

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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