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## BIBLIOGRAPHY—AN APOLOGIA

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HOWEVER first called bibliography 'the grammar of literary investigation'<sup>2</sup> may have been taking a very narrow view of the study of literature or may even have had a mistaken conception of bibliography, or both, but at least he invented a phrase so apt and pregnant that I prefer to think that he knew what he was talking about, and that he foresaw the position that bibliography would one day come to hold in historical science. The phrase will stand and repay carefully weighing. To confine the investigation of literature to what can be achieved by bibliographical means would be fantastic: therefore to say that bibliography was, or was the instrument of, literary investigation, would be to give the former so wide an extension as to make it meaningless, or the latter so narrow a one as to render it nugatory. To bring the two into fruitful relation we must confine literary investigation to its most fundamental aspect, the establishment and history of the text. At the root of all literary criticism lies the question of transmission, and it is bibliography that enables us to deal with the problem. This, I take it, is just what is meant

<sup>1</sup> The substance of this paper was read as a presidential address before the Bibliographical Society on 21 March 1932.

<sup>2</sup> On a previous occasion I inadvertently quoted the phrase as 'Bibliography is the Grammar of Literature'. I assumed and intended the meaning to be the same, but it was not an accurate rendering of the words cited by Dr. Copinger in 1892 (*Transactions*, i. 34).

by calling bibliography the *grammar* of literary investigation : it is the fundamental instrument of research, or, if you will, the key to the fundamental problem. Thus you will see that to say that bibliography is the grammar of literary investigation may be taken as equivalent to calling bibliography the science of the transmission of literary documents.

I shall need, in a moment, to put before you the arguments in favour of this view. But by way of preface let me remark that, while I accept and even cling to the term Bibliography, I am not altogether happy about it. Form and analogy suggest a descriptive science, which this, in my view, is not. The old term Bibliology had the advantage of being non-committal, but it is not in itself attractive, and is hardly worth reviving. Book-lore has virtue, but being of an antiquarian flavour, retains some suggestion of 'bôklâr', book-learning, and is thus less satisfactory than the admirable German equivalent *Bücherkunde*, after which I confess to hanker. 'Bibliography' be it, but let it be understood that it is in no way particularly or primarily concerned with the enumeration or description of books<sup>1</sup>—a belief which has done much in the past to reduce it to futility and retard the recognition of its real nature and importance. It ought not to be necessary further to argue, though it may be well to put on record, that bibliography has nothing to do with the subject-matter of books, but only with their formal aspect.

Let it then be granted that bibliography is the study of books as material objects. For bibliography to be a serious study it is necessary that books should be objects of importance. What then is the value of books? Books, said Milton, 'preserve as in a violl the purest efficacie and extraction of that living intellect that bred them.'<sup>2</sup> They are our main link

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that enumeration is a necessary preliminary to study. This is in fact not true : were it so, every natural science would be primarily enumerative.

<sup>2</sup> *Areopagitica*, 1644, p. 4.

with the past, the repository of the thought and the aspiration, no less than the record of the deeds and the desires, of those who came before us in the making of the world. If the study of history and the enjoyment of literature are of any value to mankind, then books are indeed a precious inheritance. Books are of value in proportion as they preserve the past. But there seems implicit in Milton's words a belief that a book is a more faithful repository than experience warrants. The record is defaced in a hundred ways which it is the patient task of criticism to detect and to correct. Thus the material study of books is of importance just in so far as it helps us to read their record, and so enables them to fulfil their function. The essence of bibliography is therefore the science of the transmission of literary documents: it is this, and this alone, that gives it a claim upon the attention of serious students.

My quarrel, such as it is, with the traditional school of bibliography is that it has tended to overlook this essential function of books, and has concentrated on one or another accidental character. I have thus been led to formulate a thesis that is the foundation of my bibliographical creed. It is intended less as a formal definition of bibliography than as a description of its function in criticism; and I insist upon it, not in any exclusive sense, but as embodying the claim of bibliography to recognition among critical sciences. Once more, and in the fewest possible words, my argument is this: Books are the material means by which literature is transmitted; therefore bibliography, the study of books, is essentially the science of the transmission of literary documents.

In putting my position thus I may seem to exclude, or at any rate to depreciate, many subjects that are by common consent held to fall within the purview of bibliography. There is no department in which greater labour has been expended, or more brilliant results achieved, than the study of typography: the historical investigation of the face-forms of

printing types, their assignment to different countries, towns, and presses. This investigation undoubtedly has an historical interest of its own as regards the invention, development, and distribution of one of the greatest crafts that the genius of man has evolved. But when we ask what is its real aim and value in relation to book-production, the answer must be that it enables us to assign an undated and unlocated book to a particular place and date. And the date and the place, even the particular printing house, at which a book was produced, is always a relevant, and may be a crucial fact, in its transmission. It is this that justifies, and indeed forces, us to regard the study of types as an important branch of bibliography, and gives to the investigation its bibliographical significance. And so it is with many other branches. On the one hand we must treat the study of text-transmission in a broad and liberal spirit, not confining it to the mere editorial reconstruction of the text, but letting it embrace the whole history of the chances that have befallen it in the course of its precarious survival. On the other hand, since bibliography is the study of books as material objects, it is bound to take cognizance of everything appertaining to them, and we must expect it to include branches that draw much of their interest from extraneous considerations, of art, craft, or biography, only content to lay down the principle that these branches, whatever their own interest may be, are of bibliographical importance just in so far as they relate to the function of books as the preservers and transmitters of literary documents, giving of course to that term its widest possible extension.

It may help to make the matter clearer, and to show that I am not seeking to exclude from bibliography any legitimate branch of study, if we glance for a moment at various subjects that generally come within the purview of the student, and ask whether and how they are related to the essential function of books, and what therefore is their strictly biblio-

graphical significance. Palaeography, it may be said in passing, is essentially in the same position as the study of types, but its relevance to text-transmission is even more obvious. There are however other branches whose claims are less immediately apparent.

I think the first place should be assigned to book illustration. Undoubtedly this is a subject whose appeal or relevance lies primarily in the realm of graphic art and not of bibliography. It claims the attention of bibliographers merely on the ground that these products of art are found in books. Their connexion with the books in which they occur may be of the most superficial and fortuitous character, though it sometimes goes deeper. There are of course books, particularly books of a technical character, in which the illustrations may be said to form an integral part of the text : but these are comparatively rare and may be disregarded. The question, I think, is this. Occurring as they do in books, and forming a more or less integral part of them, as the case may be, illustrations are bound to receive notice from bibliographers ; but, admitting that their main importance lies in the sphere of art, must we admit that it lies wholly there, and therefore outside bibliography, or can we claim that it possesses a strictly bibliographical importance as well ? I think there is no doubt that we can. It is true that different classes of illustration possess very different degrees of bibliographical relevance : their importance is generally greater in manuscripts than in printed books, and in earlier than in later examples of the latter. Engravings, separately printed and stuck into otherwise already complete books, show the minimum of relevance to their surroundings. But with woodcuts, which are printed with the text, and have thus at least a material relevance, and with the work of the illuminator and miniaturist, the case is somewhat different. Even when, as generally happens, the illustrations have been designed apart from and later than the text, they may never-

theless serve as a commentary thereon, which is sometimes illuminating as well as illuminated. And even apart from this, text and illustration are often so intimately associated in the chain of transmission that it would be inconvenient to treat the one without the other. Furthermore, illustrations may throw valuable light upon the locality in which a manuscript, or even a printed book, was produced, the circumstances of its production, and the public to which it appealed: and these are important points in the history of the transmission of the text. Thus bibliography could not afford, without serious loss, to hand over the study of book illustration exclusively to the department of graphic arts; and when the bibliographer devotes himself to the investigation of illumination, wood-cutting, and even engraving, in books, while he may be contributing mainly to the history of art, he is at the same time doing work essential to book-lore, work that can be justified on the most rigid bibliographical grounds.

Next I should place binding. Unlike illustration it is a purely bookish art; on the other hand its connexion with books is of a more external nature. There are two aspects of book-binding, the material and the ornamental. Of the former, dealing with the actual methods of the craft, the materials and their manner of use, practically nothing of a systematic nature is known. Yet its importance is obvious. A craft upon which the very preservation of books depends cannot but interest all students of books. At the same time it is rather as a postulate of transmission than as a factor in that problem that it arrests our attention, and I confess that I am rather at a loss to defend it from some suspicion at least of 'mere antiquarianism'. But there is one warning that I think I may justly interpose at this point. I would have our studies be catholic. For until all facts relating to every branch of book production have been collected and considered, it is impossible to say what bearing they may have upon the central problem of text-transmission. And while

I admit that the claim of material binding to great importance in bibliography does not look promising—apart from such lights as it may ultimately throw on locality—I would remind you of the possible relevance, as regards textual problems, of the habit of keeping manuscripts long unbound, and of stripping them of their bindings for travel.

Ornamental binding is certainly less important in the history of book production and preservation, and the fact that it has received a vastly greater amount of attention is a tribute rather to its artistic attraction than to its bibliographical importance. As illumination belongs to fine art, so decorated bookbinding belongs to fine craft; moreover it is impossible to consider tooled bindings apart from leatherwork in general, panel stamps apart from wood engraving, jewelled bindings apart from the goldsmith's craft, or those abominations, embroidered bindings, apart from more legitimate uses of needlework. All the same, the study may have a bibliographical bearing, even an important one, on occasion, for bindings can sometimes be localized with considerable precision, and may thus afford valuable evidence of provenance, upon the bibliographical importance of which I shall have something to say in a moment.

Ornamental bindings often have a personal association through being prepared for an individual collector and bearing his device. This brings us to the question of ownership. As a general rule this study is a collector's hobby, without bibliographical interest. But it is not always so by any means, especially where the early ownership of manuscripts is concerned. Much labour has been bestowed on the attempted reconstruction, from early catalogues and the examination of extant manuscripts, of the medieval libraries of some of the great monastic houses. For textual critics such reconstruction may at times possess great value. When a particular manuscript can be shown to have been in a particular library at a

particular date, the fact may give a valuable clue to its place and circumstances of origin. And even if we consider only later provenance, it may be of importance to know whether a manuscript can be shown to have been exposed to contamination by other known manuscripts, or have been capable of exercising an influence upon them in its turn. Less often, but still sometimes, it happens that the comparatively recent ownership of a printed book is of concern to the literary student. For instance, when an early editor makes some statement regarding the text, we sometimes need to know what copy he may have had access to, before we can determine whether he is merely misdescribing his original, or whether he had access to one now lost or unidentified. And if we extend the notion of transmission to include the history of the editing of a text, I think even so-called 'association copies' may occasionally be more than mere futility. The Anglo-Saxon *Orosius* was first edited by Daines Barrington in 1773, but in his preface he explains that he had inherited some of his material from Joseph Ames, who had once contemplated an edition, as appears from a letter which he quotes. In my copy Ames's original letter is inserted. It may be vanity on my part, but I incline to think that it gives the copy an additional interest that is truly bibliographical.

I suggested above that binding, however essential to the preservation of books, was rather a condition antecedent to transmission than governing it, and on that ground I hesitated to give it bibliographical status. I think we shall find it necessary to set a firm limit on these lines somewhere, lest we be tempted to indefinite excursions into the fields of entomology, chemistry, and the like. And so it is with the wide subject of librarianship, both practical and antiquarian. Its connexion with books is evident, but if we pursue even its second branch we soon find ourselves involved in the discussion not of bibliography but of architecture. Nevertheless, though I cannot at

the moment recall any instances linking library construction with problems of textual transmission, I am quite prepared to believe that they may exist, and in any case the connexion of the monastic library with the scriptorium was probably intimate.

I have allowed myself this lengthy digression in order to show that, while convinced that bibliography ranks as a serious study just in so far, and only in so far, as it relates to the essential function of books, namely the transmission of literary documents, I yet take a sufficiently catholic view of our pursuits, and welcome light and guiding from every branch of bookish lore, only premising that the strictly bibliographical importance of these branches is not always that which their devotees would claim for them. *A bibliotheca sum, nihil bibli-cum a me alienum puto.*

But though I have boldly described bibliography as the study of the transmission of literary documents, I have not yet sought to show that the question of textual transmission comes into it at all, and I think I may fairly be challenged to do so. If some one were to say to me: Your definition is mere bluff; you insist that books are material objects and that bibliography is concerned only with their formal aspect and has nothing to do with the subject-matter; how then can it touch the problem of transmission, by which you mean textual criticism, a study essentially concerned with the subject-matter and not with the external form of books?—if any one were to argue thus he would be raising no merely captious objection, but would be penetrating at once into the very heart of the matter. If we who hold this view can answer him and maintain our position, I believe we shall have established a principle which is fundamental in literary criticism, and the recognition of which is in fact at this moment having a marked effect on literary studies.

I start then with the postulate that what the bibliographer

is concerned with is pieces of paper or parchment covered with certain written or printed signs. With these signs he is concerned merely as arbitrary marks ; their meaning is no business of his. Now the reproduction of a text, either through transcription by a scribe or through composition and impression by a printer, is unquestionably a bibliographical fact, one of which the bibliographer is bound to take cognizance. Let us watch the scribe at work. The printer proceeds on essentially the same method, so for the sake of simplicity we may at present ignore him. The scribe, then, reproduces after a certain constant manner the signs that lie before him in his exemplar. He may not reproduce them exactly—for instance he may be transcribing an uncial original into minuscule script—but there will be a certain constant relation between the signs of the exemplar and those of the transcript. Now and again this relation will fail, and we then have what we call a variant in the copy. It may be due to inadvertence on the part of the scribe, or it may be intentional, but in either case what survives, and all that survives as evidence for the critic, is just this bibliographical fact of a failure in the relation. And textual criticism is the study of these failures, which can thus be defined in bibliographical terms, without any reference to the meaning of the signs or the subject-matter of the text.

Theoretically, therefore, the study of textual transmission involves no knowledge of the sense of a document but only of its form : the document may theoretically be devoid of meaning or the critic ignorant of its language. There exist certain medieval manuscripts written in sham Arabic : the signs are imitated more or less closely from Arabic letters, but they are used arbitrarily and do not even form words. Again, unless I am mistaken, the famous Voynich manuscript, which has been supposed to contain secret records by Roger Bacon, is not a cipher at all, but just such a palaeographical hoax—*une diablerie*, as a French critic has called it. Now if such manuscripts were

transcribed, it should theoretically be possible to apply to the copies the principles of textual criticism no less than to the most serious author. Or take a modern instance, Russell and Whitehead's *Principia Mathematica*, a work written mainly in symbols, which, though they represent perfectly definite ideas, are not meant to be translatable into speech, but form a silent language of their own. Between the first and second editions (of the first volume) there are certain differences. I know just enough of the subject to have anticipated a few of these, but others are entirely beyond the scope of my intelligence. But that does not prevent my observing the variations and even criticizing them: for supposing that a third edition were to be published, then, if a variant of the second persisted, I should assume that it was a correction, whereas, if the reading of the first were restored, I should assume that that of the second was a mistake. Of course these inferences might not be correct, but they would be legitimate deductions from the bibliographical evidence and my knowledge of the circumstances of production, and their probability would be of just the same order as any other inferences of textual criticism. Thus I think I am justified in maintaining that text-transmission is a bibliographical fact, and that the study of textual variation is a strictly bibliographical study, quite independent, theoretically, of the meaning of the text.

Of course, in practice, we should hardly follow this severely ideal method of textual research. Nobody would think of editing a text that had no meaning, and nobody would choose to edit a text in a language he did not understand—though it might be a very interesting exercise. We all involuntarily pay attention to the sense of the texts we are studying; and the sense often enables us to arrive by a short cut at results that could only be laboriously achieved by strictly bibliographical methods, and may lead us to results that could not be reached by those methods at all. But we ought always to have in our

minds a clear distinction between what is achieved by the one method, and what by the other ; and if we wish to arrive at really reliable results we ought always to be sure that our textual conclusions, by whatever road we have reached them, are capable of proof on rigidly bibliographical lines. I am much mistaken if more and greater critical mistakes have not arisen from reliance on the supposed meaning of the text than from all other sources of error put together.

Bibliography then will carry the textual critic some way towards his goal. It would be extravagant to pretend that it comprises the whole equipment of an editor. Even if he seeks to limit his task to the application of textual criticism to a particular work, the editor requires at least a knowledge of the author's language, probably also of his period and circumstances, and the subject-matter of his work. This means a whole mass of linguistic, historical, and antiquarian or technical equipment that has nothing whatever to do with bibliography. But all these are variables, differing as we pass from work to work and from author to author. What does not differ, what may be called the editorial constant, is just those principles of textual transmission which we have found to be essentially bibliographical. The limit to which bibliography will reach is pretty evident : it would be premature to regard it as co-extensive with textual criticism, but the intimate relation of the two should by now be apparent, and when we come to consider textual criticism more closely, as I propose to do in a moment, I think we shall find a marked cleavage in its methods corresponding closely at any rate to the limits of bibliographical evidence.

Let us, however, first review textual transmission as it appears from the standpoint of bibliography. A scribe takes a sheet of writing material, and pen and ink. He has an exemplar of the work he proposes to transcribe, and from this he proceeds to make his transcript, copying down onto his sheet what

he sees, or thinks he sees, before him. For a while all goes well, and he reproduces accurately what is in his exemplar. But sooner or later he makes a slip of eye or hand, and his writing ceases to preserve the correct relation to the original. At another point he thinks he sees an error in that original. If he is a very mechanical or a very conscientious scribe he may be content to reproduce exactly what is before him ; but more likely he will succumb to editorial vanity and write what he thinks ought to be there, thus sowing the seeds of trouble for students in the future. Textual critics should praise God for the simple fool. Thus the bibliographical operation of transcription inevitably introduces variations into the text, while each subsequent transcription will introduce further variants. Later copies may be made directly or indirectly from the first, or they may be made independently from the original or some other transcript of the original. Thus, as the lines of descent spread out, so the variants multiply in number and complexity, and the text of each derivative manuscript varies more and more alike from the original and from that of manuscripts of different descent. But however many copies of a work there may be, and however diverse the lines by which they are descended, they are all (provided we exclude oral transmission) necessarily derived from a single original by a definite number of transcriptional steps. Furthermore, every variant arises in one definite act of transcription, and is a relation between two terms, the reading of the transcript and that of the exemplar. Where a number of manuscripts are extant there may be three or four or more variants of a single reading, and the critic may be tempted to assume a fundamental relation of three or four or more terms. In fact, however, every textual variant, however complex, is the product of a number of relations of two terms each, and textual criticism partly consists in analysing manifold variants into their simple components. Descent by the repetition of single transcriptional steps from one original,

and divergence through the multiplication of simple variants—these are the two fundamental principles of transmission ; and though when they are thus stated in bibliographical terms they may appear mere truisms, experience shows that their implications are not always recognized.

Next let us look at the problem of text-transmission from the point of view of the textual critic. He starts with the examination of a number of manuscripts, collating their texts and collecting their differences of reading, and his object is the reconstruction of the work as the author wrote it. This means, as is now generally recognized, the reconstruction of the steps or stages by which his text has come down to us. The evidence for this reconstruction is, in the main, the textual variants in the manuscripts. By a comparison and analysis of these the critic seeks to arrange the manuscripts in groups, which is equivalent to tracing back the steps by which they have originated. His object is to arrive unambiguously at the very autograph of the author. In the most favourable case he may achieve this object, at least to his own satisfaction. In general he is more likely to arrive, with more or less ambiguity, at an archetype which may be several steps, and perhaps many centuries, removed from the autograph, if this ever existed. It is true that given only a single manuscript or a late archetype, the critic is not quite at the end of his resources : he may yet be able to trace transpositions and errors of foliation and alinement that may help towards the restoration of the original text : but generally speaking it is upon multiplicity of tradition that criticism relies.

When, therefore, the critic has reached this point in his investigation, his work usually remains imperfect in two respects. In the first place, the tradition is seldom if ever unambiguous : in seeking to reconstruct the text of the archetype the critic will generally find a number of passages in which different readings claim equal authority or among which there is only a

balance of probability in favour of one or another. He is faced with the problem of selection. In the second place, the tradition seldom leads back beyond an archetype at several removes from the original, containing at least some readings repugnant to sense and which one hesitates to ascribe to the author. The critic is faced with the problem of emendation. In either case there is nothing for it but to fall back on personal judgement—guided, let us hope, by the ripest experience and the maturest consideration—of what the author is likely to have written, or, to put it rather differently, what we think he ought to have written—for what our judgement really implies is the rather conceited belief that the author did in fact write what we should like to think he had written.

This is, no doubt, a shocking thing to say, but an extreme example will make my meaning clear. Suppose that we possess, or can arrive at, the author's own original: how far is an editor bound by its readings? I am told that, if we may trust the tradition, Saint Jerome in his translation of the Bible was once at least guilty of a false concord, that this actually stood in his autograph. Now if we accept the Catholic belief in the inspiration of his work, I think we shall yet hesitate to ascribe such a grammatical lapse to the divine spirit; we shall tactfully set it down to a failure of inspiration, an imperfection of the human instrument. But this is merely an irreverent instance of the problem that confronts us whenever an author has written what in our opinion he ought not to have written. Should an editor leave him to the censure of posterity with all his blushing sins upon him, or should he correct the text? If he chooses the former alternative he will probably be accused of neglecting his editorial duty and of insulting his author and his readers alike. But if, on the other hand, he chooses the latter he is shouldering a dangerous responsibility; for who is the critic that he should claim censorship over the inspiration of literature, and if he begins by correcting Saint Jerome's false

concords, will he not end by re-writing his author, as Pope re-wrote Shakespeare, as Bentley re-wrote Milton, and as Faustus, in Goethe's play, re-wrote Saint John ?<sup>1</sup> From such extravagances most critics are mercifully preserved by a proper distrust of their own judgement, yet the judgements that lead to them are identical in kind with those that every critic of necessity makes in textual selection and emendation.

The point I am aiming at is, of course, that textual criticism involves two utterly different stages, phases, or processes : so different indeed that it is misleading to include them under a common name. These judgements of what an author must or should have written are quite other in kind from the humble collation of textual variations and reconstruction of scribal steps. The one is almost mechanical, the other intuitional. The evidence that leads us patiently from transcript to transcript is material : the evidence that leads to the preference of one co-equal tradition to another, or to the rejection of tradition in favour of emendation, is psychological. Is it unreasonable to suggest that one should be described as critical, and the other distinguished as metacritical ?

The distinction has, of course, been commonly recognized, and critics have laid stress upon, and extolled the virtues of, one branch or the other according to their personal predilections. The more humdrum, pedantic, and unimaginative have fancied that by patient mechanical methods they could reach all that was required of editorial science, and reach it with a certainty denied to what they were inclined to regard as the unscientific vapourings of irresponsible amateurs. Contrariwise, the more imaginative, intuitional, and creative are naturally inclined to magnify their own particular province and to look down on the humbler function that concerns itself with the

<sup>1</sup> Geschrieben steht : ' Im Anfang war das Wort ! ' . . .  
 Ich kann das Wort so hoch unmöglich schätzen . . .  
 Und schreibe getrost : Im Anfang war die That

details of variation and transmission. Thus, when Professor Housman speaks of textual criticism he is apparently thinking almost exclusively of emendation. What he would call the study of transmission I do not know, but it is clear that he would relegate it to a lower sphere. I think that he and I would agree pretty well in our analysis of the situation: his textual criticism corresponds with what I have called metacritical, while he would perhaps leave me free to call my critical division by any name I pleased. Where we might differ would be in regard to the relative values of the two divisions. To Professor Housman it is the metacritical that is alone worthy of a gentleman and a scholar. For my own part, however fascinating a pursuit this may be, I incline to emphasize rather the humbler function of the critic, in the belief that it is here that the more certain results may be attained, and that until a firm foundation has been laid by these methods, any metacritical superstructure is so much building in the air.

It will be obvious whereto this argument is tending. We have examined the problem of transmission first from the bibliographical point of view and then from that of textual criticism, and we have found that in the latter case the problem falls into two parts which are by nature entirely distinct. Moreover, the first, or logically prior, of these parts is so closely related to the bibliographical aspect of the problem as to be almost identical. You will now understand why I hold that bibliography—or, if you will, critical bibliography, that essence of the subject that alone justifies its claim to rank as a serious science—is in fact the same as textual criticism.

Now, textual criticism is no new study—far from it—and it may be asked what is gained by seeking to give it a new name. If the whole question is a verbal one, or one concerned merely with the formal classification of knowledge, then it is sheer foolishness to make a pother about it. I feel that I am on my defence, and unless I can make it good, my whole position

as a bibliographer and a literary critic needs reconsidering. Naturally I believe that I have a sound case to put before you.

I would begin by remarking that there may be a good deal in a name if it implies an attitude. And I think that results of considerable importance to the study of literature are likely to result from the change of attitude implied by recognizing that Textual Criticism and Critical Bibliography are synonymous. Of course, I do not pretend that in the past textual critics have been blind to the importance of bibliographical evidence, or that they have not frequently used it with masterly insight and telling effect. Some of the most profound investigations of the bibliographical characteristics of lost archetypes—palaeography, foliation, stychometry—have been due to textual critics; and though, naturally, the arguments have varied much in cogency, they amply prove that critics have been alive to the importance of bibliographical data. What, so far as my limited knowledge goes, they have never fully realized is that the whole of their textual apparatus needs to be approached from the bibliographical point of view. In my humble opinion—and I am sensible of my temerity in criticizing the work of famous scholars—two fundamental errors have been made, which are really distinct, though their results are not always easy to separate. The first has been the failure to distinguish between critical and metacritical problems, and the second to realize that the former are essentially bibliographical.

The result of the first of these errors has been the persistent application of metacritical or intuitional methods to the solution of what are purely critical or bibliographical questions. Nothing is more usual than for the bibliographical critic to be able to say with confidence that, whatever reading in a given passage may be correct, certain readings are necessarily unoriginal. Yet it sometimes happens that the intuitional critic will assert that one of these condemned readings is just what the author must have written. To which the proper answer is

that what must be must be, but that the occurrence of the reading in question in some manuscripts, is no better (probably worse) evidence in its favour than would be its appearance as the emendation of a modern editor. If results of any value are to be achieved in textual criticism, then strictly critical methods must be allowed to do their work unhindered before metacritical methods come into play, and the latter must on no account butt in where they have no concern.<sup>1</sup>

The second error, the failure to recognize that in the textual sphere critical problems are essentially bibliographical, has led to their being approached from a wrong angle. Readings have been treated as literary counters, by juggling with which in a certain fashion, it was thought that a correct text could be constructed. At first readings were selected merely as they pleased the taste of the editor, and we got what is called an eclectic text. If the taste of the editor was good the text was at least readable, though it might sometimes have surprised the author had he seen it. Then some one—perhaps an editor who distrusted his own taste—lit on the idea of accepting the reading supported by the greatest number of manuscripts. The result was far worse: the text produced was less readable without necessarily being nearer to what the author would have recognized as his. But it was the first step in the bibliographical direction, for it recognized that the readings could not be treated as unrelated entities, but that the manuscripts in which they occurred were somehow relevant. The mistake lay in counting the manuscripts instead of examining their history. The next stage was to study the relation of the manuscripts and to ascertain the steps by which they came into being.

<sup>1</sup> This is, of course, an illustration of a far wider principle. Even so it is legitimate enough for metaphysical or theological arguments to be applied to the conclusions of science, but we have learned by long and sad experience that to allow these arguments an entry into purely scientific problems is to court disaster.

It is now recognized that all turns upon the question of transmission, and that it is only when the purely bibliographical problem of the descent of the manuscripts through a series of transcriptional steps has been solved, that we can ascertain the relative authority of different readings. So long as readings were treated exclusively from the literary standpoint, the so-called genealogical method was undreamed of, and even when this became possible and its importance was recognized, its laws and nature long remained imperfectly understood. One of the earliest and one of the ablest expositions of it in English is Dr. Hort's *Introduction to the Greek New Testament*, first published just fifty years ago: and yet in this, the section on the 'Manner of discovering genealogy' (§§ 58–9) is vitiated by a perfectly definite and perfectly elementary fallacy, into which it is inconceivable that so acute a critic could have fallen had he not been thinking literarily, in terms of groups of readings, instead of bibliographically, in terms of transcriptional steps.<sup>1</sup> It may be said with confidence that no sound basis of textual criticism will be established until critics give up looking on variant readings as literary counters, and treat them primarily as evidence for the reconstruction of the steps in the transmission of the text, reducing the whole process to a question of pieces of writing material covered with certain conventional signs.

<sup>1</sup> 'The process depends on the principle that identity of reading implies identity of origin. . . . Wherever we find a considerable number of variations, in which the two or more arrays of documents attesting the two or more variants are identical, we know that at least a considerable amount of the texts of the documents constituting each array must be descended from a common ancestor subsequent to the single universal original, the limitation of ancestry being fixed by the dissent of the other array or arrays.' But, unless by 'reading' and 'variation' we are to understand *error*, this is false; for it is obvious that agreement in original readings does not imply common origin 'subsequent to the single universal original'. Thus the 'principle' to be valid demands an intuitive knowledge of what readings are original and what not—the very object of the inquiry!

At the centre of the critical problem, conditioning the whole, is the bibliographical operation of the scribe copying the text. It is he that is responsible for the variations which at once create the critical problem and afford material for its solution. But he is responsible for more than that, for he leaves many traces of his operation beyond the actual differences of reading, traces which having no literary bearing or value are commonly unnoticed or ignored by the old-fashioned textual critic, but which may be of crucial value as evidence of manuscript descent. Deletions, erasures, insertions, transpositions, mis-lining, irregularities in the number of lines to a page or of leaves to a quire—these and many other details may supply needful evidence, and will reveal themselves at once to the eye of the bibliographer. It is true that now and again an editor has made excellent use of evidence of this sort, and thereby shown a true bibliographical instinct, but it is safe to say that the great majority of textual critics have been more or less wilfully blind to everything beyond the text itself.

In considering the relation between bibliography on the one hand, and textual criticism as usually practised on the other, there is one further point to which I should like to direct attention. I think it is a rather important one, although it is by no means fundamental, but may be regarded, if we please, as merely incidental to the angle of approach. As a general rule what the textual critic is concerned with, and all that he is concerned with, is the editorial problem, the reconstruction of the author's original text. There is, of course, no reason why his outlook should be thus limited: criticism may just as rightly be applied to any other point in the transmission of the text. But the fact remains that in at least ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he is dominated by the editor's demands, and his interest concentrated upon one particular point in the field. Now the bibliographer approaches the problem with no such prepossession: his concern is with the history of the text as a

If, then, I have made good my contention, it follows that bibliography necessarily includes, as its most distinctive branch, the study of textual transmission, and that textual criticism, up to the point where it changes its nature and becomes meta-critical, is essentially nothing but the application of bibliographical analysis. Moreover, I contend that textual criticism has in the past suffered much from the failure to recognize this fact: on the one hand it has often relied on illegitimate meta-critical methods, on the other hand it has excluded a quantity of relevant and at times crucial evidence. None but the bibliographer, trained in the material analysis of books and the signs that fill them, can be trusted to extract from their silent record the full testimony for the determination of the text. There can surely no longer be any doubt that the fields of the bibliographer and the textual critic are, if not identical, at least intimately related. I do not suggest, and I would not for a moment desire, that all bibliographers should apply themselves to textual criticism. Rather each individual should till his chosen field and garner ever more and more material for the common stock. Nor would I argue that an editor need of necessity be an expert bibliographer. It would be unreasonable in every case to expect that one man should possess all the detailed literary, linguistic, and archaeological training required of an editor, and all the technical equipment of the bibliographer as well. Of course, to say this is to say that an editor need not necessarily be an expert textual critic, for the latter, I hold, does need a thorough bibliographical training. However, there may be room for a new class of scholars cultivating an intermediate field. In these days of specialization I think we might recognize a faculty of textual criticism, of what might be called bibliographical critics, whose business it would be, not to produce critical editions themselves, but to investigate the facts of textual transmission, and prepare the material which the literary editor would be bound to use, and

give a verdict which he should be bound to accept. In publishing their work they might or might not find it convenient to print a text of the work in question, but they would make no pretence of producing a literary edition of it. Such a textual bibliographer would not of course be required to be an expert on illumination, or bookbinding, or typography, perhaps not even on palaeography—it would depend upon his particular textual field—but he would be required to possess such a general knowledge of these subjects as to know just how and where they might become relevant to textual issues, and how and where to get further information should he require it. In other words he would need a thorough general knowledge of bibliography, and especially of all the material conditions, processes, and accidents that may affect the transmission of the text. It is, I am convinced, in the hands of such scholars that the future of textual criticism lies—and the text is the central problem of all literary study.

And now, because a little concrete experience is sometimes more illuminating than much abstract argument, I will conclude with a series of examples of the application of bibliographical methods to literary problems of a more or less strictly textual kind.

First I will take, as an instance from early times, an investigation by the late Henry Bradley into ‘The Numbered Sections in Old English Poetical MSS.’ It has always appealed to me as a brilliant piece of bibliographical argument, but I must warn you that his conclusions are not altogether accepted by experts, and that it will be safer to treat the matter rather as an illustration of method than as embodying ascertained facts.<sup>1</sup> An almost

<sup>1</sup> The basis of the whole argument is the alleged arbitrary nature of the divisions, which are said to occur even in the middle of a sentence. It has been pointed out to me that this is itself a literary and not a bibliographical datum, and it is, moreover, denied by some competent scholars. Others regard as over-ingenious the arguments by which Bradley sought to establish the equality of

constant feature of the extant manuscripts of Old English poetry is the numbered sections into which the longer works are divided. These sections are often of an apparently arbitrary nature and editors have had some trouble to relate them to the logical structure of the poems. Bradley argued with immense ingenuity that they are the relics of archetypal foliation, corresponding as a rule to four-page sheets of parchment on which the works were originally written. This is an interesting bibliographical fact or theory, but without any necessary literary bearing. In one case, however, that of *Elene*, these hypothetical sheets corresponded with the structural divisions of the work. This at once raises a literary problem. Why should Cynewulf have thought it necessary to make each canto of his poem on the Invention of the Cross fill exactly four pages? Was it mere perversity on his part, as Bradley supposed? Or should we see in this curious correspondence evidence of some lectionary system on which Anglo-Saxon poetry was composed? The answer to the riddle is not in our hands, but it is evident that such a compulsion must have put a marked curb on what Bradley described as the already not ungovernable Pegasus of Old English religious poets.

One example from Middle English may suffice. There is no more intriguing field of bibliographical exploration than the curious Cottonian manuscript, containing one of the four surviving cycles of English miracle plays, commonly but erroneously known as *Ludus Coventriae*. A careful examination of the manuscript, including watermarks, catchwords, deletions, and

length of the sections in certain poems. The approximate uniformity of those in *Elene* is admitted, but unless they can be connected with the sheets of an archetype, this too remains, of course, a literary rather than a bibliographical fact. I am incompetent to judge of the merits of the case: but there is no doubt that Bradley, brilliant critic though he was, occasionally fell victim to an over-subtle imagination.

all such technical trivialities, reveals the fact that considerable additions and rearrangements were made during the actual writing, and renders it highly probable that much of the work of combining into a single cycle the very diverse elements that can be traced in its composition was done in the course of compiling the actual copy extant. But it is also clear, from the elaborate notes with which the scribe has filled his margins—relating, for instance, to the genealogy of the Maries and the dimensions of Noah's Ark—that the extant copy was prepared for the use of readers and not for acting. It follows, therefore, that to inquire how or where the cycle, as we have it, was performed, is to ask a meaningless question ; and that all attempt to reconcile the various theatrical data that survive from the different sources is mere futility. Yet literary historians have not yet given up spinning critical cobwebs round it, arguing whether it 'belongs' to Coventry or Norwich, to Lincoln or Bury, or maintaining that it was performed by an itinerant company in two portions in successive years.

A couple of small examples from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may next claim our attention. The literary flyting that centres round the queer figure of Gabriel Harvey is familiar to students, but the details of the quarrel are obscure and long remained a puzzle to historians. We had, indeed, the word of Thomas Nashe, the protagonist in the affair, for the assertion that Greene incidentally attacked the Harvey brothers in his *Quip for an Upstart Courtier* : unfortunately nothing could be found in that pamphlet that at all explained Gabriel's venomous counterblast. Dr. McKerrow, however, when he came to edit Nashe, was able to show that a couple of original leaves in Greene's work had been replaced by cancels, and to point to the exact spot where the offending passage must have stood. Ten years later a copy of the *Quip* turned up in its original state, showing that Dr. McKerrow's inference was perfectly correct : he had only erred as to the

length of the suppressed passage, and that was because Nashe's original remarks were not quite accurate.

When the Cambridge University Press produced an edition of the plays of Beaumont and Fletcher some twenty years ago, the editor included a reprint of what he took to be the first edition of *The Elder Brother*, issued in 1637. Now, there are two editions bearing that date: they are textually very similar, and are most easily distinguished by the fact that in one the title is printed in capital (upper-case), and in the other in small (lower-case), letters. The Cambridge editor reprinted the lower-case edition. I do not know the grounds of his choice, but if he had been familiar with the typography of the seventeenth century, he could hardly have helped suspecting that this edition was a fraud and was really printed a score of years after the date that appeared on its title-page. This, however, is a difficult thing to prove. It happened that I was myself working on the play at the time, and it was necessary to produce unequivocal evidence of the order of the two editions. I collated the texts minutely, but it was not till near the end that I found what I was seeking. There was a passage (v. ii. 72) containing the word 'young', and in the upper-case edition a space had worked up before the 'y', making a mark above the line not unlike an apostrophe. In the lower-case edition a perfectly meaningless apostrophe had been inserted before the word: the compositor had been misled by the accidental mark in the upper-case edition, which was thus proved to be the original.

My last four instances shall be taken from Shakespeare, upon whose plays, as you know, much critical work of a bibliographical nature has been done of recent years. I will begin with a problem that long ago reached its solution, thus showing that bibliographical criticism is nothing new. There are two issues of the quarto of *Troilus and Cressida* (1609), one with a sober and apparently authoritative title-page, the other with a

catchpenny title and a flaunting preface. It was long supposed, by Malone, Collier, and others, that the preliminaries of the adventurous printer had been suppressed on the receipt of official information, because the preface apparently claimed that the play had never been acted, whereas the title-page of the other issue recorded its performance. However, this pretty literary reconstruction was entirely upset by the Cambridge editors, who pointed out that, whereas the sober title-page was printed on the first leaf of the first quire, the preface and its title formed a double-leaf which had been substituted for the same. It followed, of course, that the preface had not been suppressed, but was itself a later addition, and to this conclusion literary interpretation has had to accommodate itself.

Some years ago I lit on a rather nice example in *Titus Andronicus*. It has been a common opinion among critics, since the days of Ravenscroft, that this is an old play by one or more inferior writers, to which Shakespeare contributed in course of revision a few 'Master-touches', and various attempts have been made to identify these gems. I am, for my part, inclined to scepticism respecting such endeavours, since it sometimes happens that a passage selected as distinctively Shakespearian can be closely paralleled from Greene or some such inferior writer. However, a good shot was made by Professor Parrott (*M.L.R.*, 1919, xiv. 33) when he declared that none but Shakespeare could have put into the mouth of the Clown the words: 'God forbid I should bee so bolde, to presse to heauen in my young dayes' (iv. iii. 90). He was arguing on purely literary grounds, and in ignorance of the fact that, although the words occur as part of a prose speech, they are printed as a separate paragraph, a fact that almost certainly shows them to have been a marginal addition in the copy sent to the printer.<sup>1</sup> Whether the hand that

<sup>1</sup> I am, of course, relying on the quarto of 1600, but it is a fair inference that in this particular it reproduces exactly that of 1594.

made the addition was Shakespeare's, is, of course, another story.

The mention of marginal additions recalls one of the most convincing inferences made by that brilliant critic Professor Dover Wilson. It concerns the well-known description of the lunatic, the lover, and the poet in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* (v. i. 2–22). Part of this, as printed in the first edition, is perfectly straightforward, but there are two passages falsely divided, in which the lines of type bear no relation to those required by the verse. Moreover, if these false-lined passages are omitted, the remainder is found to run on consecutively and to make perfectly good sense. We can hardly resist the conclusion that in this remainder we have the speech as originally composed, and that the anomalous passages represent additions crowded into the margin of the manuscript without regard to metrical division. This is a bibliographical argument, and the conclusion may be accepted as tolerably certain. Professor Wilson further suggested, on grounds of style, that the additions are no mere afterthoughts following hot-foot upon the composition of the rest, but that they belong to a later period of the author's poetical development and imply a revision of the play several years after its original conception. This, however, is a matter upon which bibliography is silent.

In conclusion I may be allowed to mention a problem in the solution of which I have been personally concerned. There are two editions of *The Merchant of Venice* dated 1600, and editors of Shakespeare were long divided upon the question which was the earlier. Johnson and Capell placed the so-called 'Heyes' quarto first, the Cambridge editors and Furnivall voted for the so-called 'Roberts' quarto. The latter further argued that neither quarto was printed from the other, but that their divergences pointed to independent manuscript sources. And so the controversy might, and doubtless would, have continued upon traditional literary lines, and with wholly inconclusive

results, had not bibliography come to the rescue. For as soon as attention ceased to be concentrated upon variant readings and began to take account of print and paper as well, it became evident that, be the explanation of the divergences what it may, typographical arguments conclusively prove a relationship no further removed than the printing house—the ‘Roberts’ quarto must be a reprint of the ‘Heyes’. Moreover, further investigation revealed the surprising fact that the former was not printed in 1600 at all, but was one of a set of ten quartos printed, several of them with false dates, in 1619. This I may claim to have established in 1908, but the demonstration upon which I relied, based on the watermarks in the paper, was of an unfamiliar character, and many critics refused to be persuaded. After a couple of years, however, Mr. William J. Neidig of Madison, using elaborate laboratory methods of photography, put the matter beyond doubt and was able to convince the most sceptical. He succeeded, namely, in proving that the title-pages of the group were nearly all printed in part from the same setting of the type, and was further able to show approximately the order in which they had been produced, an order that did not agree with their ostensible dates. Bibliography had come into its own.

A similar dispute had arisen over the two quartos of *King Lear* dated 1608. In 1866 the Cambridge editors declared in favour of the priority of the so-called ‘Butter’ quarto, but before the revision of their work in 1892, Aldis Wright had convinced himself that the so-called ‘Pied Bull’ quarto was the earlier. He was unquestionably right, for the ‘Butter’ quarto is one of the 1619 collection.

I trust that by these illustrations I have succeeded in showing how practice supports theory, and demonstrated the impossibility, or at least the danger, of cutting textual criticism adrift from its bibliographical foundations.