
The Conservator's Gaze and the Nature of the Work

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ABSTRACT

Aesthetic philosophers, theorizing literary critics and editors, and reflective commentators on the restoration of paintings, buildings, and monuments have repeatedly shown that the concept of the work is anything but self-evident. The present essay examines major attempts to conceptualize this problematic area since the 1930s, before proposing a solution based on the semiotics of C. S. Peirce and Theodor Adorno's negative dialectics that will help clarify thinking when practices of preservation and conservation are being determined. The language and thinking come ultimately from scholarly editorial activity; the working assumption is that, with suitable adjustments for the medium, it will apply to other historically orientated forms of cultural conservation.

INTRODUCTION

I should choose my writing to be judged as a chiselled block, unconnected with my hand entirely. (Virginia Woolf, 1908/1975, p. 325)

A theory of the work does not exist, and the empirical task of those who naively undertake the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory. (Michel Foucault, 1969/1986, p. 104)

Work: only four letters, satisfyingly brief, apparently simple. In English the verb and the noun are the same, so that the concept of *the work* retains its direct connection to the hand of its maker. The concept loses it in most other European languages: so we have German *Werk* (as opposed to *Arbeit*), French *oeuvre* (vs *travail*), Italian *opera* (vs *lavoro*), Spanish *obra* (vs *trabajo*), Russian *proizvedenie* (vs *rabota*), and so on. Getting a grip on the

concept is notoriously difficult in whatever language; and, by and large, editors and conservators who want to get things done avoid taking the trouble. Yet, if the nature of the work undergoing expert treatment during cultural heritage conservation or scholarly editing is assumed to be self-evident, then the danger looms that practitioners will, despite the best of intentions, misrepresent works or just flounder about with self-contradicting solutions when faced with difficult cases.

Aesthetic philosophers, theorizing literary critics and editors, and reflective commentators on the restoration of paintings, buildings, and monuments have repeatedly shown that the concept is anything but self-evident. The present essay examines some attempts to conceptualize this problematic area since the 1930s, before proposing a solution that will, it is hoped, help clarify thinking when practices of preservation and conservation are being determined. The solution on offer is unavoidably provisional in that it reflects the background of the author. The language and thinking employed here come ultimately from scholarly editorial activity; the working assumption is that, with suitable adjustments for the medium, it will apply to other historically orientated forms of cultural conservation.¹

The first step is to characterize what can loosely be called the traditional understanding. Whether the work in question is *allographic* (as in the case of a literary work, where any copy is an instance of it) or *autographic* (as in the case of a painting, where the physical object is identical with it), we have traditionally come to the question of the work with a series of assumptions: that the work is in some sense objective, standing over and apart from its maker and its perceivers and that, conversely, its histories of making and reception stand over and apart from its essential nature as a work; that the work has the potential to persist over time; and that it has an identity that sustains true descriptions of it (for example, that the *Iliad* is in hexameter). Performance-works, it has long been recognized, raise their own problems of definition because of the gap between script and performance (for example, Is an unsung song that exists only in written form truly a song?). But other seeming paradoxes such as, If the *Mona Lisa* is in the Louvre, where is *Hamlet*?, are readily dealt with by the allographic/autographic distinction.² This was the general understanding into the late 1960s when some memorable accounts of the literary work were put forward.

The granting of objectivity to the work placed conservation, editing, and interpretation in a position essentially external to it. The argument of the present essay is that this 1960s position was and is basically wrong; that the post-structuralist strands of thought that succeeded this position got it wrong but in another way; and that, counter-intuitively, preservation, conservation, and interpretation are always and unavoidably intrinsic to the work. Fundamental philosophical positions undergird each of these arguments. They are examined here in turn. A solution is proposed and

then applied to the problematics of historic building conservation. But, first, some examples of art conservation that expose the inadequacy of the traditional understanding and that beg the questions that this essay seeks to answer will be briefly described.

WORKS IN DISTRESS

In 2005, with the publication of its fourth volume of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, the Rembrandt Research Project, which had commenced in 1968, was only one volume away from completing its verification of the authenticity of the many hundreds of paintings that have been claimed as authorial by successive catalogers since the late nineteenth century. Numbers have been radically trimmed from the most optimistic claims, some very significant de-attributions have been made, and other paintings queried. Historical information, extensive scientific testing, and connoisseurship have brought us as close as possible to knowing what exactly Rembrandt's oeuvre is made up of.

July 2006 was the cause for further celebration: the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Rembrandt. Numerous public events marked the occasion in Holland, including important exhibitions of his recently restored paintings. In the Mauritshuis art museum in The Hague, for instance, several thoroughly restored Rembrandts were proudly on show, together with reports on, and a video of, the cleaning processes that the paintings had undergone. This sort of exhibit makes for a different kind of response to the traditional one of simple admiration. We are learning to see paintings differently. This has been happening with Rembrandt in a concerted way since the late 1980s through a series of exhibitions around the world that have been curated with scholarly care and extensive research. We are regularly invited to absorb and thus to naturalize the conservatorial gaze.

This is apt to come at some cost to our preconceptions. X-radiographs on display at the Mauritshuis showed for instance that, in the famous *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632), the corpse being dissected (based on an executed criminal whose right hand had earlier been cut off for some other malfeasance) acquired a well-proportioned hand even though Rembrandt had originally painted him in his non-entire condition. It is not a botched job by some later perfecter. It is authorial.³

We are not used to thinking of paintings as having previous versions or of their colors as changing over the decades by different amounts; yet they do, and conservators find ways of rebalancing the paintings to approximate their (fancied) original state. This same painting had previously been restored in 1951 when an eighteenth-century addition was deliberately obscured. The addition was a numbered list of the names of the doctors watching the dissection; it was placed in a drawing held by one of

them, and corresponding numbers were added next to each portrait. The restoration of 1997–98 partially removed the obscuring medium so that now the information is just legible.

Sometimes restoration is justified by rhetorical appeal to the mastery of the artist (or alternatively to the aesthetic values of the painting as an object: the two are not the same thing but are often elided). Sometimes the ground of appeal is the painting's historical witness: here, the fact of the interpretation being felt desirable in the eighteenth century and its taking the form it did. This restoration wants to have it both ways: to be, now with a wonderful new clarity, *of* Rembrandt but also (with a little less clarity) *of* the eighteenth century. It appeals to two different standards of textual authority (as a scholarly editor would put it) simultaneously. What *is* it, then, that we are seeing? What effect does such intervention have upon our notion of the work? The following example of a very famous, recent restoration will help answer the question.

Pinin Brambilla Barcilon's restoration of *The Last Supper* of Leonardo da Vinci, completed in 1999, was based on an informed historical awareness of the earlier and botched attempts of her predecessors and on a comprehensive regime of photographic and scientific testing of the surface and subsurface, as well as upon access to Leonardo's own accounts of the painting. His use of a dry rather than fresco technique left the painting vulnerable to the absorption of water, and deterioration was noted as early as 1517. Since then, numerous restorations have been attempted. Barcilon's removing of the earlier overpaintings, her revealing of the remaining Leonardo fragments, and her undetailed and removable completion in watercolor of the painting around the fragments, was an immensely painstaking task of some twenty years. Its progress was regularly reported in newspaper stories often syndicated around the world, and usually celebrated as a heroic endeavor on behalf of Western cultural heritage. *The Last Supper* is an autographic work. It needed restoration and received it: so, apparently, no philosophical problem there.

Until, that is, Martin Kemp (1990) argued at a conference in 1990 that, far from being the natural and inevitable response, Barcilon's method of restoration, like all restorations, involved critical interpretation:

I am not someone who believes that the artist's intentions are either imponderable or irrelevant to the historian who wishes to understand the work and, by extension, to any spectator who wishes to enrich the potential of their viewing. In Leonardo's case we are fortunate in possessing a large body of notes to help us identify his "intentions"—in the most obvious sense of this term. . . . [But any] artist's intentions, and most especially during the deeply pondered and protracted execution of a work like the "Last Supper", will be a complex and shifting compound of conscious and unconscious aspirations, adjustments, re-definitions, acts of chance and evasions. It is unlikely that there was ever

a stable set of transparently accessible intentions. . . . Any programme of restoration of a badly damaged and extensively repaired artefact which aims to reinstate some measure of the original experience has to make an implicit choice as to which of the artist's intentions or groups of intentions and which of the various spectators' criteria are to be satisfied. (p. 18)

Our "conception of what is essential in a work of art," Kemp concludes, "determines what demands we make on visual images" (p. 20). In this case, earlier readings of *The Last Supper* as a history painting had determined efforts to restore it as such. Barcilon's scientific gaze, by contrast, privileged the authorial fragment.

Compare Kemp's conclusion to a startling reflection made in 1995 on another form of cultural preservation. Alois Pichler participated in the international text-encoding community's efforts during the 1990s to find satisfactory methods of transcribing manuscript and print documents and of marking them up for electronic storage. The change in medium means that mark-up is unavoidably interpretative. "Our aim in transcription," Pichler reasoned, "is not to represent as correctly as possible the originals, but rather to prepare from the original text another text so as to serve as accurately as possible certain interests in the text." And he added: "what we are going to represent, and how, is determined by our research interests . . . and not by a text which exists independently and which we are going to depict" (1995, p. 690). In 1997 Allen Renear, a prominent member of the same community, objected to what he called this antirealist view of text, but his arguments seem finally to rest on the unproblematized notion that texts are or must be objective realities that encoders would do well to represent truthfully (Renear, 1997, pp. 117–124).⁴

Here is another case, a personal one. I began editing the Lawrence and Mollie Skinner novel set in Australia *The Boy in the Bush* for the Cambridge Works of D. H. Lawrence series in 1983. By 1988 it had become clear to me that my experience of this work, now that I had nearly finished editing it, was highly unusual. Radical immersion in the waters of authorial textuality is disorienting, especially to one's preconceptions about what works are. In a paper at the 1989 Modern Language Association conference, I noted several aspects of Lawrence's writing life that had become clear to me. Intellectually and artistically, Lawrence rarely stood still, he was ceaselessly experimental, and he worked fast. Textually, he was prolific and untidy. He produced multiple versions of most of his works whether from scratch or in revision, and where he had to prepare copy for two publishers the copies were nearly always at variance. He never *finished* his works in a Flaubertian way. They were always in a process of becoming or of (only gradual) abandonment—a process of working his way through related themes that did not respect publication dates. Nor was this the-

matic unfolding over time single-stranded; while writing any particular novel Lawrence was simultaneously turning his hand to writing shorter pieces, as well as reading widely.

Once this essential continuity is glimpsed one is tempted, as a literary critic, to get beyond the great-works approach and try to recover the biographical-textual mesh from which they rose to public view. But to do this, I argued, we need first to break our long-standing habit of confusing the editorially established reading text with the work. Of course, that text is commercially adaptable to popular and student formats, it is well-suited to first-time readers, and it is a reliable, common reference point for textual quotation in articles and books. It is all of these things, but it is not the literary work. For me, that had become a more capacious entity of which the reading text I established was a useful but only partial representation.

These last three cases point toward a conclusion with consequences. When it comes to the abstract question of the identity of the work that is being transcribed, Renear seems to deny the inevitability of the encoder's mediation. Similarly, Barcilon's reliance on scientific testing and naturalized reading practices (the seductive authorial fragment that the movie camera can linger on in close-up) also allows the hand of the conservator to disappear as a constitutive part of the object we look at. That this consolation is an illusion is exposed by the conflicting conservatorial appeals in the 1997–98 *Anatomy Lesson*. In the Lawrence case, my experience of tracking in a text-biographical way the continuum of writing was not matched by the commercially denominated work *The Boy in the Bush*, which it was my task to perpetuate in a scholarly edition.

Although Barcilon's position is a very defensible one, although Renear's might seem like common sense, although the new *Anatomy Lesson* seems to be able to eat its cake and still have it, and although the Cambridge Lawrence is a robustly pragmatic compromise, none can give us access to what does not exist: the true or real Leonardo, the essential Rembrandt painting, the printed or manuscript text in itself, or the work of Lawrence as an essence outside of the editor–conservator's representation. The conserved painting, the transcribed text, the completed scholarly edition do not, then, exist unproblematically, whether on the wall, in the computer file, or in the Cambridge hardback. In an important sense, each is completed by its readership both during conservation and after.

This is an unsettling conclusion. It suggests that we need to know more about what works are. A closer examination of the 1960s consensus is therefore necessary.

THEORY OF THE WORK IN THE LATE 1960S

In 1968 René Wellek and Austin Warren added an important chapter to a new edition of their influential *Theory of Literature* (1948), called

"The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art." It brought together and crystallized many of the insights and working assumptions of the New Criticism. That movement had emerged in the 1930s, displaced belletristic and literary-historical approaches during the 1940s and 1950s, and was itself, by 1968, on the verge of being superseded by the new post-structuralist movement.

In their essay, Wellek and Warren run through the various conceptions on which the idea of the literary work could be thought to be founded. It could not be identical with the physical medium that bears its inscription since every copy would then be a different work. It could not consist of someone's reading it aloud since that would ignore the physical inscription and its stability, in comparison with the evanescence of performance. It could not be merely the experience or response of the reader since then the work would have no independent identity to discuss. This "affective fallacy" had been famously paralleled by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley in 1946 with the "intentional fallacy." With the latter in mind, Wellek and Warren confirmed that neither could the work be the same thing as the experience of the author, whether during writing (since we can have no part in that experience) or via the author's later articulations of what was meant to be conveyed in the writing (since the writer may have lost touch with the original experience and be acting now only as an interpreting reader). Rather, poems have an independent public existence: the poem is, as Wimsatt and Beardsley had put it, "detached from the author at birth and [it] goes about the world beyond his power to intend about it or control it" (1946/1954, p. 5). But there was a further possible grounding: could the work, Wellek and Warren asked, be regarded as the sum of all experiences of it, its existence granted only as a potential cause of the experiences? This ingenious explanation was however, they pointed out, thwarted by its ignoring the "structure of determination" (1968, p. 152) intrinsic to the work's meaning. None of these groundings, then, underwrite the necessary conditions of the work's identity over time or its capacity to be known.

This compelling diagnosis of failed definitions was unfortunately not matched by an equally clear proposal that would underpin the requisite independence from document, author, and readers. If none of the work's manifestations in the world did the job, then invocation of an ideal identity seemed unavoidable. But how to incorporate the manifestations at the same time? While conceding that works are not ideal in the perfect way that, say, a triangle is, because they change in their readings and thus in a sense enjoy a "life," Wellek and Warren (1968) argued that works must somehow have a "substantial identity of 'structure'" (p. 155) and be comprehensible in relation to "a system of norms[,] of ideal concepts which are intersubjective. They must be assumed to exist in collective ideology, changing with it, accessible only through individual mental experiences,

based on the sound-structure of its sentences" (p. 156). This attempt to bring together several of the dimensions in which the work undoubtedly participates in fact bows, as we shall see, to the epistemology of Edmund Husserl and more directly to the 1930s aesthetic philosophy of his student Roman Ingarden, whose work was only very belatedly available in English. The Wellek and Warren essay hovers uneasily between this broadening and the strong underlying assumption visible in their characteristic phrase, the "concrete work of art" (p. 147).

The latter had already become a byword in literary criticism, which should therefore be primarily interested in the aesthetic dimension, not in the psychological, historical, or sociological. The term *verbal icon*, as Wimsatt and Beardsley had famously called it in 1954—in other words, the aesthetic object—announced an orientation that would also condition the pursuit of scholarly editing. Behind the concrete work of art lay, in some sense, an ideal text; *this* was to be the editor's quarry. It was necessarily an ideal text, typically seen as the author's intended one, which, for one reason or another, had not achieved publication in that form.

G. Thomas Tanselle brought this pursuit to an increasingly sophisticated level of definition in essays written from the 1970s to the 1990s.⁵ His conjoining of intention with the ideal required the invocation, whether at first or second hand, of the work of Husserl. E. D. Hirsch's influential *Validity in Interpretation* of 1967 had shown the way. In relation to the definition of the work, Hirsch's argument crystallized the *Zeitgeist*. For Hirsch (1967), the textual meaning of a literary work must be unchanging ("determinate," p. 230) since only such a thing can act as a true object of study. "Verbal meaning," he argues, "is that aspect of a speaker's 'intention' which, under linguistic conventions, may be shared by others" (p. 218). It is "unchanging and interpersonal" and "determined once and for all by the character of the speaker's intention" (p. 219). For published works, the author's meaning is the publically accessible part of it—communicated intention, not what was going on in the head of the "biographical" author as such (p. 244). This communicated meaning is, as we shall see, like one of Husserl's intentional objects.

For the scholarly editor this argument amounted to an underwriting of the ideal of the intended text of the work, which only the accidents and contrarities of production had prevented from being realized. It would be the editor's job, by means of comparison of the multiple versions of the work, to identify which variant readings were the impediments to that realization and to remove them, by eclectic combination of readings from different versions if necessary, thus establishing the text of final authorial intention. The rejected readings would be recorded, but only in the subsidiary position of the textual apparatus. The foundation of this conservatorial approach in Husserl's philosophy—of which most practicing editors were blissfully unaware—needs next to be considered.

THE IDEAL TEXT: HUSSERL AND INGARDEN

The founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), refused to entertain conceptual presuppositions. Like other epistemologists he was looking for a basis for absolute certainty in knowledge. His slogan was “To the things themselves.” By “the things” he meant acts of consciousness and the things that are constituted by them. He wanted to get clarity *there* before the traditional problems of philosophy were approached. His first business as a phenomenologist was therefore to describe the phenomena. He gave perceptual priority to the subject (i.e., the perceiver), postponing the question of the ontology of the object (Kant’s “things-in-themselves,” which were not accessible to the mind).⁶ He came to the conclusion that mental acts are intentional in the sense of being of or about an object—or, more strictly speaking, of or about a would-be object, something supposed to be beyond those mental acts.

A much-discussed example of Husserl’s intentionalism is how we come to know what a tree is; we can have many views of a tree but none of them fully presents the tree to us. Only the intended object as a whole (the tree itself) unifies all of the acts of perception. The “object as a whole” exists for us as an entity only because the various sensory “takes” we have of it postulate its existence as a way of ordering them. This is a separate question from *whether* the tree exists—which, within Husserl’s orbit of thought, comes to seem a less important one.

Husserl’s intentionalism appears to be the ultimate source of Tanselle’s view of the text of the literary work, probably as inflected by Hirsch.⁷ Tanselle concludes from the existence of many documentary texts, that seem to be versions of one another, that each represents but does not present the work. The concept of the work exists, as it were, as a way of making sense of them. The documentary texts may be said to be somewhat like sense experience—what Husserl calls “immanent,” that is, directly accessible to the mind—but the intended object (the tree, the work) is presented as transcendent, that is, outside the mind’s direct experience. In both cases there is a unifying assumption that there is an object out there (the tree, the work) that is the unity behind the disparate appearances (or documentary texts). The assumption in both cases sustains the experienced variability, allowing it to seem to cohere. This, I believe, is the basic, normally unstated warrant of the idealist argument in editorial thought.

Roman Ingarden and the Work

Husserl’s gap between the material and intentional object created the space for an aesthetic theory. His student, Roman Ingarden (1893–1970), is important here as carrying on the phenomenological flame. Ingarden’s ideas about the work would ultimately be taken up, as we have seen, by some Anglo-American aesthetic philosophers and New Critics in the 1960s, broadening their thinking in the process, and, somewhat later, by

editors of the Anglo-American school, who by and large until then had been content to understand their activity methodologically.

Given its complexity (such as I have outlined above in summarizing the Wellek and Warren arguments), the literary work, Ingarden (1931/1973) observes, "is never *fully* grasped in *all* its strata and components but always only partially" (p. 334). Although, in reading, it can only be apprehended "in the form of one of its possible concretizations" (p. 336), when reading we are usually not conscious of this distinction. Being aware of the difference between the work and its concretizations, however, gives meaning to the term, the "life of the literary work"—which is the name of one of his chapters. The fact that a work can be created, changed by revision, or destroyed by its author before publication is further evidence of its having a "life," but also proof that, unlike a living being, it is not an "ontically autonomous object" (p. 346). It only "lives" passively, dependent as it is on readers to concretize or change it (p. 352). Ingarden accepts the implications of his observation about the life of a literary work. He recognizes that a history of readings, influencing one another over time, can change the literary work insofar as it lives in its concretizations, but those readings cannot change the identity of the literary work itself that he has already distinguished from them.

But what is this essence that is left over from the concretizations? He does not mean the physical document since that is merely a founding stratum. He has already allowed that the work is not ontically autonomous. Being only therefore, as he says, ontically heteronomous, it cannot be an ideal object. But if it is to have the separate essence postulated by his argument, it has to be in some sense transcendent,⁸ even as it always "seems to dissolve" in the "manifold variety" of its readings. At the level of sentences, he argues, the writer cannot create "genuine realizations of ideal essences or ideal concepts" but only draw on their ideal forms. The writer can "actualize" them but not—the stronger form—"realize" them (p. 362). Ideal concepts must exist, according to Ingarden (1931/1973), since without them linguistic communication would be impossible "in which both sides . . . apprehend an identical meaning content of the sentences exchanged" (p. 364). There are of course misunderstandings in real-life communication, but without ideal concepts the possibility of exchanging "identical meaning content" cannot be envisaged.⁹ So he staves off the "danger of subjectivizing the literary work or of reducing it to a manifold of concretizations" but only "by accepting the existence of ideal concepts" (p. 364) even though he is convinced the work is not one of them, or at least not in the full sense. "[I]n terms of ontic autonomy," he concludes, the literary work "is a nothing . . . and yet a wonderful world in itself—even though it comes into being and exists only by our grace" (Ingarden, 1931/1973, p. 373).¹⁰

Although Ingarden shows little bibliographic awareness, he is, as a

phenomenologist, very open to empirical and structural evidence of a work's stages of existence and its functioning. But, at the end of the day and despite having substantially undermined it, he has to fall back on a belief in the transcendent condition of the literary work if his structure of thought is to hold. Husserl's method of bracketing the intentional object in order to study the subject's dealings with it had tended, given that the philosopher's attention was elsewhere, implicitly to grant the object a steady continuity of existence independent of its contexts. In relation to the work of art, this would have seemed an uncontroversial assumption during the first half of the twentieth century, given the overhang of aestheticism, and given the doctrines and methods of modernism, formalist criticism of art, and New Criticism. (Cf. the epigraph to this essay by Virginia Woolf.) Seen in this general context, Ingarden's book is very much a reflection of its period. That it spoke so directly to Hirsch, and to Wellek and Warren, as late as the 1960s, and filtered through them to Tanselle even later, helps explain why change, when it came, would prove catastrophic.

WHAT CHANGED WITH THE WORK?: HEIDEGGER AND POST-STRUCTURALISM

The changes came, of course, with the various forms of post-structuralist theory from 1968 as they made their way—gingerly at first, triumphantly at last—through the anglophone world in the 1970s and 1980s. The new theorists adapted the radically different phenomenology of Husserl's student Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), who, in addition to his major work *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*, 1927), wrote “Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes” (“The Origin of the Work of Art”) in the mid-1930s.

Heidegger was deeply affected by the pre-Socratic philosophers. Their successors, Aristotle and Plato, eventually made possible the Enlightenment tradition of rational argumentation based upon the subject-object split. Kant posited the existence of innate, transcendental categories within the human mind (such as causation, quality, and time) that allow us to understand the sense impressions that we receive from the outside world. For Heidegger, this artificial division into inner and outer was the root of the problem when what the early Greek philosophers had recognized as the primordial dimension of Being circulated through both and was the prerequisite for any recognition. On this assumption, no object can, strictly speaking, be bracketed for contemplation as Husserl's method required. The Kantian tradition, which Husserl extended, had sprung, in Heidegger's view, “not from a genuine perception of Being but from a *forgetting of Being*, from a taking-for-granted of the central existential mystery” (Steiner, 1992, p. 28). As soon as the essence of an object is recognized as an idea or meaning, its Being is consumed by being given directedness, as it almost automatically is, within traditional Western pro-

cesses of thought. Their idealism requires its essential being to be located elsewhere, whereas for Heidegger Being is Being-in-the-world, a living *of* time rather than living *in* it. Knowing is not a smash-and-grab raid on the object but what he calls a Being-with, a concern, a not-having-power-over.

Accordingly, Heidegger was obliged to reinterpret all forms of knowledge as orientations toward Being. So he redefines truth not in terms, as philosophers traditionally do, of the correspondence between subject and object but in terms of what he calls discoveredness:

To say that a statement is *true* means that it discovers the beings in themselves. It asserts, it shows, it lets beings "be seen" . . . in their discoveredness. The *being true* (*truth*) of the statement must be understood as *discovering*. Thus, truth by no means has the structure of an agreement between knowing and the object in the sense of a correspondence of one being (subject) to another (object).

Being-true as discovering is in turn ontologically possible only on the basis of being-in-the-world. This phenomenon . . . is the *foundation* of the primordial phenomenon of truth. (Heidegger, 1996, p. 201)

What then is the nature of a work that lasts for centuries or is restored after damage or destruction? In "The Origin of the Work of Art," Heidegger argues that the work, upon its creation, discloses a previously unthought-of world by bringing its truth into being, but in doing so renders the awareness of it historical. As the centuries go by, the awareness fades even though the physical object may not: "World-withdrawal and world-decay," he said, "can never be undone. The works are no longer the same as they once were. It is they themselves, to be sure, that we encounter there, but they themselves are gone by" (Heidegger, 1993, p. 167).

His example was the Aegina marbles, a ruined temple that King Ludwig I of Bavaria had bought in 1811 during a visit to the Greek island and carried off as a cultural treasure. The stones were restored speculatively into an integrated form and displayed in the Munich Glyptothek until the 1960s when the elements that had been fabricated to complete it were removed and the fragments alone left on display. It turned out that they had been damaged by the restoration. Unaware of this future fate and prepared to grant the nineteenth-century restorer, Thorwaldsen, his interpretation, Heidegger was nevertheless raising the question about whether what he calls "the work itself" can ever be encountered when it has been subjected to art-historical study—when it has been rendered the object of a science. (Similarly, the study of the processes of a literary work's genesis and development through successive versions is, to the extent that it objectifies the work, necessarily inauthentic in Heidegger's terms.¹¹)

Heidegger's philosophy requires a leap of faith; finally the dimension of Being is mysterious. That does not make it untrue, but the challenge of going without the traditional tools of analytical thought, which normally presuppose a subject-object division, reveals the dilemma that Der-

rida among other post-structuralists struggled to bridge post-1968. They continued Heidegger's reaction against Enlightenment modes of thought and in particular against the metaphysics of self-presence implied, as they saw it, in Husserl's phenomenology. In it, the self-presence of the object as vouchsafed to the subject was the ground of meaning. It was an ideal meaning that reduced writing, according to Derrida, to a merely cognitive operation and did not explain the iteration of meaning that allows it to be made present to readers over and over again. Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist account of language in which meaning is always deferred—signs refer to other signs, and meaning lying in the difference of their signification—allowed Derrida to free the workings of textuality from any anchor in intention or the writer. The ground of writing could henceforth be considered to be (other) writing, not authorship. This amounted to a new foundation, though always elusive, never achieved. Representation was the vehicle of meaning; recourse to the subject-object binary would no longer be necessary. It did not however explain the work, as witness the epigraph to this essay by Michel Foucault.

Editorial practitioners found this linguistic turn a hard pill to swallow, since they were encountering documentary traces of personal agency on a daily basis and were in the habit of inferring its intention. Nor did Saussure's synchronic system assist with the analysis of textual processes of revision over time. Michel Foucault's account of socially circulating discourses changing with successive epistemes or periods, and therefore of works being expressions of discourses rather than of authors, only restated the problem in somewhat more historical ways. There was a stalemate. Scholarly editing has meanwhile continued to take place, but since the 1980s in mainly silent opposition to the dominant intellectual forces of the time. This was not a happy position to be in.

French Existentialism and Blanchot

Although Derrida dealt with the Heideggerian inheritance directly, the route to the stalemated position actually went via French existentialist phenomenology: from Jean-Paul Sartre, through Maurice Blanchot, and then to Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1968/1977a), the *locus classicus* for the post-structuralist decentering of meaning from author to text.

Sartre had studied the phenomenology of Husserl while in Berlin in the early 1930s, but the existentialist form of it developed by Heidegger found a peculiar resonance in post-World War II France following the cultural disaster of Nazi occupation. New foundations for meaningful living were necessary, ones that cleaned the table of old formulations. Existentialism was a heroic medicine in which the role of art, standing over and apart from the ways of the world, would be crucial. In *What Is Literature* (*Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, 1947/1988), Sartre saw writing as necessarily

acting in the present as a form of commitment, political and personal, situated in and shared with the contemporary society or "age"—and thus, somewhat akin to Heidegger's account of the Aegina marbles, losing its relevance upon the author's death.¹²

Maurice Blanchot's *The Space of Literature* (*L'Espace littéraire*, 1955) pushed the existentialist case further:

The goal of art is an object . . . a realized action which is itself activating, which informs or deforms others, appeals to them, affects them, moves them—toward other actions which, most often, do not return to art but belong to the course of the world. They contribute to history and thus are lost, perhaps, in history. (1955/1989, p. 212)

Blanchot seized the opportunity that Heidegger's phenomenology offered to differentiate categorically between the realm or space of art and the workaday world of purposive activity on the one hand and of self-confident, yet philosophically fragile, truth claims on the other.

Art, according to Blanchot (1955/1989), was more like a substrate of reality than a place; *Being*, in the special sense Heidegger gives it, could spring from art into the ordinary world, or be accessed there, even if the disclosure (publication, say) was ultimately a compromising event. The work was not the same thing as the book, the latter being only "the approach and the illusion" (p. 23):

The writer never knows whether the work is done. What he has finished in one book, he starts over or destroys in another. . . . At a certain moment, circumstances—that is, history, in the person of the publisher or in the guise of financial exigencies, social duties—pronounce the missing end, and the artist, freed by a *dénouement* of pure constraint, pursues the unfinished matter elsewhere. . . . However, the work—the work of art, the literary work—is neither finished nor unfinished: it is. (pp. 21–22)

While this conclusion seems promising as a defence of the study of the genesis of a work's making, and of the related histories of works unfolding from one another in relation to the author's biography as I described above with D. H. Lawrence, Blanchot gives no such solace. This is because of the ultimate underpinning of the work in *Being*. The inexhaustible origin of art, Blanchot maintains, is quite impersonal: the writer cannot claim to be its source but can only give himself or herself up to it: "The poet only speaks by listening" (p. 226).

Thus Blanchot (1955/1989) disassociates the work from the writer's ordinary self: "To write is to break the bond that [in speaking] unites the word with myself" (p. 26); "it is [the writer's] not being himself" (p. 28). Therefore literature's imaginary space is one where no-one abides: "No one who has written the work can linger close to it" (p. 24), not even the writer. Yet, because it is a void, it lends itself to having its meaning appropriated by successive generations of readers; it is gradually "filled up with everything it isn't" (p. 11):

The work of art does not refer immediately back to the person who presumably made it. When we know nothing at all about the circumstances that contributed to its production, about the history of its creation—when we do not even know the name of the person who made it possible—it is then that the work comes closest to itself. (p. 221)

The line from this isolation of the work from the author to Barthes's aim of liberating the reader from the authoritative shackles of writerly intention becomes apparent in his essay "From Work to Text" (in French, 1971), especially in his catchphrase: "the work can be held in the hand, the text is held in language" (1971/1977b, p. 157). For Barthes, like Derrida, the author's life offered no point of origin for texts and therefore no hope of explanation for them. Existing only in language, texts could have neither origin nor closure. Given that their fate was to be traversed again and again by readers, texts could be experienced "only in an activity of production," and were therefore irreducibly plural (p. 157). Participating in larger cultural flows of meaning, they were neither stable nor time-bound objects.

This became an influential position. It signally rejected the existing literary-critical understanding about works, and it left the editing of works and the study of their genesis out in the cold. And yet, despite that, the last twenty to twenty-five years have seen a flowering of a new kind of editorial and textual theory. While borrowing terms and benefiting from some of the habits of thought that post-structuralism rapidly naturalized, these new forms of editorial theory have had essentially to work from the overlooked or neglected empirical realities of documents. Attention turned to enunciating the importance of textual process (the genesis of versions of a work) rather than of finalizing its text as an authoritative "product"; to the theoretical and practical exploration of opportunities in electronic editions that would be capacious enough to document these textual processes; to the importance of linking particular texts, regardless of their authority, to their historical audiences; and to the peculiarities of the physical document itself, especially its *mise-en-page*.¹³ Its presentation could be considered a site and source of meaning, complicating that of the linguistic text with which earlier editors had been solely concerned.

In these ways, liberation from the final-intentions school of postwar Anglo-American scholarly editing has opened doors—but, ironically, to much the same dimensions of works that Wellek and Warren, and Hirsch, were ushering into anglophone consideration in their essays of the late 1960s. Despite typically rejecting the ideal-text assumptions of editing—and thus, in effect, rejecting the Husserlian legacy—editorial practitioners have usually found little support in Heidegger. A theory of the work that might ground what editors do still does not exist, "and the empirical task of those who naively undertake the editing of works often suffers in the absence of such a theory" (Foucault, 1969/1986, p. 104). Foucault's

warning is no less true today, despite the welcome broadening of attention to the workings of the work, if one may put it that way, that practitioners have been recently engaged in.¹⁴ So . . . stalemate from another direction.

WHITHER AWAY FOR THE WORK?: PEIRCE AND ADORNO

What then is the way forward? I see two possibilities. The first would be to adopt or adapt as a basis for a definition of the work a text-defining semiotic that recognizes agency and history, rather than the synchronic model of Saussurean structuralism upon which post-structuralism rested. The American inventor of the doctrine of Pragmatism, C. S. Peirce (1839–1914), philosophized in many areas, but at the center of his thinking was a semiotic that bypassed the subject–object binary. Peirce went back to the medieval scholastics, including St. Augustine and Duns Scotus, to retrieve a missing third term—semiotic. The effect of inserting semiosis (or the process of communication that mediates knowledge) into the subject–object relation is that it becomes triadic; the object cannot be directly available to knowledge if it can only be represented by the sign. The sign or representamen, according to Peirce, is “determined” by its object; it functions by creating (“determining”) an interpretant, which may itself stand as a sign to a later interpretant, and so on.

It can be difficult to appreciate the fundamentality of Peirce’s semiotic at first. Peirce was trying to define the theory of the sign to stand as his logic and thereby as the basis of his metaphysics and epistemology. To humanize or psychologize the operation of the sign would compromise this fundamentality. Thus, the interpretant is not a person; strictly speaking, it is the counterpart of the representamen and stands in an equivalent or developed relation to the object. The sign as a whole is therefore a relation, in fact tri-relational; it is not a thing, although a thing may become a sign if it takes on that relational function.¹⁵

From this apparently severe semiotic Peirce developed a wide-ranging philosophical system usually referred to as pragmatism.¹⁶ His failure to publish an elaborated and complete form of it notoriously causes problems for those who would elucidate it from the basis of his occasional essays, reviews, letters, and very extensive, often undated manuscripts. The failure also helps explain his comparatively meager influence so far, as does the fact that the place that his semiotic might have occupied was taken by twentieth-century Saussurean structuralism. The latter is, in contrast to Peirce’s, dyadic (i.e., two-termed; signifier versus signified), synchronic (the linguistic system is analyzed at a chronological moment), and systematic (meaning is based on difference between terms in the system rather than, as for Peirce, on its practical outcomes or further development).

Peirce’s incorporation of the interpretant into the definition of the sign means that semiosis is understood as ongoing and diachronic.¹⁷ Every

sign, therefore, “is essentially incomplete and . . . essentially developable” (Gallie, 1952, p. 129). Development requires a notion of community; indeed, Peirce stressed continuity rather than arrival in what he called the path of inquiry. Insofar as the “real” and the “truth” could be said to exist at all, they were only the limiting conditions of this continuity. They committed the community of inquirers to the testing of the always provisional truth-claims—just as scientists do, routinely. Public truth or “the real” is said to be “the idea in which the community ultimately settles down.”¹⁸

Individuals and communities therefore may be said to participate in semiosis, but *it* does not originate in them (cf. Riddell, 1995, p. 86). Peirce commented in a late essay of 1905, “What Pragmatism Is”:

[A] person is not absolutely an individual. His thoughts are what he is “saying to himself,” that is, is saying to that other self that is just coming into life in the flow of time. When one reasons, it is that critical self that one is trying to persuade; and all thought whatsoever is a sign, and is mostly of the nature of language. (Peirce 1931–58, 5.421)

If even our private reflections function semiotically, then there can be no constitutive origin for meaning or knowledge outside semiosis, either in the self or in unmediated Heideggerian Being. There can, accepting this line of argument, be no “capital A” Author as pure source of the work. According to Peirce, there never is an “I” thinking (or writing or reading) that is knowable independent of the signs that signal the activity. And just as there can be no knowable, originating, unitary presence or Author outside of semiosis, so there can be no Work whose ontology is secured by that Author. Rather, textual agency is restricted to those who are involved in the ongoing semiosis. If Peirce is right then, first, process is of the nature of the Work (which presumably now takes on the lower case *w* and functions only as a regulative idea, not an ideal); and, second, the activity of each reader in creating the interpretant is part of the work.

Textual agency is not a Peircean term. Although, in his system, the operation of the sign is infinitely regressive, it is transactional. Therefore, if one extrapolates from his austere logical starting point where semiosis is conceived as a purely functional relation, the production of both the representamen and the interpretant can be seen in practice to require agency. Nowhere is this more evident than when the production takes physical form in a document. In other words, a bibliographical extension of Peirce’s account of semiosis might form the ground of a new conception of the work.¹⁹

The importance of the physical object—the documentary dimension of textual communication—is something that philosophers are apt to overlook or treat as trivial. This is despite the fact that the document is the pathway into the past. But it is only a pathway: the act of reading, of reviving the represented idea, reinvoles the unpredictabilities and flux

that are always part of semiosis. Meanwhile, the document itself remains unaffected, stable, and open to contrary readings. This documentary dimension might give Peirce's idea of the community of inquirers a force it presently lacks, given that it would generate the need for an account of the slowly changing linguistic conventions that allow communities to make sense of documents from the past. In the moment of reading, the document is inevitably a record of and from the past and lies at the cross-section of other histories: of the book trade, generic conventions, readerships, and political, social, and other discourses. For readers it is the point of departure and return. Its stability provides the point of focus enabling profitable disputation (in the present) about the interpretant, which may be differently inflected by every reader.

Adorno and Negative Dialectic

This proposed convergence of semiosis and bibliography, which may seem a strange one at first, requires recourse to the only other possible way out of the stalemate that I am able to see: namely, to adopt a chronological model of the continually unfolding relationship between document and text, or between cultural object and interpretation.

The writings of the Frankfurt School philosopher, Theodor Adorno (1903–69) offer such a model. It is not Adorno's aesthetic theory that I find helpful²⁰ but rather his central concept of negative dialectics. Giving the Kantian notion of the subject–object binary an epistemological twist, Adorno argued that subjects, situated in history as they are, are not identical with themselves over time. Nor therefore can the object stay still, or be self-identical, since it can only be known, over time, as it “entwines with subjectivity” (Adorno, 1966/1973, p. 186). As a result, non-identity as between subject and object has to be taken as the basis of knowledge. The subject does not, after Kant, passively measure the object against a repository of categories that it holds in mind. Rather, through a process of reaching out toward the object, the subject seeks to approximate it mimetically in all its concrete particularity (to use a Frankfurt School term). Adorno refers to this process as “exact fantasy”: the subject transforms the object “into a new modality”; it is not a replication but a translation (Buck-Morss, 1977, p. 88). Peirce had rejected the subject–object binary at its base and replaced it with a tri-relational semiotic. Adorno locks subject and object together in an experiential embrace. Such requires the other's difference in order to secure its own identity. Each is, as it were, a constituting principle of the other. This rules out any appeal to an ontological ideal imagined as standing outside the process. Semiosis had a similar result for Peirce.

Take the relationship between nature and history. When beliefs that were once resisted become accepted over time, they are granted what Adorno calls a second-nature status—they are naturalized—only in turn to have their naturalness challenged by awareness of their history of be-

coming. The process is dialectical but not leading to a higher synthesis, to a transcendental reconciliation of subject and object—as with Hegelian dialectic, at least as it is popularly known. Rather, the dialectic is negative in that it is based on awareness of the historicity in nature and of the naturalness in history. The one mediates the other.²¹ In short, a negative dialectic describes an ongoing, antithetical but interdependent identity-relationship that unfolds over time.

There are possibilities here, which Adorno himself did not pursue, for conceptualizing the ways in which authors, editors, and readers “perform” literary works—or concretize them, to use Ingarden’s term. Adorno’s favorite example is the way in which a translation transforms its original text into something new. We might think that, in the act of reading, the text with which we engage and which we seek mimetically to approximate or perform is the literary work itself. But a little bibliographic attunement shows that it is a document of paper and ink that bears a text that we raise in the act of reading. While in Adorno’s sense the document is a natural object, it is also a socially produced one that anticipates the observance of accepted conventions of raising meaning. The document, whether handwritten or printed, is the textual site where the agents of textuality meet: author, copyist, editor, typesetter, and reader. In the acts of writing, copying or reading, the work’s documentary and textual dimensions dynamically interrelate; they can be seen as a translation or performance of one another. They are, in this sense, one another’s negative constituting principle. Document, taken as the material basis of text, has a continuing history in relation to its productions and its readings. Any new manifestation of the negative dialectic necessarily generates new sets of meanings.

A consequence is that, if the documentary and textual dimensions are one another’s negative constituting principle, then neither has a secure identity in itself. In other words, we need potentially readable text before paper and ink can constitute a document. To have text, we need a material document (in any medium, whether printed, a computer-screen visualization, or sound waves in an act of vocalization). The two dimensions are conceptually separable but linked in practice. The *work* emerges only as a regulative idea, the name or container, as it were, of the continuing dialectic. The ongoing or recorded existence of the document is enough to link all the textual processes that are carried out under the name of the work. And bibliography is a technology for describing and relating its allied documents.

Following Ingarden, we can say that this is the “life” of the literary work—but without accepting the idealist belief that, for him, goes with it. Peirce’s account of semiosis allows us to dispense with that; and its capacity, when applied as I have suggested, to incorporate agency and diachronicity sits happily enough with Adorno’s unfolding dialectic. From Adorno we can define a concept of the work that does not sublate or

supersede the empirical workings of textuality. The “work” can be seen as a phenomenological concept—not in the full, Husserlian sense of an intentional object, but in the weak sense that it operates as a regulative idea that immediately dissolves, in reading, into the negative dialectic of document and text. Seen as a regulative idea, the “work” retains its function as a pragmatic agreement for organizing our remembered experiences of reading documents that are closely related bibliographically and for delimiting the relevance of documents being investigated for their relevance to an editing project: for an edition of the “work.”

Seen in action the “work” unravels, in every moment of its being, into a relationship between its documentary and textual dimensions. If it can, then, no longer be imagined as a historical object (as in Tanselle’s “intended text”), then the idealist position that seeks to secure its self-identity must be abandoned. The dynamic principle I am proposing is offered as an alternative that answers to the richly various lives of the work to which editorial commentators have been drawing attention since the 1980s.

If such is the basis of the textual condition, then the editor (like every other reader) can never get outside it; the work can never be an object on which he or she *works*. Instead the editor must have—can only have—a participatory role in the life of the work. The editor’s main work is textual; it leaves a documentary testament. Editions (as documents) represent the work by extending its life, by making further textual encounters possible: there can be no definite closure to a negative dialectic. One thing we can say for sure is that the work is not an aesthetic object if only because that traditional formulation collapses these interdependent dimensions.

BUILDINGS AND MONUMENTS AS WORKS: THE OBLIGATION OF THEIR CARERS

But can this conclusion be extended to include artistic works, historic buildings, and monuments? Potential complications should not shut down the attempt to map the conclusion across. Some remarks of Gary Taylor suggest a pathway. He is the general editor of a project to edit the works of Thomas Middleton (1580–1627), a playwright whose achievement has always been occluded by that of his great contemporary, Shakespeare. “How can you love a work, if you don’t know it?” Taylor asks. “How can you know it, if you can’t get near it? How can you get near it, without editors?” (1993, p. 133). This simple, rhetorical argument could equally be applied to the conservation of historic buildings or the restoration of damaged paintings: you can’t love them if you can’t see them or touch them: if you can’t, in Heidegger’s sense, be-with-them. But this still leaves unresolved exactly what the “it,” that Taylor speaks of, consists in.

To envisage the work as I am proposing, as constantly involved in a negative dialectic of material medium (the documentary dimension) and meaningful experience (the textual), and as being constituted by an

unrolling semiosis across time, necessarily interweaved in the lives of all who create it, gaze at it or read it, is to recognize, among other things, the roles of agency and time. Depending on the perspective in play, the agency of authorship broadly considered (whether of playwright, architect, sculptor, or editor) may be foregrounded; some intending person or persons had to create the “document,” which, from this point of view, will be forever embedded in that moment. Equally the latter experience, the unrolling semiosis, may be focused on: the role (or, as an editor would say of a readership, the authority) of the people, say, who lived around the historic building may gain significance. It certainly did for Ruskin in 1849 as he considered the plight of fourteenth-century English churches subject to the new, religiously-inspired craze for restoration: “*We have no right whatever to touch them,*” he declared. “They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us. The dead still have their right in them.” The walls “that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity” only *gradually* acquire their living value—what he called “that golden stain of time” (1910, pp. 358, 339, 340).

From this point of view, to detach the work from its idealist grounding in the absent architect-author does not necessarily remove the basis of its identity. To think of the building or monument as a work rather than merely a three-dimensional (documentary) object is to recognize that its meanings are not fully determined in advance by builder or architect. They are also assigned (in the textual dimension) by those who come into contact with the (documentary) object. Semiotic appeals to meaning will be embedded in conventions of reading architecture, in the functions of buildings within broader circulating discourses, and they will be assigned variously, and change over time. Thus, adapting Adorno, the building as work does not stay identical with itself.

This stands to reason. The historic building, *any* historic building will always have been in a process involving, in varying degrees, conscious alteration, accidental change, and natural decay. The building does not and cannot have a stable constitution. Given the loss of furnishings, the limitations of contemporary catalogs of furniture and decorations by which the present deficiency might be made good, the usually radical changes in the surrounding gardens (the effect of natural growth, neglect, or changes in style of gardening) and loss of land through subdivision and sale; given also the common absence of original plans and (depending on the age of the building) of photographic documentation of it, and the limited helpfulness of early watercolor and other sketches—given all of these factors, a historic house *cannot* be reliably returned in every detail to its original condition, even if this were desirable. And yet most visitors to heritage buildings believe this is what they are seeing. They want to believe that the Neoplatonic ideal of the house-as-it-originally-was is here embodied.

If conservators and curators necessarily participate in the building's unrolling semiosis, in the life of it as a work, then they need to accept the responsibility that this awareness entails and not cater to illusions. Nor should they pretend to stand outside it as if it were only a (documentary) object to which they apply their science and taste. Management plans for historic buildings that appeal in a 1960s way to the famous architect as guarantor of the building-as-work's near-perfect integrity—almost as if it were a poem or painting, a “concrete work of art”—need to beware of appealing in the next sentence to the necessity of preserving the historical witness of the building's original fabric. Both appeals falsely objectify the building. Appeals that flip-flop between historical and aesthetic groundings for the work are not likely to lead to coherent editorial solutions.²²

Historic buildings exist and persist, if they are suffered to do so, as “document,” stolidly awaiting their fate. Meanwhile their further semiosis unrolls in the lives of their inhabitants and of passersby. Buildings continue to undergo change in response to people's needs. Clearly, the preservation of the documentary fabric must be the primary aim and ethic of conservators. This is what conservation must conserve since, without it, that life of the building as a work is impossible or impoverished. We would not be able to get “near” it. But, in this formulation, what is the “it”? It is not an object pure and simple, since, under the conservatorial gaze the building's documentary fabric cannot be left alone. Some attitude toward its preservation must be arrived at, some standard appealed to. This involves making choices about what aspect of the building's life, what source of authority for its presentation as a work, the conservator will decide to respect. And what alterations or partial destruction will be deemed necessary so that the general public can be “near” it.

The documentary dimension of the building only functions under the conservatorial gaze *as* fabric insofar as it is part of a negative dialectic with its interpretations. There is no innocent, no inevitable policy available, even though the simple, common-sense language of such heritage-policy documents as the Venice Charter of 1964 and the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter of 1992 give rise to the hope that there is. We have to accept that the conservation and the curation will inevitably alter the nature, by shifting the grounds, of the building's continuing semiosis.

Honest curation will declare the compromise, will declare its interpreting hand. Whether, say, the building and contents have been preserved so far as possible to represent some point in their history, or perhaps as an inevitably partial and selective three-dimensional diary of the lives of the generations of families that have lived in it. Usually, with historic buildings, curation performs something of the function that annotation does in a scholarly edition, selectively pointing the reader-viewer toward what to look for in the fabric, giving advice as to how to read its historical testi-

mony, and therefore by implication how to understand the conservatorial orientation and policy that have been applied.

The expansion over the last twenty years of the possible, legitimate grounds of textual authority for the editing of literary works has been paralleled by more flexible policies of curation, such as those I have just described. In both pursuits, the avoidance of ad hoc or self-contradictory policies could be avoided, and aims clarified, by a more conscious understanding of the nature of the work. The present essay is offered as a contribution to that debate.

NOTES

1. Together with new work, this essay adapts material from other essays by the present author listed in References and Additional Reading.
2. It is Nelson Goodman's (1968, chap. 3). Other definitional problems lay in wait for it: silk-screen prints, conceptual art, *arte povera* and found objects, and protest art where commercially printed or manufactured objects deliberately replace handmade or painted ones.
3. See further Runia and van Suchtelen (2006, pp. 40–47).
4. Discussed in Eggert (2005).
5. Tanselle avoids talk of "ideal" texts but his argument that the intended text of the work is historical though unachieved implies ideality; see Eggert (1998c). The text can be the one intended by whomever the editor deems to be the source of authority for the purposes of the edition—not necessarily the author.
6. Husserl's postponing extended to any subject-independent entity whether noumenal (things-in-themselves) or phenomenal (their appearances). He wanted to study the constructivity of the mind—not the empirical objects nor their phenomenal appearances, but the experiencing of objects by the mind. He invented the special meaning of the existing term *phenomenology* to cover this interest.
7. See Tanselle (1990, p. 31 and n. 9) [an essay that originally appeared in 1976].
8. The editor and translator Grabowicz's term, Introduction to Ingarden (1931/1973, p. xix).
9. Grabowicz (see preceding note) reports that in the Polish revised translation of 1960 Ingarden "warns that he now questions [the] existence" of ideal concepts; this reflects his "later commitment to realism" (Ingarden, 1931/1973, p. lix).
10. Grabowicz—who is very sympathetic to Ingarden's thought—is less circumspect in his averrals that the work is a "purely intentional formation, 'transcendent to all conscious experiences, those of the author as well as those of the reader'" (Ingarden, 1931/1973, p. lviii; the last is a quotation from Ingarden's *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art*, orig. in Polish 1937). When Grabowicz tries to draw out the idea, he states that the work is "finally an *intersubjective* intentional object [i.e., in relation to all readers] constituted . . . on the basis of a constant and faithful intentional reference to some given real object which is the work of art itself" (Ingarden, 1931/1973, p. xxi). The definition is circular, and it leaves aside the question of the way in which the work may be said to be "given."
11. In her forthcoming book, *Text as Process: An Exploration of Creative Composition in the Work of Wordsworth, Tennyson and Emily Dickinson*, Sally Bushell argues that there is room in Heidegger's thinking to allow such study despite its admitted inauthenticity (see chap. 10).
12. Sartre defines as a "new absolute . . . The age [which] is the intersubjectivity, the living absolute, the dialectical underside of history" (1947/1988, p. 241). The link between Barthes and Sartre is made in Bushell (in press), *Text as Process* (see preceding note). She comments that awareness of it "should cause a re-definition of our understanding of what Barthes means by his title ["The Death of the Author"] and a reminder of the historicized nature of his statement" (chap. 2). I thank Sally Bushell for allowing me to quote from this work prior to its publication.
13. For process, see Shillingsburg (1991) and Cohen and Jackson (1991). For electronic

- editing, see Finneran (1996) and McGann (2001). For the linking of texts to their audiences, see McKenzie (1986). For meanings in physical documents, see any of the writings of Randall McLeod, e.g. for example, "Enter Reader" (1998) [where the author's name is playfully given as "Random Cloud"] and McGann (1991).
14. German historical-critical editing practice claims, or at least claimed, to be grounded in Prague structuralism, from which source it took its definition of text as a semiotic system altered by any alteration of words or punctuation in it. The central job is therefore to construct an archival apparatus of variants around any one of the extant texts of the work. There is no warrant for the textual intervention by appeal to intention typical of Anglo-American editions. In my view, the claimed grounding has led to some contradiction and complacency: see Eggert (1998a).
 15. Nevertheless Peirce sometimes despaired of being able to explain his conception. In a letter of 23 December 1908 to Lady Welby he wrote: a sign is "anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its Interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former." He goes on to say "My insertion of 'upon a person' is a sop to Cerberus, because I despair of making my own broader conception understood" (Hardwick, 1977, pp. 80–81).
 16. Peirce is chiefly remembered for the doctrine that the meaning of an idea lies in its practical outcomes, but this ignores the semiotic underlay that was at the center of his thinking. Even in a quite early essay he wrote: "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (Peirce 1931–58, 5.2 [i.e., vol. 5, numbered paragraph 2]). A modern edition of Peirce's works is in progress, though it will not be a complete works. For commentaries on Peirce's philosophy, see Gallie (1952), Apel (1981), Hookway (1985), Keeler and Kloesel (1996), and Keeler (1998).
 17. See Martens (1995, pp. 214–215). Martens cites Köller (1977) as source of this interpretation.
 18. (Peirce 1931–58, 6.620). Peirce himself had been a research chemist, and this was undoubtedly the source of his model. See further Searle (1994).
 19. Bibliographical questions seem not to have impinged on Peirce's accounts of semiosis. Signs he says are not things; things (objects) cannot be replicated, only represented. Representations, however, can be replicated: "Look down a printed page [Peirce once remarked], and every *the* you see is the same word, every *e* the same letter. A real thing does not so exist in replica": quoted in (Keeler, 1998, p. 175), from a Peirce manuscript of 1904. Peirce denies that ideas can be reproduced: "taking the word 'idea' in the sense of an event in an individual consciousness, it is clear that an idea once past is gone forever, and any supposed recurrence of it is another idea" (Peirce, 1931–58, 6.105). This is because any representation of the idea creates its own, new interpretant. The same would be true of the idea in printed form as the reader raises the documentary representation onto the level of text. The meaning raised is never absolutely predictable from the documentary representation, for, as Peirce says elsewhere: "no Sign is absolutely precise . . . and indefiniteness is of two kinds, indefiniteness as to what is the Object of the Sign, and indefiniteness as to its Interpretant" (Peirce, 1931–58, 4.543).
 20. *Aesthetic Theory* was collected only after his death. It is partly caught up in Walter Benjamin's broad-brush Marxist rejection of "the aesthetics of genius" (Adorno, 1970/1984, p. 244)—the work seen as the reflection of the creative personality. Adorno saw it as a facile explanation of a complex process and Benjamin as a capitalist diversion from the real business of the artist's altering the relations of production. For Adorno, the "artist's absolute act [of putting pen to paper, brush to canvas] . . . is of minuscule importance" (1970/1984, p. 239). However "the moment of making or fabrication" is of importance (p. 244) because the artist, at that moment, "functions as the executor" of the relation between subject and object (p. 2389). But Adorno's major interest in art is its potential to help us escape political ideology and social repression: the rise of fascism and the failure of Marxism deeply affected his thinking.
 21. As Adorno once famously said: "History is in the truth; the truth is not in history" (as cited in Buck-Morss, 1977, p. 46). Adorno did not invent the notion of negative dialectic; it goes back to Socrates and early Plato.

22. Eighteenth-century editors who improved Shakespeare's lines on the grounds that the master could not have been capable of imperfect metremeter (i.e., editing by an aesthetic criterion) have long been the butt of jokes. Their taste did not last the historical distance.

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