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Essays

Teodolinda Barolini
The Time of His Life: Petrarch’s Marginalia and
Rerum vulgarium fragmenta 23 1

Marco Francesco Aresu
Modalità iconica e istanza metatestuale
nella sestina petrarchesca Mia benigna fortuna
el uiuer lieto (Rv 332) 11

Tom Clucas
A Genetic Edition of William Godwin’s Political Justice:
MS Abinger c. 24, folios 36r–40v 26

Jeffrey Todd Knight
Invisible Ink: A Note on Ghost Images
in Early Printed Books 53

W. Michael Johnstone
Toward a Book History of William Wordsworth’s 1850 Prelude 63

Anglo-American Reviews

Van Hulle, Dirk. 2008. Manuscript Genetics,
Joyce’s Know-How, Beckett’s Nohow. 92

Alan W. Friedman

Dierks, Konstantin. 2009. In My Power: Letter Writing and
Communications in Early America. 94

Adrian Chastain Weimer
CONTINENTAL AND MEDITERRANEAN REVIEW ESSAY


H. Wayne Storey

Notes on Contributors 107
The Society for Textual Scholarship 109
The Time of His Life

Petrarch’s Marginalia

and

Rerum vulgarium fragmenta 23

Teodolinda Barolini

Abstract

Petrarch’s draft notebooks, MS Vaticano Latino 3196, contain marginalia that often record the date and time of composition of a poem, along with date and time of transcription into Vaticano Latino 3195 (the volume of collected poems that became known to posterity as Canzoniere), interleaved with personal notations. I examine these marginalia, haunting in their immediacy and intimacy, for what they can tell us about Petrarch’s poetics, with particular attention to the notations to Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade, the poem that became number 23 and the first canzone of the Rerum vulgarium fragmenta.

There is no author I can think of in whose work time has a more privileged place than Petrarch — and I am including in my tally works of such explicit time-centeredness as Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu. Titles were not as significant in the fourteenth century as they were in the twentieth, but in fact Petrarch’s own title for the lyric sequence traditionally called Canzoniere does thematize time, albeit in a fashion more oblique than Proust’s title. The title Rerum vulgarium fragmenta (Fragments of Vernacular Matters), uses the idea of fragmentation to highlight the metaphysical basis of time, the medium that fragments us, that makes us multiple and metamorphic, that robs us of ontological stillness and wholeness. The title Rerum vulgarium fragmenta also brilliantly reflects the process of material construction, whereby Petrarch built his lyric collection by transcribing “fragments” — poems from his draft notebooks — into a unified collection, a standing order. The process by which Petrarch materially constructed his lyric collection (and also, significantly, his epistolary collections) in itself is dialectically enmeshed with Petrarch’s abiding metaphysical concerns, and thus the title Rerum vulgarium fragmenta reflects
both the material and the metaphysical, the author’s hand and the author’s thought.

We can think of time in Petrarch’s work in a number of ways. First, and most obvious, is the continual thematic invocation of time and its passing, present in his poems from first to last, but not just in his poems; time is thematized in all of Petrarch’s writings, from the Latin to the vernacular, from the philosophic to the erotic, from the humanistic to the religious. My favorite representative of this vast thematic current is this passage from one of the letters:

Ecce ad hunc locum epystole perveneram deliberansque quid dicerem amplius seu quid non dicerem, hec inter, ut assolet, papirum vacuum inverso calamo feriebam. Res ipsa materiam obtulit cogitanti inter dimensionis morulas tempus labi, meque interim collabi abire deficere et, ut proprie dicam, mori. Continue morimur, ego dum hec scribo, tu dum leges, alii dum audient dumque non audient; ego quoque dum hec leges moriar, tu moreris dum hec scribo, ambo morimur, omnes morimur, semper morimur [. . .].

(Having reached this point in the letter, I was wondering what more to say or not to say, and meanwhile, as is my custom, I was tapping the blank paper with my pen. This action provided me with a subject, for I considered how, during the briefest of intervals, time rushes onward, and I along with it, slipping away, failing, and to speak honestly, dying. We all are constantly dying, I while writing these words, you while reading them, others while hearing or not hearing them; I too shall be dying while you read this, you are dying while I write this, we both are dying, we all are dying, we are always dying [. . .]).

I find this passage compelling, because in it Petrarch makes the time of writing and the time of being literally the same: the time of his life. And, to the degree that these words reach out to us and spell our own mortality, they spell the time of our lives as well.

After the category of theme, we can move to the category of form: Petrarch was deeply invested in the invention (or re-invention) of genres that are temporally charged, that problematize narrativity and hence time:

1. Rossi v 942, 220 (Fam. 24.1.26–27). The translation is Aldo Bernardo’s (1985, 312). In fact, Petrarch’s own introductory rubric announces the letter’s central topic: “Ad Philippum Cavallicensem epyscopum, de inextimabili fuga temporis” (“To Philippe, Bishop of Cavaillon, on the incredible flight of time” [Rossi 1942, 213]).
the lyric sequence (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*) and the epistolary collection (*Familiares*, *Seniles*). Within the already temporally charged lyric sequence, he cultivated meters that are obsessive in their manipulation of time, for instance the sestina.\(^2\) At a micro-level as well, his lyrics are magisterial in their manipulation of time through the use of time-engaged tropes such as chiasmus and hysteron proteron as well as in their syntax and grammar, as is clear from the study of his deployment of tense.\(^3\)

All of these examples are reflected in the material record: Petrarch left behind clear documentation of the ways he went about writing his lyric sequence that shows us how his method of composition in itself reflects his awareness of time and its passing. Never is this more apparent than in his remarkable marginalia in the paper and parchment MS Vatican Latino 3196, all in Petrarch’s hand, of which we possess eighteen chartae devoted to his lyrics (and those of others), pieces of his *Triumphus Eternitatis*, and a fragment from the letter *Familiaris* 16.6. Often on these holograph chartae we find as well his recording of the date and time of composition, along with personal notations and dates and times of transcription that are haunting in their immediacy and intimacy. In the following pages I will focus on these marginalia and particularly on the record of composition regarding a poem that his marginal comments indicate was very special to him and that eventually became number 23 of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*: the first canzone of the collection, *Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade*.

On the first charta from Petrarch’s draft notebooks (now Latino 3196), we can see a sampling of his marginalia.\(^4\) In the upper right corner, Petrarch noted the date in very precise detail: “1366. Sabato an[te] [lu]ce(m), dece(m)br(is) 5” (“Saturday, December 5, 1366, before daylight”).\(^5\) By noting the year, the date, the day of the week, and even the time of day, he

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3. On chiasmus and in particular *Ref* 266, see Barolini 2009a, 219–21. On tense in the *Ref* see Taddeo 1983. After a brief section on “Il tempo come tema nelle *Rime*”, Taddeo deals with “Il tempo come categoria formale nei sonetti”, showing how Petrarch employs tense to obtain “quello che è il carattere specifico della poesia petrarchesca, la *profondità della prospettiva temporale*” (75).
4. Transcriptions and translations of these marginalia are my own from MS Vaticano Latino 3196. Thanks to Wayne Storey for his assistance with the transcriptions and to Julie Van Peteghem for her assistance with the translations. For editions of Petrarch’s MS Latino 3196, see Romanò 1951 and, more recently, Paolino 2000. See as well Salvo Cozzo’s photographic edition (1895).
5. Petrarch’s frequent abbreviations are expanded in parentheses. Square brackets indicate conjecture. See Paolino 2000, 175 for the reconstruction — through Ubaldini 1642 and Appel 1891 — of this annotation now faded with time.
situates this transcription within the flow of time, registering quite literally the time of his life.\textsuperscript{6} Above the first sonnet on c. 1r, \textit{Oltra l’usato modo}, to the left, he indicates that the transcribed poem is by his friend Sennuccio del Bene with the notation “Respo(n)sio Se(n)nucij n(ost)ri” (“Reply of our Sennuccio”). We should note that one of the stories told by the marginalia of Vaticano Latino 3196 is the place of friendship at the very heart of Petrarch’s most intimate life, his writer’s workshop; in other words, the marginalia are also testaments to the place he accorded to friendship. Above the next sonnet, \textit{Se le parti del corpo mio destrutte}, Petrarch wrote “Iacobus de Columna lomber(iensis) ep(iscopu)s” (“Giacomo Colonna bishop of Lombez”), indicating that the sonnet is by another friend, Giacomo Colonna.

Above the third sonnet transcribed on the \textit{recto} of the same first charta of Vaticano Latino 3196, \textit{Mai non vedranno}, which eventually became \textit{Rvf} 322, Petrarch wrote “Responsio mea sera ualde” (“My response, late indeed”), a notation as haunting as any poem written by this poet of a nostalgia so cultivated and pronounced that at times it is even proleptic.\textsuperscript{7} In the postilla “Responsio mea sera ualde” there is, however, no prolepsis, just retrospection: the sonnet \textit{Mai non vedranno} was written as a response to Giacomo Colonna’s sonnet (\textit{Se le parti del corpo mio destrutte}) congratulating Petrarch on receiving the laurel crown in 1341; Giacomo himself died in August 1341, before Petrarch was able to reply to his congratulations. Petrarch’s postilla expresses regret for time lost and for a future forever tarnished by what he failed to do in the past. Not for Petrarch the can-do optimism and psychological good health of staying focused on what we can control in the present, of leaving behind what is past and hence irreparable. All the regret and belatedness that mark human interactions — all the things we wish we had said before it was forever too late to say them — are contained in the spare notation “Responsio mea sera ualde”.

On the \textit{verso} of the second charta, we find Petrarch’s notation made on 19 May 1368, in which he gives even more precise information about

\begin{itemize}
  \item[6.] We should bear in mind that Petrarch died in 1374, so this postilla was written quite late in his life.
  \item[7.] An example of proleptic nostalgia is found in canzone 126, \textit{Chiare, fresche et dolci acquce}, whose complex temporal shifts encompass the imagining of a future time (“Tempo verrà” [v. 27]) in which Laura will return to their shared past, their “usato soggiorno” (v. 28), with the result that the love that she never showed him in the past of the macrotext is shown in an imagined future recollection of a past that is created within the present of a microtext. Citations from the \textit{Rerum vulgarium fragmenta} (\textit{Rvf}) are taken from \textsc{Contini} [1964] 1972, bearing in mind \textsc{Storey} 2004.
\end{itemize}
“the time of his life”, recording his insomnia: “1368. maij 19 uen(er)is, nocte (con)cub(ia). i(n)so(m)nis diu [ta(n)de(m) su]rgo (et) occ(ur)rit h(oc) uetustissimu(m) an(te) XXV a(n)nos” (“19 May 1368, Friday, in the middle of the night. Unable to sleep, I finally got up and this very old composition from 25 years ago presents itself” [O bella man, Ref 199]).

Here Petrarch tells us that a poem on which he was working in 1368 was first composed circa 1343, a quarter of a century earlier. Very important is the information recorded in the postilla not only about the temporal nature of Petrarchan composition but also about the self-consciously temporal nature of the process, as documented also in his notation on c. 7r to the sonnets Per mirar Policleto and Quando giunse a Simon, which became Ref 77 and 78: “tr(anscripti) isti duo i(n) ord(ine), p(ost) mille a(n)nos 1357 m(er)cur(ii) hora 3 noue(m)br(is) 29” (“These two were transcribed in order, after 1000 years, Wednesday 29 November 1357 at 9 a.m.”). Saying that he finally transcribed these sonnets into the standing order “post mille annos” is Petrarch’s way of drawing attention to a process that he experienced as supremely temporal. He worked on his lyrics off and on for years and years, always conscious of time as the medium in which his work came to fruition: the very brine of life, the salt of existence in which his words were pickled and became “done”, ready to be copied into the codex in which the ordered sequence was being constructed.

The sonnet Voglia mi sprona, Amor mi guida et scorge, appears on c. 5r. It eventually became number 211 in the Rerum vulgarium fragmenta, but — according to Petrarch’s notation — it almost failed to make the cut:

Miru(m), h(un)c ca(n)cell(atum) (et) da(m)natu(m) p(ost) m(e)nu(m) b(ri) sat(sti) m(,), no(n) uer(leg)e(n)s, absolu(j) et tr(anscrpsi) i(n) ord(ine) stati(m), no(n) obst(ante). 1369 lu(n)i 22, hora 23, uen(er)is, pauc(a) p(ost)ea, die 27, i(n) uesp(er)is, mutauj fine[m] [. . .] h(oc) f[. . .] e(r)it a[. . .]9

(Amazing. By chance rereading this deleted and rejected sonnet after many years, I readmitted it and transcribed it immediately into the order, notwithstanding [. . .] Friday 22 June 1369 at 5 a.m. A little later, the 27th, in the evening, I changed the ending [. . .]).

“Amazing” — “Mirum” — writes Petrarch, and it is truly amazing, for the ending of Voglia mi sprona, which Petrarch tells us he rewrote shortly after

8. See again Paolino 2000, 190 on the nineteenth-century origins of the conjectured “tandem su” before the codex’s deterioration.
9. The postilla has for several reasons attracted paleographic and interpretative conjecture. See Paolino 2000, 213.
readmitting it to his ordered collection, gives us the year of his falling in love, or as he puts it, of his entering the labyrinth: “Mille trecento ventisette, a punto / su l’ora prima, il di sesto d’aprile, / nel laberinto entrai, né veggio ond’esco” (“One thousand three hundred twenty-seven, exactly at the first hour of the sixth day of April, I entered the labyrinth, nor do I see where I may get out of it” [Rvf 211.12–14]). Without this poem, which was “cancellatum” and “damnatum”, we would be less able to reconstruct a chronology of the Canzoniere, because the all-important date “Mille trecento ventisette” (1327) is absent from the previous version. We begin to see a pattern emerging from the notations: the more time Petrarch spends working on a poem, the more time he incorporates into the poem. Given more time to think and work, he will move in the direction of language that is ever more temporalized, ever more freighted with time. The lengthy process of composition frequently records an emendation or correction or rewriting that is more temporally charged than the original variant.

This process, whereby an ever more temporalized diction emerges from a lengthy crucible of composition, is well displayed by the evolution of the canzone Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade (Rvf 23). This long canzone — at 169 verses it is longer than the longest canto of Dante’s Commedia (Purgatorio 32 contains 160 verses), and the longest poem in Petrarch’s collection — narrates the vicissitudes of the lover/poet as he undergoes a series of Ovidian transformations.10 Begun according to most estimates between 1327 and 1337, the last postilla is dated 1356, at least twenty years later.11 The recto and verso of charta 11 of the draft codex contain a number of Latin notations. We should note that their chronological order, in which we will consider them, is not the order in which they appear on the charta.12

The earliest transcription was actually written on the verso of c. 11 in the upper margin on 3 April 1350: “p(ost) m(u)ltos a(n)nos, 1350 Ap(r)

10. On the Ovidian transformations of Rvf 23, see Barolini 2009b, 50–53.
11. See Martinelli 1977, 50–79 for a review of the dating of the canzone. Of particular note is Petrucci’s paleographic evaluation (1967, 29), which identifies Petrarch’s adoption of a chancery minuscule hand between 1336 and 1337 as the script used for cc. 7–8, 9–10, 11r, and 16 of Vaticano Latino 3196. See also Petrucci 1967, 107–14 for a contextualization of this cursive hand that was essential to Petrarch in his letter writing and draft copies of his poetry.
12. The spatial orientation of the notations on c. 11r and v demonstrate that Petrarch’s notes were less systematic than they were driven by the impulse of time and the poet’s repeated attention to revision of the text.
The second postilla belongs to a year later, 1351, and recounts that the poem has been completed, although not yet corrected, and defines it as “de primis inventionibus nostris”, thus maintaining a symmetry between the poem’s content (“Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade” [v. 1]) and its compositional chronology: “Explicit. sed nondum correcta [. . .] nocte concubia”. Six years after the first notation of 1350, on 4 November 1356, Petrarch is working on verse 156, in the canzone’s concluding stanza, and, after suggesting a variant to himself (“u(e): I’ narro il uero forse (et) c(etera)”), ruminates as follows: “1356 novembri 4, sero, du(m) cogito de fine harum nuguum” (“4 November 1356, at a late hour, while I thought about the ending of these trifles”). Six days later, on 10 November 1356, in the upper margin of c. 11r above the entire poem he notes that the canzone has finally — “post multos et multos annos” — been transcribed into the standing order: “transcripta in ordine post multis et multis annos, quibusdam mutatis 1356, Ioannis in usperis, 10 novebris, mediolani” (“transcribed in order after many, many years, with some changes, 1356 Thursday, in the evening, 10 November, Milan”).

13. See Dutschke 1977, 30. For this notation I have followed Dutschke, who prints “post multos annos” with what follows as one postilla on p. 29, whereas Paolino (2000, 842) transcribes them as two separate entries.

14. Added to the lower margin of c. 11v, “Explicit” is in an ink that is different from that in which he writes “sed nondum correcta [. . .] nocte concubia”. There is little way to measure the lapse of time between the two entries.

15. For additional but undated variants, see Paolino 2000, 245.
Again, there is a mirroring consonance between poem and life: as the poem is revised, as it changes in time, it becomes more temporalized, more existential, in a word, more Petrarchan. While on the whole Petrarch remains very faithful to his old poem, making revisions that are, as he says, hardly extensive (“quibusdam mutatis”), they are telling. There are, in my estimation, three major sites of revision.\(^\text{16}\) The first is in the second stanza, verses 30–31, where the poem comes to a first existential climax in “Lasso, che son! che fui!” (30). Although Petrarch toyed with this verse and registers many slight variants, from “Che son lasso et che fui” to “Or che son et che fui” to “Oimè che son che fui”, he found from the outset and preserved the key existential meditation on the self captured by the two first-person verbs, one in the present, one in the passato remoto: \(\text{sono}\) and \(\text{fui}\), a temporal contrast of which Petrarch was fond (cfr. \text{Rvf} 145.13, 252.13). This verse is paired with a verse that Petrarch however changed completely. Verse 31 mutates over time from a narrative statement, “Et come l’ò provato assai per tempo”, to a proverbial sententia that reminds us that only from the perspective of the end can one presume to gauge one’s life: “La vita el fin, e ’l dì loda la sera” (31).

Another occasion in which Petrarch revises in such a way as to highlight the existential is found in the same canzone at verse 80, where his transformation into a stone mutates from “D’un freddo in vista sbigottito sasso” through “D’un freddo e ’n vista sbigottito sasso” to the final and uncanny “D’un quasi vivo et sbigottito sasso”, where the stone’s coldness is unpacked in order to get at the existential interstices that this poem probes: in the same way that he is caught between the present and the past in “Lasso, che son! che fui!” he is a stone, dead and inert, but somehow “quasi vivo” in the final version of verse 80.

The most profound revision occurs when, at the lowest ebb of the lover’s fortunes, the poet interrupts the narrative: “Ma perché ’l tempo è corto, / la penna al buon voler non pò gir presso: / onde più cose ne la mente scritte / vo trapassando” (“But because time is short, my pen cannot follow closely my good will; wherefore I pass over many things written in my mind” [vv. 90–93]). He uses poetry to break violently free; because “living voices” — “le vive voci” — are forbidden him, he will cry out with paper and ink: “le vive voci m’erano interditte; / ond’io gridai con carta

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16. A revision that I do not discuss is v. 28, where the rewriting of “Et quel ch’i’ non provava in me quel tempo” conforms to the pattern of emphasizing the existential quandary of the self: “né rompea il sonno, et quel che in me non era, / mi pareva un miracolo in altrui” (vv. 28–29).
et con incostro” (“Words spoken aloud were forbidden me; so I cried out with paper and ink” [vv. 98–99]). What he writes is a disclaimer of self in the language of metamorphosis; he who changes shapes, taking other identities through love, does not possess his self: “Non son mio, no” (“I am not my own, no” [100]). This quintessentially Petrarchan focus on self and identity was painstakingly achieved, for the earlier version of this verse is courtly and reminiscent of earlier stilnovist poetics: “Però con una carta et con enchiostro / Dissi: accorrete, donna, al fedel vostro!” (“Therefore with a paper and ink I said: run, lady, to your faithful servant!”) became “ond’io gridai con carta et con incostro: / Non son mio, no. S’io moro, il danno è vostro” (“so I cried out with paper and ink: I am not my own, no; if I die the fault is yours”).

Far from merely technical, the marginal notations to *Nel dolce tempo* are, like the revisions we have just rehearsed, nothing short of existential; they afford Petrarch an ancillary venue, alongside a poem that in itself is all about time, in which to ruminate on the time of his life. From the first “post multos annos” to the last “post multos et multos annos”, from the idea of the first of his compositions (“de primis inventionibus nostris”) to the idea of the end of his collection (“de fine harum nugarum”), these are *postille* of ink that might as well be of blood.

Indeed, as Petrarch writes in *Nel dolce tempo*, the cries of his primal self are etched with ink on paper. But the poems are by definition, through the beautiful artifices of meter and rhetoric, and through the longue durée of their composition, necessarily somewhat belated, somewhat detached from the self that creates them. The truly primal cries are preserved in a primacy paradoxically reinforced by their occasional and secondary status in *Vaticano Latino* 3196. Etched in fading *incostro* on the fragile *carte* that preserve them, Petrarch’s marginal notations are the authentic witnesses to what it means to “gridare con carta et con incostro” — to fight against time by embracing it with a writer’s tools.

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Modalità iconica e istanza
metatestuale nella
sestina petrarchesca
*Mia benigna fortuna el uiuer lieto*
(Rvf CCCXXXII)

Francesco Marco Aresu

**Abstract**

This essay studies the metatextual implications of the interaction among metrical structure, semantic articulation, and material layout in Petrarch’s double sestina *Mia benigna fortuna el uiuer lieto*, as the poem appears in the holograph of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (MS Vaticano Latino 3195).

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*Et moi aussi je suis peintre*  
G. Apollinaire

Il presente studio affronta le relazioni tra la struttura metrica della forma sestina, la sua articolazione semantica, e la sua disposizione materiale nell’olografo petrarchesco dei *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (MS Vaticano Latino 3195), con particolare riferimento al componimento CCCXXXII *Mia benigna fortuna el uiuer lieto*; analizza quindi il significato di questa relazione nei termini di una istanza metatestuale, che si risolve in direttive di decodifica del testo, verbali e iconiche, offerte al lettore dal testo stesso; individua infine in queste disposizioni un rapporto ma-

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1. La sestina tra forma metrica e mise en page

Con una certa approssimazione si è soliti attribuire ad Arnaut Daniel la qualifica di inventor della forma sestina: in una lettura delle forme metriche che è più teleologica che storica, si suole poi delineare un progressivo perfezionarsi del significante metrico nella lirica di Dante e Petrarca. A questo progresso tecnico si accompagnerebbe una più compiuta espressione del significato poetico o, meglio, una più profonda inerenza del metro alla logica poetica. Nell’evoluzione della forma da Arnaut a Petrarca, in breve, la complessa forma metrica, da mero esercizio formale, si adibirebbe progressivamente alla complessa portata semantica del componimento, e di questa sarebbe estrinsecazione.

Secondo una critica vulgata (Riesz 1971, Roncaglia 1981), il trobar ric di Arnaut, tacciato di impoetico virtuosismo e di subordinazione artificiosa del significato a meri criteri di tecnica versificatoria, sarebbe riscattato nelle sestine dantesche, e rifunzionalizzato per conciliare aspetto formale e dato semantico in una superiore unità; tale percorso raggiungerebbe la sua klímax concettuale e tecnica nelle nove sestine petrarchesche, per esaurirsi infine nelle esibizioni di abilità combinatoria della retorica dei canzonieri tardo-rinascimentali e barocchi.

La realtà testuale è di fatto più articolata e molteplice: se è lecito delineare una dinamica intertestuale che coinvolga la produzione dei tre autori, la nozione teorica e metricologica della forma sestina e la coscienza del suo sviluppo storico non sono invece scontate né facilmente individuabili prima della produzione lirica petrarchesca.

Nell’ambito della riflessione dantesca sulle forme metriche non vi sono difatti elementi che inducano a ritenere che la sestina sia compresa e individuata come un’entità metrica distinta dalla canzone. Di quest’ultima, la sestina sembra piuttosto rappresentare una particolare configurazione: solo con Petrarca, per le ragioni che si diranno, si può sostenere a ragione, o perlomeno suggerire con plausibilità e ragionevolezza, l’ipotesi della sestina come forma e genere autonomi.

In un noto passo del De vulgari eloquentia (II x 2), Dante cita la sua Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra in riferimento a quelle canzoni di Arnaut Daniel in cui la stanza sia indivisa e priva di diesis:
Quia quedam [scil. stantie] sunt sub una oda continua usque ad ultimum progressive, hoc est sine interactione modulationis cuiusquam et sine diesi — et diesim dicimus deductionem vergentem, de una sola in aliam (hanc voltam vocamus, cum vulgus alloquimur) — et huiusmodi stantia usus est fere in omnibus cantionibus suis Arnaldus Danielis, et nos eum securi sumus cum diximus

Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra.

(Mengaldo 1968, 51)

Rispetto alla canzone arnaldiana sua omologa (Lo ferm voler qu’el cor m’intra, che tuttavia non viene mai citata esplicitamente), Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra innova nella direzione della omeometria (con stanze di soli endecasillabi, laddove il verso incipitario di ogni stanza della canzone di Arnaut è un eptasillabo femminile), della regolarità nella costruzione di stanze capcaudadas, e della “statutaria assenza dell’aequivocum” (Frasca 1992, 153).

La tecnica delle coblas capcaudadas è implicata dall’elemento forse più caratteristico della forma sestina, ovvero lo schema rimico noto col termine di retrogradatio cruciata: identiche parole-rima, dissolutas nell’ambito della singola stanza, chiodono i versi di ogni stanza; la loro progressiva articolazione è inoltre determinata dalla posizione che esse occupano nella stanza precedente, secondo una disposizione descritta compiutamente da Alfred Jeanroy nel suo studio della “sestina” dantesca: 1-2-3-4-5-6 > 6-1-5-2-4-3 (Jeanroy 1913).

Sulle innovazioni metriche portate avanti da Dante, si innesta il trattamento petrarchesco della sestina. La relazione di consustanzialità, per non dire di immanenza, tra parola letteraria e scrittura di essa, tra fatto testuale e unità materiale, determina in Petrarca implicazioni grafiche che incidono sulla elaborazione e sulla fruizione del testo letterario.

Benché difatti la natura della canzone–sestina sia così specificamente peculiare rispetto ai moduli consueti della canzone arnaldiana e dantesca, la più antica tradizione testuale di Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra non sembra concedere elementi che dimostrino un diverso trattamento materiale della canzone–sestina, tale da giustificare una classificazione di genere che distingua tra genere canzone e genere sestina.

Le autorevoli testimonianze trecentesche dei codici Martelli 12, Chigiano L VIII 305, Magliabechiano VI 143, Veronese 445 e dei due autografi di Giovanni Boccaccio (Chigiano L v 176 e Toledano 104, 6) presentano
Al poco giorno e al gran cerchio d’ombra nella caratteristica disposizione orizzontale che è propria della canzone. Benché, d’altra parte, nella tradizione manoscritta occitanica sia attestata (ancorché non comune) la disposizione verticale di versi e cola, non si ha riscontro di una differente mise en page della canzone-sestina antecedente all’olografo petrarchesco.

Al contrario, le nove sestine dei Fragmenta di Petrarca, benché poco innovino a livello strutturale rispetto alla canzone-sestina dantesca, si impongono all’attenzione per la rigorosa e sistematica disposizione nella quale esse si presentano sulla pagina dell’olografo petrarchesco:

[...]

La sistematicità nella disposizione verticale delle sestine rispetto alle canzoni segnala la consapevolezza di una riconosciuta distinzione, a livello di stesura materiale, tra le due forme metriche; d’altra parte, a livello teorico e critico, una nota autografa di Petrarca sulla c. 72v dell’olografo, a margine della canzone Vergine bella/ che di sol vestita, indica che sestine e canzoni erano ancora tipologicamente e numericamente accomunate nel progetto del canzoniere: “38. cu(m) duab(us) q(ue) s(un)t i(n) papiro”. Si vuole interpretare questa discrepanza tra pratica della scrittura e definizione tecnica come indizio di un valore iconico aggiunto della sestina rispetto alla canzone, e di un ulteriore scarto nel processo che affrancava la prima dalla seconda in termini di statuto e di genere metrici e letterari.

La difformità tra la resa grafica di canzone e sestina non sembra difatti essere casuale. Il sistema rimico articolato secondo la retrogradatio cruciata e la sequenza verticale dei versi, in cui materialmente la sestina petrarchesca si presenta al lettore, creano una tensione tra progressione sequenziale della decodifica del testo e necessità di riconsiderarne la conformazione metrica dei versi e delle stanzette precedenti, per appurarne e apprezzarne l’elaborazione prosodica e la ratio metrorum.
Alla verticalità di una istanza diacronica e sequenziale si affianca l’orizzontalità di una necessaria rilettura sincronica e simultanea: il sistema delle rime, nel momento stesso in cui procede sequenzialmente, richiede da parte del lettore un movimento regressivo, e quindi una ricorsività dell’atto di lettura, che si configura in una inversione insistita del ritmo di avanzamento lineare e temporale della fruizione del testo, per individuare retroattivamente la presenza di un pattern rimico o verificarne eventualmente la regolarità.

La disposizione in verticale dei versi della sestina valorizza le peculiarità metriche della stessa: da un lato, evidenzia l’intelaiatura delle capcaudadas; dall’altro, permette di cogliere con più immediatezza il moto di ricombinazione delle parole-rima e quindi di attivare il processo di lettura ricorsiva.

Si vuole suggerire, in breve, che la mise en page della sestina sia funzionale a una valorizzazione della fruizione delle sue peculiarità prosodiche e che essa aggiunga un surplus di senso al fatto linguistico e testuale stricto sensu. Il testo e la sua resa grafica interagiscono simbioticamente: la disposizione verticale evidenzia il particolare schema metrico; la retrogradatio cruciata dispone il percorso di lettura bidirezionale (progressiva e regressiva) che esalta l’estensione colonnare del testo.

2. La sestina come carmen figuratum

Crediamo sia possibile configurare la struttura segnica espressa dalla sestina come un progetto di integrazione di elemento linguistico ed elemento grafico, ovvero secondo le modalità di elaborazione e di decodifica della poesia visuale e concreta. Ci si riferisce con ciò alla tradizione poetica che percorre la scrittura letteraria occidentale dagli esperimenti ellenistici dei technopaegnia di Simia di Rodi, ai carmina figurata di Optaziano Porfirio, fino alla tradizione calligrafica della scuola palatina.2 Nella sintetica definizione di Giovanni Pozzi (1981, 27), il carme figurato è definito come un’entità composta da un messaggio linguistico e da una formazione iconica, non giustapposti [. . .] ma conviventi in una specie di ipostasi, nella quale la formazione iconica investe la sostanza linguistica. La lingua, pur producendo significati a lei congeniali, viene usata come medium per ottenere significati prodotti normalmente dall’altro ordine di rappresentazione.

Sono le modalità stesse della scrittura petrarchesca a corroborare l’ipotesi che alla tensione tra disposizione materiale e struttura linguistica sia preordinato un progetto artistico. Da un lato, il verso petrarchesco, nella celebre analisi offertane da Contini, si organizza sulla base della “dominante ritmica”, e “la parola più corsa e aggressiva sta all’inizio, con tutte le possibilità di distendersi e ripararsi” (Contini 1970, 186); dall’altro, il vincolo imposto dalla scelta limitata di parole-rima determina l’addensarsi dei morfemi di maggiore portata semantica nella posizione di clausola. Il verso si protrae verso le proprie estremità materiali, anche in virtù dell’istanza dicotomica di cui scrive Contini (1970, 186), che, attraverso le figure di ripetizione e amplificazione, tende a orientare il fraseggio del verso e del periodo in direzione orizzontale. Questo “bilanciamento bipolare” (Frasca 1992, 244) del metro in direzione ortogonale rispetto alla sequenza verticale dei versi della sestina descrive una figura quadrangolare, che richiama i carmina quadrata tardo-antichi. La tensione tra le due direzioni di percezione, orizzontale e verticale, sembra inficiare una lettura sequenziale, parola per parola e verso per verso, e presumere al contrario un approccio simultaneo al testo in tutte le sue parti. Nel caso del canzoniere petrarchesco, gli aspetti iconici non si reificano tuttavia in un concreto apparato di immagini, ma, com’è ovvio nell’ambito di un progetto grafico-editoriale votato all’essenzialità come quello di Petrarca e Malpaghini, sono limitati alla configurazione del componimento sulla pagina, alla regolazione degli spazi e dei righi, alla ripartizione dei versi per rigo di scrittura.

Il carattere iconico si presenta cioè innanzitutto come serie di relazioni logiche tra lingua e resa grafica per il tramite della scrittura: le relazioni logiche che emergono sono in primo luogo di logica poetica, e il loro obiettivo principale è di guidare visivamente il lettore nelle operazioni di decodifica del testo.

L’elemento che con più urgenza traspare dalla convergenza degli effetti prosodici e grafici è la tensione tra anelito verso la chiusura olistica e resistenza a essa, tra coesione strutturale e viceversa irriducibilità a una struttura compiuta. Da un lato si ha quindi la rigorosa intelaiatura della struttura del componimento e la chiusa formale imposta dal congedo; dall’altro la sua continua riapertura e riproducibilità: “one of Petrarch’s major innovations was to show how the same poem could be reinvented endlessly” (Shapiro 1980, 134).

In un’attenta ricognizione delle relazioni tra struttura sintattica e configurazione prosodica e metrica nell’ambito della forma sestina dalla produzione in occitanico fino ai componimenti post-petrarcheschi, Gabriele
Frasca individua nelle nove sestine dei *Fragmenta* il raggiungimento del carattere di stabilità formale. A salvaguardia di questa stabilità vi sarebbe l’esattezza algebrica e geometrica delle relazioni tra gli elementi testuali, la loro salda connessione, la cornice formale sancita dall’esaurimento delle possibili variazioni dello schema rimico e suggellata dall’imposizione della *tornada*, vera e propria *sphraghís* posta a chiusura del componimento:

[..] alla circolarità della sestina arnaldiana e dantesca (tolto il congedo, la sesta strofa può logicamente ingenerarne una settima, vale a dire tornare sulla prima) si contrappone la ‘compiutezza’ dei telai petrarcheschi (e quindi petrarchisti), in cui il congedo svolge un vero e proprio ruolo conclusivo, ovvero la ‘duplicazione’ (che non è tanto un raddoppimento quanto l’indicizio di una moltiplicazione, diciamo, ‘narrativa’).

(Frasca 1992, 208)

Benché l’analisi condotta da Frasca sia estremamente rigorosa e probativa, le sue conclusioni sulla algida finitezza della sestina di Petrarca sembrano cedere di fronte alla sestina doppia (*Rvf* CCCXXXII). In essa non è solo l’istanza narrativa a complicarsi: al contrario, è l’intera struttura testuale del componimento a reinventarsi con il procedere della sequenza della versificazione, e della sua esecuzione materiale.

Benché invero della sestina si sottolinei spesso la “eccezionale coesione formale” (Canettieri 1996, 62), il solo elemento che ne costituisce di fatto una rigorosa demarcazione è la imposizione di una *tornada*: essa segnala che il componimento è concluso e, in linea di principio, pronto per essere trasmesso. Tolta la sanzione conclusiva fornita dalla stanza di congedo, la possibilità di rideterminare il ciclo di composizione della struttura rimica, ripetendo la configurazione della stanza iniziale, è teoricamente illimitata.

La sestina petrarchesca nella sua dimensione materiale e nella sua struttura prosodica si sostanza quindi della tensione tra forma aperta e forma chiusa, tra forza centripeta e forza centrifuga, tra conclusione del ciclo di ricombinazione rimica e sua continua reinvenzione.

L’esempio che si è scelto di analizzare corrobora questa lettura. In primo luogo, la sestina doppia è l’esempio palese della reiterabilità virtualmente senza fine del sistema rimico, e della sua irriducibilità a sistema chiuso. In secondo luogo, la sua natura eminentemente autoreferenziale e metatestuale ha come oggetto specifico le potenzialità della scrittura stessa e della sua riproducibilità. È su questo aspetto che si intende ora indugiare.
3. Dinamiche metatestuali in
_Mia benigna fortuna el uiuer lieto_

Come si è detto, la disposizione materiale del componimento sulla pagina, l’artificio metrico della _retrogradatio cruciata_ e la dimensione iconica che scaturisce dall’interazione di questi due elementi, tendono a ridurre il carattere narrativo e sequenziale della vicenda esposta nel canzoniere, per creare delle nicchie di carattere statico e simultaneo:

[... it [scil. the sestina] becomes the textual equivalent of the illusion that time has stopped: if meter (and hence rhyme) is the poetic means of measuring time, then the sestina has discovered a meter that subverts itself, that — by producing circular stasis instead of linear movement — in effect refuses to do what meter must do.

(Barolini 2006, 201)

In luogo della dimensione cronologica dello sviluppo narrativo subentrà una dimensione spaziale, dove l’elemento privilegiato è la riflessione sulla natura e sulle modalità stesse della poesia petrarchesca.

I riferimenti alla scrittura del testo poetico, alla sua circolazione, alla sua dinamiche di fruizione e al sistema letterario _tout court_ non sono rare nei _Fragmenta_, a partire dallo stesso sonetto incipitario.


Un’analisi transfrastica delle occorrenze delle parole-rima e delle loro variazioni potrà mostrare quanto l’esemplare conciliazione di invarianza e legge di variazione, che Aurelio Roncaglia individua come tratto pregevole dell’articolazione delle rime della sestina petrarchesca (1981, 15), si risolva in definitiva in una sofisticata riflessione sulla complessità e la varietà di declinazioni della materia lirica nel canzoniere petrarchesco.

Se un nucleo tematico si vuole individuare, che emerga con insistenza dal trattamento delle parole-rima e dalle modificazioni indotte dalle rela-
zioni che esse organizzano con gli altri elementi del verso, esso è innanzitutto l’esperienza amorosa come esperienza dramaticamente dicotomica. L’istanza dilemmatica nel canzoniere è data in primo luogo dal suo più notevole elemento macro-strutturale: la divisione materiale e tematica tra rime in vita e rime in morte. Tuttavia, di tale istanza dilemmatica si sostanzia virtualmente ogni verso dei Fragmenta, attraverso l’uso sistematico e distintivo degli artifici retorici di ripetizione (si pensi alla dittologia di termini sinonimici e complementari, o all’endiadi, vere cifre stilistiche del linguaggio del canzoniere).

Si prenderanno ora in considerazione i lessemi stile e rime (desinenziali di verso) e il percorso semantico (e in ultima analisi poetologico) di dicotomia stilistica e tematica, che la ripresa sequenziale e combinata di quei lessemi realizza nella sestina.3

Nella prima stanza lo stile è caratterizzato come “dolce”:

Ei soaui sospiri. el dolce stile.
Che solea resonare i(n) versi | en rime. (Ruf CCCXXXII, 3–4)

Esso è tuttavia irrimediabilmente legato a una condizione passata e coin-cide con la stesura di componimenti “i(n) versi | en rime”. L’imperfetto di consuetudine “solea” è legato per contiguità alliterativa allo stile e ai “soaui sospiri”, nonché all’infinito “resonare”, a testimoniare di una pratica poetica tematizzata a contenuto della scrittura letteraria. L’epiteto dolce non è connotativo in senso elegiaco, ma è piuttosto, a livello intertestuale, sintetica considerazione storico-critica di continuità nei confronti della tradizione toscana. In maniera non dissimile, il latinismo “resonare” dialoga intertestualmente con il Virgilio del verso incipitario della prima egloga delle Bucoliche, in un ideale connubio di tradizione classica e moderna.

La tipologia stilistica della dulcedo non è tuttavia verisimile nella presente situazione emotiva dell’io lirico. Nella seconda stanza, “ogni stile” è definitivamente abbandonato, e la precedente corrispondenza tra “stile” e “sospiri” non riesce a sciogliersi in nuove rime; sembra che l’unico esito concesso alla scrittura poetica possa al più realizzarsi nella riflessione poetologica:

3. Per una considerazione sistematica delle parole-rima nella sestina Mia benigna fortuna el uiuer lieto, si veda Frasca 1992, 207–58.
I miei graui sospir no(n) ua(n)no i(n) rime.
El mio duro martir ui(n)ce ogni stile.

(Ruf CCCXXXII, 11–12)

L’intera sestina si configura, a partire dalle prime due stanze, come una sintesi di *ars poetica*: in essa si signalano relazioni intertestuali, nell’indeffeso colloquio testuale con la tradizione remota della classicità e quella più prossima della poesia volgare; in essa si descrive la materia della poesia, quasi a voler dare un saggio di *inventio*, di materiali fruibili in sede compositiva; in essa si istituisce, con lessico schiacciatamente tecnico, la relazione del soggetto poetabile con le categorie di stile; in essa, infine, si riflette sull’ineffabilità dello stato emotivo e intellettuale della *persona loquens*, quasi a trascendere la nozione tradizionale di scrittura come espediente tecnico, per affrontare un più raffinato discorso connotato nella direzione di una riflessione estetica.

Nella terza stanza, la negazione dell’istanza poetica è affermata più sottilemente, e investe la plausibilità stessa della forma sestina. La scrittura poetica è difatti associata al tema dell’*ubi sunt*, del carattere effimero e transeunte di ciò che non è divino. Se nella tradizione latina e romanza la scrittura poetica è *monumentum aere perennius* ed esorcizza il carattere di transitorietà e deperibilità della realtà umana, nella terza stanza è lo stesso componimento poetico a essere oggetto di dubbio: con una concettosa anfibologia l’espressione “[…] u’ son giunte le rime” (*Ruf* CCCXXXII, 15) sembra indagare non solo l’ammissibilità dell’ispirazione poetica, ma anche la natura peculiare di questi *rims dissoluts*, e quindi non (*con*)giunti: la sfiducia nelle risorse ermeneutiche della poesia dopo la morte di Laura pregiudica e compromette la scrittura poetica nel momento stesso in cui essa è concepita.

Nella quarta stanza, lo stile del proprio trascorso poetico è indicato come “agro”, ancora a sottolineare la varietà delle diverse declinazioni della lirica del canzoniere. La tematica patetica, tuttavia, non coincide più con la materia: essa non è più “alto sogetto” dell’espressione poetica, delle “basse rime”, che sollevano rappresentare una soluzione di consolazione anche qualora si esprimessero nelle categorie stilistiche e nella tradizione dell’*asperitas* (“ogni agro stile”).

La sestina sembra vagliare la concepibilità di una scrittura poetica cui sia stato negato uno dei principi ispiratori: la pur vana speranza dell’amore terreno. È insomma la concepibilità di un canzoniere in morte di Laura a essere messa in discussione; la speranza, difatti, tendeva a far coincidere ipostaticamente l’*asperitas* e la *lenitas*, stilisticamente pur così difformi:
Gia mi fu col desir si dolce il pianto.  
Che condia didolcezza ogni agro stile.  
Et ueggiah mi facea tutte le notti.  

(Ruf CCCXXXII, 19 sgg., enfasi mie)

La rilevanza del principio del *conveniens*, della corrispondenza ontologica ancor prima che poetica tra materia e stile, è oggetto della riflessione metatestuale nelle stanze quinta e settima: la *varietas* (“cangiando stile”) è diretto promanare della situazione sentimentale sopravvenuta con la morte di Laura.

Lo stile mutevole della quinta stanza diventa il “uario stile” della sesta, a dimostrazione della relazione costante della sestina con il sonetto incipitario (*programmatico a posteriori*). La mutazione stilistica si adibisce al trattamento e all’espressione dello stato “pietoso” dell’io lirico, che è subentrato a quello “lieto”. A livello macrostrutturale, il passaggio da stile dolce a stile agro (“roche rime”) è implicato dalla divaricazione tra rime in vita e rime in morte:

[[la sesta stanza che idealmente dovrebbe chiudere la tematica della sestina prima dello slancio duplicatore, ripercorre gli effetti ‘stilistici’ della morte della donna amata, preparando nella constatazione del mutamento dello *stile* il suo raddoppimento.

(Frasca 1992, 208)

Nella settima stanza lo stile è legato alla *conduplicatio*, al raddoppimento poliptotico del verbo “doppiare”, mirabile esempio di quell’ “incitamento alla dicotomia” (Contini 1970, 186), che Contini identifica come tratto peculiare della scrittura lirica petrarchesca:

[s]u questo verbo [scil. doppiare] (costruito entrambe le volte intransitivamente) ruota inevitabilmente il senso tutto della sperimentazione petrarchesca; il dolor, infatti, raddoppia, perché al dolore di vivere tristo (dopo la morte di Laura) si aggiunge quello di sapere di aver vissuto, mentre ch’ella viveva, più d’ogni altro lieto.

(Frasca 1992, 228)

Il poliptoto del lessema si riverbera nella costituzione del periodo sotto forma di *dicolon* di termini complementari con isocolia e *parallelismus membrorum*:
Nesun uisse giamai piu dime lieto.
Nesun uiue piu tristo et giorni et notti.
Et doppia(n)dol dolor | doppia Lo stile
Che trae delcor si lagrimeose rime.
Vissi di speme | Or uiuo pur di pia(n)to.
Ne co(n)tra morte spero altro che morte.

(Rvf CCCXXXII, 37–42)

Su queste modalità retoriche si modellano il raddoppiamento della sestina, che nella strofa settima riavvia la permutazione delle forme, e la divisio del testo-libro dei Fragmenta nella sua articolazione (narrativa, stilistica, concettuale e materiale) di rime in vita e in morte di Laura.

Nella nona stanza, per la maniera poetica proposta nella sestina, raddoppiata e di fatto illimitatamente amplificata, si auspica uno stile “pietoso” (in senso attivo, che induca a pietà). Esso si configura nella scrittura stessa della sestina, definita poesia “senza rime”. Nella definizione coincidono ancora una volta notazione strettamente tecnica e principio stilistico: il dato tecnico, tuttavia, non è aridamente gratuito, bensì è inscritto nella superiore struttura semantica della stanza in riferimento all’episodio mitico del poeta Orfeo, la cui metrica classica, informata a principi di prosodia quantitativa, era invero scevra da sistemi di associazione rimica e, di fatto, “senza rime”.

Nella stanza undicesima lo stile è definitivamente “mutato”: se si considerano i due poli verso i quali convergono la prassi poetica e la materia poetabile a partire dalla loro presentazione nel sonetto proemiale (“piango et ragiono”, “Frale uane sperançe el uan dolore”), si comprenderà che la mutazione di stile verso cui si muove nella sestina è orientata in direzione del polo tematico tragico e del registro stilistico dell’asperitas.

Il congedo riconfigura, nell’alternanza di posizioni desinenziali e posizioni interne delle parole-rima, la struttura rimica della prima stanza: (A) B (C) D (E) F; nella ricorrenza dello schema metrico iniziale è implicita ancora una volta la dimensione di iterabilità e ricombinazione della forma sestina:

Far mi po lieto in una onpoche notti.
En aspro stile | en angosciose rime.
Prego chelpia(n)to mio finisca morte.

(Rvf CCCXXXII, 73–75)

L’invocazione a Morte da parte della persona loquens affinché concluda il pianto di cui la sestina si sostanzia, è anche un invito a sancire l’effettiva
chiusa del componimento. Quest’ultimo è definito nei termini di un “aspro stile” che si realizza in “angosciose rime”: in questo modo l’oggetto della riflessione metapoetica è individuato, prima ancora che nella natura della poesia o del canzoniere, nella sestina stessa. La riflessione metatestuale investe la comunicazione letteraria nei suoi molteplici aspetti: microstrutturali (materia, stile, struttura prosodica, forma metrica) e macrostrutturali (continuità narrativa, rime in vita e rime in morte).

Ma non basta. In riferimento alla sestina, si è detto che le interazioni tra le modalità di codificazione iconica del segno testuale, la forma metrica del componimento e la struttura narrativa del canzoniere, le conferiscono un carattere statico: questa stasi, messa in forte rilievo dalla pausa narrativa, si configura spazialmente come luogo privilegiato di rifrazione metatestuale. In termini hjelmsleviani, potremmo affermare che sia la forma del contenuto (la narrazione in forma testuale del canzoniere) che la forma dell’espressione (la sua scrittura e resa grafiche, il suo progetto editoriale) determinano delle direttive, se non dei vincoli, per la fruizione e l’interpretazione dei *Fragmenta*. Si è visto quanto l’originale *mise en page* della forma sestina incida sulla lettura del componimento. Si vuole ora sottolineare, a conclusione del nostro discorso, quanto gli aspetti stretta-mente testuali della sestina riflettano alcuni caratteri della realtà materiale del testo-libro dei *Fragmenta*.

Il progetto editoriale petrarchesco associa idealmente l’attività di scriba e quella di letterato, in una voluta coincidenza di espressione letteraria e scrittura, di creazione artistica e segno grafico, di testo e libro, di componimento e *charta* (Petrucci 1967, 71–88). Questo progetto comporta una relazione biunivoca tra i due ambiti, il testo e il libro. Le seguenti implicazioni metatestuali della tecnica versificatoria della sestina si risolvono, in definitiva, in altrettante conseguenze interpretative in riferimento alla scrittura materiale dei *Fragmenta*.

In primo luogo, si consideri la tensione tra chiusura e apertura, che si è vista essere principio immanente dell’elaborazione della sestina ed elemento fondante dell’orizzonte di attesa del fruitore. A essa è accostabile l’anelito verso una chiusura definitiva del libro dei *Fragmenta*, frustrata dalla continua prassi di revisione e riordino di esso. L’atto finale di questa pratica, materialmente indiscutibile, è il progetto di ricombinazione degli ultimi trentuno componimenti dei *Fragmenta*: la rinumerazione a margine di essi in cifre arabe sanziona la nuova procrastinazione della chiusura del libro.

La modalità stessa di permutazione e ricombinazione delle parole-rima della sestina rappresenta inoltre, a livello microtestuale, il concetto di canzoniere come macrotesto *in fieri*; la pratica di rasura, revisione e so-

Infine, la continua reimpostazione regressiva data dall’impianto metrico della retrogradatio e della crucifixio sollecita una fruizione simultanea del testo in tutte le sue parti. Parimenti l’impatto di ogni nuovo intervento nella sequenza dei componimenti o nell’ambito del singolo componimento esige la riconsiderazione delle occulte geometrie del canzoniere.

Nella sua ambivalente natura di testo ulteriormente perfettibile e di sistema coeso immodificabile, la sestina riproduce il carattere sistemico del canzoniere petrarchesco, ne riflette l’indissolubile organicità e reciproca corresponsendza delle singole parti, ed evidenzia ulteriormente il progetto di labor limae che, con compulsiva evidenza, caratterizza l’istanza progettuale e critica di Francesco Petrarca.

Stanford University

Opere citate


The Case for a Genetic Edition of
William Godwin’s Political Justice
MS Abinger c. 24, folios 36r–40v

Tom Clucas

Abstract

Making use of previously unpublished variants for Godwin’s work contained among the Abinger Papers in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, this essay examines the necessity for a genetic edition of William Godwin’s Enquiry Concerning Political Justice. These previously unknown variants record how Godwin develops his political philosophy in the process of writing. Challenging Godwin’s own belief in the pre-linguistic nature of philosophical ideas, the essay uses Godwin’s compositional practice to support a model of philosophy-as-text. This model raises the status of manuscript variants and recommends that they should not be swept away from the text. The essay concludes with a sample genetic edition containing the unpublished variants for Political Justice from the Abinger Papers.

The loose folios 36r–40v of ms Abinger c. 24 contain drafts and a leaf of the printer’s copy for William Godwin’s Enquiry concerning Political Justice in Godwin’s own hand.¹ The purpose of this essay is two-fold: firstly, to make the case for a genetic edition of Political Justice as a contribution to literary history; secondly, to provide a sample edition of the manuscripts for Political Justice held among the Abinger Papers. These manuscripts contain unpublished variants which help the reader to under-

¹. I follow Peter Shillingsburg in his definitions of ‘draft’, “the preliminary form of a version”, ‘version’, “the ideal form of a work as it was intended at a single moment or period for the author”, and ‘work’, “[which] has no substantial existence, [n]or is it [. . .] one fixed ideal form” (1996, 44–45, 46, 42–44). I wish to offer my thanks to Bruce Barker-Benfield and the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, for permission to consult and quote material from the Abinger Papers, as well as to Mark Philp of Oriel College, University of Oxford, for agreeing to be interviewed on 22 February 2010.
stand the historical development of Godwin’s text. Seen in a wider context, they show the importance of the developing text of *Political Justice* as a barometer for the debates about human nature and government which were sparked by the French Revolution and have come to be known as the Revolution controversy (Butler 1984).

*Political Justice* was published in three editions during Godwin’s lifetime by G. G. J. and J. Robinson of London, in 1793, 1796, and 1798. The work had a profound impact on many writers at the time, particularly Wordsworth, who read the first and second editions and addressed Godwin’s political thought directly in his tragedy *The Borderers*, written between 1797 and 1799 (Wu 1993, 66–67). William Hazlitt claimed in *The Spirit of the Age* that: “No work in our time gave such a blow to the philosophical mind of the country as the celebrated *Enquiry concerning Political Justice*” (1998, 7: 87). Godwin revised the text extensively for the second edition, entirely rewriting eight chapters and significantly altering eleven others; he also modified the work’s title. Two years later, Godwin made further revisions, though less numerous, for the third edition. The drafts and portion of the printer’s copy among the Abinger Papers have not been included in any posthumous edition of *Political Justice*, yet they record the development of significant revisions to the text and warrant editorial notice. Specifically, the Abinger Papers include two versions of the beginning of a new chapter that Godwin wrote for the second edition, which became Book 1, Chapter 5: “The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in their Opinions”, and a draft of the “Summary of Principles”, which Godwin added to the third edition. My contention is that Godwin’s textual revisions show him rethinking the principles of *Political Justice* to a greater extent than has previously been recognised, and that they should therefore be given prominence in scholarly editions of his work.

The textual history of *Political Justice* is complex. In addition to the three versions published in Godwin’s lifetime, there are extensive manuscripts for each held in the Forster Collection of the National Art Library, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London (from which one leaf among

2. The chapters Godwin emends entirely for the second edition are: Book 1, Chapters 1, 5; Book 3, Chapters 3, 6; Book 4, Chapter 1; Book 8, Chapters 2, 4, 7. For a table of those chapters, mainly within Books 1–4 and 8, which Godwin “completely or significantly” rewrites, see Godwin 1993, 4: 9.

3. From *An Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness* (Godwin 1793) to *Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and its Influence on Morals and Happiness* (Godwin 1796).
the Abinger Papers has become separated). Although the three published editions appeared in close succession, they were divided by momentous events which undoubtedly influenced both Godwin’s revisions and the reception of Political Justice. The first edition appeared in February 1793, the month that France went to war with Britain. Before the appearance of the third edition in December 1797, Godwin’s conception of Political Justice as a work had been affected by eight pivotal events: the beginning of the Revolutionary Wars, the Great Terror in France, the Treason Trials and the passing of the Gagging Acts in Britain (respectively in 1794 and 1795), his own publication of Caleb Williams and Cursory Strictures (both in 1794); his marriage to Mary Wollstonecraft in March 1797, and her death the following November. In what follows, I shall argue first from a literary-historical and then from an editorial point of view that the idiosyncratic textual history of Political Justice invites genetic solutions. Godwin made significant changes to a work whose three editions had a significant impact on the history of political and moral thought. Only by presenting the developing text of Political Justice, and making available those variants which have thus far been overlooked, can we fully understand the origins and impact of Godwin’s ideas.

The Literary-Historical Case

The case for a genetic edition of Political Justice rests, in part, on an argument for the literary-historical significance of Godwin’s revisions to this work. For many years, critics have agreed that the momentous events which Godwin experienced between 1793 and 1798, coupled with suggestions from friends and reviewers, led him to depart from the “rationalism of the first edition” of Political Justice (Philip 1986, 8). One of Godwin’s recurring concerns in revising his work is that after the first edition he continues to overemphasise rationality, assigning too much importance to reason over sensation in motivating human actions. In 1793, he rebels against the model of human psychology dominant since Locke’s Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690), claiming that sensations are “so comparatively inefficient and subordinate as to stand in the estimate of almost nothing” (Godwin 1793, 1: 52). This position is essential to Godwin’s philosophical anarchism: if it were shown that people act on the basis of

4. The manuscripts for the three versions have been bound together somewhat out of order in three volumes, with the pressmarks MS Forster 47.C.6, MS Forster 47.C.7, and MS Forster 47.C.8.
irrational sensations, then repressive governments would become crucial to regulate their conduct and the anarchist system of *Political Justice* would collapse. Godwin largely avoids tackling this problem in the first edition, but he makes it the subject of Book 1, Chapter 5 in the second. The deletions and variants from the Abinger Papers document Godwin’s struggle, while writing this chapter, to reconcile the roles of reason and sensation in motivating human behaviour. Still dissatisfied after the second edition, Godwin later writes a “Summary of Principles” for the third. Far from being a paratext, the “Summary of Principles” shows Godwin continuing to revise the argument of *Political Justice*. It includes the proposition that “[t]he voluntary actions of men are under the direction of their feelings” (see the edited text of MS C, l. 48), a proposition which appears verbatim in a much-cited notebook entry written the following year (1798), where Godwin criticises the whole work *Political Justice* for “not yielding a proper attention to the empire of feeling” (Godwin 1926, 1: xxxi). What may at first seem minor textual revisions can in fact offer us evidence of Godwin formulating and reformulating key parts of his philosophy in the act of writing.

The rejected variants from the Abinger Papers show how Godwin departs from the rationalism of the first edition of *Political Justice*. Marilyn Butler observes that this edition “totally rejects [the] view recently exploited by Burke […] that man’s inner life is primarily instinctive, and his attitudes and actions involuntary” (1990, 40). In 1795, however, Godwin confronts this view afresh in the first draft of the new Book 1, Chapter 5 which he writes on MS Abinger c. 24, folio 37r (henceforth MS A):

> It has frequently been supposed that the conduct of human beings is by no means determined by any principles of reasoning and comparison, but by certain immediate and undisciplined impulses which operate upon us in defiance of the conclusions and convictions of our understanding.

(lines 5–8, variants omitted)5

5. The following abbreviations occur in the essay and in the apparatus of the edited texts:
   1. First printed edition;
   2. Second printed edition;
   3. Third printed edition;
   MS. Godwin’s manuscript for the first printed edition;
   SMS. ‘Second manuscript’: manuscript revisions Godwin made for the second printed edition between 24 December 1794 and 26 November 1795;
Tellingly, Godwin fails to refute the proposition thus worded and abandons the draft with the Burkean suggestion that “human conduct” may, after all, have to be regulated by “the salutary prejudices and useful delusions [. . .] of aristocracy” (MS A, ll. 16–17); his anarchist system initially collapses when faced with the suggestion that humans act from irrational motives. Before he abandons the draft, however, Godwin inserts the qualifiers “uniformly” and “in many instances” into the sentence quoted above: “the conduct of human beings is by no means uniformly determined by any principles of reasoning and comparison” (ll. 6–7 variants). This emendation signals his recognition that reason and sensation may serve as joint motives for some actions. Godwin then begins the chapter for a second time on MS Abinger c. 24, fol. 36r and v (= MS B), rewording the case for sensation in the light of this recognition:

as reason will sometimes subdue all the allusions of sense, so there are other cases in which the headlong impulses of sense will render all opposition ineffectual.

(ll. 23–25, variants omitted)

This wording of the proposition shows Godwin devising the three-way division among “voluntary”, “involuntary”, and “imperfectly voluntary”
actions which he later develops in Book 1, Chapter 5 (1796, 1: 65). The recognition that sensation and reason can compete as motives for human actions and that some actions are jointly motivated by both allows him to stop categorizing actions such as responding to hunger as purely rational choices, making his philosophical system far more realistic.\(^6\)

At first, Godwin seems to feel a need to regulate and govern those actions motivated in whole or in part by sensation. He writes about “the dictates of judgment” and the possibility that human beings might “be made entirely subject to [. . .] the influence of general truth” (MS B, ll. 26, 28 variants). Such phrases figure reason as a new form of repressive government, though Godwin makes stylistic changes to remove this suggestion. Mark Philp observes in the second edition as a whole Godwin’s “elimination of those sections in the 1793 edition which had indicated that there may be some positive role for government to play” (1986, 121). The variants on MS B complicate this observation, showing that Godwin only reassured himself of the continued validity of his anarchist principles while writing the new sections. At first, sensation brings with it the need for regulation, but Godwin later convinces himself that the “hopes and prospects of human improvement” remain valid because reason still motivates people’s most important, voluntary actions (1796, 1: 86).

The problem becomes even more pressing in 1797, however, when he writes his “Summary of Principles” for the third edition. Here, he advances his position toward an even greater recognition of the role of sensation in motivating human actions. He moves from the statement which provides the title of Book 1, Chapter 5 in the second edition (“The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in their Opinions”) to a new statement: “The voluntary actions of men are under the direction of either sensation or reason” (MS C, l. 48 variant). Godwin then replaces “either sensation or reason” with the phrase “their feelings”, making him sound closer to Burke than the Godwin of the first edition. In a deleted variant, Godwin suggests that reason “has in no sense the force of a motive” (MS C, l. 49 variant), moving beyond Book 1, Chapter 5, where voluntary actions proceed from “actually existing foresight and apprehended motive” (1796, 1: 68). Whether or not the “Summary of Principles” accurately summarises the text of the third edition, it expresses Godwin’s wish to continue modifying the arguments of \textit{Political Justice} in 1797. My purpose is not to suggest that Godwin reneged on his original philosophy, but to show that he re-examines many of his most important principles as he rewrites his prose.

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This contention lends significance to his deleted variants and is supported by wider criticism of his work.

Literary critics have long suggested that Godwin modified his philosophical principles in the act of writing (see Kelly 1976, 184). Pamela Clemit is one of several critics who instance the conclusion of Caleb Williams. Having completed this novel on 30 April 1794, Godwin composed a “new catastrophe” between 4 and 8 May (Clemit 1993, 64–69). In the revised ending, Caleb does not pursue truth to the point of denouncing Falkland, but instead decides to “confess every sentiment of [his] heart”, prompting Falkland’s own confession (Godwin 1992, 3: 272). Clemit shows that Godwin drew on Richardson’s Pamela for this revised ending, and concludes that “Godwin’s use of sentimental conventions shows his early recognition of the value of feeling that would not be formulated until the second edition of Political Justice” (1993, 66–67). She joins a critical consensus in claiming that the experience of writing Caleb Williams helped to shape Godwin’s revisions to Political Justice, causing him in particular to give a greater emphasis to sensation and feeling in motivating human actions. Clemit argues that the “process of modification, development, and self-criticism which characterizes the Godwinian novel as a whole is also a feature of individual texts” (1993, 9). In the process of writing Caleb Williams, Godwin revises the narrative and philosophical principles of the whole novel, having Caleb find sympathy for Falkland’s suffering and thus allowing them to reach some kind of reconciliation. Godwin was primarily a man of letters, not a philosopher, and he appears to have revised his literary and philosophical texts in similar ways. His narrative and philosophical ideas often emerge from — not prior to — the act of writing prose. To say this, however, is to contradict Godwin’s own description of prose composition in The Enquirer (1965, 370–71):

The forming of an excellent composition may be compared to the office of a statuary according to the fanciful idea of one of the ancients, who affirmed that the statue was all along in the block of marble, and the artist did nothing more than remove those parts which intercepted our view of it.

Godwin’s emphasis on the antecedence of ideas is typical of his time, as is his belief that “[s]tyle should be the transparent envelop of our thoughts” (1965, 370), but his creative practice suggests otherwise. We should not regard the rejected variants in the manuscripts of Political Justice as
“portion[s] of marble which ought to have been cut away” from a pre-existing philosophy (Godwin 1965, 371). Instead, we should preserve them as a record, albeit partial, which Godwin left in the process of forming his ideas.

The Editorial Problem

The literary-historical arguments outlined above invite a genetic approach to editing Political Justice. So too do the editorial difficulties posed by Godwin’s work, not least of all the difficulty of choosing a copy-text. Modern editors of Political Justice are split on their choice of copy-text: Raymond A. Preston (1926) and Mark Philp (1993) use the first edition, while F. E. L. Priestley (1946), K. Codell Carter (1971), and Isaac Kramnick (1976) use the third edition. Any choice of copy-text is reinforced by the length of Political Justice, which leads Priestley and Philp to divide the reading text and variants into separate volumes. Though this arrangement makes perhaps for a “clean” reading text, it has the disadvantage of promoting one version of Political Justice above the others. Most editors defend their choices of copy-text by assenting to Godwin’s claim, in his “Preface to the Second Edition”, that despite his revisions “the spirit and great outlines of the work, he believes, remain untouched” (1796, 1: xv).

As I have argued, however, Godwin’s beliefs on this matter do not necessarily coincide with his practice as an author. Furthermore, Mark Philp observes that even the revised texts “fail to express the views Godwin held” (Godwin 1993, 1: 42). In fact, Godwin planned to revise the work for a fourth edition in his lifetime, but never saw this plan through: James Watson finally published a fourth edition reset from the third in 1842, six years after Godwin’s death (Godwin 1842). The Abinger Papers contain a wealth of manuscript evidence for Godwin’s planned revisions. To take one of many examples, the first folio of MS Abinger c. 33 is entitled “Meditated Alterations in Political Justice”; its paper carries a watermark that is datable to 1819. In the case of Political Justice, we must concur with Daniel Ferrer and Michael Groden that a “published text can be reconceived as a provisional central point, a ‘caesura’ in the line of writing” (1995, 503). Many of Godwin’s manuscripts and drafts post-date printed editions, and the 1798 edition is followed by nearly forty years of intentions recorded in manuscript which never made it into print. An edition of Political Justice would do well to treat the early printed editions as stages
in what Hans Walter Gabler (1987) and Sally Bushell (2009) refer to as the “text as process”. No one of the published versions should be elevated above the others, since none of them can claim to offer the best representation of Godwin’s changing intentions.

Thomas De Quincey anticipated this rejection of Godwin’s claim that the “spirit and great outlines” of *Political Justice* remain the same despite his revisions. De Quincey believed that the “second edition, as regards principles, is not a re-cast, but absolutely a travesty of the first” (Locke 1980, 93). The genetic editor cannot assent to De Quincey’s evaluation between the editions, but would agree that Godwin’s “contingent intentions” expressed in the text alter and are altered by his “programmatic” intention for the work (Bushell 2009, 62). That is to say, in the act of revising *Political Justice*, Godwin necessarily rethinks some of its arguments: his task is not merely that of a “statuary” revealing what existed all along. The text of “Book 1, Chapter 5” for the second edition offers compelling evidence that Godwin altered *Political Justice* with what Sally Bushell calls a “revised intention”; that is, when “the writer, rather than still trying to meet his original intentions, returns to the work with changed objectives” (2009, 64). The editor’s task, it would seem, is to represent Godwin’s intentions as they changed, rather than decreeing one point at which Godwin best knew what to do with his work. The genetic approach to editing overcomes Stephen Parrish’s belief — close to that of Hershel Parker, though not as aesthetically motivated — that authors’ intentions deteriorate with time as they become “inhibited by the various orthodoxies — political, social, religious, and practical” to which they succumb in “later years” (Parrish 1988, 346 [cf. Parker 1984, x]).

Given the momentous events that occurred between 1793 and 1798, as well as the short intervals between the editions, it seems difficult to maintain, as Hershel Parker does, that “after the creative process has stopped, an author stands in the same relationship to his work as any other editor” (Shillingsburg 1996, 11). Both Godwin and the text of *Political Justice* develop during the 1790s; it is partly this development which gives Godwin’s work its historical significance. Genetic editing, then, is sociological in a broader sense than either Shillingsburg or McGann use the term. Genetic editing allows us to recognize that authors’ intentions as well as their texts are subject to social forces and that this does not necessarily compromise the integrity of either (Shillingsburg 1996, 23). From this position, the rest of this essay sets out to show how *Political Justice* might be edited genetically, using as examples three unpublished manuscripts from the Abinger Papers.
The Manuscripts

There currently exists no catalogue of the Abinger Papers, though one is due to appear this year. MS Abinger c. 24 comprises fragmentary drafts by Godwin of verse, drama, and prose, including passages for the novels The Looking Glass (1805) and Cloudesley (1830), as well as extensive drafts for Godwin’s Ancient History of Britain (unpublished). The manuscripts date from the 1790s to the 1830s, but most of the sheets carry watermarks which respect the 1794 Act of Parliament, which dictated that “no drawback of Excise duty was allowable on exportation except on papers which had the year-date in the sheet” (Shorter 1971, 62). The date and provenance of the paper can thus be determined with reasonable accuracy. The majority of Godwin’s paper is high-quality, laid writing paper bought from paper mills in Kent. The names of James Whatman II, John Buttanshaw, and John Floyd appear in watermarks in MSS Abinger c. 24 and c. 33 (in the later, fols. 1–11 of which contain later notes for Political Justice in Godwin’s hand). The favored designs of these printers recur in the watermarks, the most frequent being ‘fleur-de-lis’, ‘horn’, ‘Britannia’, and ‘pro patria’. In offering bibliographic descriptions of MS Abinger c. 24, fols. 36r–40v, I have grouped the manuscripts into three according to their texts: MSS A, B, and C. I follow these divisions when presenting the edited texts.

MSS A, B, and C all bear different relations to the manuscripts of Political Justice held at the National Art Library in London. On viewing these manuscripts, it emerged that MS B, rather than being a second draft as I had previously assumed, actually belongs to the final manuscript of the new chapters Godwin wrote for the second edition. More simply, it belongs to what I have termed the second manuscript.

The manuscripts in London have been bound into three volumes. Volume 1 contains the “Preface” through to the end of “Book 5, Chapter 5” for the first edition. Volume 2 contains “Book 5, Chapter 6” through to the end of “Book 8, Chapter 8” for the first edition and some new material for the second edition. Volume 3 contains new chapters for the second edition, as well as a group of disparate documents termed “materials for 2nd & 3rd editions”. As would be expected, these last manuscripts tend to

7. MSS Abinger c. 24, fol. 43; c. 24, fol 37; and c. 33, fol. 18 respectively. For the names of printers and their mills, see Shorter 1971.

8. MS Forster 47.C.8 in the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, London. The person who bound the volumes inserts this note following pp. 1–190 and a single sheet numbered 21–22.
be written with the darker ink, finer nib, and thicker paper that Godwin characteristically used after 1796. The pages within the volumes are numbered in Godwin’s hand but have been bound somewhat out of order: page numbers are often duplicated and do not run sequentially. Throughout the discussion and apparatus, I refrain from referring to the manuscripts in London as the fair copy of Political Justice: to use this term would be misleading, as the manuscripts are full of corrections in Godwin’s hand, predominantly made at the original time of writing. No fair copy of Political Justice exists; it could well be that none was made. Doubtless this is due to the fact Godwin mentions in the “Preface” that “printing was [. . .] commenced, long before the composition was finished” (Godwin 1793, 1: ix). It lies beyond the scope of this project to describe the contents of the London manuscripts in detail. This study’s goal is to locate the manuscript of “Book 1, Chapter 5” for the second edition, which has been split across two volumes and two cities. I have tabulated this information for ease of reference.

Table 1: Locations of the manuscript for “Book 1, Chapter 5”, second edition.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page numbers on manuscript</th>
<th>Line numbers1</th>
<th>Location (Vol. 1 = Forster 47.C.6; Vol. 2 = Forster 47.C.7; Vol. 3 = Forster 47.C.8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21–22</td>
<td>17 (note)</td>
<td>Vol. 3, after p. 190. This first draft of the note has been canceled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23–24</td>
<td>1–44</td>
<td>MS B (MS. Abinger c. 24, fol 36r and v)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48–51</td>
<td>“Book 1, Chapter 6”</td>
<td>Vol. 3, at the end.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>17 (note)</td>
<td>Vol. 3, at the end.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Line numbers taken from the version of ‘Book 1, Chapter 5’ in PPW 4:28-47.

As can be seen above, MS B belongs to the second manuscript but has become separated from it: p. 25 of the second manuscript picks up where MS B leaves off, and the text of the footnote on the recto of MS B appears twice, as a canceled draft on p. 21 and a final text with correc-
tions on p. 52. MS A is an abandoned draft from which MS B was written, as described below. MS C is the only existing manuscript version of the “Summary of Principles” which Godwin added to the third printed edition. It differs from MS B, however, in that the printed text of the “Summary of Principles” diverges widely from the manuscript version. Hence MS C arguably warrants being treated as a first draft. Since the modern editions of *Political Justice* do not provide bibliographic descriptions of the early printed versions, I have included them among my own.

**Bibliographic Descriptions**

**MS A:**
A single page (fol. 37r), on which Godwin wrote a preliminary draft (26 lines) of what became the opening of Book 1, Chapter 5 in the second printed edition. The sheet is high-quality laid writing paper. It has nine horizontal chain-lines and has been folded parallel to the chain-lines to form a bifolium. On the recto side, Godwin writes parallel to the chain-lines across both leaves, treating them as a single page; on the verso, he treats the two leaves as separate pages and writes perpendicular to the chain-lines. The top half of the watermark “BUTTANSHAW” runs vertically up the right-hand side of the verso. There is no date, but Shorter (1957, 280, fig. 20) attributes this watermark to the papermaker John Buttanshaw of Kent for the years 1794–1798. The draft belongs to Godwin’s first period of revisions for *Political Justice*, which further constrains its composition between the dates 24 December 1794 and 10 October 1795 (Godwin 1993, 3: 7).

**MS B:**
A single sheet (fol. 36r and v), like fol. 37, which measures 237x193mm and is folded in half parallel to its nine horizontal chain-lines. When the sheets are put together, with 37v on the left and 36r on the right, the two halves of the watermark “BUTTANSHAW” align, showing that these two sheets were originally leaves of a single sheet that was cut. Godwin obviously set aside the preliminary draft of MS A and wrote the final draft of MS B from it. MS B also covers the opening of what became Book 1, Chapter 5, but runs to 61 lines. The fact that Godwin copies interlined

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9. These are brief notes concerning alternatives to sensation in forming human ideas.
variants from MS A into the text of MS B (“by the reasonings”, l. 1) corroborates an ordering that places MS A first. Godwin writes parallel to the chain-lines on both sides of fol. 37, numbering them “23” and “24” in the top right- and left-hand corners respectively and filling both pages.

MS C:
A draft of the “Summary of Principles” which appears in the third printed edition, it consists of two sheets. The first sheet comprises chartae 39 and 40 which form a bifolium, folded parallel to the chain-lines, with each leaf having five vertical chain-lines. All of this sheet’s edges are rough-cut, and there is a watermark at the top of chartae 39v and 40r across the fold, comprising the bottom-half of a horn design, with the letters “GR” beneath (cf. Heawood 1950, PL. 354, no. 2764). The leaves are written on until halfway down 40r, with 40v left blank. The ink is blacker and the nib finer than on MSS A and B, whose ink is brownish. The other sheet, fol. 38, is half the size (193x120mm), with five vertical chain-lines, suggesting that it has been cut from a similar bifolium. In the top-right corner of the recto, there is a watermark depicting part of a fleur-de-lis or horn design (cf. Heawood 1950, PL. 224, no. 1656 and PL. 225, no. 1660). The text and its numbering of sections both begin on the verso of the sheet, so I will present verso before recto in both the transcript and the edited text.

First Edition:
AN | ENQUIRY | concerning | POLITICAL JUSTICE, | and | ITS INFLUENCE | on | GENERAL VIRTUE AND HAPPINESS. | by | WILLIAM GODWIN. | in two volumes. | vol. 1. | LONDON: | PRINTED FOR G. G. AND J. ROBINSON, PATERNOSTER-ROW. | MDCCXCIII.


Binding: Ochre leather. Front: blank. Spine: [pairs of indented lines at 37mm intervals] [red panel with gilt border] [gilt letters “GODWIN’S | POLITICAL | JUSTICE.”] [red oval with gilt border] [gilt letters “I”]. Back: blank.


Second Edition:

Vol. ii: [A¹] a²B–Z²2A–2M²2N¹; pp. [iii–v] vi–x 1–546; leaf measures 210x130mm, edges trimmed, rounded corners; text laid paper with watermark “1794”, vertical chain lines, wove endpapers on pastedown, flyleaves at front (vol. i: none; vol. ii: 1) and back (vol. i: 1; vol. ii: 1) wove paper.


Spine: [pairs of gilt lines at 33mm intervals] [gilt letters “GODWIN’S | POLITICAL | JUSTICE”] [gilt letters “VOL | 1.”] [gilt ornament: Army and Navy Club device]

Copy Examined: Bodleian Library, University of Oxford—24817 e.154, 155.
Third Edition:


Editorial Method
A possible solution to the editorial problems posed by Political Justice would be a parallel-text edition. However, I have rejected this approach for all three of my edited texts because MSS A and C differ too greatly from the corresponding printed texts to make a parallel comparison useful, and MS B resembles the second edition identically when one reads the interlined variants. For this reason, I have chosen to edit MSS A and C as stand-alone texts which could appear as appendices to a scholarly edition, including their variants in a synoptic apparatus on the page. I have used a similar synoptic apparatus for MS B, giving a sample of how Political Justice could be edited for a future scholarly edition. Since MS B is a final
draft and part of the second manuscript, one can follow the development of the text without major disjunctions from the manuscript through to the second and third printed editions. I have therefore chosen the second edition as my copy-text, and included variants from the manuscript and the third edition in the on-page apparatus. My choice of the second edition as copy-text is based on Mark Philp’s observation that Godwin tended to revise from the published versions, and that presenting the earliest printed version allows the reader to “follow the moves against the master” (Philp 2010). The aim is to provide the reader with a readable text uncluttered by the “close-to-impenetrable thickets of brackets” which would result if one tried to incorporate the variants into the text itself (Gabler 1984, 320). However, some indication of “textual instability” is desirable to make the reader aware of the textual variants (Stillinger 1994, vi). I have therefore used bold print to highlight those sections of text for which variants exist, referring the reader to the apparatus with superscript characters (A, B, C, SMS, 3) to signal which versions contain variants from the reading text. Note that I have not done this with Godwin’s titles, chapter summaries, and annotations. Most of these were added in the printed edition. To highlight them in full would give them undue prominence over the rest of the text, as well as obscuring variants within them (see “Edited Text: MS B”, l. 11).

To preserve what Jerome McGann calls the “bibliographical codes” of the manuscripts (1991, 57), I have signaled their page breaks with a forward slash followed by the number of the new leaf in braces: “/ {36r}”. Beyond this, I have placed observations concerning the bibliographical codes of the manuscripts in my own footnotes (indicated with a dagger “†”). The purpose of an edition is to preserve a text’s linguistic codes while modifying its bibliographical codes to make it more accessible to a readership. No scholarly edition can preserve the bibliographical codes of an original entirely: the only way to observe them is to study the original documents, comparing multiple copies if they exist. With this in mind, I have shortened long esses, which G. G. and J. Robinson use everywhere except word-final position, and rendered ampersand as “and”. To respect the “socialized” production of literary texts, however, I have not altered Godwin’s spelling and have included punctuation variants where they exist in the second layer of the apparatus.
The Apparatus

There are up to three layers of on-page apparatus for the edited texts that follow. The first concerns what may be termed “substantives”; the second deals only with punctuation; the third contains editorial footnotes. The first two layers are synoptic, detailing both alterations Godwin made within one version and variants between versions. Alterations are followed by a dash and a character in bold print to indicate the version in which the alteration is found. In the case of MS B, which is the only text to have variants, the variant from the copy-text (second edition) is given first, followed by the variant from the other version (SMS or 3). Godwin’s deletions are contained within angled brackets “< >”, while his additions (normally interlined with a caret and made during the original act of composition) are contained within square brackets “[ ]”. Where one word or phrase has been substituted for another, I represent this as an addition followed by a deletion. I use an italic typeface for deletions and a roman typeface for additions. My aim in doing so is to preserve a sense of the chronology of Godwin’s changes. Where one set of brackets falls within another, the innermost set should be read first, as in mathematics. Thus

Table 2: Collation of the manuscript and printed versions of the “Summary of Principles”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript Draft (C)</th>
<th>Third Edition (3)</th>
<th>Reordered</th>
<th>Revised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1–8</td>
<td>1–9</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9–10</td>
<td>26–27</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–13</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14–21</td>
<td>60–67</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22–26</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27–28</td>
<td>58–59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29–30</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31–35</td>
<td>31–35</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36–45</td>
<td>10–18, 21–22</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46–50</td>
<td>46–50</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51–58</td>
<td>53–59</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59–68</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69–76</td>
<td>38–45</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

the annotation “<be made entirely [subject] to>” shows that Godwin added the word ‘subject’ before deleting the entire phrase. The italic typeface confirms that the word ‘subject’ was also ultimately deleted (see MS B, l. 29). In the case of MS B, I have included variants from the second manuscript for the footnote at l. 29, the text of which appears on p. 52 in Forster 47.C.8. Variants for ll. 45–334 of “Book 1, Chapter 5” can also be found on pp. 21–22 and 25–30: these variants have never been included in any scholarly edition, but it is beyond the scope of this project to record them. In the case of MS C, the reader may be interested to compare the draft “Summary of Principles” with the version printed in the third edition. I have therefore included a table to clarify the extensive rearrangements Godwin makes between the draft and the published version, and of which there are no records.

Exeter
CHAP. V. THE VOLUNTARY ACTIONS OF MEN ORIGINATE IN THEIR OPINIONS†.

Prevailing ideas on this subject.—Its importance in the science of politics.—I. Voluntary and involuntary action distinguished.—Inferences.—Opinion of certain religionists on this subject.—of certain philosophers.—Conclusion.—II. Self-deception considered—Custom, or habit delineated.—Actions proceeding from this source imperfectly voluntary.—Subtlety of the mind.—Tendency of our progressive improvements.—Application.—III. Comparative powers of sense and reason.—Nature of sensual gratification.—Its evident inferiority.—Objection from the priority of sensible impressions—refused from analogy—from the progressive power of other impressions—from experience.—Inference.—IV. Vulgar errors.—Meanings of the word passion.—V. Corollaries.—Truth will prevail over error—capable of being brought home to the conviction of the mind—omnipotent.—Vice not incurable.—Perfectibility of man†.

†If by the reasons already given we have removed the supposition of any original bias in the mind that is inaccessible to human skill, and shown that the defects to which we are now subject are not irrevocably entailed upon us, there is another question of no less importance to be decided, before the ground can appear to be sufficiently cleared for political melioration. There is a doctrine, the advocates of which have not been less numerous than those for innate principles and instincts, teaching "that the conduct of human beings in many important particulars is not determined upon any grounds of reasoning and comparison, but by immediate and irresistible impression, in defiance of the conclusions and conviction of the understanding. Man is a compound being, said the favourers of this hypothesis, "made up of powers of reasoning and powers of

†: Title. This chapter is headed “Chap. V” in B. The title “The Voluntary Actions of Men Originate in their Opinions” appears in 2 and 3.
1–12. Absent from B; appear in 2 and 3.
13. A note “Book 1. Chap. V.) Prevailing ideas on this subject.” appears in the right-hand margin of 2 and the left-hand margin of 3 at this point. In B, there is a note on the left, reading “Prevailing ideas on this subject”.
21. Source untraced. The fact that Godwin makes so many alterations to the wording of this quotation in B strongly suggests that it is his own.
sensation. These two principles are in perpetual hostility; and, as reason will in some cases subdue all the allurements of sense, so there are others in which the headlong impulses of sense will for ever defeat the tardy decisions of judgment. He that should attempt to regulate man entirely by his understanding, and extirpate the irregular influences of material excitement; or that should imagine it practicable by any process and in any length of time to reduce the human species under the influence of general truth;† would show himself profoundly ignorant of some of the first laws of our nature.

†This doctrine, which in many cases has passed so current as to be thought scarcely a topic for examination [36v], is highly worthy of a minute analysis. If true, it, no less than the doctrine of innate principles, opposes a bar to the hopes and improvement of social institutions. Certain it is, that our prospects of melioration depend upon the progress of enquiry and the general advancement of knowledge. If therefore there be points, and those important ones, in which, so to express myself, knowledge and the thinking principle in man cannot be brought into contact, if, however great be the

* Objections have been started to the use of the word truth in this absolute construction, as if it implied in the mind of the writer the notion of something having an independent and separate existence, whereas nothing can be more certain than that truth, that is, affirmative and negative propositions, has strictly no existence but in the mind of him who utters or hears it. But these objections seem to have been taken up too hastily. It cannot be denied, that there are some propositions which are believed for a time and afterwards refuted; and others, such as most of the theorems of mathematics, and many of those of natural philosophy, respecting which there is no probability that they ever will be refuted. Every subject of enquiry is susceptible of affirmation and negation; and those propositions concerning it, which describe the real relations of things, may in a certain sense, whether we be or be not aware that they do so, be said to be true. Taken in this sense, truth is immutable. He that speaks of its immutability, does nothing more than imply in the mind of the writer that they ever will be refuted. Every subject of enquiry is susceptible of affirmation and negation; and those propositions concerning it, which describe the real relations of things, may in a certain sense, whether we be or be not aware that they do so, be said to be true. Taken in this sense, truth is immutable. He that speaks of its immutability, does nothing more than predict with greater or less probability, and say, “This is what I believe, and what all reasonable beings, till they shall fall short of me in their degree of information, will continue to believe.”


31. There is a marginal note “Its importance in the science of politics.” It appears on the right in 2, the left in 3, and the left in B without the full-stop.
improvement of his reason, he will not the less certainly in many cases act in a way irrational and absurd, this consideration must greatly overcloud the prospect of the moral reformer.

There is another consequence that will flow from the vulgarly received doctrine upon this subject. If man be, by the very constitution of his nature, the subject of opinion, and if truth and reason when properly displayed give us a complete hold upon his choice, then the search of the political enquirer will be much simplified. Then we have only to discover what form of civil society is most conformable to reason, and we may rest assured that, as soon as men shall be persuaded from conviction to adopt that form, they will have acquired to themselves an invaluable benefit. But, if reason be frequently inadequate to its task, if there be an opposite principle in man, resting upon its own ground, and maintaining a separate jurisdiction, the most rational principles of society may be rendered abortive, it may be necessary to call in mere sensible causes to encounter causes of the same nature, folly may be the fittest instrument to effect the purposes of wisdom, and vice to disseminate and establish the public benefit. In that case the salutary prejudices and useful delusions (as they have been called) of aristocracy, the glittering diadem, the magnificent canopy, the ribbands, stars and titles of an illustrious rank, may at last be found the fittest instruments for guiding and alluring to his proper ends the savage, man†.

* Book V, Chap. XV.

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B, SMS, 3: 38. impovement—B. 39. must <so> greatly—B. 40. [reformer] <investigator>—B. 43. [complete] <secure>—B. 43. displayed give—2; displayed, give—3. 55. rank, may—2; rank may—B.

†: 56. B omits the final word-and-a-half, ending: “his proper ends the sa-...”. The hyphen suggests that it continued onto another sheet, which has been lost. The footnote, which appears in 2 and 3, is also absent from B.
Edited Text: MS A

If in the reasonings already detailed we have removed the supposition of any original bias in the mind, inaccessible to human skill, and for that reason irrevocably entailing upon us the defects to which we are now subject, there is another question of no less importance to be decided, before the ground can appear to be sufficiently cleared for political melioration. It has frequently been supposed that the conduct of human beings is by no means uniformly determined by any principles of reasoning and comparison, but in many instances by immediate and undisciplined impulses which operate upon us in defiance of the conclusions and conviction of our understanding. If this statement be just, we shall probably have gained little by removing the blind to unreflecting principles by which our actions are moulded from its supposed preexistent state to a period more or less subsequent to our birth. The condition of mankind upon this hypothesis as upon the other is independent of the portion of knowledge and information which may exist among them: it depends upon other principles, and will be little benefited by the results of the most laborious enquiry. Not is this all. If human conduct be to be influenced by something else, while the clearest illapses of truth shall be of no avail, we shall find it difficult to pronounce that that something else is not the salutary prejudices and useful delusions (as they have been termed) of aristocracy, the glittering diadem, the magnificent canopy, the ribbands, the stars and the venerably derived titles of an ancient nobility.

A: 2. [human].  6. [uniformly].  7. [by certain] [in many instances by].  9–11. [it would seem as if inferences would follow materially disadvantageous to any comprehensible ideas of social improvement] [we shall probably have gained little by removing the blind to unreflecting principles by which our actions are moulded from its supposed preexistent state to period more or less subsequent to our birth]. 11–12. [as upon the other]. 13. other.

†: 15. “illapses”: “The act of gliding, slipping, or falling in, of gently sinking into or permeating something. a. Theol. Said of spiritual influences, esp. in the illapse of the Holy Spirit and equivalent expressions. (Freq. in 17th c.)” (OED, “illapse, n.”, senses 1. and 1.a.).
Edited Text: MS C

II
The object of all moral and political disquisition is pleasure or happiness. The primary or earliest class of human pleasures, is the pleasure of the external senses. In addition to these, man is susceptible of certain secondary pleasures, as the pleasures of intellectual feeling, the pleasures of sympathy, and the pleasures of self-approbation. The secondary pleasures are probably more exquisite than the primary; or, at least, the most desirable state of man, is that in which he has access to all these sources of pleasure, and is in possession of a happiness the most varied and uninterrupted. This is a state of high civilisation.

III
The pleasures of self-approbation in particular, together with the security of all our other pleasures, require the possession of individual independence. Individual independence is best secured by the smallest quantity of restriction, that is consistent with the preservation of one individual against the injustice of another; all restriction or government is an intrenchment upon individual independence.

III
The pleasures of intellectual feeling, and the pleasures of self-approbation, together with the right cultivation of all our pleasures, are greatly aided by soundness of understanding. To soundness of understanding freedom of enquiry is highly conducive; consequently opinion should as far as public security will admit, be exempted from restraint. Soundness of understanding is inconsistent with prejudice; consequently as few falsehoods as possible should be imposed, either speculatively or practically, upon the community.

IV
The nature of man, so far as relates to the acquisition of knowledge, is progression. Not merely the pleasures of intellectual feeling, but the variety of our other pleasures and
the skill of managing them, may be expected to be increased, with the increase of our knowledge, particularly moral and political knowledge

Hence it follows
1. That institutions calculated to give permanence to any particular mode of thinking, or state of improvement, are pernicious†
2. That the progressiveness of our moral and political improvement, like the progressiveness of our knowledge, is unlimited

V

The true standard for the conduct of one man towards another, is justice

Justice requires that I should put myself in the place of an impartial spectator of human concerns, and divest myself of retrospect to my own predilections

Justice is that principle which proposes to itself the production of the greatest sum of pleasure or happiness† / {39r}

The most desirable condition of the human species is a state of society

The injustice and violence of men in society, produced the demand for government

Government, as it was forced upon mankind by their vices, so has it commonly been found the creature of their ignorance and mistake

Government was intended to suppress injustice, but it offers new occasion and new temptations for the commission of it

By concentrating the force of the community it gives occasion to wild projects of calamity, to oppression, despotism, conquest and war

Government was intended to suppress injustice, but its tendency has been to embody and perpetuate it†

†Reason, though it cannot excite us to action, is calculated to regulate our conduct, according to the views it supports of

†The voluntary actions of men are under the direction of their feelings.

Reason is not an independent principle, and cannot excite us to action; in a practical

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C: 27–28. [permanence] <stability> to any particular [mode of thinking, or]. 31. [true standard] <only sufficient rule>. 33. <all>. 38–39. [has it commonly been found] <it is>. 40. <violence> injustice. 43. [to]. 47. [supports] <affords>. 48. [of their feelings] <either of sensation or reason>. 49. [cannot excite us to action] <has in no sense the force of a motive>.


46. Left-hand marginal note: “The worth of different excitements”.

48. Here begins a note written vertically (down the page) in the left-hand margin of c. 39r. Some words have been lost due to damage to the leaf: “If the reader find any differences between this language, and that of Book I, Chap. V, it but justi. to observe that the summary was written after the rest of the work was ..”. This note does not appear in the print edition.
view, it is merely a comparison and balancing of different feelings†
Reason depends for its clearness and strength upon the cultivation of knowledge.
The progress of man, in the acquisition of knowledge, is unlimited.
Hence it follows
1. That human inventions and the modes of social existence, are susceptible of perpetual improvement.
2. That institutions, calculated to give perpetuity to any particular mode of thinking, or condition of existence, are pernicious†

The primary object of voluntary action in man, is agreeable sensation.
That which in the sequel often becomes the object of voluntary action, is, the means of agreeable sensation; the means, forgetting the end for which they were originally desired.
This is the history of a confirmed avarice, and of many other base and sordid passions, as well as of benevolence.
Benevolence, when thus rendered a passion, is capable of being encouraged in us by reason and reflection.
Disinterested benevolence is the principle to which most readily subjects our conduct to the standard of justice.

Duty is that mode of action, which constitute the best possible application of the capacity of the individual to the general benefit.
Right is the claim of the individual to his share of the benefit arising from the discharge of their duty by all his neighbours.
The claim of an individual is either to the exertion or the forbearance of his neighbours.
The exertions of man in society are to be trusted to his discretion; his forbearance in certain cases is a point of more pressing necessity, and is the direct province of political superintendence or government†.

†: 46–50. Cf. section “VI”, ll. 46–50 in 3, reordered and revised.
69. “s” omitted in C.
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Manuscript Sources

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London, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, MS Forster 47.C.7
London, Victoria and Albert Museum, National Art Library, MS Forster 47.C.8
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 24
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 29
Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Abinger c. 33

Printed Sources


Invisible Ink
A Note on Ghost Images in Early Printed Books

Jeffrey Todd Knight

Abstract

This note speculates on traces left in rare book collections that are not catalogued and that do not appear in digital reproductions. Using examples of unseen evidence in two of Shakespeare’s so-called Pavier Quartos, I suggest that perceptions of literary history can depend on practices of bibliographical description and codification, which are not always objective. I argue that attending to the “invisible” can expand accounts of the history of reading and literary production and renew our incentive to do archival work in archives.

Figure 1 displays the back page of HEH 69323, the Huntington Library’s copy of Henry V (1619) by William Shakespeare.¹ This page is blank; there is nothing here to read.² The adjacent text, however, is among the most heavily scrutinized early printed works available in archives. In 1906, A. W. Pollard identified two similarly bound collections of Shakespeare’s plays from the seventeenth century. Since then, Henry V has formed part of the infamous “Pavier Quartos”, the series of texts published under mysterious circumstances by Thomas Pavier shortly after the playwright’s death.³ To Pollard, “the chances that two collectors, without any determining cause, had bound together precisely the same editions of these plays, without the admixture of any others, seemed very remote” (1906, 529). It was concluded that the plays were meant to be bound together, and that Pavier’s project — a “pirated” Collected Works of Shakespeare or

2. The Huntington catalog reproduces the standard description: “The last leaf is blank”. It has since been amended to account for my findings, reported here.
3. See Pollard 1906 and, for the expanded account, Greg 1908. Greg’s theory of piracy became the dominant interpretation. For recent discussions, which are friendlier to Pavier, see Massai 2007, 106–35, and Murphy 2003, 36–56.
“False Folio” — must have been halted by the King’s Men when the real Folio went to press.

Most of the surviving Pavier quartos, like the one in Figure 1, were rebound in the modern era, purged of any trace that they were once part of this larger Shakespearean collection. But look closely at the photograph. Though the page is, in curatorial terms, a “blank”, it contains a trace of ink.
The trace is — again, in curatorial terms — not “offset”, or transferred from another page while the ink was still curing in the printing house. It is an almost imperceptible darkening of the paper that, during a recent stay at the Huntington, I began to call a “ghost image”, lacking a proper bibliographic descriptor. After discussions over email and in person with my colleagues at the library, the curators eventually determined that such images come from either the oil in the ink or its acidity relative to the leaf it touches. The transferred letters, I took note, spell W-O-M-A-N, and there is a faint K in the space below. A keyword search on Early English Books Online revealed that the ghost image is, in fact, the title page of Thomas Heywood’s 1617 play A Woman Killed With Kindness and its “ghost image”. Reprinted with the kind permission of the Huntington Library.

4. Email correspondence with Stephen Tabor, 8–9 September 2009. My thanks to Stephen Tabor and the Huntington photographers for their patience and kind assistance.
Thomas Heywood’s play, *A Woman Killed With Kindness* (1617), a copy of which was bound, at some point, to this quarto of *Henry V* (fig. 2).

What is surprising is not the likelihood that two quartos by different authors were formerly in the same early volume; this, along with the later disbanding, was common practice. It is rather that this particular Shakespearean quarto, thought to be part of Pavier’s series or Collected Works, was compiled — or “admixed”, to use Pollard’s term — with a work not in the series at all. The visibility of the ghost image led me to suspect that these texts had been bound together for some time. It also suggested that more examples of hybridized Pavier volumes could be found, and my suspicions were confirmed on a subsequent trip to the Folger Shakespeare Library, where I came across the contents list pictured in Figure 3 in a Pavier edition of Shakespeare’s *Pericles*. The volume that corresponds to this list has long been disbound, but the former owner, Bishop Percy, recorded valuable information about its provenance in manuscript notes dated 1763. Though the books have been reshaped numerous times, the table of contents (also in Percy’s hand) “may safely be assumed [to reflect] the original order” of texts, according to the Folger conservators. And here we can see that the first play listed is none other than *A Woman Killed with Kindness*, originally adjacent to Shakespeare’s *Henry V*. The appearance of Heywood’s play here and in the ghost image in the Huntington’s copy of *Henry V* could, of course, be simply a remarkable coincidence. But if two like combinations of texts were enough to spur Pollard in 1906 to begin to formulate what would become one of Shakespeare studies’ most enduring mysteries, the two combinations here — coincidence or not — should certainly give us pause.

It is not my intention in this short space to rehearse scholarly debates about the Pavier Quartos, nor is it to draw out the implications of these

5. On the prevalence of early printed Sammelbände and modern disbanding, see Knight 2009a and 2009b.
6. We might think of the similar ink transfers often seen in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century books, especially where bookplates touch flyleaves of different acidity.
7. Folger Shakespeare Library STC 26101 copy 2.
8. Percy’s note remarks on the volume’s acquisition from someone named Orlebar (or Orlebars) as a gift, as well as its being sent to a collector friend at Cambridge, who extracted *King Lear*. What was left of the book was rebound in the nineteenth century and disbound into its present state shortly thereafter. The only texts currently bound together are *Pericles* and the two parts of *The Whole Contention*.
9. The conservator’s note is also recorded in the flyleaves of STC 26101 copy 2.
Figure 3. FSL STC 26101 copy 2, the contents list from a now-disbound Pavier collection. Reprinted with the kind permission of the Huntington Library.
findings for Shakespearean reception history or criticism of the works. Though there is undoubtedly much to say about the literary links between the plays, and about the contingency of early dramatic collections. Instead, I would like to make three brief methodological points specific to textual studies that, to my mind, emerge from this sort of evidence — evidence that is invisible, or “ghostly”, in that it points to books (or in this case, patterns of books) no longer physically present. Faint ink transfers and referentless contents lists, I imagine, make up only part of what is available in archives. A great deal remains to be uncovered; this is a preliminary attempt to make it more visible and perhaps comprehensible.

The first point is that as fields of expertise, book curatorship and conservation remain largely under-utilized by scholars of early modern English literature, perhaps in the same way that editing was underscrutinized several generations ago, before a philosophically informed literary criticism called it into question. Stephen Orgel (2000) once complained that “postmodern theory has not reached the world of bibliophile practice” (107). And indeed, the activities of librarians and collectors — in arranging, classifying, and cataloging the texts we read — are implicitly, I think, seen as a kind of service industry: a value-neutral domain that merely facilitates access to books and other data, and that lies outside the scope of theoretical inquiry. But the curatorial dilemma presented by the non-Shakespearean ink transfer on HEH 69323 illustrates a Foucauldian point that has become fundamental everywhere else in literary-historical criticism: that taxonomies, archives, and other systems of codifying knowledge do not just name things that are visible in advance (from sexualities to illnesses to books); they also, to a certain extent, determine what is visible in the first place. Perhaps precisely because there is no bibliographic

10. I have had opportunity elsewhere to discuss the contingency of the Pavier Quartos as resisting the logic of the Collected Works volume that Pollard, Greg, and most modern commentators ascribe to them. See Knight 2009b, 323–26. See Robinson 2002 for a helpful overview of play collecting and its impact on the interpretation of drama — particularly Heywood’s. Tara Lyons (2011) has explored the issue of early play collecting more fully.

11. For an overview of this development as it unfolded in early modern literary criticism, see Marcus 1996, ch. 1.

12. Foucault 1972. The central argument of Foucault’s celebrated methodological statement was that archives (broadly construed) are not inert collections of statement-events or enunciations, but “that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset the system of its enunciability” (129). Jacques Derrida made a similar point, speaking on
designation for “ghost images”, the one in the Pavier edition of Henry V had not been seen by the bibliographers at the Huntington. They only looked for traces that were “offset”, which is a proper designation, when I first inquired into it over email. That evidence like this goes unseen and uncatalogued says a lot about what we desire — or what modern collectors in general have desired — not to preserve in literary artifacts: the unprinted histories of use, conservation, and circulation that inhere in a text’s pages and bindings. Histories of curation and (non-)conservation merit scrutiny because, like editing, they have practical effects on research and interpretation. In both of my examples above, the collectors who disbound Shakespeare’s plays from Heywood’s, and the curators who recodified them, rendered important textual links unsearchable by conventional means, buttressing (or perhaps helping to generate) claims about Pavier’s quartos as an aborted, purely Shakespearean, Collected Works. Literary and historical scholars depend on catalogs, databases, and other forms of curatorial guidance to formulate questions about primary materials and to answer them in their work. Such resources shape perceptions of literary history, as studies of the medieval manuscript miscellany have shown; it is time that scholars across historical periods find ways to collectively examine assumptions that lie behind them.

Secondly, I would like to suggest that within the history of the book, and particularly the history of reading, a willingness to make inroads into ‘the invisible’ — that is, the field of evidence not readily apprehended according to established categories — can help bring about a more expansive object of study. Recent scholarship has sought to move beyond narrow definitions of reading and book use, practices which often leave behind no material evidence. Indeed, ink transfers, superseded contents lists, and

13. Cloud makes this point in his analysis of another kind of invisible mark, bearing (or bearer) type. The reading of a book “merely for its literary narrative”, he explains, “requires turning a blind eye to the signs of its other narratives” (2000, 151). See also Sherman 2008, 151–78, on the modern preference for “clean books”.

14. On the methodological questions raised by medieval manuscript miscellanies, see Boffey and Thompson 1989 and Hanna III 1996.

15. For an overview of recent scholarship on “book use”, as well as its methodological problems, see Sherman 2008, xi–xx.
other “ghostly” traces allow us to begin a history of reading without material readers’ marks — that is, without the sole dependence on annotations or “marginalia” as the only viable form of data.\(^\text{16}\) Book history, though still largely ascendant and new, has relied heavily on objects at the expense of ideas, and nowhere is this more evident than in the reduction of reading to marginal inscription. When faced with a book that lacks marginalia, archival researchers too often assume that there is no story to tell about the text’s use. But when we expand our scope to include evidence whose ontological status is ambiguous — evidence both there and not there, or hidden in plain sight — stories of use and reading become apparent, many of them unanticipated. For what did early readers see in Shakespeare’s political and triumphalist *Henry V* and Heywood’s domestic tragedy, *A Woman Killed With Kindness*, that suggested to them that the two works be bound together? Did they know that they were buying part of Thomas Pavier’s “series”? The point is that histories of reading and of books are present not just in pen-and-ink marginalia, but often where there is no ink: in bindings, catalogs, and curatorial systems of organization and display, which are not adequately scrutinized outside the domain of specialist bibliography.

The third and final point has, I hope, been implicit throughout. “Ghost images” — forms of evidence on the threshold of the visible — offer a renewed incitement to do archival research in archives. At a time when electronic research tools like *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) have made anastatic reproductions of printed books widely available, and when major archives like the Folger have begun to digitize part of their collections, it has been easy to forget that text reproduction technologies, at every level, carry biases. The onscreen interfaces that give us Shakespeare and Heywood’s plays today are not transparent windows onto the text themselves; they define and regulate a field of visibility, as do all forms of curation going back to the early copies, which also carried biases. Provenance data is almost never digitized. Neither are collations, bindings, or the files and itinerant data that make up the curatorial apparatus in libraries. The researcher, in other words, cannot see faint image transfers in digital reproductions of a book, nor would the scanners at Chadwyk-

\(^{16}\) Marginalia has been the central object of study in the history of reading since the move away from the abstract, idealized “reader” of reader-response criticism. The earliest literary critical treatments were Tribble 1993, Sherman 1995, and Jackson 2001. On the historiographical problem of marginalia see also: Grafton 1997, Grafton and Jardine 1990, and Orgel 2000.
Healey necessarily include a superseded manuscript list in the pages of an EEBO reproduction. The tools of contemporary scholarship, gone unexamined, can in this sense reinforce literary-historical narratives (such as that of Shakespeare’s Pavier Quartos) that might otherwise be nuanced or replaced. They focus attention narrowly on the ink, and not the “invisible ink”, which has its own story to tell.

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Works Cited


Toward a Book History of William Wordsworth’s 1850 Prelude

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Abstract

This essay argues for the necessity of a book history of the 1850 first edition of William Wordsworth’s poem The Prelude, which is currently a liber non gratus: a marginalized, unwelcome book. Editing of and scholarship on The Prelude since 1926 have promoted earlier, manuscript versions at the expense of the 1850 edition, despite accepting it as a “fact of literary history”. Thus, attention to the material life of the 1850 poem with Victorian readers — such as in criticism and biographies of Wordsworth, and the giving of books as gifts — recovers its significance to our conceptions of nineteenth-century literary history.

Throughout the day, as he sat up in his bed, he had been reading the Prelude of Wordsworth, and the marker still remains at the spot where he had left off when he closed the volume — the beginning of Book Fourteenth.

The Life and Letters of Edmund J. Armstrong
(Francis 1877, 555)

The Prelude is connected with all that is greatest in the poetical achievement of Wordsworth; with all that makes for his immortality as a poet. [. . .] It [is] one of the most remarkable poetic productions in the language, and [. . .] one of the brightest flowers in his unfading coronal.

A. J. George (1888, xxv–xxvi)

Today, the 1850 first edition of William Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem The Prelude owns a status much like a persona non grata — it is a liber non gratus, a book unwelcome, unaccepted, unrecognized.1

1. For advice and assistance during the development of this article, I wish to thank J. Douglas Kneale (Brock University), Donald S. Hair (University of Western Ontario), Heather Jackson (University of Toronto), and Jason Jones (McCallie School).
It attained this status through editorial and critical decisions over the past eighty-plus years that predominantly value its Romantic manuscript history over its Victorian book history. Since 1926, when Ernest de Selincourt published the first parallel-text edition of the 1805 manuscript version and the 1850 printed version, the latter poem (and book) has steadily been left marginalized, silenced. The result is a discounting of *The Prelude*’s Victorian publication and reception, such that the development of the 1850 *Prelude* into a *liber non gratus* confuses and leaves a notable gap in the record of nineteenth-century literary history. Attending to the book history of *The Prelude* is thus necessary because it will recover not only the fact that the poem originally appeared to and was experienced by Victorian readers as *a book*, but also, consequently, the legitimacy and importance of how those readers experienced the poem within the context of the Victorian print culture responsible for producing and disseminating it.

Following de Selincourt, who wrote of Wordsworth and *The Prelude* in 1926 that “he would surely have done better to leave as it stood what he had first written for Coleridge [in 1805]” (1926, lxii), the attachment to the early Wordsworth has gradually eroded the 1850 poem’s presence in literary history. Therefore, recovering the 1850 *Prelude* and its Victorian publication and reception offers a certain clarity to literary history, like carefully brushing away layers of dust to reveal an artifact’s shape, color, and meaning; furthermore, doing so brings light to *The Prelude*’s role in Victorian culture and society, which set the foundations for interpreting the poem and for reinterpretating Wordsworth’s canon and biography in view of the poem. First, then, I will outline the current condition of Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, which reveals how editors, critics, and anthologies marginalize the 1850 *Prelude* despite acknowledging it as the text of “historical validity” (Wolfson 2006, 113); I will also show that the signifier “1850” has as a result become inaccurate. Secondly, I will discuss what the Victorian *Prelude* was, in terms of the text and book read by Victorians and through investigating aspects of its nineteenth-century reception. Jerome McGann suggests that, “[p]roducing editions is one of the ways we produce literary meaning” (1985, 33), but a sustained study of the book history of the 1850 *Prelude* recovers the work’s larger cultural significance and puts us again in contact with its Victorian meanings as communicated by its Victorian editions, counteracting its virtual erasure by twentieth-century editors and critics. More importantly, such a recovery reconsiders the 1850 *Prelude*’s unwelcomed condition by embracing its Romantic and Victorian relevance instead of shunning the latter in favor of the former.
Part First: Liber Non Gratus

Ernest de Selincourt’s parallel-text edition of *The Prelude* and his argument for the 1805 poem’s superiority mark a bifurcation in Wordsworth studies specifically and Romanticism more widely: the heralding of the “early” Wordsworth and the denigration of the “later” Wordsworth. Along with the changes made by Wordsworth’s family and executors\(^2\) to the 1839 manuscript (MS E) in preparing *The Prelude* for publication, critics and editors point to the increasing political conservatism and religious piety of Wordsworth’s presumably later poetry and successive revisions to *The Prelude* as evidence for the 1850 edition’s textual and aesthetic unreliability. As a result, inspired by de Selincourt, editors and critics such as Jonathan Wordsworth, Stephen Gill, Stephen Parrish, W. J. B. Owen, Mark L. Reed, Susan Wolfson, and Duncan Wu have established the 1805 manuscript of the poem as the definitive *Prelude*. Editions of and briefs for other manuscript stages of *The Prelude* have further marginalized the 1850 poem. Candidates include the two-part 1799 version, the speculated five-book version of 1804, the C-stage 1819 manuscript, and the 1832 MS D as *The Prelude* Wordsworth truly, finally intended.\(^3\) In order to distinguish among all of these *Preludes*, editors and critics employ an assortment of titles: the “Two-Part *Prelude*”, the “Five-Book *Prelude*”, the “Thirteen-Book *Prelude*”, the “Fourteen-Book *Prelude*”; if not simply 1799, or 1805, or 1850; *The Prelude*.\(^4\) Anyone attempting not just to study Wordsworth’s epic but to distinguish among its versions and drafts faces a dizzying array of redactions, all of them effectively geared toward supplanting the 1850 first edition’s priority and authority. Stephen Gill argues that with *The Prelude*, “bibliographical innocence is not an option”, for “[o]nce there was one version of *The Prelude*, now there are many, and there’s no going back” (2006, 18). Susan Wolfson underscores the irrevocability of “the

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2. Wordsworth’s executors responsible for bringing *The Prelude* to press were his son-in-law Edward Quillinan, his nephew Christopher Wordsworth, and his clerk John Carter.
3. On the five-book *Prelude*, see Wu 1997; on the C-stage *Prelude*, so denoted because the copy text is the “C” MS of 1819, see Reed 1991, vol. 2.
poem’s history”, and so “[w]hether one revels in or regrets the resources, there is no revoking their existence and no profit in resisting their challenge” (2006, 77–78). I agree wholeheartedly with Gill and Wolfson. For both, this textual diversity is a fruitful condition, productive of editorial and critical labor that reifies the differences between versions, the distinct qualities that separate one version from another. Such diversity, however, can also be a kind of mischief (OED 2009). In navigating the multiplicity of Prelude editions one finds nearly twenty relevant manuscripts whose status has been widely discussed by editors. The mischief resides in how this discourse of manuscripts, versions, and editions has tended to distract us from an adequate historical and cultural contextualization of the 1850 Prelude and its reception among Victorians. Even what we identify as the 1850 Prelude can prove elusive.

Debates about the authority and aesthetic quality of the Prelude editions, once lively and contentious (especially between the 1970s and the early 1990s), have subsided into relative silence over the last decade or so. Yet the 2006 publication of the Oxford Casebook on The Prelude, edited by Stephen Gill, reminds us of the continued relevance of such debates, particularly because Gill reasserts his longstanding and influential support for the 1805, thirteen-book poem:

A reader [. . .] has to start by getting to know one version. In time, the idea that it is the one correct, or ideal, or authorized version will give way to a slightly unsettling but ultimately invigorating sense of the multiple invitations offered by Wordsworth’s autobiographical poem(s). But one has to begin somewhere, and for student readers this is most likely to be with the thirteen-book poem of 1805.

(Gill 2006, 18–19)

For Gill, the 1805 poem should be “the default version [. . .] for academic courses and critical writing on the Romantic period” (2006, 19). In effect,

5. For helpful summaries of the relevant Prelude manuscripts, see Wordsworth 1995, xlvi–xlvii; and Wordsworth et al. 1979, 507–9.

6. The following sources provide a fair representation of the debate about The Prelude’s texts from the 1960s to 1990s: Baker 1982; Butler 1997; Gill 1983; Jarvis 1981; Leader 1996, especially Chapter One (19–77); Lindenberger 1963, especially Appendices One and Two (295–304); Parrish 1997; Stilinger 1989; Waiting 1986; Wordsworth 1997 and 1992; and Young 1982. One can also reference the introductions and discussions of texts in the major Prelude editions mentioned in n4, above.
Gill establishes a hierarchy of the Casebook’s criticism on The Prelude (such as by Geoffrey Hartman, Walter J. Onorato, and S. J. Wolfson) that posits an “early Wordsworth” as the authoritative Wordsworth. Moreover, his assumption that a “student reader” will start with the 1805 poem demonstrates how the multiple invitations of Prelude versions ultimately subordinate the 1850 poem’s “historical validity” to a belated and peripheral position. Utilizing the thirteen-book poem of 1805 as Gill suggests reorients the version’s variants to those of other drafts and alters the history of Wordsworth’s revisions between 1805 and 1839, thereby evading the provisional nature of the 1805 version, announced by the title given to MS B (1805): “Poem / Title not yet fixed upon / by / William Wordsworth / Addressed to / S. T. Coleridge”. Gill’s Casebook thus reopens debate about the meanings at stake when promoting The Prelude’s early, “not yet fixed” manuscript versions over the published edition of 1850.

Ernest de Selincourt’s role in that history cannot be overstated. Before de Selincourt, editions of The Prelude consistently reproduced the 1850 text rather faithfully (see below: Part Second). In fact, Victorian and early-twentieth century readers knew only the 1850 text. Moreover, readers understood the distinction between The Prelude’s time of composition (1798–1805) and its publication, a difference that Christopher Wordsworth states in his Memoirs of William Wordsworth: “the appearance of this poem, after the author’s death, might tend to lead some readers into an opinion that it was his final production, instead of being, as it really is, one of his earlier works” (1851, 1: 313). When de Selincourt offered a text of the 1805 poem parallel to the 1850 poem, he gave physical form to what was before mostly hint and allusion. This event constituted a fundamental re-evaluation not only of The Prelude as a poem, but also of Wordsworth’s life. In his introduction to his 1926 Oxford edition, de Selincourt establishes the relationship between the two texts as fundamental and endorses the earlier manuscript version, undermining the authority of the later published version. The Prelude has not been the same since.

For de Selincourt, the earlier manuscript version represents the true, proper Wordsworth because its composition occurred during the time of his “best work” and “the fullness of his powers” (1926, vii, xv). Conversely, the later published version represents the “less inspired”, conservative, and “pietistic” Wordsworth (1926, vii, lix). While de Selincourt grants that “the 1850 version is a better composition” than the 1805 poem and accepts that “The Prelude, as Wordsworth left it, had reached a high

7. For reproductions and/or transcriptions of this title, see De Selincourt 1926, 1; and Reed 1991, 1: 105 and 2: 1004.
level of workmanship”, his sympathies lie with what he calls “the original Prelude” (1926, xliv, xlvi, lxii):

The ideas [Wordsworth] has introduced [into the 1850 text] [. . .] were entirely alien to his thought and feeling, not only in that youth and early manhood of which The Prelude recounts the history, but in that maturer period when it was written; and they have no rightful place in the poem. [. . .] The essential point for us to realize is that their intrusion has falsified our estimate of the authentic Wordsworth, the poet of the years 1798–1805.

(1926, lx1)

Wordsworth thus betrayed his own “authentic self” with his successive revisions to The Prelude, thereby generating misreadings of his life and poetry. Throughout his introduction, de Selincourt identifies the various deficiencies of the 1850 text, such as punctuation and printers’ errors, but his critique aims specifically at Wordsworth’s “ideas”. For instance, according to de Selincourt, Wordsworth alters The Prelude to make his earlier “naturalistic religion” align with his later “definitely Christian dogma” and concern for “edification” (1926, lix). The “authentic” and “original” Wordsworth of 1798–1805 is a Wordsworth of particular — and appropriately Romantic — “ideas” that the 1805 text embodies, correcting the “intrusion” of possible false readings derived from the 1850 text. De Selincourt politicizes the relationship between the 1805 and 1850 texts by repositioning the latter as impure, untrue, and deceptive, its authority destabilized by the “original” text and the “frank” Wordsworth of 1805 (1926, l). His parallel presentation of the poems concretizes this ideological manoeuvre: the 1805 poem appears on the left, where a reader naturally begins reading, and annotations are keyed predominantly to its verses.8 This typographical valuing of the 1805 text and devaluing of the 1850 published edition changed how we read The Prelude, lessening the value of its Victorian book history and increasing the value of its Romantic inspiration and creation.

The weakness of this editorial process can be located in de Selincourt’s overarching principles applied to the editing of The Prelude:

8. This practice is followed by other editors. For commentary on how the editors of the Norton Prelude use annotations and setting the 1805 text on the left in facing-page editions, see Baker 1982.
The ideal text of *The Prelude* [...] would follow no single manuscript [...] and would reject those later excrescences of a manner less pure, at times even meretricious, which are out of key with the spirit in which the poem was first conceived and executed. Most firmly it would reject all modifications of his original thought and attitude to his theme.

(1926, l1)

“Theme” links to “ideas” in his preferred early Wordsworth, for what matters are “manner”, “thought”, and “attitude” as fixed in “the years 1798–1805”, where they remain safe from Wordsworth’s “later excrescences” and “modifications”. Such idealizing of the early Wordsworth, however, fixates upon what can only ever be thematic, philosophical, and textual speculation. As much as de Selincourt attacks Wordsworth for his “growing conservatism” (1926, liv), he confines the “ideal [...] *Prelude*” to a condition that is provisional, overwriting the facts of Wordsworth’s successive revisions of the poem. Therefore, the problem with de Selincourt’s position, which leads us straight to Gill’s brief for the 1805 poem as the “default” *Prelude*, is the search for a “pure” *Prelude* that never existed in any sort of stable, complete, and resolved state, but which expresses de Selincourt’s clear attachment to a specific and personal “Wordsworth”. De Selincourt’s 1926 Oxford edition thus altered so influentially how we edit, read, and know Wordsworth that *The Prelude* has since been defined by parallel texts, competing editions, and diverse titles that continually reify the division between the early and late Wordsworth at the expense of a complete and accurate construction of literary history.

Following de Selincourt, the parallel-text edition of *The Prelude* becomes the standard scholarly presentation of the poem, and the search for the “pure” *Prelude* leads to editions of manuscript versions from before and after 1805 that make their own claims to be the “best” *Prelude*. Ideologically, this process relies upon the opposition between the early, “authentic” Wordsworth and the late, “falsified” Wordsworth. On both counts, the Cornell Wordsworth series (begun in 1975, under the general editorship of Stephen Parrish) and the 1979 Norton *Prelude* (edited by Jonathan Wordsworth, Stephen Gill, and M. H. Abrams) exemplify the fruition of de Selincourt’s repositioning of *The Prelude* and of Wordsworth.

Together, these editions refine and solidify de Selincourt’s favoring of an historical Wordsworth that dates from 1798 to 1805, reinforced further by their citation in scholarship and use in anthologies. In his headnote to numerous Cornell Wordsworth volumes, Stephen Parrish identifies one of the series’ core aims as that of “bring[ing] the early Wordsworth into
view”, specifically because “Wordsworth’s practice of leaving his poems unpublished for years after their completion, and his lifelong habit of revision [. . .] have obscured the original, often the best, versions of his work” (1991, 1: v). The Norton editors also privilege this historically earlier Wordsworth in The Prelude: “1850 is a more formal poem than 1805, frequently tighter in syntax, but seldom more accurately reflecting the thought processes it had been Wordsworth’s original intention to evoke” (Wordsworth et al. 1979, 523). Both editions focus on the three now-accepted principal versions of The Prelude to advance the “early” and “best” Wordsworth: the two-part poem of 1798–1799 (considered the first discrete version [MS JJ]), the thirteen-book poem of 1805 (MSS A and B), and the fourteen-book poem published in 1850. What should be noted about the Norton and the Cornell editions of the fourteen-book poem, however, is that each (like de Selincourt) rejects the 1850 first edition as a legitimate representation of Wordsworth’s “intentions” and instead reconstructs a text of the poem with reference to MS D (1832), the last manuscript considered to bear Wordsworth’s fully authoritative revisions. W. J. B. Owen, editor of The Fourteen-Book Prelude for the Cornell series, endorses this later, 1832 version: “The originality of [my] edition lies in its adoption of MS D [. . .] as a copy text and in its rejection of the comparatively blind faith of some earlier editors in the authority of MS E and the text of 1850” (1985, ix).9 Similarly, the Norton editors state:

Previous editors of 1850 have offered the text of the first edition, although it was printed after Wordsworth’s death, and manifestly does not in all cases represent his intentions. [. . .] The 1850 text printed here is therefore that of the first edition, refined by collation with E, and further checked against D [. . .].

(Wordsworth et al. 1979, 511–12)

Their objections to MS E and the 1850 edition focus primarily on the interference of Wordsworth’s executors as they used MS E (copied from MS D in 1839) to prepare the poem for publication after Wordsworth’s death on 23 April 1850. For Owen, MS E is “carelessly and mechanically written”, “inferior to D” and “illogical” with regard to punctuation, often “incon-

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9. MS E of The Prelude is a transcription by Dora Wordsworth and Elizabeth Cookson of MS D executed in the spring of 1839, which the Norton editors deem “hasty and inaccurate” (Wordsworth et al. 1979, 509). Wordsworth’s executors used this manuscript to prepare the poem for print.
trovertibly wrong”, and thus “unsatisfactory” and “unreliable” (1985, 5, 11, 12, 17). For the Norton editors, Wordsworth’s executors made “unwarranted editorial changes” and “rewrote, reordered, and omitted lines” to the point that “MS E has no authority against the final state of D”. Agreeing with de Selincourt, they express dissatisfaction with Wordsworth’s revisions, noting that “neatness [is] achieved at the expense of spontaneity and strength” and the presence of “orthodoxy and Victorian proprieties” (Wordsworth et al. 1979, 512, 523). Even with the later Wordsworth, earliest remains best. Not only do Wordsworth’s texts become corrupted by his revisions and meddling executors, but also by his wrong thinking. And so the 1850 published edition must be consigned to obscurity so that Wordsworth’s real “intentions” shine through. Jack Stillinger has called this editorial ideology “textual primitivism” (1989, 4). I aim not to disagree with de Selincourt, Owen, and the Norton editors about the problems of MS E or the 1850 first edition. Rather, I wish to demonstrate that their “primitivism” involves an interruption and confusion of literary history by treating the 1850 edition as a kind of bastard child that the family would do well to hide from the prying eyes of the neighborhood. How we read The Prelude today has much to do with the eliding of such interruptions and confusions, which get reproduced through scholarship, criticism, anthologies, and teaching.

10. One example of such unwarranted rewriting cited by the Norton editors and other detractors of the 1850 edition occurs in the poem’s opening lines, where the “gentle breeze” takes the neutral pronoun “it” instead of the “he” found in MS E (1839): “it fans my cheek [. . .] the joy it brings [. . .] Whate’er its mission” (1.1–5). The Norton editors base their reading on the principle that “[t]here is no manuscript authority for the first edition reading ‘it’, ‘it’, ‘its’, for ‘he’, ‘he’, ‘his’ [. . .]. The substitution was made in proof [. . .] to remove the characteristic but unorthodox Wordworthian animism” (Wordsworth et al. 1979, 29). In his edition, Jonathan Wordsworth echoes the Norton editors: “A clear case of the poet’s executors ignoring his intentions” (1995, 555). Yet these editorial and ideological investments prove problematic, for in this instance editors treat MS E as authoritative even though overall they disparage and discount it, while their versions of the 1805 poem that they promote as the “best” and “authentic” Prelude use the neutral pronoun. In the Norton edition, the verses of the 1805 version read, “it beats against my cheek, / And seems half conscious of the joy it gives” (vv. 3–4); the verses are the same in Jonathan Wordsworth’s edition. If the Norton editors believe that “MS E has no authority against the final state of D”, the exception they make here in their criticism of Wordsworth’s executors appears selective as to what constitutes “unwarranted editorial changes” (Wordsworth et al. 1979, 512, ix) in the 1850 edition.
A return to Gill’s Casebook shows how Wordsworth’s editors and critics have muddied literary history in a manner that can leave uncertain precisely what “1850” means. To this end, I will focus on Susan Wolfson’s essay, “Revision as Form: Wordsworth’s Drowned Man”, in which Wolfson studies Wordworthian revision through a close reading of the drowned man of Esthwaite episode in The Prelude’s principal versions: the first part of the 1799 two-part poem; Book V of the 1805 poem; Book Fifth of the 1850 poem. For her texts, Wolfson uses the Cornell Wordsworth editions by Stephen Parrish (1977), Mark L. Reed (1991), and Owen (1985), respectively. Wolfson’s choice of the Cornell texts accepts and participates in their early-is-best approach to Wordsworth’s poetry, eschewing the 1850 published edition. She provides a lengthy note explaining that she uses the Cornell editions because of their reliability and completeness, as they “retain accidentals” and “note [...] any emendations” of the manuscripts made by the editor (2006, 112). Wolfson agrees with Owen’s assessments of the rejected authority of MS E and of the 1850 first edition on the grounds of “the interference of [Wordsworth’s] executors”, which, as we have seen, prompts Owen to work from MS D as his copy text for the fourteen-book Prelude (2006, 113). As Wolfson concedes, Owen’s edition “is thus an ‘eclectic’ construction”: i.e., built from several different manuscripts and versions (2006, 113). We should note, thus, that Wolfson’s use of Owen’s edition configures an analysis of a Prelude that is manifestly not the book received by Victorians in 1850. She seems to veil this fact in her essay by identifying the poem as the text of 1850. For example, when quoting the last of the drowned man passages, her heading reads, “The Prelude, 1850, Book Fifth: W. J. B. Owen’s reading text (base text MS D)” (2006, 81). Throughout her essay she employs phrases such as “the 1850 text” or “in 1850” or “in the 1850 text” or the “language of the 1850 text” (see 2006, 104–5). Wolfson seems to confuse the poem’s literary and editorial history by ostensibly citing a work published and received in 1850 while actually referring to Owen’s “construction” of the 1832 manuscript presented as a fixed reading text of the “fourteen-book Prelude” — a “construction” that Wolfson admits “has no discrete textual or historical existence” (2006, 77). The apparent slipperiness of the date “1850” becomes thus all the more troubling when we see Wolfson’s notation on the 1850 edition: “The 1850 publication, of course, has historical validity as the form in which the poem was read in the nineteenth century” (2006, 113). Such “historical validity”, however, is elided and depreciated by Wolfson and Owen, acknowledged only with a statement consigned to a note and
subverted by an edition that distinguishes its originality through a title (*The Fourteen-Book Prelude*) that gestures toward the form and structure of the 1850 edition.

The Oxford *Casebook* legitimizes this distraction from the circumstances of literary history in two key ways. One, it includes Wolfson’s essay as a representative, authoritative scholarly work on *The Prelude*, a work, in fact, that appeared first in 1984 as a *PMLA* article and then in 1997 as a chapter in Wolfson’s own book *Formal Charges* (see Wolfson 1984). It also aligns Wolfson and other scholars with the 1805 poem as the sanctioned, “default” *Prelude*. While there may be no return to innocence from the multiplicity of *The Prelude*’s manuscripts and resources, there clearly must be a rethinking of the consequences of making and citing *Prelude* editions in light of distinct disruptions of “historical validity”.

The necessity of rethinking such consequences proves acute in view of the standardization of the Cornell texts in criticism and anthologies. According to Gill, for instance, the “Cornell Wordsworth series” is the “standard edition” for “Wordsworth’s poetry” (2006, 403). When considering the current prevalence of Owen’s *Fourteen-Book Prelude* specifically, this standardization perpetuates the inaccurate depiction of literary history seen in Wolfson. The eighth edition of the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, for instance, uses Owen’s text, as the editors inform readers in the headnote to the poem. They also explain briefly that the 1850 published edition is based on “Wordsworth’s latest revisions” of 1839 (Stillinger and Lynch 2006, 323). Yet the anthology’s editors provide a problematic picture of the textual and historical situation. On the one hand, their headnote refers to this poem as “The 1850 *Prelude*”; on the other hand, they indicate that their “selections” come from “the manuscript of [the] final version”, which would thus be MS E of 1839, but which — as we remember — is for Owen MS D of 1832 (Stillinger and Lynch 2006, 323).11 The anthology’s editors sanction the 1850 title of the poem, *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet’s Mind: An Autobiographical Poem*, which we know was

11. Intriguingly, the editors of the *Norton Anthology* base their decision to use Owen’s edition on Stillinger’s arguments in “Textual Primitivism”, where Stillinger notes that his “quotations of *The Prelude* are from the latest authoritative text [. . .] as edited by W. J. B. Owen” (1989, 3). This choice by Stillinger is poignantly ironic, given that in his article he contends that the Cornell Wordsworth series is partly responsible for “the later Wordsworth being forced out of the picture” and for the “disappearance of the revised Wordsworth” (1989, 4).
devised by Mary Wordsworth, William’s wife, for the poem’s publication (Wordsworth 1851, 1: 313). Like Wolfson, the Norton Anthology cites and provides a text that is not the 1850 poem, but offers it as such — giving us a sense of the misdirection that the use of “1850” seems to offer in the standardization of the Cornell editions. Readers today, therefore, cannot be wholly certain as to which poem or text constitutes The Prelude proper, let alone what precisely is the poem of 1850 as published for and read by Victorians. The issues are serious because readers must confront a diversity of “editorial construct[s]” (Owen 1985, 19) that are, ultimately, hypotheses supplanting and interfering with the 1850 poem’s “historical validity”, their ideological investments reproduced in criticism and anthologies.12

Calling editions of Wordsworth’s Prelude hypotheses is not intended to disregard the value of their scholarship to our now detailed understanding of the poem’s genesis; but the term seems to concede what Wordsworth’s editors themselves admit about their editions. These admissions give us the opportunity to re-evaluate the status of the 1850 poem, both textually and historically. At the beginning of their discussion about “General Editorial Procedures”, the editors of the Norton Prelude grant that:

> [t]here can be no perfect edition of any of the three major states of The Prelude. The published text of 1850 might be expected to be authoritative, but was seen through the press after the poet’s death by executors whose editorial decisions certainly do not always reflect his intentions [. . .]. To confuse things further, the manuscripts of all three versions of

12. Other recent anthologies and editions of Wordsworth’s poetry further demonstrate the issues at stake in the choice of Prelude text. Wolfson and Manning (2006) include excerpts from Reed’s edition (1991) of the 1805 poem for the Cornell Wordsworth. Wu (2006) also includes substantial excerpts of the 1805 poem, along with a very short excerpt of the 1850 poem; Black et al. (2006) include excerpts of the “Fourteen-Book Prelude” (255) apparently taken from the Norton Prelude’s version of the 1850 poem, according to the anthology’s “Bibliography”. Mellor and Matlak (1996) excerpt predominantly from de Selincourt’s 1926 text of the 1805 poem, offering only a short, parallel selection from Book 14 of the 1850 poem for the purposes of comparison (652). For anthologies, McGann 1993 is an important counter-example: he does not include any selections from any version of The Prelude, as he chooses “to print only the texts that had been made available to the poet’s original audiences” (1993, xxv) within the strict timeframe of 1785–1832. Gill (1984) gives the full text of the 1805 poem, referring the reader to the Norton Prelude for the texts, details on composition, and annotation (727–28).
The Prelude contain revisions and inserted material that cannot be dated with certainty.13

If a “perfect edition” of The Prelude is an impossibility, then we might ask, what fundamentally makes an “editorial construct” any more authoritative and reliable than the 1850 first edition? In effect, editors have always attempted to establish an “ideal”, even idealized, text of The Prelude, have sought to fix it in a form expressing either a particular loyalty to Wordsworth’s “intentions” and/or a desire to present a specific “Wordsworth” to the public. Yet since de Selincourt, editors tend to smooth over the lack of “certainty” while simultaneously confessing to the provisional nature of their editions. In the Norton edition, for example, speculation is frequent: “1805 is printed in the version that seems likely to have stood between February 1806 and revisions of January 1807”.14 This language of hesitation appears in Owen as well (“I infer a general superiority in D which justifies the assertion that, where choice is possible […] the reading of D is more probably in agreement with Wordsworth’s intentions” [1985, 12]). Ultimately, what separates the Norton editors and Owen from Wordsworth’s executors comes down to “intentions”, where the former claim to give us texts “Wordsworth would have approved” because the latter “made unwarranted changes” (Owen 1985, 11; Wordsworth et al. 1979, 522). This is the justification for modern editors to set aside the text of The Prelude that the Norton edition calls “an established fact of literary history” (Wordsworth et al. 1979, 511; cf. Wordsworth 1995, lli), despite the hypothetical condition of their texts that assign authority to what was “not yet fixed” in literary history until 1850.

Part Second: The Victorian Prelude

We do not lack information about The Prelude’s Victorian publication and reception. James A. Secord writes that studying the “history of reading”

13. From Wordsworth et al. 1979, 510. In a similar vein, Duncan Wu writes of the five-book Prelude that it is “distinct from any other version of Wordsworth’s poem in so far as it exists in no complete manuscript text. […] No complete extant fair copy draft survives relating to any of the Books, and there are certainly none for the entire poem” (1997, 13).

14. See Wordsworth et al. 1979, 510. Other instances of this language of probability include: “was probably”, “seems to have”, “we cannot know”; “almost certainly”, “the probable sequence”; “may well have been” (516–20).
will reveal “cultural formation in action” (2000, 3). Attending to The Prelude that Victorians knew will contribute not just to our knowledge of how they read the work, but also of its role in the development of Victorian culture as located in publishing and reception practices. While Stephen Gill addresses such issues in his Wordsworth and the Victorians (1998), his efforts there fall under the purview of his advancement of the early Wordsworth and are problematized by the text of The Prelude from which he cites. Nevertheless his study provides a good starting point from which to explore aspects of the 1850 poem’s Victorian publication and reception that reveal the distinctiveness of The Prelude’s life in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth. The relative stability of the 1850 text during this period guarantees a certain accuracy in knowing what Victorians read. Moreover, The Prelude’s centrality to literary and biographical assessments of Wordsworth and its use in other books such as novels or travel guides from 1850 on demonstrate the poem’s relevance to the Victorian appreciation of Wordsworth and the extent to which it participated in Victorian print culture. Finally, Victorians seem to have been fond of giving The Prelude as a gift, fulfilling one of the poem’s key rhetorical aims, stated in Book Fourteenth, that Wordsworth and Coleridge would leave “men” and “nations” with a “lasting inspiration” (14.435, 437, 445). These three aspects of the Victorian Prelude’s publication and reception comprise key examples of how the book history of the poem can reclaim its “historical validity” and redress its current status as a liber non gratus.

As Gill writes, The Prelude confronts readers with its “oddness” not only because of its several states and versions, but also because it is, in effect, “a Victorian poem” (2006, 4). Yet this manoeuvre offers in one hand what it takes away with the other. In Wordsworth and the Victorians, for instance, Gill investigates the “Victorian sense of what constituted Wordsworth” and the Wordsworth that “people actually read” (1998, 5). To do so, he frequently discusses how prominent Victorian writers received Wordsworth, such as Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot, Thomas Arnold, and Lord Tennyson. For these writers, “Wordsworth was a presence not to be put by”, with Eliot especially influenced by The Prelude in novels such as The Mill on the Floss and Silas Marner (1998, 6). Eliot “knew The Prelude [. . .] well”, Gill writes, and she sympathized with many of Wordsworth’s aesthetic and moral tenets, but Gill avoids the fact that Eliot’s Prelude was the text of the 1850 edition — which must be accounted for if, as Gill states, literary history is shaped by the “vitality of literary transmission”
(1998, 146). For example, when Eliot provides an epigraph from *The Prelude* at the start of Chapter 69 in *Daniel Deronda*, she quotes from Book Eighth of the 1850 text (1884, 598). The passage she quotes (“The human nature unto which I felt [. . .] of vanished nations”) is found on page 232 of the 1850 first edition (see 8.608–15). Her epigraph follows the 1850 text nearly exactly, the only difference being a comma after “spirit” (8.610). The 1850 text thus functions not simply as a point of reference for Eliot, but as a key intertextual thread in her novel’s fabric of meaning, which itself participates in the transmission of *The Prelude* for Victorian readers.

We arrive immediately at a crucial question regarding the value of Eliot’s reception of Wordsworth’s *Prelude*. If Eliot took much from Wordsworth aesthetically and morally, did she thus fundamentally misread and misinterpret Wordsworth because she “knew [. . .] well” only the 1850 *Prelude* as opposed to the 1805 manuscript poem? This question goes to the heart of how Gill manages the matter of literary transmission. Even though he allows that “the 1850 text of *The Prelude* was the only one available in the Victorian period”, he uses Owen’s text of *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* for “all quotations” of the poem — “unless there is reason to quote from the actual first edition” (1998, xiii).16 By referencing a modern, eclectic “editorial construct” of *The Prelude* based on manuscript versions of the poem unavailable and unknown to Eliot, Gill seems to honor the “historical validity” of the 1850 *Prelude* while he simultaneously discounts it, conflating the facts of Victorian “literary transmission” with the ideological investments of twentieth-century Wordsworthian criticism and editing. *The Prelude* that Eliot “actually read” is thus not represented in Gill as the text she actually knew.17

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16. We cannot, however, be sure if Gill at any point does quote the “actual” 1850 edition instead of Owen, for, like Wolfson, his use of “1850” to identify the quoted text makes no clear distinction between them; also, in at least two instances he cites the 1805 poem (1998, 7, 129). Without comparing editions, Gill’s reader cannot know for certain which of the following citations might refer to the 1850 Prelude and not to Owen’s text: “*The Prelude* (1850), I. 631–36” (1998, 297n50) and “*Prelude*, 1850, XII. 319–20” (1998, 158).

17. For Victorians, the publication of *The Prelude* was likely not all that odd in view of other significant artifacts of Romanticism still present at the middle of the nineteenth century. A new edition of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* appeared in 1847, edited by his daughter Sara Coleridge (who dedicated the edition to Wordsworth) and frequently cited in Christopher Wordsworth’s *Memoirs*. Leigh Hunt (died 1859) was still alive and published his *Autobiography* in 1850. Thomas De Quincey (died 1859) was also still alive and publishing original work (such as *The English Mail-Coach* in 1849), and major multi-volume
Which *Prelude*, then, did Victorian readers know? For the period covering 1850 to 1926, Victorian publishers and editors (British and American) reproduced relatively consistently the text of the 1850 edition. As we have seen, Owen treats this consistency as the “blind faith of some earlier editors in [. . .] the text of 1850” (1985, ix), yet whether or not these earlier editors indiscriminately adhered to the first edition’s authority, their faithfulness to the 1850 text over the course of seventy-five years is relevant in and of itself when accounting for that text’s role in Wordsworth’s Victorian reception. While American editions altered the text to agree with American spelling, such as in the 1871 *Poetical Works* edition by the Boston publisher Osgood, or while British editions corrected apparent errors in punctuation or wording, such as in the 1895 *Poems of William Wordsworth* edition by Thomas Hutchinson for Oxford University Press, *The Prelude* remained basically the same text from 1850 onward. We can thus be reasonably sure that *The Prelude* read by George Eliot was *The Prelude* read by Thomas Babington Macaulay or Benjamin Jowett.

Victorian readers seem to have appreciated the historical distinction between *The Prelude*’s composition and publication, starting with the advertisement of the 1850 edition (reprinted in virtually every succeeding Victorian edition of the poem): “The following Poem was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805”. The relative consistency of the text of *The Prelude* between 1850 and 1926, along with the poem’s clear place in the history of Wordsworthian composition and publication, is crucial to *The Prelude*’s Victorian book history.

Throughout the Victorian period, editions of Wordsworth’s poetry became increasingly elaborate, to the point that William Knight’s 1896 edition, published by MacMillan, already had the appearance of current, modern editions in its annotations, editorial headnotes to poems, recording of variants, and supplementary contextual matter such as letters and excerpts of criticism. Victorian editors addressed the arrangement of the poems, either following Wordsworth’s personal groupings (last established collections of his writings began in 1851 (*De Quincey’s Writings*, by Ticknor, Reed, and Fields of Boston) and 1853 (*Selections Grave and Gay*, by James Hogg of Edinburgh). Joanna Baillie died in February 1851, but in that same year was published her *Dramatic and Poetical Works* (by Longman of London). For recent essays dealing with such vestiges of Romanticism for Victorians, see Faflak and Wright 2004, and Radford and Sandy 2008.

18. Wordsworth 1850, v. We recall as well Christopher Wordsworth’s caution to readers of his *Memoirs* not to mistake *The Prelude* for Wordsworth’s last work, as it was actually an earlier poem.
authoritatively in the 1849–1850 *Poetical Works*, published by Moxon) or choosing to present the poems chronologically by year of composition.¹⁹ The former arrangement tends to dominate, such as in William Michael Rossetti’s 1869 edition for Moxon and the later scholarly editions by Edward Dowden (1892–1893) and Thomas Hutchinson (1895, 1911), and in these editions *The Prelude* appears either as a separate, late volume or at the end of a book on its own; the latter arrangement is favored by editors such as William Knight (1882, 1896) and John Morley (1888), and notably in these editions *The Prelude* is grouped with the poems of 1805.²⁰

Chronology, in fact, typifies a key concern of *Prelude* editors, who steadily seek to pinpoint the details of when Wordsworth wrote specific books and lines, working from letters of Wordsworth’s circle, Dorothy Wordsworth’s journals, and notes dictated by Wordsworth to Isabella Fenwick in 1843 — material most prominently made available by Christopher Wordsworth’s *Memoirs*.²¹ In the Preface to his 1882 edition of Wordsworth’s poetry, Knight describes some of the compositional history of *The Prelude*:

“The first six books were finished in 1805, in the spring of which year

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¹⁹. In his Preface to *The Excursion* of 1814, Wordsworth likened the “connection” between his poems, “minor” and “main”, to the various parts of “the body of a Gothic Church” (1814, ix). Successive authorized editions of *Poetical Works* then arranged the poems according to theme, subject matter, and/or publication. For instance, the poem *We Are Seven* (first published in the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*) is found in “Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood”, while the poem *Resolution and Independence* (first published in the 1807 *Poems, in Two Volumes*) in “Poems of the Imagination”, and the *Yarrow Revisited* collection (1835) in its own section.

²⁰. The Victorian editions mentioned include *Dowden* 1892; *Hutchinson* 1911; *Knight* 1882–1889; *Knight* 1896; *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, with an Introduction by John Morley* 1907; *Rossetti* 1869. The last authorized edition of Wordsworth’s *Poetical Works* was published in 1849–1850, by Edward Moxon. This edition was the standard copy text for nearly all subsequent official and scholarly editions into the twentieth century; its arrangement of the poems was generally considered to represent Wordsworth’s final intentions. *The Prelude* appears in an official Moxon edition of the *Poetical Works* for the first time in 1857, concluding Volume 5 (of six), placed after *ODE. Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*; it appeared on pages 113–366.

²¹. What are now generally called the “Fenwick Notes” comprise Isabella Fenwick’s transcription of comments made to her by Wordsworth on his poems, over several months in 1843. For a modern edition of the Fenwick Notes, see Curtis 1993.
seventh was begun; and it, with the rest of the poem (seven additional books) was finished the end of June 1805” (1882–1889, 1: xiii). His headnote to the poem in Volume III of the same edition provides a lengthier discussion of The Prelude’s composition, and includes an excerpt from Coleridge’s Table Talk (1835)22 about the poem and Coleridge’s poem To William Wordsworth (1807), written in response to Wordsworth’s reading of the 1805 manuscript poem over Christmas and New Year’s 1806–1807.23 Both Edward Dowden and Thomas Hutchinson provide a “Chronological Table” in their editions, cataloguing which poems Wordsworth wrote in which years and listing the years in which Wordsworth finished particular books of The Prelude. Dowden’s headnote to The Prelude informs readers: “We thus learn [. . .] that Books III., IV., V., VI., and a third of Book VII. (if the division into Books was identical with the final division) were written between Feb. 19 and April 29, 1804” (1892, 7: 259). In his Chronological Table, Hutchinson writes for the year 1800, “Bks. I. and II. of The Prelude were probably finished before the close of 1800. The poem was then laid aside until the spring of 1804” (1895, xxvii). I refer to these examples of how Victorian editors dated the stages of The Prelude’s composition to demonstrate that nineteenth-century readers had access to a healthy amount of information on the poem. Victorians, then, read essentially the same text of The Prelude from 1850 onward, and they also knew in successively greater detail that the poem was one of Wordsworth’s earliest works. Although Victorians did not apparently have access to the 1805 manuscript, they were at least not ignorant of its existence as a vital stage in The Prelude’s development. Thus, a fairly significant component of The Prelude’s transmission in the Victorian period comprised an understanding of the text as a Romantic work in its origins and as a Victorian work in its publication and reception. That Victorian-era editions of The Prelude encoded such meanings in their presentation of the poem is pivotal to the text that Victorians used to reread and reassess Wordsworth in light of The Prelude.

The plethora of editions of The Prelude and Poetical Works, British and American, throughout the period 1850–1926 attests to the continued interest in and transmission of Wordsworth. I wish now, therefore, to look

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22. In the entry for 21 July 1832, in Table Talk (recorded by Henry Nelson Coleridge and first published in 1835), Coleridge wishes that Wordsworth had published his “thirteen books on the growth of an individual mind” (Woodring 1990, 307). This passage also appears in Wordsworth 1851, 1: 302–3.

at two aspects of that transmission that relied upon the 1850 text: First, the use of *The Prelude* in literary and biographical commentaries on Wordsworth, as well as its presence in other Victorian publications such as letters or travel guides; second, the Victorian practice of giving *The Prelude* or the *Poetical Works* as a gift. For assessing the significance of such these aspects, James A. Secord’s concept of “literary replication” proves apposite. To track the various forms of “reproduction” through which a book could develop into a sensation in the Victorian period, Secord pinpoints such factors as reviews, advertisements, literary salons, railways, circulating libraries, anthologies, letters, and any mention that includes a quotation from or excerpt of or conversation about a book. Secord defines “literary replication” as focusing on “the actual business of producing and distributing print”, which can tangibly affect a work’s meaning. With regard to Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, then, commentaries or travel guides or gift-giving constitute forms of literary replication, specific acts by which Victorians received and circulated the poem among each other, contributing to its life as a book and to its role in the rethinking of Wordsworth (Secord 2000, 126).

Victorian assessments of Wordsworth’s poetry were organized predominantly around a biographical key. And, likewise, biographies of Wordsworth turned frequently to his poetry for supporting evidence. The cornerstone for this biographical-critical reading was set most prominently by Christopher Wordsworth’s *Memoirs of William Wordsworth*, published simultaneously in England and America in 1851. At the beginning of the *Memoirs*, Christopher Wordsworth writes of his uncle, “his Life is written in his Works. [. . .] His Works, therefore, are his Life” (1851, 1: 2). To substantiate this claim, he presents extensive quotations of letters, journal and diary entries, and other primary documents to establish for Victorians the authoritative narrative of Wordsworth’s life. It is noteworthy that he quotes or references *The Prelude* more than any other poem, treating it as a factual source for Wordsworth’s biography from his birth in 1770 to about 1805. The critical position established in the *Memoirs* became standard practice in the Victorian period, with literary commentaries grounded in Wordsworth’s life, citing or alluding to *The Prelude* (and mining material from the *Memoirs*) to illustrate his aesthetic and philosophical principles, as derived from his personal experiences. For example, in *On Poetic Interpretation of Nature* (1877), John Campbell Shairp constructs his chapter on Wordsworth as essentially a retelling of the poet’s biography in order to explain Wordsworth’s “views of nature”: “To understand what Wordsworth did as an interpreter of Nature, we must bear in mind the experience through which he passed” (1877, 240). That “experience” for Shairp is
most clearly expressed by *The Prelude*, and his treatment of Wordsworth’s “views” follows the chronology of the poet’s life, repeatedly quoting from and summarizing key events of the poem. Regarding Wordsworth’s reactions to the French Revolution, for instance, Shairp writes of his profound disappointment at Napoleon’s emergence after the fall of Robespierre and the end of the Terror: “Despairing of the destinies of mankind, he wandered about the country aimless, dejected, almost in despondency” (1877, 242). Here, Shairp refers to Books Tenth and Eleventh of *The Prelude*, especially the latter, where Wordsworth admits: “I lost / All feeling of conviction, and [. . .] / Yielded up moral questions in despair” (11.302–5). The conclusion of Shairp’s chapter then leaves no doubt concerning *The Prelude’s* centrality to reading Wordsworth (1877, 275):

There were many who knew Wordsworth’s poetry well while he was still alive, who felt its power [. . .]. [. . .] But when, after his death, “The Prelude” was published, they were let into the secret, they saw the hidden foundations on which it rests, as they had never seen them before. The smaller poems were more beautiful, more delightful, but “The Prelude” revealed the secret of their beauty.

Shairp thus reads “Wordsworth’s poetry” just as the *Memoirs* desires, *The Prelude* revealing both the poet’s life story and the “secret” to his entire poetic canon. Secord argues that the structures and processes of book production in the Victorian period contributed to “defining readerships and meanings” for works (2000, 126). Therefore, a book such as Shairp’s, like the *Memoirs*, shows concretely the extent to which Victorian criticism relied upon — and replicated — the text of the 1850 *Prelude* specifically, demonstrating that text’s centrality to how Victorians read Wordsworth’s life and poetry. In a sense, *The Prelude* for Victorians could no more be separated from that life and poetry than the breath from the body.24

24. Christopher Wordsworth’s inclusion of letters, journals, and the Fenwick Notes in his *Memoirs* experienced their own literary replication in subsequent editions of Wordsworth’s poetry. Stephen Gill observes that the *Memoirs*’ “mass of documentary material was to be pillaged by all other writers of introductions and biographical notes for the next twenty years” (1998, 32). The 1871 *Poetical Works* by the publisher Osgood of Boston, for instance, makes this acknowledgement in its appendix: “The following illustrations of Wordsworth’s Poems have been selected from the ‘Memoirs’ by his nephew” (7: 335). As well, William Knight frequently quotes material from and cites the *Memoirs* in *The English Lake District as Interpreted in the Poems of Wordsworth*, first published in 1878.
The replication of *The Prelude* during the Victorian period occurred in forms other than strictly literary or biographical commentaries, though certainly reviews and books such as Shairp’s constitute highly visible means by which *The Prelude* was assessed and disseminated. Letters or journals offer references to *The Prelude*, one of the most famous being Thomas Babington Macaulay’s judgment after reading the poem in 1850: “The story is the old story. There are the old raptures about mountains and cataracts [. . .]. The poem is to the last degree Jacobinical, indeed Socialist. I understand perfectly why Wordsworth did not choose to publish it in his lifetime” (Trevelyan 1878, 283–84).25 There are also even more private and personal references to the reading of *The Prelude*, such as seen in this article’s first epigraph quoted from *The Life and Letters of Edmund J. Armstrong*. Armstrong’s mention of “Book Fourteenth” confirms that he read the 1850 text.26 In the 1870s, William Knight’s *The English Lake District as Interpreted in the Poems of William Wordsworth* (1878) makes extensive use of *The Prelude* and the *Memoirs*, informing readers in his preface that “quotations from *The Prelude* are from the octavo edition of 1850” (1878, xxiii). Knight aims at providing “a guide to the Poems, more than to the District; and to the District, only in so far as it is reflected in, and interpreted by, the Poems” (vii); he admits that “to show what Wordsworth saw in Nature, and how he saw it”, he must “quote very largely from the Poems” (xxi). In this spirit, Knight begins “Chapter I. Cockermouth, etc.” with *The Prelude*, “to find out how Wordsworth felt toward Cockermouth, the place of his birth” (1878, 1), and he gives a long passage from Book First describing Wordsworth’s childhood connection to the River Derwent (see 1.270–300). Such long quotations from *The Prelude* are the norm for the first several chapters of Knight’s book, indicating the extent to which he relies upon it as a guide to and interpreter of the Lake District. Together, then, Macaulay (and Shairp), Armstrong (and the *Edinburgh Review*), and Knight provide the sort of physical evidence that shows the varied replication of *The Prelude* during the second half of the nineteenth

25. Shairp quotes this passage from Macaulay in *On Poetic Interpretation of Nature* and notes that Macaulay “was not given to feel or to see the things which Wordsworth most cared for”. Shairp urges readers instead to approach *The Prelude* as “a wonderful and unique poem, most instructive to those who will take the trouble required to master such a work” (1877, 234–35).

26. This passage is quoted by the *Edinburgh Review* in its discussion of the editions of Armstrong’s poetry, prose, and letters published in 1877 (Francis 1877, 555; Remains 1878, 79).
century, thereby reinforcing the significance of the 1850 text to Wordsworth’s Victorian reception.

Victorians disseminated The Prelude in ways other than by quotation, allusion, and commentary, ways that further reveal how The Prelude as a book participated in what Secord calls Victorian “cultural formation” (2000, 3). This included bestowing The Prelude (or Poetical Works) as a gift, a practice that began immediately with its publication. Owing to the resources available through the Wordsworth Trust’s online collections, we can establish some of the occasions for and sentiments with which Victorians gave and received The Prelude from the inscriptions they left in their books.27 For instance, Wordsworth’s wife Mary gave The Prelude as “a Memorial” to family and close friends, indicating the book’s function as a memoir and as a monument for Wordsworth. Others presented The Prelude or Poetical Works as a wedding gift, a Christmas present, a school prize (for attendance, composition, good behavior, or high grades), at baptisms, to express friendship, high regard, or love, to say farewell.28 These acts of literary replication generate intriguing questions about Wordsworth’s Victorian readers, the answers for which rely upon the “historical validity” of the 1850 Prelude. Who were they? What was their relationship with his poetry, particularly the 1850 Prelude? Why give The Prelude for such occasions and with such sentiments? In some cases, we know these readers, such as William Knight. In other cases, we know little if anything about these readers: Bessie Walton; W. H. Elkins; students such as Edith Allen, Elsie Ashby, or Maggie Robertson. In all cases, however, these readers contributed to The Prelude’s distribution and reception. Inscriptions in gift copies of The Prelude or Wordsworth’s Poetical Works thus memorialize the 1850 text’s material presence in and meaning to the lives of Victorians.29

27. All quotations of and references to names in these inscriptions are from the Dove Cottage, The Wordsworth Museum & Art Gallery, Cumbria web site.
28. Inscriptions include such phrases as “To my dear friends [. . . ] for the new and coming years”, “on the happy occasion of her marriage”, “as a token of affectionate regard”, “Forget me not”, and “with all good wishes” or “with love and best wishes”.
29. The 1850 text is key to our understanding of other aspects of The Prelude’s Victorian sociocultural context. See Dawson 1979 for discussion of the “autobiographical impulse” (9) prevalent in mid-century Victorian culture. Dawson treats The Prelude in relation to other (auto)biographical works published in 1850, such as Tennyson’s In Memoriam, Dickens’s David Copperfield, and Thackeray’s Pendennis. See also Reid 2004 for discussion of Wordsworth’s influence upon the study and teaching of English literature during the nineteenth century,
When we read the 1850 *Prelude* in light of such practices, we see that Victorians fulfilled one of the poem’s primary rhetorical aims. From the beginning, Wordsworth addressed his poetic autobiography to Coleridge, charting the growth and development of his mind as a poet and hoping to heal Coleridge, who went to Malta in 1804 for his health and to overcome his opium addiction. *The Prelude*’s series of apostrophes to Coleridge epitomize both of these rhetorical aims, asking for his approval of the poem and seeking to incorporate him in its consoling and rejuvenating project. Throughout *The Prelude*, Coleridge is addressed as the poet’s “Friend!”; he is also named twice, in Book Sixth and Book Fourteenth. In Book Sixth, Wordsworth refers to Coleridge’s “search” for “health / And milder breezes” (6.249–50) in Malta and offers a kind of prayer to him:

> Speed thee well! divide  
> With us thy pleasure; thy returning strength,  
> Receive it daily as a joy of ours;  
> Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift  
> Of gales Etesian or of tender thoughts.  
> (6.247–51)

Wordsworth here forges a sympathetic connection with Coleridge, receiving and giving “pleasure” and “strength”, partaking of the “fresh spirits” of Mediterranean summer winds and tenderness in order to sustain Coleridge during his absence. After this apostrophe, Wordsworth acknowledges their shared “discipline” as poets, claiming they are “Predestined” to “have one health, / One happiness” (6.256–59). In Book Fourteenth, an extended apostrophe to Coleridge closes the poem, reaffirming the sympathetic con-

at the University of London specifically. Reid notes that Wordsworthian values such as “self-expression, experiential learning, creative imagination, moral growth, and so forth” informed the pedagogy of instructors at London (2004, 93). Still to be examined more carefully is the transatlantic (and even colonial or transnational) *Prelude*. The poem was published simultaneously in America by D. Appleton & Co. of New York and influenced American writers such as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. Christopher Wordsworth’s *Memoirs* deserves greater attention as well.

30. Here are the forms of address to Coleridge and their frequency, derived from Jonathan Wordsworth’s 1850 text: “O Friend!” (21); “my Friend!” (8); “beloved Friend!” (5); “dear Friend!” (4); “Friend!” (4); “Coleridge!” (2); “Dearest Friend!” (1); “Fellow Voyager!” (1); “honoured Friend!” (1); “indulgent Friend!” (1); “my honoured Friend!” (1); “O distant Friend!” (1).
nection with Wordsworth, but also making both of them “joint labourers” and “Prophets of Nature” (14.441, 444). Together, as poets, they will give to “men” a “day / Of firmer trust” and “speak / A lasting inspiration, sanctified / By reason, blest by faith” (14.435, 440–41, 444–46); ultimately, they will “teach” and “Instruct” humanity about the beauty and divinity of the mind (14.447, 448). Moreover, in Book Fourteenth, Wordsworth calls his poem a “gift” (14.415) for Coleridge, looking forward to Coleridge’s return from Malta when they both will “draw [. . .] pleasure from this offering of my love” (14.428–29). Rhetorically, therefore, The Prelude embeds in the addresses to Coleridge an argument for its worth and the conditions for its replication between readers, conditions realized by Victorians in gifting The Prelude and spreading its inspiration.

Part Third: Material Form and/as Meaning

I have intended here to show the process by which the 1850 Prelude today bears the status of a liber non gratus, the resulting need for a more accurate construction of nineteenth-century literary history as exemplified by the problems related to the modern editing of Wordsworth’s poetic autobiography, and the significance of the text of the 1850 edition in the Victorian reception of The Prelude and of Wordsworth. At the heart of this study resides the argument that we have reached a point where a book history of the 1850 Prelude is necessary to redress its marginalization and recover its relevance to nineteenth-century literary history.

As previously stated, The Prelude was first published as a book, that is as a printed, physical form that influenced how Victorians read and interpreted the poem. Moreover, the text of The Prelude assumed a specific materiality in the 1850 edition, located in the typography and the organization of its parts. In this respect, book history’s emphasis on how meaning is affected by the material form of a literary work (in print and manuscript culture) is especially valuable. D. F. McKenzie, for instance, states that “the material forms of books, the non-verbal elements of the typographic notations within them, the very disposition of the space itself, have an expressive function in conveying meaning” (1986, 8). Echoing McKenzie, Roger Chartier observes that the meaning of texts “depends upon the forms through which they are received and appropriated by readers”; furthermore, “it is necessary to maintain that forms produce meaning” (1992, 50). James A. Secord sees reading as involving “all the diverse ways that books and other forms of printed works are appropriated and used”; he also claims
that “material form is integral to the meaning of the work” (2000, 518). Literary history as constructed from the position of McKenzie, Chartier, and Secord relies upon the details of who read what, when and where and how, details that the qualities of printed works shape in specific ways. For *The Prelude*, the book published, distributed, and read in 1850 — along with subsequent editions in various formats up to 1926 — embodied a distinct reading experience for Victorians that “produced” distinct meanings influenced by the work’s material forms. In Andrew Piper’s words, the 1850 *Prelude* was a “material event” (2009, 63). This tangible presence of *The Prelude* in Victorians’ lives distinguishes itself from the materiality of the poem’s several manuscripts that remained effectively unavailable to nineteenth-century readers.

The reception theory of Hans Robert Jauss augments the positions of McKenzie, Chartier, and Secord by arguing that literary history must include “the reader, listener, or observer as a mediating moment in the history of authors and works” (1978, 137). According to Jauss, literary works achieve historicity in relation to readers; the experience of literature involves “the historical communication between author, work, and reader” (1982, 52). Assessments of this experience hinge on how a work affects a reader’s “horizon of expectations”, which encompasses both formal factors, such as genre or theme, and social factors, such as class or education (1982, 22–23). For Jauss, readers are “historically, socially, biographically distinct” — or, “explicit” (1978, 142). Literary works affect not just how readers read but also, potentially, how they live: “[t]he social function of literature manifests itself in its genuine possibility only where the literary experience of the reader enters into the horizon of expectations of his lived praxis, preforms [sic] his understanding of the world, and thereby also has an effect on his social behavior” (Jauss 1982, 39). In this theoretical light, the “historical validity” of the 1850 *Prelude* is constituted by how it altered Victorians’ “horizon of expectations” for phenomena that ranged from Wordsworth and Romanticism to autobiography and epic in blank verse. Stephen Gill notes that Wordsworth remained “a continuing resource for Victorian readers” because they “wanted poetry that could teach and guide” (1998, 205), a “social behavior” informing Christopher Wordsworth’s *Memoirs*:

How are the young to be rescued from this perilous condition? [. . .] It must be, by the warning voice of some contemporary teacher, who has won their respect by his intellectual powers, and has gained their affections by his ardent benevolence, and who will warn them against the
delusions of the age, and instruct them to suspect, distrust, and analyze its opinions.

(1851, 1: 422)

The 1850 Prelude, both book and text, assumes a place in literary history by the fact of its materiality and by its interaction with Victorian society. As evidenced by Gill and Christopher Wordsworth, readers appropriated Wordsworth’s poetry in ways that related to their “lived praxis”, whether in producing their own literary works, as with George Eliot, or in communicating friendship or love by giving Wordsworth’s book as a gift. McKenzie, Chartier, Secord, and Jauss thus offer a theoretical framework for our book history of the 1850 Prelude on the grounds of its material and sociohistorical significance.

The 1850 Prelude carries its own material authenticity and historical validity quite apart from Wordsworth’s intentions or the meddling of family executors. If the 1850 Prelude remains a liber non gratus, we will only keep telling a woefully incomplete story of nineteenth-century literary history. A book history of The Prelude constitutes the most effective way to embrace and appreciate the radical reconsideration of Wordsworth’s work that occurred in the Victorian period. Otherwise, we confine the story of the “authentic” Wordsworth to a narrow span of time and a narrow set of aesthetic and critical parameters, when in fact — exemplified by The Prelude — Wordsworth’s life and poetry resisted and transcended such restrictions.

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Works Cited


Genetic criticism seeks to clear away the theoretical underbrush of, for example, new critical “fallacies”, poststructuralism, and deconstruction, while tracking a widened path back from published text through surviving drafts — and then forward through this expanded terrain — in a quest for fuller meaning and understanding than the published work alone can provide. In the imagery wielded in *Manuscript Genetics*, Dirk Van Hulle seeks to navigate the treacherous waters that lie between “positivism and intentionality, the Scylla and Charybdis of literary theory” (24), while simultaneously “bridging the gap between . . . the ‘proletariat’ of scholars and the ‘aristocracy’ of critics” (42). Yet genetic criticism has a certain affinity with new criticism: “Since any attempt to look inside a writer’s mind is doomed to fail, genetic criticism does not try to reveal what an author wanted to write, but focuses instead on what he has written” (3) — only the well-wrought urn has become less a static and finished product and more a dynamic and unfolding process, so the corpus of a writer’s work now expands to include all surviving writings as well as what poststructuralists and deconstructionists view as “the aporias and instabilities of texts” (43).

For genetic critics, literary modernism is the golden age because writers like Joyce and Beckett, aided and abetted by librarians and archivists, have done so much to insure the survival and preservation of their manuscripts. As Van Hulle writes, “[t]he process of writing is the focal point of genetic criticism”, but the notion of “process” is what can be read and inferred from all extant documents, culminating with the final, authorized text. The goal is both to elucidate how works came to be and to expand the concept of what the works are: “I aim to demonstrate that the composition process is an integral part of what these authors’ works convey” (2). The product is as implicit in the product as vice versa.

With Joyce, Van Hulle examines only *Finnegans Wake*. (He doesn’t say whether he thinks his methodology could apply as well to other Joyce writings.) Not intending to make this difficult text more accessible to non-experts (and he doesn’t; this is a book for specialists), his examination
of Joyce’s copybooks, notebooks, drafts, manuscripts, letters, and diaries makes obvious that it had, unsurprisingly, an extraordinarily complex genesis. By its very nature, *Finnegans Wake* is particularly suited to Van Hulle’s approach. Joyce’s working title, “Work in Progress”, combines product and process, emphasizing that it is both at the same time. For example, as Van Hulle demonstrates, Joyce “decomposed” Wyndam Lewis’s hostile criticism of “Work in Progress” in *The Art of Being Ruled* by including bits of it into the revised text that became *Finnegans Wake*, while from “even [. . .] generally positive evaluations” of “Work in Progress” “Joyce extracted only the negative remarks” to incorporate (84). This Joycean text that never ends because of its Viconian recorso became, both substantively and structurally, more “liquefied” during the process of its composition: “Joyce’s work in progress [. . .] already contained a quite ‘fluid’ chapter on ALP, but had not yet been conceived as a ‘riverrun’ in its entirety”. “Lewis’s fulmination against Bergson’s fluidity and ‘Heraclitus’ famous flux”” helped make it so (81). Van Hulle traces the evolution of “narrative kernels” (59) and “relatively small textual units” (72) in *Finnegans Wake* in order to demonstrate how words themselves liquefied, ran into each other, assumed new shapes, and gradually became “the main character of ‘Work in Progress’ as Joyce detached his lexical material from its conventional referentiality” (83).

For all the differences between Joyce and Beckett, and between their writings, they share a preoccupation with the “dynamics of the writing process” (133), “composition and recollection” (128), “the paradox of composing by means of decomposing” (158). Van Hulle finds a “homophony of ‘no’ and ‘know’ [. . .] repeatedly exploited by both Joyce and Beckett” and Beckett’s equivalence of Joycean flow in the way his characters “always somehow feel the need to go ‘on,’ which is probably the most important word in Beckett’s writings. It is the most concise expression of his highly ambiguous attitude toward modernity’s faith in Progress and the resulting movement for the sake of mere movement” (147) — though Beckett’s preferred phrase was “work in regress” (3), as Van Hulle exemplifies through exploring the evolution of significant Beckettean linguistic uses: “never been properly born” (142, 168, 172), the “way” (174), holes (176, 180, 183), “and yet” (188).

As Van Hulle demonstrates, Joyce “remained the mastermind that decided which coincidences were incorporated and which were not”, although he was always ready to incorporate into his text the aleatory, “serendipitous montage”, “external stimuli” (106–7). Beckett also sought control, but his process was the reverse of paring and eliminating, an
approach Beckett described “as boring holes in the veil of language” (193). The contrast is striking: “Joyce’s openness to the aleatory was the engine of a textual machinery that could not fail because everything could become part of it; Beckett was convinced that his writing could not but fail, and therefore resolved to fail better” (193). But Beckett, who asserted authority over productions and actors as well as texts, sought to control failure as much as Joyce sought to control success.

Manuscript Genetics is suggestive rather than exhaustive, even with regard to the two writers on whom it focuses. The manuscript preservation craze, a twentieth-century phenomenon that shows no sign of abating thanks largely to the continuing interest of research libraries and universities, has fostered a new critical approach that, in Van Hulle’s capable, pioneering hands, promises much more to come. Learning how properly to value the “stuff” an author has both discarded and preserved will require considerable tact and discretion of future genetic critics. One hopes that they will rise to the level of the model and challenge that Manuscript Genetics sets them.

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Networks of communication forged by middle-class letter-writing habits proved a distinct advantage to patriots in the War for American Independence. More broadly, modes of letter-writing contributed an “ideology of agency” in eighteenth-century America. In this important book at the intersection of ideologies of modernity, material culture, and middle class practice, Konstantin Dierks argues that when men, women, and eventually children achieved prowess with the writing of a letter, they gained access to social networks which could help them achieve a more secure, comfortable life. Further, properly manufactured and composed letters became central to a new business culture that prized routinization, procedure, and reliability. Examining not just the content of letters but their visual and material culture, letter-writing manuals, the use of letters in newspapers, postal history, and the cultural, economic, and military work being done by correspondence, Dierks offers a significant re-evaluation of what it meant to be middle-class in the eighteenth century.
When the bourgeoisie wrote letters, which they did with frequency after 1750, they were most interested in self-improvement and self-articulation. Astutely identifying the common phrase “In my power”, Dierks argues that men and (some) women wrote in order to express both their agency and their limitations: for an individual letter writer, what was “in my power” and not “in my power”. Above all, letter writing involved a commitment to investment in skills and materials, self-discipline, the internalization of social norms for efficiency and courtesy, a duty to keep up relationships, and politeness (or, later, sentimentalism). Aware when they were stretching the conventions in manuals, correspondents strove to tighten familial and economic bonds and to define their position in the world. This “myopic” and self-serving epistolary culture, however, omitted consideration of “dispossession and slavery” in what amounted to the “severing of agency from ethics” central to middle class modernity (182, 114, 8).

Whereas in the seventeenth century letters served to affirm the authority of social elites, by the late-eighteenth century letter-writing was perceived as a “universal” medium of communication. This very assumption of “universality”, however, elided inequalities in access to education, technologies, and supplies. The abilities, affinities, and networks achieved by letter-writers ultimately led to an “epistolary divide” between middle-class whites and those lower on the social strata. Though briefly noting the participation of enslaved blacks and native Americans in documentary cultures through, for example, the forgery of travel passes, Dierks finds non-whites notably, and culpably, absent from middle class epistolary worlds.

While Dierks’s main argument is based on this omission of social ethics in epistolary culture, his most fruitful field of positive evidence centers on the history of the post. A fascinating story emerges of the “intrepid experimentation and unfortunate struggle” of men such as Andrew Hamilton and Edward Dummer, who, a half century before Benjamin Franklin, pioneered the colonial postal service (51). Staffed mostly by middle-class men (with the notable exception of the remarkable Baltimore Postmistress Mary Katherine Goddard) the postal service grew into a monumental communications infrastructure. First controlled locally, when it became lucrative the post was subsumed into the British imperial system. Then a full year before independence was declared, the colonial post rebelled. Ousting British postmasters from their positions, sometimes by force, the Parliamentary Post Office became the Constitutional Post Office. Speed of communications became supremely important in maneuvering troops and supplies during the war, with British commanders at a disadvantage when
they had to send letters by boat. A political ideology of freedom of communication existed uneasily with ubiquitous surveillance of the mail for military intelligence or signs of treason. Dierks makes a compelling case for the crucial role played by letters in military strategy and family survival during wartime.

Assuming that theology gives way to bureaucracy in English culture, Dierks spends little time on religion and or epistolary networks among religious groups. One wonders, for example, how his assessment of Sarah Osborn as an “ordinary” letter-writer who did not imagine “any social reach for herself outside her immediate social circle” might change if she was acknowledged as a major figure in the Newport revivals of the 1760s, welcoming as many as 525 people to her home each week, including enslaved and free blacks (160). Osborn’s correspondence with Susanna Anthony was also published, forming part of a tradition of the circulation of pious letters going back to the English Reformation. Further studies might explore the role of letters within religious networks and the formation of religious epistolary cultures that may have had distinct social and ethical concerns.

Dierks’ final chapter on the myth of “universalism” will be of broad interest to scholars of educational reform, literacy, and slavery. The focus expands to documentary cultures generally in order to explore the implications of literacy for free and enslaved blacks. Examining runaway advertisements, abolitionist writings, and free black networks, he concludes that those enslaved and free blacks who could read or write were limited by the “complexities and contingencies of everyday life”, including exclusion from epistolary cultures, from using their skills to mobilize resistance to slavery itself (253). Deliberately depoliticized by the late eighteenth-century, letter-writing nonetheless shaped the politics of race in the antebellum period. Painstakingly researched in archival sources, In My Power deftly points to the significance of communications infrastructures to economic and social change.

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Continental and Mediterranean Review Essay


The publication of a new critical edition of a cultural icon like Petrarch’s *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* necessarily confronts 1: the recent textual tradition that has been essentially a *receptus* of Contini’s editions of 1949 and 1964 with sometimes problematic conjectures and emendations in subsequent reprintings (discussed by Belloni 2004, Capovilla 2010, Fenzi 1998, Suitner 1996, and others), 2: the presence of a partial holograph (MS Vaticano Latino 3195) and the extensive ongoing research that such an important literary document has garnered, and 3: methodological issues that even in the best neo-Lachmannian approaches lead to perplexing doubts about a text that spawned centuries of study, debate, and poetic imitation. For example, microscopic emendations, often based on interpretative conjecture, brought forth in Santagata’s and Bettarini’s commentaries (respectively of 1996/2004 and 2005), both founded principally on Contini’s 1964 edition, confirm a perspective somewhat unique to the textual tradition of Petrarch’s *Fragmenta*, a preference for establishing the text according to previous editions rather than from the manuscript tradition. Evidence from several sources confirms that Modigliani’s 1904 diplomatic edition of Petrarch’s partial holograph of the *Fragmenta*, an edition whose aggiunte and correzioni were not always consulted, became the reference text for many who produced subsequent editions (see Storey 2004b, 386n5). There is little doubt that in addition to the authority of a copy of the *Fragmenta* partially in the poet’s own hand, an additional layer of authority accrued to Contini’s editions, to the point that when in the
mid-1990s Furio Brugnolo and I proposed to the Vatican Library a new facsimile edition of MS Latino 3195 and a volume of commentary (Bel-loni, Brugnolo, Storey and Zamponi 2003 and 2004), the project was immediately welcomed by then Prefect Leonard Boyle as a means to redirect attention to the codex itself, long ignored except by some of us who had long been puzzled by Wilkins’ conjectural assessments (1951) and by Petrarch’s scribal treatment of the poetic genres that comprise the work.

Petrarch’s *Fragmenta* (*Ruf*) have for non-specialists a problematically misleading textual tradition. Petrarch’s perhaps most influential work has never been the subject of a Lachmannian edition. In 1501 Aldo Manutius claimed that Bembo had used Petrarch’s own copy to edit the *Cose volgari di messer Francesco Petrarca*. This assertion did not keep Pietro Bembo and Aldo Manuzio from making a significant interpretative change in the edition of 1514, moving the division between Parts 1 and 2 from the canzone *I’ vo pensando* (264) to the sonnet *Oimè il bel viso* (267).¹ Eleven years later Alessandro Vellutello (1525) argued that the codex bound in white leather could not have been Petrarch’s copy in light of the first letter of the *Familiares*. Not until the late nineteenth century (1886) was the Vatican codex Latino 3195 definitively reclaimed by Nolhac as Petrarch’s, followed — in 1896 — by Giovanni Mestica’s critical edition based not only on the readings of Latino 3195 but also upon its marginalia, that is the small numbers with which Petrarch experimented with reorderings of the last thirty-one poems of the *Fragmenta* in his own service copy. Mestica altered the order in which these poems had appeared in early manuscripts and previous printed editions. Not even Valdezoco’s 1472 Paduan edition, taken directly from the same white leather manuscript that Bembo and Vellutello had seen, had given this different arrangement to these final poems.² And therein lies one of the fundamental problems of the textual tradition of Petrarch’s *Fragmenta*.

¹ See Barolini’s discussion on the significance of this editorial change in her “Petrarch at the Crossroads of Hermeneutics and Philology: Editorial Lapses, Narrative Impositions, and Wilkins’ Doctrine of the Nine Forms of the *Rerum vulgarium Fragmenta*” (2007, especially 27n10).

² The publisher’s colophon reiterates Valdezoco’s access to a codex that he believed to be in Petrarch’s hand: “Francisci petrarcae laureati poetae nec non secretarii apostolici benemertit. Rerum vulgarium(m) fragmenta ex originali libro extracta[.] In urbe patauina liber absolatus est foeliciter. [. . .]” (Valde-zoco 1472, 188v).
Many literary scholars today will say, we have Petrarch’s manuscript for the work, just publish that. But Latino 3195 contains scribal errors, some of them Petrarch’s, letters and entire verses traced by a subsequent hand, and numerous erasures and dubious readings. From the time of Petrarch’s death, when the manuscript’s fascicles were still unbound, until its entry into the Vatican Library by the bequest of Fulvio Orsini (1374–1600), the codex was in private hands and subject to the privileges of private ownership. Moreover, well before the manuscript’s completion, it would seem that it, or a previous copy of the evolving work, served as ‘antegraph’ (or exemplar) for fair copies for early readers and friends. We know definitively of at least two such copies, which we can trace by previous readings (lectiones) in poems later changed by Petrarch in Latino 3195. But there is an even larger dynamic at play in Petrarch’s partial holograph that has to change our orientation to the codex: the shift of scribal register. The copyist Giovanni Malpaghini began his transcription of Latino 3195 as a fair copy of the Fragmenta. After Malpaghini abandoned the project, Petrarch served as his own scribe and attempted to maintain the same “fair copy standards”.3 But at a certain point in Petrarch’s transcriptions and subsequent interventions to erase, emend, and experiment throughout the work, the manuscript became a working or service copy, never destined for circulation — unlike the fair copies made from earlier stages of Latino 3195. This shift in scribal register in Petrarch’s copy is essential in assessing the manuscript’s codicological values. It also explains why not a single copy from the early manuscript tradition contains, for example, the final thirty-one poems in Petrarch’s experimental order renumbered on cc. 66v–71v. It is also one of the keys to coming to terms with Savoca’s edition and its companion study.

In the spirit of the 2003 facsimile and the 2004 Antenore commentary, Savoca’s edition attempts to shine additional light on Petrarch’s problematic artifact. To his credit, Savoca proposes to do this in a schematic presentation in the companion Codicologia, which substitutes for the more

3. This is especially the case with Petrarch’s attempt to salvage and recycle the rounded body of the rubricated ‘D’ of Donna mi vene spesso ne la mente, which occupied place 121 in the Fragmenta when Petrarch had the loose bifolia sent to the rubricator in Milan probably in mid-1368. These bifolia amounted to five complete quaternions (cc. 1–8, 9–16, 17–24, 25–32, and 53–60), one partially completed quaternion (cc. 33–40 [last rubrication O bella man, c. 39v2]), and a partially completed binion (now cc. 61–62 and 71–72 [last rubrication for È questo ’l nido, c. 62v1]).
transparent explanation of methods and tools that characterize critical editions, and to apply selected results in the edition. *Codicologia* insistently draws attention to physical aspects of the manuscript (including holes and stains) that can tell us much about the parchment, its preparation and its itinerary through the hands of numerous readers. But the problem of the permutation in the codex’s scribal register, never addressed by Savoca, leads us to a daunting question: are the author’s final intentions represented by his final working draft copy? or in a final fair copy — still to be identified — sanctioned by the poet? Savoca follows the lead of ongoing research in this area from different methodological approaches to reevaluate mostly early manuscripts, from the late fourteenth and from the fifteenth century, and early printed editions. This work requires a dispassionate and scientific orientation toward Wilkins’ (1951) often conjectural reconstructions of Petrarch’s *Fragmenta* as well as a willingness to utilize the contributions of previous scholars in a collaborative effort (see Del Puppo and Storey 2003, Barolini 2007, and Pulsoni 2009). Maddalena Signorini’s work on MS Laurenziano 41.10 (2003), Furio Brugnolo’s contributions (1992 and 2004) to our understanding of Petrarch’s visual poetics, Marco Pacioni’s study (2004) of the material and metrical forms of the *ballata* in Petrarch’s manuscripts, Gino Belloni’s studies (1992 and 2004) of the variants and stages of emendation in Petrarch’s Latino 3195 and the early tradition are just a few examples of philological efforts that build generously on the work of others and move toward clearer methodological stances. Time after time in Savoca’s edition and *Codicologia* one has the distinct impression that the work of colleagues is cited only to dismiss it *ex cathedra*. In some instances, previous studies are either ignored or misrepresented. Decorum keeps me from listing, so I will only say that several times I returned to reread my own work to see if I had indeed represented certain findings as Petrarchan emendations only to discover that I clearly had not. Entire sections in *Codicologia* on Petrarch’s system for transcribing diverse genres recount the results of the painstaking work of others without acknowledgement. *Codicologia*’s negative orientation leads to philological mistakes on the nature of majuscules and the interpretation of Petrarch’s punctuation, where a much healthier appreciation of previous studies on punctuation would have afforded a more open, if not more accurate, discussion of these related issues as well as of the value of a codex like Laurenziano Segni 1, whose majuscules — as I noted in 2004 — reveal evidence of a direct relationship with Latino 3195 and cause us to study it more carefully rather than dismiss it as a *codex descriptus* (a problem investigated by Del Puppo [2004 and 2007]). From both *Codicologia* and
the edition there emerges especially a competitive stance toward the work of previous scholars and projects that could have been used to support the self-declared innovations of both the companion study and the edition.

This lack of collaborative orientation toward the philological foundations investigated by others has both macro- and microscopic effects on the critical edition. The value of Savoca’s microscopic studies and attention to the smallest details, most warranted and welcomed because the nature of Petrarch’s own orientation to his writing is microscopic, is offset — for example — by the editor’s decision to print all 366 poems not according to Petrarch’s precise transcriptional layouts — an integral part of his poetics dating back to his early draft manuscript Vaticano Latino 3196 and well-documented in research essays since the late 1980s — but to the fifteenth-century scribal rendering of one verse per line. Savoca’s position, that the systematic transcription of the genres in Latino 3195 is part of a scribal strategy for organizing this particular book, ignores not only the long history of the “poetica grafico-visiva” of pre-Petrarchan poets such as Monte Andrea and Dante, but the purposefulness of the early manuscript tradition of the Fragmente in adopting (and even correcting) Petrarch’s precise transcriptional layouts (as in the cases of — among others — Laurenziano 41.17, Queriniano D II 21, Morgan M502, Laurenziano 41.10, and Laurenziano Segni 1). Previous research on this essential relationship between Petrarch’s transcriptional system and his poetics is ignored to the detriment of the philological truth of the struggle between early Italian poets and the professional copyists who grew increasingly disenchantment with the ‘old transcriptional style’ of some poets and scribes (see MS Riccardiano 1088, c. 27r, cited as well by Savoca to ‘correct’ the record).

The edition’s handling of the reordering of the last thirty-one poems is equally problematic, not because it adopts the marginal renumbering that seems to represent Petrarch’s last experiment (as so many other editors have done as well), but because Codicologia makes such a point of insisting upon the importance of being faithful to the physical form of Petrarch’s ‘original’, while the edition simply renumbers the compositions without reference to the poems’ original physical position in the codex (a problem at least addressed in Bezzola’s 1976 BUR edition). This editorial decision raises a significant methodological problem. Medieval copyists used combinations of numbers, letters, and symbols in the margins of manuscripts to reorder compositions. But, as Roberta Capelli demonstrated in 2004, such

4. These literary-scribal matrices are described and analyzed in Brugnolo 1992 and Storey 1993.
reordering markers were commonly used in a workshop copy to establish the order of a new, projected manuscript. The methodological implications of Capelli’s study for the editing of a work like Petrarch’s draft copy of the *Fragmenta* suggest that since we have no subsequent manuscript that follows completely Petrarch’s renumbering, when we publish the revised order without due transparency, we are no longer publishing the document Vatican Latino 3195 but the potential text projected by Petrarch. If the physical form of Latino 3195 is the touchstone of Savoca’s edition, then the sonnet *Vago augelletto* cannot be “CCCLIII” but in fact “365 [rev. 353]” with the understanding that the revised position produces a new, conjectured work which is not Latino 3195.

Philologists, codicologists, and historical linguists will also object to many more microscopic errors that will cause some to lose sight of the goals of Savoca’s editorial experiment. I have long proposed a renewed effort on Petrarch’s punctuational style, which integrates majuscules and textual space in Petrarch’s intricate system variously described by previous scholars. But Savoca’s surprising unwillingness here to follow the codex or to give Petrarch the benefit of a more complex syntactic construction to express the tension and passage between poetic composition and tears in sonnets 229 and 230, for example, jolts universally: “Cantai. Or piango. Et non men di dolcezza / Del pianger prendo, che del canto presi, / Ch’a la cagion, non a l’effetto, intesi / Son i miei sensi vaghi pur d’altezza.” (229.1–4, p. 362); and “I’ piansi. Or canto. Che ’l celeste lume / Quel vivo sole alli occhi mei non cela, / Nel qual honesto amor chiaro revela / Sua dolce forza, et suo santo costume, / Onde e’ suol trar di lagrime tal fiume,” (230.1–5, p. 363). In spite of his own early insistence upon the logical and musical properties of Petrarch’s punctuational ‘system’, Chiorboli (1924) and Salva-Cozzo (1904), like Contini (1949) and Mestica (1896), operated on the realistic principle that hundreds of years of editorial change have distanced our ears and eyes from the diverse graphological marks and use of space that characterized Petrarch’s scribal cultural and sometimes distinguished his own usage, for example, from that of professional copyists. After years of examining Petrarch’s diverse registers of punctuation even in the same codex, I would be the first to point out that the debate is far from resolved. Where does fidelity to the marks on the parchment that Petrarch and Malpaghini used stop and the useful application of modern punctuation of short, medial, and long pauses begin? Savoca is correct in proposing a solution to what I have called the interpretative *textus receptus* transmitted more by years of public recitation locked in the Italian ear than by attentive study of the manuscripts. There is little doubt that
Chiorboli’s lack of punctuation of the appositional “che del canto presi” (129.2) ignores Petrarch’s markings. Santagata’s and Contini’s interpretative punctuation of the contrastive “ch’a la cagion, non a l’effetto,” (129.3) changes the function of the construction “intesi / son”. But all editors see and hear in the construction of the quatrain a single, complex formula in which vv. 3 and 4 are strictly linked to the initial contrast of v. 1. Savoca’s jarring interpretation (“Cantai. Or piango. Et non [. . .]”) eliminates the syntactic unfolding of the quatrain and of what Bettarini calls the pivotal “sintagma incipitario” (2005, 1061), and, if we respect prosodically the syntactic full stops as barriers to elision, renders the verse hypersyllablic. The effect is even more dramatic in sonnet 230 (“I’ piansi. Or canto.”), where Savoca alters the syntax (cfr. Santagata 1996): “[. . .] ché ‘l celeste lume [. . .] sua dolce forza et suo santo costume;”) and misinterprets Petrarch’s frequently pleonastic virgule before conjunctions (a tradition continued in early printed editions), reducing to a secondary position Laura’s “santo costume” in respect to her “dolce forza” (v. 4) revealed by the “honesto amor” (v. 3) of her “celeste lume” (v. 1). Again the end of the first quatrain of Rvf 230 represents a syntactic pause, but now in an extended metaphor. Savoca’s decision to eliminate the medial pause at the end of v. 4 takes away the elegant solution offered by Contini’s semicolon (;) or even Chiorboli’s colon (:) out of his strict adherence to limited punctuation. By the same token, his decision not to follow the codex’s punctus after “revela” (v. 3) is based on his interpretation of the marker as metrical rather than syntactic (p. 363). But the explanation mystifies. Why metrical rather than the catch-all category of “segnetti accidentali” (p. 47, note for v. 66)? There is not an editorial soul who would separate v. 3 from v. 4 with punctuation. This otherwise insignificant instance underscores one of the fundamental problems in Savoca’s method: interpretation. In some places, Petrarch’s punctuation cannot be ours and the editor must interpret, even conjecture. Here and elsewhere Savoca seems the victim of his own claims for the superiority of his edition as scientifically faithful to Petrarch’s manuscript. As long as they are transparent in their choices, editors are allowed to conjecture and interpret because critical editions are proposals and working hypotheses, never ‘the final word’. Savoca has too often boxed himself in to the enclosure of fidelity to the manuscript, except he isn’t always faithful. And in the urgency of that fidelity he finds explanations that do not always lead us along the path of what Canfora calls the “diritto alla verità” (2008).

Other instances of editorial interpretation are instructive. Historical linguists might protest the incipit of Savoca’s Quel ch’infinita (4.1, p. 6),
founded on the acceptance of the codex’s erased ‘l’ of Quel against the vast tradition of “Que’ ch’infinita”. Savoca counters Modigliani’s accurate but neutral assessment of Que’ with minimal evidence. Nor is his transparency, the hallmark of all critical editions, all that it could be. He ignores Boccaccio’s earlier transcription of the poem (Chigiano L v 176, c. 43v: “Que chinfinite prouedenc’”); and his citation of Valdezoco’s 1472 “Quel chinfinite prouidentia” simply tells us, as in other cases in the Paduan edition, that the ‘l’ had been added before Valdezoco gained access to the manuscript. Along similar lines, in his discussion of v. 44 of O aspectata in ciel beata et bella (28), Savoca does not grasp the significance of the erased ‘l’ after Qua and qua in Qua’ figli mai, qua’ donne in spite of their presence in Laurenziano 41.10 and Laurenziano Segni 1 (p. 47, ad loc.): the antegraphs of both Laurentian manuscripts were prepared before the erasures were executed, clarifying for us the diffusion of Petrarch’s earlier versions of the Fragmenta.

Historians of the language will on the other hand applaud Savoca’s decision to follow the current trend away from standardized and conventional spellings: he maintains Petrarch’s oscillations between graveza and gravezza, he eschews the anachronistic ‘h’ in forms of avere (“Così l’alm’à sfornita” [135, 24]; “Ò servito a signor crudele, et scarso” [320, 12]); he insists upon the exclamatory de! (dè rather than the then non-existent deh); and he pays honor to good sense in restoring the form ajuagli (against the modern editorial tradition’s avagli) in v. 21 of Perché la vita è breve (71 [“Non che l’ajuagli altrui parlar, o mio”]) upon the evidence of the inserted ‘g’ subsequently erased.5 However, again in this last case, Savoca turns to the early manuscripts without recognizing the snapshot of the earlier unerased form in Latino 3195 contained in both Laurenziano 41.10 and Segni 1, which read ajuagli.

Savoca’s edition contributes to a much larger discussion in which numerous scholars have been toiling for years. Though critical editions are often signed by a single editor who has devoted years of research to the witnesses of a work, in truth such scholarship is usually produced in collaboration, not only with numerous readers and informants with whom one checks readings but also with that vast group of scholars who have studied and proposed textual solutions before us, sometimes with different results but always with a sense of contributing to a historical discussion.

5. This paleographic problem and its interpretative significance were discussed extensively by Belloni in 2004 (84) with useful inclusion of the work of other scholars.
We build on the good work of our predecessors and leave, we hope, an accurate record for others of where our own work has contributed and, yes, where it has failed. The practice of putting our work through its paces under the scrutiny of our fellow researchers by presenting at conferences problems of readings among witnesses, codicological findings, and proposals for methodological innovation is both time-honored and sound. As the editor/scholar takes his work to press after years of consultation, emendation, and study, the sensation is often one of humble gratitude toward the generations and even centuries of collaborators who have contributed even the smallest pieces of information to our collective knowledge of a work.

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Works Cited


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Founded in 1979, the Society for Textual Scholarship is devoted to providing a forum, in its biennial conferences and in its journal *Textual Cultures: Texts, Contexts, Interpretation* (formerly *Text*) for the discussion of the implications of current research in a variety of textual disciplines. The Society has also recently added a blog on its website and the option of smaller workshop conferences to be hosted by various institutes and universities during the years when the biennial conference does not take place. The 2008 conference was organized by Archie Burnett and held at the Editorial Institute of Boston University. The 2009 conference at New York University was organized by John Young (Marshall University) and Andrew Stauffer (University of Virginia). The 2009 conference hosted thirty-nine panels on textuality and textual editing, with topics as diverse as “Modern Manuscripts”, “Race and Textuality”, “New Editorial Practices in Digital Scholarly Editions”, “Early Modern Reprints”, and “Textual Studies and Video Games”. The 2011 conference, has been organized by Matthew Kirschenbaum (University of Maryland). For future conference information, please see the Society’s website (http://textualsociety.org). The Society is also now an Affiliated Member of the Modern Language Association, and hosts a session at the annual conference in December. Please consult the Society’s website for announcements and additional calls for papers.

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