6. Final Authorial Intentions:
Exceptions and Misconceptions

These examples force us to inquire further into the related concepts of authorial intentions and authorship itself. Such ideas seem transparent and elementary, but in fact they conceal a network of conceptual ambiguities which necessarily result in procedural difficulties of various kinds. Before we take these problems up, let me recapitulate some relevant matters.

The rule of final intentions is an editorial construct which has a particular and explicable development in the history of scholarship. It evolved out of circumstances which initially defined a concept of "author's intentions" or "author's original intentions," but which subsequently yielded to the formulation "author's final intentions." This conclusive form of the rule emerged when textual critics began to study works produced in the later modern periods, where large masses of prepublication materials have to be dealt with. It is, furthermore, a concept which emerges through the Lachmann-Greg tradition, that is to say, through a tradition which conceives that the study of texts must be carried out within the terms defined by an ancestral series. In this situation, the critic seeks to arrange his texts in order to sort out the least corrupt line of textual descent. Joseph Bédier's critique of this approach is interesting and important because his study of medieval texts led him to very different conclusions about textual recension and emendation procedures. In Bédier's view, to seek a
reconstruction of some original work from later textual consti-
tutions was often both impossible and misguided. The best 
procedure, in such circumstances, would be to seek after the 
"best text" among the extant documents and edit that. 70

Plainly, such an approach has set aside altogether any 
concept of authorial intentions. One does not try to reconsti-
tute a lost original document — this is the heroic task which 
Kane and Donaldson have set for themselves — nor does one 
seek to produce an eclectic text based upon a hypothesized 
intention in the author. As different and even as antithetical 
as these two approaches are, both accept the Lachmann 
premise of ancestral series and both seek to recover some 
form of original and authorial text. So, although Greg does 
not activate a concept of authorial intentions in his theory of 
copy-text, the form of his thought — in contrast to the form of 
Bédier’s — leaves itself open to an intentionalistic interpreta-
tion. It was Bowers, as we have seen, who introduced such an 
interpretation. The concept of final authorial intentions is 
therefore functionally related to the theory of the copy-text.

Eugene Vinaver’s great edition of Malory, which I shall 
discuss more particularly below, offers an interesting example 
of a work which stands, from the point of view of theory, half 
way between Bédier and Lachmann. Vinaver’s edition explicit-
ly invokes Bédier when he speaks of the "base" manuscript 
which "has been adopted for this edition," but he reveals other 
critical allegiances just as clearly when he observes of textual 
criticism in general: "The primary aim of any critical edition 
is a text which would approach as closely as the extant 
material allows to the original form of the work." 71 In editing 
Malory and similar texts, the concepts of copy-text and final 
authorial intentions simply have no ready application. 
Nevertheless, Vinaver’s work is produced under the influence 
of Lachmann’s stemmatic quest for the lost original.

Critical concepts of authorial intentions begin to appear 
when certain historical circumstances come to prevail in the 
discipline — specifically, when textual critics trained in the 
same traditions which nurtured Bédier and Vinaver turn their 
attention to works of the more modern periods. Large masses 
of monogenously related textual materials called for sys-
tematic procedures which would facilitate analysis, in the way 
that Lachmann’s procedures had facilitated the analysis of 
polygonous texts. As textual critics developed their methods 
for sorting out the final intentions from these masses of edito-
rial and textual data, the very rule of final intentions began 
to be placed in a critical position. This we have already 
observed, in a general way, in the various exceptions and 
problematic cases which editors and critics have raised against 
the rule from time to time. Of course, the rule has never been 
easily applied to classical works, the Bible, or to texts pro-
duced in earlier periods — to Chaucer’s or to Langland’s texts, 
for example, or even to Shakespeare’s. But since the rule was 
developed to deal principally with works from the later 
modern periods, these special deviations have not seemed 
crucial. Nevertheless, numerous problematic cases continue to 
be instanced from eighteenth- to twentieth-century texts, and 
these have begun to place the rule of final authorial intentions 
under considerable pressure. The argument-by-exception has 
thus far brought about the collapse of the idea of the 
"definitive edition," 72 a change in critical thinking which sig-
nals the crisis now facing the Bowers line. The fact thatTan-
selle has been called upon to write a series of lengthy defenses 
of the line is a further symptom of the crisis.

My argument here is that the problem cases raised by 
various commentators are not properly understood as excep-
tions to a "normal" editorial situation, but as signs that the 
textual-critical theories which dominate our approaches to
early-modern and modern works have failed to define properly either (a) the status and nature of "the text," or (b) the correspondent obligations which the critical editor has toward his work. My view is that editors cannot follow the guidance of a rule of final authorial intentions in determining the texts they will print because final authorial intention is a deeply problematic concept. Though this is evidently the case in relation to works produced in very early periods, the concept is especially treacherous in relation to more recent works because it seems so clear and simple at the level of theory and method.

Practical problems, particular cases, reveal the ambiguity in the concept, and I want to begin here to generalize those particular case problems. Only then will we be able to see that we are not dealing with exceptional instances but with a structural fault in the very concept of final intentions as it has been used and understood. Let me say here, however, that we are interested in cases where the rule of final intentions cannot, does not, or will not apply, not in order to destroy this important tool of textual criticism, but in order to clarify the range and field of its usefulness.

I will begin with two patterns of texts—or classes of textual problems—which we may observe to short-circuit the easy operation of the rule of final intentions. The first of these involves cases where we cannot determine final authorial intentions because we have multiple versions, all of which exert equivalent claims upon the editor. Zeller instances famous examples like The Prelude, but this class is an extremely diverse one embracing a wide range of authors and types of work. Editors have always been aware of this sort of problem, and the facing-page resolution has been the normal method of accommodation. Such an accommodation is in fact perfectly adequate so long as it does not obscure for us the conceptual problem which this rule of accommodation has evaded.

The problem is restored to view when we look at a few extreme cases from this class of texts—cases, that is to say, which will not easily submit to a facing-page solution. The enormous mass of so-called occasional poems would supply any number of examples. Byron's "Windsor Poetics" is a good example. The number of versions of this epigram nearly correspond to the number of extant copies, of which there are many. The character of the piece explains the editorial problems it raises. A political poem ridiculing the Prince Regent and monarchical authority in general, the poem was not written for publication, but for private circulation in manuscript form, chiefly among Byron's friends and the Whig circles of his period. Byron himself gave copies to several friends and acquaintances who shared his political views, and he expected that the epigram would be more widely disseminated as further copies were made from the originals and from the secondary copies as well. Byron is directly responsible for at least three versions, but the work is of such a character that it can hardly be said to lie under his sole authority in any case. The poem exists in a state analogous to (though not identical with) the state in which traditional ballads descend to us.

Byron wrote many occasional poems of this sort—works which he either could not or would not publish in his lifetime, and some of which he never wanted published at all. In this respect his practice is typical, and Landor's works provide numerous similar instances. Landor would typically send a poem to (say) Lady Blessington in a letter, and he might later publish a more formal version—sometimes more than one formal version. But Landor's works are notorious not so much for this sort of textual situation as for another one which reveals a different type of textual multiplication. That
is to say, Landor frequently wrote verses which he then reworked in various ways to accommodate them to different circumstances and publications.

I do not have in mind here Landor's perpetual habit of tinkering with his texts, or of introducing changes as the works moved through subsequent publications in his lifetime. These cases are famous and they include "Ilanthe" ("Past ruin'd Ilion") as well as "To Ianthe (In Vienna)." In the former poem Landor dropped the final stanza from the initial printed version, and in the latter he omitted the first ten lines when he reprinted. These are interesting cases because readers generally find that the first poem benefits from the excision of the final stanza, whereas the loss of the first ten lines in the other seems a much less certain benefit.

Difficult as such poems are when later editors have to make decisions about the reading text, they will submit to a Bowers line of interpretation, though it remains a moot question whether such a line ought to be followed. In any case, the problems are simple when compared with another set of typical Landor works. Like many other poets, Landor often took verses which he first wrote or published in one form or another and used them later in entirely different circumstances. Joseph Warren Beach has pointed to Auden's frequent resort to this practice (see below, pp. 87-89), and we see it in Landor as well. The Imaginary Conversations contain numerous instances of verses which were later reprinted as separate poems incorporating integral titles and textual changes of various kinds. Thus, the poem "Sophocles to Poseidon," published in the 1847 Helenics, initially appeared in 1824 as part of the "Pericles and Sophocles" Imaginary Conversation, and the same is true of "Regeneration" and numerous other verses by Landor. (One has difficulty calling them "poems" or "works" since they seem

such adaptable and shape-shifting creatures.)

Far from an exceptional pattern of behavior, Landor's practice here is typical of many poets' work. The charming lyric commonly known as "To Ianthe" ("A voice I heard and hear it yet") offers a peculiarly interesting case of Landor's manipulation of his texts and—as a consequence—of subsequent editorial difficulties. Landor's manuscript poem is titled "To Ianthe" and runs as follows:

A voice I heard and hear it yet,
"We meet not so again,
My silly tears you must forget
Or they may give you pain."

The tears that on two faces meet
My Muse forbids to dry,
She keeps them ever fresh and sweet
When hours and years run by.

She bids me send this verse to you . . .
"Go tell him still to be
(Without a tear) as fond and true
And leave the rest to me."

When Landor came to print these verses in Heroic Idyls (1863), however, they appeared without a title and as two separate poems entirely. The first was printed thus on page 213:

A VOICE I heard and hear it yet,
We meet not so again;
My silly tears you must forget,
Or they may give you pain.
This epigram was then followed by two brief pieces, one titled "Calverton Downs" and the second "On Some Obscure Poetry." Then came another untitled epigram which turned out to be the second stanza of the original manuscript work. And that was that. Lines 9-12 from the manuscript poem were never printed by Landor.

A further change was made in this poem by Stephen Wheeler when he came to print it in his great edition. Wheeler printed stanzas 1-2 as a single integral poem under the title "To lanthe" and he placed lines 9-12 in an apparatus note. That is to say, Wheeler created a poem which Landor seems never to have put together at any time (it is, however, a very good poem in its own right). Wheeler went on to say that "In 1863 two other epigrams are wrongly printed between stanzas i-ii, which are here brought together as in the author's manuscript." Thus was produced the eight-line version of this lyric, nor did Wheeler at all think he was creating something Landor never "intended". On the contrary, Wheeler certainly felt that the eight-line poem was what Landor intended.

We reach this last conclusion because (a) Wheeler was a shrewd and scrupulous editor, and (b) the extant manuscript, along with the circumstances surrounding the publication of Heroic Idyls, led Wheeler to this conviction. The book was the last published in Landor's lifetime, and it was put together in the most confusing and disordered set of circumstances. Landor was always a difficult author for a publisher to work with since he was simultaneously volatile, arbitrary, and meticulous, especially about his poetry. He tinkered with his texts repeatedly and placed extraordinary demands upon his printers and publishers. But the editing of Heroic Idyls took place when Landor's already difficult temperament was exacerbated by increasing senility and loss of memory. The story is well known and has been splendidly told by R. H. Super in The Publication of Landor's Works. Under these circumstances, Wheeler looked at the twelve-line manuscript text and then at the two separated four-line epigrams in the book, and he concluded, not unreasonably, that the fiasco of the book's printing history resulted in a mistake. In Wheeler's judgment, Landor's final intention was to print a single eight-line epigram in Heroic Idyls, not the twelve-line epigram and not two separate four-line epigrams.

Wheeler's version of the poem may be what Landor wanted, but then again it may not be. Furthermore, what Landor wanted might well be considered a secondary consideration under the circumstances. Three options are available to a later editor, and the evidence we have could be used to justify the choice of any one of the three.

Heroic Idyls contains a fair number of other works which illustrate similar problems in defining final intentions. A Mother to a Boy" appears in two different versions in the book (165, 217) and so do "The Later Day" and "The Former Day" (216, 196), as well as the verses beginning "We hear no more an attic song" (197, 267). The poem "Eurckates to the God Sleep" (79) and "An Old Poet to Sleep" (123) are different versions of the same work. Of course, these double versions were printed in Heroic Idyls only because of special local circumstances. They are important in the context of this discussion, however, not primarily because they present problems of choice between different versions, but because they underscore a widespread practice among poets. If Heroic Idyls represents an exceptional case among Landor's books, its peculiar difficulties only exist for the editor because of Landor's habit of using his texts to generate various sorts of literary work. Eclectic reconstruction of an "authoritative" text—a standard operation in contemporary editorial procedure—is not appropriate here.
These examples lead us to suspect that the general criterion of author's intentions in its current acceptation—that is, as the conceptual ideal which guides our editorial practice—may be leading textual critics astray by obscuring the true character of literary production. A second group of texts enforces this suspicion—somewhat paradoxically, in fact, for this group includes works whose process of socialization has been partially arrested.

This class of texts includes those for which the author never brought his work to a point where an editor can speak of final intentions at all. Once again we are not dealing with a relatively circumscribed set of texts. This class includes some of the most celebrated works in our heritage, and it possibly comprises—in sheer numbers of textual items—nearly as large a corpus as what we have of fully "authorized" and published works. To supply many examples is unnecessary; one need only mention Shelley's "The Triumph of Life" to organize this class for our attention.

An important paradox emerges when we come to deal with these sorts of text, as the following demonstration will show. In treating them critically we begin by focusing almost wholly on the author and the relative state of completion which his work shows. Furthermore, to edit such works means that we deal with them in their early (document) state. These circumstances force us to choose a textual version which conforms to the Bowers rule (i.e., an authorial manuscript, if available). But note that this conformity is purely accidental, and that the rule has in fact no applicability for criticism at all. We have only one authorial manuscript to "choose from" when preparing a critical edition of "The Triumph of Life" or "The Fall of Hyperion." Editorial emendation, of course, is not yet an issue, and hence the problem of copy-text remains to this point as irrelevant as the rule of final intentions.

If, on the other hand, uncompleted works descend to us in several authorial manuscript versions, the critic must establish procedures for distinguishing such texts in order to make choices between them. I propose that we speak of early, medial, and late manuscript versions. These distinctions do not correspond to draft, corrected draft, and fair copy texts, since these latter traditional terms serve to elucidate part of the monogenous stemma, and hence presuppose the concept of completed intentions. They are important concepts, but they confuse the issue when the contemporary textual situation is restricted to pre-publication forms. Under conditions where the author's publishing institutions are not involved in the production of the work, the author's fair copy does not necessarily represent the author's final intentions but only the latest manuscript state of the work. As yet the editorial concept of intentions—even were we inclined, following Bowers, to invoke it—would have no operational application.

At this point we should be able to see the theoretical importance of these texts for criticism. They are peculiarly significant because they reveal the paradox implicit in the concept of authorial intention. In their earliest "completed" forms these texts remain more or less wholly under the author's control, yet as a class they are texts for which the editorial concept of intention has no meaning. These texts show, in other words, that the concept of authorial intention only comes into force for criticism when (paradoxically) the artist's work begins to engage with social structures and functions. The fully authoritative text is therefore always one which has been socially produced; as a result, the critical standard for what constitutes authoritativeness cannot rest with the author and his intentions alone.
Once again let me have recourse to Byron to illustrate these matters. I have in mind the cases of major works like "To the Po" and the "Stanzas" ("Could love for ever"), though many of Byron's posthumously published works would do as well to illustrate my point. I shall here offer only the single example of "To the Po."

First, let me narrate the relevant textual information. Byron's "draft" manuscript (MS. Mo) was written on 1 or 2 June 1819. He did not make a revised copy (MS. B) until 14 April 1820, at which time he sent MS. B to his friend Douglas Kinnaird in a letter. There are no other holograph copies of the poem, but at least four transcripts were made of which three survive. All of these ultimately derive from MS. Mo.

MS. P is a transcript made by Mary Shelley. It is a careful copy of MS. Mo and was almost certainly executed at Albaro late in 1822, when she was copying a number of Byron's manuscripts for him. MSS. P and Mo were among the manuscripts which he left with Teresa Guiccioli in 1823 when he left Italy for Greece.

MS. A is another transcript made by Mary Shelley; it appears at the end of one of her journal books whose last dated entry (before this transcript) is 4 June 1819. MS. A seems to be a copy which she made from MS. Mo, but hastily and without the care she took in making MS. P.

MS. G is Teresa Guiccioli's transcript made from MS. P. MS. G was probably executed sometime during 1827-29, as we see from Teresa's correspondence with Mary Shelley and Thomas Moore during that time. On 10 August 1827 she wrote to Mary Shelley saying that she would send Moore transcripts of Byron's unedited poems, and Moore wrote later—29 October 1829—to thank her for the materials she had sent.

Finally, Thomas Medwin must have made a transcript of the poem, but his does not survive. The collation indicates that this transcript—and hence the printed text which was made from it—was probably made from MS. A rather than directly from MS. Mo.

Byron himself originally thought to publish this famous lyric from MS. B in 1821 or 1822, but he finally decided not to. The poem was first printed by Medwin in his Journal of the Conversations of Lord Byron (1824). Medwin's text is a problematic one. In the first place, it derives from MS. Mo rather than from MS. B; in the second place, its descent from MS. Mo seems to be through MS. A, the worst of the intermediate transcripts; finally, and most seriously, Medwin's text introduced a number of readings which do not appear in Byron's own surviving manuscripts.

The poem was next printed in the collected edition of 1831 which used the Medwin printed version as copy-text but which resorted to MS. G for corroboration of its readings in certain cases. Also, the 1831 edition introduced a few of its own alterations into its base text from Medwin. The 1831 text was copy text for the first standard collected edition of 1832-33; all subsequent printings descend from these last two.

Thus one can see that all currently available printed texts of the poem seem to be based on Byron's draft manuscript, not on the revised copy which he had once thought to print. Furthermore, because all printed texts can be traced back to Medwin as their most important immediate source, all currently available texts provide the reader with Medwin's version of the poem, which differs considerably from both holograph manuscripts.

This is a complicated history which raises many more textual issues than I can comment upon here. What I want to emphasize is the character of the nonauthorial copies made
directly or indirectly from MS. Mo, for it is these copies which help to elucidate the textual status of Byron’s holographs. Mo is an early—indeed, a draft—manuscript, whereas B is a later one, a corrected copy made from Mo. But we would do well here to speak of these as early and later manuscripts rather than as drafts and corrected copies because Byron’s editorial intentions toward the poem are not a precisely determinable matter. That we cannot speak of B as representing Byron’s final or even latest intentions is patent. Mary Shelley’s first copy, MS. P, emphasizes the crucial fact that Byron seems not to have regarded Mo as a superseded or corrupt or inaccurate text. Medwin’s printed version raises the further possibility that Byron made another copy of his poem based on Mo which differed from B and which conformed more closely to what Medwin printed. We do not know. But even were we to hypothesize this as a fact, the methodological issue remains the same. In such a case we would simply have two “later” manuscripts rather than one. What we would still not have would be either the warrant or the opportunity to invoke the editorial concept of author’s final intentions to decide the practical choices we should have to make when editing the poem. That concept only becomes available when an author enters into publishing arrangements. In this case, Byron died before such arrangements were set in motion, and the consequence is that his intentions cannot be appealed to for final textual determinations.

This class of texts—where final intentions were never achieved and hence where the editorial category of intentions is itself rendered extremely problematic—is so large and complex that critics will have eventually to analyze its special characteristics and forms. Recently we have been reminded of this sort of text through the rather acrimonious re-emergence of the problem of Thomas Wolfe’s works, and especially of the last three novels published under his name and from his unfinished corpus of literary remains. That these were editorially reconstructed has long been known, as we have also known Maxwell Perkins’s extensive collaborative involvement in the making of Wolfe’s first three novels. This early productive history is important for understanding the posthumous situation, for it shows the productive method which Wolfe finally settled upon: that is to say, it shows his dependence upon the editorial assistance of his publishing house.

Consequently, the mere existence of an unpublished Wolfe manuscript, whether apparently “finished” or not, cannot be approached the way one would approach an unpublished manuscript by Keats or Browning. In Wolfe’s case, the question of author’s intentions will always remain problematic. As far as the three posthumous novels are concerned, their editorial reconstruction—which by Edward Aswell, of Harper and Row, but with the assistance of Perkins and Elizabeth Nowell—is precisely what we would expect to find if Wolfe’s literary remains were to be published as novels at all. Printing Wolfe’s posthumous manuscripts in the form in which he left them would be to print an extended excerpt from the case history of a writer-at-work, and an eccentric writer at that. It would not be printing a novel in any sense, however interesting the documents might be for other reasons. Besides, such a project—given Wolfe’s history as a publishing writer—would mean engaging in another sort of editorial reconstruction, paradoxical as that may seem. It might prove an interesting publishing project were anyone to undertake such a venture. It would certainly present Wolfe’s work in a light that never was on land or sea.

Important writers always leave unpublished work behind them. These situations, perhaps more than any others, provide dramatic evidence of the fact that all writers always work
under an imperative of "collaboration." Swinburne left at his death one of his most impressive works, the early uncompleted novel we now call Lesbia Brandon. Unlike Wolfe, Swinburne was a meticulous craftsman, but the fragments of this prose work seem to have been left in a relatively inchoate state. Swinburne seems not to have been able to choose between several structural options, so that we are left with a number of relatively complete units whose interrelations are not always precisely determinable. The brilliance of these pieces is such, however, that they were posthumously edited and published by Randolph Hughes. The relative adequacy of Hughes's reconstruction has been questioned, and Lesbia Brandon will certainly be edited again, perhaps with better results. Whatever the case, Lesbia Brandon will never appear in a form which the author finally intended. Indeed, part of the enduring charm of the work lies in its unfinished character.

7. The Problem of Literary Authority

These two groups of problematic cases expose, it seems to me, the fundamental nature of the issues which must be faced. The rule of final authorial intentions, as well as the guidelines determining choice of copy-text, all rest on an assumption about the location (and the locatability) of literary authority. As the very term "authority" suggests, the author is taken to be—for editorial and critical purposes—the ultimate locus of a text's authority, and literary works are consequently viewed in the most personal and individual way. Furthermore, just as literary works are narrowly identified with an author, the identity of the author with respect to the work is critically simplified through this process of individualization. The result is that the dynamic social relations which always exist in literary production—the dialectic between the historically located individual author and the historically developing institutions of literary production—tends to become obscured in criticism. Authors lose their lives as they gain such critical identities, and their works suffer a similar fate by being divorced from the social relationships which gave them their lives (including their "textual" lives) in the first place, and which sustain them through their future life in society.

This set of issues needs to be examined closely, and I want to begin with the case of Malory's Morte d'Arthur. This work's chief line of descent into the twentieth century is
through the text printed by William Caxton. But in the early part of this century the Winchester Manuscript of the work was discovered, and the evidence provided in this new text—principally in the now famous colophon at the end of book 4—suggested that the Winchester text stood in a closer relation to Malory than did Caxton’s printed version. Eugene Vinaver eventually produced an edition of Malory based on the Winchester Manuscript, and his presentation of the text there emphasized, quite correctly, the authorial connection. Although Vinaver was too scrupulous a scholar to argue that the Winchester text was more authoritative than Caxton’s, he continually pushed the reader toward such a conclusion. We see this clearly in his following general comment on the relative difference between Caxton’s text and the Winchester Manuscript. “The Winchester scribes copy their text mechanically and seldom, if ever, attempt to correct it. Caxton, on the other hand, is an editor rather than a scribe.”

This sort of remark betrays Vinaver’s predilection to believe that a text which shows no editorial intervention will be prima facie more sincere than one that exhibits intervention. The scribal text seems less corrupted than Caxton’s, and therefore will also seem closer to Malory. This predilection is deeply imbedded in our textual criticism, as we have seen, and in its latest form it serves to validate the theory of copytext and the rule of final intentions.

Vinaver, however, is aware of the pitfalls which such a predilection can lead an editor into because Vinaver was trained as a scholar of polygenous texts. So when we examine Vinaver’s edition we see that its argument for choosing the Winchester Manuscript as base text is rather broadly grounded:

The Winchester MS has been adopted for the present
edition . . . not because it is in every respect nearest to
the original, but because it is so in some parts, and
because as long as absolute "truthfulness" is not aimed
at, the less well known of the two versions, which is at
least as reliable as the other, is as fair as any choice can
be. 79

This is unexceptionably expressed. Vinaver’s choice of his
base text is founded on a shrewd assessment of its distinctive
qualities. The Winchester Manuscript differs in sharp and
important ways from Caxton’s text—principally, it is less
ordered and integral in its parts—so that the Winchester
version exerts its own strong claim to be printed on its textual
merits alone. The colophon which seems to link the
manuscript to Malory is important, of course, but hardly
regulative or determining. Did it not exist at all Vinaver’s edi-
tion would remain a powerful and important piece of work.
The existence of the colophon did not determine Vinaver’s
choice of text, it provided Vinaver with a further reason to be
interested in the manuscript, on the one hand, and on the other,
with a scholar’s fact which would be certain to com-
mand attention.

Vinaver’s edition enters its field, then, not by supplanting
the Caxton text with one that is more “authoritative” (least of
all "definitive"), but by supplementing it with a new version.
Caxton’s version has received the sanction of its own history
and tradition quite beyond the possibility of abrogation. This
is the case, moreover, not merely by accident or force of cir-
cumstance, but because Caxton’s version exerts various sorts
of claim on our attention and respect. That Vinaver is aware
of this is clear from his introduction to his edition of the
Winchester Manuscript text; that he would like to believe he
might be able to discover, or recover, an authorial text wholly
uncorrupted by other, intervening authorities is, however,
equally clear. The colophon to book 4 focuses the nostalgic attachment which textual criticism has always had for original authorial documents. It has been a functional and important nostalgia, particularly in the work of the early critics of ancient texts and authors. For scholars of more recent periods, however, it is just as likely to operate as a source of confusion.

Vinaver’s edition appeals to our longing to read texts which come as clearly and directly from the author’s hand as possible. His critical scrupulousness, however, reminds us of the special authority which Caxton’s editorially mediated text will always possess. In this way, paradoxically, Vinaver’s edition shows that for an editor and textual critic the concept of authority has to be conceived in a more broadly social and cultural context. Authoritative texts are arrived at by an exhaustive reconstruction not of an author and his intentions so much as of an author and his context of work. Even in those cases where the rule of authorial intentions seems determining or even regulative, we must see that it will have been so only in the event, that is to say, only after the editor has weighed a great many other factors which bear upon his understanding of the received texts. In cultural products like literary works the location of authority necessarily becomes dispersed beyond the author. When, therefore, Vinaver speaks of “the aim of any critical edition” being to approach as closely as possible the author’s original work, he assumes an editorial concept of poetic authority which cannot really be maintained through an analysis.

Textual authority undergoes dispersal and alteration from a number of directions. Bulwer-Lytton’s novel *Pelham* illustrates a series of revisions which the author himself took responsibility for as the book moved through its early editions. Which of these texts is the most authoritative, however, cannot be decided on Bulwer-Lytton’s authority alone. Certain of the revisions seem defensible or even necessary, but many can hardly be judged as other than ruinous and misconceived. Bulwer-Lytton introduced them in response to pressures brought by some of his early readers and reviewers, so that, if later readers and critics see the matter differently, one must judge that the question of authority has not been settled. The editor and textual critic is himself implicated in the determination of that authority. “Under which king, Bezonian—speak, or die.”

Sometimes the authority is dispersed among multiple authors. John Ashbery and James Schuyler wrote the novel *A Nest of Ninnies* (1969) together, a peculiar situation which raises interesting questions for the critic. Less peculiar is the similar case of works which are ghost written. I have already mentioned *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* in passing, and one can cite numerous other works of a similar sort, like *Soul on Ice*. Such books are often important pieces of literature rather than ephemeral productions which appeal only to a passing market interest. The problems which these sorts of work locate are not at all dissimilar to those which the earliest modern scholars of the Bible and Homer encountered: when printed material is, in its initial formations, an oral event or testimony, how does one deal with the authority of the text?

Great eighteenth-century scholars opened up these issues, which established the terms in which modern textual criticism could be carried out. Similar problems reappear continually, in new forms of course, and *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* is an especially interesting case because of the reappearance of a non-scriptural level of authority. An editor who came to deal with this work might be tempted to say, simply, that Alex Haley is the principal authority for the “words” while Malcolm X is the authority for the material and “ideas.”
Chapter Seven

Needless to say, it does not require much imagination to realize the problems which would await an approach based upon such distinctions.

Examples like these highlight the problem of the nature of the critical concept of literary authority, but other sorts of case are more useful for expressing the issues at more practical levels. One wishes to consider here notorious examples like Marianne Moore’s final intentions toward her poem “Poetry.” The three-line version of this work most emphatically represents the author’s final intentions toward a poem which she originally published in thirty lines. Nevertheless, it is equally clear that the earlier and longer work will never be superseded by the later revision; indeed, the peculiar force of the revised version depends in important ways upon our knowledge and recollection of the earlier. When we read the following in the 1967 Complete Poems:

I, too, dislike it.
Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it,
one discovers in
it, after all, a place for the genuine.

we probably recall what we saw in the 1935 Selected Poems, or in the 1951 Collected Poems. Moore’s revision is in fact deeply self-conscious about itself and quite a typical example of Moore’s genius for low-keyed shock tactics. The three-line version of “Poetry” is a piece of trenchant poetical wit illustrating her concept of stylistic economy and a severe habit of self-discipline. We should probably do well to regard it as a new and separate poem rather than as a revision of the earlier work, and hence to print both—the one following the other—in an edition. Such a decision would, however, depart from Moore’s own explicit intentions: she removed the thirty-line “Poetry” from the corpus when she came to put together the Complete Poems.

Moore’s latest work shows other marks of revision at which readers may justifiably find reason to demur. In “The Steeple-Jack,” for example, a long passage has been added to the middle of the poem in the Complete Poems text. One could easily follow a Moore line of reasoning to support a retreat to the earlier, more severe text, and the same could be said of poems like “Peter” and “Picking and Choosing.” In these cases Moore’s revised texts smooth out the odd and striking arrangement of the verse lines in her originals. Once again we have a case of explicit final intentions, but once again we may find good reasons to hesitate before following those intentions.

W. H. Auden’s habits of composition and revision present similar problems of authorization. Like Landor, Auden often plundered his earlier work for later and very different textual uses. He was particularly attentive to the opportunities which bibliographical context presented. After 1939 he would often place poems in entirely novel contexts and thereby generate different networks of meaning. In many cases the verbal surface would not be altered in any significant way, but the import would shift dramatically because of the contextual change. The most notorious such case is, I suppose, his prose piece “Depravity: A Sermon” which in its original context in The Dog Beneath the Skin (1935) is a highly ironical anti-religious parody, but which in its reappearance in the 1945 Collected Poetry is so placed that one is forced to read it as a serious religious tract. A similar sort of thing happens in Auden’s “Letter to a Wound” when it moves from its original context in The Orators (1932) to its final resting place in the Collected Poetry.
Situations of these kinds occur frequently in the Auden corpus, and they present serious editorial problems. Joseph Warren Beach, who approached Auden’s texts with the eye and interests of an interpreter rather than an editor, saw in them "the hazards a poet runs in putting old wine into new bottles." But in such cases the poet’s hazards are as nothing compared to the later editor’s, for whereas Auden as writer is free to make and remake his works as he chooses, the editor is obliged to pass on what was done. When Auden’s intentions shift and change dramatically, and when the changes take the peculiar contextual forms we see in Auden and Landor, an editor must struggle with problems that the author does not have. Auden’s canon must be especially maddening for an editor who follows a Bowers line in seeking to establish a canon of eclectic texts.

We are ordinarily forced to an awareness of such cruces only when they have to do with important works. Auden’s "September 1, 1939" is, like Moore’s "Poetry," a famous instance where the issue of authorization descends to us in a problematic state. Auden’s final wish was to suppress the poem altogether, and his editor Edward Mendelson has followed that wish in the posthumous Collected Poems (1976). The poem itself exists in two optional versions, one without the eighth (the original penultimate stanza). The longer work (of nine stanzas) was (first published in the New Republic in 1939 and again in the volume Another Time (1940). He revised the poem and removed the eighth stanza when he placed it in the 1945 Collected Poems.

All the instruments agree that this is one of Auden’s most important works, so that a collected edition without it—particularly a posthumous edition—seems an anomaly. Agreement is also general that the removal of the eighth stanza weakens the poem. In all respects, then, the case illustrates the relative nature of authority in matters dealing with cultural products like poems. The author’s wishes and intentions are obviously matters of importance, but they must be adverted to and assessed by the textual critic in a more generous social context. As Auden himself once said, poetry "survives; In the valley of its saying," which is a place where author’s wishes, the physical texts, and a host of other "unfamiliar affections" and relationships all cooperate in the establishment of what editors like to call "the authority of the text."

But this final Auden example graphically reveals the ambiguity in a concept like the authority of the text. The work we know as "September 1, 1939" exists in print in several different versions, and one of these is an absent text (as it were), a suppressed poem. Current anthologies of poetry which print selections from Auden choose between these different versions in definite and particular ways. When this happens, an editorial decision intervenes to assume some authority over the text. In fact, the assumption of authority over texts by later editors (scholarly or otherwise) goes on all the time, and the example from Auden, like the other examples I have set forth here, merely calls attention to the situation. Editors and textual critics are naturally aware of their interventions.

Nevertheless, the concept of the critical edition, so called, clearly induces the illusion among scholars that the chief obstacles standing in the way of the reconstitution of an original text lie in the past, with its accumulated corruptions and interfering processes. The critical editor enters to remove those obstacles and recover the authoritative original. The previous examples show, however, that such a scholarly project must be prepared to accept an initial (and insurmountable) limit: that a definitive text, like the author’s final
intentions, may not exist, may never have existed, and may
never exist at any future time. Editors and textual critics may
have to confront—do in fact confront all the time—a specific
number of different early texts, or versions, which incorporate
a now historically removed process of production and repro-
duction from which one can choose as a base text one of a
number of optional versions.

But the examples show a further and related limit which
scholarly editors in particular are faced with. When preparing
a critical edition the editor chooses one particular version as
the basis for his reading text, and he lets the critical apparatus
carry all the information necessary for the reconstruction of
other possible versions and reading texts. If we think of the
literary work as a physical object, as a book with particular
sorts of content that come first to the attention of our eyes
and then of our minds, we may begin to see what a peculiar
version of the "original work" is being presented to us in criti-
cal editions. Editors, including critical editors, exercise
authority over their texts, and sometimes exercise a great deal
of authority. But this is an obligation of their work, and it
can no more be evaded than it ought to be obscured beneath
illusory ideas about critical objectivity, final intentions, and
authoritative texts.93

The critical edition is a historical edition, as we are often
reminded. This means that (a) the method of investigating the
text is carried out along historical lines, and (b) the actual
dition will present, in its formatting operations, the evidence
showing the historical development of the work from its ori-
ginary moment to the present. The text it asks us to read is
not a historically removed text at all, and the version which it
chooses as the basis of that text—that is, the version which
will organize our experience of all the complex textual
data—is but one among several which could have been
chosen. That choice will be based upon two dialectically
related factors: the obligations placed upon the present by the
authority of past events, and the demands made upon the
past by present requirements. Furthermore, both of these fac-
tors will be defined in the actual practise of a particular schol-
ar. The entire situation is nicely illustrated in the following
eample.

E. H. Coleridge's widely used critical edition of
Coleridge's Poetical Works is based on the 1834 text of the
work we know as "Allegoric Vision." The choice is not parti-
cularly remarkable since the 1834 text certainly represents the
author's final intentions with respect to this work. Because of
certain textual problems, however, E. H. Coleridge was forced
to preface his printed text with a long editorial note, the most
essential features of which I quote.

The "Allegoric Vision" dates from August, 1795. It
served as a kind of preface or prologue to Coleridge's
first Theological Lecture on "The Origin of Evil. The
Necessity of Revelation deduced from the Nature of
Man. An Examination and Defence of the Mosaic
Dispensation." . . . The purport of these Lectures was to
uphold the golden mean of Unitarian orthodoxy as
opposed to the Church on the one hand, and infidelity
or materialism on the other. "Superstition" stood for and
symbolized the Church of England. Sixteen years later
this opening portion of an unpublished Lecture was
rewritten and printed in The Courier (Aug. 31, 1811),
with the heading "An Allegoric Vision: Superstition,
Religion, Atheism". The attack was now diverted from
the Church of England to the Church of Rome. "Men
clad in black robes," intent on gathering in their Tenth,
become "men clothed in ceremonial robes, who with
menacing countenances drag some reluctant victim to a
vast idol, framed of iron bars intercrossed which formed
at the same time an immense cage, and yet represented the form of a human Colossus. At the base of the statue I saw engraved the words "To Dominic holy and merciful, the preventer and avenger of Soul-murder." The vision was turned into a political jeu d'esprit levelled at the aided and abettors of Catholic Emancipation. . . . A third adaptation of the "Allegorical Vision" was affixed to the Introduction to A Lay Sermon. . . which was published in 1817. The first fifty-six lines, which contain a description of Italian mountain scenery, were entirely new, but the rest of the "Vision" is an amended and softened reproduction of the preface to the Lecture of 1795. The moral he desires to point is the "falsehood of extremes."64

The situation we have here is interesting because it clarifies two of the most vexing problems which preoccupy contemporary textual critics: the problem of choosing between textual versions, on the one hand, and the problem of the applicable limits of a concept of authorial intentions, whether "original" or "final." In actual editorial practice, these two problems are normally brought into a close analytic relation with each other, so that—typically, for example—the problem of choosing which optional version of a text to print will be decided by a search for "the author's final intentions". This example graphically illustrates the problems which arise for an editor when he operates with such guidelines.

The example is even more important, however, for what it shows when an editor actively seeks to deal with the problem of a work's textual instabilities. The editor's note cuts across the reading text which he presents and forces us to read the work in the context of its many shifting original shapes. This is, quite literally, not a text which ever existed before; it is the (historicalist) reconstruction by E. H. Coleridge of poetical work by S. T. Coleridge (in which "work" is to be understood as a process or as a specific series of related textual events, but not as a "text"). Furthermore, it is a reconstruction carried out according to a determinate structure, a text established in a particular point of view. "Allegoric Vision" exists in various textual versions, but the "Allegoric Vision" presented in E. H. Coleridge's edition forces us to regard all these texts as variants, or really functions, of the 1834 text. We see the work as Protean, but always from a particular vantage.

The example interests me, then, because it shows how every textual formation—including the critical works of scholarly editors who operate on shape-shifting texts like "Allegoric Vision"—necessarily reflects a special set of literary productive relations. The critical edition is so to speak a "genre" among texts; as such it is marked by peculiar characteristics and biases toward the original work which it seeks to reproduce, and these peculiarities are themselves historically determined (and hence historically explicable). Furthermore, any actual edition produced by a critical scholar will bear within itself yet other, and more particular, idiosyncracies which are characteristic of the scholar who produced it, and the context in which he worked.

What is especially important for us to see about the critical edition is its aspiration to transcend the historical exigencies to which all texts are subject. A critical edition is a kind of text which does not seek to reproduce a particular past text, but rather to reconstitute for the reader, in a single text, the entire history of the work as it has emerged into the present. To the scholar's eye, the critical edition is the still point in the turning world of texts, a text which would arrest, and even reverse, the processes of textual change and corruption. As such, the critical edition embodies a practical goal which can be (within limits) accomplished, but it equally
embodies an illusion about its own historicity (or lack thereof). According to this view of itself, the critical text is reproduced with a minimum of interference by contemporary concerns on the one hand, and a maximum of attention to the historically removed materials on the other. The rules for producing critical editions place such emphasis on these matters that editors cannot be encouraged to reflect upon the contemporary motivating factors which operate in their work.

The theory of the modernized or nonspecialist edition enters the field at this point—Edmund Wilson's notorious, sullen protest is an actual instance of such an intervention—to provide models for directing critical attention toward those contemporary motivating factors. A theory of textual criticism cannot be completed until the relationships of specialist and non-specialist editions are elucidated. These relationships are the subject of the next section of this essay. The presentation will complete the final phase of the argument, since the theory of such editions holds the key for elucidating certain important obscurities in the practice of modern textual scholarship. In particular, I shall argue that the best scholarly editions establish their texts according to a catholic set of guidelines and priorities whose relative authority shifts and alters under changing circumstances. The value of a particular piece of work will be judged by the skill with which the editor is able to assess those circumstances. This skill, I hasten to add, is not an abstract or critically indeterminate set of powers. Rather, it is a function of particular social conditions and needs, and manifests itself in the scholar's ability to produce a text—whether critical or non-critical—which responds in an illuminating and useful way to those particular conditions and needs.

8. Modernized Editions and the Theory of Textual Criticism

When critics speak of the tasks of editing, they normally make a sharp distinction between the scholarly or critical edition on the one hand, and modernized or noncritical editions on the other. Some critics, like Bowers, have seen no real justification for modernized editions but the common view is that such editions often serve useful purposes. R. C. Bald's comments are persuasive.

There will always be, one hopes, editions in modern spelling of the major English authors since Spenser. Chaucer can only be modernized by altering his language, and Spenser, with his deliberately cultivated archaisms, is also separated from us by a linguistic gulf, narrow and easily crossed, but none the less real. But if ever the day comes when no modernized editions of Shakespeare and Donne and Milton are available to the general reader, our cultural heritage will be in a sad state. The responsibility of the editor of a text in modern spelling is no less than that of him who edits in the old spelling; if anything it is greater.

Bald's remarks suggest that good nonspecialist editions can involve as much scholarly intelligence as critical editions, or even more, precisely because the editor of a nonspecialized text is required to incorporate in the reading text alone a process of historical translation analogous to what the scholar
sets forth through his critical apparatus. Talbot Donaldson’s justly acclaimed modernized edition of Chaucer could not have been produced except by an editor possessing immense scholarly knowledge and skills. Narrower scholars than Donaldson or Bald often assign special value to the work that goes into the production of critical editions, and while it is right to demand that nonspecialist editions should be based on careful scholarship, we cannot forget that critical editions are always produced under the pressure of contemporary demands. The nonspecialist editor is perforce highly conscious of such demands, whereas the critical editor, because of the more specialized nature of his projects, tends to overlook them—and to overlook not merely the fact of them, but their fundamental relevance to his work. Consequently, critical editors take it as a matter of course that their scholarly methods can judge the editorial work that produces modernized texts, but they rarely see that the theory and methods of nonspecialist editing might be necessary to pass a corresponding judgment upon the work of critical editors.

Just these scholarly considerations were present in the mind of Stephen Booth when he produced his excellent edition of Shakespeare’s sonnets. Throughout his preface he discusses the complex problems which a contemporary reader of the sonnets must face, and he sets forth his own rationale for dealing with those problems. His edition prints in parallel texts a facsimile of the 1609 Quarto version and a modernized version based on the following attitudes, goals, and scholarly assessments.

My primary purpose in the present edition is to provide a text that will give a modern reader as much as I can resurrect of a Renaissance reader’s experience of the 1609 Quarto; it is, after all, the sonnets we have and not some hypothetical originals that we value. I have adopted no editorial principle beyond that of trying to adapt a modern reader—with his assumptions about idiom, spelling, and punctuation—and the 1609 text to one another. I do not modernize for the sake of modernizing or retain Quarto readings for the sake of retention, and I do nothing for the sake of methodical purity (to do that would be to let the means justify the end, and, since my modern text is physically coupled to the Quarto text reprinted in parallel with it, my lack of systematic rigor about particulars should not inconvenience anyone). Both my text and my commentary are determined by what I think a Renaissance reader would have thought as he moved from line to line and sonnet to sonnet in the Quarto. I make no major substantial emendations and few minor ones. It might therefore seem reasonable to reprint the Quarto text alone and simply comment on that, but the effects of almost four centuries are such that a modern reader faced with the Quarto text sees something that is effectively very different from what a seventeenth-century reader saw.

(ix)

These remarks show an admirable sense of the problems which arise when old texts place demands on the scholar which collide with his obligations to his immediate audience. Booth is well aware, in fact, that his attempt to translate the early seventeenth-century text into an equivalent twentieth-century medium and format must often encounter insurmountable obstacles. These situations impel him to a parallel text edition, and the following explanation: that those passages and lines "resistant to translation into the twentieth century are accompanied by the Quarto text itself and by commentary that attempts to mark each unsatisfactory compromise for what it is" (xvi).
A recent paper by Thomas Greene enters an important critique of Booth’s attempt to produce a modernized text of the sonnets. "Anti-Hermeneutics: The Case of Shakespeare’s Sonnet 129" argues generally against Booth’s modernizing impulses, and specifically against the modernizations proposed for Sonnet 129. Greene’s argument is particularly interesting because his position is based upon an appeal to hermeneutics rather than to textual criticism. Modernization is, in Greene’s view, “anti-hermeneutical” because it eases the contemporary reader’s access to the work. In Greene’s view, the 1609 text is much to be preferred precisely because it is more “difficult” for a twentieth-century reader, because it encourages and promotes interpretive action. Where Booth, like most editors of the sonnets, sees anachronistic accidents of various kinds, or positive errors of substance, Greene stands resolutely for the principle of difficilior lectio.

The problem of line 11 focuses the whole set of issues. Like most previous editors, Booth introduces serious emendations into the line, which in his text reads: "A bliss in proof, and proved, a very woe," whereas 1609 reads: "A blisse in profe and proud and very wo." To emend the line as Booth does is to rationalize what appear to be irrelevant anachronisms and positive errors. But Greene’s argument is that this is merely a modern form of bowdlerizing, and that the line’s obscurities may merely reflect our ignorance of older usages. Greene encourages us to think that perhaps the orthography of "proud" involves a punning device, and to take the absence of punctuation as a positive benefit to the line’s operation. In this respect Greene stands opposed to the entire view which Booth takes of the sonnets and which is epitomized in the following set of remarks:

Dutiful retention of the Quarto’s random use of italics

(as in the Quarto text of sonnet 1, line 2) results in... distortions by giving the sort of urgency orthographic emphases give to Adolescent prose. Renaissance texts do make purposeful use of such devices (e.g. Will in the Q text of 135.1, 2, 11, 12 and 14), but they do not do so consistently (e.g. will in the Q text of 135.4. 5, 6, 7, 8, and 12 and Statues in the Q text of 55.5). The literary experience of Shakespeare’s contemporaries, not conditioned to look for meaning in orthographic variations, presumably let them recognize orthographic signals when their import assisted what was inherent in the rhythm and sense of a line but let them ignore orthographic peculiarities where they seem accidental; experience presumably also let them ignore the absence of such signals in situations where they are appropriate, and presumably preserved them from our modern temptation to study a printer’s use or non-use of capitals and italics as a clue to what a Renaissance writer wished to convey. In modernizing the Q text I have used roman throughout and have not used informative capitals because where they are not unnecessary they are unwarranted. (xvii-xviii)

But in fact we do not know so much about “the literary experience of Shakespeare’s contemporaries” to take such positions, or to say, specifically, that they were “not conditioned to look for meaning in orthographic variations.” Scholarly opinion varies as wildly about the extent of Shakespeare’s involvement with the text of 1609 as it does about the reliability of the text itself. As our scholarly knowledge increases, however, we often discover that texts which had previously seemed corrupt are not so at all; that it is we (or our ignorance) who are at fault.

I instance this example of a scholarly disagreement not to adjudicate the specific issue, however, but to dramatize why
and how textual critics and scholars involve themselves in matters of contemporary significance. A historical approach to literature, including a historical approach to the establishment of the texts of literary works, asks for a critical assessment of the textual traditions which we are instituting as much as it does of the tradition which we receive. This means that a critical edition has to include in its theory and historical procedures the capacity for an objective self-analysis. Such objectivity is made possible when the critical edition studies itself from the vantage that calls forth the nonspecialist edition, which is to say from a vantage of textual criticism that transcends both. Ideally, a critical edition should not be produced, and ought not to be evaluated, without situating it clearly in terms of its present orientation and set of purposes.

This general rule merely extends what has already been said about the nonautonomy of the authors and works we inherit from the past. Literary production is not an autonomous and self-reflexive activity; it is a social and an institutional event. Critical editions serve important functions within the institution and are themselves literary productions of a special sort. What they do—what they actually produce—reflects (as Byron’s original texts are said to reflect) the producers’ aims and purposes toward their contemporary institutional situation. Critical editors and theorists are normally quite self-conscious about their aims and purposes toward their received texts, but they have given much less attention to this other, equally significant aspect of their work. Nonetheless, although the theory has not elucidated these matters sufficiently, the editorial practice always takes them into account, however unselfconsciously.

We commonly observe the critical editor’s self-conscious analysis of his current institutional obligations at the outset of the typical “Editorial Introduction.” Here is where the editor will normally provide a brief textual history of the work. This history establishes the grounds of justification for the critical edition, that is, it serves to explain why the editor has thought it necessary to produce the edition at the present time. Here we observe, in its clearest form, the presence and operation of the theory of the nonspecialist edition in the production of critical texts: contemporary needs call out and define the character of the edition. The edition is not adequately explained if it is explained only in terms of its technical operations and methods of procedure, any more than a poem or creative work can be adequately explained in what have been called “intrinsic” terms.

These matters are plain enough. The issues become complex, however, when we focus once again upon the problem of choosing versions and copy-texts for critical editions of modern works. As Zeller and others have been able to show, when an editor faces the work he has to do, his initial textual analysis will reveal a number of possible texts which might reasonably be chosen. The question remains posed (and it is a question which neither Zeller nor anyone else who follows his revisionary approach has thus far been able to answer in theoretical terms): how does one adjudicate the different options? What principles (or theory), if any, should guide or determine the choice?

Certain critics and editors, like Donaldson, seem fundamentally opposed to theoretical and systematic guidelines, and hence argue that the problems have to be decided in purely pragmatic terms, ad hoc. Critics who follow the dominant line developed by Bowers, as we have seen, are guided by the rule of final intentions, and the more traditional approaches taken by Thorpe and Gaskell, while they disagree with the dominant line in certain tactical matters, also agree that the rule of final intentions will govern. Their agreement
here reflects a common descent from an earlier line epitomized in the Lachmann Method. Only Zeller argues that the rule of intentions (whether original or final) is impossible to follow under certain circumstances: "It is the difficulty, indeed the impossibility, of obtaining a text attributable exclusively to the author, when conditions are really complicated, which led Thorpe towards a recognition of an aggregate of alien influences." And it is Thorpe's recognition which leads Zeller to the theory of textual versions, and hence to the problem stated above: on what basis does one make choices when the rule of final intentions cannot be applied—or, indeed, when no encompassing rule can be appealed to?

Before answering this question let me recall a few matters which we have already dealt with, but which will assume particular importance, once again, in the present discussion. In the first place, when Zeller, in the last quoted passage, speaks of "an aggregate of alien influences," we must be certain to purge his remarks of any suggestion that the institutional forces operating within literary works are in themselves "alien influences." Of course, whenever information is mediated some contamination results; this is the law of information theory which necessitates textual criticism. But a process of mediation is essential to literary production; indeed, many variant processes are necessary because literary works are only material things to the degree that they are social projects which seek to adapt and modify themselves circumstantially. As soon as an author utters or writes down his work, even for the first time, a mediation has to some degree come between or "interfered with" the original, unmediated "text."

A Romantic observer of this process like Shelley found it to be a matter of disappointment.

When composition begins, inspiration is already on the decline, and the most glorious poetry that has ever been communicated to the world is probably a feeble shadow of the original conception of the Poet."

Nevertheless, and as we have already seen, the literary work is always produced under institutional conditions—these vary with period and place—and their impact upon the author's work in the literary production is by no means always an alien or contaminating influence. Quite the contrary is the case. Of course, Shelley (and others) have sometimes lamented the fatality of all mediations, whether systematic or institutional, as "a necessity only imposed by the limitedness of the poetical faculty itself." In such a (Romantic) view—and it is a view that continues to exercise its influence, even, as we see, in the domain of "rational" and "scientific" textual criticism—mediation processes are regarded as structural contaminants on an original and autonomous authority, and their effects have to be removed. In the present view, these mediations are regarded as conditions of being rather than otherwise; limits, if you will, but limits only as the body is a "limit" of humaness.

In the second place, we must recall that "conditions [get] really complicated" when we have to deal with texts which descend to us in multiple legitimate versions. This situation appears most dramatically in the modern periods, when the preservation of texts became such a scholarly imperative that critical editors typically are asked to deal with works which have been preserved in massive (sometimes complete) documented forms. The authoritative originals are not missing, and so many legitimate variant textual formations exist that the very concept of final intentions often proves helpless as a guide to choice.

We can now return to our question. I propose a guide which will not lead the editor to imagine that his work aims
at definitiveness. The very existence of multiple versions is a limiting fact of the editorial situation which conditions the nature of the "choice" involved. We are dealing with a both/and, not an either/or, situation. This being the case, no amount of scrupulousness in examining the received documents will in itself decide the issue, for the rule of choice does not lie hidden in the documents. It lies hidden in the exigencies of the present and the future.

The rule emerges when we theorize on the practice of the nonspecialist or modernizing editor, whose choice of reading text is guided by what he judges to be most useful and important for a certain audience of readers. His task is to preserve the continuity of a more or less significant cultural resource. Such an editor is aware from the start of the multiplicity of legitimate texts because he is conscious of the multiplicity of audiences, among whom the original author and work are and have been continuously dispersed. From the point of view of the nonspecialist editor, there is no such thing as final intentions, whether authorial or otherwise. We recall once again Greg's shrewd comment: "Authority is never absolute, but only relative."

Faced with the existence of multiple legitimate options, the critical editor should not seek to impose upon them a system which pretends to distinguish one, ideal eclectic text. Rather, he must come to a judgment about which of the legitimate texts to choose given the demands which are made upon the work from the following quarters: (a) the current state of textual criticism in general, both as to theory and as to practice; (b) the current understanding of the textual history of the work in question, including its composition, production, reproduction, and reception histories; (c) the deficiencies which current critical practice has served to promote and (finally) reveal in the received texts; (d) the purposes of the critical edition's text, both immediate and projected.

The guidelines do no more than make explicit what has been governing the practice of many recent editors whenever circumstances were affected by massive textual documentation. The well-known cases of "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," which exists in two legitimate versions, and The Prelude, which also comes to us in two—or, as we now judge, in three—distinct constitutions, exemplify the situations which have governed practice. Critical editors have produced first one, then the other version, and eventually some produced editions with both. In Byron's case, works like "To the Po" have come to us in particular textual versions which are by no means definitive. Until the present Oxford English Texts edition, "To the Po" and a number of other famous poems were constituted in a series of texts based upon Byron's earliest manuscript copies rather than on his later manuscripts. More than one hundred and fifty years of readers have added their weight of legitimacy to these versions, which are in fact perfectly acceptable basic texts. Nevertheless, the later manuscript texts clearly have a prima facie claim to legitimacy which is all the more imperative at the present time, given the textual history of the poems to date. The choices of version and copy-text in the OET were guided by these considerations.

The case of The Giaour is perhaps even more instructive since the optional texts are distinguished by different systems of punctuation where the final intentions of the author—or even of the author working cooperatively with his publisher—are not definable in any clear way. The best options range between the following choices: (a) the rhetorically punctuated first edition, which one would emend for later substantive corrections and additions (the copy-texts for
the additional passages would be Byron's press copy manuscripts in order to remain as close as possible to the rhetorical style of the first edition's punctuation; (b) the more strictly and syntactically punctuated seventh edition, where the poem was first published complete, and which Byron proofed, with substantive emendations from later texts as necessary; (c) the third or the fifth editions, emended as in (a) above, which observe punctuation systems that strike compromises between options (a) and (b); (d) the thirteenth edition, which was carefully repunctuated for the first collected edition of Byron's works, though Byron did not proof this edition, with standard emendations; (e) the text printed in the first comprehensive collected edition (published posthumously in 1832-33 under the supervision of Byron's closest literary associates), again with the standard emendations; (f) a text based solely on the fair copy manuscripts, with standard emendations.

The argument developed in the present essay should explain why (c) through (f) eliminated themselves fairly quickly. The nature of the edition being undertaken, which will serve as the basis for many derivative texts for years to come; the character of the audience of the edition, which is both scholarly and—particularly through the derivative editions—more general; the historically received text, which has never been submitted to a thorough critical editing, or a careful analysis of textual options; the early printing history of *The Giaour*, along with the general character of Byron's relation to his audience and his publisher (so different from Shelley's); and, finally, the current state of textual criticism (both its limits and its powers) as I understand these matters: all these factors combined to make options (c) through (f) less desirable than either (a) or (b). My preferred text would have been with options (a) and (b) on facing pages, but the exigencies of the whole edition obviated this possibility. I finally chose option (b) because option (a) seemed a too specialized and artificial text.

Giving up the rule of final intentions and adopting instead a set of interconnected guidelines for choosing which texts they will edit, critics introduce a subjective factor into the critical process. Zeller's concept of textual versions adds to the danger posed by this subjective factor, since the concept of versions does not in itself judge the relative value of the different versions. It merely seeks to distinguish them. Consequently, since we do not have a nonsubjective means of deciding their relative value—since we have only a set of guidelines which have to be weighed and implemented by a fallible editor—the possibility exists of making a bad choice among the optional versions.

Donaldson once pleaded eloquently for the subjective factor in editing, and he denounced, with amiable severity, the entire project of a "scientific" textual criticism. We may perhaps theorize his polemic and argue that, in problem-solving situations, the possibility of error must exist if the possibility of truth is to remain. The rule is a corollary of the principle of falsifiability. In the present instance, these considerations lead us to the conclusion that a systematic criticism has to be developed which has factored in an antisystematic element. Hence the re-emergence of a "subjectivity" within the present proposals.

Its necessity is seen if we compare the problems of editing Shelley and Byron in critical texts. Though they were contemporaries as well as friends, though they shared a number of the same habits of composition, and punctuated their manuscripts in similar ways, each requires a distinct and pointedly divergent editorial approach. The different printing histories for each poet's works, contemporary and
posthumous alike; the special differences between the development of Shelley's texts at the hands of later critics and the markedly different development of Byron's; and, finally, the peculiar differences between their poetic styles: these and other factors make it necessary for an editor to approach the works of each poet in a very different way, especially when handling the problem of copy-text.

Briefly, we may say that Shelley's manuscripts frequently assert a strong demand to be adopted as copy-text, whereas Byron's rarely do. The reason for this difference is partly a matter of the printing histories of each poet's works, and partly a matter of their different poetic modes. As to the latter, Byron's is typically neoclassical in form and verse-line structure, and prosaic or rhetorical in tone or style; Shelley's, by contrast, is typically symbolist in form and verse-line structure, and lyrical in tone or style. As a consequence, Shelley's syntaxes are more fluid, suggestive, and ambiguous than Byron's. Punctuation, in Shelley's verse, becomes an absolutely crucial matter, whereas in Byron's work alternative punctuations are common and present no great difficulties.

Previous editors of Shelley's works have exacerbated the difficulties in their responses to the editorial problems. Recognizing the problems which Shelley's syntaxes frequently posed, past editors and textual critics tended to intervene in Shelley's texts with "improvements," in the hope of bringing a particular form of order to the poet's ambiguously structured syntax. The recent OET edition has continued this line of approach; and while it can prove useful and has done so in dealing with certain particular textual cruxes, it is a procedure which has systematically disfigured Shelley's texts. Byron's texts, by contrast, suffered no such systematic corruption of their punctuation simply because his punctuation and syntax never presented editors with anything more serious than local

problems.

Though Shelley published in a fashion that was normal for his period, his work as an artist is much closer to Blake's or Dickinson's—from the point of view of the editor and textual critic—than it is to Byron's. This is a fact which an editor cannot fail to take account of, one way or another (that is to say, for better or for worse). It would be a disservice to Shelley's work, as well as to the justifiable expectations of present and future audiences, if a critical edition today neglected to consider, in the matter of copy-text, the sincerity and integrity of Shelley's manuscripts. In this respect Shelley's manuscripts are far more important than Byron's; indeed, a powerful case could be made for producing an edition of Shelley's Complete Poetical Works in which the copy-text for the poems would be, in almost all cases, the manuscripts.

Needless to say, this case would not be founded upon an appeal to the rule of final intentions, but to the actual "achieved results" of the previous texts, both manuscript and printed; and to the immediate requirements of Shelley's readers, who cannot at present rely upon the texts which have been placed in their hands.
9. Summary

The analysis is now complete, and we may therefore summarize our findings by moving back through the presentation in reverse order. In doing so we shall take up the three main topics we have been concerned with. These are the same topics which Tanselle, in a recent essay, has also noted as the crucial ones with which contemporary critics have been concerned. Since my own position differs so sharply from Tanselle's on at least two of these subjects, and since Tanselle's views represent the most advanced and persuasive defense of the Bowers line, I shall use his summary as a convenient structure on which to hang my own.

"The first set of questions," Tanselle observes, "consists of the preliminary ones that any editor must decide at the outset, questions about what kind of edition is to be undertaken." That is to say, will the edition be scholarly or non-scholarly; and if it is to be the former, will it be a critical text or will it not? For Tanselle the issue here is straightforward:

Pieces of writing to be presented as documents are most appropriately provided in noncritical texts, whereas those to be presented as finished works are most usefully offered in critical texts.

This is really all that needs to be said in a general way about the choice among different kinds of editions—the absence of any reference to modernizing,
to the nature of the intended audience, or to whether or not writings are "literary" being meant to suggest that these matters need not be taken into account. However, so much has been said about them—they have proved to be the most prominent red herrings of editorial debate—that it now seems impossible to pass over them with no comment at all. Regularizing and modernizing (their aims may be different, but they amount to the same thing) are ahistorical in orientation and therefore have no place in the historical approach to texts—which is to say, in scholarly editions. (61)

Tanselle's inability to see the pertinence of a more probing theoretical examination of this topic is a sign that he does not recognize the historical dimension of all literary productions, including critical texts, modernized editions, and so forth. Tanselle sees "regularizing and modernizing" as "ahistorical," that is, as interventions in the critical attempt to establish a purely "historical" text. But he is mistaken in his implicit assumption here. Every literary production is "ahistorical" in the sense of Tanselle's usage, and a complete theory of textual criticism, including a complete theory of a critical edition, will not be developed until the contemporaneity of such editions is elucidated more clearly.

Tanselle says that

The intended audience may indeed be a factor—for economic reasons—in deciding whether a detailed apparatus is to be published with the text; but there is no reason why it should be a factor in determining the treatment of the text itself. (61)

He immediately introduces an exception to this statement, however, in a footnote: "Except for some of the earliest works in a language, which might be said to require 'translation', rather than simply 'modernization,' for the general reader." What Tanselle does not see is that the "treatment of the text" in every edition is powerfully determined by the "factor" of "the intended audience." A theory of modernized and nonspecialist editions is necessary to a full critical theory for precisely this reason: that the factor of the intended audience is easily seen in the modernized edition, whereas in the critical and scholarly edition it is buried under the critic's social and institutional ideology. (68)

"The second large group of questions," Tanselle says, "concerns the nature of authorial intention and how one is to handle the difficult distinction between intention and expectation" (62). Tanselle's position here is well-known and follows Bowers and others quite exactly. I shall not rehearse what I have already argued at some length, but will merely observe that Tanselle's concept of author's intentions, as well as the related concept of authorship itself, no longer help to clarify what transpires in the production of literary works. (69) When Gaskell and others argue that, in the modern periods, a first edition is normally a better choice for copy-text or base text than an author's manuscript, their position seems to me clearly more sound than Tanselle's and Bowers's, for it takes better account of the social dimension which surrounds the process of literary production. The problematic character of Tanselle's and Bowers's concepts here only becomes clearer when we retreat in time to consider, for example, medieval texts.

Finally, the "third of these large central questions" deals with Greg's theory of the copy-text, and in particular with "the problem of the so-called 'indifferent' variant."

This problem has been much discussed under the guise of examining how to select a copy-text. It is not necessary to have a copy-text at all, of course, unless there are
in fact some indifferent variants. The reason so much attention has focused on the choice of copy-text is that it is a necessary first step in critical editing but that in most cases variants appearing to be indifferent do seem to occur, so that one needs a principle for favoring one text over another. As for a general rationale for choosing a copy-text, one can draw on testimony from all periods, as well as on common sense and everyday experience, to show that texts can be expected to deteriorate as they are transmitted. It follows, therefore, that a copy-text should be an early text—one as near to the author’s manuscript as possible, if not that manuscript itself—whenever the individual circumstances do not suggest a different text as the more reasonable choice. When they do, then by all means another text should be chosen. (64-65)

On these issues Tanselle’s position is far more thoughtful, persuasive, and flexible than that of most critics who have followed Bowers. What remains to be said, I think, is that Tanselle’s catholicity on this matter has led him to abandon the aggressive positions once occupied by the Bowers adherents. But Bowers himself—the most vigorous proponent of the narrow application of the theory—abandoned his earlier fortifications, first in 1972 and then again in 1978. All that remains to be done here is to provide an explanation of this process of retraction.

Tanselle’s remarks show that the theory of the copy-text has been clarified by its having been subordinated to a more comprehensive problem. The first consideration which the critical editor must face is to distinguish textual versions and not, as Bower has said, to choose copy-text. Distinguishing versions centers in the analysis of the process of textual transmission; choosing copy-text, in the analysis of the process of literary production. In each case, so-called author’s intentions is one of the factors to be weighed and studied. When choice of copy-text is being made, the crucial factor is to distinguish true errors and deteriorations from legitimately produced variants. In particular, what is at issue are those indifferent readings and whether their production must be conceptualized for the author alone, apart and isolated from the cooperative involvements with his or her chosen (and sometimes fated) institutions of literary production. My own opinion, of course, again differs from Tanselle and the Bowers line generally, since my view of the process of literary production is far more socialized than theirs.
10. Conclusion

The tradition of textual criticism upon which our own work is most immediately dependent began in the eighteenth-century and flowered in the nineteenth. Anyone today who picks up Eichhorn, Heyne, or Wolf and is not humbled by their breadth and spirit ought to be ashamed. The early history of philology and textual criticism demonstrates clearly, even in the work of relatively minor figures, that these scholars—far from betraying any pedantic narrowness or abstraction from the present by their immersion in the past—were fired with the belief that historical method had uncovered a whole new educational program whose immediate and future significance could scarcely be underestimated.

Textual criticism was an instrumental discipline within the large enterprise they called Alterthumswissenschaft, and while the subordinate program served the larger enterprise, the latter supplied the former with its governing context and raison d'être. The historical method demanded that the textual critic try to achieve as complete an imaginative recovery of his past author as was possible. To edit ancient texts required, first, that the entire cultural and historical context of the original work be recovered; second, that the entire critical history of the work also be explored and elucidated; and finally, that the work itself be reconstituted for the present in terms of these two historical matrices.
The study of the works of the ancients is certainly most fruitful when one concentrates not so much on the works themselves as on the authors and the periods from which the works come. Only this method can lead to a true philosophic knowledge of human beings, for this method obliges us to search out the character and the entire context of a nation, and to grasp all aspects of the subject in their comprehensive interrelationships. The struggle to gain this kind of knowledge (for no one alone can hope to see its fulfillment) must be called absolutely necessary for every human being.

(Die Betrachtung der Werke des Alterthums ist gewiss dann am fruchtbarsten, wenn man nicht sowohl auf sie selbst sieht, als auf ihre Urheber und die Perioden, aus denen jedes herstammt. Nur diese Betrachtungsart kann zu wahrer philosophischer Kenntniss des Menschen führen, insofern sie uns nöthigt den Zustand und die gänzliche Lage einer Nation zu erforschen und alle Seiten davon in ihrem grossen Zusammenhange aufzufassen. Das Streben nach einer solchen Kenntniss (da niemand eigentliche Vollendung derselben hoffen darf) kann man jedem Menschen . . . unentbehrlich nennen.)

Clearing ancient texts of their accumulated errors was an operation which required at once great technical skill and purpose, as well as a deep and humane sympathy for the work. Both the material form of the work and its aesthetic force and meaning developed as a function of its imbedded social and cultural nature. To understand and appreciate Homer, or to edit his work, required that you study both with as full a sympathetic consciousness of the social context as it was possible to gain: because authors, their works, and their texts were not isolate phenomena. All were part of a continuing process, a changing and sometimes even a developing history of human events and purposes.

This view of scholarship and program of general education are based upon a paradigm which sees all human products in processive and diachronic terms. The paradigm has controlled the work of textual criticism from its inception, and it operates to this day. The theory of copy-text and the rule of authorial intentions emerge from a critical analysis of problems that are peculiar to the study of certain dynamic human phenomena.

My own view, however, is that the lines of critical procedure developed largely out of Bowers represent specialized and very restrictive applications of the original historical paradigm. Faced with problems that are specially pertinent to early modern and modern texts, these approaches often develop useful ways for handling them. Yet the procedures have sometimes been urged not as tactics to be employed as needed, but as a general strategy for editing all texts. In this respect they offer themselves as more comprehensive developments of the original paradigm we receive through the work of men like Wolf and Eichhorn. In my view, however, these lines are not always a development or more comprehensive extension of the original approach; rather, they often seem much more narrow and restricted. In asking us to analyze textual problems—indeed, to decide the most basic textual issues—within a sharply restricted analytic field, these approaches have tended to suffocate textual studies as well as the larger enterprise of which they are a part. Essentially these lines ask critics and editors to view the dynamic evolution of literary works in a context evacuated of its complex human relations. The author’s productive work and the institutions of reproduction are either divorced from each other by the analysis or they are set in a negative relationship. This view
of the social structure of literary production forces the critic to study both the text and the meaning of the work in the narrowest possible context—that is to say, in a human space whose contextual dimensions are psychological and biographical, or at most professional.

This narrowing of the critical focus is not, of course, the arbitrary consequence of an ingrained natural pedantry in the critics concerned. On the contrary, it results from the changing historical character of authorship from Shakespeare's day to our own period. Leigh Hunt once said that Wordsworth stood at the head of the profession of letters in his age. The remark revolted Byron, not merely because of its elevation of Wordsworth, but even more because of its view of authorship.

Did you read Hunt's skimbrel-skamble about Wordsworth being at the head of his own profession, in the eyes of those who followed it? I thought that poetry was an art, or an attribute, and not a profession—but be it one, is that ******* at the head of your profession in your eyes? I'll be cursed if he is of mine, or ever shall be. 104

The ideology of authorship implicit in this statement is old-fashioned, not to say anachronistic, in Byron's period, when the profession of letters, which began to take shape in the eighteenth-century, reached an advanced level of development in people like Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Hunt. The profession emerges in a fully developed form in the later nineteenth-century and is officially recognized toward the end of the century with the passage of the copyright laws protecting authors and their property rights.

Nevertheless, although this historical development is noticeable and important, and although the specialized and technical focus of textual criticism reflects that development, literary works remain human products with the broadest cultural interests and relationships. That they enter general society through the mediation of complex publishing and academic institutions is a central fact, but hardly one which should lead to a narrowing of the critic's focus. Yet this is precisely what tends to happen when editing and textual criticism are pursued along certain lines which are now current.

The chief difficulties emerge when textual criticism has the effect of desocializing our historical view of the literary work. When we make decisions about the condition and significance of various texts on the simple criterion of author's (final) intentions we foster serious misconceptions about the nature of literary production. Too many relevant aspects of the literary work are de-emphasized, or even abstracted from the critical view altogether, when we operate on such a principle. F. A. Wolf worked at a relatively primitive state in the history of textual studies, but such an approach would have been inconceivable for him.

Of course, it may be objected that the rule of final intentions is only relevant to the determination of the copy-text, and that I am introducing problems which have no relation to the use of the rule or to the theory of copy-text in general. But this is not the case. The choice of copy-text can involve major practical decisions which far transcend indifferent readings, especially when the choice is tied to the pursuit of an eclectic text based upon an ideal of author's intentions, as is the case with the Bowers approach. Whatever the practical effect, a choice based upon this line of reasoning will involve maintaining certain theoretical confusions in the discipline of criticism. To determine copy-text and the rules for emendation on the elementary basis recommended by the Bowers line of reasoning is to make crucial textual decisions without
taking adequate and systematic account of all the relevant factors. A hypnotic fascination with the isolated author has served to foster an overdetermined concept of authorship, but (reciprocally) an underdetermined concept of literary work.

Texts can and must be analyzed in such a way as to distinguish author's intentions toward the works, or the degree of revision and correction which the various texts display, both authorial and nonauthorial. But fundamental decisions about copy-text and base text should not be made solely on the basis of such an analysis—especially if the function of the analysis is simply to isolate the authorial intentions rather than to plunge into the phenomena to understand their meanings and textual significance. The textual critic must go between and behind such matters to determine the contexts which they helped to produce: "to grasp all aspects of the subject in their comprehensive interrelationships." The status of accidentals is not the same for all texts, partly because of differences between authors (Shelley versus Byron), partly because publishing conventions and techniques change with place and time, and partly because language itself changes along with the societies which use the language. The character of the accidentals, then, may help to determine copy-text in one case, but may prove to be little or no help at all in another. This is only to say that the theory of the copy-text, the guideline of accidentals, and the rule of final intentions are all useful analytic devices whose power can only be determined when their precise limits are clearly grasped. These devices form part of a much larger structure of critical analysis, they do not define that structure, not even at the micro (or text) level. To determine the physical appearance of the critical text—indeed, to understand what is involved in such an apparently pedantic task—requires the operation of a complex structure of analysis which considers the history of

the text in relation to the related histories of its production, reproduction, and reception. We are asked as well to distinguish clearly between a history of transmission and a history of production. Finally, these special historical studies must be imbedded in the broad cultural contexts which alone can explain and elucidate them.
Appendix:
A Possible Objection

My critique of the rule of final intentions throughout this essay has been tied to a series of counter examples, the most important of which are brought forward to argue the collaborative or social nature of literary production. The issue here involves the rule developed by Bowers that when a choice is to be made between author's manuscript and first edition, the presumption will be in favor of the manuscript, since it contains what we know to be the author's (rather than someone else's) intentions toward accidentals and so-called indifferent readings. My argument has been that the presumption should lie with the first edition since it can be expected to contain what author and publishing institution together worked to put before the public.

A friendly critic has objected that this view lays itself open to attack by other sorts of counterexample.

We know from Lawrence's career, for example, that the author can be a willing partner in a helpful process, a willing or passive partner in an unhelpful process, or an unwilling partner in a downright repressive process. Conventional house-styling by a printer, active editing by Edward Garnett, silent censorship by Martin Secker, suppression by magistrates, threats of libel by Heseltine—all these things argue in his case against the printed text being generally seen as representing a successful transmission operation.165
This is of course perfectly true, and one could accumulate a host of similar instances. John Cowper Powys's novel *A Glastonbury Romance* (1932) was threatened with a libel suit as soon as it was published in England (1933). Powys had used a number of real place names in his book, and a Somersetshire landowner—who was the owner of a place called Wookey Hole, which figures prominently in the novel—sued for damages. The consequence was that Powys's next novel, which had just been published in America (1934) and which also made extensive use of actual place names, underwent a last minute set of revisions in the English edition to avoid another such suit. The novel was published in England as *Jobber Skald* in 1935. Not until many years later did this work appear in England in its proper original version, with the original title of *Weymouth Sands* (1963). Powys himself urged and carried out the corrections, so that one must see *Jobber Skald* as his "final" intended version. Nevertheless, *Jobber Skald* is not the version of this work that any reasonable editor would produce.

The expurgation, suppression, and mutilation of texts occur all the time and for many sorts of reasons. Powys's magnum opus, *Porius*, has never been published in a proper text. The novel was held up by World War II, and when it finally could be published it had to be drastically cut back because the book was long and paper was short. *Porius* was finally published in 1951, but that book resembles only in the most remote way the original epic narrative on which Powys hoped to stake his fame.

Nevertheless, these sorts of examples go to the issue of textual versions rather than to the rationale of copy-text. When authors and publishing institutions collaborate, the works they bring out may be well or poorly produced. Not every critical edition is good simply because it is a critical edition. In choosing the textual version, the editor must examine carefully the early publishing history in order to arrive at a reasonable decision. No scholar—one would hope, no publisher—would today reprint the 1951 published text of *Porius*; what needs to be issued is the version of the novel which survives in Powys's typescript, carefully edited of course.

Having chosen that version—having decided, in Lawrence's case, to print an unexpurgated text of *The Rainbow*, or even perhaps the two volume version of *The Rainbow and Women in Love* (which Lawrence once expressed a desire to see published)—the critical editor then faces the issue of copy-text. Tanselle is quite right when he says that this issue centers on the question of indifferent readings, and that it must be separated entirely from the problem of textual versions. In practical terms—to take the example of *Porius* once again—the editor has to decide whether he will give authority over accidentals and indifferent readings to Powys's typescript or to the 1951 printed text when a choice is available. When there is no choice to be made—when we are dealing with the expurgated passages and have only the typescript to rely upon—obviously one prints the typescript and edits only for the mistakes. But when we are printing the bulk of this novel, we have a choice between the typescript and the 1951 text.

The copy-text for such an edition should be Powys's original printer's copy typescript. This is an opinion which most editors would hold, I suspect. I only wish to emphasize here that such a choice cannot really be justified by an appeal to final intentions, though Powys's original (but interrupted and deflected) intentions are an important factor in the analysis. The 1951 *Porius* is a compromise production arrived at by
mutual agreement between Powys and his publisher. Had the war not been a factor in the production, one presumes that Powys's publisher would not have sought for such massive excisions and revisions, and that Powys would not have made them.

One would not wish to use the 1951 printed text to decide between indifferent readings because the proof corrections will often be affected by the larger "revisional" changes which the work underwent in its early production phase. The better move is to start with the original typescript and use the subsequent materials, including the 1951 printed text, to introduce whatever substantive and accidental changes seem best.

The point is that the decision on copy-text always involves many factors, and that "author's intentions" cannot be offered as the determining one for all cases. It is only one of many factors to be taken into account, and while in some cases it may and will determine the final decision, in many others it cannot and must not be forced to perform that function. In all cases many factors enter into the decision, and in each case one or another factor will be the determining one. But to see "author's intentions" as the basis for a "rationale of copy-text" is to confuse the issues involved.

Notes


3. Edmund Wilson's famous attack originally appeared in two articles in *New York Review of Books* in 1968, and these were reprinted as *The Fruits of the MLA* (New York, 1968). Wilson's polemic served to focus attention on the subject.


5. The initiating article in this interesting controversy was Michael J. Warren's "Quarto and Folio King Lear and the Interpretation of Albany and Edgar," which was delivered in 1976 at the International Shakespeare Association Congress, Washington, D.C., and later published in *Shakespeare Pattern of Excelling Nature*, ed. David Bevington and Jay L. Halio (Newark, Del., 1978), 95-107. In my discussions below I do not deal with my two central subjects, authorial autonomy and final intentions, in terms of the problems which appear in Elizabethan plays, and in dramatic works generally. The problematic nature of both concepts leaps to view when we study these sorts of text, as much recent work has shown. Commenting on two of the most important of these recent works, Stephen Orgel has observed "how much the creation of a play was a collaborative process, with the author by no means at the center of the collaboration"; and also, "that the notion of final or complete versions assumed by virtually all modern editors of Shakespeare is inconsistent with everything we know...about Renaissance theatrical practice" ("What is a Text?", *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 24 [1981], 3, 6. Orgel is here commenting on two of the most significant works which take up these matters, G. E. Bentley's *The Profession of Dramatist in Shakespeare's Time* (Princeton, 1971) and E. A. J. Honigmann's *The Stability of Shakespeare's Text* (Lincoln, Neb., 1965). The reader should also consider the implications of Steven Urkowitz's *Shakespeare's Revision of King Lear* (Princeton, 1980), as well as various recent scholarly works put out by Michael Warren and Peter Blayney, among others.


7. Randall McLeod's paper "The Marriage of Good and Bad Quartos" is a witty and provocative critique of the dominant critical methodology; McLeod uses the texts of Romeo and Juliet to exemplify its argument. The paper was delivered at the 1981 World Shakespeare Congress, and it will be published in *Shakespeare Quarterly*.


10. For a survey of recent critical work see *Textual Strategies*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca, 1979), and see especially the bibliography, 443-63.


13. The formulation is variously made: author's intentions, author's original intentions, author's final intentions. These different formulations reflect differences in the subject matter being discussed and will be elucidated below. Suffice it to say here that the first is a general formulation of wide applicability. James Thorpe's statement is typical of this usage: "The ideal of textual criticism is to present the text which the author intended" (*Principles of Textual Criticism* [San Marino, Ca., 1972], 50). The second form emerged (and is still used) when the authorial texts are distanced from their scribal or typographical copies, and especially when the authorial documents are no longer extant. The third formulation came into use when editors were dealing with heavily documented works, especially works which are preserved in one or more prepunctuation forms.

The literature on the question of final intentions is conveniently surveyed in G. Thomas Tanselle's "The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intentions," *SB* (1976), 167-211; reprinted in Tanselle's *Selected Studies in Bibliography* (Charlottesville, Va., 1979), 309-54. This may be supplemented by Tanselle's essay "Recent Editorial Nutrition," *ibid*., esp. 52-57 and 62-64.

14. For accounts of Lachmann and his methods see Sebastiano Timpanaro, *La Genesi del metodo del Lachmann* (Florence, 1963); F. X. Polzl, *Uber Karl Lachmann* (Vienna, 1889); Kümmel, 146-49. Pasqualli's *Storia della Tradizione* is a brilliant critique of some weaknesses in the method as it is developed for classical texts.

15. In this context the names of Greg, Pollard, and McKerrow become important. But from the point of view of the subsequent development of Shakespearean textual criticism, the key document is W. W. Greg, "The Rationale of Copy-Text," *SB* 3 (1950-51), 19-36; reprinted in *The Collected Papers of Sir Walter W. Greg*, ed. J. C. Maxwell (Oxford, 1966), 374-91. (The latter text of this essay will henceforth be cited as "Rationale.") Greg's distinction between "substantives" and "accidentals" has come under some justifiable criticism. I shall adhere to the terminology in this essay for the convenience of my general argument. Greg's famous essay cannot be mentioned without calling to mind Fredson Bowers, whose important interpretation of Greg's essay led to his edition of *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker* (Cambridge, 1953-61), the first edition to be produced through a systematic application of Greg's principles.


17. This difference was early recognized by the New Bibliographers. See R. B. McKerrow's *Prolegomena for the Oxford Shakespeare* (Oxford, 1939) and Fredson Bowers' recapitulation in *On Editing Shakespeare and the Elizabethan Dramatists* (Philadelphia, 1955), 83-86.


22. The term is Bowers's *ibid.*, 198.

23. See Bowers's *Textual and Literary Criticism*, where the method of subtraction is clearly formulated. In Bowers's words, we must seek to "restore the shape of the lost [original] manuscript as we strip away ... the veil of print" (81). What is stripped away is the compositorial element in the printed texts.


25. James Thorpe, *Principles of Textual Criticism*; Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*; Donald Pizer, "On the Editing of Modern American Texts," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* 75 (1971), 147-53. Gaskell and Thorpe dissent from within, however, in the sense that they share the heritage of the genealogical method and the New Bibliography, as well as a commitment to certain crucial concepts, like the ideal of authorial intention. Another critique from within can be observed in the work of George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson. Kane and Donaldson emphasize "subjectivity" in the editing process where Bowers emphasizes system and theory. See *Piers Plowman: The B Version*, ed. George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson (London, 1975), 130-31 and 212-13. The most significant departure from the Bowers line to date has been Hans Zeller's "A New Approach to the Critical Constitution of Literary Texts," *SB* 28 (1975), 231-64. The fact that this paper was first printed in English in Bowers's journal testifies to the intellectual vigor and purity which has always characterized Bowers's work.

26. Although Morse Peckham's essay "Reflections on the Foundations of Modern Textual Editing," (Profil 1 [1971], 122-55) was an attempt to deal with the issues theoretically, his way of proceeding—via communications theory and psychology—seems to me to have missed the crucial issues by eliding the social and historical perspective.


31. *Ibid.*, 381-82. The crux here is the status of the so-called "indifferent readings." See the more developed discussion below, pp. 59-64, 113-15.


34. Tanselle, "Recent Editorial Discussion," 64.

35. *Ibid*.


40. It seems odd that critics have not been more alive to the differences between the textual-critical problems which are characteristic of Shakespearean studies and the analogous problems in more modern works. Bowers and the New Bibliographers were well
aware of the differences between Shakespearean problems and classical problems (see n. 17 above). The differences between the publishers and printers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and those of the Elizabethan and neoclassical periods are very great—in their levels of skill and standardized procedure, in their possession of more efficient technologies, and in the more professional and intimate relations they maintained with their authors. See Gaskell's remark quoted above, p. 58. As Gaskell suggests, these differences should not permit critics to treat the problem of accidentals in modern works with an approach designed for the treatment of an Elizabethan situation. The method of punctuating modern printed texts can hardly be seen as a contamination process in itself at all, given the sort of supervision which accompanies the printing of nineteenth- and twentieth-century books by author, publisher, and both in concert.

41. See Zeller, "A New Approach."

42. Tanselle, Selected Studies, 314. This formulation, I should point out, differs significantly from Bowers. In a letter to me Tanselle has pointed out "that your interpretation of the phrase is not what I had in mind. . . . I used the wording . . . only because a critical text will not normally coincide with any single preserved document. . . . I did not mean that phraseology to imply acceptance—as a general rule—of the kinds of alterations made in a publishing office. . . ."

43. The problem here reveals itself in the illustrations provided by Hershel Parker in his interesting essay "Melville and the Concept of "Author's Final Intentions,\" Proof I (1971), 156-68.

44. Tanselle, Selected Studies, 283-84.


46. Brack and Barnes, Bibliography, 195.


49. Tanselle, Selected Studies, 330.

50. Ibid., 332.


52. Tanselle, Selected Studies, 330.

53. Ibid., 300.


56. Ibid., 820, 865 (letters of 30 Jan. 1803 and 19 Dec. 1808).

57. Ibid., 867.


59. Tanselle, Selected Studies, 284.

60. See Foxon's discussion of these matters in his essay cited above, note 4.


62. The Autobiography of Malcolm X and similar works raise the problem of the authority of the ghost writer. See below pp. 85-86.

64. Tanselle, Selected Studies, 339.

65. The term 'ideal text' should not be confused with the technical term from bibliography of 'ideal copy'. For a good discussion of the latter see G. Thomas Tanselle, "The Concept of Ideal Copy," SB 33 (1980), 18-53.

66. The complexity of the problems in establishing an orderly recension for the Piers Plowman manuscripts is so great that Kane was forced to abandon the genealogical approach. His remarks on the state of the A manuscripts are noteworthy: "recension is not a practicable method for the editor of the A manuscripts. Nor is the creation of a hierarchy, with some one copy elevated to the role of authority: while some of these manuscripts are more corrupt than others, all are corrupt to an indeterminate but evidently considerable extent" (Piers Plowman: The A Version [London, 1960], 115).

67. Gaskell, A New Introduction to Bibliography, 337.

68. Byron's intentions toward all aspects of his various works shifted with time and circumstances, nor does his case seem, in this respect, untypical of most authors. Byron is particularly interesting because his shifting intentions are often explicitly tied up with non-subjective factors of different kinds.


72. Tanselle has already urged that this concept of definitiveness is untenable and should be eschewed ("Greg's Theory of Copy-Text and the Editing of American Literature").


78. Vinaver, Malory, xciv.

79. Ibid., civ.


83. Randall McLeod has an amusing (but trenchant) essay called "UnEditing Shakespeare," Sub-Stance 33/34 (1982), 28-55 which bears on the topic. He shows how crucial the physical form of a work can be, how a work's meaning may depend as much upon its format and physical constitution as it does on its words.

85. See Lorene Pouncey, "The Fallacy of the Ideal Copy," Library, 5th Series 33 (1978), 108-18. I disagree with a number of this essay's positions, but its discussion nicely highlights the place which modernized editions ought to have in the mind of the critical editor.

86. R. C. Bald, "Editorial Problems—A Preliminary Survey," in Art and Error: Modern Textual Editing, ed. Ronald Gottesman and Scott Bennett (London, 1970), 42. The article appeared originally in SB 3 (1950-51), 13-17. For Bowers's view see Brack and Barnes, Bibliography, 194-95: "One may flatly assert that any text that is modernized can never pretend to be scholarly, no matter at what audience it is aimed." But Bowers is less obdurate on the subject elsewhere: see On Editing Shakespeare, 69.

87. Various attacks upon the CEA editions were grounded in an awareness of the scholar's obligations (his scholarly obligations) to a more general audience—obligations which are all the more pressing when classic American works are involved. The general point concealed in this situation is that all literary works, including scholarly editions, are produced in a functional relation to a public, and their value is partly to be measured by this relationship. Audiences vary, of course, and some scholarly works are produced for a very small circle of scholars. The point is simply that the theory of a critical edition must make its assumptions about the audience an explicit part of the theory.


89. Greene's paper was given as a lecture at Johns Hopkins University in 1981 and again at California Institute of Technology in 1982; it is published in Poetic Traditions of the English Renaissance,


93. Ibid.

94. That is to say, it was not guided by the appeal to final intentions, although one might easily be led to think so, in the present climate of critical opinion, since the OET texts are based—in these cases—on texts which Bowers would approve. The point is that the two best optional texts of "To the Po" possess, in my view, the status of versions (in Zeller's sense of that term). An editor therefore cannot choose between them on the rule of final intentions, but must establish other grounds for a choice.

95. See Donaldson's discussion in Speaking of Chaucer, 102-18.


97. Tanselle, "Recent Editorial Discussion," 23-65. Page references to this essay will be given in parentheses in the text.

98. What I mean here may be clarified through the following remark by Pierre Machery on the nature of ideology: 'Like a planet revolving around an absent sun, an ideology is made out of what it does not mention.' It exists, he goes on to say, 'because there are things which must not be spoken of'—or, I should add, which have not been spoken of, or (sometimes) which cannot be spoken of. See A Theory of Literary Production (London, 1978), 132.
99. That is to say, its original usefulness has been exhausted as the field of study has developed itself and—in this process—has laid bare the obscurities inherent in the concept as it was originally formulated.


101. See Bowers's essay cited in note 18 above.

102. The passage is from Wilhelm von Humboldt; it is quoted by Wolf in his *Darstellung der Alterthums-Wissenschaft* (1807), in the *Kleine Schriften*, vol 2, ed. G. Bernhardy (Halle, 1869), 884-85n.

103. I am using the term "paradigm" here in the context of Thomas Kuhn's writings on the history of science. Margaret Masterman's essay "The Nature of a Paradigm" discusses the emergence, elaboration, and collapse of paradigms in a way that I have found most useful. See *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave (Cambridge, 1970), 59-90.

104. Byron's letter to Thomas Moore, 1 June 1818.

105. From Edward Brown's letter to me, June 1981.
Voss, J. H., 13

Warren, Michael, 130–31
Wellek, Rene, 130
Weller, Barry, 14
West, M. L., 1–2, 129
Wheeler, Stephen, 72–73, 139
Wieland, C. M., 13
Wilson, Edmund, 94, 130–31
Wolf, F. A., 12, 117, 119, 121, 142;
Prolegomena ad Homerum, 132
Wolfe, Thomas, 78–80, 139
Wordsworth, William, 120; The
Prelude, 32, 105

Zeller, Hans, 32, 42, 58, 61, 68,
101–2, 107, 134, 136, 138, 141

Urkowitz, Steven, 131

Vickers, Brian, 131
Vinaver, Eugene, 66–67, 82–84,
138–39

Turner, Dawson, 46

Tinsmanaro, Sebastiano, 133

Thorpe, James, 21, 31, 34, 42, 55,
101–2, 129, 132, 134, 137

Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, 48; Maud, 49;
Poems (1832), 49; The Princess, 49

Swinburne, Algernon C., 80, 139;
Lesbia Brandon, 80, 139

Super, R. H., 73, 139

Tanselle, G. Thomas, 5, 14, 21–22, 27,
31–35, 39, 42, 67, 111–15, 127,
129, 132, 134–39, 141