Proofs of Genius
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NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Philip Cohen describes some contemporary theorists as thinking editorial work is “mere drudgery for a few eccentric pedants and an army of graduate students.” See Devils and Angels (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991), xv.

2. I use “text” in a way it is commonly (though not uncontentiously) invoked in editorial theory, to indicate, depending on context, either (1) the wording of a work—which is itself an abstract ideal that may only be imperfectly realized in documents, or not fully realized at all, (2) the wording of a document, or (3) as shorthand for a book or other print document. See, for example, G. Thomas Tanselle’s “Textual Instability and Editorial Idealism,” Studies in Bibliography 49 (1996): 1–60, or Paul Eggert’s “Making Sense of Multiple Authorship,” Text 8 (1995): 305–323.


7. McMahon, Divine Fury, 133.

8. See Michael Anesko’s study of how publishers sold collected editions on subscription as a way of making money off of authors on their payrolls in “Notes towards the Redefinition of Culture,” in Nash, Culture of Collected Editions, 69–79.

9. This volume is held by the Peoria Public Library in Peoria, Illinois.

CHAPTER 1

1. In Britain, the same was true of American works, and the situation did not significantly change until the Chace Act of 1891, which was the first legislation to protect international copyright in the United States. See James L. W. West III’s “The Chace Act and Anglo-American Literary Relations,” Studies in Bibliography 45 (1992): 303–311 for a fuller discussion of the provisions of the law.


3. See Robert Weisbuch’s discussion of this and of universalism, the contention among some nineteenth-century American intellectuals that it was counterproductive to pursue a national literature for nationalism’s sake, in Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).


10. The works of Ann Eliza Bleecker, discussed later in this chapter, may provide an additional exception to this rule, though she was significantly less popular than Dunlap or Brown, and the circumstances surrounding her publication are so idiosyncratic as to make her collection seem like a quite different kind of undertaking.


12. Mary Gardiner, A Collection from the Prose and Poetical Writings of Mary L. Gardiner (New York: J. Winchester, 1843), v.

13. See Elizabeth Eisenstein’s discussion of St. Bonaventure’s medieval definition of authorship, in which he claims:
A man might write the works of others, adding and changing nothing, in which case he is simply called a “scribe” (scriptor). Another writes the work of others with additions which are not his own; and he is called a compiler (compilator). Another writes both others’ work and his own, but with others’ work in principal place, adding his own for purposes of explanation; and he is called a “commentator” (commentator). . . . Another writes both his own work and others’ but with his own work in principal place adding others’ for purposes of confirmation; and such a man should be called an “author” (auctor). (Quaestio IV of the Proemium in Librum Primum Sententiarum; discussed in Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early Modern Europe* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979], 121–122.)


18. In fact, Peterson seems to have harbored a particular interest in publishing proslavery literature in the North, as Hentz was one of several authors he published who glorified slavery.

19. Henry Seidel in the *Saturday Review of Literature*, 1930, quoted in Megan


**CHAPTER 2**

1. Sally Bushell has argued that the heavy-handed approach Todd and Higginson took with the poems was necessary to getting them published at all, and that the editors themselves were aware that their level of intervention was not ideal, as reflected in the fact that they interfered considerably less in the second and third volumes. See *Text as Process: Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 169.


11. *The Literary Remains of Martha Day; with Rev. Dr. Fitch’s Address at Her Funeral; and Sketches of Her Character* (New Haven: Hezekiah Howe, 1834), 97.

30. *The Poetical Remains of the Late Mary Elizabeth Lee* (Charleston: Walker and Richards, 1851).
34. Her motivation for stalling the edition is a matter of debate—many contemporary scholars, such as Smith, believe that Susan’s uniquely sensitive understanding of Dickinson’s idiosyncratic poetics overwhelmed her, and though she worked diligently on reading, ordering, and reordering the manuscripts, she was ultimately stymied by her respect for Dickinson’s reluctance to print. This explanation is plausible, but it seems just as likely that Susan, who was busy with the running of a household and the responsibilities associated with her position as a community leader, together with the emotional burdens of her sister-in-law’s recent death, her
son’s tragic death only slightly earlier, and the humiliation of her husband’s very
public affair with Mabel Loomis Todd, simply felt unmoved to undertake the enormous
task.

35. Millicent Todd Bingham, Ancestors’ Brocades: The Literary Discovery of Emily
Dickinson; The Editing and Publication of Her Letters and Poems (New York: Dover,
1967), 66.

36. Martha Nell Smith has suggested that some nineteenth-century readers may
not have even viewed Dickinson’s poems as poems until they were realized in print.
She writes, “When Dickinson’s poems were first published in printed volumes in
the 1890s, many poets did not even regard their poems as having come into exist-
ence until they saw them printed . . . when editors Thomas Wentworth Higginson
and Mabel Loomis Todd imagined, or saw, a Dickinson poem, they saw a typo-
graphical object.” In this light, editors of poetical remains could be seen as making
the poets’ writings real through these posthumous volumes. See “Corporealizations
of Dickinson and Interpretive Machines,” in The Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print,
and Digital Culture, ed. George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle (Ann Arbor: Univer-

37. When the poems were about to go to press, Lavinia balked at the fact that her
formidable sister-in-law would realize upon the volume’s publication that Lavinia
had turned to Todd, and at the last minute wrote Higginson asking him to with-
draw Todd’s name—Todd’s only credit for years of careful work—from the book.
Higginson refused, and it seems that Todd and Lavinia’s relationship began to suffer
real strain, since Todd felt betrayed by the woman whom she had greatly assisted,
both in the editorial project and in various other personal ways, and whose trying
behavior she had endured over the previous several years. The appearance of Poems
in 1890 indeed had the effect on the Dickinson family that Lavinia feared, and even-
tually resulted in the dispersal of Dickinson’s poems between the house of Susan
Dickinson and the house of Todd: Todd’s holdings were inherited by her daughter,
Millicent Todd Bingham, who had helped transcribe them for the first edition as
a child, and the Dickinson family’s portion was inherited by Martha Dickinson
Bianchi, Susan’s daughter and Emily Dickinson’s niece. Both women published
volumes of Dickinson’s writings over the following decades, all drawn from their
own stashes of the manuscripts. Today these manuscripts are divided between Har-
vard’s Houghton Library and Amherst, where Bianchi and Bingham respectively
bequeathed them.

38. Bingham, Ancestors’ Brocades, 17.

39. Higginson seems to contradict himself here.

40. For a much more detailed account of Todd’s transcriptions, see Franklin,
Editing of Emily Dickinson, 6–22. It is not clear how many transcriptions Todd
originally passed on to Higginson. She recollects giving him “about two hundred,”
but even after his initial vetting he estimated a volume that would contain three
hundred poems, drawn primarily from those of the group sent to him that Todd
categorized as the best. This indicates that she gave Higginson far more than two
hundred poems to select from.
41. Niles’s specialty as a publisher was juvenile fiction, and he is today best known for his encouraging Louisa May Alcott to write *Little Women*.

42. Niles’s title at Roberts Brothers was literary manager, but he actually ran the whole operation. Niles had gone to work for Roberts Brothers in 1863, after a firm of which he had been a partner failed. At that time, Roberts Brothers specialized in photo albums, which had become a growth industry among people commemorating loved ones and experiences during the Civil War. The Roberts brothers themselves, Lewis and Austin, were content with their limited industry, but nevertheless allowed Niles to join the company and publish trade books if he were to handle it.


46. *Cleveland Herald*, Tuesday, November 29, 1881, 4.


48. Higginson chose this phrase and explained to Todd that he put her name first because she did most of the work.

49. Indeed, as Caroline C. Maun has argued, the subsequent volumes of Dickinson edited by Higginson and Todd and later Todd alone did not fare as well because readers seemed to think they were gathering subpar poems that were rightfully excluded from the first collection. See “Editorial Policy in *The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Third Series*,” *Emily Dickinson Journal* 3, no. 2 (Fall 1994): 56–77.


**CHAPTER 3**


5. See Miller, *Walt Whitman*, for example.

6. In personal conversation, Jerome McGann suggested that Whitman seems to allude to Isaiah 40:6, “All flesh is grass.”


17. Traubel, *Walt Whitman in Camden*, 2:418. Also recounted in Ed Folsom,


19. Whitman, Complete Poems and Prose, [1].

20. Few scholarly sources have looked closely at Whitman’s tomb affair. Traubel’s With Walt Whitman in Camden remains the most detailed source of information, though it is spread out over many volumes. A recent piece by Matthew L. Ifill, “‘The Rudest Most Undress’d Structure (with an idea) since Egypt’: The Story of Walt Whitman’s Tomb, Harleigh Cemetery, Camden, NJ,” Conversations: The Newsletter of the Walt Whitman Association, Fall–Winter 2011–2012, 1–4 provides a very readable description.


27. Matthews, Poetical Remains, 3 and passim.


33. For instance, see Kaplan, Walt Whitman, 49.

34. Traubel, Walt Whitman in Camden, 8:245.

35. Traubel, Walt Whitman in Camden, 8:289.

36. Traubel, Walt Whitman in Camden, 8:475.

37. Traubel, Walt Whitman in Camden, 8:428.


43. Triggs mentions the course in “Whitman the Most Significant and Most Universal of Modern Writers,” *Conservator* 6 (June 1895): 60, and Hamlin Garland adds that 1895 was the second year that the course ran, *Conservator* 6 (June 1895): 61. Apocryphal reports claim that Triggs was fired from his position for his championing of Whitman (see Thomas Henry Briggs, Max J. Herzberg, and Emma Miller Bolenius, eds., *Romance* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1932], 300), though evidence for this is scarce, and Triggs was involved in some in-fighting that seems as likely a factor in his dismissal.


48. Bucke et al., *Complete Writings of Whitman*, xxxix.


55. Bucke et al., *Complete Writings of Whitman*, xxxix.

**CHAPTER 4**

5. Anesko quotes James as writing, “It is best, I think, that it should be selective as well as collective; I want to quietly disown a few things by not thus supremely adopting them.” “Collected Editions,” 191.
6. Strategic exclusion, in fact, was quite common through the early twentieth century, and poets such as Marianne Moore excised considerable material from collected editions. See George Bornstein’s “What Does a Collected Edition Collect? Mapping Modernist Poetry,” Paideuma 35, nos. 1–2 (Spring–Fall 2006): 3–16.
7. For a study of modernist collected editions, see George Bornstein’s “What Does a Collected Edition Collect?”
9. For a recent discussion of Greg, his life, and his impact on editorial theory and bibliography, see Textual Cultures 4.2 (Autumn 2009), a special issue devoted to Greg on the fiftieth anniversary of his death.
10. Similar changes were occurring in other nations. For example, see Paul Eggert’s Securing the Past: Conservation in Art, Architecture, and Literature (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 158, for a brief discussion of midcentury editing in Australia.
14. This characterization was not entirely accurate. For example, Germany undertook a similar effort to create large editions in the 1960s, based mostly on the method of genetic editing favored by German editors. See Bodo Plachta, “German Literature,” in Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research, ed. D. C. Greetham (New York: MLA, 1995), 504–529.
18. As John Bryant has pointed out, “Modern editing, literary theory, criticism, and classroom instruction have an understandable fixation on single texts, if only to address the simple need among theorists, critics, teachers, and students to locate the same words on the same page at the same time” (The Fluid Text, 113). As Ameri-
can universities grew in the Cold War, so-called definitive editions provided rapidly expanding literature classrooms with common texts.


28. Philip Cohen has succinctly remarked on the relationship between New Criticism and Greg-Bowers editing: “Although traditional editors have often criticized the New Critics’ focus on the aesthetic autonomy of literary works, it was, curiously enough, the New Criticism’s emphasis on close readings of single texts that made the massive editorial projects of the 1960s and 1970s possible.” Yet, for their part, “many theorists deny the recuperability of authorial intention and its usefulness in discussing and evaluating texts that have been constituted referring to that same intention.” See Devils and Angels, x–xi.


40. Arvin, review of *Poems of Emily Dickinson*, 234.

41. Leyda, review of *Poems of Emily Dickinson*, 245.

42. The Howells volumes were not released in order, and the first volume was actually number 32.

43. See also Paul Eggert’s discussion of the *New York Review of Books* dustup in chapter 8 of *Securing the Past*.

44. See Joel Myerson’s discussion, “Colonial,” 353.

45. As Hershel Parker explains, Mumford had publicly bristled when William H. Gilman, the general editor of the *Journals* that Mumford attacks, corrected various points in Mumford’s scholarship on Melville. See footnotes on page 20 in Parker’s *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority and American Fiction* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

46. Even more unseemly: Wilson’s collaborator in seeking funds to edit volumes of American literature was Jason Epstein, who was married to Barbara Epstein, editor of the *New York Review of Books*.


CHAPTER 5


31. For information on Harris’s popularity, see Walter Brasch, *Br’er Rabbit, Uncle Remus, and the “Cornfield Journalist”: The Tale of Joel Chandler Harris* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000). In a letter published in *Uncle Remus’s Magazine*, September 1908, 5, Roosevelt opined, “I very firmly believe that his writings will last; that they will be read as long as anything written in our language during his time is read.”


33. See, for example, the guidelines for Scholarly Editions grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities: http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/editions.html.


35. Grigely, *Textualterity*, 46. McGann’s recent *A New Republic of Letters* is also concerned with the scholarly treatment of what he calls “secondary documents,” which he sees as crucial to a full and instructive study of production and transmission history.

36. For the sake of simplicity the diagram omits materials commonly encountered in author-centered archives, such as manuscript drafts. I have separated *Uncle Remus: His Songs and Sayings* from the rest of the Remus texts in order to illustrate that many derivatives directly relate to one text, while others, produced after many of the books were published and making use of recurring characters, cannot be traceable to a particular text. Except for the dotted arrow noting the special relationship between the 1880 text and its parent category, the arrows in the diagram indicate the direction of demonstrable influence.

37. See, for example, Ed Whitley’s *Vault at Pfaff’s* (http://digital.lib.lehigh.edu/pfaffs/), a study of the bohemian community in New York that included several
important mid-nineteenth-century American writers. Whitley realized early in
his work that the relationships among these authors and the many texts they pub-
lished in a particular newspaper were of much more scholarly interest than the
finely tuned editing of any particular text. He and a colleague at Lehigh University’s
library created a database that would allow them to express these relationships and
store an impressive quantity of annotations on the writers (Whitley, 5–6).
