

Editing Renaissance Classics in Spain in the 90's

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Editing Renaissance Classics is not a particularly agreeable subject for me to discuss with an audience where the specialists abound, indeed it is even rasher on my part to do so when one has to take into account as well that those classics are not even in one's mother tongue, but in English. To be precise, in Renaissance and Elizabethan English. You may then accept my apologies if my course strands too far away from where it should come to. In the end, I am afraid that more darkness will result today from my speculations than any clear light of Reason and better understanding of the problems under scope: comparative studies and philological procedures. In this sense, it would be more advisable to revise the impact that these comments may cause when they may be published in the future by means of a second reading. Yet, I think that this topic needs some discussion in detail both generally, and also particularly. Editing texts, that I consider as the basic task of all philologists, is a discipline that has become almost an exile from the literary core courses in the recent past, both in the English and the Spanish speaking countries although it now seems to be enjoying a timid revival.

In the case of Spain, this has been a country where so far we have seen an enormous variety of editorial practices, but very little discussion about them. I should add further that those academically generated practices have been connected with the Spanish Renaissance and Baroque Classics (even Medieval ones) rather than with their English correlates, or to tell the truth, with any other foreign ones. I think that one could barely name a little more than a dozen Spanish scholars who have been involved in the serious study and discussion of the problems of Editing Renaissance Classics and comparing opinions about the problems that such an activity poses. One early reflection I would like to bring into this discussion is what we, or at least what I mean by editing English Classics in a non-English speaking country like Spain. Or if I may put that question from a different point of view: Is there any real need for editing and translating English Renaissance Classics in Spain (or, if we come to that, in any foreign country)? Is it possible to do it similarly to the ways in which native speakers feel and do it?

I may also say that what we generally understand by editions of a text or a work –and I do not consider that these two terms refer necessarily to the same items, as I will try to show later– and all editorial work in general, seem to be under revision these days. This is mainly, I think, a result of the impact that the new computing tools and techniques have caused in the academic world. The fact that an alphabetical word list, the basis of a traditional glossary of “hard terms” for, let us say, Spenser's *The Shepheards Calender* –a good example as I have been completing a Spanish edition in the very recent past– can be compiled in a matter of seconds, or in a couple of minutes at the most, if it were the case of *The Faerie Queene*, while that same job used to take several painstaking months using the good old card-

board files and a lot of patience, is just an example of what I am trying to illustrate. But, mind you, I have alluded to new tools and new techniques in the sense that there cannot be any doubt that the traditional ones are already changing, and changing fast. What must and will change as from the middle of the 1990's are the theoretical principles of editing texts. This second (or third, even) epistemological change, seems to run on a smooth parallel with that triggered by the 19th century English and German Scholars who founded institutions such as the *Early English Text Society*, the *Malone Society*, or *Anglia*. That is, about a hundred years ago there was a major change in the approach and methodology of textual editing, and Philology became a science.

Tampering with texts has been popular since the late 15th century Humanists decided to change and challenge the Medieval approach to authority, but it is not until Lachmann and his followers decided that it was time to change and challenge their predecessors' procedures, that at least the *recensio* and *emendatio* should be separated, and that it would be a great idea to use a method similar to Charles Buffon's and Carl af Linné's (Linnaeus) to establish *stemmata*, that a change of paradigm took place. I feel, as I have just advanced, that we are now in the middle of a similar change. I am not intrepid enough to foresee whether applying Cladistic analysis to editorial practices may produce a parallel result (see R. O'Hara & P. Robinson 1993), but I would not be surprised if it did. And, sure enough, let me insist on the fact that computing tools and techniques are the crystallizing feature of the change of paradigm that is on its way.

ENGLISH RENAISSANCE CLASSICS IN SPAIN

The study of English Classics from the Golden Age has been in Spain more a *rara avis* than a true commonplace with the possible exception of Shakespeare and a handful of individual cases. However, let us make some interesting remarks to this rather rash statement. Really, in a broad sense, there has been and there is a tradition of studying English 16th and 17th literature and culture, and I must emphasize that this tradition started well before English Studies where officially established in Spanish Universities by the end of the 1960's. It is also true, however, that in the last two decades alone we find more publications than in all the previous times altogether. I know that quantity is not necessarily a synonym of quality, but, at least we may assume that if there is some quantity there might be some quality in it, whereas if there is nothing or just very little to count on, quality becomes even rarer.

Comparative studies both in the fields of language and, especially, of literature and translation, or what is now called vaguely "cultural studies", have taken the lion's share of the modest bulk of Spanish studies on the English Classics of this period. Translations of works have not been unknown either, although if we are now to contrast their number and scope with the previous group, we will see that there is an important decrease in their importance. When it comes to editing itself, the number of studies dwindle to such an extent that, generally speaking, we should be able to use our fingers. Also, one should consider whether the work of scholars has been unconstrained by publishers and possible audiences—or to put it in a cruder form, markets—or whether some publications in part or as a whole might have been the result of such instances. A second point is, of course, whether editorial work has been occasional within the curricula of people who have devoted time and effort to it, or whether there has been a regular line in that kind of activity.

A brief and incomplete panorama of what we can find today and what might be found in the past decades will concern us presently. However, Javier Sánchez Escribano who has been working very hard to provide us (eventually) with a *vademecum* of what have been and what seem to be English Renaissance Studies in Spain, is a much better source of information. What I am attempting at here is just a sort of last minute review of what topics have been touched, which have been covered partially, and which particular studies have had greater consequences in this field. By this field I mean editorial problems and practices concerning English Renaissance Classics, as studies on those works are quite abundant, and, at least for the moment, they should be naturally out of the field in question here. My shortlist begins with Shakespeare, because as the French say, *Ça va de soi*.

SHAKESPEARE

To start with, we are bound to mention Shakespeare. Namely because he has received and still receives a lot of attention: books, Ph. D. theses, M. A. theses and several dozen articles can be easily listed in a succinct bibliography. Some are even quoted abroad, although the general lack of international repercussion of what we do in this country—with very few exceptions so far—is one of the various endemic problems that English Studies have in Spain. But I am not in the mood of being a New Jeremy, so I should rather return to my original commentary and emphasize what has been done and suggest what could be done by the younger generations.

On that account, and coming back to Shakespeare, I should stress that the work of the research and editorial group from the Shakespeare Institute of the University of Valencia led by professor Manuel Ángel Conejero, and, why not, the splendid isolation of professor Ángel Luis Pujante from the University of Murcia, have obtained national fame and some international esteem. The Valencia Shakespeare Foundation has well established and serious connections with different English and American Academic and Research Institutions, and it is likely that when they eventually finish their edition and study of Shakespeare they will continue with other Renaissance classics. If the results of such a research group demonstrate very well what can be achieved by applying this method, Pujante, who generally works alone, and therefore has to resort to different procedures, has nevertheless demonstrated that individual publications can also obtain laudable results. In both cases, that is, Conejero's and Pujante's, their work has been consistent and continued, and some of us hope that their editions and translations will end up by becoming standard within the Spanish speaking world. Some have already become relative best-sellers, though not necessarily because of their scholarly excellence.

Shakespeare's poetry has been more and less fortunate. Let me explain. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* have been variously edited in Spain and translated several times into Spanish or Catalan (Muñoz Calvo 1989). There are all sorts of things in this field, some of them very good, but, also, some tend to reach into the fields of nonsense. Bilingual editions have also enjoyed a discreet popularity. Other poetical works, namely *The Rape of Lucrecia* and *Venus and Adonis*, have received less attention, and as far as translations are concerned, we still have to resort to those by Luis Astrana Marín published in the 1920's and 1930's.

DRAMA

As far as other Renaissance –to be more precise Elizabethan and Jacobean– drama is concerned, Spanish scholars have only visited it occasionally. I should mention now, and I do not think I will forget any of the important publications of the last fifteen years, the following editors and editions: Julio César Santoyo & José Miguel Santamaría’s Marlowe’s *Faustus*; Teresa Fanego’s *Hamlet* (and this means Shakespeare again); Bernhard Dietz’s Tourneur’s *Tragedies* or his Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist*; or, again, Ángel Pujante’s work on Middleton and Dekker. However, this list will not run into many more titles, and hence it is quite clear that editions and translations of English Classical drama, including minor authors, have not been frequent. I should like to point out, though, that unusual as those studies may be, what little has been done in this area can be qualified as very good. I should also explain my allusion to “minor authors”, who, indeed have been even more popular in Spain than the major ones. A good reason for studying second or third rate authors from the canon may be that they are also less studied in the English speaking world, and therefore most of what can be done about (or even to and with) them tends to have more relevance in absolute terms (H. Bloom, 1995). This means that comparatively, for instance, Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* has received more attention than Ben Jonson’s *Plays*, as most of them have never (as far as I know) appealed to Spanish academics. I dare say that several of them have not even attracted English scholars in the recent past. The problem of why there has been (and still is) a deep reevaluation of the canon is very interesting indeed, but you will excuse me if somewhat arbitrarily I decide to postpone this discussion.

POETRY & PROSE

Poetry and prose present another kind of problem. Let us begin with poetry first. As I have already mentioned, it is true that Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* have been translated and even published in bilingual editions several times, but most of them are fairly recent, and if we disregard Shakespeare, what remains is really very little in absolute terms. A general review will, again, list only a few works and fewer names out of scores of admirable Elizabethan and Jacobean authors who might have receive some attention. It is no wonder that *The Faerie Queene* has not been translated into Spanish, as we still lack its complete translation into Italian or French, two languages in which the tradition of English Studies exists since long ago. In case of Spenser, his sonnets are the only complete work that has been edited in Spain (González Corugedo 1983). The only other true Elizabethan poet that has received some attention is Sir Philip Sidney, whose *Astrophil & Stella* only appeared in Spain for the first time in F. Galván’s edition in 1991. If we come to that, Sidney’s *Defence of Poesy* was translated into Spanish in the 17th century. There have been people who had projects concerning Samuel Drayton’s poetry, or *England’s Helicon*, but so far most of these projects are still unborn creatures.

John Donne, however, is much better known: his *Songs and Sonnets* have had no less than four Spanish translations and at least two bilingual editions. But his *Holy Sonnets*, and most of his other poetical works have received almost no attention at all. I cannot avoid saying that the English Madrigalists as a whole have had a better luck, as records containing musical miscellanies from the Tudor and Elizabethan ages can be found in almost every good music shop in Spain, and as far as we know they have sold rather well.

The instance of Prose is even worse. Excepting Francis Bacon's *Essays* and *The Advancement of Learning*, or Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and what I would call odd bits and pieces, the rest is virtually unexplored territory. I would not be so brutal as to say that most Elizabethan prose writers are generally unknown to Spanish students taking University degrees in English, because that could be the case of many British and American students as well, but I would be harsh enough to say that many of those authors are ignored in the main reading lists. It is all very well that at least students are forced to know the basics of the life and whereabouts of Sidney, Lily, Deloney, etc., (and this means that at least in many cases they have gone through a very short and heterogeneous selection of their work), because that is better than nothing at all. But I think it is profoundly sour that any of the same students who may have to devour Richardson's or Jane Austen's works almost in full may do so without having the slightest clue—but for the occasional footnote in which the clever editor reveals his erudition—of why *Pamela* is such a story and not a different one because Philip Sidney wrote his *Arcadia* some two hundred years before. Also, with this umpteenth *maladie infantine* that we are now going through in the form of, for example, a tidal wave of so-called and self-appointed “postcolonial” authors (and critics), I feel that most of what should be accessory in degree studies is increasingly trying to become central, and has thus started to displace to marginal positions most of the common canon of the English Literature—of the English Great Tradition, to use Leavis' term—to be found in University and College core courses.

All these may also be further signs of the change of paradigm I was referring to before, and it might be wise to let some time pass before we finally decide what to keep and what to reject. Conversely, that is precisely what we are also bound to criticize most cruelly, as one should also mention that students in general and almost everywhere in the Western cultures tend to abandon the green fields of classicism in the pursuit of the new, and, from my obstinate point of view, transitory fashionable. I think I am not being very fair by expressing such an opinion in such a way, but one has only to look around at the new curricula everywhere to be certain that classical perspectives, because they imply intrinsic difficulties such as devoting more time and effort to their better understanding, are in recession. Lope de Vega in the early 17th century alluded to the need that authors have of feeding their audience with the food they ask for: “pues hay que dar contento al vulgo”, and that is what many still cleverly do precisely because the commoners have now flooded into the former happy Arcadias of education. This may be a possible reason for the scornful thoughts that many colleagues dedicate to the humble editors of the classics. F. Nietzsche declared the death of God about a century ago. Many of the newer critics have declared the death of the editor and the absolute triumph of what they call the text, although what most mean by “text” is seldom explicit, let alone clear.

If we advance a step further, and we now have a look at the long lists of publishers' catalogues and at international databases, we also observe with some dismay that all sorts of “new” studies are thriving whereas classical ones disappear. All this is not merely, I hope, a melancholy swansong, a mere brazen reflection of the golden classical attitude that declared that all times past were better, especially because without abjuring from that tradition, I do think that many of these “newer” things and many of the “isms” are very good, several are quite interesting, and a few are even seminal for everybody. What I really mourn is the agony (but transitional to resurrection, I hope) of studying matters that are difficult because they are remote, and that because of their difficulty many avoid them and favour easier moods and modes. This difficulty is double in our case, both as people living in the 1990's and as foreign students of literature belonging to preterite ages.

Finally, what several Spanish scholars have done in the past, and what they will likely continue doing in the near future as far as Renaissance Studies are concerned, is to reflect on mutual influences in both traditions and literatures, including the reception of Spanish Classics in England, and that of English Classics in Spain. This, of course, implies editing works. And this, that has been a very productive field, though it might have been modest, is definitely where some of the best results have been obtained in the past. Comparative and cultural studies have also fructified in some memorable publications, and the proceedings of this Society that hosts us here today are a good proof of that. But, in the end, let me sum up and say that in absolute terms, as the scarcity of the examples provided demonstrates, the edition of English Renaissance Classics in Spain has been a rather marginal activity, even within the scope of editorial work in particular.

EDITING AND EDITORIAL PRACTICES

Editorial practices are today being much argued about and disagreed over. But I hope that the good health of the present matter can hardly be better exposed than in the strength of this very argument: my questioning of editorial attitudes and assumptions is proof enough of their vigour, at least with some people. Textual editing and textual criticism are parallel arts and that is why they are not just an aesthetic and elegant exercise, but they are also scientific techniques that offer splendid series of advice distilled from a secular tradition on individual cases of rather different natures. The pursuit of the *text* also presupposes that those of us who have learned the craft (just to some extent, of course) are theoretically in a better position to interpret and criticise texts than those who have not. I trust that this will not become too radical a defense (but not necessarily illustration) of editorial practices, but just what I would call a fair presentation of evidence for the establishing of one basic requirement for those people who are appointed as “official” students of language and literature.

Editing, then, should be part of the training of any philologist. And very especially part of the training of anybody concerned with texts produced before the 19th century. We can all see that, up a certain extent, this experience is achieved at least in a passive form by every reader, because when we read a text, unless it be the original holograph, that text has been edited in different forms and degrees, and hence precisely as readers we submit ourselves to the results of the process of transmission and the modification that such a process implies. But in the training of a philologist, as I have just said, an *active* part in editing texts should be encouraged. Especially because to edit is usually defined as “to set in order for publication” (OED), and ordering things tends to be an excellent way to their better understanding.

If editing is really arranging and organizing, editorial practises can be as different as the number of ways and manners in which we can arrange and organize texts. Nevertheless, there are obvious limitations to these processes. Some are legal, as for instance copyright laws, some other are factual, as the reality of the physical objects that convey the text, and, finally some are called aesthetic, mainly when their authors just tend to justify what I would call wanton and extravagant.

After having pondered thoroughly on how we may tackle the problem, we see that editing, intrinsically, is the task of meddling with the transmission, fixation and interpretation of texts, and this implies dealing with and defining the concepts of message, text and work. In our particular case, it also implies dealing with their material supports and formats: the book and its forms. This asks for a short explanation concerning what editorial practices have been common, which ones have become obsolete, and

which other may become popular in the near future. But such comments will be dealt with later. Now it is time for establishing cohesion in the foundations of the editorial activity.

MESSAGES, TEXTS, WORKS & BOOKS

A linguistic *message* may be transmitted orally or by means of writing. In any case it needs fixation by means of a code if it is aimed at for permanence. When the message is fixed in writing we assume that it becomes a *Text*, as its parts have been knitted or woven together. Although this is a widely assumed axiom, I should now remind this audience that a text does and does not exist on its own. It exists per se inasmuch as it is made of linguistic units, and in such a way it belongs to the domains of the *psyche*. But it does not exist physically because it is always fixed on something, it is supported and exhibited on stone, papyrus, paper, parchment, tape, magnetic disc, a screen or whatever media, and in this sense the text is always vehicular, it exists as a result of its exhibition. This material aspect, so very often neglected by literary criticism, is always indispensable for the text. That is, texts do not exist *in vacuo*, and, I may add, unless we admit Revelation as a conceptual entity with real-life implications, they do not originate *ex nihilo*.

However, as I have just said, the text also exists as a pure intellectual concept, i.e. as a set of words that work in combination to express meaning conveying a message, and hence that we can talk about this or that text, that then becomes a "*work*", play, poem, or whatever generic aspect you would prefer to consider. It is then that the concept of art intervenes in order to confirm that our text has now become *Literary*. I will not reproduce here the old Aristotelian polemic that confronts arts and techniques, as we may now have reached a stage where we may quite safely assume that both belong to different necessary and complementary activities of man.

My concern as far as space and time are involved is double: I shall be discussing texts mainly as literary messages, as aesthetic objects then, implying that they are the result of both an artistic and a technical process. But I would also like to point out to texts as media for actual artifacts in the course of their transmission: either as they were offered to an audience in earlier times (books, reading aloud), or as they might appear massively in the near future (electronic files). Even in the case of other newer textual formats, I hope, there is, and must still be, as I have the purpose of giving proof, room for the literary critic in what I consider his most formal and elementary approach to a literary work: that of the textual editor. With these concepts in mind, I should also, I think, devote some reflections to the posing of the problems implied by the notions of "Classic" and "Renaissance" in our context.

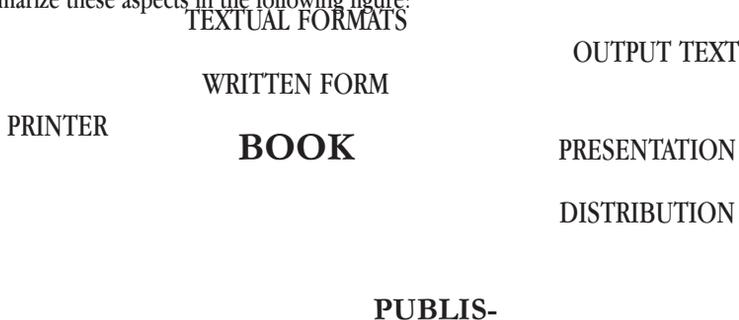
If the literary text may be an artistic message, then we should consider that the encoding is not only modified at the two extremes of the scheme: author and audience, it is also modified in different degrees by those persons who are in charge of the reproduction and lawful transmission (I may eventually refer to illegal procedures as well) of the text: printers, publishers, and editors. I have mentioned the verb to modify, as being quite different from those typically used to describe what authors do: create, generate, give birth, sell; and what audiences do: receive, obtain, buy. These brokers of literature, those that by a small (or largish) fee or, occasionally the mere reward of a scant touch of fame, help the readers to get acquainted with the work of an author, can also leave their own imprint on the text. In a reverse order of importance as regards non-authorial textual manipulation I shall now start with printers.

Printers, in general, only manipulate the text in a physical aspect, and therefore their intervention tends to be more on the side of the artifact, of the book or volume, rather than on the textual contents. Their exploits are easily detected by the watchful reader, and their misprints, transpositions, blunt edges, etc. can be easily corrected, if needed. They are the technicians of our story, and as it is the general rule with technicians, they are seldom allowed to modify things but in the detail.

Next, Publishers can and do manipulate both the artifact and the entities: the book, the work and the text. Indeed they can even stipulate conditions for all the aspects of a work, including the creative ones, and they have been doing so since they first started practising their trade seriously and in significant numbers. Roughly, this has been happening consistently since the historical period we are now concerned with. Therefore, publishers are both heroes and villains in the process of transmission of literary works because, first they can produce artifacts of an exquisite appearance containing vile works, then, they can also produce shabby containers for wonderful texts, and, more often than not, a middle term is achieved. They can also establish different degrees of censorship based on moral or economic factors, and all in all, the publisher is the real owner of what the public buys: the *book*. He may be the owner of the intellectual contents or just the mere filling of the commodity, as he actually used to be in the past, while today he is normally a temporal holder of rights, at least if the author has been sensible enough.

Finally, editors manipulate the text itself and any condition also the work, but not necessarily. Truly, in many cases, they have displaced or even usurped the author's position. However, editors tend to be fair to authors, even to anonymous ones, and hence tend to state that their wish is to assist in the transmission of the text so that it may reach an audience, and in the correct understanding of the message. As I have just mentioned, the editor becomes a succubus author, and, at least in academic circuits, we frequently refer to Vinaver's Malory, Alexander's Wells & Taylor's Shakespeare, Ringler's Sidney, etc. Editors also exert a very prominent (or so they think) influence on literary critics, although that influence is customarily obviated by the latter.

Let us summarize these aspects in the following figure:



I will try to link later on the assumptions underlying this explanation to the problems of organizing and presenting the *text* (produced by the author) and what I have labeled as the *output text* (what the editor produces) in terms of linear (traditional or guided) presentation, and hypertextual presentation. The latter implies a free or even random choice of textual concatenations.

EDITORS AND CRITICS

I should say that by now it should have become evident, but for the very obtuse, that this indispensable and often silent (also silenced) activity is regaining some of the ground it lost during the last decades when the many –isms invaded, or rather, just superimposed as they still superimpose, their so-called (and ever changing) truths to the permanent and material aspect of literary criticism: the problem of texts. The rest is very likely sheer interpretation or, to put it mildly, exegetical exercise, interesting as it may be, although it gravitates towards the consideration of a universe where the text is self-sufficient and almighty.

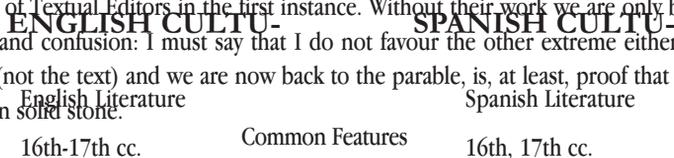
But what would happen if that self-sufficient and almighty text is corrupted –and corruption can appear under many shades–, or merely changed, or manipulated somehow in senses that escape both the critic and the reader? Then, everything derived from the text will also be corrupted, changed, manipulated beyond recognition, and therefore deprived of value for the purposes of the student of literary texts. One occasionally wonders about the mental sanity of such people as those –and please let me advance that I do not try to offend anybody– who favour or even impose a, let us say, “postmodern”, or “feminist”, or “deconstructive” or “historical” just to mention a few of those in vogue, or whatever other manipulating reading of, let us say, *Othello*, a play belonging to a determined historical period which tends to have sociocultural associations with concepts such as the Renaissance, or the Middle Ages, the Classical World, etc. On the other hand I also admit that every new reading which makes use of whatever fashionable mode of interpretation is favoured by the intellectual establishment does bring forth new insights of that Play or Work, or as one may say, criticism re(e)valuates the work: it may be restored into favor, or sent to the pit of oblivion, just for a while, or even for good.

However, again, one also wonders about the real scopes and tenets of such critical approaches that tell us about the “inner force” of this or that character, or its “generic” (should one really understand “sexual” instead?) attitudes and behaviour, when that same acclaimed critic shows a manifest ignorance of the actual fact that –and back to the example of plays– for instance, female characters were normally performed by men when those plays were staged for the first time. Or people whose encyclopedic misunderstanding of the fact that mankind and their languages change as time lapses, triggers a misinterpretation of meanings, attitudes, the text, and, why not, of life itself.

That is part of what I mean here by superimposing a critical view, by a hammer-sledge wedging of a particular interpretative structure on a text having very little or even no care at all for times past and for authors past. There is also the tendency to superimpose just *one* or *the* interpretation, although literary texts should be, by definition open to conjecture and ambiguity, and classical texts in particular, more so. Of course, such bigoted and biased practises are not exclusive to literary critics, they can also be extended to textual editors, though as there are many more of the former, it is only natural that the latter tend to be freer of certain sets of ideological prejudices: they just have other.

This is not, however, a real vindication of editorial and authorial importance, I hope it is just a reminder of the fact that the author of a text exists, although he or she may be unknown to us. And that, I am afraid, implies that such people as those who look at the work in order to find in it what they have already decided beforehand, can easily impose their views because nobody is likely to refute them. I do not try to imply that such readings, or such interpretations are illicit, not at all, and I should say that many, in general, are entertaining and some are even useful. What I would like to imply is that from my point of view such things do not belong to the realms of philology. They may belong somewhere else, though. However, I would also like to point out that editorial practices, or editing in general and in particular, is precisely the basic aspect of philology and hence the groundwork of all further philological and critical activities.

It is just as in the old parable: buildings with stone foundations tend to be more structurally correct than those erected on the riddle of mere sand. When the flood of words of every new critical approach has ebbed, the only rock that remains is the text. It is neither pure nor simple; we can find it either stark naked or consciously ornate, but it is still there and it is strong enough for other critics to start a new campaign against it and against the readers. And the text, at least since the second half of the 19th century has been the realm of Textual Editors in the first instance. Without their work we are only bound for perpetual ambiguity and confusion: I must say that I do not favour the other extreme either. However, establishing a text (not the text) and we are now back to the parable, is, at least, proof that we are founding our structure on solid stone.



AUTHORS, EDITORS, TEXTS & AUDIENCES

My long discussion about the vehicular role of editors, publishers and printers between the origin of a text (the author) and its destination (the reader, as we deal with –primarily– written forms), also asks for some commentary concerning these two components of the figure. Mainly because in the first instance we belong to different cultural traditions although we share a common essence, and second, we are approaching a different synchrony from our own, and it is only natural that our horizontal axes of reference are to be completed by the vertical and diagonal axes. The following figure, where I have intentionally skipped intermediary temporal stages, summarizes this idea:



TEXTS & CLASSICAL TEXTS

I will not discuss now the concepts of artistic and literary messages in detail, as many scholars have been doing so for many years, and many more will go on doing the same, I hope, but just allow me the privilege of stating the obvious and assume that we have a loose agreement on what we consider as a Literary Message if we all agree that, say, Spenser's *The Shepheards Calender*, Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, or Milton's *Paradise Lost* are Literary Texts. They are also Classical Texts in the sense that they constitute and belong to a tradition. *Mutatis mutandis*, and although I am quite sure that on my following point disagreement is much more likely to arise than understanding, I will also assume that you would accept that by Renaissance Classics I might imply works (or texts?) produced during a flexible period that will cover part of the 15th and 17th centuries and all or most of the 16th. They are also works (or texts) distributed and disseminated by various means, but that have, nevertheless, received some acclaim over the following centuries and have thus become the elements of a literary canon, whatever that may be, and I know, under revision. The canon has always been under revision, and I hope that it will also be in the future.

Let me also revise partially the concept of Classic that I have been using so far. It is, no doubt, a problematic term that is commonly used in different and partially overlapping senses. I do not think it is still acceptable to define a classic merely as an author or a work that is "a good example" and that it is "worth imitating". It is obvious that very few contemporaries would maintain that Lily's *Euphues* is today a good example for the ordinary reader or that imitating it will result in ceaseless fame. However, it is, I think, a great classic, and it was admired and imitated *ad nauseam* in the past. Some of us still admire it although we would not dream of attempting at producing a modern imitation in the same shape.

So we see that many things have changed indeed since such two defining features were central to the concept of Classic. The idea that imitation is a good thing was destroyed by Romantic Originality. And this is curious because many of the English Romantic poets wrote compositions "in the manner of..." "after..." or even as straightforward "imitations". I doubt that anybody in his or her senses would write today a play exactly in the same way as Ben Jonson wrote *Volpone*, or a poem as John Donne's *Good Friday, Riding Westward*, although both have been used again and again, and even quite recently as, to put it mildly, sources of inspiration. Thus, imitation, that used to be a "good thing", especially for the education of the young, was substituted by the concept of "in the manner of" or "after" some two hundred years ago, and has been more recently substituted by "reminiscent", "in the mood of" and the like.

About my other point, the "exemplary" quality, one must say that fashion is an ugly despot, and what was acclaimed once may now lie withered in the gutter. But the ways of the world are such, and the Wheel of Fortune may turn again in quite different directions, hence that it might be safer to enunciate vaguely that a literary classic is a text universally considered as first-rate, excellent of its own kind, at least in one particular moment and by one particular community. The immediate consequence may be that a classical text will become a standard reference, even a model, for those who share in the appreciation of the past.

In a certain sense, we all agree that every generation—or so—changes in the canon take place: what I am trying to point at out is that we are right in the middle of one of those changes. It is, therefore a good opportunity for many students and scholars, because they will be able to exert an important pressure on the revaluation of the canons.

TRANSMISSION, WITNESSES AND TEXTS

It is now time to turn to the message as a result of the connection of interpreting the transmission of the text and its conversion into a work. Let me quote a traditional view that centres its admissions on the aims of literary criticism and authorial paraclitism.

El mensaje literario nos llega fijado en forma de texto: la crítica literaria, por tanto, tiene que comenzar por entender rectamente ese texto, depurándolo, en lo posible, de todos los elementos extraños al autor. (A. Blecua 1987: 370)

All this is clearly more than merely debatable: first, the literary message is not just a text, but a “book” or a codex, i.e. it is not an abstraction but something tangible. Second, it is unusual that texts dating from the older periods are “fixed” in any way unless we are dealing with a sole witness (*Orrmulum*, *Sir Gawain* ...), nor is this fixation found in writing, printed layout, etc. Third: Literary Criticism does not necessarily imply *de recta interpretatione* of the text in the first instance, although I do agree that this must be one of its early aims when confronted to a literary work. This is also because I consider as very convenient to separate Literary Criticism as it is normally understood these days from Editing properly. And, finally, the cleaning stage that has been mentioned in which the critic should deprive the literary text from elements alien to its author(s), rests upon the commonplace that the text must be pure and virginal and that restoration according to what the critic assumes to have been the author’s intentions is the only right possibility.

I am afraid I consider all this a fallacy. Literary texts, on many occasions have reached us as a most interesting compound of interactive forces. Let me set an elementary example with Shakespeare’s plays. What the literary canon has consecrated in most instances as “the text” is what we find in the 1623 first Folio edition of Shakespeare’s Works. From time to time, revisions of the canon based on the earlier quarto editions, when such exist, have been proposed. This example demonstrates that what has become seminal for the English Literary Tradition is *not* what the author might have produced as an original text, but rather the popular extension (with all the *caveats* that the term “popular” implies both in the 17th century and in the late 20th century) of a transvestite set of works prepared for the print by a group of, possibly, yes, well-intentioned friends, but whose intentions were also, no doubt, fully commercial. It is this Folio “text” and its continuations what has influenced later authors in general, and hence it is the text of “the critics”, not the text of the author. That we still refer to the Shakespeare Folio(s) or Quartos, also proves that the actual book appearance is something still valued by our contemporaries.

EDITORIAL PROBLEMS AND EDITORIAL PRACTICES: THE LINEAR TEXT & THE HYPERTEXT

I mentioned before that I would be trying to link part of what we commented on the authorial and editorial output of texts and the ways in which these reach and influence their audiences. I have also alluded to the new technologies and how these are causing a great impact in the ways in which we have just started to reevaluate editorial practices and problems. It might be the case that many of our traditional

views will be affected and that some will have to change radically. What I shall be doing in this final part of my discussion is to offer a summary of what has been done in the past, even in the very recent past, and what one may foresee for the very near future as far as editing texts is concerned.

The traditional editor (or author) has usually provided his/her audience with a linear text. The way in which linear texts operate can be formalized in this figure:

Linear Text Layout

1

2

3

4

5

n

The graphic shows quite clearly that, generally speaking, the reader has always been forced to follow step by step the successive sections (numbered as from 1 to a finite number represented by *n*), and that although some readers may skip certain parts in the succession, or even go back to previous parts, in the end the reader's possible movements tend to be just in a straight line starting at the beginning and reaching the end. There might be circular (at least partially circular) proposals, but, again, these also tend to link one point to the next in the succession.

Therefore, most editorial practices of the past, and still most of them in the present have reduced themselves to develop linear presentations according to different principles, either methodological or, occasionally, aesthetic. It may be interesting to make now a brief sketch of the main types of editions that

have been used since editors started tampering with works. I will also like to emphasize that some may have developed rather modern forms (electronic facsimiles, for instance), but even those tend to show great antiquity and authority in their theoretical principles.

TYPES OF EDITION

The following figure lists most of the most common types of editorial proceedings used with Renaissance Classics (both English and Spanish):

TYPES OF EDITION

Facsimile

Type Facsimile
Photographic Facsimile
Electronic Facsimile



Diplomatic Transcript
Critical Edition with Inclusive Text
Eclectic Clear-Text Edition with Apparatus

Parallel Text Edition

Multiple Witnesses
Old and Modern Spelling/Morphology Parallel Text
Bilingual Edition



Edition with Commentary
Genetic Edition
Critical and Synoptic Edition
Variorum Edition

From the previous figure, the careful reader would have wisely deduced that my own choice for editing English Renaissance texts in Spain in the 1990's is a combination of a special kind of parallel text edition: a bilingual edition whose original text can be an electronic facsimile with apparatus (that may be eventually printed), together with a Spanish annotated version. That, I think, may satisfy a range of audiences that may include the scholar together with the undergraduate student: the former can have immediate access to the original manuscript or printed text as it was known to the author's contemporaries (remote audience in terms of time and context); while to the latter this can be a decisive help in his early contacts with English classical authors.

This type of edition can be reproduced in the case of any other different European languages and literatures. Inasmuch as readers belonging to the same cultural paradigm are concerned, a possible ans-

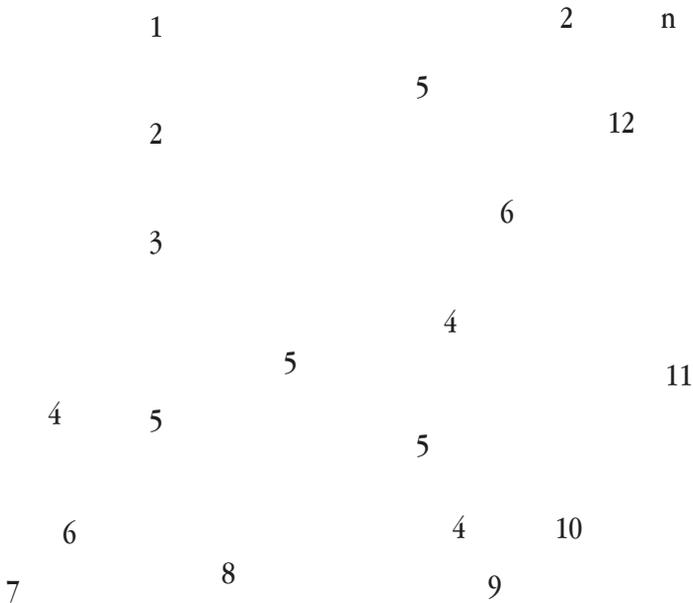
wer might imply the electronic facsimile confronted with a critical edition. A Variorum might be favoured in certain cases, but I assume that a critical edition with inclusive text may also be taken into consideration. In any case, I will leave this door still open: my own choice may very like move in the near future towards Hypertext editions of literary works, especially if they are further improved.

HYPertextS AND PHILOLOGY

There are people who still consider that hypertexts are just mere jargon belonging to the very sophisticated computer wizards, and that they are so remote from the common mortals that it is sheer nonsense to try to understand their working principles. In fact, hypertexts have had –and still have– quite a bad name, they have had and have quite different definitions, although, and just to simplify things, they can be defined as a combination of at least some kind of written text, together with any other of several possible options: sound, images, animation (or motion pictures, as they used to say), interaction, etc. Of course, they can also combine them all.

Computer hypertexts of a certain quality have been around since, approximately, 1989, and in the last five years or so they have improved enormously. They have also grown exponentially in storage memory size and in quality. Also, what we mean by hypertexts implies that the structure of the traditional linear texts disappears, because there is not necessarily, although it can still be there, a sequential development that makes the reader go step by step in the sense that section one is followed by section two, two by three, and so on. In a hypertext you can read in such a way, but it is much more natural to go through it in a quite different way. Indeed what people tend to do with them is something rather simi-

Hypertext Layout



lar to what 16th century oceanic navigators did: their ships followed course, but they stopped here and there to take water or food, they were pushed forth by favourable winds, or rotted in the midst of great calms, they also went anywhere if they thought that some “advance” in their fortunes could be obtained from such a change in their routes.

Hypertextual routines can be represented by the following figure:

The actual numbering of the different sections is merely orientative, in the sense that any section could have any number, and that consecution or logical sequences do not necessarily follow any established linear rules. The reading of such texts, or more precisely their *navigation*, is not based on the need of moving from section one to section two, and then in successive correlation. You may navigate hypertexts in that way, but there are as many options as items have been embedded in the system together with their virtual combinations. Also, see that there is only one entry, however random that may be, while many possible exits exist.

However, in the end, when one comes to examine hypertexts closely, and one starts to navigate them with confidence and elegance, if we forget for a moment about the computer screen and its multiple windows that open and close both simultaneously and in succession, they look surprisingly similar to typical editorial practices, to philological activity in its most radical and pristine aspects: what you usually have is an interaction of several sections that may (or may not) conform just to one, but that will typically conform to more than one text, provided that witnesses are abundant. That is for instance what parallel editions present, or variant editions, or even synoptical editions: a convolution around a central point: how texts create the literary work. As we have just seen, hypertexts organize themselves around the same kind of possibilities and expansions. Indeed they could be considered as a special kind of edition of a special kind of text.

It is by such conjunctions, of the new and the traditional, of implosion and explosion of textual information, that we may be able to reevaluate and appreciate the English classics in the new millennium.

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