

from

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III

To this point I have been taking the word "text" to signify the linguistic text, the verbal outcome at every level (from the most elementary forms of single letters and punctuation marks up to the most complex rhetorical structures that comprise the particular linguistic event). And even if we agree, for practical purposes, to restrict the term "text" to this linguistic signification, we cannot fail to see that literary works typically secure their effects by other than purely linguistic means. Every literary work that descends to us operates through the deployment of a double helix of perceptual codes: the linguistic codes, on one hand, and the bibliographical codes on the other.

We recognize the latter simply by *looking* at a medieval literary manuscript—or at any of William Blake's equivalent illuminated texts produced in (the teeth of) the age of mechanical reproduction. Or at Emily Dickinson's manuscript books of poetry, or her letters. In each of these cases the physique of the "document" has been forced to play an aesthetic function, has been made part of the "literary work." That is to say, in these kinds of literary works the distinction between physical medium and conceptual message breaks down completely.

I could adduce scores of similar examples of works generated out of the production mechanisms developed by printing institutions. The most obvious are the ornamental texts produced, for example, by writers like William Morris, but the books published by Whitman, Yeats, W. C. Williams, and Pound—to name only the most obvious examples—make the same point. Less apparent, but no less significant, are the novels of Dickens and Thackeray, or the serial fictions produced throughout the nineteenth century—topics I shall elaborate upon in a moment. If Tanselle cannot easily draw a dis-

inction between a historical and a literary work, it is just as difficult to distinguish, in all these cases, between that which is documentary and that which is literary. The physical presentation of these printed texts has been made to serve aesthetic ends.

Textual and editorial theory has heretofore concerned itself almost exclusively with the linguistic codes. The time has come, however, when we have to take greater theoretical account of the other coding network which operates at the documentary and bibliographical level of literary works.

Not that scholars have been unaware of the existence of these bibliographical codes. We have simply neglected to incorporate our knowledge into our theories of text. Surely no editor of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner"—if the editor chose to print the 1816 rather than the 1798 text—would consider placing the famous set of glosses anywhere except in the margin of the work. The glosses have to be *there*, and not set as either footnotes or endnotes, because their bibliographical position is in itself highly meaningful. Placed as they are, the glosses make an important historical allusion that affects the work in the most profound way. A similar kind of historical allusion operates in the ink, typeface, and paper used by William Morris in the first edition of his *The Story of the Glittering Plain* (1891). Both involve literary allusions: the one to medieval conventions of textual glossing, the other to fifteenth-century styles of typography and book production.

As Tanselle has argued, every documentary or bibliographical aspect of a literary work is meaningful, and potentially significant. But Tanselle's clear, practical sense of this matter has not led him to imagine how such materials are to be incorporated into a theory of texts and editing. On the contrary, in fact. He has neglected doing so, I believe, not because of his adherence to an eclectic model of editing, but

because of his unnecessarily restricted view of the processes of literary signification.

A few more examples will clarify what I have in mind. In the current controversy over the edition of *Ulysses*, attention has been focussed on a number of specialized, and largely executive, issues (for example, the *Ulysses*' editors failure to work directly from original documents rather than from photocopies).⁴ The overriding editorial question, however, has always been this: Should Gabler have chosen the 1922 *Ulysses* as copy-text instead of trying to construct as his copy-text (if that is the right term in this peculiar case) the theoretical entity he called in his edition "the continuous manuscript text?" Without going into the technical issues involved, let me simply observe that John Kidd—Gabler's chief critic—originally took his own preference for the 1922 edition because he detected in that book an elaborate symbolism keyed to the sequence of page numbers. If Joyce's page numbering has been symbolically deployed, that fact has to be registered in the editorial reconstruction. Specifically, the 1922 pagination of *Ulysses* would have to be editorially preserved.

The example of *Ulysses* ought to remind us that many of the key works of the modernist movement in literature, especially the work produced before 1930, heavily exploit the signifying power of documentary and bibliographical materials. The first thirty of Pound's *Cantos*, published in three book installments between 1925 and 1930, are only the most outstanding examples of this fact about modernist texts. A great many similar examples could be cited from modernist writers working all across the Euro-American literary scene.

Nor does the situation change if we move back in time. The case of Thackeray is well known and typical, and the particular example of *Vanity Fair* eloquent. In the first 1848 edition Thackeray himself designed the sixty-six decorated

initials and eighty-three vignettes—as well, of course, as the thirty-eight principal illustrations. His surviving manuscript of the novel with his markups shows where he wanted various cuts to appear. Yet most editions of *Vanity Fair* omit these materials altogether, even though they are clearly involved in the structure of the book's meaning. Gordon Ray has pointed out, for example, that while the verbal text “leaves unanswered the question of whether or not Becky Sharp brought about the death of Jos Sedley[,] his etching of Becky's second appearance in the character of Clytemnestra more than hints that she did.”⁵ Thackeray's decorated cover for the nineteen separate parts of the serially published text (1847–48) is an equally unmistakable case of the book's graphic materials being coded for significance. Indeed, in chapter 8 of the novel the narrator refers to that symbolic design and explicates its meaning.⁶

From a scholarly point of view, it would be difficult to justify an edition of Thackeray that omits the illustrative matter handled at the documentary level of the work. For the novel is not merely “one of the best illustrated books in the world,” it is also an important “experiment in composite form as much as Edward Lear's *Book of Nonsense*” (1846)⁷—as much, indeed, as the more famous “composite art” of William Blake. Indeed, Thackeray explicitly calls attention to his own composite art in the subtitle of his novel: “Pen (i.e., linguistic) and Pencil (i.e., graphic) Sketches of English Society.”

Yet the same must be said in the case of Dickens, even though Dickens did not, like Blake, Thackeray, and Lear, design his own illustrations. For the texts of Dickens's novels were equally produced as works of composite art, though in this case Dickens supplied only the pen, while others worked with the pencil. The relevance of the illustrative material has been acknowledged throughout the editorial history of Dickens's works, both their scholarly and their commercial history.

Or what would one say of a critical edition of the Alice books that omitted the designs of Sir John Tenniel? So important was Tenniel's work for the first of the Alice books (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865) that his protest at the poor printing of the first edition caused the book to be cancelled altogether.

In fact, we have two distinct versions of this famous book: the version on which Carroll and Tenniel collaborated, published in 1865, and the fair manuscript copy with Carroll's own illustrations made as a Christmas gift for Anne Liddell, and eventually published in 1886. In both cases the verbal text and the documentary materials operate together to a single literary result.

Nor do I mean to isolate for importance, in the case of this work, only the marriage of illustration and text. As Tenniel's protest over the poor printing of the first edition indicates, the entire documentary level of the work must be understood as carrying significance. The fact that one version was conceived as a publishing event, and the other as a manuscript gift book, sets the bibliographical coding for each version on an entirely different footing.

The two versions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* may well remind us of the variant versions of so many nineteenth-century books, especially the novels. Serial publication of one kind or another was the rule, as were the related publication mechanisms we associate with institutions like the circulating library. Writers worked within those particular sets of circulatory conventions (though they vary with place and time, such conventions always exist) and the literary results—the books issued—are coded for meaning accordingly.

Furthermore, different types of serialization were available. A novel written for weekly serial publication, like Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854),⁸ is not merely *written* differently from one that is written for monthly circulation (or for no serial publication at all); it is *produced* differently and comes

into the reader's view via differently defined bibliographical structures of meaning. Or consider the exemplary case of *Oliver Twist*. First issued in serial parts in the monthly magazine *Bentley's Miscellany* (1837–39), it was printed again in three volumes (1838) even before the serial run had been concluded. Then in 1846 it was published again, this time in ten serial installments (the run in *Bentley's Miscellany* had been twenty-four installments). In each of these cases the text is organized very differently. The *Bentley's* and the three volume publications comprise fifty-one chapters, whereas the 1846 serial publication has fifty-three. *Bentley's* is divided into three "Books," but these do not correspond exactly to the three "volumes" of 1838. The *Bentley's* serial typically prints two, sometimes three chapters per unit, whereas the monthly numbered parts of 1846 typically contain six, sometimes five (and in one case, four) chapters.⁹

These kinds of production structures can be exploited for aesthetic effects in particular and always highly individuated ways. *Pickwick Papers* first appeared in serial parts (1836–37), as did *Little Dorrit* (1855–57), but in each case the bibliographical codes are manipulated to unique effect. The latter is one of the late novels, produced twenty years after the groundbreaking effort of *Pickwick Papers*. The early work is far more episodic than the later, so much so that many would be reluctant to call *Pickwick Papers* a novel at all. Whatever it is, the work emerged through the mutual efforts of Dickens, two illustrators (Robert Seymour and Hablot Knight Browne ["Phiz"]), and the production mechanisms set in motion by the publishers Chapman and Hall, all working together in cooperative consultation.¹⁰

Literary works are distinct from other linguistic forms in their pursuit of extreme concrete particularity. That special feature of "literature" has two consequences we all recognize. First, literary works tend toward textual and bibliographical dispersion (signalled at the earliest phases of the

work by authorial changes of direction and revision, which may continue for protracted periods). Second, they are committed to work via the dimension of *aesthesis* (i.e., via the materiality of experience that Blake called "the doors of perception" and that Morris named "resistance"). In each case, literary works tend to multiply themselves through their means and modes of production. These processes of generation are executed in the most concrete and particular ways. *Oliver Twist* is produced during Dickens's lifetime in several important creative forms. But then there are equally important versions of that work—equally significant from an aesthetic point of view—that are produced later. Kathleen Tillotson's is a splendid edition of a great literary work, but perhaps we should want to argue that her edition is not the work of Charles Dickens. And perhaps we should be right in doing so.

Tillotson's edition stands in relation to Dickens's novel in the same kind of relation that (say) the Tate Gallery stands to the paintings of Turner. Both gallery and edition force us to engage with artistic work under a special kind of horizon. It is far from the horizon under which Dickens and Turner originally worked. It is nonetheless, still, an aesthetic and literary horizon, and that fact cannot be forgotten. Of course we cannot recover the earlier frame of reference; all we can do is make imaginative attempts at reconstituting or approximating it for later persons living under other skies. The vaunted immortality sought after by the poetic impulse will be achieved, if it is achieved at all, in the continuous socialization of the texts.

IV

We cannot leave this subject without making one last critical turn upon the idea of textual socialization. I have in mind a subject implicitly raised by my examples of the museum and the scholarly edition. The problem appears if we simply give