in particular had the best potential to be a locus of sublime experience; their overwhelming mass, incomprehensible heights (for those viewing from their base) and capacity to produce “astonishment [. . .] in its highest degree” from multiple vantage points (to quote from Edmund Burke's *Enquiry*), made them “Immortal” in ways that Dickinson seems to be considering as well as challenging.<sup>8</sup> The Alps are enduring and sublime within a conventional nineteenth-century cultural context for the Hitchcocks on their European tour, but Dickinson's poem Fr108A also acknowledges that context (in a far less conventional way) with its description of lands she “never saw” but instead may have envisioned — not only through an accessible cultural knowledge, but also, to borrow Shelley's phrasing, more profoundly through the power of her “mind's imaginings” (17).

Notwithstanding Dickinson's subtle references to alpine “Immortality” in these two examples, the mountain peaks of the Alps are addressed far less as a topic in her poems than are the world's volcanoes, both active and extinct. More than any other geologic feature, Dickinson's poetic deep mappings of volcanoes synthesize and solder a wealth of disparate associations; her poems engage in what Randall Roorda would characterize as a broad “sedimentation of impressions” that present a complex layering of place (2001, 259). Dickinson's volcano poems have been widely studied, but a specific focus on these poems in light of Edward Hitchcock's geologic diction and mapping is less fully realized, with the exception of Hiroko Uno's close readings of select volcano poems in her essay “Geology in Emily

8. The quote from Burke's *Enquiry* addresses astonishment not only as “the effect of the sublime in its highest degree”, but also as “that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended [with] the mind so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other” (2008, 53). Dickinson's version of alpine sublimity in this poem — with its questioning of assigned “immortal[ity]” in the closing lines of the poem — seems to temper astonishment with coy bemusement.

Dickinson's Poetry".<sup>9</sup> Examples of deep map crossover between Hitchcock's geology and Dickinson's volcanic poetry are evident in a comparative study of diction, but skillful deep mapping is not limited to language-based analysis. A once vividly colored classroom chart drawn by Orra Hitchcock for Edward's geology lectures provides a unique insight into the deep mapping inspiration of Orra Hitchcock's artistry that became a foundational aspect of her husband's work. Tekla Harms's article on "The Hitchcock's Classroom Charts" points out that "it is difficult to appreciate how provocative *Sectional View of the Crust of the Earth* (cat. 76) would have been for nineteenth-century Amherst students, prompting them to see the earth as an isolated body and challenging them to consider its character deep beneath the sphere of human habitation" (2011, 53). The illustration was most likely intended for Edward Hitchcock's lecture on volcanic action and the internal temperature of the earth; the description in *Elementary Geology* states that as "all of the interior of the earth, except a crust from 50–100 miles thick, is at present in a state of fusion" (1844, 250). Moreover, the note for the figure of the earth's cross-section included in this passage (a simplified version of Orra Hitchcock's more detailed chart) explains that the circular drawing "is intended to represent the proportion of melted and unmelted matter in the earth" (1844, 250). Although the inks of the original classroom chart drawing for the molten interior of the earth have undoubtedly faded over time, Harms points out that Orra Hitchcock's illustration "represents this realm in pink and schematically indicates volcanoes arising from beneath the crust" (2011, 53). The twelve tiny plumes of fire erupting from the darkened outline of the earth's crust — with each plume ascending from an inverted cone protruding from the molten pink interior — are difficult to discern in a photograph of the illustration, but the effect for an eye-witness viewer (like Dickinson and her fellow Amherst Academy students) must have been memorable. As Harms notes, "We now know the crust of to be even thinner and the mantle hot but solid; nevertheless the intellectual impact of this view of the earth, demonstrating the

9. For a selection of critical responses to Dickinson's volcano poems, see, for example, SEWALL 1974, RICH 1976, ORSINI 2016, WHITE 1992, PEEL 2010, BRANTLEY 2013, SIELKE 1996 and UNO 2001. Peel and Uno both acknowledge the extensive influence of Hitchcock's geology in the volcano poems, but only Uno considers Hitchcock's diction within the context of specific poems; see pages 4–15 in "Geology in Emily Dickinson's Poetry" for specific examples, particularly in poems Fr165A and Fr517A.



**Figure 4.** Orra Hitchcock, *Sectional View of the Earth's Crust*. Illustration for Edward Hitchcock's classroom charts at Amherst College. Reproduced courtesy of the Amherst College Archives & Special Collections.

insignificant scale of the crust that supports life and civilization remains undiminished to this day" (2011, 53).

Dickinson's cryptic reference to the "projects pink" of the "reticent volcano" in Fr1776[A] may have an oblique tie to Orra Hitchcock's color scheme for her deep-mapping classroom charts; another chart (cat. 75) features "veins of lava" in elongated pink fissures beneath the surface of Etna.<sup>10</sup> The "projects pink" of Fr1776[A] are secretive and mysterious; they

10. The MS for this poem has been lost, and no date has been assigned to the poem. R. W. Franklin's printed text in *Poems* (1998) is based on a transcript made by



are part of a plan that never slumbers and is explicitly not shared in confidence with human beings:

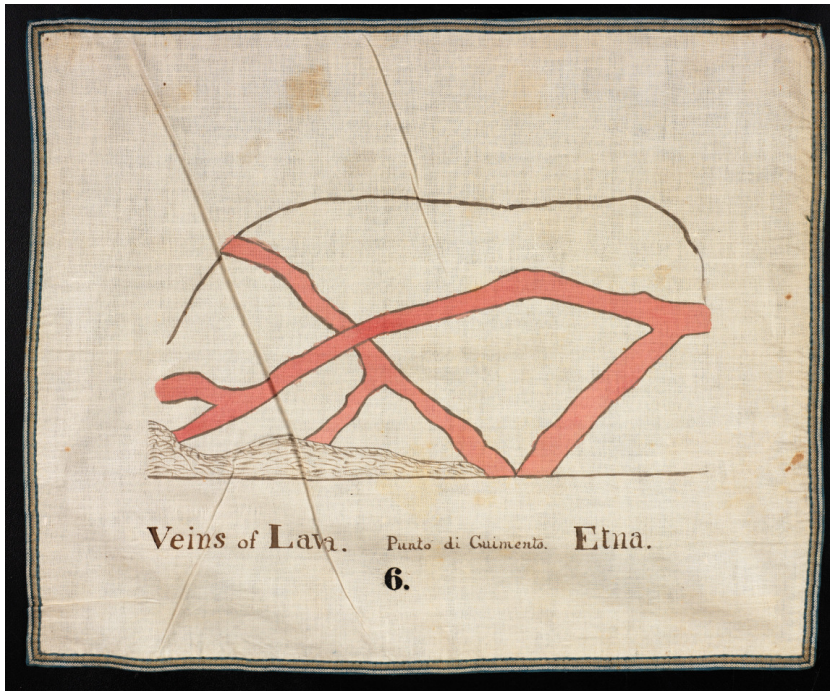
The reticent volcano keeps  
His never slumbering plan;  
Confided are his projects pink  
To no precarious man. (1–4)

But the project or plan of a volcano is not simply to erupt (and destroy), but also, as emphatically expressed in Hitchcock's *Elementary Geology*, to create new geological formations: "Volcanic agency has been at work from the earliest periods of the world's history; producing all the forms and phenomena of the unstratified rocks, from granite to the most recent lava. [. . .] History abounds with examples of new islands rising out of the sea by volcanic action. [. . .] Very many large islands appear to be wholly, or almost entirely the result of volcanic action" (1844, 225, 231). "[P]rojects pink" are newborn and newly formed (but they are also fluid and molten "project[ion]s", as in Orin Hitchcock's charts), and even though volcanoes appear to slumber when they are not erupting, their "plan" or purpose never does. Hitchcock's *Elementary Geology* offers multiple accounts of volcanic vents that "have been constantly active since they were first discovered. They always contain lava in a state of ebullition; and vapors and gasses are constantly escaping" (1844, 232). The second stanza of Fr1776[A] ponders the secretive nature of this creative act in lines 5 and 6 ("If nature will not tell the tale / Jehovah told to her"), as well as our human dilemma — and "precarious" estrangement — in not fully sharing in nature's confidences in lines 7 and 8 ("Can human nature not proceed / Without a listener?"). The poem concludes cryptically with a reference to "Immortality" as the "only secret neighbors keep" (11–12), but as Hitchcock reminds us in his text, the "seat of volcanic power" is both deep *and* mysterious. "Were not the power deeply seated", Hitchcock conjectures, "volcanos would become exhausted; as they sometimes throw out more matter at a single eruption, than the whole mountain melted down could supply" (1844, 234).

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Mabel Todd (A 1896 PC, 27). The punctuation is almost certainly Todd's rather than Dickinson's.





**Figure 5.** Orra Hitchcock, *Veins of Lava, Punto di Cuimento, Mount Etna, Italy*. Illustration for Edward Hitchcock's classroom charts at Amherst College. Reproduced courtesy of the Amherst College Archives & Special Collections.

Although it is beyond the scope of this essay to address more than a few of Dickinson's volcanic deep mappings, one additional poem, Fr752B, "Ah, Teneriffe – Receding Mountain –", bears mentioning for its particular geologic references within a context of a "theology of nature" that is both reverential and wondrous, a stance evident in the lines of Dickinson's poem as well as the lines from Hitchcock's *Elementary Geology* that may have inspired it. For Dickinson's lexicon suggests that she would have known Tenerife as a "peak volcano on the Canary Islands", but also as the "legendary abode of the All-Creator". In geologic terms it is also the "Receding Mountain" framed by the sunset's "Sapphire Regiments" (1, 3), a mountain with a glacial history the speaker's address directly acknowledges: "Still clad in Your Mail of Ices –", with "Eye ["Thigh"] of Granite – and Ear of Steel –" (5–6). The "All-Creator" implied as residing within the mountain itself in this poem is "Passive alike – to Pomp – and Parting –" (7), even though the speaker is "pleading ["kneeling"] still –" (8), awed

by the mountain's grandeur and visual splendor. Dickinson's Lexicon also describes the etymology of Tenerife as a derivative of the Latin *Pico de Tenerife*, "possibly 'white mountain' or 'luminous one'", a reference that is suggestive of alabaster, another white and luminous stone considered by Dickinson in poems such as Fr124A–G, "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers –". The description of the majestic volcano as "[s]till clad in your Mail of Ices –" seems to acknowledge the paradox of ice layers persisting through fiery eruptions, but the line also perhaps echoes Hitchcock's vivid observation in *Elementary Geology* that an insulating layer of volcanic ash — a powerful non-conductor of heat — allows a mass of ice to persist beneath a flowing current of hot lava above it, and that ice layer will be sustained "from the period of volcanic eruption to the present" (1844, 232). Hitchcock's comments refer specifically to the discovery, in 1828, "of a mass of ice [that] was found on Etna, lying beneath a current of lava", but the story, with its opening line of "This explains a curious fact", is recounted as a "remark" ["Rem."] to be considered more broadly as scientific evidence of volcanic activity (1844, 232).

Hitchcock layers this "curious" account with three additional examples of wondrous active volcanoes, including an interweaving of both "deep past" and "personal participation in a spatial milieu" (MAHER 2014, 10) for the volcano Kilauea, an account that has uncanny resonance with Kilauea's present-day eruptions. Hitchcock describes Kilauea as "the most remarkable volcano on the globe" and quotes from the interwoven stories of English and American missionaries "who have given us the most graphic and thrilling descriptions" of Kilauea's terrible beauty: "Sometimes, and especially at night, such masses of lava are forced up that a lake of liquid fire, not less than two miles in circumference, is seen dashing up its angry billows, and forming one of the grandest and most thrilling objects that the imagination can conceive" (1844, 233). This account recalls the language of sublime experience, of things grand though "terrible"; it seems to confirm Edmund Burke's conviction that "astonishment [. . .] is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree" (2008; 36, 53). Hitchcock also includes an account by "Rev. Mr. Coan, American Missionary" in this same section, one that details the "frightful hissings and detonations" of a "stream of red hot lava" as it "poured into the sea" following "a powerful eruption of this volcano that took place in May and June 1840" (1844, 233). Hiroko Uno perceptively attributes Dickinson's reference to "hissing Corals" in Fr517A as being inspired by this quoted passage from *Elementary Geology*; she also notes that Dickinson's emphasis on "still[ness]" in this poem (as well as in Fr165A and Fr591A) can be traced to Hitchcock's observation

that “a volcanic eruption is commonly preceded by [ . . . ] stillness of the air” (Uno 2001, 11). Hitchcock’s explications of volcanic formation and activity — replete with interconnected stories and eye witness accounts — were an unquestionable influence on Dickinson’s own volcano-inspired explorations of human and natural history. As Maher explains, “deep mapping chart[s] multidimensional history”; it allows us “to extend our contemporary awareness of the region” (2014, 22). And as awareness extends and deepens for each observer through time in a particular location, deep mapping makes it possible, in effect, “to walk in the stories of this place” (HEAT MOON 1991, 268).

Object lessons abound in other examples of Dickinson’s poems with geologic references that address both human and natural history: in Fr1088A, after death, human “Vitality is Carved and cool —” and commemorated on a gravestone (where “nerve in marble lies”); in Fr147A the lines “a single bone — / Is made a secret to unfold” (3–4), echoes Hitchcock’s “astonishing fact” in *Elementary Geology* that a “single [ . . . ] bone” in fossil form can reveal with “mathematically exact” accuracy “the condition of the entire animal” that may once have roamed the earth in earlier geologic ages (1844, 85). But two poems, Fr740A and Fr584A, feature object-based deep mappings that I believe can be traced even more directly to the syntactical inspiration and hand drawings found in *Elementary Geology*, and specifically to passages describing what Hitchcock called “the almost infinite variety” of granite formations (1844, 70). No poem better explores a deep mapping of self-reliant possibilities than Fr740A, “On a Columnar Self —”, in which a “granitic base” of conviction provides the foundation for an image of Dickinson’s growing self-awareness, increasingly firm with the certainty of “rectitude” and distinct from the “assembly” of others:

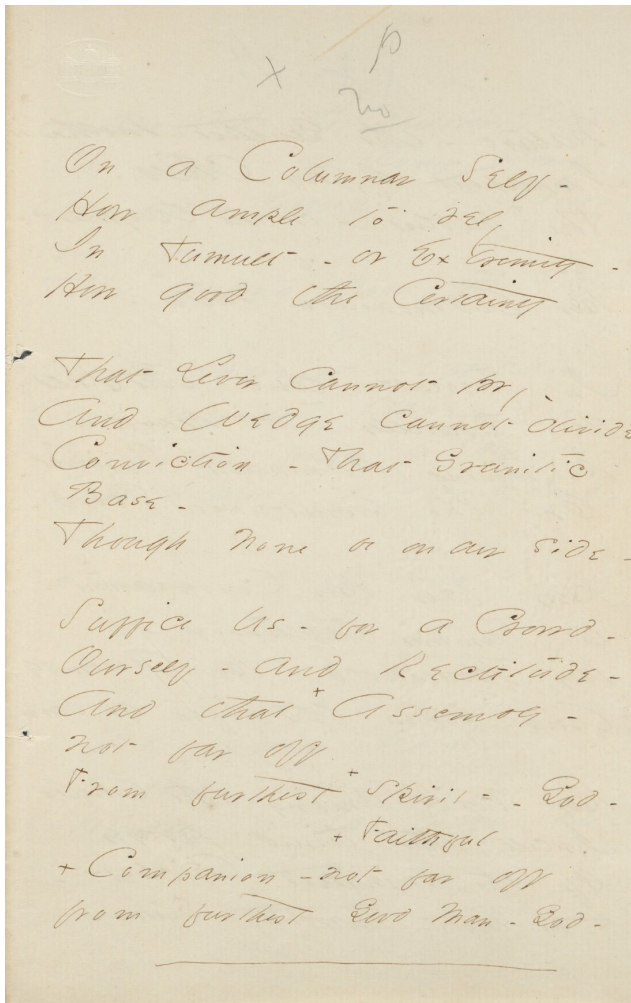
On a Columnar Self –  
How ample to rely  
In Tumult – or Extremity –  
How good the Certainty

That Lever cannot pry –  
And Wedge cannot divide  
Conviction – That Granitic Base –  
Though none be on our side –

Suffice Us – for a Crowd –  
Ourselves – and Rectitude –

And that Assembly – not far off  
From furthest Spirit – God –

11–12 Assembly – not far off / From furthest Spirit – God –]  
Companion – not far off / from furthest Good Man – God –  
12 Spirit] Faithful



**Figure 6.** Emily Dickinson, “On a Columnar Self –” (H 98), Fascicle 36, about the second half of 1863. Reproduced courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The poem is replete with stone references, and the unusual word “columnar” in the first line is featured in a substantive section from Hitchcock’s textbook on the “Columnar Structures” of granite trap rocks found on nearby Mt. Holyoke. Hitchcock notes that “[o]ne of the most remarkable characteristics of the trap rocks, is their columnar structure [. . .] whose length is sometimes not less than 200 feet [. . .] whose extremities are more or less convex or concave, one fitting into the other. Usually these columns stand nearly perpendicular. [. . .] They stand so closely compacted together, that though perfectly separable, there is no perceptible space between them” (1844, 74–5). In Fr740A, which incorporates the words “columnar” and “extremity” found in Hitchcock’s passage, a geologic deep mapping of granite trap rocks is infused with an interconnected story of human history and perhaps even a topical reference to Amherst social mores. Dickinson’s “Columnar Self” is separate and proudly distinct from the “Assembly” of those who stand “so closely compacted together”, like trap rocks with their convex and concave extremities aligned with “no perceptible space between them” (HITCHCOCK 1844, 74–5). Moreover, Dickinson’s self is an ample resource in both “Tumult” and “Extremity”, and its “granitic base” stands firm against the levers and wedges of societal norms and conventions. By the time she wrote this poem, Dickinson would have seen literal attempts in 1855 to extract a large bolder with levers and wedges on the corner of her father’s property. The project was conducted by Edward Hitchcock’s geology students from Amherst College, and several newspapers published eye-witness accounts of the successful extraction of the massive rock.<sup>11</sup> Emily Dickinson herself could easily have been an eyewitness, as her bedroom window looked directly at that corner of the Homestead lawn. Dickinson never commented on this well-known topical event, but the “Granitic Base” of poem Fr740A is *not* extracted by any exterior efforts of “Assembly”: instead it holds the “Columnar Self” upright with an “ample” foundation (1–2).

Bakhtin’s chronotopes, with their deep mapping of time and space narratives, offer a useful starting point for the second granite-based poem I’ll address, Fr584A, “We dream – it is good we are dreaming –”. In the narrative of Bakhtin’s chronotope, “time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise space becomes charged and responsive to the movements and intersects of time, plot, and history. This intersec-

11. See the June 7, 1856 edition of *The Springfield Republican* (page 4, column 5), for an account of the boulder extraction that would have been read in the Dickinson Household.

tion of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic chronotope” (1981, 84, 85). As Maher explains, “Like the vertical axis in one Bakhtin’s chronotopes, [everything] that on earth is divided by time, here, in this verticality, coalesces into eternity,” into a drama of ‘pure simultaneous coexistence’” of phenomena taken from widely separate periods of time.<sup>12</sup>

Poem Fr584A can be addressed in light of distinctions between dreaming of death and the reality of dying — with the image in the final stanza identified as a gravestone with an inscription on its granite surface. But it may also be possible to see this poem in light of a specific passage from *Elementary Geology*. Edward Hitchcock’s textbook notes the proofs that granite eruptions can be definitively traced “in no less than four different epochs” with linked intersects in time and history (1844, 26); it is possible that Dickinson’s poem builds on this deep mapping with an intersect of human and geologic dramas that “coalesce” into eternity — into a drama that is never dead.

The opening line of Fr584A perhaps offers a nuanced reference to Prospero’s musings on dreams in *The Tempest*, and lines 3 and 4 juxtapose the plot of our human “playing” within the larger “play” of something outside of our mortality — that drama that extends well beyond the “truth of Blood” that we “die – Externally”:

We dream – it is good we are dreaming –  
It would hurt us – were we awake –  
But since it is playing – kill us,  
And we are playing – shriek –

What harm? Men die – Externally –  
It is a truth of Blood –  
But we – are dying in Drama –  
And Drama – is never dead –

1 We dream] We are dreaming 1 are dreaming] should  
[dream] – 2 would] *marked for an alternate, none given*  
3 it is] They [are] 6 truth] Fact 8 never] seldom – (1–8)

12. Maher quotes from Loren Eiseley’s “The Slit” in this passage; for additional commentary on Eiseley’s use of Bakhtin’s chronotopes and “coalesce[nce]”, see chapter 1 of MAHER 2014.



Bakhtin's intersect of the time and space narrative in which human dramas "thicken and take on flesh and become artistically visible" (1981, 84) seems to apply in the first eight lines; our lives are plotted, a finite part of "the everything" on the earth that is divided by time, including distinct epochs in geology, but they will also "coalesce" in an unending Drama of eternity (MAHER 2014, 15). Perhaps the simultaneous coexistence of the finite and the infinite is a truth that lies beyond our ken; a full understanding would "hurt us" were we fully awake to it. "We dream – it is good we are dreaming", Dickinson affirms in line 1; we are, as Prospero reminds us, "such stuff dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep" (IV, 1, 148–50). The final line in the poem, however, suggests that it is wiser — more "prudent" — to dream:

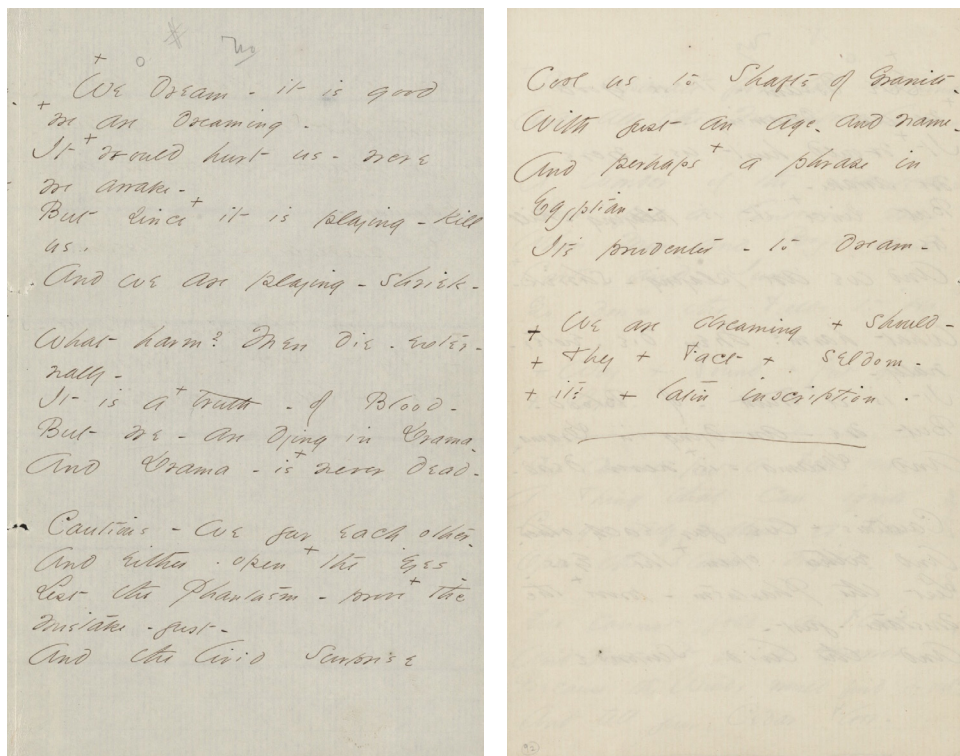
Cautious – We jar each other –  
 And either – open the eyes –  
 Lest the Phantasm – prove the mistake –  
 And the livid Surprise

Cool us to Shafts of Granite –  
 With just an age – and a name –  
 And perhaps a phrase in Egyptian –  
 It's pruderter – to dream –

10 the] it's      11 the mistake –] just [mistake] –      15 phrase in  
 Egyptian –] latin inscription – (9–16)

Although there is much ambiguity in this poem, I suggest that the inspiration for Dickinson's cryptic final stanza — in which we are "Cooled" to shafts of Granite" and "given an age – and a name – / And perhaps a phrase in Egyptian –" to define us further — can be traced to *Elementary Geology*, specifically to Hitchcock's description and drawing for "Graphic granite", a rock with a vast range of crystalline fragments of quartz and feldspar. Hitchcock notes that the arrangement of crystals "makes the surface of this granite exhibit the appearance of letters" (1844, 70); he then directs the reader's attention to Figure 41 in his text, a drawing of the lettered surface of this granite that is found on the opposite page. Just below the drawing is a reference to a famous rock form in Upper Egypt, one much employed in ancient monuments, a rock that Hitchcock determined was not syenite, but rather "granite with flecks of black mica" (1844, 71–2).

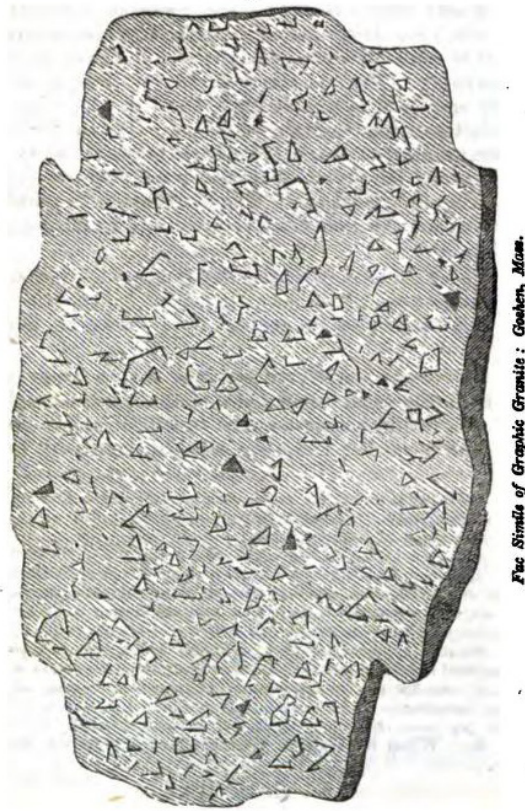




**Figure 7.** Emily Dickinson, "We dream – it is good" (H 92), Fascicle 25, about summer 1863. Reproduced courtesy of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

The image and the language used for Figure 41 (see Figure 8) recall, at least in oblique ways, the Rosetta Stone deciphered by Champollion twenty years earlier, another stone with a lettered surface, a section of which is written in hieroglyphics, or "phrase[s] in Egyptian –". Hitchcock does not make any reference to the Rosetta Stone in this passage, but the text that appears directly below his drawing may well have led Dickinson in this direction for her own deep mapping in poem Fr584A.<sup>13</sup> And the

13. Champollion deciphered the Rosetta Stone in 1822 after years of study; the achievement was widely known in the nineteenth century. The grandiorite stone — similar in composition to granite — is a fragment of a rectangular stele discovery in 1799 in Memphis, Egypt. It is likely that Dickinson (and Hitchcock) would both have known of this discovery and decipherment.



**Figure 8.** Edward Hitchcock, “Graphic granite” (hand-drawn illustration), *Elementary Geology*, 1841.

line “Cool us to Shafts of Granite” has a natural geological intersect with the “livid Surprise” of the line that precedes it. Indeed, Dickinson’s lexicon defines “livid” as “fiery and blazing” — perhaps a reference to the igneous origin of granite that Hitchcock addresses in his text: shafts of granite are formed by hot magma that has cooled and hardened (1844, 70). Hitchcock’s drawing with its “appearance of letters” on “the surface” (1844, 70) is a facsimile of a rock found in the 1840s in Goshen, Massachusetts; the text of the observation below that drawing is a cross-sectional story that alludes to the ancient monuments of Upper Egypt. In Dickinson’s poem, the two deep map features are “coalesce[d]” to borrow Loren Eiseley’s phrasing, in dramas of “simultaneous coexistence” (quoted in MAHER 2014, 15).

Fr740A and Fr584A are only two of the examples of the interesting connections — some definitive, others perhaps more nuanced — between Dickinson's poetry and the granite-based language and illustrations found in Edward Hitchcock's *Elementary Geology*. But more broadly, it is Hitchcock's comprehensive analysis of the "mineral masses that compose the earth", as well as the "organic remains which they contain" (1844, 2) — the grounding definition of Geology — that provide a solid reference point for many of Dickinson's most compelling "artful braiding[s]", to borrow Maher's phrasing (2014, 10). Indeed, Richard Sewall's long-ago assertion that "Hitchcock at his best combined mystical fervor and pure aesthetic delight with sharp scientific observation" in "many a passage [that] could have prompted a later poem of Emily's" (1974, 344), is born out in contemporary approaches to what Maher calls "the aesthetic and the ethos" of modern deep mapping (2014, 23). Shelley Fisher Fishkin's recent challenge to American Studies scholars to use deep mapping as a way to build most productively on the critical insights of the past is a worthy clarion call, for "the 'true' deep map remains open-ended and continues to invite new contributions and fresh queries" (2011, 3). Moreover, in Fishkin's view, "deep maps are palimpsests in that they allow multiple versions of events, of texts, and of phenomena to be written over each other — with each version still visible under the layers" (2011, 3). The image of the palimpsest is consistent with the vernacular of deep mapping, and it invites both scholarly exchange and the recovery of insights that would otherwise be lost. The richly layered geological epochs addressed in both Hitchcock's texts and Dickinson's poetry can be seen within a similar image-based context of exchange and recovery — in this case, recovery of what is missing from the "gaps" in our understanding of both natural and human history. Hitchcock spent most of his life as a scientist engaged in the process of discovering what was *not* known about the earth's geological continuum, and he relied on the palimpsests of scientists before him as well as the deep map evidence of the earth itself, with "each version" of the earth's story "still visible under the layers" that came before it. Dickinson's attempt to understand both human history and the world as she knew it (as well as the world beyond) was her self-stated occupation of life, her business of "Circumference" (L268) — a word she would have seen used in Hitchcock's text "to represent the proportion of all melted and unmelted matter in the earth" (1844, 250). Her poems engage deeply with the palimpsests and multivalent forms of deep mapping provided by Hitchcock and others, even as she generates her own visionary insights and unique solderings of

both similar and disparate objects as a way to grapple with the gaps in her understanding. The best writers “construct deep maps to stretch boundaries, to enlarge vision and scale, to multiply perspectives, and to make the finite and the infinite touch”, Maher advises (2014, 62). Writing from a “Granitic Base” of “Conviction” (Fr740A) — with her focus on “eternity” as the “only adamant Estate / In all Identity” (Fr1397A) — Dickinson’s poetic deep mappings do nothing short of that.

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# Forces of Unworking in Virginia Woolf's "Time Passes"

*Stefanie Heine*

## ABSTRACT

The middle part of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*, "Time Passes", presents a seemingly post-human setting in which destruction reigns. Read today, this scenario immediately evokes imaginations of the Anthropocene while resisting teleological notions of an end-time. Rather, "Time Passes" is pervaded by forces of unworking: agency slips into passivity, whatever is done becomes undone. A holiday house abandoned by human beings decays to "rack and ruin" until a group of cleaners attempts to reverse nature's work. Both the natural forces taking over and the cleaners engage in processes that are simultaneously destructive and productive. An analogous dynamic can be observed in Woolf's writing and editing practices: her laborious revisions mainly consist in deleting. As Woolf continually erases large parts of her writing, composition and decomposition are interwoven.

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EVEN THOUGH VIRGINIA WOOLF WROTE BEFORE THE ANTHROPOCENE became "conscious of itself" (Stiegler 2015, 129), she often imagined scenarios of extinction and states that come very close to what Deborah Bird Rose describes as the prevailing mood of being situated in the Anthropocene, that is, of "[b]eing overtaken by processes that are unmaking the world that any of us ever knew" (2013, 2).<sup>1</sup> In *The Waves*, for example, Louis encourages us to listen

[. . .] to the world moving through abysses of infinite space. It roars; the lighted strip of history is past our Kings and Queens; we are gone; our civilization; the Nile; and all life. Our separate drops are dissolved; we are extinct, lost in the abysses of time, in the darkness.

(WOOLF 2000a, 173)

1. Recent research on Woolf is increasingly interested in reading her work through the lenses of ecocriticism and posthumanism. See, for example, TAZUDEEN 2015 and KIME SCOTT in BERMAN 2016. Research focusing on Woolf and the Anthropocene is also evolving; see, for example, TAYLOR 2016.



Questions of ephemerality and durability, of what may last and what may vanish, preoccupied Woolf throughout her writing. Geological formations are described in terms of deep time: looking at the “dunes far away”, Lily Briscoe, one of the protagonists of Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, surmises that the “distant views seem to outlast by a million years” (2000b, 25), and Mr. Ramsay, a character in the same work, asks, “what are two thousand years? [ . . . ] What, indeed, if you look from a mountain top down the long wastes of the ages? The very stone one kicks with one’s boot will outlast Shakespeare” (2000b, 41). While Woolf again and again takes into consideration that art — literature and painting, for example — has the capacity to endure, such assumptions are often severely qualified, sometimes undone: the stone outlasts Shakespeare. When Lily Briscoe reflects on the painting she works on assailed by doubt throughout the novel, she supposes, on the one hand, that it will not “pass and vanish”, and, on the other, that it will end up “in the attics” or be “rolled up and flung under a sofa” (WOOLF 2000b, 195). She continues her rumination as follows: “One might say, even of this scrawl, not of that actual picture, perhaps, but of what it attempted, that it ‘remained for ever,’ she was going to say, or, for the words spoken sounded even to herself, too boastful, to hint, wordlessly” (WOOLF 2000b, 195).<sup>2</sup>

In this article, I want to look into what is described as a “wordless hint” towards the temporality of art and how it may remain. The ways in which Woolf outlines both the possible endurance and perishability of art in her novels challenge clear-cut oppositions of persistence and transience, permanence and termination. Woolf’s writing in many respects confirms Jean-Luc Nancy’s claim that “art” is above all the name of that which remains clear of ends and goals” (NANCY and RICCO 2015, 90).<sup>3</sup> Thereby, it also escapes the logic of the teleological, “apocalyptic” implications of the Anthropocene (SLOTERDIJK 2015, 334) as a “narrative organized in terms of [its] ending [ . . . ], which attempts to evaluate the world from the perspective of its end” (SLOTERDIJK 2015, 330). Giorgio Agamben addresses the impending damage in the Anthropocene when he observes that “humanity [ . . . ] has [ . . . ] developed its potency [*potenza*] to the point of imposing

2. For a discussion of this passage and the question of ephemerality and durability in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*, see ROSNER 2005, 170.
3. The context of this quoted passage is a conversation about the Anthropocene with John Paul Ricco, who addresses the “problematic of ends”: “one might ask how the Anthropocene thesis is, or is not, yet another figuration of the ‘kingdom of ends’”; see NANCY and RICCO 2015, 89.



its power over the whole planet” (1999, 177). Paradoxically, this power that threatens to destroy the planet is, in Agamben’s own terms, a “constituent power” (2015, e.g. 266). Following the dynamic of what Horkheimer and Adorno described as the dialectic of enlightenment, in the Anthropocene men’s ambitious operativity, through which they achieve power over nature, fuels progress and constructs and arranges the world for their benefit (c.f. 2013, esp. 9–15); rebounded, the “constituent power” is turning into a destructive one and humans are moving towards a self-inflicted apocalypse. Sloterdijk observes that, in the “ontology” of the Anthropocene, “the human being plays the dramatic animal on stage before the backdrop of a mountain of nature, which can never be anything other than the inoperative scenery behind human operations” (2015, 334). Even attempts to impede or restore the ecological damage in the sense of “‘eco political’ action” (SLOTERDIJK 2015, 331), necessary as they are today, are situated in this very framework. In this respect, the “inoperative” may be more relevant than suggested by Sloterdijk’s mention of it in a subordinate clause not further expanded on — provided that one does not consider it as the inferior contrast to the actions of “man” as a “major player” in the “game of global forces” (SLOTERDIJK 2015, 328), creating and destroying with godlike power.

As a force beyond active agency, inoperativity, and here we circle back to Agamben, represents an alternative to the logic of constitutive, destructive, and restorative power, which potentially resist it. Agamben describes inoperativity, the possible “access to a different figure of politics”, as “desituent potential” (2015, 266) that “holds its own impotential or potential not-to firm” (2015, 276). In the same breath, he gives literary production as an example of inoperativity: “A poet is not someone who possesses a potential to make and, at a certain point, decides to put it into action” (2015, 276). That Agamben mentions the writer as an almost self-evident example for inoperativity presumably looks back to Maurice Blanchot’s notion of *désoeuvrement*, or “unworking”, a term which Agamben reinterprets. For Blanchot, who discusses unworking in the context of the emergence of artworks, “art is situated where [. . .] the artist has bit by bit removed from it [. . .] everything pertaining to active life” (1989, 47). Paradoxically, what makes a work possible “is the absence of all power, impotence” (BLANCHOT 1989, 108). For an artist, “wanting to produce a work, but not wanting to betray what inspires it”, means seeking “to reconcile the irreconcilable and to find the work where he must expose himself to the essential lack of work, the essential inertia. This is a harrowing experience, which can be pursued

only under the veil of failure" (BLANCHOT 1989, 185).<sup>4</sup> Such an exposure to failure, to the passive force of unworking, Blanchot continues, "is the infinitely hazardous movement which cannot succeed", but also the only possible way to create something that might be successful as a work of art (1989, 185). It goes without saying that in Blanchot's non-economic apprehension of the creative process, success is not granted thereby.

An awareness of potential failure pervades Lily Briscoe's reflections on the possible endurance of her painting, which she struggles to accomplish even as she is ridden with self-doubts, and also Woolf's personal "feeling of impotence" and fear of "failing to write well" (WOOLF 1982, 28). In his essay on Woolf, focusing on *A Writer's Diary*, Blanchot points out how she, "so anxious, so uncertain", and, at the same time, so "carried by a prodigious movement" (2003, 103), engaged in a process of unworking initiated by voiding: "she must encounter the void ('the great agony,' 'the terror of solitude,' [ . . . ]) in order, starting from this void, to begin to see" (2003, 99) and to write. For Blanchot, such a movement towards the void goes hand in hand with the articulation of a silence: "Art seems [ . . . ] to be the silence of the world, the silence or the neutralization" (1989, 47). As he puts it elsewhere in the same work, "This silence has its source in the effacement toward which the writer is drawn" (1989, 27). In "Time Passes", the middle part of *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf depicts a scenario of effacement in which the silenced voices of the human characters are replaced by the hardly perceptible but persistent sounds of anonymized agencies. In the deserted holiday house, "stillness" reigns, the noise of the airs and the wind pervading it "scarcely disturbed the peace", "the swaying mantle of silence" (WOOLF 2000b, 141). Silence "wove into itself" the natural sounds (WOOLF 2000b, 141), and "the empty rooms seemed to murmur with the echoes of the fields and the hum of flies" (WOOLF 2000b, 145).

"Time Passes" opens by presenting the diminishing voices of the characters in the holiday house hand in hand with a decrease of daylight. The ensuing nightfall introduces a post-apocalyptic setting: "So with the lamps all put out, the moon sunk, and a thin rain drumming on the roof, a downpouring of immense darkness began. Nothing, it seemed, could survive the flood, the profusion of darkness" (WOOLF 2000b, 137). This sentence, recalling to readers the passage in *The Waves* stating, "we are extinct, lost in the abysses of time, in the darkness", marks the moment when the

4. In English, Blanchot's *désœuvrement* is sometimes translated as "inertia", "lack of work", "unworking" or "worklessness".

house, abandoned by human beings, starts being devoured by nature and decays to “rack and ruin” (WOOLF 2000b, 150). Woolf herself describes her endeavour to write an increasingly voided space as follows in her diary: “I have to give an empty house, no people’s characters, the passage of time, all eyeless & featureless with nothing to cling to” (1982, 87). This task is a great challenge that triggers her uncertainty: “I cannot make it out — here is the most difficult abstract piece of writing” (1982, 87). Woolf’s struggles with “Time Passes” and her writing and editing of the section is not unrelated to its contents (or rather lack of contents); in fact, one can observe that the production process of the text is reflected in it: a sense of unworking pervades both levels.

It is important to stress that such a sense of unworking neither exactly corresponds to what Blanchot outlines as *désœuvrement*, nor to Agamben’s reinterpretation of it in his notion of “inoperativity”. This essay does not attempt to elucidate, or worse, give an example of what these writers have in mind. Nevertheless, those terms offer a framework against which Woolf’s writing in *To the Lighthouse* can be read: the resonances, especially with Blanchot, are here alluded to in order to unfold Woolf’s own expression of and engagement in forces of unworking. Bearing this in mind, and before focusing on the intersections between Woolf’s writing process and what is depicted in “Time Passes”, I want to point out a historical moment that constitutes the socio-political context in which it was written: the General Strike in 1926.<sup>5</sup> While Woolf was struggling with a text in which almost nothing happens, the General Council of the Trades Union in the United Kingdom called a strike during which more than a million workers preferred not to, thus staging a gesture of resistance through inoperativity. In her diaries Woolf keeps mentioning the strike, a feeling of “deadlock” (Diary entry for 6th May 1926, not paginated) which, at times seems to pass on to her own preoccupation (and her husband Leonard’s): “men in the street loafing instead of working. Very little work done by either of us today” (Diary entry for 7th May 1926, not paginated). One of her diary entries directly related to the strike, a description of an old couple affected by the suspension of public transport, is especially significant to our discussion of “Time Passes”: “Among the crowd of trampers in Kingsway were old Pritchard, toothless, old wispy, benevolent [. . .] & old Miss Pritchard, equally frail, dusty, rosy, shabby. ‘How long will it last Mrs Woolf?’” (Diary

5. The question here is not Woolf’s involvement or non-involvement in the strike, but rather how she integrated a certain mood of inoperativity in “Time Passes”. For a study of Woolf’s concrete political engagements, see JONES 2016.

entry for 6th May 1926, not paginated). Out of this sketch of the Pritchards, the character of the housekeeper Mrs. McNab will be born. Similarly, the question, "How long will it last?", echoes throughout "Time Passes". The mood of the strike, of inoperativity, of the impaired, and the uncertainty about the outcome and end seeps its way into the text.

Despite its apocalyptic implications, the "downpouring of immense darkness" in "Time Passes" does not denote an endpoint; rather, other agencies subtly awaken with the disappearance of the humans. The abandoned house is invaded by forces of nature: even though the narrative voice, which seems to have fallen into an impersonal insomniac state,<sup>6</sup> claims that "life had left it" (WOOLF 2000b, 149), we observe what can be described as the "animation of the inanimate" (PAPAPETROS 2012), or the emergence of "vibrant matter" (BENNETT 2010) when airs, winds and plants start to ramble and spread. "[T]he fertility, the insensibility of nature" (WOOLF 2000b, 150) results in overgrowth and proliferation and slowly makes the building corrode and decompose. Moreover, a fragile counterforce enters the scene as time passes: the housekeeper Mrs. McNab struggles to undo nature's both fertile and destructive work. And just as she is close to giving up a task that is bound to fail as her old body cannot handle the immense work, just before the house ultimately collapses, a troop of cleaners is mobilized to support her until the house is finally restored and made habitable again.

Nature's proliferation and the cleaners' cultivating obliteration, both tidying nature's sprawls, are analogous to Woolf's writing and editing processes, where productive and destructive forces are comparably interwoven. In a letter to Vita Sackville-West, Woolf addresses the struggles involved in writing "Time Passes": "I was doubtful about Time Passes. It was written in the gloom of the Strike: then I re-wrote it: then I thought it is impossible

6. David R. Sherman convincingly claims that "'Time Passes' achieves what might be called a narrative insomnia, a preternatural vigilance in the narrator that exceeds the available means of being a subject" (168). He describes this "insomniac consciousness" as "a mind that has fallen out of the dialectic of waking and sleeping, being and nothingness. [ . . . ] [It] makes less sense, loses its bearings, is unable to return to itself in a self-recognizing embrace after an absence" (168–9). In this context, Sherman references Blanchot's essay "The Narrative Voice". What Blanchot outlines as a neutral voice articulating literary texts is very accurate with regards to the narrative situation of "Time Passes": In order to avoid the impression that "Time Passes" is told by a personified narrator, I use the more impersonal term "narrative voice". See SHERMAN 2007 and BLANCHOT 1982.

as prose" (1977, 374). Her comment about the revisions points to a compositional-decompositional movement that, like both the natural forces and cleaners' work, is characteristic of her editing practice in general and can be summarized by her comment on her intentions in *The Waves*: "[W]hat I want now to do is to saturate every atom. I mean to eliminate all the waste, deadness, superfluity" (WOOLF 1977, 209).<sup>7</sup> Woolf's revisions in *To the Lighthouse* are mostly determined by reducing, deleting, tightening and condensing. In her diary, Woolf comments on writing the manuscript of "Time Passes" and mentions that she is "flown with words", but that the text "needs compressing" (1982, 87). After having completed the first holograph draft, consistently writing about two pages a day over the period of almost a month, that is, after systematically producing written material, the text is reduced in the typescript and even more so in the printed version.<sup>8</sup> Whereas not much is added, many passages are either fully deleted or compressed. The structure of the chapter as a whole and the array of the scenes already given in the manuscript, however, remain almost unchanged. The holograph draft in which many words and sentences are already blotted out after a first review is akin to the stone block out of which a sculpture is chiselled.

When revising *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf is thus involved in a laborious, time-consuming and exhaustive process of removing surplus material. Here we can see a clear parallel to the cleaners' work on the fictional level of "Time Passes", who are "rubbing", "dusting", "wiping" (WOOLF 2000b, 142), "sweeping" (WOOLF 2000b, 145), "mopping, scouring" (WOOLF 2000b, 151). The parallels between Woolf's revising practice and the cleaners' work accrue across the text. When Woolf writes, in reference to the cleaners' work, that "[s]ome rusty laborious birth seemed to be taking place"

7. In *The Making of Samuel Beckett's L'Innommable / The Unnamable*, Dirk van Hulle and Shane Weller observe a comparable dynamic in Beckett's self-translation and revisions of *The Unnamable*, which they describe as a process of "self-decomposition" (191). Their genetic analysis of the drafts for *The Unnamable* points out a "movement towards a radically new form of what might be termed *unwriting*" (21). Despite the basic similarities — composition becomes decomposition — Woolf's concrete editing practice differs fundamentally from Beckett's and the concrete examples of "unwriting" given by van Hulle and Weller hardly overlap with what I will outline as forces of unworking. See HULLE and WELLER 2014.

8. The holograph draft has around 11,180 words, the typescript around 7,000 words, and the printed version around 5,750 words. Cf. *Woolf Online*, a digital archive of Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*.

(2000b, 152), she may also be referring to the emergence of writing. We hear, moreover, echoes of Mrs. Mc Nab's complaint that "there was too much work for one woman", and of the cleaners' sigh, "Oh, [ . . . ] the work!" (WOOLF 2000b, 152), in Woolf's articulations of her somatic experience of the difficult writing and revising process of *To the Lighthouse*: "I so soon tire of work" (1982, 28). Reading the exclamation "Oh, [ . . . ] the work!" as a self-reflexive comment about the writing process is encouraged by the double meaning of "work", as labour and as literary work. The words "it was finished" (WOOLF 2000b, 153), articulated after the cleaners complete their task, could also be applied to the writing process, as the passage draws to an end at this point. The expressions "Oh, they said, the work!" and "it was finished" do not appear in the holograph draft, which points to the fact that the writing process at its specific stage is reflected in the various versions: the anticipation of a finished work is more present in the typescript and fulfilled in the printed version, whereas it is not yet in sight in the holograph draft, where only the "labour" (WOOLF *Draft*, 164) and the "laborious birth" (WOOLF *Draft*, 180) are mentioned.<sup>9</sup> As a last example of the parallelism between the work of cleaning and writing, when nature's forces ravage the house, the narrative voice claims that "[n]othing now withstood them; nothing said no to them" (WOOLF 2000b, 150), while what characterises Woolf's writing practice most is saying "no" to rampant language.

Cutting the linguistic proliferations implies that composition and decomposition go hand in hand: by deleting more and more, Woolf continually destroys parts of the text she created. If we look at pages of the holograph draft, the deletions evoke the impression of the text being harmed or in decay. At the same time, the destruction of parts of the text in the drafts is what enables the realisation of the text in its final form. In this way, Woolf's editing processes echo a dynamics of unworking in a Blanchotian sense. Blanchot himself, who was aware that Woolf was "rewriting each of her books I don't know how many times" (BLANCHOT 2003, 101), describes such a practice as follows: "everything original is put to the test by the sheer powerlessness inherent in starting over — this sterile prolixity, the surplus of that which can do nothing, which never is the work, but ruins it and in it restores the unending lack of work" (1989, 37). It is precisely the "sterile prolixity" of "starting over", revising again and again, which makes writing

9. All citations from the draft and the typescript are taken from *Woolf Online* and reproduced with the kind permission of The Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Estate of Virginia Woolf.



“interminable” and “incessant” (BLANCHOT 1989, 26). For Blanchot, “to write is [. . .] to surrender to the risk of time’s absence, where eternal starting over reigns” (1989, 33). Obviously, “Time Passes” does not present an *absence* of time as such, but, in line with Blanchot’s implication, it stages a movement of “eternal starting over”, of unworking on the fictional level, which at the same time preserves traces of a writing and editing process determined by a corresponding dynamic.

What is abandoned in such a dynamic is the idea of an ultimate finality, an end of times. In this respect, it is significant that “Time Passes” is set during World War One, deliberately focusing on a temporally alternative scenario to the war, which was conceived as the end of civilization by many of Woolf’s contemporaries. Here and there, Woolf famously inserts brief factual scraps from the parallel scenario of the War in her text, stressing the finality of its temporal logic by using square brackets, i.e., “[A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty young men were blown up in France, among them Andrew Ramsey, whose death, mercifully, was instantaneous]” (2000b, 145). Within the chapter as a whole, the seeming closure of the square brackets is undermined, as they represent an *interruption*, and not a termination of the temporal proceedings in the abandoned house, which, I argue, may offer us a way to approach a notion of the Anthropocene beyond the apocalyptic logic, an Anthropocene, that is, determined by forces of unworking rather than a linear teleological path towards destruction.

To return to the parallels between the fictional level of “Time Passes” and Woolf’s writing and editing processes: Woolf’s deletions are not only comparable to the cleaners’ work, but also to the decomposing forces of nature, especially the “nibbling” airs. The airs’ work resembles Woolf’s deleting process through the corroding act of nibbling: In both the holograph draft and the typescript they are called “spies” (WOOLF *Draft*, 157; *Typescript*, 4, 6) and repeatedly described as beady-eyed agents moving about the house. In the holograph draft, the air-spies are described as a “stealthy patrol” (WOOLF, 156), “prying & peering” (WOOLF, 155). Such a militant surveillance also corresponds to Woolf’s insistent review and inspection of her drafts as a prerequisite for her relentless corrections and deletions. It is no contradiction that hints to Woolf’s editing process can be found both in the description of what the airs and the cleaners do and undo. It would be incorrect to assume that the cleaners’ work is purely reconstructive and that of the natural forces purely destructive.

The closer we look at the text, the more obvious it gets that their operations — or, shall we say inoperations? — are analogous. The airs and

the cleaners are engaged in a process of unworking where productive and destructive forces intertwine: the animate airs contribute to the house's impending collapse, whereas the cleaners undo nature's "fertile work" and thereby restore the damaged house. Their respective doings are highly precarious and constantly on the verge of diminishing or turning into resignation and inertia. The airs are frail, hardly visible, barely perceptible: when they are first described, the narrative voice keeps speculating about the hour that their movement through the house will "cease" (WOOLF 2000b, 138). In a similar fashion, the narrative voice stresses the weakness and mortality of Mrs. McNab's body: "she was too old. Her legs pained her" (WOOLF 2000b, 147). It is precisely these feeble and faint entities, whose endurance is, literally, constantly put into question, that persevere. The disembodied airs who constantly almost "cease" and "disappear" (WOOLF 2000b, 138), "iterate[]" and reiterate[]: "we remain" (WOOLF 2000b, 141). In turn, Mrs. McNab and the cleaners finally do stay and restore the house.

The relation between the cleaners, Mrs. McNab and the airs exceeds analogy: they are rather presented as various figurations of the same force of unworking. When Mrs. McNab temporarily gives up her task of reverting nature's work, "the trifling airs, nibbling, the clammy breaths, fumbling, seemed to have triumphed" (WOOLF 2000b, 150). The airs are no longer mentioned when the cleaners succeed in restoring the house, which may imply that the cleaners "triumphed". However, the way in which the cleaning women move around the house, "stooping, rising, groaning, singing", how they "lapped and slammed, upstairs now, now down in the cellars" (WOOLF 2000b, 152), is strikingly similar to how the airs "crept" around "corners", "entered the drawing-room", "mounted the staircase and nosed round bedroom doors" (WOOLF 2000b, 138). Returning to earlier descriptions of Mrs. McNab, too, one can observe a strange correlation between her and the airs, even in the words with which Woolf describes them: they both "sigh[]" (WOOLF 2000b, 139, 149) and "rub[]" (WOOLF 2000b, 138, 142). Certain words and attributes are thus transferred from the airs to Mrs. McNab. Rather than being agents that respectively attempt to cancel each other out, the airs and the cleaners *persist* in an incessant process of doing and undoing — and what the personified airs give as an answer to their repeated question of what will endure, namely "*we remain*" (WOOLF 2000b, 141), is affirmed: their movement is maintained in Mrs. McNab's work. Immediately before the cleaners return to the house, we find the following sentence: "But there was a force working; something not highly conscious; something that leered, something that lurched; something not inspired to go about its work with dignified ritual or solemn chant-

ing. Mrs. McNab groaned; Mrs. Bast creaked” (WOOLF 2000b, 151). The most straightforward interpretation would be to identify this “force” with the cleaners. But why would the cleaners be called “something”, and why would they be “not highly conscious”? Rather than equating it with Mrs. McNab and her helpers, “the force” may refer to the movement shared by the airs and the cleaners, which also manifests itself in the *transference* of attributes from the airs’ activity to the activity of the cleaners. Operating in a subliminal, semi-dormant rather than an active way, the paradoxically persistent force of unworking shows how the text as such “works”.

In this context, the question of the cleaners’ social status has to be addressed.<sup>10</sup> In *The Labors of Modernism*, Mary Wilson claims “Woolf’s domestic modernism [. . .] depends on, and continues to be invested in, the visible invisibility of servant labor, while it creates a style of modernist narrative that borrows from that very structure” (2016, 23). It is precisely in the parallels created between the servants’ and the writers’ work, or the literary work, that Wilson observes a perpetuated structure of exploitation: “their home-making labors are inscribed in, and often exploited by, the novel-making labors of modernist writing” (2016, 10). As Alison Light convincingly shows, Woolf’s depictions of servants reproduce some of the “prejudices about the ‘lower orders’ [that] were typical of the day” (2008, xviii) and portraits like the one of Mrs. Mc Nab as a kind of inarticulate “archetypal species” (2008, 200) certainly involve problematic mystifications. I would argue that the continuity between the cleaners, the airs, Woolf’s editing practice and the text’s own movement — when considered in terms of unworking — at least to some degree resists both these prejudices/mystifications and the exploitative mechanism Wilson points out in attempts to assimilate modernist writing and servant labor. Unworking breaks with an “economy of dependence” (WILSON 2016, 30) and unsettles the space of middle class domesticity. As a force countering the realization of getting work accomplished or done, unworking is situated outside the logic of economy as such. The relations between the agents in the house that is no longer a home are complex and escape linear hierarchy: in their attempts to domesticate it again, the cleaners mirror how the airs undo the domestic space. The goal of the cleaners’ work on the diegetic level, to make the house habitable again “for the upper classes” (LIGHT 2008, 200), is undermined by the form their work takes on, the way in which it slips into unworking. That the cleaners’ movements, sounds and words

10. I am grateful for Amanda Golden’s advice to address this issue as well as her suggestions for further reading.

contain both traits of the airs and of Woolf's editing practice complicates established social power relations. The fact that they are the most conspicuous trace of that editing practice in the finished novel almost reverts the idea that the servants' work is rendered invisible in the writers' work it makes possible. Finally, the cleaners' affinity to the airs and the impersonal space of writing as well as the insistence of the passive force the cleaners exert, their potential to remain, maybe remain after extinction, in a post-apocalyptic world, shifts them to a domain beyond the human,<sup>11</sup> and thus beyond socio-political power relations.<sup>12</sup>

What becomes apparent if one traces the course of Woolf's editing process, which, as it has been observed, mainly consists in reducing textual material, is that she lets the occurrence of human characters diminish. In the first draft and the typescript, "sleepers", very possibly the sleeping guests of the holiday house, that is, the characters whom we got to know in the first part of the novel, are present as actual human bodies in the initial stages of the house's decay. Even though the sleepers are described as waning, they are still there:

Not only was furniture confounded; but there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say 'this is he' or 'this is she'; but from the many bodies lying asleep either in the rigid attitudes of the old passively creased in the creases of the beds, or easily lying scarcely covered, in childhood [ . . . ] there rose, to break silvery on the surface, thoughts, dreams, impulses, of which the sleepers by day knew nothing. Now a hand was raised as if to clutch something or perhaps ward off something; now the anguish which is forbidden to cry out for comfort parted the lips of the sleepers; now and then somebody laughed out loud, as if sharing a joke with nothingness.

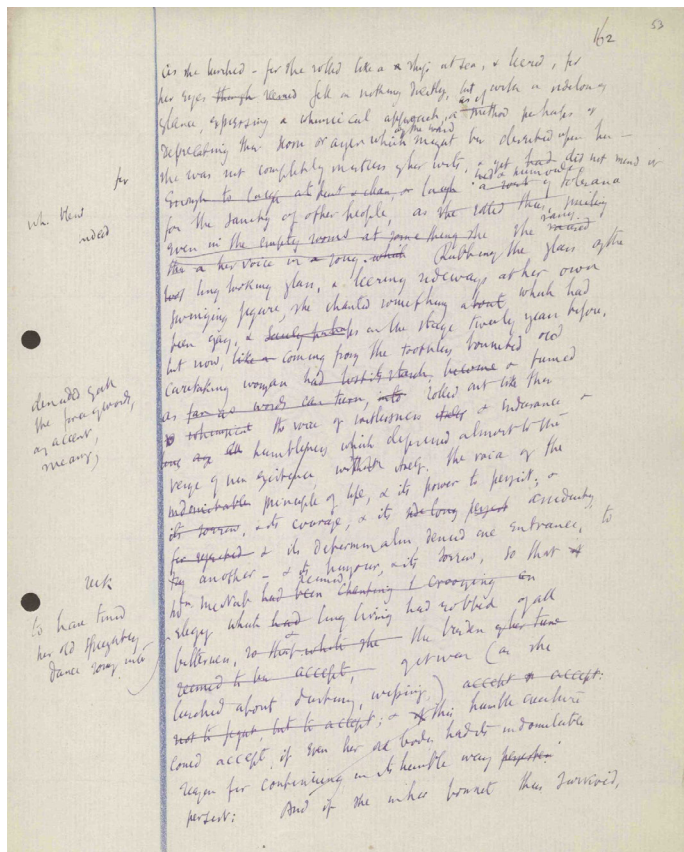
(WOOLF *Typescript*, 1)

In the printed version, this passage, unlike many others where the sleepers occur in draft and typescript, is carried over, but the sleepers them-

11. Depersonalizing the cleaners (WILSON 2016, 53) and stressing their passivity would in that sense by no means reproduce the common prejudice against domestic laborers, but rather provide a re-evaluation and rethinking of the widespread devaluation of passivity and of anthropocentrism in a society that builds on social exploitation.
12. Rather than calling into question readings like Light's or Wilson's, I argue that the reproduced power relations they importantly point out are accompanied and at times counteracted by other implications.

selves have disappeared. The “hand” is raised out of nowhere, the laughter is no longer tied to “the lips of the sleepers”. What in draft and typescript belonged to slumbering humans now occurs in a disembodied manner: “there was scarcely anything left of body or mind by which one could say, ‘This is he’ or ‘This is she.’ Sometimes a hand was raised as if to clutch something or ward off something, or somebody groaned, or somebody laughed aloud as if sharing a joke with nothingness” (WOOLF 2000b, 137–8). In the only instance where a sleeper occurs in the printed version, it does so hypothetically: “should any sleeper fancying that he might find on the beach an answer to his doubts, a sharer of his solitude, throw off his bedclothes and go down by himself to walk on the sand” (WOOLF 2000b, 140). In the draft and the typescript, the sleepers, who explicitly linger “in the house” (WOOLF *Draft*, 187), sometimes somnambulate outside: “so the wind may have answered the sleepers, the dreamers, pacing the sand” (WOOLF *Typescript*, 2). Thus, in the early versions of “Time Passes” there is a narrative continuity to “should any escaped soul, any sleeper, who fancies that in sleep he has grasped the hand of a sharer walk the edge of the sea” (WOOLF *Typescript*, 6), and the hypothetical sleepers clearly go back to actual ones.

Hand in hand with the depersonalization of the sleepers, a realization of the endeavour “to give an empty house, no people’s characters”, qualities that are in the first draft attributed to Mrs. McNab’s “incongruous song” (WOOLF *Draft*, 164) are transferred to the airs. Whereas we can observe a movement of incorporation of the airs in the body of the cleaners as the middle part turns towards its end within all various drafts, including the final version, a reverse movement can be detected if we look at the development of the text across the drafts: human characters become more and more depersonalized and the “sound issued” from a human character’s “lips” (WOOLF *Typescript*, 9) emerges from the disembodied airs. Here it is worth comparing the description of Mrs. McNab’s song in the first draft and the printed version. In all versions, the “song”, or rather remains of a song Mrs. McNab utters during her exhaustive work, is depicted as being in a derelict state. The printed version puts it as follows: “something that had been gay twenty years before on the stage perhaps, had been hummed and danced to, but now, coming from the toothless, bonneted, care-taking woman, was robbed of meaning, was like the voice of witlessness” (WOOLF 2000b, 142). In the first draft, this ruinous singing appears to us in an accordingly decomposed language, a language that shares this quality with the song it describes precisely because it is in composition, in the process of becoming:



Figures 1 and 1a.

Virginia Woolf, draft page of "Time Passes". Holograph MS, Berg Collection. New York Public Library. The image here is from Woolf Online and is reproduced by the kind permission of The Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Estate of Virginia Woolf.

swinging figure, —  
 been gay, & surely perhaps on the stage twenty years before,  
 but now, like a coming from the toothless bonneted old  
 caretaking woman had lost its starch, become & turned  
 as far as words can turn, into rolled out like the  
 so whimsical the voice of witlessness itself & endurance &  
 long ago All humbleness which depressed almost to the  
 verge of non existence without itself. The voice of the  
 indomitable principle of life, & its power to persist; &  
 its sorrow, & its courage, & its sidelong persist assiduity,  
 for-rejected & its determination, denied one entrance, to  
 try another - & its humour, & its sorrow, so that if  
 Mrs. McNab had been chanting / crooning an  
 elegy which had long living had robbed of all  
 bitterness, so that while she the burden of her tune  
 seemed to be accept, if it was (as she  
 lurched about dusting, wiping) accept [?]& accept  
 fight, but to accept; & if this humble creature  
 had its indomitable



In the draft, the fluid transition between Mrs. McNab's "voice of witlessness itself & *endurance*", the "voice of the *indomitable principle of life* and its power to *persist*" (my emphases) and the air's speech is much more obvious than in the description of it in the printed version. The airs' "light persistency of feathers" (WOOLF 2000b, 138) is echoed, and the word "endurance" recalls the question "how long would they endure" (WOOLF 2000b, 138), which, in the draft is uttered by the narrative voice describing the airs, and then, in the later versions, by the airs directly, in their own "voice of witlessness". In contrast to the draft, the printed version also lets this question echo word by word in Mrs. McNab's mouth: "how long shall it endure?" (WOOLF 2000b, 143), she asks about the work. Thus, the airs' and the cleaners' inoperative voices and words interweave.

That Mrs. McNab's dirge expresses "some incorrigible hope" (WOOLF 2000b, 143) in the light of her almost unmanageable task can also be read as a reference to Woolf's editing practice: her corrections themselves rest upon something "incorrigible", the hope that they will at some stage lead to a finished text. Hope and lament meet in the moment a process of unworking is reflected. It is a moment of utter uncertainty in which everything is simultaneously falling apart and coming together — a moment that, when it is depicted on the fictional level of "Time Passes", maintains traces of how the text itself came to be: the instances when it was a ruinous progress, a feeble construct tattered by deletions whose outcome was not granted. This can only be met with a sigh — a communal, anonymous sigh of lament and perseverance like the one uttered by the airs and the creaking of the obstacles they meet: "At length, desisting, all ceased together, gathered together, all sighed together; all together gave off an aimless gust of lamentation" (WOOLF 2000b, 139). A "murmur of the incessant and interminable" (BLANCHOT 1989, 48) that in Woolf's text moves from breath to air and back, gets embodied and disembodied, and mediates between the finished text and the traces of its emergence. The three scenarios investigated here articulate an elegy of unworking: while the feeble airs pervade the deserted house, Mrs. McNab forces her aching body to work and Woolf cuts her way through "the most difficult abstract piece of writing" in which the proximity to resignation, "rack and ruin" and "oblivion" is stifling. Maybe as stifling as an age termed the "Anthropocene", in which the apocalyptic narrative of the end of time almost seems to relieve the uncertainty we encounter, and when a sentence like the opening of "Time Passes", "Well, we must wait for the future to show" (WOOLF 2000b, 127), may be overshadowed by more severe ruminations: "*The disaster takes care*

of everything. [. . .] Nothing suffices to the disaster; this means that just as it is foreign to the ruinous purity of destruction, so the idea of totality cannot delimit it" (BLANCHOT 1986, 3, 2).

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# Difference as Punishment or Difference as Pleasure

From the Tower of Babel in *De vulgari eloquentia*  
to the Death of Babel in *Paradiso* 26

*Teodolinda Barolini*

## ABSTRACT

Dante's linguistic treatise, *De vulgari eloquentia*, is not without joy in linguistic difference and invention. However, the treatise's signature view of linguistic difference is its powerfully punitive account of the Tower of Babel. Linguistic diversity, aka "confusion of tongues", is the punishment meted out to Nimrod and his followers for their presumptuous building of the Tower of Babel: thus, difference is punishment. This essay traces Dante's evolution as he moves from *De vulgari eloquentia* to the encounter with Nembrot (as Dante calls Nimrod) in *Inferno* 31 and then to *Paradiso* 26. The punishment of *Inferno* 31 is no longer differentiated language but lack of language: Dante punishes Nembrot not with linguistic diversity, but by assigning him a non-language that communicates non-sense. Adam's great discourse on linguistic creation in *Paradiso* 26 signals full transition: from difference as punishment to difference as pleasure.

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IN THIS ESSAY I INTEND TO RETURN TO THE QUESTION OF DIFFERENCE in Dante's *Commedia*, as treated in *The Undivine Comedy* (BAROLINI 1992), and to trace its genealogy in Dante's earlier treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*. Difference — linguistic, temporal, narratological, political, existential, theological — is a major theme of *The Undivine Comedy*, where I also outlined the origins of Dante's preoccupation with difference (aka diversity or multiplicity) in his previous works. With respect to Dante's unfinished treatise on language and vernacular eloquence, *De vulgari eloquentia*, I noted the hostility toward difference/diversity/multiplicity displayed by the linguistic treatise, where difference is associated with *presumptuositas*.<sup>1</sup> My

1. See the analysis in BAROLINI 1992, 180–2, beginning "In some of his works, notably the *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Monarchia*, Dante displays a hostility toward difference and multiplicity" (180).

goal now is to elaborate my earlier thoughts regarding difference in *De vulgari eloquentia* and, in light of that elaboration, to reassess the relation between *De vulgari eloquentia* and the *Commedia*, particularly *Paradiso* 26.

Difference, in the form of linguistic diversity, functions as the divine castigation of human pride in *De vulgari eloquentia*. In the treatise, following Genesis 11 and Augustine's *City of God* 16.4, the differentiation of one original language into multiple languages is God's retaliatory scourge upon our wickedness for attempting to scale the heavens by building the Tower of Babel. The account in Genesis 11:6–7 stipulates the link between linguistic unity and transgressive human success:

et dixit: Ecce, unus est populus, et unum labium omnibus: coeperuntque hoc facere, nec desistent a cogitationibus suis, donec eas opere compleant. Venite igitur, descendamus, et confundamus ibi linguam eorum, ut non audiat unusquisque vocem proximi sui. (Genesis 11:6–7)

The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other".

In *De vulgari eloquentia* as well, Dante stipulates that linguistic unity creates a context in which humans work together and achieve more, stating that the builders originally spoke "one same language" and were subsequently "diversified into many languages": "qui omnes una eademque loquela deserviebant ad opus, ab opere multis diversificati loquelis desererent et nunquam ad idem commertium convenirent" (Previously all of them had spoken one and the same language while carrying out their tasks; but now they were forced to leave off their labors, never to return to the same occupation, because they had been split up into groups speaking different languages [*Dve* 1.7.6]).<sup>2</sup> Dante narrates the story of the Tower of Babel as a third *prevaricatio*, or transgression, followed by a third punishment: the first *prevaricatio* is original sin, punished by exile from Eden; the second consists of the *lussuria* and *trucitas* of the human species, punished

2. All citations from the *De vulgari eloquentia* are from TAVONI 2011. English translations of the work are taken from BOTTERILL 1996. In both cases, passages will be cited according to the book, paragraph and line divisions (for example, *Dve* 1.2.2). I have also consulted Enrico Fenzi's 2012 edition.

by the great flood; and the third is the presumptuous building of the Tower of Babel, punished by linguistic confusion.

The noun *prevaricatio*, “transgression”, appears twice in *De vulgari eloquentia*: it refers to original sin on both occasions, in *Dve* 1.4.4 (“post prevaricationem humani generis”) and 1.7.2 (“per primam prevaricationem”).<sup>3</sup> Etymologically *prevaricatio* is a “going beyond”, deriving from *prae* + *vari-cari*, a verb from which descend *varcare* and *valicare*, thus related to “varco”, as in the “varco / folle d’Ulisse” of *Paradiso* 27.82–83.<sup>4</sup> Revealing an apparent profound continuity between the earlier treatise and *Paradiso*, the idea of *prevaricatio* is reprised, as Tavoni notes in his commentary to the linguistic treatise, by Adam’s “trapassar del segno” of *Paradiso* 26.117: “Il verbo *praevaricor*, intransitivo, significa ‘andare oltre, fuori dal tracciato’; corrisponde dunque perfettamente alla definizione del peccato originale che darà appunto Adamo in *Par.* XXVI 115–17: ‘Or figliuol mio, non il gustar del legno / fu per sé la cagion di tanto essilio, / ma solamente il *trapassar del segno*’” (TAVONI 2011, 1161 [his italics]: The intransitive verb *praevaricor* means to ‘go beyond, outside the path; it corresponds perfectly to the definition of original sin that Adam will give in *Par.* 26. 115–17).

By the time we reach *Paradiso* 26, Dante has constructed a vast semantic and metaphoric field around the idea of trespass, featuring protagonists from classical mythology as well as biblical figures and centering on the Greek hero Ulysses. At the core of the *trapassar del segno* is the sin of pride, and in *The Undivine Comedy*’s analysis of the metapoetic current of the *Commedia* I claim that “the terms *presunzione* and *presumere* may be said to carry a Ulyssean charge in all Dante’s works . . . indeed they were invested by Dante with a special significance as early as the *Convivio* and the *De vulgari eloquentia*, before such a thematic could properly be dubbed ‘Ulyssean’.”<sup>5</sup> In other words, Dante has a history of using these words in contexts that indicate his ongoing concern with the problem of intellec-

3. Botterill (1996) translates “transgression” in *Dve* 1.7.2, “disaster” in 1.4.4.

4. Citations from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* are taken from the three-volume commentary by Anna Maria CHIAVACCI LEONARDI 1991, 1994, whose text is based on PETROCCHI 1966–1967. I cite passages from Dante’s *Commedia* according to their usual divisions by canticle, canto and verses (thus, for example, *Par.* 26.38). Translations of the *Commedia* are those of Allen Mandelbaum, accessed at *Digital Dante* (<https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/>).

5. See *The Undivine Comedy* (BAROLINI 1992, 115) for my analysis of the usage of *presunzione* and *presumere* in the *Commedia*: the noun *presunzione* appears only with respect to excommunication in *Purgatorio* 3 and the adjective *presuntuoso* appears only in reference to Provenzan Salvani (1992, 114–18).



tual arrogance, the problem to which in the *Commedia* he gives dramatic and metapoetic shape through the figure of Ulysses.

In *De vulgari eloquentia* the first and programmatic use of this key word cluster is the adjective used in 1.4.2 as a qualifier for Eve: *presumptuosissima Eva*. Dante is here discussing Eve's role when, by replying to the devil, she becomes, according to Scripture, the first human to engage in *locutio*. Dante disputes that a woman could have been the first speaker, preferring to "believe that the power of speech was given first to Adam, by Him who had just created him" (*Dve* 1.4.3). Putting aside Dante's interpretation of this speech act vis-à-vis the biblical antecedent, discussed by Rosier-Catach (2007), my interest is in the adjective *presumptuosissima*, the redolent superlative that marks the entrance of *presumptio* into the lexicon of *De vulgari eloquentia*. The misogyny underpinning Dante's view here is telling: Eve remains *presumptuosissima*, even though Dante seeks to take away her status as first speaker, the act that signaled her presumption.

The fault of the prideful presumption of the single woman of *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.4.2 becomes, in its next appearance, the fault of the prideful presumption of the human race, the "culpa presumptionis humane" of 1.6.4. Following our expulsion from the garden of Eden and our near extinction in deluvial waters, in our foolish pride we presumed yet a third time, turning in *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.7.3 to the construction of a Tower that can reach to heaven itself: "per superbam stultitiam presumendo" (1.7.3). The participle "presumendo" at the end of 1.7.3 is immediately echoed by the next word, the powerful verb "Presumpsit" (the subject is "uncurable man") which begins 1.7.4: "Presumpsit ergo in corde suo incurabilis homo, sub persuasione gigantis Nembroth, arte sua non solum superare naturam, sed etiam ipsum naturantem, qui Deus est" (So uncurable man, persuaded by the giant Nimrod, presumed in his heart to surpass with his art not only nature, but also nature's maker, who is God [1.7.4]).<sup>6</sup>

The extraordinary sentence that begins "Presumpsit" in *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.7.4 proceeds to define humankind's sin as mimetic, as representational, as always already artistic. The idea that our sin consisted in attempting to surpass with our art not only nature, but also nature's maker, anticipates the theory of mimesis (derived from Aristotle's *Physics* as the

6. I offer my own translation of this sentence in order to keep the Dantean word "art", as compared to Botterill's rendering "skill": "Incorrigible humanity, therefore, led astray by the giant Nimrod, presumed in its heart to outdo in skill not only nature but the source of its own nature, who is God" (BOTTERILL 1996, *ad loc.*).

maxim “ars imitatur naturam in quantum potest”) that Dante outlines at the end of *Inferno* 11 and again in *Purgatorio* 10. Nembrot’s attempt to surpass not only nature but also nature’s maker causes him to be remembered in each *cantica* of the *Commedia*, as part of an “artistic” constellation of transgressors that merges the biblical giant with the mythological Arachne and Phaeton. The attempt to overturn the mimetic hierarchy, as described in the linguistic treatise, makes Nembrot an emblem, for Dante, of the pride inherent in human creativity, human art, human productivity, human work. Thus, Nembrot stands bewildered by the “great work” (“gran lavoro”) that lies crumbled at his feet in the sculpted examples of pride in *Purgatorio* 12.34. This “gran lavoro” is recast by Dante’s Adam as the “ovra inconsummabile” (unaccomplishable task) of *Paradiso* 26.125.

But difference is not only castigation in *De vulgari eloquentia*. God’s ability to differentiate is celebrated in the treatise, as it will be (and less equivocally) in *Paradiso*, the *cantica* that devotes so much poetic energy to the fact that the One made the many. In *Quaestio* 47 of the *Summa Theologiae*, titled “De distinctione rerum in communi” (on the plurality in general of things), St. Thomas writes: “distinctio et multitudo rerum est a Deo” (the difference and multiplicity of things come from God [GILBY 1967]). In *De vulgari eloquentia* God’s *opus distinctionis* is beautifully evoked in the rhetorical question in which Dante wonders whether God, who differentiated far greater things, could not have created the distinctions that cause a few words to sound: “Ipso distinguente qui maiora distinxit?” ([what surprise] if He distinguishes them who has made much greater distinctions? [*Dve* 1.4.6]).

Moreover, in *De vulgari eloquentia* Dante characterizes exile — alienation from one’s homeland or *patria* — in a manner far different from the degradation and homelessness that characterize exile in his contemporary philosophical treatise, *Convivio*. Describing himself as one to whom “the whole world is a homeland, like the sea to fish” (“cui mundus est patria velut piscibus equor” [1.6.3]), Dante claims to find a *patria* for himself everywhere. The difference inherent in the condition of exile is thus turned into a value, and indeed Dante is open to the value of difference: to the value of swimming in a vast sea that is populated by fish of diverse stripes, by fish that are communicating, so to speak, in diverse tongues.

The treatise performs joy in human innovation and creativity, beginning with the innovation of the author himself, in the treatise’s “Ulyssean” incipit: “Cum neminem ante nos de vulgaris eloquentie doctrina quicquam inveniamus tractasse” (Since I find that no one, before myself, has dealt in any way with the theory of eloquence in the vernacular [*Dve* 1.1.1]). When,

in Book 2 of the linguistic treatise, Dante puts aside the fate of the human race and turns to a historiography of vernacular poetics, he is a partisan who takes overt pleasure in his supremacy. Thus the word *presumere*, in its six uses in the treatise, treats first the sin of the human race in Book 1 and then is used in Book 2 to regulate status among poets. In Book 2 chapter 4, Dante as author presumes (“presumpsimus”) to call “poets” those who create verse in the vernacular: “quod procul dubio rationabiliter eructare presumpsimus” (this presumptuous expression is beyond question justifiable [*Dve* 2.4.2]). At the end of this same chapter, Dante describes inferior poets who try to go beyond their natural limits with the noun *presumptuositas*, used in adjectival form earlier in the treatise for Eve. Lesser poets should desist from such presumption, he writes, and if nature or laziness has made them geese, they should accept their lowly status and cease to imitate the starseeking eagle: “et a tanta presumptuositate desistant, et si anseres natura vel desidia sunt, nolint astripetam aquilam imitari” (Let them lay such presumption aside; and, if nature or their own incompetence has made them geese, let them not try to emulate the starseeking eagle [*Dve* 2.4.11]). The *presumptuositas* of the geese here stands corrected not by a castigating divinity but by Dante’s very human pride in the artistry of the “starseeking eagle”.

A positive view of human difference is thus not lacking in *De vulgari eloquentia*. Joy in human diversity is confirmed by the usage in the treatise of the verb *gaudere* and the noun *gaudium*.<sup>7</sup> Humans are moved not by instinct but by reason, and, since reason takes diverse forms in diverse individuals — “diversificetur in singulis” — it seems almost as though each individual enjoys the privilege of being a species unto her or himself: “sua propria specie videatur gaudere” (1.3.1).<sup>8</sup> The celebratory “diversificetur” of the phrase “diversificetur in singulis” (1.3.1) will be echoed and reversed by

7. There are two uses of the verb *gaudere*, in *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.3.1 and 2.12.3, and three uses of the noun *gaudium*, all in 1.4.4.

8. I diverge from Botterill’s translation (1996) for this last clause. Botterill uses “almost” to qualify “everyone” (“to the point where it appears that almost everyone enjoys the existence of a unique species”), while I have instead followed the renderings of TAVONI 2011 and FENZI 2012, for whom “almost” qualifies the idea that an individual is a species unto herself: “al punto che ciascun individuo sembra quasi far specie a sé” (TAVONI 2011, 1149); “quasi si direbbe che ognuno goda del privilegio di fare specie a sé” (FENZI 2012, 23). Botterill captures the literal meaning of “gaudere” in “videatur gaudere”, as does Fenzi, while Tavoni glosses over it.

the punishing “diversificati” of “multis diversificati loquelis” in the Tower of Babel story (1.7.6).

Given the exalted sense of the value of being differentiated into individuals attested by “sua propria specie videatur gaudere”,<sup>9</sup> it is interesting to note that the only other use in the treatise of the verb *gaudere* brings us back to the elation that accompanies poetic greatness. The verb *gaudere* is used to express Dante’s beautiful conceit that the stanzas in a canzone “rejoice in being composed entirely of hendecasyllables”: “Nam quedam stantia est que solis endecasillabis gaudet esse contexta, ut illa Guidonis de Florentia, *Donna me prega, perch’io voglio dire*” (For there are some stanzas that seem to rejoice in being composed entirely of hendecasyllables, as in that poem of Guido of Florence *Donna me prega, perch’io voglio dire* [Dve 2.12.3]).

The noun *gaudium* is concentrated in one chapter of the linguistic treatise, where it occurs three times in a tightly woven skein of intermixed loss and joy. Dante considers first the fall that stamps our language with woe (“heu”, the wail of birth, based on the name “Eva”). He then moves backwards in time to consider the joy that must have previously marked the speech of the first man and compelled his first utterance to be the word ‘God’:

Nam, sicut post prevaricationem humani generis quilibet exordium sue locutionis incipit ab *heu*, rationabile est quod ante qui fuit inciperet a **gaudio**; et cum nullum **gaudium** sit extra Deum, sed totum in Deo, et ipse Deus totus sit **gaudium**, consequens est quod primus loquens primo et ante omnia dixisset “Deus”. (Dve 1.4.4)

For if, since the disaster that befell the human race, the speech of every one of us has begun with ‘woe!’, it is reasonable that he who existed before should have begun with a cry of **joy**; and, since there is no **joy** outside God, but all [joy] is in God and since God Himself is **joy** itself, it follows that the first man to speak should first and before all have said ‘God’.

9. Fenzi (2012, 23) notes the intensity of this formulation (“questa intensa frase”) and glosses: “È precisamente nell’esercizio della sua natura razionale che l’uomo si rivela libero e inconfontabile con qualsiasi altra persona, e fa specie per se stesso, proprio come avviene per gli angeli secondo Tommaso [. . .]” [It is precisely in the exercise of his rational nature that each human being reveals herself to be free and unique with regard to any other person, and is a kind unto herself, just as [saint] Thomas suggests is the state of the angels].

In this passage, Dante constructs a before and an after: a time before the fall and a time after, “post prevaricationem humani generis” (*Dve* 1.4.4). In order to recover the joy of human speech, Dante turns to the before, which in the structure of his sentence he positions after. He thus ends his thought not with the fall of the human race but with the joy of the first speaker, Adam. (Dante here calls Adam “*primus loquens*” and discounts the idea that Eve could have been the first speaker, though he has already harshly labeled her *presumptuoissima* on the basis of that act.) He constructs this dialectical sentence such that the reader’s final take-away is not the fall of Adam and Eve but Adam’s previous joy in speech: as the “*primus loquens*” who “*primo et ante omnia dixisset ‘Deus’*” (the first speaker [who] first and before all said ‘God’).<sup>10</sup>

The general structural and narrative economy of *De vulgari eloquentia* mirrors the structure of the sentence cited above, moving from *heu* to *gaudium*, from loss to joy. Book 1 moves from the self-inflicted human losses that culminate in the confusion of tongues to the *idioma tripharium* introduced in *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.8.5 and to the inventory of the languages spoken on the Italian peninsula, concluding with the characteristics of the *vulgare illustre*. Book 2 (and what was intended to follow Book 2, to the degree that Dante shares this information) deals with making poetry and with those who make it. In such a narrative economy the reader experiences first the fall — the somber *heu* or wail of human existence — and then the *gaudium* of creation. And we feel not only the joy of divine creation but of human creation as well: all those languages, all those poets, all those genres and meters.

Dante also takes this opportunity to tell us that the *gramatica* was invented precisely as a means of circumventing the debilitating effects of difference. Its inventors wanted to offset the possibility that linguistic mutability and differentiation would separate us from others. They invented *gramatica* lest “we should become either unable, or, at best, only partially able, to enter into contact with the deeds and authoritative writings of the ancients, or of those whose difference of location makes them different from us” (*Dve* 1.9.11). The *gramatica* thus keeps us in contact with the ancients and with those who are geographically distant from us.<sup>11</sup> In

10. Dante’s self-descriptor “*neminem ante nos*” aligns with Eve, who speaks “*ante omnes*” and now with Adam who “*ante omnia dixisset ‘Deus’*”.

11. Dante here construes the cultural other precisely as he does in the *Commedia*, where the other is construed both temporally and geographically. Not only does Dante in the *Commedia* devote much attention to communication with the

a telling phrase Dante refers to “those whose difference of location makes different from us”: “illorum quos locorum diversitas facit esse diversos” (1.9.11). Language, rather than necessarily rendering us more different and separate, as per the punishment meted out for the Tower of Babel, therefore is also the means of reaching those whom *diversitas facit esse diversos*. From punishment and consequent loss comes a new form of unity, created by humans for human use.

Without doubt, the positive view of language as compensation for alienation or difference is already in *De vulgari eloquentia*. However, although we recognize the important place accorded to human invention in the linguistic treatise, we must also acknowledge the primacy of the early placement of the Tower of Babel narrative. The Babel narrative gives dramatic and performative power to the idea that loss of linguistic unity is punishment for sin. Language as we know it is the punishment visited upon our pride and the treatise’s accounting for language is ineluctably bound to the logic of punishment and consequent loss.

The story of Babel is fed by primitive emotions, fostering a shame so strong that it exists even “now”, Dante writes, in the present tense of the author writing the treatise. Dante takes the shame of original sin onto himself and “blushes” at the beginning of *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.7, where the verb “Dispudet” (it shames me) is accompanied by an authorial “heu”, the sound defined in 1.4.4 as the wail that has accompanied birth ever since original sin: “Dispudet, heu, nunc humani generis ignominiam renovare! Sed quia preterire non possumus quin transeamus per illam, quamquam rubor ad ora consurgat animusque refugiat, percurremus” (Alas, how it shames me now to recall the dishonouring of the human race! But since I can make no progress without passing that way, though a blush comes to my cheek and my spirit recoils, I shall make haste to do so [*Dve* 1.7.1]). Dante lists our transgressions, wondering rhetorically why the punishments of banishment and extermination were not sufficient to correct us. The passage culminates with the beating that we humans deserve, authorially highlighted with an address to the reader: “Ecce, lector, quod, vel oblitus homo, vel vilipendens disciplinas priores et avertens oculos a vibicibus que

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ancients, but he is also deeply concerned about the virtuous pagan whom geographical location has rendered different: the virtuous “man born on the banks of the Indus” of *Paradiso* 19.70–71. For this linkage, see “*Inferno* 4: The Cultural Other.” *Commento Baroliniano*, Digital Dante. New York, NY: Columbia University Libraries, 2018: <https://digitaldante.columbia.edu/dante/divine-comedy/inferno/inferno-4/>



remanserant, tertio insurrexit ad verbera per superbam stultitiam presumendo” (And so, reader, the human race, either forgetful or disdainful of earlier punishments, and averting its eyes from the bruises that remained, came for a third time to deserve a beating, putting its trust in its own foolish pride [Dve 1.7.3]).

The Babel story enacts the law of the father and is steeped in the primal emotions of a patriarchal drama,<sup>12</sup> as the father mercifully administers a pious beating upon his rebellious son: “O sine mensura clementia celestis imperii! Quis patrum tot sustineret insultus a filio? Sed exurgens non hostili scutica sed paterna et alias verberibus assueta, rebellantem filium pia correctione nec non memorabili castigavit” (Oh boundless mercy of the kingdom of heaven! What other father would have borne so many insults from his child? Yet, rising up not with an enemy’s whip but that of a father, already accustomed to dealing out punishment, He chastised His rebellious offspring with a lesson as holy as it was memorable [Dve 1.7.5]).

All of this (frankly repellant) baggage of patriarchy and shame and pious beatings is swept away in *Paradiso* 26, where we meet Adam, who forcefully revises the status of Hebrew as presented in *De vulgari eloquentia*. Without explicitly articulating the theory that held Hebrew to be immutable (because Hebrew was created by God at the time when He created the first man), Adam nonetheless debunks it. He does so by simply and clearly stipulating the fact of Hebrew’s extinction. Speaking authoritatively about the language that he spoke — “La lingua ch’io parlai” — Adam explains that Hebrew was subject to the same laws of time and mutability as other languages. For this reason, Hebrew was extinct before the Tower of Babel was constructed:

La lingua ch’io parlai fu tutta spenta  
innanzi che a l’ovra inconsummabile  
fosse la gente di Nembròt attenta                    (Par. 26.124–6)

The tongue I spoke was all extinct  
before the men of Nimrod set their minds  
upon the unaccomplishable task

Nardi writes stirringly of how Dante here sheds the “ancient prejudice” that maintained that Hebrew was a divine creation, co-created by God

12. On familial dimensions within the *De vulgari eloquentia*, see CESTARO 2003.

along with Adam. Dante here, according to Nardi, reached a position that is advanced even with respect to much later thinkers like Vico.<sup>13</sup>

Dante also sheds the emotional turmoil surrounding the patriarchal drama of *De vulgari eloquentia*: gone are the shame-laden blushes and violent whips of the Tower of Babel story. God's pious beating of errant humanity has given way to Adam's dispassionate and philosophical presentation: a presentation that, rather than avoid Nembrot and the Tower, manages to pull the Babel story into the new narrative and to reframe it. Remarkably, for all that Adam references Nembrot and the Tower, the power of Babel is here eviscerated. Although Dante captures the haunting echo of the ancient punitive beating in the striking hapax *inconsummabile*,<sup>14</sup> the very verses that cite Nembrot's "ovra inconsummabile" effectively deny the significance of that beating.

With the death of Hebrew announced by Adam comes the death of Babel. In other words, the extinction of Hebrew also extinguishes the causal logic, present in the story since the Genesis account, whereby our sinful pride was punished by linguistic "confusio": the "confusion of tongues" — diversity of language — that was meted out as punishment for our transgression.<sup>15</sup> The result of *Paradiso* 26's acceptance of the radical historicity of all human language is nothing less than the excision of the causal link that makes the myth of Babel so powerful.

Dante still held to that causal link in *Inferno* 31, where Virgilio addresses Nembrot as foolish and confused, "Anima sciocca" (73) and "anima con-

13. See NARDI 1949. For the "vecchio pregiudizio", see p. 244: "e in queste ricerche egli maturò il suo pensiero, finchè il vecchio pregiudizio del *De vulgari eloquentia* si staccò dal suo animo e cadde come una fronda inaridita"; for the later Giambattista Vico, who attempted to "salvare la verità del racconto biblico", see p. 246.

14. See CHIAVACCI LEONARDI 1994, 730, of her commentary on the *Paradiso*: "Per la terza volta nel poema (cfr. *Inf.* XXXI 77–8; *Purg.* XII 34–6) ritorna il mito dell'umana superbia che così profondamente aveva colpito la mente e la fantasia di Dante. Qui il senso della storia è affidato all'aggettivo *inconsummabile* (che mai poteva esser consumata, cioè portata a compimento), dove è espressa l'impotenza della presunzione umana di farsi uguale a Dio".

15. Tavoni (2011, xiv) similarly notes that the differentiation of language before Babel "renders the episode irrelevant" ("il che rende l'episodio babelico irrilevante"), further commenting that Adam's claim that his language was mutable and arbitrary has the effect of "eliminating from the Babel myth its epochal value" ("Nel *Paradiso* Adamo dirà invece che anche la sua lingua era mutevole e arbitraria, togliendo al mito di Babele ogni valore epocale" [2011, 1076]).

fusa" (74), reminding us of the causal link between Nembrot's tower and the confusion of tongues. Dante further presents Nembrot in two verses that highlight the causation between overweening pride and linguistic diversity: "questi è Nembrotto per lo cui mal coto / pur un linguaggio nel mondo non s'usa" (this is Nimrod, through whose wicked thought / one single language cannot serve the world [*Inf.* 31.77–78]). Here Dante states with utmost clarity the premise that *because* of Nembrot's "evil thought" ("mal coto"), one single language ("pur un linguaggio") is no longer used by humans. The causal link that is here posited between human sin and linguistic diversity indicates that the Babel myth still holds sway in Dante's mind. Although Hebrew is not explicitly mentioned in *Inferno* 31, the implication is, as in *De vulgari eloquentia*, that the one original language lost by Nembrot was Hebrew.<sup>16</sup>

There is no denying that *Inferno* 31 picks up from *De vulgari eloquentia* the castigatory concept that Nembrot's sin led to the loss of "un linguaggio" that was shared by all humans. But, at the same time, I believe that *Inferno* 31 demonstrates an important softening, not toward Nembrot and his sinfulness, but toward the very concept of difference, which is no longer seen as inherently sinful and hence as an appropriate punishment for transgression. In this way, I believe that we can see the position on language of *Inferno* 31 as a way-station toward the position on language of *Paradiso* 26.

In the treatise, we remember, Dante follows the biblical and Augustinian versions of the Tower of Babel story: the punishment for transgression is diversity of language. As we saw, the builders of the Tower came to the task with "one same language" and left it "diversified into many languages": "qui omnes una eademque loquela deserviebant ad opus, ab opere multis diversificati loquelis desinerent et nunquam ad idem commertium convenirent" (Previously all of them had spoken one and the same language while carrying out their tasks; but now they were forced to leave off their labours, never to return to the same occupation, because they had been split up into groups speaking different languages [1.7.6]). As each group of builders becomes a new linguistic unit, with its "one" differentiated individual language, Dante deploys the terminology that previously signified unity in such a way as to underscore the unity that is no more: "Solis etenim in uno convenientibus actu eadem loquela remansit: puta cunctis architectoribus una, cunctis saxa volventibus una, cunctis ea parantibus una; et sic de singulis operantibus accidit" (Only among those who were engaged in a particular activity did their language remain unchanged; so, for instance,

16. See CHIAVACCI LEONARDI 1994, *ad locum*.

there was one for all the architects, one for all the carriers of stones, one for all the stone-breakers, and so on for all the different operations [*Dve* 1.7.7]).

But in *Inferno* 31 Dante does not punish Nembrot by inflicting difference upon him. Dante could have found a way to indicate that Nembrot now speaks a language that is different from the language that he spoke originally, and could have indicated that Nembrot is now unintelligible to Dante and Virgilio because his language is unknown to them. Rather, the fate of Nembrot as told in *Inferno* 31 is discontinuous with respect to all previous versions of the Tower of Babel, including *De vulgari eloquentia*.

For in *Inferno* 31 Dante punishes Nembrot not with linguistic diversity, but by assigning him a non-language that communicates non-sense. He is explicit about this point, stating that Nembrot's language is known to no one:

Lasciànlo stare e non parliamo a vòto;  
ché così è a lui ciascun linguaggio  
come 'l suo ad altrui, ch'a nullo è noto.                    (*Inf.* 31.79–81)

Leave him alone—let's not waste time in talk;  
for every language is to him the same  
as his to others—no one knows his tongue.

Nembrot in *Inferno* 31 is condemned to a more extreme form of unintelligibility than the one visited upon him in *De vulgari eloquentia*. In previous versions of the tale, Nembrot's followers are struck with linguistic diversity, so that he as their leader loses his ability to lead: he can no longer communicate with his followers and command them. But he retains the ability to speak, and hence presumably the ability to communicate with those few followers who still speak his language. However, in *Inferno* 31 there is no speaker to whom Nembrot can communicate; now he is condemned to an absolute *parlare a vòto*, to empty speech. He is stripped of the ability to transfer cognition to language. His “evil cognition” (the “coto” of “mal coto” in verse 77 is derived from Latin *cogitare*) has been punished in Dante's hell by condemnation to speak a non-language that is emptied of cognition. This is truly a *parlare a vòto* (*Inf.* 31.79).

The punishment of Nembrot in *Inferno* 31 is more absolute than the punishment that he suffers in the biblical and Augustinian stories, where he is punished with the confusion of tongues, the differentiation of one language into many languages. But, although harsher to Nembrot, the punishment of *Inferno* 31 no longer classifies difference itself as a form of

catigation. Dante has shifted away from the original versions of the story, no longer using difference itself as the punishment for the Tower of Babel. The punishment for Babel in *Inferno* 31 is non-language, not the creation of different languages.

Perhaps therefore we can claim that Dante has already softened his view of linguistic difference in *Inferno* 31. Perhaps we can posit Dante moving incrementally toward the position that he espouses in *Paradiso* 26, where difference is accepted, almost celebrated, as part of a necessary existential reality. The philosophical account of *Paradiso* 26 that takes the place of Babel removes the premise of our sinfulness and instead insists on the laws that govern all created being: the laws of time and mutability and the corruption and passing of all created things. These facts of existence may make us sad (and there may be a tinge of melancholy to Adam's speech), but they are also free of the terrible abjectness that permeates the Babel narrative.

The philosophical tone continues in the rest of Adam's speech. Following his announcement of the death of Hebrew, Adam revisits the issue of the creation of language by humans *ad placitum* — according to our pleasure. This issue too had been discussed in *De vulgari eloquentia*:

ché nullo effetto mai razionabile,  
per lo piacere uman che rinovella  
seguendo il cielo, sempre fu durabile.  
Opera naturale è ch'uom favella;  
ma così o così, natura lascia  
poi fare a voi secondo che v'abbella. (Par. 26.127–32)

For never has any thing produced by human reason  
been everlasting — following the heavens,  
men seek the new, they shift their predilections.  
That man should speak at all is nature's act,  
but how you speak — in this tongue or in that —  
she leaves to you and to your preference.

As Dante emphasizes in the above passage, how we speak is left by nature up to us. Without any tinge of shame, Dante affirms that how we speak is dictated by what pleases us: “natura lascia / poi fare a voi secondo che v'abbella” (nature leaves to you and to your preference [Par. 26.131–2]).

In order to underscore his point that Hebrew too was manmade and subject to change, Adam then turns to the example of the name of God and

to the changes in God's name that he has witnessed and observed. Before he (Adam) died, God had one name (*I*) and then subsequently He had another name (*El*). These changes occurred before Babel and were caused by the "uso" or habitual behavior of humans, a behavior that is habitually marked by variation and mutability, as individual humans follow their individual *placitum*. Our *uso* is a constant force for diversity and mutability, coming and going like the leaves on the bough of a tree:

Pria ch'ì scendessi a l'infernale ambascia,  
 I s'appellava in terra il sommo bene  
 onde vien la letizia che mi fascia;  
 e *El* si chiamò poi: e ciò convene,  
 ché l'uso d'ì mortali è come fronda  
 in ramo, che sen va e altra vene. (Par. 26.133–8)

Before I was sent down to Hell's torments,  
 on earth, the Highest Good — from which derives  
 the joy that now enfolds me — was called *I*;  
 and then He was called *El*. Such change must be:  
 the ways that mortals take are as the leaves  
 upon a branch — one comes, another goes.

We have already seen that Adam's speech on the human creation of language begins by correcting the status of Hebrew, a point to which the first man returns in the above passage with the example of the name of God. As compared to *De vulgari eloquentia* where Dante claims that the first word pronounced by the first speaker is "the name of God or *El*" (1.4.4), Dante now confirms that mutability attends even the language that names the divinity, which changed from an original *I* to the later *El*. He also corrects *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.9.6, whose discussion features much of the same language that we find in Adam's speech in *Paradiso* 26. Thus, in the below passage from *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.9.6, we see Latin "nullus effectus" which will become Italian "nullo effetto" (Par. 26.127), Latin "a nostro beneplacito" which will become Italian "lo piacere uman" (Par. 26.128), Latin "durabilis" which will become Italian "durabile" (Par. 26.129), and Latin "habitus" which will become Italian "l'uso d'ì mortali" (Par. 26.137):

Dicimus ergo **quod nullus effectus** superat suam causam in quantum effectus est, quia nil potest efficere quod non est. Cum igitur omnis nostra loquela, preter illam homini primo concreatam a Deo, sit **a nostro**



**beneplacito** reparata post confusionem illam que nil aliud fuit quam prioris oblivio, et homo sit instabilissimum atque variabilissimum animal, nec **durabilis** nec continua esse potest, sed sicut alia que nostra sunt, puta mores et **habitus**, per locorum temporumque distantias variari oportet. (*Dve* 1.9.6)

I say, therefore, that no effect exceeds its cause in so far as it is an effect, because nothing can bring about that which it itself is not. Since, therefore, all our language (except that created by God along with the first man) has been assembled, in haphazard fashion, in the aftermath of the great confusion that brought nothing else than oblivion to whatever language had existed before, and since human beings are highly unstable and variable animals, our language can be neither durable nor consistent with itself; but, like everything else that belongs to us (such as manners and customs), it must vary according to distances of space and time.

In *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.9.6 human choice in the invention of language is immediately shadowed and conditioned by the specter of the cause of that choice: our sin. Thus, “a nostro beneplacito” is followed by “reparata post confusionem”, which in turn is followed by “nil aliud fuit quam prioris oblivio” (*Dve* 1.9.6). In other words, we humans are not afforded the opportunity to *create* language “a nostro beneplacito” in *De vulgari eloquentia*. We are only afforded the opportunity to *reconstruct* it, hence it is “a nostro beneplacito **reparata**” (*Dve* 1.9.6). Moreover, the reconstruction occurs in the aftermath of and as a precise function of our sin, which caused the confusion that resulted in the oblivion of the prior original language that God had made for us: the language that was co-created with Adam.

In contrast — and it is an enormous contrast, which can hardly be overstated — in *Paradiso* 26 our human will and pleasure and invention and creativity and art are released from the parental yoke. They are freed, and their freedom is expressed in language whose very beauty — “per lo piacere uman che rinovella” (*Par.* 26.128), “natura lascia / poi fare a voi secondo che v’abbella” (*Par.* 26.131–2 ) — surely reflects the pleasure of the poet who wrote these words. The poet chooses the verb *rinovellare*, enshrined at the end of *Purgatorio* as a signifier of positive human change, and the verb *abbellare*, associated with lyric love poetry, to indicate the beauty that human choice can produce. And we note “la letizia che mi fascia” of *Par.* 26.135, the happiness that envelopes Adam: he has refound the *gaudium* of *De vulgari eloquentia* 1.4.4.

I will conclude with a corollary on speech and gender. In the *Commedia* Dante reverses the silence of the lyric lady and the errant speech of *presumptuosissima Eva* with that most effectively loquacious of literary ladies: the *Beatrix loquax* who enters the *Commedia* in *Purgatorio* 30, in the very Garden of Eden in which Eve so presumptuously spoke. *Beatrix loquax* then speaks for much of the rest of the poem.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps we can align the gradual change in Dante's views of human linguistic production with a gradual change in his attitudes toward female speech. Eve's signature act of presumption is her speech, viewed as profoundly gendered speech. For, while all earth and heaven were obedient, she alone was disobedient; she, despite being female, alone, and just created ("femmina, sola, e pur testé formata") — dared to refuse all limitation, a limitation moreover expressed in profoundly gendered terms: she refused to remain under any veil — "non sofferse di star sotto alcun velo" (*Purg.* 29.27).<sup>18</sup> Dante transitioned over time from the harsh judgment of Eve's speech in *De vulgari eloquentia* to the ability to imagine a female as engaged in *locutio* as the Beatrice of *Paradiso*.

The figure of *presumptuosissima Eva* is emblematic of *De vulgari eloquentia* and the figure of *Beatrix loquax*, whose speech is not gendered (because it is multi-gendered, and multi-genred), is emblematic of the *Commedia*. Dante's Beatrice of the *Commedia* does not speak with the limitations of a woman, and her verbal authority is conferred by the author giving her access to so many genres.<sup>19</sup> The trajectory of Dante's thought from *presumptuosissima Eva* to *Beatrix loquax* is analogous to the trajectory from difference as punishment in *De vulgari eloquentia* to difference as pleasure — "lo piacere uman che rinovella" (*Par.* 26.128) — in *Paradiso* 26.

We come out from under the shadow of the Tower and we are free to grow and change, *rinovellando* like the young plants at the end of *Purgatorio*: "come piante novelle / rinovellate di novella fronda" (like new plants / renewed with new leaves [*Purg.* 33.143–44]). Out of the shadow of the

17. I first coined the phrase "Beatrix loquax" in a footnote of *The Undivine Comedy* (1992, 303), where she came into existence precisely as a counterweight to *presumptuosissima Eva*.

18. See the description of Eve in *Purgatorio* 29.25–7: "che là dove ubidia la terra e 'l cielo, / femmina, sola e pur testé formata, / non sofferse di star sotto alcun velo" (because, where earth and heaven were obedient, / a solitary woman, just created, / found any veil at all beyond endurance).

19. For the construction of Beatrice in the *Commedia*, see my "Notes toward a Gendered History of Italian Literature, with a Discussion of Dante's *Beatrix loquax*" [BAROLINI 2006].

Tower, we are part of the natural order: “ché l’uso d’i mortali è come fronda / in ramo, che sen va e altra vene” (the ways that mortals take are as the leaves / upon a branch — one comes, another goes [*Par.* 26.137–8]). Like the *fronda in ramo*, we die, but we are also born: “sen va e altra vene”. We die, but we also make language. We die, but we also write poems. The seeds of these views (or, better, of this attitude, because it’s really a question of which side of the dialectic one privileges) are in *De vulgari eloquentia*. In *Paradiso* 26 they have reached full and magnificent flower.

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# Error Aligned

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## ABSTRACT

*This essay tracks the digital afterlives of etaoim shrdlu, typographic error turned textual agent. A media effect of Linotypes, this phrase was meant to notify editors that their compositors' fingers had slipped during transcription and a hot-metal line needed to be pulled. It was an internal memo, passed around the printshop — and it is now a recurring text string in digital archives of newspaper pages, where the phrase's accidental inclusion in printed matter has been newly reset by automatic transcription processes. After examining the place of Linotypes in a long history of machine reading, I argue that the presence of this machine's error signal in digital corpora presents an opportunity to consider the extent to which automatic transcription works from an interpretive disposition.*

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“The Head Compositor nodded. ‘Correct, although in a manner of speaking the operator and the machine are one, in that the operator is a function of the machine and the machine is a manifestation of the operator and both are extensions of the ego of the . . . but I guess that is a little too complicated for you to understand.’”

— Fredric Brown (1943, 69)

CHARLIE WILLIS MEETS GOD, A LINOTYPE COMPOSITOR, WHILE tracking down the typographic errors wreaking havoc on his life. In the fantastic mythology of Fredric Brown’s “The Angelic Anglemorm”, hot-metal composing machines cast the course of our preordained biographies, and the one spelling out Charlie’s fate hitches whenever a bad *e* matrix cycles through it. Thus, these and other supernatural events no one but him believes: pulling an angelworm from a clod of dirt before a fishing trip, halo and all; feeling a sunburn-inducing heat, not hate, during an argument on the street; finding a teal duck in a museum display case, where once sat a Chinese coin called a tael. And thus comes Charlie knocking on the Head Compositor’s printing office door, demanding a revised edition.

Finding the ultimate source of these slips took all but a total commitment to providential inerrancy: for Charlie, every ounce of his weird, ill luck “had to MAKE SENSE!” (BROWN 1943, 62). And it did — to him, if not to those disbelievers around him. But his scripted acts need not have meaning for a class of equally programmed readers who extract, ingest, and re-present printed matter as born-digital text, readers with which the Linotype’s workings are deeply consonant. To transcribe from scanned page images, these automated readers simply compare inked glyphs to reference vocabularies and resort to guesses based on statistical distributions in language, should that comparison end in ambiguity. For them, sense seems to mean little, if anything. Of them, and the general spirit of Charlie’s sense-making insistence, this present essay has much to say. My subject is mechanized word processing, taken two ways, with the first being those readers — or better put, software processes — that otherwise go by the name of computer assisted text transcription. Working under what Mara Mills has called an “assistive pretext” (2010, 39), these processes use optical character recognition, or OCR, to identify characters in images of printed pages and then compose new plaintext files therefrom, transforming digital facsimiles into machine-readable data, ready and waiting for further computational analysis. Constant companion to both the digital humanist and the casual browser of digitized books alike, theirs is a form of reading that can quickly roam into scales we see only at long range, in glimpses and in summaries.

But it is a form of reading with many forebears, all quite legible. In what follows, I take “word processing” to also extend to an assemblage comprised of Linotypes and the compositional practices that accompanied them at the turn of the twentieth century. By that designation, I mean to demonstrate how this assemblage rehearsed much in our contemporary ways of reading alongside machinic readers. Linotypes are word processors, for they were some of the first among text technologies to mechanize character composition. From an initial 1883 patent application on, these machines kept letter molds confined to magazines, assembled them, cast them into lines, and returned them to storage with minimal intervention, save that of a few keystrokes and the pull of a lever. If, with word processing, as Friedrich Kittler once remarked, “we simply no longer know what our writing is doing” ([1995] 2014, 221), the Linotype is a wedge in the beginnings of this rift, one that stretches into present-day systems where machine readers read and write text on our behalf. When those automated readers turn, then, toward the 14.5 million newspaper pages mounted on the Library of Congress’s Chronicling America website, a strange, recursive loop develops. Linotypes helped make many of those pages, with the result that OCR

excavates its own history as it scans through them. This amounts to an “epistemological reverse engineering”, in which “media themselves [. . .] become active ‘archaeologists’ of knowledge” (ERNST 2013, 55). I want to use this convergence of Linotypes and OCR to explore the semiotic architecture of machine reading, and my investigations take their cue from Charlie’s exchange with the Head Compositor. If, in that story, mechanization synthesizes machines and their operators, the elliptical break trailing out from that interplay gestures toward what N. Katherine Hayles has called a “cognitive assemblage” (2017, 116), in which sense-making is distributed between both human and nonhuman agents. Sense rises across them, not from one or the other. To make sense of machine reading now, this essay traces the human-machine interactions of Linotypes as those interactions surface across touch-typing manuals, newspaper editorials, trade stories, and literary caricature.

An especially charged site for these interactions is that of the error. As recent bibliographic work on OCR has demonstrated, the historical lineaments of automatic text transcription are most legible during instances where these processes stray from source text.<sup>1</sup> Rather than fixate on the way errorful OCR impedes efforts to construct “clean” corpora, I follow David A. Smith and Ryan Cordell’s recent call to imagine what researchers can do with OCR’s errors, not in spite of them (2018, 10). Errors turn up decisions — design decisions, engineering ones, decisions, too, in both labor management and aesthetics — that designate what reading, and indeed text, should be. This holds equally for discourses that negotiated automation in fin de siècle text technologies as much as it does for OCR, and examining moments where digitized trade stories reflect on the potential impact of errors can potently outline how mechanization more generally augments legibility. My sense is that such discourses, both then and now, are proxies for hermeneutic certitude, what has to “MAKE SENSE!” (BROWN 1943, 62). When an error is under discussion, so too are conditions of, and assurances about, legibility — what, in the case of machine readers, quite literally counts as sense. When an error appears, then, in the output of word-processed letters, texts present an opportunity for us to identify and trace these discussions. Below, I turn to Linotypes and their traces to suggest a continuity in the way these machines’ operators handled their mistakes and how OCR presents errors in datafied textual records. For those earlier word processors, there is a nonsense phrase that thumbnails

1. See TRETTEIN 2013, ALPERT-ABRAMS 2016, and CORDELL 2017.

these negotiations, one that has carried forward into error-prone newspaper records now displayed online: etaoin shrdlu.



Its creators conceived of the Linotype as a parenthetical device, propped between two preexistent print technologies and meant to cement their logics together by blending one with the other. From its earliest stages the composing machine was under a direct order: span the centuries-old practice of printing on a pull press with the nascent, still amorphous typewriter, patented some 400 years after Gutenberg in the late 1860s. American shorthand writer and entrepreneur James O. Clephane issued the command in 1872, announcing his desire to “bridge the gap” between these two writing technologies (ROMANO 2014, 2). After achieving some small renown for his skills in stenography (he served both as secretary to the US Secretary of State William H. Seward and as a court reporter for the Supreme Court), Clephane was approached by Christopher Sholes, one of the first patent holders for a device the latter called the “Type Writer”. Sholes and his associates felt their invention would have immediate advantages for shorthand writing, and, in a moment of nineteenth-century quality assurance measures, they asked Clephane to test the machine and provide consultation on any future improvements they might make to its design.<sup>2</sup> The stenographer was reportedly harsh in his criticisms of the device but found it promising, and under his direction the first Sholes and Glidden typewriters were built for his employees.

Clephane saw in typewriters possibilities for expediting the publishing process. His involvement with these machines made it clear to him that setting type on presses could neither keep pace with his stenographic notation, nor with the new compositional technique of typing on a keyboard, and Clephane began to explore ways to augment typesetting with that latter technique in mind. Initially, he planned to create a machine that would assemble entire pages of type for inking and printing, much like stereotyping, but difficulties in this design surfaced at every turn, forcing Clephane to settle on using the line as his base unit of print production (ROMANO 2014, 10). The stenographer enlisted fellow inventor Charles T. Moore for the project, and the two of them first experimented with a caster that used papier-mâché matrices (type molds) indented by mechanically assembled characters. But by their own admission, the machine was a failure, and in

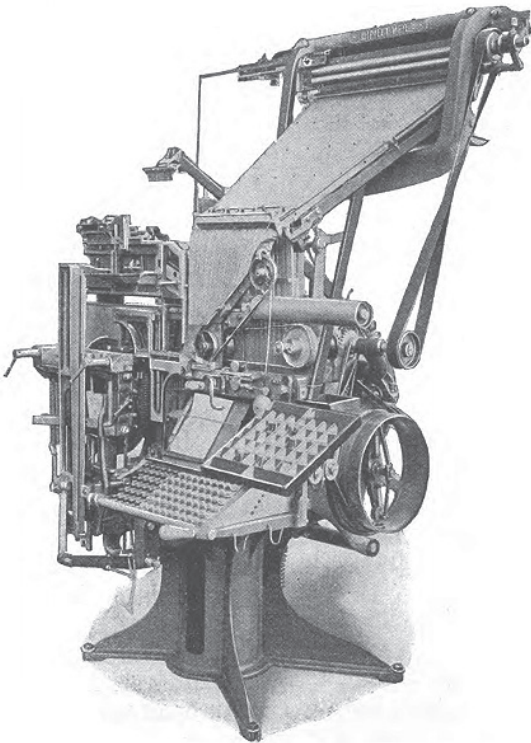
2. See FOULKE 1961, 73–5 and Clephane’s obituary in the *New York Times*: “James O. Clephane Dead” 1910.



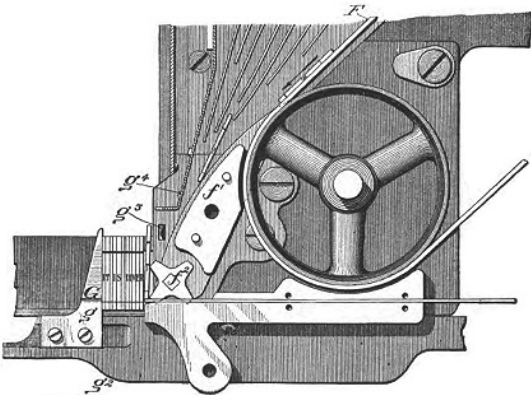
1876 Clephane and Moore reached out to a Washington, D.C. machinist by the name of August Hahl for help. Hahl referred them to his cousin, Ottmar Mergenthaler, a German immigrant who apprenticed as a watchmaker before coming to the States to work in Hahl's shop. Mergenthaler set to work, and after designing several prototypes over the next six years, he had a device ready for a patent submission in 1883.

When a former courtroom stenographer secures the necessary capital to recruit a watchmaker with the task of accelerating the pace of print shops, automation results. Mergenthaler made letter assembly a closed and mechanized loop, locking away the workings of type production into magazine channels, elevators, extruders, and distributor bars — the mere touch of a finger would make them all run. A keyboard sits front right. Each of its ninety keys are individually affixed to cams via corresponding triggers and yokes that, upon those keys' impress and subsequent upstroke, cause the cams to rotate. This engages a long, slender rod that engages an escapement lever. Crescent shaped and so engaged, the lever's bottom half lowers to release a brass matrix down a duct in the Linotype's magazine, while the top of the lever raises to keep in place the next matrix above. On the edges of these matrices are indented characters, ranging from the Latin alphabet to punctuation marks, figures, and ligatures, and from these the Linotype casts its slugs. A compositor presses a key, which drops its corresponding matrix down the magazine and into an assembler. There it waits until, with the pull of a casting lever, that matrix is sent off to the Linotype's extruder. But it can make that trip only once the assembler is full, for the machine Mergenthaler designed remains true to Clephane's original intent and uses complete lines as its basic structural units. To make casts from matrices, compositors need to fill their assembler, and only then can they send their lines to the extruder, where hot lead alloy runs over the molds' impressed surfaces. After making its cast, the extruder then turns and releases a line, or "slug", of raised print characters, type high and ready for inking. For the "simplicity of handling", slugs on this machine are full alphanumeric strings, justified automatically with expanding spacebands (MERGENTHALER Co. 1940a, 11). Hence its name, Linotype, producer of a "line o' type" (*Inland Printer* 1889, 272).

The convolutions of these workings — workings Hugh Kenner once termed "intricate intelligibility" (1986, 10) — should make clear that writing with Linotypes is dispersed, multiplex, and circulatory. They are more like miniature factories than tools, and so from the outset their proper place and use seem better suited for anonymous industrial workrooms, rather than that of the home office. Despite their ubiquity in newspaper



**Figures 1a. & 1b.**  
Linotype illustration (T)  
and assembler detail (B)  
from Theodore Low de  
Vinne's *The Practice of  
Typography* (1904).



publishing around the globe, this alone has significantly contributed to these machines' relative invisibility in historical accounts of writing technologies; if Linotypes appear in these at all, it is often so only as footnotes or as quirky modifications to the workflows of print shops. And the yawn of this absence is widened further by a lack of narratives chronicling the Linotype's grand entrance into literary composition. Of it, there are no commonplace stories similar to the one recounting Mark Twain's use of a typewriter to produce his manuscript for *Life on the Mississippi* (1883). Though minor narratives did, in fact, exist during the first decades of its introduction to publishing, the infrastructural position of Mergenthaler's machine has made it a fringe figure in histories of writing.

But media archaeologists in particular would do well to consider the enduring salience of the Linotype's assembler (Figure 1b), not only in the context of late nineteenth-century writing technologies, during which the workings of textual input had yet to fully solidify, but also in the long history of computing. I highlight this component because with it, the Linotype puts text into a storage state. It drops letters behind the veil of its magazine cover, briefly keeps those letters strung together, and then sends them off for casting en masse. To be sure, this is not computation — far from it. But in this early instance of automated writing, textual production on Linotypes adheres to the logic of suspended inscription, in which “the stored record of a text is separate from whatever medium or surface on which it is ultimately printed or inscribed in more palpable form” (KIRSCHENBAUM 2016, 46).<sup>3</sup> Unlike the pen, the typewriter, or even stereotype plates, letter assembly on this machine does not coincide with those letters' printed production. Indeed, Mergenthaler's matrices never touch paper: after assembling these molds, the machine converts their character information into a different, leaden form and sends matrices back up into its magazine. Like a computer assembler, it translates language across formats.<sup>4</sup> It should come as no surprise, then, that the use of the term “assembler” to designate a mechanical component predates its arrival into computing by nearly 60 years. The year 1959 marks that later occasion. However, the *Oxford English Dictionary* credits the word's first printed appearance in this sense to a 1902 entry in

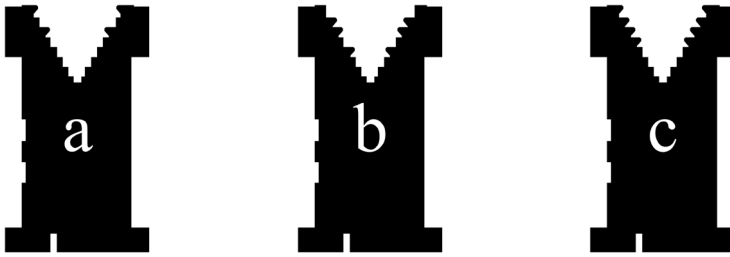
3. “Suspended inscription” is Daniel Chandler's term; see “The Phenomenology of Writing by Hand” (1992).

4. An assembler translates symbolically coded instructions (written in assembly language) into those that a computer processor can directly execute (machine code).

the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Its subject: the Linotype.<sup>5</sup> With the advent of this machine, assemblers and writing join together in semantic congress.

In his history of word processing, Matthew Kirschenbaum sees the Monotype's coded ribbons as a formative moment for suspended inscription and pits them against Linotype slugs, which the latter created without translating keyboard input (2016, 177fn40). So too does Hayles position Mergenthaler's machine as a foil to James W. Paige's Compositor, a complicated typesetter that, in her account, was able to cognitively differentiate between type pieces and discard defective ones, before redistributing good pieces at will (2018, 1234–5). In comparison to the 18,000 separate parts required to make the Paige Compositor run, the relative simplicity of the Linotype would seem to thoroughly lock it into mere mechanization. But the information conversion that occurs in Linotype assemblers suggests a greater continuity between this machine, the Monotype, and Paige's Compositor, a continuity made all the more suggestive by an encoding system accompanying that conversion. The Linotype also works from code. Mergenthaler developed an encoding scheme that allows molds to return to their corresponding places in a magazine after the Linotype extrudes a line. This made the machine automatic, closing the loop Gutenberg left open between composition and type case redistribution. After casting, a transfer finger pushes used matrices onto an elevator, which shuttles them to the top of the machine, where a shifter lifts them onto a ridged distributor bar. Helical screws propel them along this bar as they hang from grooves, or "teeth", cut into the upper portion of each matrix. While on the course of their travels, certain ridges on the distributor bar end directly above channels in the magazine. When this happens, a matrix falls. Up to seven paired teeth line their inside edges, and cutting them away in different patterns produces 126 "matrix tooth combinations" individually linked to the specific character housed on any given mold — more than enough for the 91 channels a Linotype requires. "When the combination of a given matrix arrives at and meshes with its complimentary distributor bar segment, the matrix is released from the bar and falls by gravity into its respective magazine channel" (MERGENTHALER Co. 1934, 7). On this machine, *e* is distinguishable from *a* not only because of their engraved shapes but because encoded into their very teeth are differences that contour the course of their separate travels through its mechanisms. By means of a simple, forensic dentistry the Linotype pieces its parts back together and the loop Gutenberg leaves open finds its close.

5. See "assembler, n." 5a and 4, respectively.



**Figures 2a–c.** Silhouettes of Linotype matrices. Tooth combination data taken from *Useful Matrix Information* (1934).

When taken alongside the machine’s assembler, I suggest that this system positions the Linotype as a key node in the genealogy of computational media and opens up the machine’s operations to considerations regarding machinic cognition. Given Hayles’s recent work that demonstrates how cognitive activity can happen among mechanical agents (2017, 20–27; 2018), the Linotype’s active processing of words amounts to a reading operation, one which interprets alongside human operators within a wider cognitive assemblage.<sup>6</sup> Its tooth combinations enable the circulation of characters from one area of its workings to the next, and they do so by working from a rudimentary form of machine-readable code. Though Mergenthaler could not program his machine to register language as language — which is to say, to register new semantic data and modify its operations accordingly — he equipped it with the ability to separate language elements, query them, and change their address locations during the composition process. To be sure, this is not consciousness, and the code this operation depends upon pales in comparison to the complexities of modern-day computing. But latent in its logics is a programmatological function later forms of code will also share. In both a literal and an idiomatic sense, machine reading cuts its teeth on the Linotype.



6. Hayles’s definition of cognition is “a process that interprets information within contexts that connect it with meaning” (2017, 22). For her, “defining cognition as a process emerging from flows of information and from interpretations of those flows [ . . . ] invites questions about the nature of meaning and how it differs for human and technical cognizers” (2018, 1240). Challenging an anthropocentric perspective, this expanded sense of cognitive activity “opens meaning making to nonhuman life-forms as well as to technical systems” (2018, 1240).

Of the several dozen patents specifying modifications to the original 1883 Linotype, none take time to explain the logic behind one of the machine's strangest features, its keyboard. "Finger-key" layouts (MERGENTHALER 1885, 1) on this device differ from those of both its contemporaries, such as the Remington II or the Monotype, and those of later machines, including modern day desktops. On these, QWERTY reigns, though only as a de facto standard that comes into full circulation by the early 1900s. Thomas Mullaney explains that as portions of the print industry gradually moved from type cases to typewriters, the very idea of how to organize input characters — to say nothing too of which particular interface was best suited for input in the first place — was often in question (2017, 41–2). The QWERTY layout faced competition ranging from stylus-based interfaces to chorded stenotypes and alternative keyboard layouts; the Linotype is one such example. On it, the constancy of letter frequency grids language production, with redundancy serving as a theory of compositional efficiency. While patents for this machine do not spell out their reasoning, they tacitly assume the benefits of grouping together characters with statistically-high rates of appearance in a sentence, rather than keeping them spread out, interspersed with infrequent candidates like *q* or *x*. In this way a type compositor need not stray far from one area of the keyboard while inputting a line of matrices, reducing extraneous movement and subsequently increasing typing rates. As a result, on the Linotype, *e* sits at the top, left-most corner of its keyboard, followed underneath by *t*, *a*, *o*, *i*, *n*, and then, at the start of a new column, *s*, *h*, *r*, *d*, *l*, *u*.<sup>7</sup>

There are more than just statistical logics undergirding this layout, however. In Mullaney's account, QWERTY took hold only insofar as it was able to suppress non-Latin writing systems such as Chinese, which manufacturers came to see as the big Other of communication technologies well into the twentieth century (2017, 35–43). Similarly, in the decade following the typewriter's debut, women were often the subject of typing manual instructions, and they consequently learned to type on QWERTY keyboards. Mergenthaler's decision to use an alternative character organization may well have been a response to this. He believed women "ruined the reputation" of Linotypes and made for bad printers, and thus his design

7. While this layout was standard for Linotypes, machines that made their way into non-English printing offices could also be outfitted with different keyboards. In German, this resulted in keyboards whose first 12-character inputs read *e*, *n*, *i*, *a*, *t*, *x*, *r*, *d*, *g*, *o*, *v*, *c*; in Cyrillic, the same range reads *о*, *е*, *н*, *а*, *и*, *с*, *м*, *в*, *ы*, *г*, and *у*.

upheld standing and sexist disparities in gender equity on shop floors and in workforces (GOBLE 1984, 152). More, when women did take part in the printing process, employers would often “keep a woman on straight composition [regularized lines of body text], to make as much as possible an automaton of her” (ABBOTT 1910, 254–5) — precisely the type of composition Linotypes are best suited to mechanize. These machines’ setting of “straight matter” outpaces that of a hand compositor, relegating the feminized labor of producing body text to mechanics.<sup>8</sup> If these mechanics are to serve, then, as forerunners to computational media technologies, as I have argued, it is also because Mergenthaler’s machine is an anchor point for the gendered logics undergirding clerical work during the era of mainframe computing and now, the labor of digitizing printed matter housed on platforms such as Google Books.<sup>9</sup>

This genealogy is all the more apparent when early twentieth-century touch-typing manuals carry Linotypes and their laborers into digital technologies, often quite literally. Google Books’s Library Partners program lists among its participants the Big Ten Academic Alliance and the University of California, whose holdings contain much of the extant trade literature produced for, and alongside, these machines.<sup>10</sup> Many of these texts are now readily available online, and among their pages one finds narratives cataloging the necessities of adjusting to automation. A certain fervency dominates throughout, with manuals imploring both employers and workers to pay special attention to the way lines are composed. Once letters are no longer tied to their type case boxes, they explained, the horizon of their arrangement rests upon the swiftness of their compositor’s fingers. Proponents of the Linotype claimed it not only removed the need for such boxes, but also opened new opportunities to readjust and train workers’ bodies to the demands of high-output printing. To “set type at high rates of speed requires incessant reading of the copy”, reads a manual collected in Theodore Low De Vinne’s *The Practice of Typography* (1904, 448), continuing,

8. See also THOMSON 1997, 133–58.

9. See HICKS 2017 for a history of the feminized labor in mainframe computing; for an explanation of digitization workflows at Google and its partner libraries, see LOSH 2009, 265–72.

10. For example, HathiTrust, whose contributors often map directly onto the list of participants in Google’s Library Partners program, holds 72 volumes of *The Inland Printer*, which devoted many discussions to trade technology like Linotypes (and fin de siècle arts more generally). The database attributes these holds to libraries at the University of Minnesota and those in the University of California system.

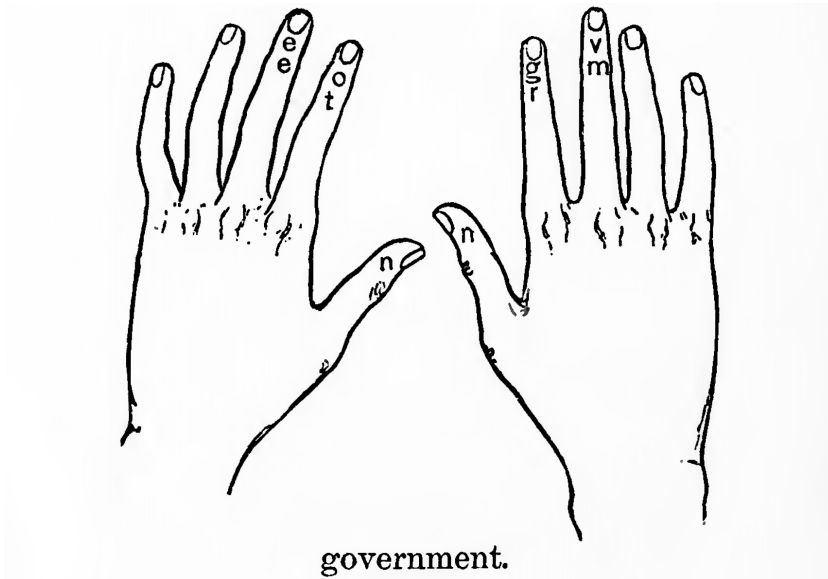


“The keyboard must of necessity be operated without looking at it”, lest a compositor lose their place or produce an error in the line. “Therefore,” the manual concludes, “it is apparent that [ . . . ] the location of the keys must be so fixed in the operator’s mind that the fingers seek them automatically, and the eyes be devoted to the continuous reading of the copy” (DE VINNE 1904, 448). No room to think: devotion, utter observance of the line and the keyboard articulating it, leaves no place for anything but the mechanical scanning of copy. Eyes are to operate with full and perfect independence from fingers once thought steps out the door. With touch-typing, the medium does not extend cognition, as in McLuhan’s dictum, but rather brackets it so as to better bifurcate work into muscle memory and visual scanning, demanding bodies structured like machines.<sup>11</sup>

This sentiment appears among many such manuals in late nineteenth-century America, a time during which a new profession Lisa Gitelman (1999) calls “the scribal technician” emerged. If Hayles finds evidence of distributed cognition among the machines of this period, anxieties about the thought patterns of those new mechanical agents are also traceable in an “underlying conflict over how much intelligence the scribal technician had to supply” to the cognitive assemblage of which they were now a part (GITELMAN 1999, 203). There were many open questions about “when and how much the head and the fingers worked,” Gitelman explains, or “just how automatic stenographers, telegraphers, and other scribal technicians had to be” (1999, 203). When, as typing manuals would have it, copy is a matter of the eye and production, that of fingers, said technician’s experience of embodiment would seem to be a purely mechanical affair, properly gauged for both efficient word processing and good typographic aesthetics alike. A certain *Linotype Keyboard Practice* maintains that a compositor’s “subconscious attention to the machine must be such that he constantly produces slugs with clean sharp-printed face and good body, properly trimmed to uniform size” (MERGENTHALER CO. 1940b, 4). Here, a technosomatic continuity — an “intextuation” (CERTEAU 1984, 149) — implicates cognition with copy-text reading and type production. The workings of the machine spread to those of the human, and the facticity of letter frequency comes to govern not only the space of a keyboard layout but the space of discursive manufacture. For Linotype manuals, character assembly is human-machine feedback. It requires bodies to be no more than mechanistic reflexes, a series of inputs and outputs working independently of conscious activity. Type composition turns technosomatic when making

11. See McLuhan [1964] 1994, 3–21.

words “has nothing to do with the ‘I think’” (KITTLER 1999, 189): type with “good body” simply needs to be produced by good (read: disciplined) bodies. The sentiment of such manuals is writ large quite literally across their fingering instructions, inscriptive overlays of letter combinations and governed digits diagramming a body in pieces. . . .



**Figure 3.** Typing instructions from Theodore Low De Vinne’s *The Practice of Typography* (1904).

So thoroughly set as they are on efficient and effective word processing, these manuals rarely entertain the possibility of failure. But typographic errors were (and are) inevitable, and they especially trouble Linotypes. The very same components that separate keyboard input and character assembly on these machines demand the special handling of typos — or no handling, rather. Pulling a mistake is not particularly feasible when an assembler and magazine channels keep matrices out of human reach; doing so disrupts the loop Mergenthaler introduces into the print shop. All a compositor can do is clear the assembler and start over. This, however, will still activate the machine’s extruder mechanism, producing the incorrect line anyway, so that a typo does not disappear once registered, as on twenty-first-century word processors, but rather becomes all the more weighty —

weighty, and imbued with the potential for someone to overlook the error, place it into a galley, and send it off to be inked and printed. In response to this threat it became common practice for compositors to run their fingers down the first two rows of the machine's keyboard when they noticed their errors, creating a nonsense phrase after the mistake meant to stand out during proofreading. The eye would then snag where the finger had slipped.

The outcome of this practice: etaoi n shrldu, pure, leaden letter frequency. Thumping one's fingers down key by key of the 12 most recurrent characters in the English language produces letter salad; bookends to a prior mistake; noise pointing to noise; a clash of awkward syllables strung together only to indicate that they should not be there, that something is wrong, that something needs a fix, a second look, another set of eyes. And once they have caught the eyes of editors these letters are to simply disappear as easily as they came, sliding back into the molten lead alloy above the extruder that cast them, their matrices pulled upwards, back into the guts of the machine, to be released by fingers trained — this time — to touch the right keys.

But traces of these errors persist, and this poses an opportunity to consider how born-digital records can point text mining methods on large corpora toward medium specificity. Despite the canny eyes of compositors (or the intuitions of their fingers), editors would occasionally fail to see those garbled lines of type earmarked for remelting and would instead send them through the rest of the printing process. In newspapers especially, etaoi n shrldu appears nestled in paragraphs, hanging under show times and sale prices, or nearly buried underneath photos in their captions. The Library of Congress's Chronicling America houses some 485 instances of this letter string, which serve as photo negatives to the positive proclamations otherwise found among digitized typing manuals on Google Books, HathiTrust, and the Internet Archive.<sup>12</sup> Examples occur on digital exemplars from Duluth to Los Angeles: "Now on the ear sounds srish8!tsecaofycea ETAOIN SHRDLU the 'Dead March' [ . . .]" (*Labor World*, 13 Nov., 1920); "WHERE THE SHOE PINCHES etaoni Mv etaoi n shrldu srdlu cmfwyp [ . . .]" (*The Los Angeles Herald*, 17 Nov., 1907). The mistakes that have prompted a compositor to type etaoi n shrldu are there too, but the locations of these are murkier for keyword searches, since they have no defined syntax. Etaoi n shrldu is easier to find, predictable; it stays gridded to the same patterned

12. The number of instances of etaoi n shrldu is likely to increase; Chronicling America is an ongoing effort and periodically gains new content. This count is gathered from a search I conducted in September 2018.

structure keeping compositors' fingers in line, and it stays on when those fingers' sentinels fail to keep watch. The phrase persists despite itself, existing by way of a strange irony. Only because an editor fails to see a typo their compositor has recognized will yet another error go to print.

Once it has, the phrase stands as an indexical trace of the human-machine feedback loop that created it. Etaoin shrdlu is an example of what Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht terms the "materialities of communication" (2004, 17–18), a "presence effect" in symbolic work that directly evinces interactions between media technologies and their users. The phrase says that a Linotype was there, and, just as important, there was a practiced and acculturated compositor there using it, re-appropriating the machine's logics to fit both the communicative and material needs of their print shop. German media archaeology has a name for this: etaoin shrdlu signifies one of a multitude of *Kulturtechniken* ("cultural techniques") that accompany media technologies and do so as "ontic operations", operations that quite literally make sense as they pass between human and nonhuman agents.<sup>13</sup> Where etaoin shrdlu lies on paper, or rendered as a digitized exemplar, a Linotype and its strange rituals are somewhere nearby. Consider the multilingualism the phrase strangely accrues when it appears in *L'Italia* (San Francisco, 1887–1943), which spells out the accommodations Italian printers made when working with English keyboards. "Prima di lasciarsi però gli assessor si scambiarono la parola d'ordine che nessuno doveva st-sa etaoin shrdlu cm nessuno avrebbe parlato con estranei del dissidio, e difatti nessuno parlò" (31 May, 1900; emphasis added). Though it has changed in both material form and textual format, etaoin shrdlu is still present and still signifies. When digitized exemplars of the phrase sit on databases like Chronicling America, building a query with an ostensibly dematerialized character string can serve as a pathfinder back to the ink and paper surfaces Linotypes and their operators produced. Querying for an error on digital collections that remove text from paper produces paper trails pointing toward analog media.

Such a query adds a forensic dimension to distant reading practices, putting digital humanists in conversation with both media archaeologists and

13. See SIEGERT 2015, 9–12. Siegert's translator, Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, writes that *Kulturtechniken* is difficult to render into English not because of *Kultur* but because of *Technik*: "Its semantic amplitude ranges from gadgets, artifacts, and infrastructures all the way to skills, routines, and procedures — it is thus wide enough to be translated as *technology*, *technique*, or *technics*" (2015, xv).

bibliographers.<sup>14</sup> That conversation would begin to ameliorate the lack of “data-rich literary history” in computational text analysis by supplying its methods with what Katherine Bode has called a “scholarly edition of a literary system” (2017). Shaping digital corpora, she argues, should be a matter of identifying and representing how literary works “circulated and generated meaning together at particular times and places” (BODE 2017, 94). More, this shaping should self-reflexively make plain the “scholarly infrastructure” that informs a corpus’s bibliographic selections. Showing this infrastructure, Bode explains, changes the question of doing literary history with big data from one that speculates on a future synthesis of readings distant and readings close, to one that instead asks about the appropriate amount of documentation required to articulate historical context in concert with the interpretive decisions that inform corpus construction. Inasmuch as the Linotype’s legibility in digital corpora indicates how particular texts got to where they are, I take this machine to be one such entry in this documentation. Indeed, media technologies are crucial nodes in the scholarly infrastructure Bode discusses, and her projected records of literary systems will need to account for the way such devices enabled circulation in their contemporary milieux and still continue to do so — albeit it after any number of remediations.<sup>15</sup> Identifying the traces of Linotypes with this in mind “translates”, as Bode puts it (2017, 97), methodological achievement into a historical insight that looks both ways: at the past, and at those history-making selections that go on now.



While attention to Linotypes may buttress Bode’s method, her cross-scale and distributive approach to literary history is also essential for animating these machines’ digital afterlives, especially inasmuch as they continue to be marked by *etaoin shrdlu*. As I have already indicated, that phrase indexes more than just the mere presence of Mergenthaler’s invention; so too does *etaoin shrdlu* locate the compositional practices that accompanied these machines. Complicating this, though, is the fact that within 20 years of the Linotype’s introduction into print shops, a diffuse mesh

14. See KIRSCHENBAUM 2008 and, more recently, HUCULAK 2015.

15. An analysis that susses out the full extent of those remediations would need to contend with the performativity of a text, with its place conditionally situated inside a broader “knowledge ecology”, existing “in a co-dependent relation to the cultural systems of production/reception in which it functions” (DRUCKER 2014, 22).

of tropes and characterizations begins taking those very practices as its subject. By the early 1900s, etaoín shrdlu no longer means what it originally meant. Or rather, it widens in semantic sense when the phrase begins circulating as a print shop in-joke, published in editorial quips and short stories, poems and apologies. Where these moments of symbolic work comment upon the role and effects of automated print technologies, they also put pressure on the indexicality for which I have just advocated, diverting it, forking it, sometimes leading it altogether astray. But they do so productively, for these departures offer up so many chances to trace out a recursive play between technology, technique, and trope that distributes the presence of Linotypes across digital collections.<sup>16</sup> As I discuss below, the *Kulturtechniken* that accompanied those machines serve as key frames for understanding bibliographic criticism's relationship to automatic text transcription in our present moment.

Exhibits A, B, and C are editorials, instructions advising readers on the proper interpretation of etaoín shrdlu. "Using 'Etaoín Shrdlu Cmfwyp' for a headline", writes the "Jayhawker Jots" section of the *Topeka State Journal*, "the Sedan Times-Star hastens to explain that it is only 'linotype' for a brand new set of matrices" (23 April, 1914). So says A. B. for the Salem, Oregon *Daily Capital Journal*, "If the war correspondents would just substitute 'Shrdlu' and 'Etaoín' for some of those badly spelled and never pronounced names of men and places, it would be as intelligible to the readers, more simple for the editors and a joy to the linotype operators" (7 Oct., 1916). And C: the Crystal Falls *Diamond Drill* makes a plea: the "linotype operator has a 'Volapuk' all his own. Every time he makes a 'pi' line it is 'etaoín shrdlu shrdlu.' So dear reader, whenever you are reading along and come to a couple of 'etaoín shrdlus' don't let it bother you — it's only the operator's way of telling his troubles to his fellow craftsman. Just hurdle over the 'shrdlus' and proceed with the story" (20 July, 1918).

In one of the earliest instances of this self-conscious usage, a poem (Figure 4) begins a round of reprintings after its initial publication in the May 1903 edition of *The Inland Printer*, a key trade journal that often reported on developments in the American print industry. First attributed to a Chicago letter artist by the name of Edgar Yates, *The Deadly Pi Line* quickly loses its byline in later printings across *Chronicling America*, which catalogs its

16. One such instance of this recursion is a particularly astute essay of Whitney Trettien's (2013), in which she ties the "zombie-like" materials of algorithmically generated print-on-demand books back to nineteenth-century reprints of Milton's *Areopagitica*.

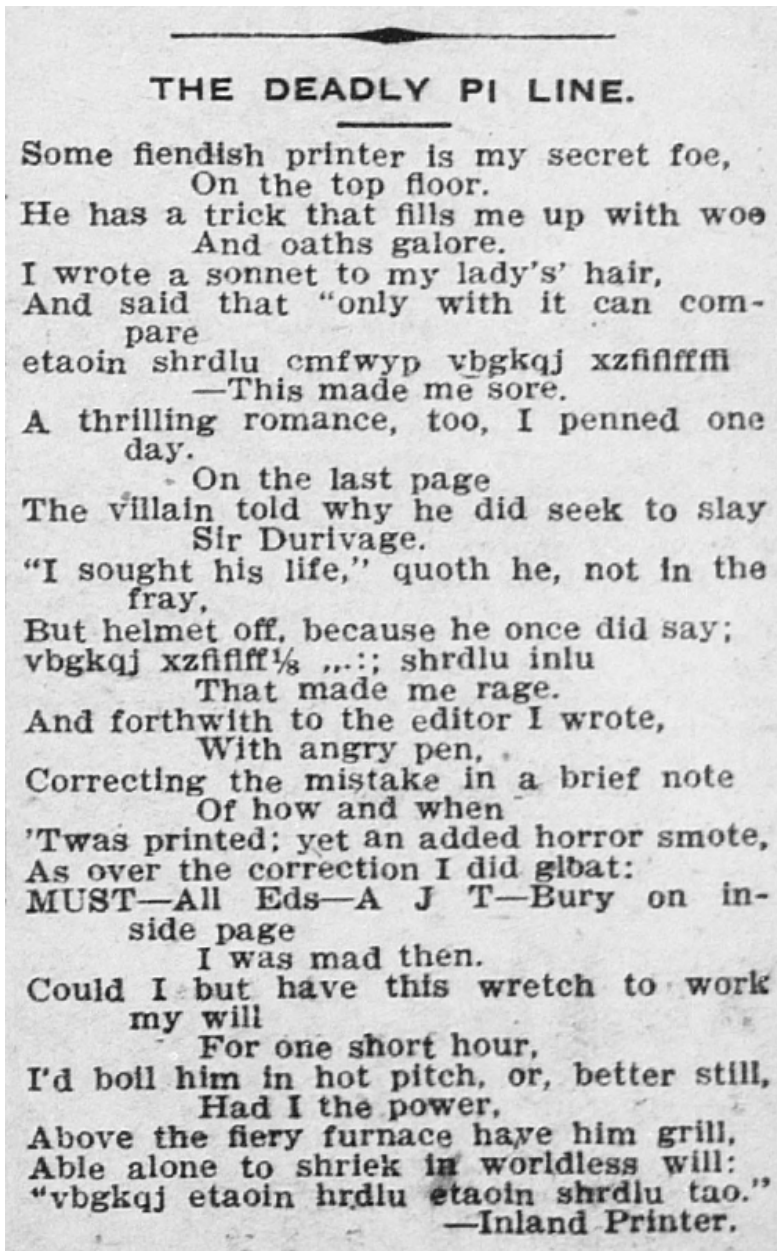


Figure 4. *The Deadly Pi Line*, in *The St. Paul Globe* (3 October, 1903).  
 Available on Chronicling America at <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn90059523/1903-10-03/ed-1/seq-7/>.



travels to Indianapolis (29 May), Marshalltown, Iowa (8 June), Minneapolis (15 June), and St. Paul (21 June). Further printings in the California Digital Newspaper Collection and HathiTrust see it go as far as Los Angeles (10 June) and Augusta, Georgia (August edition) before returning to the *St. Paul Globe*, where it makes a final appearance in the October 3rd edition of 1903. Generically, the poem follows the conventions of “fugitive verse”, which featured “narratives of authorship that provided lurid interest, fostered sentimental identification, or otherwise helped readers connect” with poems as they were reprinted across newspaper publications (CORDELL and MULLEN 2017, 43). Here, that identification broaches the conditions of newspaper manufacture. The poem’s speaker pens and publishes a sonnet “to my lady’s hair”, merely to have the second half of a simile frustrated by gibberish: “only with it can compare / etaoín shrdlu cmfwyp vbqkj xzfllffff”. A simple mistake, perhaps, but a subsequent attempt at writing “a thrilling romance”, and then a letter to the editor written “with angry pen” both suffer similar bouts of logorrhea. Fuming, since typographic errors seem to mar any attempts at writerly expression, the poem’s speaker fantasizes about all they would do to their “secret foe”, if given the chance. *The Deadly Pi Line* ends with their plotting:

Had I the power  
 Above the fiery furnace have him grill,  
 Able alone to shriek in wordless will,  
 vbqkj etaoín hrdlu etaoín shrdlu tao.

Whether readers are to understand this final line as a tormented howl or further ironic censorship, one cannot tell: they are one and the same after so many wordless phrases have muddled the print copy from start to finish.

“Pi Line”, not “By Line”. That this poem of frustrated writing registers a typographic error at the site of authorial attribution suggests other forces shaping intent and the production of meaning beyond the Romantic ideal of a transcendent Author. “Pi Line”, not “By Line”, because the poem harkens back to Gutenberg’s logic of printing, where type sorts are in high demand and a printer may have need to substitute the phonetically identical but visually distinct *i* for *y* — in type cases, there are only so many of each letter. “Pi Line”, not “By Line”, because this displacement spells out the numerical value  $\pi$ , that ratio of circumference to diameter that, in the idiom of the print shop, means a line has been jumbled up. To “pi the type” is to remix characters so their order resembles that random sequence of numbers after the decimal point of  $\pi$ . And ostensibly, the errors this poem’s

meditation on typos highlights are themselves infinite, errors constituting a series of random permutations and chance occurrences that foreclose the effective transfer of idea to page to public sphere. “Pi Line”, not “By Line”, because *The Deadly Pi Line* presciently figures poststructuralist theories of the author’s death — Foucault or Barthes: your choice, it is all the same to the free play of mechanically processed language.

If, in this poem, troublesome printers threaten authorship, the etaoïn shrdlu trope will soon lay siege to print shops as well. The phrase comes alive in the form of a proper name, and as it begins to move beyond the editorial page and into the print industry more generally, it brings along anxieties about automating trade work. In a parody of the disciplined bodies of touch-typing, Elmer Rice’s 1923 play *The Adding Machine* sees its protagonist, Mr. Zero, meet a certain Mr. Shrdlu in the Elysian Fields. The former had been hanged for killing his boss, upon discovering his employer would soon replace him with an adding machine, while the latter, a morose copy-editor, snapped and murdered his mother during Sunday dinner. Details of that grim meal were published far and wide, for newspapers record the sins of typos and those of murderers alike.

Zero. I remember readin’ about you in the papers.

Shrdlu. Yes, my guilt has been proclaimed to all the world.

(RICE [1923] 1965, 38)

Because of his actions, Shrdlu lands in purgatory, where he is to remain “until I understood” (RICE [1923] 1965, 43) — until, that is, he can work through the psychic break that drove him to run a knife across his mother’s neck, a break as illegible to him as the letter salad mimicking those shrieks of pain in *The Deadly Pi Line*. Until he, like Charlie Willis, can “MAKE SENSE” of these events (BROWN 1943, 62), here he will wait. Much as the typographic errors Shrdlu was to watch for in shoe catalogues stay inked on printed pages, the copyeditor stays in an afterlife limbo for his indelible crimes.

In the years after Shrdlu’s confinement, a Linotype named “Etaoïn Shrdlu” gains sentience in another of Fredric Brown’s short stories and puts George Ronson, typesetter, to work: “the Linotype no longer worked for him; he was working for the Linotype” (1954, 61). “Or”, as Ronson’s friend Walter suggests, the machine was merely “interested in learning. And it read by assimilating the process of typesetting” (BROWN 1954, 61). Machine reading ends with machines reading — a situation to which I will soon turn. “Etaoïn and Shrdlu” by Anthony Armstrong follows in tow,

along with newspaper typesetter Mr. Etaoin in Charles G. Finney's *The Circus of Dr. Lao* and a mischievous Étienne Cherdlu in Thomas Pynchon's "The Secret Integration". Across the scriptural economy whose expansion Linotypes underwrite, the etaoin shrdlu myth takes hold, and by means of the very same speculative registers these stories so often use, nonsense is named.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, that named nonsense will come to rely solely on those registers, for by the midcentury, other print technologies like phototypesetting begin making substantial gains on the Linotype's lead in newspaper publishing. The errors only that earlier machine produces must migrate into the mythic space of literary reference if they are to stay alive. The typographic error tropologically figured: in this form, the myth lives on.

Right up until the Linotype's death knell, compositors continued using etaoin shrdlu to mark off mistakes. The phrase leads a double life, and its strange polysemy necessitates the documentary records Bode proposes, for when typo crosshatches with trope, querying for this letter string in digital corpora does not always lead to a mistake. Etaoin shrdlu stays uncertain. The mythic structure of its surplus significations blurs the indexical traces of Linotypes, while its joint use as error and errant signifier frustrates its unambiguous reading among collocations and topic models. When it shows up in these, it remains noisy, undetermined, like a probability space. Letter frequency indicating a statistical distribution of topicality encoded into machine reading from 1883 on: this is the trace Linotypes leave on pages and in files. To "MAKE SENSE" (BROWN 1943, 62) of these machines in digital collections, bibliographic forensics on computational platforms must supplement evidentiary claims with speculation.



Such supplementarity marks a wider condition of working with automatically transcribed records, one that arises from the probability spaces in which optical character recognition itself works. Numerous OCR methods have been in use since the early twentieth century, but on computational media these processes generally implement template matching, feature extraction, or a mix of both to generate data from print sources. In template matching, software engines compare the overall shape of a glyph

17. Here I have in mind de Certeau's concept of myth: "fragmented discourse which is articulated on heterogeneous practices of a society and which also articulates them symbolically" (1984, 133–4). See also Lisa Gitelman's use of the scriptural economy in her work on the "embarrassment of material forms" that surged into use with the advent of job printing in nineteenth-century America (2014, 6).

with exemplars in a reference vocabulary to make their identifications, while those using feature extraction isolate smaller, more idiosyncratic features such as a letter's line intersections or curvatures during comparison. After an initial scan both methods compile a short list of potential character matches for every printed mark and advance hypotheses therefrom. As with Linotype keyboard composition, statistical distributions of letter and word frequencies often aid in making these decisions: if they cannot discern a glyph's outlines, OCR engines consult frequency lists to probabilistically guess which word or letter they should compile next. To these matches software engines add a confidence rating and then move on, inputting characters into a plaintext readout, all with their own ratings.<sup>18</sup>

Collectively, these matches amount to varying degrees of confidence. Because statistical distributions in corpora inform OCR's transcriptional matches, this process is error-prone, susceptible to misrecognition. Its guesses do not always line up with their paired page images, and Ryan Cordell has argued that digitized facsimiles and the born-digital data derived therefrom amount to two separate editions of a text. OCR, he writes, is a compositor "setting text in a language it does not comprehend" (2017, 196) — and, I would add, it is in this sense an heir to the automatic writers touch-typing once demanded. Composition in machine reading unthinkingly inputs characters from proof texts to generate statistically informed readout containing differences from those sources. It produces new bibliographic objects with no guarantee that these will maintain utter fidelity to their imaged variants during a side-by-side inspection. Those objects are, as Hannah Alpert-Abrams argues, "interventions" in the historical record of a text, not transcriptions (2016, ¶ 34), and claims to the contrary uphold a reigning "myth of surrogacy" in digitization (MAK 2014, 1520), which treats the presence of computational processes as a certifying seal for completeness, comprehensiveness, and accuracy. Here, *etaoin shrdlu* is instructive: beyond just serving as their pre-digital forebear, the mythic status of that phrase demonstrates the need for a skeptical view of those substitutions. Linotypes, surrogate and automated word processors, probabilistically generated words that no compositor would otherwise type, and readers were left to contend with the task of assimilating nonsense into discourse. The joint force of mechanized word processing and *etaoin shrdlu* produced semantic residue, and now, a correlative excess in OCR keeps

18. For an overview of how these ratings impact analyses of newspaper archives, see HOLLEY 2009. See also SMITH 2007 for an in-depth explanation of how Tesseract, one of the most widely used OCR engines, works.

automatically generated text in an approximate, supplementary relationship to the page images from which it derives.

Inasmuch as my own thinking focalizes this errancy through its Linotype forebears, I want to suggest that the enduring traces of these machines are best suited to unravel the implications of that last and most important letter, R, in OCR. As it both replicates and misprints printed sources, automatic text transcription adheres to the complex and shifting sites of recognition etaoín shrdlu first marks. OCR readouts are above all catalogues of recognized and recognizing agents, and they “inscribe the scene of their production into plaintext forms” (ALPERT-ABRAMS 2016, ¶ 34).<sup>19</sup> Such scenes remain open to interpretation in ways etaoín shrdlu underscores. Consider a key feature of the phrase, which continues to haunt its digital exemplars, even if curatorial efforts manage to account for its joint use, figured or mis-fingered: while it is an error, it also represents yet *another* error to which it is meant to point. In this way etaoín shrdlu reflects warnings retrospectively, where, looking back, one notices anomalies without being able to pinpoint them directly. Beyond generalities, the phrase can do little more. It simply indicates that an editor needed to revisit the trace of a mistyped key or series of keys within the last 30 to 42 picas of newly forged lead before ink can meet paper. There lies, then, a hidden error on the page, undisclosed, intimated but unrevealed, an errant string that gives rise to the letter salad accidentally appearing at present in *Chronicling America* and elsewhere. Etaoín shrdlu is an unrecognized error stemming from an error previously recognized, and this prior mistake, that one that accompanies etaoín shrdlu as its initial catalyst, now haunts the semiotic architecture of machine reading.

It haunts machine reading both literally and because the two errors etaoín shrdlu indicates produce the very same signifying structure — and signifying is the word — that errant OCR produces now. Anytime automatic transcription outputs text that diverges from its sources, it recreates the recursive chain of recognition editors working alongside Linotypes faced, in which nonsense text calls out to readers and points them elsewhere in a document. For those pages produced by Linotypes, that location

19. Alpert-Abrams’s own case study details how the automatic transcription of colonial contact narratives often reproduces the very same marginalization such narratives enforce. “Automatic transcription, itself a mechanical and practical tool,” she writes, “also and simultaneously participates in this transfer of power, with practical consequences for scholarly work and our work as actors in the public sphere” (2016, ¶ 10).

was often earlier in a line; for errorful strings in OCR, substitute characters lay in place of a page image’s direct reproduction, and that “elsewhere” is no longer present in the text file itself. In both, error results from, indexes, and demands further recognition, which shifts the function of OCR from transcription to that of a hermeneutic act — or better, indicates that from the very start OCR entails a reading operation. Following Alpert-Abrams and Cordell, if OCR transcriptions intervene in the historical record, the digital afterlives of etaoïn shrdlu show how the mode of that intervention has, at base, an interpretive disposition. We readers of those automatic readouts must learn to recognize, and then to read alongside and within, the slippery probability spaces of machines reading. The table below gives four such examples in *Chronicling America* that necessitate this recognition. In the first two, the afterimage of leaden letter frequency indicates an error forensically identifiable in page images but masked in plaintext by errors produced during the statistical analyses informing decisions in automated reading. New typos replace existing typos. And the statistical logics that make that replacement possible have, in this table’s third and fourth entries, produced “etaoïn” where no such etaoïns were printed — produced them in an anticipatory move, in fact, for these newspaper pages appear well ahead of the Linotype’s debut.

**Table 1.** *Chronicling America* OCR interpretations. The first two entries register misprinted misprints; the third and fourth, anticipatory replacements in text printed before the Linotype’s invention.

Newspaper	Original Text	OCR Interpretation
<i>Misprinted Misprints</i>		
<i>The Irish Standard</i> 13 February, 1897 (2)	2 cows . . . . . etaoïn shrdlu cmfp	.....etaola sbrdlu cmfp
<i>Virginian-Pilot</i> 25 July, 1900 (7)	SOLD etaoïn shrdlu cmfwypvb	SOLD elaoïn slirdlu omfwypvb
<i>Anticipatory Replacements</i>		
<i>New-York Daily Tribune</i> 3 April, 1844 (1)	The public are invited to call and examine them — also, all other kinds of Sofas always on hand.	The public are invited to call and etaoïns them?also, ill cther lundi of .-> .fi* liway? ou hand.
<i>New Orleans Daily Crescent</i> 8 July, 1852, morning (7)	Agents Louisiana Dry Dock Co. / New Orleans, February 4, 1852	N...O.in., Febrn..y, IILS. etaoïn .rDok.

Under these conditions, interpretive conjecture must accompany computational forensics. When, as with automatic text transcription, a process poses and resolves decision points before any output goes on to human eyes, our interpretive activities are channeled along through cognitive assemblages that perform semantic difference ahead of our review. OCR engines “MAKE SENSE” (BROWN 1943, 62), despite their being not conscious of that fact. Though they may not comprehend what they set, with OCR processes we are nevertheless faced with an uncanny, almost unthinkable situation in which comprehension is no longer a necessary and sufficient condition for hermeneutic activity.

In this sense, that the following appears as a header for every plain-text view of newspaper pages in *Chronicling America* is entirely apposite. There, errant letters leave their columns for an HTML render, finding themselves set not by a Linotype but by a web browser. Above them; above the page image from which they have derived (diverged); above a link that asks, “What is OCR?”; above a “persistent link” that directs readers to the present born-digital edition; above information specifying the state collection in which the aforementioned page image lies; above that page image’s title, publisher location, span of publication, and its particular date, there is a phrase that both describes the transcription below it and that names a mode of nonconscious reading whose implications we have yet to fully think through: “OCR Interpretation”.

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# Book Reviews

BALDERSTON, Daniel. 2018. *How Borges Wrote*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. ISBN 9780813939643. Pp. 392. Hardback \$49.50.

In one of Jorge Luis Borges's last short stories, "Shakespeare's Memory", the main character, a professor of English literature called Hermann Soergel, inherits the memory of the great playwright through a miraculous yet trivial act. After a while Soergel realizes, much to his disappointment, that his understanding of Shakespeare's work is not better than that of scholars who do not possess his magical gift. "Change or fate", he declares, "dealt Shakespeare those trivial things that all men know; it was his gift to transmute them into fables, into characters that were much more alive than the gray man who dreamed them". Soergel concludes that literary creation is a mysterious process; it is better not to examine too much how life experiences are transformed into artistic works.

The story came to my mind again when I was reading Daniel Balderston's *How Borges Wrote*, as it had before when his first article on Borges's manuscripts appeared in 2009. Will we, as Soergel puts it, "unravel that wondrous fabric, besiege and mine the tower" when the secrets contained in an author's drafts are uncovered? Of course, the task of studying manuscripts is considerably less daunting than trying to understand the mental and creative processes that go from experience, either lived in the real world or through fiction (is there a difference in Borges?), to the final work. Yet they seem to have something in common: through the study of manuscripts we expect to see at least a glimpse of the author's creative process, his hesitations, the connections between the readings he was doing at the time and the texts he was producing, between his immediate context and the literary work. Perhaps we hope to find evidence that a consecrated writer also rewrote, was indecisive, and that the final text required a laborious process.

The archive of Borges represents a peculiar case: although many of his manuscripts survive, access to them has proven quite difficult. Balderston, one of Borges's foremost scholars, devoted more than ten years to gaining access to the author's manuscripts and studying them. As Balderston states,

since Borges's papers are dispersed, "the archive must be constructed", a situation that differs from that of other writers whose working papers are situated in more accessible collections. *How Borges Wrote* represents the culmination of this project, which Balderston calls "the most important work of my scholarly career" (5). This is a significant statement, coming from someone who published two other seminal books on the Argentine writer: *El precursor velado: R. L. Stevenson en la obra de Borges* (1985), which revealed Borges's use and creative manipulation of one of his fundamental sources; and *Out of Context: Historical Reference and the Representation of Reality in Borges* (1993), an influential study revealing the writer's consequential relationship with history and the treatment of it in his work.

In some ways, Borges seems to have operated like his character Pierre Menard, who "wrote" *Don Quixote* in notebooks he later destroyed. In these notebooks, Menard tried variations of the original text, crossed many passages out, but we know only the final result: a few fragments of the *Quixote* that coincide word by word with Cervantes's novel. Yet Borges was also aware of the value of his manuscripts. He would occasionally offer them as gifts — cleaner versions, but ones that still contain revisions — and he almost never got rid of them. It is amazing to learn there are surviving manuscripts from his beginnings as a poet, a fact that illustrates Borges's obsession with preserving and re-using them for future writings.

Using the techniques of what the French call *critique génétique*, Balderston examines Borges's creative process as revealed in his manuscripts. This is characterized by his peculiar handwriting, the habit of noting down source materials in the manuscripts' margins, the substantial number of variants Borges considered for many passages (more often than not, the variants were not crossed out, leaving the possibilities open until the text was typed or published), and the typographical signs he employed to rearrange sentences, insert new text or make corrections.

Balderston's book begins with the study of a practice that was essential to Borges's writing system. As he read, Borges would use the book (usually the blank pages at the end of it) to "note down the page reference and a few words of a quotation in the original language" (22) with the intention of checking the passage later if needed. This practice is consistent with the one Borges employed in his manuscripts: on their left margins he would write down the bibliographical information for a passage quoted directly or connected to the short story or essay. "Reading" is the title of the book's first chapter, which analyzes this system and convincingly refutes the misconception that Borges's erudition was partially invented or

that his sources were often imprecisely handled. All of the book's chapters are named after a compositional element or step in Borges's writing process: "Reading" is followed by "Jottings", "Notebooks", "Possibilities", "Copies", "Typescripts", "Revisions", and "Fragments". In "Notebooks", we find out they were fundamental to Borges's writing method and that there are revealing connections between the several texts contained in a single notebook, even when those texts belong to different genres. In "Typescripts", we learn that Borges did not know how to use a typewriter, so he depended on other people for this task. Each particular analysis is illustrated with images of Borges's manuscripts, diplomatic transcriptions and translations into English.

The book includes several useful appendices. The first lists all the manuscripts consulted, organized by year, with information about their location and publication history. Appendix 2A consists of a facsimile of the 1950 Cuaderno Avon Notebook, which includes the short story "La espera" and a draft of the important essay "El escritor argentino y la tradición". The last appendix includes images of the entire pages from which Balderston extracted the details that he examined in each chapter. Thanks to this, the reader has access not only to the facsimile excerpts that Balderston uses for his analyses, but also to the larger manuscript context. The quality of these images varies, reflecting the condition of Borges's manuscripts and the problematic access to them: photographs, photocopies (sometimes of other photocopies), scans or handwritten transcriptions are some of the methods Balderston used to compile these valuable papers.

One imagines that great writers of the past had a clarity of purpose that made them, precisely, into the creators we admire today. Seeing Borges's manuscripts, analyzing his numerous corrections and indecisions, does not diminish his literary genius. Balderston's book illustrates how the final product evolved from succinct notes and the way Borges's ideas crystallized after considering multiple options and eliminating details that were either superfluous or exposed too much the circumstances that informed a given text. This last process is noteworthy: Borges tended to discard concrete references to political and other circumstantial elements, apparently to make his writing more universal. This erasure has led many critics to think there were few connections between Borges's writings and his immediate surroundings. We have learned to read backwards, though, to find the specific references Borges was making to the problems of his time. *How Borges Wrote* makes an exceptional contribution to our understanding of this process.

One of the book's appendices reproduces Borges's own printed copy of his short story "La lotería en Babilonia" as it appeared in the journal *Sur* in 1941. This copy shows hundreds of corrections in Borges's hand, to the point of creating an almost entirely different text, in its language if not in its content. Even the title is transformed, becoming "El Babilónico azar". However, these corrections never made it into *El jardín de senderos que se bifurcan*, where the short story appeared later that year. Was Borges serious about these changes or was he simply playing with the possibilities? Balderston suggests that for Borges there never existed a final text; the ones we take for definitive today would have kept changing if the author had had the opportunity.

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BORSUK, Amaranth. 2018. *The Book*. Cambridge: MIT. ISBN 9780262535410. Pp. 344. Paper \$15.95.

Amaranth Borsuk's *The Book* works from the premise that our understanding of the titular subject is often a hazy nebula encompassing a range of texts, technologies, genres, ideas, experiences, and experiments. Audio-books, for example, occupy an identifiable position in this book galaxy, as do papyrus scrolls, unreadable "bookworks", and narrative-driven iPad apps. The codex is identified early and often, naturally, though its position in Borsuk's star chart is deliberately decentralized — except, perhaps, in the case of *The Book's* own material form, a "beautifully produced pocket-size" (5×7-inch) paperback (vii).

While primarily critical and historical in content, *The Book* also demonstrates a keen theoretical capacity through its four major subdivisions: "The Book as Object"; "The Book as Content"; "The Book as Idea"; "The Book as Interface". Borsuk characterizes the book as a "fluid artifact" (xiii), a productive contradiction of flow and stasis that encourages us to slide freely among different conceptions of it. "The Book as Object" begins in the traditional history-of-the-book fashion, with cuneiform wedges in Sumerian clay, meandering east and west until finally arriving at the codices of European manuscript culture in the Middle Ages. What distinguishes Borsuk's account is the commitment to fusing digital and print attitudes toward book study from the outset. In the opening paragraph, for example, the book is neatly distilled as a "portable data storage and distribution method", and the development of Egyptian hieroglyphics is likened to the proliferation of interactive video clips. "The Book as Content" shifts



to typography and the book world of and after Gutenberg, thus historicizing the link between book form and print technology. While many book histories, especially those in the spirit of Marshall McLuhan — such as Elizabeth Eisenstein’s seminal *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (1979) — tend to emphasize the profound effect of print on culture as a whole, Borsuk closely examines how the emergence of print specifically shaped the modern understanding of the book. During the transition from manuscript culture, printed books “become the intimate spaces we expect them to be, whether guiding one through the stations of daily devotion or conveying ancient thought on the structure of tragedy” (84).

With these histories well told, the second half of *The Book* gains a provocative potency. If chapters one and two describe what the book has been, chapters three and four challenge readers to consider what the book can be. “The Book as Idea” is the heart of Borsuk’s work. An expansive look at the artist’s book tradition, this chapter runs through the historical gamut of usual suspects: William Blake, Stéphane Mallarmé, Ed Ruscha, Ulises Carrión, and the like. Aware of cultural representation and bias, Borsuk is careful when citing these typical “flashpoints”, as she calls them, resisting the establishment of a clear “lineage” of artist’s books while acknowledging the need for the presence of these major author-artists in an “essential knowledge” text (117). (*The Book* is part of the MIT Press Essential Knowledge series.) Much more than scholarly hedging, however, Borsuk’s framing emphasizes an imaginative attitude toward books rather than specific accomplishments in their tradition. The names and dates are not as important as the “energies motivating artwork in book form” that they represent (117). The historically inclined context created in the first half of *The Book* thus gives way to an intellectual context of innovation and experimentation in the second. This shift becomes a subtle invitation to readers to think like book artists, so that by the time we reach the end of the third chapter, the example of Dieter Roth’s *Literaturwurst* — a series in which whole books are processed like sausages — seems a perfectly sensible take on the ephemerality of books. Not that Roth’s work is derivative, only that the reader’s idea of the book has now become as capacious as the creator’s.

“The Book as Interface”, as the technological word choice implies, traces the development of book production from manuscript texts and print books to their modern electronic counterparts. The small-scale craft and focus on material aesthetics of Gutenberg’s printing process described in chapter two lays the groundwork for the emphasis on plain text and mass accessibility of the e-books of Project Gutenberg — an immense digitization effort begun in the 1970s — cited in chapter four. Beyond Project Gutenberg and

digitization, Borsuk discusses born-digital books as explorations into the affordances of evolving and emergent digital media — a narrative mobile app that may make use of a phone's geolocation data or internet connectivity, for example. Google Books, the Internet Archive, Kindles and eBooks, and interactive fiction are all relevant plot points for the story of the book now. Borsuk plays off the preceding chapter's focus on artist's books as a model for digital books: "because [digital books] are fundamentally interactive, tactile, and multisensory: the reader must manipulate them to experience their full effect" (255). In the opening pages of *The Book* early inscription practices were described with a forward-looking sensibility, and Borsuk now comes full circle in accounting for digital advances in the book through print-based precedents. While this print-digital dialectic is typical in comparative media histories, in Borsuk's treatment it serves to flatten chronology; she remains emphatically resistant to timelines and lineages, in favor of what we might call an expansive intellectual geography of the book. This strategy contributes to *The Book's* birds-eye view of the book as a "fluid artifact" under continual change "whose form and usage have shifted over time under numerous influences: social, financial, and technological" (xiii).

For this reason, *The Book* is not easily placed into a standard scholarly category like book history or media studies. More complete and traditional histories can be found in classics like Warren Chappell's *A Short History of the Printed Word* (1970, 2000), and a more richly illustrated study of medium can be found in David Pearson's *Books as History* (2008, 2011). Each chapter of *The Book* does offer a kind of primer in the spirit of one or the other, but the ingenuity of *The Book* is a material and conceptual fusion of these varying perspectives in one text. Borsuk, an accomplished book artist as well as scholar, exhibits a masterful approach to the design and function of her own codex, even while no doubt grappling with the limitations of producing the book within an established university press series. The material novelty of *The Book* includes, for example, several dozen "hypertextual" inserts — pages that contain illuminating and provocative definitions of the book, each presented in an oversized font and inverted white-on-black color scheme to further distinguish its role from *The Book's* primary text. The inserted quotations cite a variety of sources, from scholarly to artistic, and are thought-provoking digressions for the reader, such as Dieter Roth's enigmatic "A book is a knot" (212) or Andrew Piper's simple observation that "[b]ooks are things that hold things" (107). Excerpts that might be lucid and analytic in their original context are transformed into metaphysical ruminations through Borsuk's stylized treatment. Accumulating these defi-

nitions has become its own project, in fact, as Borsuk continues to update a project website (t-h-e-b-o-o-k.com) with quotes solicited from colleagues. In a final design touch, Borsuk takes full advantage of the codex's paratextual capacity, providing exceptionally useful appendices: Chronology, Glossary, Notes, Bibliography, Further Reading and Writing, and Index.

When projects seem to occupy (or defy) a number of fields at once, it can sometimes be difficult to find an audience. The risk in this case is that it's both a series edition with introductory content and also a text that requires enough advanced knowledge to appreciate how Borsuk's innovative treatment of the subject informs *The Book's* refined argument. These risks pay off as a tremendous resource for classroom use, however, because the content is designed to stimulate discussion and engagement rather than rote consumption. I recently used excerpts of *The Book* in teaching an undergraduate course on contemporary experimental novels, and, for approaching a variety of historical or theoretical topics, it seemed to our class both accessible and boundlessly useful.

*The Book* is undoubtedly a welcome addition to the book history scene, especially as the field continues its recent and culturally savvy alignment with new media and digital studies. Borsuk's history is one built for the future. *The Book* is a digitally literate, materially self-aware study of one of humanity's most durable technologies and malleable concepts. In our digital age, *The Book* prepares us not for the end of the book but for its exciting next chapter.

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BURNS, Edward M., editor. 2018. *Questioning Minds: The Letters of Guy Davenport and Hugh Kenner*. Berkeley: Counterpoint. 9781619021815. Pp. lxxvi + 1817, in two volumes. Hardback \$95.

"[P]eering, absorbing, translating" — that's what Walt Whitman (in "Out of the Cradle") discerned to be the stages of the scholar-poet's work, and the correspondence of Guy Davenport and Hugh Kenner exemplifies and confirms the soundness of Whitman's insight. Davenport may have written more than a few substantial poems and translations, and Kenner may have scribbled a few bits of light verse (some of them in these letters), yet neither is particularly known as a poet. But they *think* like poets, they follow Whitman's direction, Davenport in his translations, assemblages, and essays — and in his drawings and paintings — and Kenner in his myriad critical essays and books. Both of them, too, have the wide-range of playfulness

and interests one might associate with Whitman. And like Whitman too they *persist*, and they *share*. With over eleven hundred pages of letters and a further five hundred and more close-printed pages of thorough, pertinent and indeed brilliant notes, *Questioning Minds* is essential reading for anyone interested in modernist writing in English, no matter what they *think* they already know. Helpfully, the seventy-page Index is printed in both volumes, and navigation and cross-reference are easy.

Davenport and Kenner exchanged more than a thousand letters between 1960 and 1976 or 1977, after which the correspondence began sporadically to falter until it finally, after gaps and silences, came pretty much to an end in about 1989 — only eleven letters after that, until on 9 August 2002, Kenner laments “in the final months of my 79th year”, that “[w]e’ve been separated too long”. That is the last letter between them, and Kenner would die fourteen months later, 24 November 2003. Davenport died just over a year later, 4 January 2005. Their correspondence tells a story of the invention and construction of modernist writing by two of its shapers who, in describing and defining it, invented it. *Questioning Minds* is utterly absorbing, chock-full of information, news, ideas and pleasures. And it reads like a novel.

“Stood on roof of Municipal Building, I mean the ledge thereof”, Davenport wrote to Kenner, 3 August 1962, “to see how brave Harold Lloyd was. Very”. He had done his military service in an airborne regiment (he ended up as a corporal), and if you can remember Harold Lloyd’s antics in the famous clock scene in the film *Safety Last!* (1923) — Lloyd did his own cliff-hanging stunts — then Davenport’s words carry the central attributes of this extraordinary correspondence, something of its flavour and attitudes: *See for yourself. Pay attention*, especially to detail. And above all, *Tell*, no matter how trivial it might seem. “I jumped from rock to rock over the dry falls in Paterson”, Davenport told Kenner after visiting William Carlos Williams in 1958; “climbed to the park, and drank the tone of the gorge”. *Ask questions, consult, beg favours*: “PLEASE”, Kenner wrote on 27 June 1964, “if you can, get the matter of the ‘Burne-Jones cartons’ settled”. He wanted to settle an exact detail of Ezra Pound’s “Hugh Selwyn Mauberley”, every detail, for *The Pound Era* (published in 1971), and between them Kenner and Davenport did.

“There is no property in things of the mind”, Kenner had told Davenport on 26 May 1962; “I will with equal aplomb use anything handy that I pick up from you”. Davenport’s name for that was “buccaneering scholarship” (12 January 1962) — they both reveled in it, and for over twenty years they enthusiastically helped themselves to each other’s work, Kenner

with his mathematical and computer expertise, Davenport with his Greek, his fiction, and his graphics. Two polymaths, delighting in each other's thought as well as the very processes of thinking, and delighting in sharing what they found. "I simply need *instruction* in visual matters", Kenner told Davenport on 6 February 1963; "In addition to 'getting up' Greek I must get up painting & architecture [ . . . ]. People who write about literature, especially moddun, are too bone ignorant of *everything*", and the letters include so much information that they might serve as a sourcebook: tidbits, puzzles, drawings, photocopies, books, ideas, writing, friendships, pleasures. And sometimes comic, even hilarious, in their inventiveness: Kenner on 22 May 1962 playing with the idea of a comic novel about the publishing industry featuring "the inevitable Texas philanthropist" named "George Oilwell".

Davenport provided some of the requested instruction among translations and other desiderata, and Kenner responded in kind, among other things setting Davenport up with a regular book-reviewing gig. "I don't know how you feel about right-wing company", he said, 5 April 1961, "but *National Review* pays \$50–\$65 for book reviews and I've the ear of the B.R. editor". By the end of 1963 Davenport was a regular and indeed constant contributor. In all he'd publish over 65 reviews and brief notices there, as well as essays and articles, and with gleeful mischief to Kenner's delight he concocted and executed drawing after drawing for Kenner's books *The Stoic Comedians* and *The Counterfeiters*. "Yeats took only about twelve hours to do", he told Kenner on 4 August 1966; "I think I'll do Turing next, perhaps in gasmask, on the ailing bike, and with the alarm clock tied around his middle". And for the next few years, with project after project and book after book, Kenner intermittently dreams up and Davenport responds to uncounted possible illustrations, some of them among Davenport's and Kenner's papers. "I'm never happier than when drawing", Davenport says on 12 May 1962; "[s]heer joy, drawing". Kenner talks about his family, his colleagues, his scholarly connections and consultations, his skiing trips, his travels abroad; Davenport about his hiking, his camping trips, his girlfriends and his "Erewhonian" young men with their motorbikes and their holidays together, and his drawings. Their milieu is predominantly (but not overwhelmingly) male.

They first met in September 1953 at a conference where they each gave a paper on Pound, Davenport aged twenty-five, a graduate student at Harvard, and Kenner aged thirty, with a couple of books already published (on G.K. Chesterton and on Pound) and another on the way (on Wyndham Lewis); Davenport had spent two years as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford (where he wrote on James Joyce), his PhD thesis on Pound's *Cantos* was

not yet written, and he had yet to provide potential employers *any* of what Kenner called “substantial publications”. They didn’t begin to correspond in earnest until Davenport, his PhD at last in hand, got a job at Haverford College in 1961—till then they’d kept in rather desultory touch, with Kenner, Department Chairman at Santa Barbara College (part of the University of California system) unsuccessfully trying to create a job for which Davenport could apply. By the end of 1961 they were writing intensely to each other (25 letters that year), in 1962 they exchanged 82 letters and in 1963 a whopping 147. There was of course also the telephone, and in 1962, *en route* to academic engagements elsewhere, Kenner twice came to Haverford for the weekend. “Have just talked with Hugh Kenner for fifty-six hours”, Davenport wrote to an old Harvard friend on 22 July 1962, “any one hour of which wd have, in information and analysis, served a Mississippi Junior College with an entire humanities curriculum for a semester. That boy izza real genius, no doubt of it. He called Wednesday, saying he needed company to talk to, flew in Thursday, and just awhile ago left”. After the first visit Davenport told Kenner (1 June) that “Coleridge and Wordsworth talked for thirty hours only when they first met, mainly about Spinoza and the diction of poetry. At least we topped that. And why not. Myself, I’m ashamed of the rigors I put you to when you come, and assume that you realize that you’re taking your life in your hands and do it all in the spirit of *Camping Out* or roughing it in the wilds of a furnitureless apartment”.

That “needing someone to talk to” is telling. It is hard to imagine, in 2019, how intensely isolated people with Davenport’s and Kenner’s interests actually were in the early 1960s, their interests so clearly outside the canon. For most English professors, the only modern poets worth reading were T.S. Eliot, Robert Frost, and perhaps Wallace Stevens. Davenport told Kenner on 24 May 1962 that Harry Levin, who had directed Davenport’s thesis on Pound’s *Cantos* I-XXX at Harvard, “has read neither [Wyndham] Lewis or [Samuel] Beckett (last conversation I had with him) and will oilily (smoothing his waxed, Lisbon gigolo’s moustache) opine that they are ‘not worth considering’”. Later in the letter he reports that Levin “has maintained (over BBC) that *The Cantos* are an incoherent trash-heap of pretended erudition and smut”. No wonder they both needed each other to talk to. Davenport once told me that he’d got through life in the army barracks by reading Joyce’s *Ulysses* again and again for its intelligence. *Ulysses* was largely viewed in most English departments as an important, eccentric and largely confusing adjunct to *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, and *Finnegans Wake* was absurdly unfathomable. Similarly, Pound was a minor Georgian poet, a crank, and a traitor, Beckett incom-

prehensible when not hopelessly trivial, William Carlos Williams despite his 1963 Pulitzer Prize too simple and slight, Louis Zukofsky completely unknown and not worth reading anyway. The writers utterly central to Davenport and Kenner — they wrote of them often to each other — were far too eccentric to warrant serious attention.

Given their perspicuity, and their enterprise as scholars, it may seem rather strange to say that neither Kenner nor Davenport was at home in the academy. They were too intent on the richness of their intellectual and physical lives. “I find it hard to believe that I was a professor for 37 years”, Davenport told Kenner on 7 January 1993, “and wonder if I taught anybody anything [. . .]. I was never quite a professional in the academy; and I’m not quite a writer”. His preference for the company of artists and writers, for a life of the mind very much outside the conventional range of most English professors, is very much in tune with his constant and intense life as painter, and as a writer of fictions. His correspondence is (like his interests) far flung, multilingual, indeed vast. And Kenner, a Catholic with a large family, worries about his future and on 18 January 1961 confides to Davenport that “If I stay in academic life at all (the politics is beginning to get me down) I’ll I suppose stay here. [. . .] [O]ne of the Facts of Life is that Hahvud & Yale wouldn’t, I imagine, touch me with an 11-foot pole. I have been too impolitic for too long”. He had especially alienated Richard Ellmann, Joyce’s biographer, with his scornful comment in a review (quoted in a footnote on page 1.52n2) that in Ellmann’s book “the life of the mind, so far as Joyce himself led it, is allowed to amount to very little. [. . .] [Joyce] could never have held down an American professorship, it is clear”.

Whatever else these two volumes may do — and they do much — they tell us a great deal about the attractions and indeed the uses of scholarship in one of the most illuminating and exciting literary conversations of the last sixty or seventy years. We’re lucky to have them.

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EARHART, Amy E. 2015. *Traces of the Old, Uses of the New: The Emergence of Digital Literary Studies*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Pp. 172. ISBN 9780472072781, Hardback \$60.00. ISBN 9780472052783, Paper \$34.95. ISBN 9780472900688, Open Access.

In this era of digital humanities self-critique, Amy Earhart's *Traces of the Old, Uses of the New: The Emergence of Digital Literary Studies* is a welcome contribution to the conversation about the underpinnings of the digital humanities, specifically its development within the context of English literary studies in the United States. The book can be divided into two parts: chapters one through three, which "trace the literary approaches — textual studies, new historicism, and cultural criticism — that underlie contemporary digital literary scholarship" (90), and chapters four and five, which discuss current trends in and future avenues for the field.

The first three chapters each pair one of the aforementioned approaches with a key kind of digital humanities artifact, namely the electronic edition, the digital archive, and what Earhart calls "digital literary recovery projects", respectively (63). These chapters focus on "representational" work, "with technology primarily used to create idealized or better versions than would be possible in print" (91). In her analysis of textual studies' role in early digital humanities, she demonstrates the kind of knowledge gained by a scholar who both studies the history of her discipline and has worked in the field producing the kind of work about which she speaks. She both credits textual studies for being the governing approach to the production of electronic editions and faults it for its "problematic relationship to diversity" (35), for failing, that is, to adequately address issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Earhart urges the field to perform its analyses (textual, literary, or otherwise) in light of sociocultural context. It is not surprising, then, that Earhart discusses the move toward producing archives and away from editions in positive terms. She sees new historicism as underpinning this turn, remarking that "Greenblatt may have launched our contemporary understanding of new historicism, but Jerome McGann brought new historicism to the digital age" through his theorization of the social text (41). In the third chapter, on digital literary recovery projects, Earhart is at her most provocative, challenging her readers to consider (1) the value of DIY-style projects "that used digitization to expand what [project creators] saw as an outmoded new critical literary canon that excluded work by women, people of color, queers, and others" (63); and (2) the digital humanities community's complicity in the "stigma" applied to the "simple

technologies” (such as HTML rather than the typically preferred TEI) used for these sites, a stigma that has in part led to their decline and a general lack of preservation efforts (84).

Turning from the past of digital literary studies to its present, Earhart considers digital humanities’ much discussed culture of tool building and said tools’ use for visualization and data mining. This “interpretive” approach to digital literary studies stands in contrast to the “representational” forms discussed previously (91). She argues that “[s]cholarly analysis is being altered by algorithmic approaches that are beginning to produce evidence that might answer the long-standing digital humanities claim of presenting new findings through technological interventions, what might be called technological interpretation or algorithmic interpretation” (91). (She sees such computational analysis as “a potential break from the past” but one could also interpret it as a return to humanities computing’s roots, which included stylistic analysis, an inherently interpretive pursuit.) Such analysis can only be as good as its data lets it be. Earhart points out several dataset limitations in the collections we now have that “mar the effectiveness of otherwise superb tools” (112). She shows how datasets can be incomplete, how they exclude different kinds of authors, and how, due to outdated criteria for text selection, they may lack works that are now considered important.

Earhart says that if “we do indeed believe in digital humanities as transformative then we must continue to excavate and to rebuild the structures that underpin our work and our community” (127). *Traces of the Old, Uses of the New* is one such “excavation” of a discipline, namely digital literary studies in English (and primarily within the context of the United States). As much digital work has been done outside of the United States and outside the confines of English literature, one hopes the book will be followed by many others that do the same kind of thing for other literatures and other geographic locations — as well as for digital work in non-literary fields and interdisciplinary work. We need to understand the history of digital humanities from the points of view of disciplines that deal with visual culture, musicology, information science, and more. We need to understand it from the points of view of scholars working in Asia, Africa, Europe, and South America. We need to understand it in the context of as many area studies as possible. Our best hope for a “transformative” digital humanities will likely be intersectional.

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JONES, Steven E. 2016. *Roberto Busa, S.J., and the Emergence of Humanities Computing: The Priest and the Punched Cards*. New York: Routledge. Pp. 186. ISBN 9781138186774, Hardback \$165.00. ISBN 9781138587250, Paper \$59.95.

In *Roberto Busa, S.J., and the Emergence of Humanities Computing: The Priest and the Punched Cards*, Steven Jones's objective is singular: understanding the first decade of Busa's work will help us understand the emergence of humanities computing in the 1940s. While Father Roberto Busa, mythic founder of Digital Humanities (DH), is the hero of this intellectual investigation, *Roberto Busa, S.J.* is no hagiography. Jones aims to "complicate this myth with history" (3). In five concise but packed chapters, Jones tells the history of institution-sized heft and heritage (the Catholic Church, academia, capitalism) alongside the particular history of a midtown Manhattan meeting in the postwar United States between Busa, an Italian priest and scholar, and Thomas J. Watson, Sr., CEO of IBM — even then one of the top technology companies in the world.

As an origin story, *Roberto Busa, S.J.* begins with a careful definition of DH — careful, because the field in recent years has undergone multiple crises of identity that have been both vitriolic in nature (DH as neoliberal tool: ALLINGTON, BROUILLETTE, and COLUMBIA 2016) and theoretically productive (DH as hopefully self-reflective: LIU 2016). Acknowledging these debates, Jones asserts that there are many histories (his own work in media studies and video games included) to DH, but he has chosen to piece together a history representing the origins of humanities computing, focusing on ten years of Busa's work from roughly the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s that includes his philological work with St. Thomas Aquinas and the Dead Sea Scrolls and the creation of Busa's Literary Data Processing Center in Gallarte, Italy (arguably the world's first DH center). Such a history, Jones maintains, provides an understanding of the mid-century emergence of humanities computing that gives insight into what Jones (and many of us) believes is a good working definition of DH today "as something more than a merely instrumental or practical application of tools, as a set of institutional arrangements, self-representations, and practices engaging theoretical and methodological questions" (20). This definition forms the heart of the book's approach and inspires its ultimate goal: to paint a picture of how this historic meeting between priest and CEO came to occur is to reconcile a DH much maligned in the 2000s as "merely instrumental"

with a DH as a scholarly reckoning concerned with how we think with and against traditions and technologies.

Jones begins by acknowledging his book's theoretical underpinnings and the scholarly peers with which it is in conversation, including Algorithmic Criticism (RAMSAY 2011), Cybernetics (HAYLES 2010), Information Science (NYHAN and TERRAS 2017), Media Archaeology (EMERSON 2014), and Textual Studies (MCGANN 2004). Jones' methods are primarily informed by material forensics and archival work, and, in order to ground his investigation in the realities of then and now, he visited the many historical sites discussed in this short history, including CAAL (Centro per L'Automazione dell'Analisi Linguistica e Letteraria) and the Literary Data Processing Center in Gallarte, Italy; the Thomas J. Watson Scientific Computing Laboratory at Columbia University; and the IBM World Headquarters in Midtown Manhattan, 57th Street. Jones conducted interviews with Busa's collaborators and students and read letters and other extant papers in archives in Milan, Italy, and at Columbia University, Fordham University, the IBM Corporation Archives, and the North Carolina State Archives. Nevertheless, in his desire to be fully transparent about his primary objectives, Jones asserts, "I'm not a historian" (21). This project is ultimately about DH as an intellectual endeavor.

It is appropriate that this book project was conceived in the drinks line at a DH conference at the University of Nebraska in 2013, a cultivated space representing the inner social workings of what some see as the privileged club that is DH. Indeed, Jones recognizes the inside-joke nature of it all ("a priest walks into the CEO's office") and the book overall acknowledges the priest's personal privileges as a white, Christian, well-educated male with the means and freedoms to travel globally under the auspices of his institutional privileges as an academic and a priest in the Catholic church. After all, DH is a field that depends on resources, both of human labor and materials. Consequently, this is a book concerning textual and material studies in DH and the material under scrutiny is not only the punched-cards and room-sized data-processing machines that Jones outlines in his first and second chapters, but also the institutions and infrastructures that helped to initiate and buoy the projects that then (and now) are at the heart of DH work. Humanists have done considerable work uncovering how institutional infrastructures welcome and deny (or at the very least discourage) particular bodies, histories, perspectives, personas, questions, and, some might say, theoretical critiques. Jones uses this book on Busa and Busa's

work in the postwar global economy to insist that computational work is and always has been deeply political since dangerous “claims of amorality and neutrality” often “serve to justify entanglements with immoral actors and regimes” (35). Accordingly, rigorous DH scholarship reflects a history of interrogating such grave claims.

So — a summary being in order — in chapter one, the priest walks into the CEO’s office in November 1949. In this chapter, Jones foregrounds Busa’s humanities subject matter as what inspired Busa to interrogate politics and technology, starting with Busa’s dissertation “The Thomistic Terminology of Interiority” (1949) and including his plan to create a massive concordance to the thirteenth-century philosophical and theological Latin writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. In this and the next chapter, Jones introduces a theme that continues through the book: humans and machines are entangled in the good and the bad. He troubles the history of IBM’s punch-cards, which became the central technology employed in Busa’s projects, by looking at the IBM subsidiary in Dehomag, Germany, where the technology was used by the Nazis in 1930s to track censuses that may have enabled or “at least made more efficient, the Holocaust” (35). This chapter reminds us that humans rather than punch-cards — a method for controlling machinery that goes back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — are to blame for the atrocities of World War II.

In the second chapter, Jones explores what N. Katherine Hayles would call an “emergent complexity”: in the decade after World War II, there was a broad recognition in the public imaginary that there are feedback and feed-forward loops between human and machine — the two are necessarily interconnected. Jones discusses the IBM SSEC (Selective Sequence Electronic Calculator) as a marker of IBM’s transition from electromechanical punched-card machines to electronics, and as a trope he identifies in IBM and other industry advertising as “the human in the machine” where humans and machines “co-inhabit a shared abstract space of possibility, defined by mutual affordances and constraints, interconnected in a dynamic relationship” (59). An informed understanding of the period of experimentation between the end of the war and the mid 1950s, Jones asserts, “can provide a useful counter to both dystopian and utopian narratives of technology’s ‘rise’ and humanity’s coming self-transcendence (and consequent freedom from responsibility)” (60).

Chapters three through five detail Busa’s DH work, his particular “institutional arrangements, self-representations, and practices engaging theoretical and methodological questions” (20). With chapter three, “The Mother of all Humanities Computing Demos: The First Public Demo of

Busa's and Tasman's Punched-Card Method of 'Literary Data Processing' June 27, 1952", Jones describes this presentation as not only a watershed moment in Busa's work but also as representative of Jones's own definition of DH, since this moment essentialized how Busa had taken the *Index Thomisticus* from general proposal to funded project. Describing precisely the day-to-day of many DH scholars, Jones summarizes Busa's approach to getting his project off the ground: "Any major academic research project, especially interdisciplinary work, depends on the cultivation of a professional social network of potential collaborators, supporters, and peer reviewers. Especially for humanities research, Busa had a little choice but to cultivate the network himself" (87). Indeed, Jones shows that the June 1952 demo is the culmination of a paper trail of letters to local wealthy patrons, religious leaders from the Catholic hierarchy, IBM employees, academics from a variety of fields, and representatives of scholarly organizations such as the American Council of Learned Societies and the Modern Language Association.

Just as important as the guest list that day are the activities, all of which demonstrate "the *heavy* materiality" (94) of work both difficult and time-consuming. This materiality included "paper flow charts, metal accounting machines in the IBM showroom, and the punched-card system with its crucial paper components, generating piles of chad as waste" (96). Jones makes a point here that is neither subtle nor insignificant: DH has at its roots the heavy (often embodied) materiality of institutional and social networks and of resources, including paper, machines, and time. The demo discussed classical texts, but the emphasis was on the process, "on repeated testing, hand-drawn flow charts, experimental punching and handling of punch cards [. . .] on discovering and demonstrating the precise nature of the materiality of the technology involved at every turn" (96). Similarly, chapter four, "Centers of Activity: The Founding of CAAL, the First Literary Data Processing Center in Gallarte, Italy, 1954–1956", discusses how the structure of the first DH center was in many ways reflective of Jesuit culture and nineteenth-century industrialization in Italy, where students were trained to use printing presses and for global missions. It is in part this focus on process and the actual, physical work of computing in the humanities that highlights why Busa and his work are seen as an important prefiguring to DH today.

Significantly, *Roberto Busa, S.J.* concludes with what might be called the deep roots of Busa's humanistic work, his explorations in philology and the metaphysics of presence. If current conversations about DH or Artificial Intelligence are often political and ethically fraught, so too is the

subject of twenty-first-century humanities. In chapter five, “Computing Philology”, Jones reminds us that Busa’s philological pursuits were for him “ultimately a humanistic endeavor” (148). In a piece that Jones cites, Geoffrey Harpham investigates the philology that shaped Busa’s impressions of the world and what meanings we may glean from it. Calling philologists “admirable sages”, Harpham nonetheless argues that they “adduced linguistic evidence in support of racialist theorizing, promulgated learned forms of anti-Semitism, represented as a fact of nature the domination of the weak by the strong, and claimed to deduce from the study of language the superiority of western European culture and its dominant religion, Christianity” (HARPHAM 2009, 50). Indeed, Harpham warns us that “[p]hilology has bequeathed to modern scholarship the conviction that things are explained when their origins have been identified. This assumption commits scholarship to an endless quest, for origins may be construed in any of a number of ways, and every origin has origins of its own” (54). This warning is apropos when we are reading *Roberto Busa, S.J.* and are considering the origin of origins. Origins are not only complicated, they are cultivated, and this Jones makes clear: Father Busa was a pioneer as a man of his times. The work Busa accomplished was afforded by privilege and luck, but also marked and shaped by mistakes, failures, and much hard work. It may be that these origins shaped what became DH or it could be that they simply reflect the work humans (and humanists in particular) generally do, given a time and place in history; in either case, *Roberto Busa, S.J.* is an excellent reminder of the importance of understanding that process of becoming.

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FRIEDRICH, Markus. 2018. *The Birth of the Archive: A History of Knowledge*. Translated by John Noël Dillon. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Pp. 296. ISBN 9780472130689, Hardback \$75.00.

*The Birth of the Archive* is a delightfully engaging and erudite monograph. At times it reads like a who-done-it of the documentary evidence world from the late Middle Ages through the Early Modern period. The book begins dramatically with the story of a Parisian break-in at the *Chambre des Comptes* archives in May 1682. The theft was not, however, motivated by the value of the manuscripts, but by the resale of the parchment.

Markus Friedrich has filled the book with such incidents too numerous to mention. There is a parade of kings, religious figures, minor civil servants, and archivists all vying for the right to control, catalogue, and safekeep the written word. As Friedrich notes early on, whoever controls the archive has a singular access to memory and social history, to not only write history but to shape it. One of the joys of this book is Friedrich's ability to traverse centuries, making archival history relevant and offering precedents for today's practice.

What one learns from this impressive volume is just how fragile the documentary record has always been. This fragility is not due simply to the elements, such as fire and water, but to a growing realization in the Early Modern period that the written word is a source of power. King Philip II of France travelled with his archive — even into battle. This was an unfortunate decision when in 1194 his entire baggage train was captured by Richard the Lionheart's troops and carted away, along with the state secrets it held.

*The Birth of the Archive* is excellent at storytelling: dramatic yet scholarly, and full of detail about the birth of individual archives throughout

central Europe. Yet Friedrich does not lose sight of the bigger narrative: “the need to preserve the memory of past things in a generally credible way” (67). For those in power, archives reinforced their claim to power, be it social, legal, political, or religious. Laws could only be upheld if they were written down and legal disputes could only be solved upon examination of the written record. Archives upheld the social order, or so the ruling establishment thought (and expected).

By 1600 archives were recognized as key elements of control and authority which were as important as arsenals and granaries. They underpinned society and were as powerful as armies and navies. Friedrich makes the point that it is almost taken for granted today that “the gathering of knowledge for administrative and political purposes is an expression of a specific form of power” (139), with the beginnings of that understanding emerging during the centuries covered in this volume.

And it was not just jurisprudence that owed its birth to the archive, but cartography. Those who controlled the maps controlled the territory. Maps and words became the new technologies of the Middle Ages and the Early Modern period. Archives could become the bridge between knowledge and power, not simply by their existence, but through what Friedrich terms a complex “activation” process that could be abused and misused, especially through the “ploys of power-hungry early modern princes” (140). Pierre Camille Moine’s attempt in 1765 to explain the role and use of archives makes clear the significance that archives held in the delicate balance of power that the elite were fighting a rearguard action to defend:

Since parishes and whole communities rebelled against their lords and refused to pay dues [and since] inferior groups, casting off the yoke of subordination, attempted to subvert the old regime [. . .] then, to defend one’s demesnes, it was necessary to rummage through the archives, leaf through cartularies, registers, and disturb old papers that had long been buried in dust. (143)

Some twenty years prior to the French Revolution, this passage is of its time. By 1789 the old order in France and Germany had collapsed and the archive took on a new role, one that is more recognizable today, that of a historical and not a legal depository. Now archives became the domain of historians, writing the history of the new nation states. The archives became a place from which national identity could be argued and established. New (secular) institutions were established to house the archives,

and new roles and training were established for those who cared for them. Toward the end of the monograph, we see the genesis of our own relationship to the archive: as housing contested histories, as physical structures that are at risk from both natural and political causes, and as a place in which the pull of archivists to protect and safeguard what has been placed in their care can be met with the equal pull of historians who wish to utilize the documents in a complex telling and retelling of our past to better know ourselves and our times.

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SHILLINGSBURG, Peter. 2017. *Textuality and Knowledge: Essays*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press. Pp. xii + 222. ISBN 9780271078502, Hardback \$115.00. ISBN 9780271081076, Paper \$44.95.

This book emerges from a long career spent tussling with the many theoretical and methodological issues that scholarly editing raises. It ducks none of them. It is a richly reflective work consisting of thirteen “essays” (the book’s subtitle) rather than chapters, nearly all of them revised from their original conference paper or lecture forms, most of them during the period 2005–11.

The range of topics is attractively broad — from “The Evidence for Literary Knowledge” to “Responsibility for Textual Changes in Long-Distance Revisions” to “Work and Text in Nonliterary Text-Based Disciplines” to “Cultural Heritage, Textuality, and Social Justice”. Given the origin of the essays there is some overlap among them; nevertheless, each one gradually comes into focus as a thought-experiment in its own right.

Rather than being closely argued and systematic the essays are truly *essais*: each one tries out ideas, taking the form of a tissue of connected thinking, looking at the matter first in this way and then that, circling around the given topic till it be better understood. There is a generosity, an intellectual openness and a tolerance for divergent editorial practices continuously on offer. The tone is often relaxed and conversational, with the reader addressed directly, not just recalling the original occasions of the papers’ oral delivery but also, now in the new moment of engagement, enmeshing the reader in the speaker-writer’s idiosyncratic, personal habits of thought.

Only one of the essays (no. 12, “Publishers’ Records and the History of Book Production”) is heavy-duty bibliographical in method. It proves the existence of a previously unremarked second edition of a Thackeray novel, *The History of Samuel Titmarsh* (1849). The pleasure and skills of empirical analysis that are on display are in the accents of an earlier Shillingsburg, the trained bibliographer, scholar and editor originally from the 1960s and 1970s, shining in use and deeply influenced by the approaches of W. W. Greg, Fredson Bowers and G. Thomas Tanselle.

“Most editors”, Shillingsburg writes, “present their results as if the materials, common sense, logic, and perhaps truth itself could be served only by the editorial policy they have chosen” (155). Shillingsburg’s pluralist protest against this common outcome has been consistent since his *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age*, well known to textual-studies students around the world and first presented as a series of lectures in Canberra in 1984. As he explains in the book under review he had been stung by an adverse assessment of a Thackeray edition he had submitted for the MLA CSE seal of approval. Rethinking his own training was obviously and suddenly in order; he has been doing it ever since, with the final — if they are final — results exhibited in this book.

Through his involvement in the 1970s and 1980s in creating computer applications for scholarly editing and later in his career in more ambitious digital-archival projects, and stimulated in between by a healthy dose of participation in the 1980s–90s editorial-theory movement, Shillingsburg is, in his latest book, clearly in the mood to ascertain what from that earlier Bowersonian period has stood the test of time. To do this he liberates a mode of writing that I suspect was all along the one that came most naturally to him, except then his Pegasus was more usually in professionalised harness. And so now the reader overhears the conversation between his earlier and later selves.

That later self has no time for what he sees as unfair dismissals in the 1980s and 1990s of the grand efforts of Bowers & Co. Shillingsburg never lost belief in the Greg-Bowers form of scholarly editing whenever it was practised intelligently. Rather, for him, the context that lent it legitimacy has needed to be reconfigured, along with some of the terminology. Although typically based on a copy-text, the method, he argues, is more accurately called *eclectic* editing (following Richard Bucci and others in this), thus recognising the emendation of the copy-text from other sources while also insisting, with Greg and Tanselle, that the resort to a copy-text is only a convenience or safety valve.

Emendation, Shillingsburg argues, is necessary if a reading text is to be offered the reader that better approximates a nominated goal than any extant form of the work can do. The editor's definition of textual authority may be authorial, whether to retrieve the intended text of a work or of a version; or non-authorial to favor one of the work's other agents of its production, or as read by a particular audience; or it may be documentary but where the document has impediments to reading that the editor wants to remove, perhaps because it is a poor copy of its own lost source.

The advent of digital archives of images and transcriptions, Shillingsburg points out, now puts under notice the swing since the 1990s towards reading texts based more securely (it is usually argued) on historical forms. As the latter may now be presented digitally both in image and transcription, editors are free to produce more reader-facing editions according to any defensibly nominated goal. As a result of his essay on Jerome McGann and D. F. McKenzie (no. 3), so-called social, sociological or social-contract editing (the term associated with them, which was always something of a blur) may now be seen as more archival in orientation than editorial. An earlier generation of editors would simply have seen it as editorially cautious — “conservative”, as it was usually termed.

As to what qualifies as editing, in reading Shillingsburg's account in Essay 10 of the different national editorial traditions I was reminded of Hans Walter Gabler's apparently circular but in fact non-trivial argument that editing is always *text*-editing: an editor edits text not intentions. Shillingsburg does not mention this gambit but his view is clear. For him, the study of intention—obscured and baffling, and therefore in essence critical though its application to emendations of the stated copy-text will often be — is always part of the editorial remit, regardless of whose intention the editor may favor (Essay 7: “Revisiting Authorial Intentions”). The national or anglophone bias, the less rigorously systematic nature of Shillingsburg's thinking compared to a German and more broadly European one, comes to the surface here. It is one that implicates, I suspect, the majority of readers of this review, as well as its author.

If Shillingsburg's own route to enlightenment has involved a return to the editorial past it is a past that is newly construed. Traditional notions of evidence and reasoning are vigorously foregrounded, and the book's title has “knowledge” in the singular, an unpopular move nowadays. Are we ready for “knowledge” once again rather than or along with culturally situated knowledges? In the Preface he writes:

The principles I am arguing are, I believe, the same regardless of the gender, geography, ethnicity, or temporal placement of a writer. The relation between documents as evidence and criticism as argument is without gender, nationality, time or place. (x)

If he is right then it can only be in the sense that textual study shifts the site of conceptual problematising away from culture and its discourses to the physical instantiation of those discourses in documents — thus the notion *documentary text*, thus *version*, thus ultimately *work*. Any link in this chain of conceptualisation can, potentially in the individual case, generate evidence for simultaneously destabilising yet enriching argument. In this circumstance, “Which is the right text for all time no longer seems the right question to ask” (8); and, “no single edition of a work can do all of the work’s work” (38). The “right text” will correspond to the question that is being addressed. The editor intervenes on behalf of readers who want assistance in answering it.

Essay 2 (“Textual Criticism, the Humanities and J. M. Coetzee”) is particularly strong. Textual criticism, the subject of extended debates in Coetzee’s *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), emerges as “the study of mankind using texts” (26) and thus as a rejection of all certainties existing prior to texts. For Shillingsburg, the ethics of textual criticism involves its addressing problems that the last thirty or more years of literary theory have skirted. Shillingsburg’s references to literary theories are a little hazy, too distant, for my satisfaction, so that his account of why Greg-Bowers intentionalist editorial approaches were, in new projects at least, sidelined in the 1990s does not get at all the sources of disquiet. But something important is nevertheless at stake here: how we understand texts and, thus, our altered selves that come into being in the process of reading.

In Essay 8 (“How Literary Works Exist”), Shillingsburg’s understanding of the work-concept — its relationship to the work’s documentary embodiments — differs from the idealist one that was the subject of heated if not always clarifying contest during the editorial-theory movement. For him, the work is “implied” in its embodiments (120), or it is an ephemeral “mind object” (118) or a “mental construct” (130); and the work is performed by readings of any of its documents (125). He also refers to the “immaterial constructs of a work” (133). “Implied” is good: less mystifying than the idealist commitment that preceded it. To propose the existence of the work as an object or construct, outside and apart from its documentary embodiments, is, however, to court dangers. Shillingsburg wisely pulls back from the ontological claim to a more happily defensible phenomenological one:

From an experiential point of view, a literary work is seldom, if ever, looked at as “a whole.” Readers travel through literary works more or less linearly, focusing on smaller units in a sequence that achieves a sense of wholeness only in our memory of the experience of reading. (123)

The jury is still out on the nature of the work-concept, but what we can be sure of is that we need it to organise our discussions of our readings. That’s why we can’t and shouldn’t give it up. If readers need it, then the work has to be subject to editing, or at least versions of it do. And bibliographical and codicological analysis of its documentary embodiments, on which editing depends, will generally depend on the concept. Interpretation of worthwhile literary works can never end. If, in the particular case, the reading of a work does cease, then the work itself goes into abeyance or, as we may say, dies — for works depend not only on the availability of the carrying documents but on readers as well. This fate follows from the now widely accepted proposition that works have lives.

The book under review is wide-ranging, deceptively loose-limbed, a little repetitive in places; but it has its targets and agendas, its drum beats that get gradually louder. The textually unaware literary critic or careless scholar had better watch out, as well as the scholarly editor afflicted with tunnel vision. There are big issues at stake in this restless symposium of a book, for it is brave and honest.

Every research library serving the humanities needs to order a copy of it, and textual scholars will want to do so as well. It is well designed and produced by PennState University Press in its now extensive History of the Book series, general-edited by James L. W. West III.

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## Notes on Contributors

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# The Society for Textual Scholarship

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The STS is devoted to providing a forum, in its conferences and its journal, for the discussion of the interdisciplinary implications of current textual research.

The Society's peer-reviewed journal *Textual Cultures* is published twice a year. *Textual Cultures* invites essays from scholars around the world in English, French, German, Spanish and Italian. All articles will appear also with abstracts in English. The submission process is now electronic; for submission instructions, visit the journal's information page @ <http://www.textual-cultures.org/>.

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For general information regarding the Society for Textual Scholarship, please visit the Society's website ([www.textual.org](http://www.textual.org)) or write to:

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