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There is no end to textual violence. Texts are raped, pillaged, and plundered because of any variety of literary or historical interpretation in support of pet theories and/or ideologies. As such, editors are accomplices. If only it were so simple. Far too often texts are violated by editors long before they are able to be so by other interpreters, much as Helen of Troy was abducted by Theseus long before Priam’s son stole her away. Yet if anyone can put an end to, or at least slow down, the textual abduction of scholarship, it is we who are involved in scholarly editing. Editors too can be rapists, and often have been, despite standards and procedures set down in handbooks. Yet editors have the unique opportunity to defend the chastity of the passively mute texts. To do so, editors must break the bonds of their disciplinary fetters, look beyond their proverbial nerdish noses, and begin to recognize the commonality of the phenomena we call texts in order to effect a renaissance of editorial practice and theory that can rightly assume the foundation of all humanistic scholarship. A grandiose dream, perhaps, but dream we must, and dare to allow our dreams to change us and our practice, as Esther Katz put it to the ADE on 13 November 2004. Yet it is precisely our dream world that we must escape, a dream world in which we are important, essential, and ever so superior, to bring about a renaissance of textual scholarship.

_New Ways of Looking at Old Texts_ should be the proverb pasted on every editor’s bathroom mirror. Yet here it is the third such title of a collection of essays, all special publications of the Renaissance English Text Society, and may very well, as its predecessor did, find its way onto “graduate reading

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_Review_

_New Ways of Looking at Old Texts_

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lists, there being no alternatives. If one can take seriously the ADE mission as being "to provide a scholarly community for people interested in editing historical and literary texts and to promote the use of these records by students, teachers, and scholars," and can interpret that mission as extending beyond the confines of dead Americans, this is a volume that merits notice.

New Ways III consists of seventeen essays presented at the MLA and the International Congress on Medieval Studies in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Here one can find the wonders of the First-Line Index of Elizabethan Verse in the contribution of Steven W. May (pp. 1-12), as well as two separate complex stemma's of Donne's elegy, "The Bracelet," with a complete collation of line 11, in that of Gary A. Stringer (pp. 13-26). For experts in English Renaissance literature, this volume offers a wealth of detail certainly sufficient to get the juices flowing and cause one to ponder whether Donne actually wrote 'yet', 'yett', 'Yett', or 'yit' (p. 18-19). Yett [sic] there are also contributions relevant to editors of documents other than Tudor-Stewart. Such is Jean Klene's "Working with a Complex Document: The Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book" (pp. 169-75), which aptly illustrates the hidden difficulties of editing Folger MS. V.B. 198. What at first seemed to "be a relatively simple and straightforward task," (p. 169) turned quite messy, questioning authorship, dating, and title. Moreover, in addition to the complexity of a document as such, is, as Michael Roy Denbo makes clear, the complexity of the task of editing itself (pp. 65-73). Denbo approaches the Holgate Miscellany, an early seventeenth-century verse commonplace book, "as a social document" (p. 66), using "the contemporary use and understanding of 'manuscript'" (p. 67) as the guiding principle of his edition. While one can, and perhaps must, question what "the contemporary use and understanding of 'manuscript'" actually is, since Denbo never tells us, he does make an important distinction, even if somewhat incomprehensible: "Unlike an edition that focuses on a particular text as something to read, this edition seeks to understand the activities and practices that were required so that the

document could be read (p. 67).” What he is getting at here, it seems to me, is not so much that his edition is not meant to be read, or that there is a difference between a ‘text’ and a ‘document,’ but rather the question of how the text/document is to be read: as a piece of literature or as an historical artifact? The problem that Denbo is dealing with is one also recognized by Michael Rudick in his contribution “Editing Ralegh’s Poems Historically” (pp. 133–142), when he points out that the debate between stemmatology and eclecticism “ignores the source of the problem, which is not methodological, but instead—may we say?—ontological” (p. 140). Agreed. What is the ontological status of these ‘things’ we call ‘texts’ and/or ‘documents’? And what is the ontological status of these ‘things’ we call ‘editions’? And what is the relationship between the two?

The present volume under review offers no answers to these questions, and neither will I, here and now, at least. In many ways, these questions are the aporiae of the editorial craft, and bring the praxis of documentary editing ever so dangerously and fearfully near the abyss of editorial and literary theory. While we may continue to discuss the extent to which a particular ‘text,’ ‘document,’ or ‘manuscript’ most appropriately should be classified as ‘literature’ or ‘artifact,’ as well as how such categories should be defined, we must also take the time to ponder the nature of what we as editors are producing and/or creating. All editions are artificial and ahistorical, except in terms of the history of the time in which they are produced. Technology has forced the issue, and it is surprising to note that of the seventeen contributions to this volume, only two explicitly take on the problematic of electronic media and the implications thereof for the theory and practice of editing (pages 27–35, 37–46). Yet even here, Margaret J. M. Ezell uses electronic technology to reconceptualize seventeenth-century textuality, rather than to reconceptualize editing as such. In breaking the “strict division of ‘public’ and ‘private’ and our model of separate, gendered spheres of literary activity” (p. 29), Ezell argues:

The circulation of literary materials was governed not by a separation into public and private spheres of discourse, nor even of domestic versus commercial production. Instead, to borrow the terms of the electronic writer, the circulation of literary material among a social group serves to create and strengthen bonds between friends, family, and also generations through actively engaging them in not only the reading of literary texts but also the compilation and distribution of and contribution to them. What to us may appear as textual chaos and disorder...
may simply have been the complexity of one aspect of the dynamics of early modern literary culture we have yet to consider (p. 34).

All well and good, but she does not take the next step to hypothesize on the 'textual chaos' of modern editors and just what it is that we think we are doing. How might the possibilities electronic media offer challenge editors to reconceptualize the discipline as such? Such is the question posed by R. G. Siemens (pp. 37-44), though even here, it is done so as a future possibility: "Potentially, we are participating in a process that may ultimately lead to a re-conception of the thing itself" (p. 44). It is great if the computer age throws new light on the textualities of the past, but what does it have to say about the textualities in which we create our texts that we happen to call editions? And here we have returned to the question of the ontological status of texts with the added insight that editors, as Jorge Gracia termed it, form an essential component of the 'composite author'. 4 Such an author function of editors is painfully evident in the various editions of Lucy Hutchinson's biography of her husband John, as David Norbrook impressively brings to light in revealing the gendered alterations of Lucy's 'original' text ("'But a Copie': Textual Authority and Gender in Editions of 'The Life of John Hutchinson,'" pp. 109-30), which the new Oxford edition will present for the first time. Recognizing the 'composite author' of texts/documents allows for returning texts/documents to the realm of the social, which is where they, and our editions thereof, belong, as emphasized by Denbo and Rudick (p. 66 and 142). Yet before the papers of this collection were presented, Gabrielle Spiegel argued that we should endeavor...

...to locate texts within specific social sites that themselves disclose the political, economic, and social pressures that condition a culture's discourse at any given moment. Involved in this positioning of the text is an examination of the play of power, human agency, and social experience as historians traditionally understand them. Only after the text has been returned to its social and political context can we begin to appreciate the ways in which both language and social reality shape discursive and material fields of activity and thus come to an understanding of a text's "social logic" as situated language use. 5


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Spiegel, though, is a medievalist, and there is no evidence that her English Renaissance colleagues took her work into account, nor that of any other medievalist, with the notable exceptions of Rudick, who employed Paul Zumthor’s term *mouvance* (p. 140), and Siemens, who adopted Tim Machan’s distinction in his *Medieval Literature: Texts and Interpretation* between ‘lower criticism’ and ‘higher criticism’ (p. 38). This is a collection of essays by specialists for specialists, or in other words, it is rather inbred. There is virtually no ‘cross-fertilization’ of interdisciplinarity, even though many of the articles concern issues central to all textual scholars, medievalists as well as Americanists. Had the contributors dared to cross boundaries and borders in attempts to build bridges this volume might have found its way onto graduate reading lists beyond those of English Renaissance textual scholars. Violence can be perpetrated too by sins of omission.

There is value, I believe, in cross-disciplinary, even if not interdiscipli­nary, discussion and perhaps this truism especially applies to editors, all of whom are dealing with texts. Most members of ADE most likely will not get cold chills reading about the stemma of Donne’s poetry (which is also true, I would suspect, of most readers of Donne’s poetry), yet how to handle complex texts, or even ‘simple’ ones for that matter, are challenges facing all editors and the essays here collected ably discuss some of the problems involved. Yet there is another point to reviewing this collection here. The contributors to the volume, as mentioned above, are in general not in dialogue with editors of medieval texts, though they should be, and editors of eighteenth through twentieth-century Americana rarely, I would assume, turn to editors of Renaissance literature, though it might behoove them to do so. There is a modernist bias in ADE. Of the 106 projects listed on the ADE website that are associated with ADE, only five are devoted to pre-seventeenth-century texts. Moreover, in reading about the history of documentary editing on the same website, the Middle Ages and Renaissance have been completely erased, even though ‘modern’ textual scholarship began in the Renaissance and “collections of writings, letters, and/or speeches by leading figures” date back far before “the late eighteenth century.” Such lack of dia-

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7The practice of publishing collections of writings, letters, and/or speeches by leading figures dates back to the late eighteenth century and became popular by the mid-nineteenth .... The project that is generally cited as the progenitor of ‘modern’ documentary editing is The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, begun at Princeton in 1943.” http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/ade/about_editing/history_editing.html
logue may or may not lead to 'textual violence' regarding the documents we are editing, but it certainly does do violence to our practice by way of impoverishment. *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts* can provide new ways of looking at an 'old discipline' and at ourselves. It is only with such new perspective that we can begin working toward fulfilling our dreams of the future and bring the documents of the past out of their silent slumber, a slumber that, with respect to the past and our understanding of it, does the greatest violence of all. *Ad fontes!*

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8"Want er liggen nog ongelooflijk veel teksten uit het verleden als slapende Doornroosjes te wachten op de prins die ze wakker kust." (Because there are still so many texts waiting as Sleeping Beauties for their prince to kiss them awake.) Marita Mathijsen, *Naar de letter. Handboek editiewetenschap* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 1995), 18.