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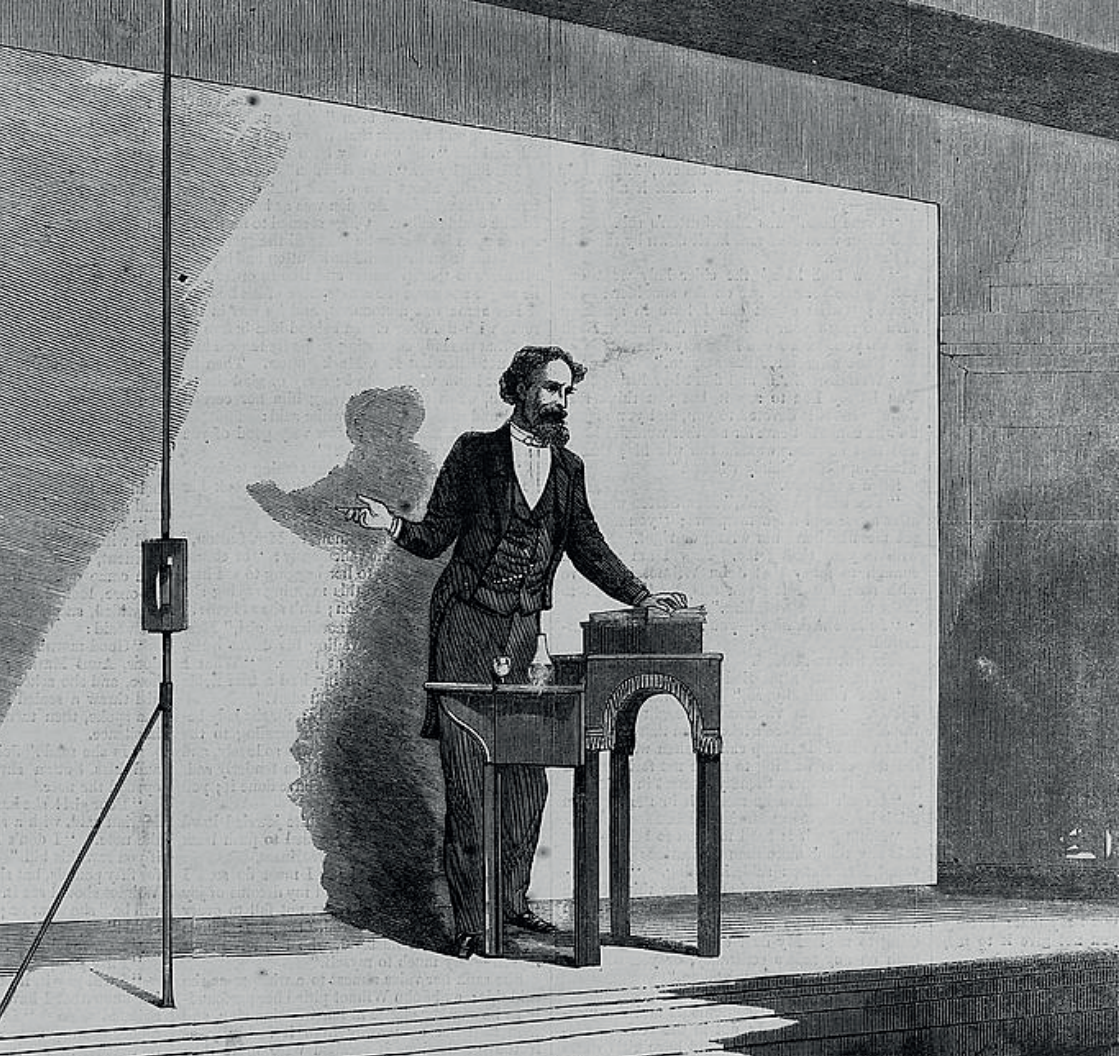
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‘The Dull Duty of an Editor’: Working with Webster and Dickens

Elizabeth Brennan

Hilda Hulme Memorial Lecture 1996

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Cover image: 'Charles Dickens as he appears when reading.' Wood engraving from a sketch by Charles A. Barry (1830-1892). Illustration in Harper's Weekly, v. 11, no. 571, 7 December 1867, p. 777.

University of London

The Hilda Hulme Memorial Lecture 1996

‘The Dull Duty of an Editor’:
Working with Webster and Dickens

Elizabeth Brennan

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Chairman: Richard Proudfoot

‘The Dull Duty of an Editor’: Working with Webster and Dickens

‘THE DULL DUTY OF AN EDITOR’ is the first of five quotations which, proposed as essay topics, constituted my first Finals paper. As I surveyed them at 9.30 a.m. on Wednesday 28 May 1952, in the Queen’s University of Belfast, the prospect of spending three hours writing on mystery in poetry, inflation in blank verse, the main business of comedy or the disadvantages of translation terrified me. The challenge of proving that an editor’s duty was both interesting and exciting was irresistible. The external examiner, who responded favourably to my essay and subsequent papers was John Butt, who, though I did not know it, was already preparing the ground for the Clarendon edition of Dickens with Kathleen Tillotson.

A character in a novel could recall all the details of that essay. I remember only that my argument was based on an appreciation of editions that had inspired me: those of *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain*, of Chaucer, the Johns Hopkins Variorum Edition of Spenser, the ‘Old’ Arden Shakespeare, Una Ellis-Fermor’s *Tamburlaine*, Gray’s poems in the Oxford Standard Authors series, M. Buxton Forman’s *Letters of John Keats*, and Ernest de Selincourt’s *Wordsworth*. It appeared to me that an editor’s most interesting duties consisted in setting the chosen work within its context and transmitting it accurately; the most exciting would be found in the recovery of a lost manuscript – Frederick J. Pottle had published Boswell’s *London Journal* in 1950 – and the use of modern technology to retrieve obscure manuscript readings. My memory of that morning forty-four years ago has dimmed, but my enthusiasm for editing has not; for it has been my good fortune to have experienced the excitement I then imagined, something of which I wish to communicate to you this evening.

Besides edited texts, there was one set of volumes without access to which my work then and later would have been impossible to carry out: the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Hilda Hulme, to whose memory this lecture is dedicated and whom I first met in 1960, kept two sets of the *OED* (to which she referred

as the *NED*). On the point of retiring, she offered me the chance to acquire both her second best set – from her office in University College – and Bartlett's *Concordance to Shakespeare*. Thus to Hilda I am gratefully indebted not only for her stimulating research into Shakespeare's language, but for enabling me to use some of her own scholarly tools.

Needless to say, my career was not founded simply on a youthful vision, but on an education which enabled that vision to be realized. At Queen's, John Braidwood taught us to distinguish between different editions of *Beowulf* and *Sir Gawain* and introduced us to the scholarship of C.L. Wrenn and Randolph Quirk. My research at the Shakespeare Institute was directed by Charles Jasper Sisson whose new readings in an edition of Shakespeare emphasized the importance of a knowledge of Elizabethan secretary hand. If the two Senior Fellows of the Shakespeare Institute – Allardyce Nicoll was the other – did not plan to produce a tribe of editors, they exposed us to the knowledge editors require: the evidence for dating early plays; palaeography; bibliography and Shakespeare criticism. I soon discovered that it was Alexander Pope, in the Preface to his edition of Shakespeare (1725) who concluded that he had discharged the 'dull duty of an editor' and that Samuel Johnson, in the Preface to *his* edition of 1765, retorted that, in so complaining, Pope 'understood but half his undertaking', adding:

The duty of a collator is indeed dull, yet, like other tedious tasks, is very necessary; but an emendatory critick would ill discharge his duty, without qualities very different from dullness. In perusing a corrupted piece, he must have before him all possibilities of meaning, with all possibilities of expression. Such must be his comprehension of thought, and such his copiousness of language. Out of many readings possible, he must be able to select that which best suits with the state of opinions, and the modes of language prevailing in every age, and with his authour's particular cast of thought, and turn of expression. Such must be his knowledge, and such his taste. Conjectural criticism demands more than humanity possesses, and he that exercises it with most praise has very frequent need of indulgence. Let us now be told no more of the dull duty of an editor.¹

The Shakespeare Institute weaned us on Greg's precepts as well as Johnson's

¹ Walter Raleigh, *Johnson on Shakespeare* (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press and Geoffrey Cumberledge, 1908), pp. 44–5.

and surrounded us with their living practitioners. When not giving seminars the Junior Fellows – John Russell Brown, Reg Foakes and Ernst Honigsmann – were engaged in editing volumes of the new Arden Shakespeare. I am happy to say that two of them are working for 'Arden Three'. Later, at Royal Holloway College, I first saw galley proofs in the office of George Kane, who was editing the A-Text of *Piers Plowman*. Inevitably, given the options of turning two theses into a critical work or becoming an editor of New Mermaids plays, I had no hesitation in choosing the latter.

In 1989 Lois Potter remarked that the plays of Webster were usually acted by those who had never read them and edited by people who had never seen them. Actors in the 1990s seem to feel about blank verse as Dick Swiveller felt about poetry – that it is prose in a hurry – but the latter statement should no longer be true. Working on the plays in the 1960s, I had minimal experience of them in the theatre and relied heavily on written accounts of productions. One's imagination of a play is less interesting than a personal comment on the means of staging – for example – Antonio's clumsy dropping of his son's horoscope in *The Duchess of Malfi*, II, iii or the way Vittoria and Zanche *shoot and run to* [Flammineo] *and tread upon him* in *The White Devil*, V. vi.

Thirty years ago, one knew little about the dramatist himself. Mary Edmond's discovery, in 1976, that he belonged to a prosperous coach-building family who lived in Smithfield, enables us to place him in a specific London context, trace his family's connection with city pageants and explain why he was not a prolific dramatist, but it doesn't tell us anything about the way he thought. R.W. Dent's comprehensive study, *John Webster's Borrowing* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: U. of California Press, 1960), did not mark the end of the quest for Webster's sources and meaning. A steady stream of articles published since then – most frequently in *Notes and Queries* – continues to add to our knowledge of what he read or saw and how his language and stage directions should be interpreted.² For it is the text of Webster's plays that reveals his omnivorous interest in the popular stories, emblems, quotations and legal procedure of his own and former ages, and calls our attention to sententiae by the use of italics or quotation marks. Similarly, readers of *The Duchess of Malfi* and *The Devil's Law-Case* are made aware of the way the text was altered while it was going through the press. The removal from the margin on the note in *The Duchess of Malfi* III. iv – 'The Author disclaims this Ditty to be his' – may prevent them

² See, for example, Martin Wiggins, 'Notes on Editing Webster', 'The Date of *A Cure for a Cuckold*', and 'A Nightingale in Poplar: The Sub-plot of *A Cure for a Cuckold*', *Notes and Queries* 240, No. 3, (September 1995), 369–80.

from envisaging the printing-house drama that it represents.³

In providing the material for 'a full reading of the play', a New Mermaids editor could produce – as a shrewd reviewer of my *White Devil* noted, 'a critical apparatus that exceeds in length and elaboration not only that of J.R. Brown's Revels edition, but even that of F.L. Lucas.'⁴ Thanks to the sharpness of reviewers and the patience of publishers, an editor's original errors may be expunged, and newly-discovered facts added to successive reprints. So the third 'completely revised' edition of my *Duchess of Malfi* (1993) eschewed superfluous collations and paid considerable attention to the play on stage.

The readership I imagine for the New Mermaids embraces both my colleagues and those young students who may not know the meaning of words still in common use. To the editor who generally excludes from his notes 'words and phrases (including French ones such as *retroussé* and *nécessaire*) glossed in *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*'⁵ I would commend Hilda Hulme's attitude to the duty of an editor in relation to the evidence she had gathered about Shakespeare's language: 'those outside Shakespearean society who want to hear his words more sharply or more fully, may agree in principle that a rigorous analysis of this kind of evidence, if not by the general reader, then by the editor working for him, is a necessary preliminary to artist- audience communication.'⁶ It is not a question of spoon-feeding, but of practicality. *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* is not a portable source of knowledge.

Hilda Hulme worked hard for the students of English as a second language for whom she prepared the Longmans' Swan editions of *Julius Caesar* (1959), *Richard II* (1961) and *Henry V* (1963). The blurb on the back of the paperback reprints states that the full text of each play is 'accompanied by notes that have been written within a controlled vocabulary of 3,000 words and with the requirements of the Cambridge Overseas School Certificate in mind.' The limitation on vocabulary meant that 'he talks to himself' is found where one would expect 'he soliloquizes'. Keeping the young student's needs in view led, on occasion, to the omission of her own research.

³ See Elizabeth M. Brennan, ed., *The Duchess of Malfi*, third edition (London: A & C Black, 1993), p. xxxix; *The Devil's Law-Case* (London: Ernest Benn, 1975), p. xxvi; David Gunby, David Carnegie and Anthony Hammond, eds., *The Works of John Webster*, Volume One (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 527; René Weis, ed. *'The Duchess of Malfi' and Other Plays*, The World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 156.

⁴ G.R. Proudfoot, in *Notes and Queries* 212 (September, 1967), 359.

⁵ Terence Cave, ed. *Daniel Deronda*, The Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995), p. 813.

⁶ Hilda M. Hulme, *Explorations in Shakespeare's Language* (London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 60.

In *Explorations in Shakespeare's Language* (1962) she argued that the Folio reading 'and a table of green fields' in the Hostess's account of the death of Falstaff in *Henry V* (II. iii. 17) is meaningful, and that 'to allow Theobald to alter the original text is merely to prefer the unambiguous sentiment of a most skilful eighteenth-century editor to the complex artistry of the greatest Elizabethan dramatist.'⁷ Hilda Hulme's edition of *Henry V*, published a year later, has Theobald's "a babbled of green fields' and her commentary is correspondingly orthodox.⁸ Yet, though her *Julius Caesar* appeared three years before *Explorations* she shared with her readers the discovery that 'malice' in the phrase 'Our arms in strength of malice' (III. i. 174) means 'power to harm'.⁹ The combination of scholarship and concern for students evinced in these Swan editions provided the finance to found the Hilda Hulme Memorial Lectures. Careful and carefully-focused editing pays.

The common reader, whose common sense is 'uncorrupted with literary prejudices' is too often sold shoddy wares, as carelessly printed books are reproduced without correction even though they have been reprinted precisely because they command a good market. Yet today's popular novel or play may become the subject of research, confused by error. Take, for example, Barbara Pym's *Some Tame Gazelle*, the most self-consciously allusive novel I know. In Chapter 10 we are told how Archdeacon Hoccleve's congregation felt abused and bewildered by his sermon on Judgment Day, the concluding quotation of which seemed to accuse them of being 'dreamers of gay dreams'.

There was quite a stir in the congregation, for some of them had been dreaming gay dreams most of the morning, although many of them had given the sermon a chance, and had only allowed their thoughts to wander when it had passed beyond their comprehension. They now fidgeted angrily in bags and pockets for their collect- money.

'Collect-money'? Imagine Jake Balokowsky who, having finished his biography of Philip Larkin, is now working on a life of the poet's friend, trying to work out the relationship between the 'collect for the day' and the obscure Anglican levy, the 'collect-money'. This compound-word occurs in *The Barbara*

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁸ 'In his fever he talks softly and in broken phrases, perhaps of the "green pastures" to which he hopes he may be led "through the valley of the shadow of death", as in the Bible, Psalm 23'. Hilda M. Hulme, ed., *Henry V* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1963) p. 58n.

⁹ Hilda M. Hulme, ed., *Julius Caesar* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1959), p. 122n; *Explorations in Shakespeare's Language* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 274.

Pym Omnibus, Pan Books (1994), the Granada paperback edition of *Some Tame Gazelle* (1981) and the first edition, in hardback, of 1950.¹⁰ The only difference is that, in the first edition, 'collect-' occurs at the end of a line. Barbara Pym's typescript, now in the Bodleian Library, reveals – as one would expect – that 'collect-money' is the figment of a compositor's dream. The congregation were seeking money for the collection.

Sometimes the author is at fault. My first experience of Harold Pinter's *The Birthday Party* in the theatre was intellectually challenging; my first reading of the play distinctly less so, as the deficiencies in the dramatist's knowledge of Ireland leapt at me from the page. Through the character of McCann, Pinter alludes to four Irish locations: the Mountains of Mourne; Carrickmacross; Roscrea; and Ballyjamesduff. In Act II, the tune of Percy French's song, 'The Mountains of Mourne' is whistled first by McCann, then by McCann and Stanley. If it hadn't been well known in 1958, when the play had its infamously short first run at the Lyric, Hammersmith, Stanley could not have done so. Ballyjamesduff features in another of Percy French's songs, of the first verse of which McCann sings a shortened and very inaccurate version, concluding with the haunting refrain:

Come back, Paddy Reilly to Ballyjamesduff

Come back, Paddy Reilly to me.

On whether the printed text stems from Pinter's memorial reconstruction of the lyric or is intended to indicate an aspect of McCann's character, you may have an opinion, but I could not possibly comment. In four editions of the play that I have collated, Roscrea is the only Irish place name that is properly written. Mourne and Carrickmacross are misspelt and Pinter clearly couldn't make up his mind whether Ballyjamesduff has one or three capitals, two hyphens or none.¹²

Revising *The Birthday Party* in 1965, he excised three short speeches in

¹⁰ *The Barbara Pym Omnibus* (London: Pan Books, in association with Jonathan Cape, 1994) p. 101; *Some Tame Gazelle* (London: Granada Publishing Ltd, 1981), p. 111; *Some Tame Gazelle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1950), p. 112.

¹¹ *The Best of Percy French*, a recording by Brendan O'Dowda of songs including both 'The Mountains of Mourne' and 'Come Back, Paddy Reilly' was published by Columbia Records in 1958.

¹² The editions scrutinized were: *The Birthday Party: a play in three acts* (London: Encore Publishing Co., 1959); *The Birthday Party and Other Plays* (London: Methuen, 1960); *The Birthday Party*, Methuen's Modern Plays (London: Methuen, paperback edition first published 1963; second edition, revised 1965), Harold Pinter, *Plays: One* (London: Methuen Paperback edition, 1974). All four read 'Morne' and 'Carrikmacross'; the 1959 edition prints 'BallyJamesDuff'; later editions have 'Bally-James-Duff'.

the dialogue between Meg and Petey in Act III, but forgot to remove one of Meg's speech-prefixes, making it appear that a speech of Petey's had been lost between two of hers¹³ as editors deduce a speech of Bosola's has dropped out of his dialogue with Antonio in *The Duchess of Malfi*, II. iii. However, in Harold Pinter, *Plays: One* (1974) this was corrected,¹⁴ so that – unlike editors of Webster – one does not have to hypothesize about the lacuna.¹⁵

Were he present, Pinter would be unrepentant. Speaking in 1962 he attributed the failure of *The Birthday Party* and success of *The Caretaker* to the fact that he employed a certain amount of dashes in the former play, but used dots in the latter. Declaring that one can't fool the critics for long, he added that they 'can tell a dot from a dash a mile off, even if they can hear neither.'¹⁶

Inexpensive books are not the only ones to perpetuate errors or be subjected to strange editing. H.T. Lowe-Porter's translation of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, discussed in an article in the *TLS* last year¹⁷ was the basis of the Folio Society edition, published in 1989. A note indicates that an editor 'made sundry corrections and revisions where the translation was either inaccurate or unacceptably dated' but 'it was felt unnecessary to interrupt the text by drawing attention to them.'¹⁸ Silent emendation can go no further!

Even when reading for pleasure, editors cannot let inaccuracy pass: a point recently made by John Sutherland, writing of the wartime enthusiasm for the work of Anthony Trollope:

Dons in uniform like R.W. Chapman and John Sparrow, when they weren't cracking codes at Bletchley Park, exchanged erudite *aperçus* about textual minutiae in Trollope's novels.

¹³ Harold Pinter, *The Birthday Party*, Methuen's Modern Plays (London: Methuen, paperback edition first published 1963; second edition, revised 1965), p. 67.

¹⁴ Harold Pinter, *Plays: One* (London: Methuen Paperback edition, 1974), p. 77.

¹⁵ Interestingly, in their commentary to this passage in *The Works of John Webster*, Volume One (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) the editors, David Gunby, David Carnegie and Anthony Hammond, conclude that the best solution for a modern production is 'perhaps to have Antonio continue ... as if it were one uninterrupted speech, regarding Bosola's previous comments as "the libel" to which Antonio refers' (p. 611).

¹⁶ 'Writing for the Theatre': a speech made by Harold Pinter at the National Student Drama Festival in Bristol in 1962; Harold Pinter, *Plays: One* (London: Methuen Paperback edition, 1974), p. 9.

¹⁷ Timothy Buck, 'Neither the letter nor the spirit: Why most English translations of Thomas Mann are so inadequate,' *The Times Literary Supplement*, 13 October 1995, p.17; see also Letters to the Editor of 8 December 1995 (David Luke); 22 December 1995 (Lawrence Venuti; Aleks Sierz); 19 January 1996 (Frances Fawcett and Patricia Lowe).

¹⁸ 'Editorial Note' in Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks* translated by H.T. Lowe-Porter (London: The Folio Society, 1989), p. 15.

In a series of articles in the *TLS* they vied with each other to find misprints which had escaped the duller eyes of the novelist himself and his Victorian proofreaders.¹⁹

In a different capacity, F.L. Lucas was also associated with Bletchley Park. *The Times* obituarist remarked in June 1967 that ‘many will remember him as the unflagging Major of the Bletchley Park Home Guard’. The writer failed to mention his 4-volume edition of Webster, to which we have been indebted since 1927.

I am fortunate to work for a publisher who invites me to submit both corrections to the text and additions to the list of ‘Further Reading’ when reprints are prepared. Though I am still responsible for the emendation and up-dating of *The Duchess of Malfi*, by far the greater part of my research over twenty-five years has been devoted to the preparation of the Clarendon edition of Charles Dickens’s *Old Curiosity Shop*, under the wise guidance of Kathleen Tillotson, whose patience, encouragement and scholarly generosity I cannot overpraise. In recent months, my attention has turned to the World’s Classics edition. Though different in kind, the tasks are complementary, since the World’s Classics volumes contain the critical opinions and explanatory notes that are excluded from the Clarendon editions.²⁰

Having established a text, the scholar under contract to annotate it may well be in the position of the nervous postgraduates in Barbara Pym’s *Less Than Angels* (1955) who visit Professor Mainwaring’s country home to be interviewed for a research grant. When the maid who had been brought in from the village came to serve the soup at dinner, she was alluded to by their host as Barbara.

‘My mother had a maid called Barbara,’ said the Professor in a thoughtful tone.

There was a polite expectant silence round the table.

‘She had a song of willow,’ he continued, perhaps surprisingly, but Mark managed to catch the allusion, though he hardly knew what he was expected to do with it.

‘Othello,’ he muttered. (Chapter 18)

¹⁹ John Sutherland, *Is Heathcliff a Murderer?*, *The World’s Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p. 139.

²⁰ See John Butt, ‘Editing a Nineteenth-Century Novelist’, *English Studies Today*, Second Series (Bern, 1961), 187-95; ‘Preface by the General Editors’, *Oliver Twist*, edited by Kathleen Tillotson, *The Clarendon Dickens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. vii.

Knowledge of what to do with allusions depends on the editor's own ability to catch them and on assumptions made about the breadth of the reader's knowledge. Reviewing Ruth Rendell's *The Keys to the Street*, John Carey concluded by praising its presentation of what is meant by 'inherent gentility' or 'being civilised'; adding that reading books and recognising, as Rendell trusts you will, the odd quotation from Shakespeare or Keats, are additional parts of the package.²¹ Quite so; but how many readers will appreciate the reference to Joanna Southcott, buried in St. John's Wood Churchyard and thought of by the character Roman Ashton as 'the religious visionary, she of "the Box", dead before the Battle of Waterloo' (Chapter 7)? In a passage of *The Old Curiosity Shop* that Dickens cancelled in proof, Sampson Brass declares that he'd 'sooner believe in Mrs Southcoate and *her* child' than in his sister Sally being the mother of the Marchioness. His allusion is to Mrs Southcott's declaration, in 1813, when she was 63, that she would give birth to the second Christ. The editor of the World's Classics edition of *A Tale of Two Cities*, explaining a reference to her in the first chapter, tells us that she 'left behind a sealed box containing further prophecies'.²² If, in 1996, Ruth Rendall expects her public to catch an allusion that an editor of Dickens wisely elucidates, what did George Eliot expect of hers, in 1876? Did they remember, when they got to Chapter 37 of *Daniel Deronda*, what Alcibiades' legs looked like? Reading the novel in the Penguin English Library edition of 1967, I was too grateful for the annotation that *was* provided to notice that a discussion of these legs passed without comment. Indeed, I had no recollection of it till Stephen Lowden, who reads with particularly close attention, asked me about it. It occurs in the scene where Hans Meyrick is showing Daniel Deronda his sketches of a series of paintings illustrating the life of the first-century Jewish adventuress, Berenice. Deronda is looking at one in which the lady is seen standing with Agrippa, her brother:

'Agrippa's legs will never do,' said Deronda.

'The legs are good realistically,' said Hans, his face creasing drolly; 'public men are often shaky about the legs - "Their legs, the emblem of their various thought," as somebody says in the *Rehearsal*.'

'But these are as impossible as the legs of Raphael's

²¹ John Carey, 'Moral Mistress', *The Sunday Times Books*, 29 August 1996, p. 2.

²² Andrew Sanders, ed., *A Tale of Two Cities*, The World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) p. 475.

Alcibiades,' said Deronda. (Penguin, p. 513)

The editor of the World's Classics edition (1984) provides information on the figures depicted in Hans Meyrick's painting and locates the quotation from *The Rehearsal* by George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham and others (1671) which, with typical and necessary helpfulness, he corrects. On the painter and his subject he offers dates and brief comments, including the fact that Alcibiades, 'a high-born Athenian, was a wayward politician and adventurer who betrayed his city and was assassinated in exile.'²³ Though acknowledging indebtedness to the work of previous scholars, the editor of the 1995 Penguin Classics describes *The Rehearsal* as a parodic play without indicating where the allusion may be found. He indicates that Alcibiades appears in Raphael's 'School of Athens' and reminds us that 'the Meyricks have an etching of the painting in their house.'²⁴ How many of us have copies of either the play or the painting in ours?

This shared joke is based on two examples of waywardness. In *The Rehearsal* III. v, Prince Volscious enters going out of Town to fight, and carrying his boots. He falls in love with Parthenope as he is putting them on. Thus his booted leg represents 'stubborn Honour'; his unbooted leg, disarming Love. Being unable to resolve to which he should yield, Volscious '*Goes out hopping with one boot on, and the other off*'. In Raphael's 'School of Athens', a fresco in the Stanza della Segnatura in Rome, the noble Athenian and his legs are facing in different directions. How this came about may be deduced from comparing the cartoon for the fresco with the finished work, both of which are reproduced in Sharon Fermor's recently-published study, *The Raphael Tapestry Cartoons*.²⁵

A further sample of annotations, from *Daniel Deronda* Chapter 61, will serve to introduce some of my work on *The Old Curiosity Shop*. Discussing the death of Grandcourt, Hans Meyrick says that he never knew anybody die conveniently before, adding, 'Considering what a dear gazelle I am, I am constantly wondering to find myself alive.' Of 'dear gazelle' the 1967 Penguin edition notes "This looks like an illusion (*sic*) to a poem by H.S. Leigh ... which may be found in *The Penguin Book of Comic and Curious Verse*."²⁶ It isn't; but one recalls Hilda Hulme's remark that 'an initial failure to pick up the right

²³ Graham Handley, ed., *Daniel Deronda*, The World's Classics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984) p. 712.

²⁴ Terence Cave, ed. cit., p. 832.

²⁵ Sharon Fermor, *The Raphael Tapestry Cartoons* (London: Scala Books in Association with the Victoria and Albert Museum, 1996), pp. 48–9; 66. There is a black and white reproduction in Kenneth Clark's *Civilisation* (London: BBC Books, 1969), p. 130.

²⁶ Barbara Hardy, ed., *Daniel Deronda*, The Penguin English Library (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967, p. 902.

clues can itself be turned to profit; what was wrong in the “guesswork” can be analysed.²⁷ The World’s Classics editor correctly quotes from Thomas Moore’s *Lalla Rookh*, refers to ‘Dickens’s parody in *The Old Curiosity Shop*’ and mention in *David Copperfield*.²⁸ In the Penguin Classics edition we find a fuller quotation, with the comment that previous editors ‘point out that the poem was often parodied and cite examples from Dickens.’²⁹

Lalla Rookh was published in 1817 and so had been known for over twenty years when Dick Swiveller exclaimed, in Chapter 56, with reference to the marriage of Sophy Wackles to Alick Cheggs, the market gardener:

“...Twas ever thus—from childhood’s hour I’ve seen my
fondest hopes decay, I never loved a tree or flower but ‘twas
the first to fade away. I never nursed a dear Gazelle, to glad
me with its soft black eye, but when it came to know me well,
and love me, it was sure to marry a market-gardener.”

Spoken by the ‘trembling maid,’ Hinda, to her lover, the original has ‘Oh! ever thus, from childhood’s hour’, and concludes ‘But when it came to know me well/ And love me, it was sure to die!’³⁰ Dickens alludes to Moore’s ‘dear gazelle’ in *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841), *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Our Mutual Friend* (1865). (Daniel Deronda is set in the mid 1860s, so George Eliot’s allusion is in keeping with her other topical references.) It is not surprising that the joke spanned Dickens’s lifetime, but it is interesting that it was taken up by much younger parodists, like James Payn (1830–98), Lewis Carroll (1832–98), Thomas Hood the younger (1834–74), and Henry Sambrooke Leigh (1837–83). Leigh’s rendering, entitled ‘Twas ever thus’ in *The Penguin Book of Comic and Curious Verse* – commenced:

I never rear’d a young gazelle.
(Because, you see, I never tried);
But had it known and loved me well,
No doubt the creature would have died.³¹

²⁷ Hilda M. Hulme, *Explorations*, p. 272.

²⁸ Graham Handley, ed. cit., pp. 721–2.

²⁹ Terence Cave, ed. cit., p. 845.

³⁰ *Moore’s Poetical Works, Complete in One Volume* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1843), p. 363.

³¹ J.M. Cohen, ed., *The Penguin Book of Comic and Curious Verse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1952), p. 253.

What Dick Swiveller gives us is an adaptation rather than a parody, but it is not what Dickens originally wrote. His manuscript and the Philadelphia edition, set up from second proofs, read: 'I never reared a young Gazelle ...' so parody was in Dickens's mind. He cannot have got it from H.S. Leigh, who was still an infant in 1841. I suspect that it was transmitted orally from one generation to another, or from one dinner-table to another.

On firmer ground, I want now to indicate how written and visual evidence combine to shed light on ten days of Dickens's creative life in the summer of 1840, when he was producing the twenty-first number of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, comprising Chapters 27 and 28 of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, due for publication on 22 August. The previous chapter had concluded with a potentially happy passage in the flight of Nell and her grandfather from the menace of Quilp: their encounter with Mrs Jarley, the friendly proprietor of a travelling wax-work exhibition whose assistant, George, guesses that the weight of Nell and her grandfather together 'would be a trifle under that of Oliver Cromwell.'

Committed for the first time to producing a novel in weekly numbers – a novel which he had never planned to write – Dickens had to forego many social activities. On Sunday 26 July 1840, declining an invitation to visit Walter Savage Landor in Bath, where his early plans for *Master Humphrey's Clock* had been discussed, he was quite outspoken:

Mr Shandy's Clock was nothing to mine — wind, wind, wind, always winding am I: and day and night the alarum is in my ears, warning me that it must not run down....

... I am more bound down by this Humphrey than I have ever been yet — Nickleby was nothing to it, nor Pickwick, nor Oliver — it demands my constant attention and obliges me to exert all the self-denial I possess. But I hope before long to be so far ahead as to have actually turned the corner and left the Printer at the bottom of the next sheet — and then — !³²

It wasn't just pressure of work that kept Dickens from visiting Landor. A plan to ameliorate the burden of his father's importunity by settling him in a cottage at Alphington, near Exeter, was threatened with failure. On the same evening, Dickens and his wife set off to visit his parents, breaking their journey at Basingstoke.

³² Letters, ii. 106.

At this time, Dickens normally used iron gall ink, which fades to brown. What he found in Alphonington was a blue ink that has retained its tincture. Thus we may see that he had written the titles of both the miscellany and the novel, the latter's chapter number and the first ten lines of Number 21 before he came away. As I later discovered, had he written a few lines less he would probably have made a fresh start in Devon. On this occasion, however, when he returned to his work, he added one word to it before continuing his narrative.

So the comedy of Mrs Jarley and her waxworks and the adaptations of popular songs to advertise them was produced in easy abundance. The only sign of Dickens's having been distracted from his task was his twice writing 'Mrs. Tyler' instead of 'Mrs. Jarley' near the end of Chapter 27. He was, however, at a disadvantage so far away from his publishers. Forster kept in touch with the printers, but failed to write to Dickens, as Bradbury's, the printers, had said he would. No doubt to save time, Dickens sent the chapters to Chapman and Hall as each was finished. It's the first time we have unequivocal evidence of Dickens resorting to this pattern of work, and it certainly wasn't the last time he did so. At the top right-hand corner of the first slip of Chapter 27 he pencilled an undated note:³³

Dr Sirs – Cattermole's subject begins at page 10 [.]
Bradburys will have the addition to N°. 20 tomorrow.
F[ai]thfully CD

[It makes] in all, with this – 12 slips.

Having sent off the chapter, Dickens settled down to the composition of four additions to Number 20, which he had underwritten. This slip – i.e. folio – of additions, also, of course, in bright blue ink is now bound with the rest of the manuscript in the Forster Collection of the National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum.

As Edward Chapman, who usually dealt with such matters, was out of town when the manuscript of Chapter 27 arrived at Chapman and Hall's, the illustration of Nell cowering out of sight of Quilp at an old gateway was mistakenly assigned to Hablot Browne. Though George Cattermole, the older of the two main providers of 'woodcuts dropped into the text' of *Master Humphrey's Clock* was clearly more at home delineating buildings than Browne, the younger artist was neither untrained nor unskilled in architectural drawing, having contributed 38 plates to Henry Winkles's *The Cathedral Churches of England and Wales* vols i and ii (1836; 1838).

³³ Though first published in the Clarendon edition of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1997), it is mentioned in *Letters*, ii. 109.

The standard critique of the illustration of Nell at the Gateway, praising Browne's skill and metaphorical intentions, is that of Q.D. Leavis.³⁴ Straying from the text and assuming that the old gateway sprang from Browne's imagination, she said that its empty niches should have held 'guardian saints'. What Browne drew was not, however, imaginary. It was the North side of the old Bar Gate, Southampton, which was easily identified by its coats of arms and distinctive lions sejant. John Bullar, in the fourth edition of *A Companion in a Tour Round Southampton* (Southampton, 1819), commented that the Bar Gate is 'guarded by its appropriate lions and giants, that recail the days and heroes of romance'.³⁵ The emptying of the niches – not of old statues – but of two large paintings on the buttresses representing 'the Knight Sir Bevois ... and his Squire Ascupart'³⁶ was necessitated by Dickens's narrative.

Dickens's London readers did not have to travel to Southampton to appreciate the model for the old gateway. They could see it at the Adelphi Theatre where Edward Stirling's *Burletta in Two Acts, The Old Curiosity Shop; or One Hour from Humphrey's Clock* ran from Monday 9 November. Dickens had recently asked Chapman and Hall to revise his agreement with them to allow *Barnaby Rudge* to succeed *The Old Curiosity Shop* in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, instead of being published in monthly parts. Amid the time-consuming legal negotiations consequent upon this decision he spent the Saturday before the opening at the Adelphi assisting Frederick Yates – who directed the production and took the part of Quilp – and Paul Bedford, who played Codlin.³⁷

In vol. 77 of Lacy's Acting Edition of Plays, n.d. [1850], the text reproduces, printed vertically over three pages, the playbill description of the 'Burletta'. As befits a piece 'produced under the immediate direction of Mr Yates' and with Dickens's own assistance, the play text, like the poster, quotes frequently from the novel and refers to its illustrations, some of which form the basis for tableaux in the action. Thus, it is at 'The Old Bar Gate of Southampton' that Quilp, accompanied by Dick Swiveller and Fred Trent, catches a glimpse of Nell in the moonlight, and exclaims:

It's her, by jingo! Nelly! (*calling*) Pretty Nelly! won't you

³⁴ Q.D. Leavis, 'The Dickens Illustrations' in F.R. and Q.D. Leavis, *Dickens the Novelist* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), pp. 344–5.

³⁵ John Bullar, *A Companion in a Tour round Southampton*, fourth edition (Southampton, 1819), p. 7.

³⁶ Philip Brannon, *The Picture of Southampton and Stranger's Handbook*, second edition (Southampton, n.d. [1850]), p. 32.

³⁷ See his letters of [6 Nov] to Macready and 9 Nov to Mitton (*Letters*, ii. 147–8 and nn).

Speak to your Quilpy?

Crying 'Save me! save me,' she runs wildly off through the gateway and the next scene (II.v) finds her in 'A neat Kitchen at Mr. Humphrey Garland's', whither she has fled with her grandfather.

As he was writing Chapter 27, in Alphington, Dickens lifted the menace of Quilp's proximity when the dwarf made for the London coach. Returning to the waxworks in Chapter 28 he credited Mr Slum – like the shabby-genteel gentleman of 'Seven Dials' in *Sketches by Boz* – with the authorship of advertisements for Warren's Blacking: i.e. for the products manufactured by Robert Warren, whose premises were in the Strand; not those of Jonathan Warren's Blacking Factory at 30 Hungerford Stairs, where Dickens had been briefly employed as a child. Staying with his parents, he happily – or, perhaps, slyly – had Mr. Slum propose that Mrs Jarley advertise her stupendous collection with an acrostic similar to the one he'd done for Robert Warren. Over-indulgence in such comedy led to later pruning of the chapter, but the number was finished on 31 July, which is probably when he sent the chapter, comprising slips 13-20, to Chapman and Hall, with a pencilled note on the top right-hand corner of the thirteenth, to inform them:

Mr. Browne's subject — the child pointing out the figures —

begins at page 18. The subject itself is in page 19.

Having reduced the delay in sending off his copy to one week, – his contract had stipulated that it be received thirty days before publication date – Dickens took the opportunity to have a day's respite from both the *Clock* and his parents' affairs, taking Catherine with him to explore Dawlish, Teignmouth, Babbacombe and Torquay. On the evening before their departure for London, he was entertained – as the *Western Times* reported – by the Mayor of Exeter. He learnt soon after his return home on 4 August of Cattermole's not having been given the subject which he had put in 'expressly with a view to your illustrious pencil.' After attributing this to Chapman's absence, Dickens described to Cattermole the subject in an as yet unwritten number which he wanted him to do: Nell in the cart with the Wax Brigand. Saying that both he and the publishers were mortally pressed for time, Dickens twice exhorted him to execute his sketch and send it to Chapman and Hall with all speed.³⁸ Despite their friendship, the artist was not to be cajoled into compliance. He did not illustrate *The Old Curiosity Shop* again till Number 31, when he used

³⁸ *Letters*, ii. 110–11.

St. Bartholomew's Church, Tong, as his model for the old church in which Nell is later to act as a guide.

By the autumn of 1995, I had set *The Old Curiosity Shop* in its context – a task greatly assisted by the availability of the encyclopaedic knowledge contained in the volumes of the Pilgrim *Letters* – and prepared what I trust is an accurate account of its transmission. Manuscript readings have been restored to the text of the Clarendon edition, where necessary, not because Dickens's eyes were dull, but because proof-correction – like everything else for *Master Humphrey's Clock* – was undertaken at speed. Moreover, both Dickens and John Forster corrected proofs without having the original copy to hand, relaying on memory and common sense to guide them. My subtitle – 'Working with Webster and Dickens' – indicates how, especially for Dickens, an editor becomes an extra proof-reader. Whereas *The Duchess of Malfi* was set up by two compositors, with recognizably different working habits, twenty-four men, involved in as few as one or as many as twenty-one of its seventy-three chapters, set up *The Old Curiosity Shop*. The potential for error was considerable.

The autograph manuscript of *The Old Curiosity Shop*, detached from the extraneous material of *Master Humphrey's Clock*, is the earliest complete manuscript of a Dickens novel to have survived. Bound by Forster in two thick volumes, it was bequeathed by him to the South Kensington Museum – later the Victoria and Albert Museum – where it is preserved in the National Art Library. Between 1965 and 1966 the manuscript was rebound, the two original volumes becoming four. Since the whole manuscript was present when I started work, the possibility of 'finding' a lost one did not exist, though the two notes from Alington had not been previously examined. Peering to read what lay beneath Dickens's deletions seemed to be as far as I could get to retrieve hitherto lost readings. But there was more work to do.

The four volumes of manuscript were bound too tightly in 1965–6, causing damage to the paper. Moreover, with a single exception, cancelled material on the versos of the folios was covered by the support sheets, and only passages on versos which Dickens had marked for inclusion in the text were left visible. As part of a conservation project to rebind all the Dickens manuscripts, that of *The Old Curiosity Shop* was disbound, the folios relaxed and – if necessary – repaired and rebound as eight volumes in 1994. This was done in a way that reveals the discarded material on a hundred versos. As it was Dickens's habit to number each slip before writing on it, one may see where discarded material originally fitted into the sequence.

Having been revealed to me when work on the Clarendon edition was almost completed, they were perforce examined as a group and proved particularly

interesting in shedding light on Dickens's writing habits. The widely-spaced wavy lines which he drew through these discarded versos left them much more legible than words and phrases deleted in the normal course of composition. In status, they are not necessarily more important than cancellations made with the running pen, though the discarded chapter openings tell us something about his difficulties in beginning new chapters and his preferred methods of doing so. Slips that were abandoned with only the title, chapter number and a few words upon them may point both to an interruption and to his need to commence each period of work with a blank slip in front of him. Two similar discards may be seen as drafts which are melded in the final version in the main text. When the revised version is virtually identical with that which has been set aside, the latter may signify Dickens's lack of inspiration. On the other hand, rejected text might be riddled with deletion and interlineation because his overflowing invention could not be accommodated on the slip, and he had to make a clean copy on a new one for the sake of the printers.

Bound up with the manuscript we have the letter Dickens wrote to Forster in the early hours of 17 January 1841, thanking him for his 'valued suggestion' of the tale ending with Nell's death: a suggestion probably made in July 1840. Dickens's letters bear ample witness to his wretchedness when writing the conclusion. What I found most exciting was evidence of his having deliberately suppressed the possibility of Nell's survival.

The channel of hope is the schoolmaster, whose meditations after Nell has been brought exhausted to the inn, in Chapter 46 (written in October 1840) run happily on the 'fortunate chance which had brought him so opportunely to the child's assistance'. Dickens continued 'and revolving in his mind a great many meditations whose purport, best known to hims' before discarding the slip. Later in the same chapter, when they have reached the village in whose school he is to be employed, a discarded passage reads:

"This is quiet enough" <said> thought the delighted schoolmaster when they had looked <abo> around them for some time in silence. "She will lead a peaceful life here

When the folios were disbound in 1994, three of five passages under strips of paper carrying revisions that Dickens wafered into position were photographed from the back on a light table – making the cancelled text visible as a mirror image – and the negatives thus obtained were printed in reverse. Sadly, both the wafers and their adhesive have affected the writing beneath them, making what is concealed by the two smallest strips almost impossible to decipher. However, this modern technology enabled me to examine a

passage which Dickens had himself obscured. Added to the suppression of the schoolmaster's hope for Nell's recovery, it forcefully suggests the strength of Dickens's emotional involvement with his heroine. The passage which occurs in Chapter 54, also written in October 1840, reads as follows:

Full of grateful tenderness, she crept closer to him <...? she
> and putting
her arms about him, laid her head upon his breast.
The schoolmaster <pressed her closer to him> <kissed
her fondly> took her thin <....> hand, <.....> and drew her
nearer to him still.
"It's God's will!" said the child.
"What?"
<"You think ? me changing? Oh yes I know you do. It's
God's>
<"No matter" replied the child> "If we draw nearer to
the angels, and think more of them and Heaven. <4/5
words illegible> Which of us is sad now? You see that I am
smiling."
"And so am I" said the schoolmaster after a pause; "smiling
to think how often we shall laugh in this same place. Were
you not talking yonder?"
"Yes" the child rejoined
"Of something that has made you sorrowful?"

My life as an editor has been far from dull. Even Pope found a way of easing the tedium of collation. In the evenings, paid assistants – or friends like Gay and Fenton – would look with him at five different editions of a single play, one of them reading while the others noted differences. As John Butt recorded in his paper on *Pope's Taste in Shakespeare*, delivered to the Shakespeare Association in 1935, 'Malone was of the opinion that it was the only sure method of comparing texts'. A twentieth-century endorsement came from one of Butt's own friends who had also tried it 'and thereby corrected what he had fondly supposed was an accurate collation'.³⁹ It is a practice which requires co-operation among scholars, not rivalry. (How about a collating room in St. Pancras, or evenings in Dickens House?)

Peter Seary, concurring with John Butt's view of Pope's lack of sympathy with Shakespeare's style, comments:

³⁹ John Butt, *Pope's Taste in Shakespeare* (London: Shakespeare Association, 1936), pp. 3–4.

Contempt for the artistry of an artist is likely to produce in the editor a profound sense of the dullness of his duties. On the other hand, admiration for the achievements of the author tends to produce in the editor a delighted excitement as he frees the text from corruption or obscurity.⁴⁰

My final quotation, from Chapter 7 of Barry Unsworth’s novel, *Morality Play* (1995), puts the student in the same position:

I stood for some moments gazing while the snow darkened the earth of the grave, and as I did so I fell into a state of mind familiar to students, at once attentive and vague, as when faced with some faulty or imperfect text. Often it is when one waits without question that the truth of the author’s intention comes drifting into the mind. Hesitant, circumspect, like the first snow.

Waiting takes time. The deficiencies of many editions are attributable to the pressure of other duties: a pressure that does not allow one to pause and consider, not only what one’s author read or wrote to his friends about, but what he saw on stage, in art galleries and in the world around him. Nevertheless, today’s proliferation of edited texts should ensure that our students, no less than the fictional ones of the late Middle Ages, are alive both to a text’s importance and to the pleasures we can derive together from its close scrutiny.

⁴⁰ Peter Seary, *Lewis Theobald and the Editing of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990) p. 47.