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# The Compleat Edition

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## **Abstract**

The nature of a scholarly edition, as of any bibliographical tool, is determined by the historical, technical, social and rhetorical dimensions of the genre. This situatedness puts constraints on the force of scholarly editions: what they can and what they can not do. Claims have been made for the potent reproductive force of scholarly editions, as well as for the making of massive digital facsimile and transcription archives that can be used as platforms for producing new critical editions. This article questions the legitimacy of such assumptions when combined with idealist notions of documents, texts and editions. That the nature of editions is rhetorical rather than neutral, social rather than individualistic, and one of complex translation rather than simple transmission, for instance, suggests that the versatility and reproductivity of the edited material itself will be limited by significant factors. Recognizing this makes us better equipped at subjecting digital editions, libraries, and archives along with the claims some of their surrounding discourses make, to critical inquiry.

Scholarly editions (SEs) based on textual criticism have historically been developed in intimate relationship with particular script- and print-based technologies and distribution logistics.<sup>1</sup> In consequence, editorial theories and strategies are intertwined in their scope, rhetorics, and strategies with particular media materialities and epistemologies. This relationship was certainly there in the temporarily stabilized universe of print media, but was rarely discussed. It is now becoming so to an increasing degree. We are currently experiencing not one but several parallel introductions of new media and technologies, exhibiting radically different logistics and parameters for document production and distribution than previous media ecologies do. For instance, new media and web distribution promise to vastly enhance the spatial confines of SEs, or even to annihilate them altogether. What changes are we witnessing in the division of labour between the people involved in scholarly editing, the tools they use and between the various media outputs from such endeavours?

The making of SEs and archives using new media seems to open up new kinds of communication between academic and professional communities that have formerly been more or less isolated from each other. Programmers and software designers on the one hand and

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<sup>1</sup> This article was originally published as "How Reproductive is a Scholarly Edition?" in *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, Vol. 19 (2004), No. 1, pp. 17-33. Apart from the changed title, a few minor distinctions added and some cosmetic work on the text, the article is virtually the same as in the 2004 version.

textual critics and bibliographers on the other have come to work together in several digital editing projects, creating grounds for new kinds of negotiation of competence and power. Editing and editions make use of many different technologies and media. Types of editions also stand in delicate relations to each other due to particular historical ecologies of media. The organisation and architecture of SEs as well as the task division between different media change as the ecology changes.

Looking at, for instance, current Scandinavian national editing projects that publish both on the web, on discs, as e-books and in print, such as the Ibsen or Almqvist projects, one sees the forming of a new division of labour between various display and distribution solutions, a changed balance between the variants of edition types. The web edition turns into a large resource archive and editorial laboratory, and even more often into a more or less temporary interface to a changing, dynamic digital archive. This affects the scope and function of the editorial material being printed. The printed version does not have to include the laboratory material of the editors (variants, alternative versions, minor paratexts, illustrations and so forth), but rather confines itself to a single, uniform reader's text with a minimum of editorial tools and paratexts. The digital cumulative archive on the other hand assumes the role of the primary, with or without a web interface, from which static spin-offs are secondarily launched in print, on CD, as e-books or on the web. The digital archive is thus able to play with various document forms as outputs (Svedjedal, 2000). A printed codex edition embodying one particular editorial theory ideal is therefore no longer the only possible output of the editing endeavour but rather one potential output from among many that at least in theory might satisfy several different and perhaps even rival theoretical ideals.

One of the questions we ask ourselves in the light of this development is whether the SE can and should continue to fulfil the same functions. To what extent, if any, might the logic and capabilities of new media affect the essence of scholarly editing? Do we need editions any longer, or should we rather invest our human, economical, and textual resources in massive, long-term digital archives? Any attempt at answering such questions will need to begin by reconsidering the nature of the SE, what forces it has and has not, what limits it has and what kind of factors determine its possibilities and limits.

This article attempts a tentative discussion of such forces and limits of the SE, and specifically looks at its supposedly representational and reproductive force. The aim is to identify poles of

extreme positions in editorial discourse and thereby to map out the fields of tension and perhaps conflict that lie between them. Coming from the field of bibliography and library and information science, I will also make an argument for the bibliographical dimension of the SE.

## 1. The SE

The SE is, and has been for a long time, a complex and diverse family of document types. Many technologies, professional practices and academic areas converge in it. A result is a spectrum of variant types ranging from facsimile, diplomatic, synoptic, genetic, critical, variorum editions to large-scale digital archives on compact discs or mounted on the web.<sup>2</sup> There is little general agreement as to the classifications. A division of critical versus non-critical, for instance, might render the impression that non-critical edition editions, whereby diplomatic and transcription types are usually designated, somehow escape implementing the scrutiny of textual criticism or of critical inquiry. More to the point, the labelling of the results of digital editing seems, as has been pointed out (Robinson, 2002, pp. 45 ff.; Vanhoutte, 2003), to further blur some of these classifications. To even talk about *digital* editions as one particular type of edition is debatable. Current discussions on digital editions tend to talk about the genre as based on media form and publishing technology, whereas traditional discussions in editorial theory rather identify the genre as based on its epistemological foundation and theoretically based strategy. Discussions therefore end up mixing apples and pears: digital editions versus, say, eclectic editions. This presupposes one predefined function and theoretical base for the digital editions to counter the ones identified in printed editions, when in fact many kinds of editorial approaches - both traditional and innovative - are being tried out and simulated in the realm of new media.

There is little room or intention in this article to elaborate further on the classifications of SEs. Perhaps we can at least agree on their quality as tools and results of scholarly inquiry, enabling us to refer to them as *scholarly* editions (while *critical* editions in this article refers to the historical-eclectic edition type). I would argue that there is also another common denominator for SEs: their nature as *bibliographical* instruments.

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<sup>2</sup> See Tanselle (1995) or Vanhoutte (2003) for overviews of variety in types. SE typologies are discussed more at length by Meyer (1992). The genre variants can be classified according to varying principles, such as media modality (e.g. image-based versus text-based), distribution form (e.g. printed versus electronic; codex versus compact disc/web/hypermedia), intended uses and audiences (e.g. student, reading or archival editions), editorial theory and strategy (e.g. intentionalistic, genetic, text sociological or new philological), or the bibliographical scope of the edition (e.g. facsimile, transcription, diplomatic, synoptic, eclectic or variorum).

## **2. The SE as Bibliographical Tool**

There is obviously an historical bond between, on the one hand bibliographic activity, and on the other scholarly editing based on textual criticism, from Alexandria and onwards. Scholarly editing and textual criticism were indeed originally conceived within a bibliographical transmission activity in a library institution context, an historical connection revived with the currently intense digitization activity in libraries. Particular branches of bibliography have collaborated closely with scholarly editing, such as textual and analytical bibliography. But there are also deeper epistemological bonds.

Editing is an attempt to produce a document that bibliographically constitutes other documents. The declared principles and explicit concepts and ideals of editorial theory are, in a sense, statements of bibliographic ideals. Its concept levels and hierarchies overlap considerably with those of bibliography. The way reference bibliography structures works and documents by making bibliographies and catalogues is strikingly analogue to the way scholarly editing structures works, documents, versions and variants by making critical editions. A critical edition is a statement as to the extent and confinements of a particular work. This is why it is central to both bibliography and editing to understand and define the concepts of works, texts and documents. This is also why concept relations and conceptual analyses are crucial ingredients in the emerging theory development within both fields.

Several bibliographical and editorial activities and functions correspond, such as the classification of what makes up a particular work, version management, and hierarchical ordering of documents. The typology of editions furthermore represents a division of bibliographical labour and interests: the critical, historical-eclectic, operates at the work level, the transcription edition at the text level, and the facsimile edition at the graphical and material document level. The way the SE manages work-version-document relations is analogous to the way a catalogue manages bibliographic relations (Smiraglia, 2001) or the way IFLAs *Functional Requirements for Bibliographic Records* talk about them (IFLA, 1998). There are however also areas where scholarly editing and bibliography differ in this respect. In particular reference bibliography displays much less interest in *texts* than scholarly editing does, and consequently has few or no instruments that equals the variant categories of textual criticism to determine versions and works or to identify and delimit the significant text in a work or a document.

The two fields consequently share a set of problems, such as difficulties in specifying the work

level, the battle to define text, and the ambivalence to the materiality of documents. The ambivalence makes it awkward to for instance demarcate text and version, and to explain and manage distortion. The connections between the fields can be further identified in their respective theoretical frameworks, tenets and scientific ideals. In bibliography however, the idealistic, unbiased and objectifying tradition is even more prominent than in scholarly editing.

### 3. The SE as Icon

But editing and bibliography are not only clustering activities. There is a related outcome of the way bibliography, primarily enumerative bibliography, and editing based on textual criticism are similar <sup>3</sup> activities, or in effect two variants of the same activity: *iconicity*.<sup>4</sup> This is one of the chief objectives of both activities, which is to produce surrogates by iconic representation. As Ross Atkinson pointed out in his stimulating 1980 article, bibliographic records, catalogue posts, and text-critical editions all function as simile representations, ranging from the single catalogue entry, via full-text records in databases, via facsimile editions, transcriptions, critical editions, variorum and synoptic editions, over to full-scale exhaustive databases or digital archives. There is obviously a considerable scale of exhaustiveness and completeness, but nevertheless a commonality in iconicity.

"An enumerative bibliography," Atkinson (1980) writes, "reproduces its Object in microcosm; it is a reflection, a picture of its Object. As such, the relationship between sign and referent in enumerative bibliography is one of *similarity* and may consequently be designated iconic." The same really goes for *descriptive bibliography*, he continues, and interestingly enough also for the way *textual criticism* is a reflection, a picture of the edited work as perceived and constructed by the editor in one or several documents. "[T]he document (in its various conditions)," Atkinson (1980) goes on, "is approached as a set of representable characteristics -- a raw material -- from which a product, the description, is to be created". The difference between reference and descriptive bibliography as activities is quantitative. If you take into account the consequences and suppose an exhaustiveness degree at its fullest, what you end up with is textual criticism. Again, there is theoretically only a scale of exhaustiveness. From this angle, textual criticism is a

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<sup>3</sup> Actually, they are "similar activities" in two ways: they are similar to each other, but they also both engage in iconic representation, which in its Peircean sense, as discussed below, is understood as a representation, whose object it is to be as "similar" as possible to an original.

<sup>4</sup> In this particular context, I am using the word to allude to a Peircean iconic sign, which as we might recall, refers to the denoted object solely by its own characteristics. An iconic sign is linked to its object by virtue of *similarity*. A portrait of someone, for example, is an icon.

natural extension of bibliography, and Atkinson in fact posits a constellation of iconicity as EDT (Enumerative bibliography, Descriptive bibliography, and Textual criticism).<sup>5</sup>

Atkinson's is one of the few argumentations I've seen for the epistemological denominator of iconicity between textual criticism and bibliographical activities, and deserves merit for this quite simple but important observation. Let us grant that the boundary between a critical edition and a reference bibliography is not entirely sharp, and that there are many further commonalities between editions and bibliographies, such as multisequentiality, referentiality, and the modularization into fragments that can be separately referenced. I would however only follow Atkinson up to a point: scholarly editions and reference works such as bibliographies do place themselves on different positions on a scale between reference and referent. The edition simultaneously refers to a work and manifests it, becoming a referent. Bibliographies and reference works can not reasonably claim the latter case.

#### **4. The SE as Media Translation**

But already the potency of simple iconicity can certainly be subjected to inquiry. Iconic representations are bridges between documents (as interfaces to the works at hand), striving to maximize the degree of similarity when transporting the perceived work contents between them - but how potent are our tools at achieving such similarity? Representation is in this case an instance of the activity of copying, reproduction, or what I will refer to as *media translation*.<sup>6</sup>

Using documents, we hope to be able to repeatedly have access to some of the originally intended qualities of a work, and we also intend for these original qualities to be repeated in more or less the same manner every time we access the document.<sup>7</sup> If 'the same manner' is repeated

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<sup>5</sup> "[I]f the relationship of enumerative bibliography to its Object does indeed involve the reproduction of portions of that Object, and if that of descriptive bibliography is the same only with greater precision and in greater detail, then there must be a final level of such a representational relationship at which the goal is to reproduce the Object with maximum precision and in every detail. The name we give to the discipline practiced at that level is, of course, textual criticism... [T]he activity of textual criticism ... must be described as the concentration of the essential representational activity of enumerative and descriptive bibliography onto a single, total document." (Atkinson, 1980, p. 68).

<sup>6</sup> A term suggested by both Grigar (2002) and Hayles (2003). There are many labels in use for this process, e.g. transition, transcendence, or transmission. The labels are neither haphazard nor equivalent, because as metaphors they convey something of the underlying understanding of the process. The translation metaphor is useful in its emphasis on the derivative status of the results of the process, whereas the other terms mentioned suggest that what is being transferred goes through more or less intact (or they are indifferent to whether there is a change or not). 'Remediation' (Bolter and Grusin, 1999) has roughly the same connotation, but I think the translation trope is better at making us grasp the degree to which the process creates something new.

<sup>7</sup> To philosopher Nelson Goodman (1969), this "sameness" in fact constituted the criterion of works of art and their texts (which he referred to as notation). As long as the notation is "correct", the work is intact. When notation is altered, you end up with a new work. I will refrain in this particular article from a thorough analysis of Goodman's rather mechanical approach to works,

we are satisfied that we have had access to the work. If however the manner deviates far enough, we sense that it no longer conveys the same work. But as long as each document manifestation is more or less adequate, a tangible, readable, accessible instance of the work is presented to the world. In other words, with documents we hope to be able to keep the work alive, or rather to keep the memory of the acted work alive.

Needless to say, perhaps, documents are also media and matter, and so documents are more or less subjected to the natural decay of all matter. They crumble away and die. If the material instantiation of a work dies, the work it contains dies with it *unless* we keep it alive in the internal memories of people or in external memories, i.e. re-instantiating the work in a new document or set of documents.

Media translation goes from a departure document to a target document. It entails many phases, e.g. scrutinizing a document, trying to establish what particulars in the document that are substantive elements of the work we suppose the document contains, and then using a new document (from the same type of medium as the departure document or from a different type of medium) into which we try to carve text and other signs in order to manufacture a target document that purports to be a remake of the departure document and, to some extent, of the work the latter contained. But it is vital to recognize that the target document is always *derivative* to the departure document.<sup>8</sup>

There are many types of media translation at use now and in history: monastic hand-copying, micro-filming, or digitization such as scanning are all examples of media translations using departure and target documents. Translation brings about transmissional noise. Although rather unproblematic in an abundance of genres, such noise however tends to become considerably awkward in cultural heritage works and other material that particularly call for the critical inquiry of human subjectivity. Textual criticism is an historical solution to come to terms with such noise. There are vast numbers of potential parameters introducing noise and constraining the

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texts and documents, but merely point out that it has little or no room for versions, variants and (near-)equivalents that enable bibliographic clustering of "almost-like" objects into works and work families. To a textual scholar, Goodman's definition comes close to reductionism: it reduces the work in all its complex instantiations to a uniform linguistic notation.

<sup>8</sup> Obviously, I am referring here to *sequential* translation, i.e. across time. Granted, technologies have for centuries made parallel media translation possible, with multiple instantiation and proliferation of works. In such cases, each production process results in a multitude of differing documents that constitute the work and that for technical reasons might travel across media. This is however a primarily technical translation as opposed to the intentional sequential translation that has as its primary task to extend the work beyond the time span of the departure document.



target document and its text:<sup>9</sup>

- the socio-cognitive, psychological, linguistic particulars of the *individual(s)* responsible for carrying out the translation,
- socio-cultural and socio-technical particulars of the *situation* in which the translation takes place (e.g. culture and tradition, purpose, specific audience, media environment),
- the material and technological particulars of the departure and target *media* (such as supporting matter, longevity, compatibility, document architecture),
- physical or symbolic *tools* at use in the process (such as practices and techniques, software, platforms, requirements, regulations, and rules), and so on.

Each medium as well as each document type produced within and for that medium brings to the text a semiotic system of its own.<sup>10</sup> In the translation process, certain features of the work are preserved that can be carved into the flesh of the new medium and be expressed by its architecture and the language of its web of signs, while others are treated as noise, obscuring the substantive signals. If translation is successful (in the sense that a human agent accepts the target document as representing the same work as the departure document) we feel the work has been kept alive for yet a little time, namely the time span of the new document instantiation. Then the work is translated again and again, perhaps even across centuries and millennia. At the same time, it is being reinterpreted by new readers and users and thus brought to new life, each new manifestation mirroring particular contemporary medial, social or cognitive settings. But when no more translations take place, no more new documents refresh the work and the old documents finally die, the externally memorized work has ceased to be. And this is precisely how we have lost the vast majority of the works produced in history. At the same time media translation is, alongside the preservation of the original document, a crucial instrument for bringing external memories of past works between generations.

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<sup>9</sup> In particular if by text is implied not only the linguistic text expressed in linear sequences of alphanumeric characters along with punctuation, but also the accidental textual particulars (expressed in typography and other visual markers) McGann chooses to label *bibliographic codes* (McGann, 2001). If the former aspect is normally subject to authorial intention, the latter is more the result of collaborative acts, including typographers, printers, and editors. The bibliographical codes are probably subject to media translational changes to a higher degree than are the linguistic characters we normally define as the pure text.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Robinson (1996). David Levy (2000, p. 26) notes, as have many others, the affects that translation has on textual content of a document, but relates this knowledge to the contextual, one might be tempted to say *social* constraints of a document's properties and essence: "Differences will always be introduced in copying; the trick is to regulate the process sufficiently so that the resulting differences are of little or no consequence and that the properties of greatest consequence are shared. *Determinations of which properties matter are made in the context of purpose and use.*" (Levy, 2000, p. 26; my italics)

## **5. The SE as Scientific Tool**

Scholarly editing is an important instrument in such media translation processes, and the SE is consequently subjected to the constraints discussed above. These are recognized by much editorial theory, but far from always explicitly acknowledged in the SEs themselves. Particularly in idealistic editing discourse, SEs have often been presented as neutral "scientific" instruments.<sup>11</sup> Scheibe (1971) e.g. claimed that scholarly editing must maintain the objective approach to texts that has become impossible within literary studies. He therefore called for a mass production of definitive historical-critical editions that would not need to be renewed to fit every new interpretative act or theoretical position.

An SE does contain introductory essays, editorial principles statements, and reports of the methods that were implemented in the task of editing, but these do not always address issues of subjectivity in the editorial function, such as how the editor contributes to shape the edited work through his/her deliberate choices between versions, forms, granularity, media and presentation. Rather, the impression one gets from reading many SEs and their statements is one of presumed intersubjectivity, reusability, and cumulative force. This is realized through the use of the critical apparatus, the stemma and the editor's account for techniques and methods applied, the level of textual granularity chosen, and the paths taken by the editor. All this is to enable the user-as-editor to follow such paths or to tread, as it were, different paths than the editor. With adequately and carefully applied methods and techniques, the scholarly editor supposedly draws the "correct" text of the edited work from one or several documents, affecting its text only in as much as she/he washes it clean from the dirt of corruption.

An outcome of this is the idea that editorial practice and textual criticism are recreating original material, be it an abstract intentional authorial text or a particular document text such as the reception text or a manuscript text. An extreme but increasingly moot conviction claims it to be both possible and ideal to confine the editorial task to mere discovery and proliferation of the original, to being somewhat of a transparent medium in which the work can safely be transported to its readers. The editor then goes on to report his/her work and reproduce the work in a new document, the edition, which in turn can be used as working material for new scholarly endeavour. But we must keep in mind the simple fact that rather than recreating the departure documents themselves, scholarly editing engages in creating new, target documents, "similar" but

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<sup>11</sup> See Tanselle's (1974) discussion on scientific claims within bibliography and textual criticism.

all the same derivative to the departure material.

Arguments as to the degree of representational force of the SE work along an axis. At one pole, editing as textual transmission between documents is a relatively uncomplicated matter. The real challenge is then to generate methods and technologies for the transmission to be performed with little or no noise - i.e. transmissional noise can be annihilated. At the other pole, scholarly editing is an undertaking inevitably constrained by many medial factors, making transmissional noise inevitable. From the point of view of the philosophy of science, the axis is related to on the one hand *idealism* (where a simplistic Platonist variant regards contents as disembodied, separable from their physical document carriers and hence transportable in their entirety to other carriers) and on the other *materialism* (where the extreme position would argue that texts are not only media typical but even exclusive to particular material media).

Given the promises of new media and web distribution to vastly enhance the spatial confines of the editorial material, or even to annihilate them altogether, a subscriber to the idealistic view might be tempted to plead for the makings of "total" digital archives, where every document witness and variant of every work of an author can be accessed in digital form in all manners of display and modes and for all kinds of purposes.<sup>12</sup> The idea is also to enable a user to generate practically any type of edition she/he desires and thus partly or wholly fulfil the editorial task him/herself. But in order to provide such a *carte blanche* to the unknown future user-as-editor, the archive would have to supply the user with access to all the departure documents in their entirety, supporting any kind of analytical aspect. An impossible task: you cannot possibly computerize and encode all possible aspects of a document. Such ideas run the risk of turning into "mimetic fallacies".

In an e-mail discussion list thread earlier this year on digitization and text encoding, Willard McCarty (2003) referred to two recurring fallacies in digitization debates and media theory as the 'complete encoding fallacy' and the 'mimetic fallacy'. I think both make way for simple replacement models.<sup>13</sup> The complete encoding fallacy was defined by McCarty as "the idea that it is possible completely to encode a verbal artefact", the mimetic fallacy being "the idea that a digitized version will be able to replace its non-digital original". The two are closely linked. If it is

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<sup>12</sup> Akin to Kanzog's famous call (1970) for the makings of archive editions that would include all versions and variants of a work to such an exhaustive degree that any future editor of the work would settle for the edition as a surrogate for the departure documents themselves.

possible to "completely" identify, formulate and unambiguously encode every aspect of an artefact, say a document, into that of another document, then by logic the target document ought to be in every aspect equivalent to the departure document. And if it is indeed equivalent, it follows that to a user it is of no importance if she gets her hands on the one or the other. And if that is of no importance, then there is little need for retaining both the departure and the equivalent target document in a collection. The target document can in other words *replace* the departure document because it is a perfect mimic of it, or at least perfect enough to get rid of the old one. Conversely, you can't make a case for mimetics if you do not believe it is possible to transfer *all* the potentially relevant aspects between media and between documents.

To these fallacies, the idealistic disembodiment viewpoint is of course an intellectual necessity: you cannot legitimize mimetics if you do not subscribe to the possibility of completely separating document from information. In all fairness, these are just ephemeral names and were probably not intended by McCarty to be regarded as a definitive model of the state of affairs in current media theory, but rather as mere handles with which to manage the particular discussion thread at hand and to make some rhetorical points in that particular context. Nevertheless, I think 'mimetic fallacies' is useful as an explicit label when discussing problematic tendencies so far only hinted at implicitly in many discourses on the various processes involved in the production, digitisation, distribution, consumption, and indeed translation of works, documents, and their texts.

## **6. The SE as Rhetorical Tool**

Particularly in the textbooks and classrooms of bibliography and the adjacent fields of library and information science, textual studies or historiography, there is a tendency to treat bibliographical tools as more or less neutral instruments. They are referred to as being impeccably beyond the limitations of spatial, material, medial, historical, social, and ideological constraints, and free from the biases and tastes of any author. Any close reading of the tools as *texts*, however, reveals their situatedness: their dependency on particular historical media settings, their socio-cultural roles and functions, or their argumentative, even *rhetorical* dimension.

For instance, the tools have been developed as solutions to problems in specific historical media situations. The parameters of new media technologies and the logistics of distributive networks make us aware of such medial and technical constraints of the tools. Their shape and architecture

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<sup>13</sup> Such as discussed by Bijker (1995) or Haas (1999).

at a given moment in history is not haphazard but a result of particular media settings. New media contain and distribute the genres and architectures of older media. Perhaps needless to say, they also impose constraints on what is both theoretically and pragmatically achievable with the bibliographic tools.<sup>14</sup> Further, the tools are never genre neutral, but on the contrary steeped in certain genre assumptions and respective social functions (Andersen 2002).

There are as well social and historical dimensions in the tools of bibliography, as they are instruments performing on various social arenas, mediating between communities. The tools are also always to some extent hermeneutical documents, subjective interpretations, in two senses: they carry with them a history of ideology and a hermeneutical heritage, and they also exert an interpretative influence over the objects they are designed to manage.

This gives us an opportunity to return to Atkinson's article. His is, I would say, an incomplete recognition of the various aims and functions of textual criticism. It is also unfair to infer from Atkinson that scholarly editing and SEs always depend on textual criticism and therefore share its aims and functions. SEs are produced for a number of reasons by and for a number of professions and groups in society, using a variety of media, of bibliographical levels in the scope of the edited material selected, of granularity, and of editorial strategies, and theoretical programmes. In short, an SE is not only an iconic representational device, but a social and intercommunal instrument as well.

Furthermore, if we regard the SE as a genre, there are useful perspectives in genre theory to analyse bibliographical tools such as the SE. Among the many genre perspectives around in literary theory, linguistics, sociology and new rhetorics, Carolyn Miller's much-quoted idea of a genre as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (1984, p. 159) strikes me as particularly fruitful. It emphasizes both a functional perspective of documents in use and the rhetorical dimensions of genres. Genres are more than the commonality of textual and visual patterns in documents, and Miller points to the socio-rhetorical situations that give rise to the documents. I think we can bring this perspective to analyse bibliographical tools such as the SE.

In a 2000 conference talk, Bethany Nowviskie made an interesting comment on the nature of SEs: "[A] scholarly edition contains an editorial essay, which makes an argument about a text or

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<sup>14</sup> In digital editing projects, technology to some extent tends to set the scholarly editorial agenda (van der Weel, 2001, para. 14, suggests an example).

set of texts, and is then followed by an arranged document that constitutes a frozen version of that argument. [*T]he text of a scholarly edition is an embodied argument being made by the text's editor*".<sup>15</sup> This is as straightforward as it is an important observation, and it is in line with Miller's observation on the rhetoricity of genres. When the SE is looked upon as an embodied argument made by an authoritative instance of responsibility (a Foucauldian "editorial function"), one can regard the SE as a *text* of its own, approaching the status of a bibliographical work in its own right. The edited work is, then, incorporated into the edition-as-work, or more precisely: the text of the edited work becomes a sign in the editor's text.

An editor might suppress or acknowledge her presence and influence in the SE, but the subjectivity is still there. The tension between acknowledged presence and presumed absence of the editor has a long history in textual criticism and scholarly editing. To intervene or not to intervene might in Greetham's use of words (1999, p. 50 f.) be described as a choice between an Alexandrian and a Pergamian editorial ideal. The former accepts and even presupposes intervention and corrections, laying the ground for eclectic editing, while to the latter interventions and corrections are theoretically awkward (and even come close to heresy), making way for the school of facsimile and best-text editing. The more explicit in an SE an editor's presence, the more the genre achieves authorial status. Conversely, the more an editor seemingly withdraws from the scene, the lesser its status as an authorial text. Going back to the idea of total digital archives based on diplomatic and facsimile editions: if in academic discourse scholars appear to want to "hide" their role as narrative writers,<sup>16</sup> then such an archive promises - or threatens - to enable them to vanish altogether, inviting readers to step in and fill the creative, authoritative editorial function. As noted by Bjelland (2000), there might in such cases be problems when the archives in an attempt to achieve user-friendliness seeks to hide their markup, scripts and programming details, which actually disarms the user-as-editor.

Atkinson's description of textual criticism and scholarly editing activity has an idealistic flair about it, as if it were the sole objective of textual criticism and scholarly editing to recreate as accurately as possible one or several documents into a new document. As Henrikson (2002, p.

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<sup>15</sup> Nowvickie (2000) (my italics). There is a parallel in Bjelland (2000, p. 8; my italics): "... the *edition itself* makes certain statements as to the nature of Shakespeare as an "author" and his "canon". To be sure, these statements are made implicitly, not explicitly as in the more politicized prefatory material."

<sup>16</sup> Bazerman (1988, p. 14) makes the following observation on the scientific article as written genre: "[T]o write science is commonly thought not to write at all, just simply to record the natural facts. Even widely published scientists, responsible for the production of many texts over many years, often do not see themselves as accomplished writers, nor do they recognize any self-conscious control of their texts."

56) reminds us, if the purpose of an SE is little more than to carry the linguistic text of the work between generations of readers and media as accurately and objectively as possible, then there are certainly fast, cheap and reliable methods for accomplishing this by means of automation. But SEs, including the ones based on textual criticism, are more often than not producing new rhetorical documents. The users of the edition are not only perfectly aware that the edition text deviates from the departure document texts. Indeed, this very reconfiguring, repositioning and recontextualizing of the edited work is conceived of as a core value of the editorial work. An SE is rather an attempt at positioning the work in contemporary literary or philological discourse.

So while I agree with Atkinson on the iconic denominator, I would contend that textual criticism and scholarly editing are also hermeneutical and rhetorical activities. The tools and documents they use and produce are equally interpretative and argumentative. In that way, and if we feel comfortable with Peircean distinctions, textual criticism and editing are also indexical activities, related to analytical bibliography, which places an SE along other axes as well.

### **7. The SE as Reproductive Tool**

To sum up, the SE is a subjective, rhetorical device. It is moreover both a result of and a comment on contemporary values, discussions and interests. It is situated in time, in space, in culture and in particular media ecologies (of both departure and target media). To all bibliographical genres, using derivative target documents as representations of departure documents, these are factors imposing constraints on their iconic force. The situatedness limits the representational and moreover the remediating force of bibliographic tools, including the SE. There are no absolutes here. The SE obviously *has* representational and reproductive force, the very abundance and undisputable value of SEs throughout history testify to that truism. The interesting question is what factors are at work to limit or to enhance this force. Another important matter is what force and purpose the remediating material itself might have, that is, to what degree the SE is valuable as laboratory, as working material for new scholarly editorial endeavours. I am not talking about the value of SEs for historians, for literary critics, for studies in the history of ideas etc., but for the makings of new critical SEs.<sup>17</sup>

A claim has been put forward that digital archives can be used as the platform from which to

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<sup>17</sup> While the concept of reusability is about the degree to which fragments of an edition's texts might be imported, reused and altered by later projects (editorial or not), the concept of reproductivity aims to capture that dimension of generating entire new

construct new critical editions of high scholarly quality that differ in scope, intended audiences, bibliographical levels and underlying editorial strategies and theoretical programmes.<sup>18</sup> This is an interesting claim that has a nicely pragmatic ring to it, but I think we need to address the limitations of such presumed archives. One might also generalize the question and ask in how many cases earlier, print-based editing has been able to rely, partly or even solely, on the material contained in previous SEs, as a raw material basis for the production of new critical editions with little or no need for consulting the *fontes*, the original documents? I think the number is scarce, and I think there are several reasons for it. Obviously, the inclusivity, the simulating capacities, the modularity and the transportable flexibility of new media are considerably different than what is possible to achieve with printed codex editions, but are the principal problems as well considerably different?

Already the claim of the printed edition's reproductivity is questionable. It is based on the SE's supposedly scientific nature, in that it supplies reports of the editorial labour undertaken, a conscientious inventory of the extant material of the edited work, along with reproductive tools such as the critical apparatus or the stemma, arming the user to undertake editorial research her/himself based on what the SE has to report. But to what extent do printed SEs really lend themselves to being such cumulative reports and reproductive laboratories? Are they at all being used that way? One can note the distrust that has been put forward in the reproductive force of e.g. the critical apparatus, whose functionality might even be a chimaera.<sup>19</sup> The variant notes can arguably be described as evidence-based arguments in support of the editor's claim rather than as reproductive instruments. As such, they are end points rather than starting points.

Digital editing makes use of such print-born reproductive tools, but also fosters new ideas of how to accommodate reproductivity. Such ideas are normally founded on the inclusive, simulating, and hypertextual capabilities of new media, exploding the embryonic idea of synoptic and variorum editing in print media into full blown hypermedia display of several or all versions of works. There is by tradition a claim for *totality* and complete exhaustiveness within scholarly editing which is being strengthened by digital editing. The potential of digital media to vastly enhance the inclusive force of editions and archives, to enable full-text representation of many or

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critical editions. The latter but not the former signifies a change in the edition's status from target to departure document.

<sup>18</sup> e.g. Ore (1999, p. 143), "Det elektroniske grunnarkivet bør - så langt som mulig - være grundig nok og komplett nok til andre typer utgaver, men også til nye tekstkritiske utgaver basert på andre prinsipper" (= "The electronic main archive ought to - as far as possible - be thorough and exhaustive enough to serve other types of editions, but also new critical editions based on other principles" [my translation]). Ore's reservation "as far as possible" is however important and goes to the heart of my argument.



indeed all versions of the edited work, and to support the modularization of documents into movable fragments across varying contexts, seems to boost the idealistic strand in editorial theory. This trend is even further supported by text encoding, where form is separated from content, and where fact is often conceived of as separable from interpretation. As a consequence, the simple replacement model and the mimetic fallacy have consolidated their positions within digital editing.

Digital scholarly editing offers the chance to organize paratexts and transmitted material in much more dynamic and complex manners than is possible within the printed edition. The modular, database logic along with the potential qualities of digital media mentioned above push the edition towards becoming an *archive*. Building a digital archive means bringing together and storing massive amounts of target documents. This is of course what any archive does, and we already have numerous prime examples of the beauty, force and hence the value of digital archives, many of which have been presented and discussed in earlier issues of *Literary & Linguistic Computing*. But the archives and their contained material will always be situated documents themselves, dependent on the kind of situational factors we have discussed above. If such archives are to be used as laboratories for generating new scholarly representational documents such as critical editions, i.e. turning the target documents into departure documents, one would have to stay alert as to the derivative status of the archived material in the first place. An SE based primarily (if not solely) on the derivative documents of such a digital archive will always to some extent depend on the inevitable choices made by the persons building the archive, on the historical, socio-cultural, cognitive, and media particulars and on the pragmatic purposes and theoretic values defining and framing the final derivative documents in the archive.

A transcriptional editing approach, for example, that reduces the many textual levels of departure documents to the linguistic, alphanumerical signs and their compositional structure as interpreted by the editor, sets aside McGann's bibliographical codes. This in its turn might decrease the reproductive force of the resulting edition and its text for those researchers and students primarily interested in working further with precisely such bibliographical matters. A transcriptional approach aiming for faithfulness to the text of the studied documents, still faces a huge array of inevitable interpretive choices and has to make compromises and sacrifices of what to represent and what to leave behind (Robinson, 2002, p. 55). What epistemological approaches we bring to the editing process, what methods we use, and at what bibliographical level we

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<sup>19</sup> "The apparatus eventually becomes a mere cemetery of variants" (Vanhouette, 1999, p. 202).

position the endeavour, necessarily determine the representational and laboratory strengths and weaknesses of the edition. It will be more apt to some users and the editorial ideal they subscribe to, and less apt to others. A universal aim will fail because it is rooted in an assumption that both textual material and scholarly editing are context-free phenomena.

This is true for digital imaging and the choices of parameters (such as colour, size, granularity, contrast, layers and resolution) that need to be made in the process of selection, interpretation, capture, copying, formatting and reproduction of the images. This is also the case for the seeming simplicity of transcription. Transcription involves inescapable choices of particular textual features and fixed levels of granularity at the expense of others to the degree that it becomes an argumentative statement on the constitutive components of the departure document. And encoding by markup obviously brings additional questions of hermeneutics and interpretation that add further to the subjectivity of the editing endeavour. Hypermedia archives further hypertextualize some intra-, inter- and extra-textual relations and navigation routes, and leave others dormant.

In other words, a user entering a digitization archive faces material that is encoded, manipulated, labelled, often project-specific and thereby, arguably, already interpreted. What possible bibliographic work can be done with the archive material is thus already to some degree predefined, which of course will be awkward to any archive hoping to function as reproductive laboratory fulfilling scientific ideals. A user is in the best of archives free to manipulate, recombine, and rearrange some of the material, but this freedom is not without limits. A user-as-editor that within the confines of for instance analytical bibliography wishes to ascertain chronological relations between two or more primary documents of which there are target representations in the archive, and whose focus of interest is more oriented to the form than to the logical structure of the primary documents,<sup>20</sup> probably needs access to different arrays of significant components than a linguist or a historian of ideas trying to frame the edited work in its socio-historical contexts.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> At least up until P5, TEI has merely included a few crude elements that might support some of the needs of e.g. analytical or historical bibliography. Bjelland suggests this is due to an inherent conflict between TEI-XML "designed to describe the document's logical structure and the bibliographical emphasis on its format... Since all elements of a given document must be embedded with the structure-oriented DTD (...), at present there is no way to make the page itself the bibliographical equivalent of a DTD." (Bjelland, 2000, p. 25)

<sup>21</sup> "... none of these archives, no matter how sophisticated they may be, will be able to *present* every "bibliographical code" of significance in such a way that its nature and importance are readily apparent to the user of the archive." (Bjelland, 2000, p. 24; her

I think the legitimacy of the reproductive assumption can be discussed, at least as far as we are talking about the makings of new critical editions based on the target documents in previous critical editions and archives. This is not to say that such digital (or printed, for that matter) archives cannot have editorial reproductive force at all. Rather, such force will always be delimited by the inescapable fact that the archival documents are derivatives. Rockwell (2003, p. 215) noted that the tools in large electronic text projects "are deployed not for general use but to make available the research of a specific project in the ways imagined by that project," and added: "However, original research consists of asking new and unanticipated questions...". To some degree, the edition as target document embodies the answers to the questions the editor asked him/herself. The possibility to pose the "unanticipated questions" Rockwell refers to and that scholarly work is much about, is reduced if we accept that every textual choice behind the edition "inevitably reflects particular approaches to literature, and that the resulting text may be inappropriate for certain purposes" (Tanselle 1995: 14).

The reproductive force of an archive will depend on many crucial factors, such as if we are dealing with the editing of works whose originals and perhaps even archetypes are long lost. Such works have come down to us only in the  $n^{\text{th}}$  generation, each generation being a derivative translation of previous ones, possibly (but not necessarily) accumulating errors, deviations, and other effects of such historical "whispering down the lane".<sup>22</sup> In other words, the distance between the contained documents and the originals of which they are derivatives, comes into play. With each generation of media translation, the distance is in principle increased between originals or archetypes and their derivatives, both historically and textually. The force of a laboratory for generating critical editions, then, that is based on derivative documents positioned several remedial generations from the primary documents, is affected by this circumstance. That will inevitably define what kinds of new editions one can hope to generate using such derivatives. The users of such archives will, to paraphrase Tanselle (1995, p. 14), tie themselves to the historical moment in which the archive document containing the text was produced.

The reproductive force further presumes that the ambiguity inherent in the transcription, coding and encoding of the material can be disambiguated and decoded (Burnard, 2001, p. 35). Another

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italics)

<sup>22</sup> I'm thinking primarily of the massively versionalized classical works of antiquity. If we're discussing 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century works, where we do have extant authorial manuscripts, first print editions, proofs etc, and where the bulk of documents and versions might not be overwhelming, the perspective and the possibilities are altered, but not, I suggest, to the degree that allows for the automatic generating of tailored editions serving quite different and, more to the point, rival editorial strategies and theories.

factor is the theoretical distance between the departure project the material was taken from, and the target editorial project in which the material is to be reused, that is whether they differ in theoretical aims and programmes, intended uses and audiences, or whether they are similar in these matters, the latter case arguably enhancing the reproductive force. And finally, there are obviously obstacles to the reproductivity claim of a more practical nature, in addition to the more principal problems discussed above. Crucial among such obstacles are issues of IP and economy. Several digital scholarly editing projects enroll library and archive institutions as digitizers. Many such projects adhere to the "one input - many outputs" principle, where sophisticated, information-dense computer files (such as TEI and TIFF) are being produced as archival formats, from which derivative, light and varying outputs are being produced on demand and for e.g. web delivery (such as XHTML, PDF and JPEG files). The idea is that the "fertile" documents can be used as a raw material to research and reproduce existing documents, as well as to produce new documents, thereby saving resources. That is obviously the soundest way that mass-digitizing institutions should go about their business. Increasingly however, digitizing libraries and archives tend to hold on to (and claim IP rights to) the thick material, tucking it away below the interface level and charging institutions and individual end-users for accessing the files, even where the works manifested in the departure documents are in the public domain. Those hoping to use the target documents in the digitized collection as departure documents for new (critical) editions will be further held back by being prevented deep access to the archival, high resolution files.

At the end of the day, we are facing some of the core questions of philosophy of science: to what degree does the SE as genre and scholarly tool lend itself to the kind of sequential *cumulativity* of collective disciplinary knowledge that is ideal in the discourse of the sciences? Do we regard the SE as primarily a more or less *pure iconic tool*, emphasizing the versatility of the textual material in editions, or as primarily a more or less *situated text*, emphasizing its bonds to the particulars of time, culture, media and individual editorial or lectorial tastes and biases? Is the SE an autonomous or a constrained bibliographic tool? What answers we provide for these questions affect what reproductive force we ascribe to the SEs. One does not necessarily have to choose sides here, but rather discuss what we lose and gain with each perspective. Questioning the reproductive potency of digital archives is not necessarily the same as dismissing the considerable value of constructing large digital archives. While I would urge libraries and archives engaging in digitization projects on the one hand to use and make available the most long-term, thick and sophisticated technology they can reasonably consider as legitimate, I would on the other suggest

they stay on a pragmatic path and not be tempted by any siren songs of universal reproductivity.

## 8. Relevance

I started the article by positioning the SE as a bibliographical tool, a valuable and privileged one. Such tools are governed by values, epistemologies and interests that need to be identified and formulated. I think these kinds of discussions, invigorated by the advent of new media and distribution technologies, make us better equipped at identifying the nature, strengths, and weaknesses of the tools. We might be alerted as to what forces but also what limitations they have, e.g. as iconic representations and socio-historical genres, changing with time, space, social context, and media. Recognizing what interests and worldviews are at stake in, for instance, the making of digital archives might reduce the risk of us expecting the wrong things from them. It might assist in avoiding the traps of mimetic fallacies and replacement models in library management when funding, engaging in, and conducting digitization projects. It might make us cautious as to what we can reasonably expect from such projects.

We need to see SEs and other bibliographical tools not as neutral prolongers of the life of the works and documents but as filtering media affecting them and our way of perceiving them. This might make it easier to understand what the tools can and cannot do, where they come from, what intellectual, cultural, symbolic heritage they bring with them, and where they might be going.

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