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Words in Space: The Reproduction of Texts and the Semiotics of the Page

Lukas Erne

According to the dominant parameters in literary studies today, texts mean linguistically, not bibliographically. Space is therefore often studied for how it is represented by means of linguistic signs. This chapter suggests that such an approach is usefully complemented by an analysis of the bibliographical space within which such representations occur. The author argues that the linguistic meaning of a text and of its various editorial reproductions is in fact inextricably bound up with, and therefore needs to be studied with an awareness of, the specificity of its material incarnation.

It is a widespread assumption today that the meaning of a text resides in its inner regions rather than in the practices recorded on its surface. Unsurprisingly, one of the ways in which this volume explores the question of "The Space of English" is that of the representation of space. I wish to complement such an approach by an investigation of the space in which such a representation can occur. I argue that what threatens to get lost in our search for depth underneath a surface that has been smoothed over is the importance of the historical contingencies of textual production. As Jerome McGann puts it, "every literary work that descends to us operates through the deployment of a double helix of perceptual codes: the linguistic codes, on the one hand, and the bibliographical codes on the other" (*Textual Condition* 77).

Exposure to McGann's "bibliographical codes" constitutes an experience of space which no reader can avoid. The space in which words occur, be it cyberspace or the physical page, provides the form which is inextricably bound up with the meaning of the text. The late D.F. McKenzie has been one of the driving forces in the exploration of the question of "whether or not the material forms of books, the non-verbal elements of the typographic notations within them, the very disposition

of space itself, have an expressive function in conveying meaning” (17). My paper answers this question affirmatively and aims at providing evidence of the difference such meaning makes.

The specific angle from which I propose to explore the relationship between a book’s materiality and the meaning of its text is that of the *reproduction* of texts. Once we take for granted that the semiotics of the page matter, that features of a text’s materiality such as typography and layout (and even the paper on which the material signs are imprinted) carry meaning, then any textual reproduction necessarily falsifies, or distorts, or reinvents the original it professes to reproduce. I thus propose to draw on a variety of works and on their textual incarnations and reincarnations in specific material formats to explore this mechanism.

Ever since F. J. Furnivall brought it into the Chaucerian textual discussion in 1868, the Ellesmere Manuscript has been considered the textually most significant manuscript of *The Canterbury Tales* (Blake 24). Even though its authority has been challenged by some who argue for the adoption of the Hengwrt manuscript as copy-text,¹ Ellesmere remains the manuscript on which wide-spread modern editions like *The Riverside Chaucer* are based.² What is peculiar about Ellesmere, apart from its generally opulent appearance, lavish borders, and illustrations of the pilgrims, is that the text of the tales appears in fact off-centre, on the left hand side, with glosses written on the right hand side (Fig. 1). These glosses have been argued by several scholars to be mostly by Chaucer himself (see Lewis, Silvia, and Caie “Early Chaucer Manuscript Glosses”). The word “glosses” may suggest a hierarchical relationship between the writings on either side of the manuscript, but they have in fact the same size and are in the same hand. The spatial arrangement implies that Ellesmere presents a parallel text, with neither text being visually privileged over the other. The Manly-Rickert edition provides translations of these glosses “when they seem important” (3.483) in a separate volume, and *The Riverside Chaucer* discusses some of them in notes at the back of the volume, but with the obvious exception of facsimiles, no edition to date has yet tried to render this spatial arrangement by printing the texts side by side. Yet as has been shown, “scribes

¹ See Ruggiers, especially the “Paleographical Introduction” by A. I. Doyle and M. B. Parkes which explores the relationship between Hengwrt and Ellesmere; and Blake.

² See Benson. For the argument that Ellesmere represents Chaucer’s own final arrangement, see Norman.

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throughout the fifteenth century thought these notations sufficiently important not only to copy them but to give them a prominent position on the page, usually in the same size as the text itself" (Caie, "Marginal Glosses" 76). So giving the glosses the textually privileged position they occupied in the copy-text visually establishes how important a role they can play for the understanding of *The Canterbury Tales*.

An example of this importance are the glosses to *The Man of Law's Tale* from Pope Innocent III's *De miseria humane conditionis* and Bernard Silvestri's *Cosmographia* which reveal how the Man of Law misrepresents the authorities he is drawing upon, turning him into one of Chaucer's unreliable exegetes, not unlike the Wife of Bath.³ Failing to mediate to modern readers the spatial arrangement of the copy-text from which they choose to set up their text, editors of *The Canterbury Tales* run the risk of losing significant textual meaning available to readers of their copy-text.

The first text page of Ben Jonson's *Sejanus* of 1605 leads me to my second example (Fig. 2). When this playtext was printed, Jonson ensured that the layout conformed to that of classical dramatic texts in which single verses shared by two speakers are printed on one line. By contrast, other Elizabethan playbooks start a new line each time the speaker changes. The semiotics of the page are thus one of the ways in which Jonson marked his distance from what he called the "loathed stage" and staked his claim on a higher form of dramatic literature than that produced by most of his contemporaries who, Jonson held, cared about little more than providing fast food for an entertainment industry.⁴ The marginalia and the so-called massed entries at the beginning of the scene also conform to the practice in classical dramatic texts, further indications of the prestige with which Jonson tried to provide his playbook.

³ For instance, by adopting material from Silvestri at lines 190-203, "Chaucer takes over his image of the heavens as a book . . . but he changes the emphasis so that only evil fates, *strif* and *death*, are foretold" (Benson 858). Elsewhere, the Man of Law laments the change in Custance's fortune in a passage which the gloss reveals to be little more than a paraphrase of Innocent's *De miseria*, but the Man of Law edits the passage so as to omit Innocent's intermittent affirmations of faith (see Caie, "Marginal Glosses" 83-84). See also Caie, "Hypertext," especially page 35.

⁴ On Jonson's anti-theatricality and its expression in his playbook publications, see Barish, Jowett, Miola, and Loewenstein.

SEIANVS.

ACTVS PRIMVS.

SABINVS. SILIVS. NATTA. LATIARIS. CORDVS.
SATRIVS. ARRVTIVS. EVDEMVS.
HATERIVS. &c.

SAB. **H**Aile ^a *Cains Silius*. SIL. ^b *Tinius Sabinus*, Hayle.
 YO'are rarely met in Court! SAB Therefore, well met.
 SIL. 'Tis true: Indeed, this Place is not our Sphaere.
 SAB. No *Silius*, we are no good Ingeniers;
 We want the fine Artes, and their thriving vse
 Should make vs grac'd, or favor'd of the Times:
 We haue no shift of Faces, no cleft Tongues,
 No soft, and glutinous bodies, that can suck,
 Like Snaiies, on painted walls; or, on our brests,
 Creepe vp, to fall, from that proud height, to which
 We did by ^c flauerie, not by seruice, chime.
 We are no guilty men, and then no Great;
 We haue nor place in Court, Office in state,
 That we ^d can say, we owe vnto our Crimes;
 We burne with no ^e black secrets, which can make
 Vs deare to the pale Authors; or liue fear'd
 Of their still waking ielosies, to raise
 Our selues a Fortune, by subuerting theirs.
 We stand not in the lines, that do aduance
 To that so courted point. SIL. But yonder leane
 A paire that doe. (SAB. Good Cossen ^f *Latiaris*.)
 SIL. ^g *Satrius Secundus*, and ^h *Pinnarius Natta*,
 The great *Seianus* Clients; There be two,
 Know more, then honest Councells: whose close brests
 Were they rip'd vp to light, it would be found
 A poore, and idle sinne, to which their Trunkes
 Had not bene made fit Organs: These can lie,
 Flatter, and sweare, forswear, depraue, ⁱ informe,
 Smile, and betray; make guilty men; then beg

B

The

^a De Caio
Silio. vid.
Tacit. Lips.
edit. 4^o.

Anna, lib. 1.
pag. 11, lib.
2. pag. 28.

^b De Titio
Sabino. vid.
Tac. lib. 4.

pag. 79.

^c Tac. An-
nal. lib. 1.

pag. 2.

^d Iuuenal.

Sat. 1. ver.

75.

^e Et Sat. 3.

ver. 49. &c.

^f De Lati-

ri, cos. Tac.

Annal. lib. 4.

pag. 94. &

Dion. Step.

edit. fol. lib.

58. pag.

711.

^g De Satrio

Secundo, &

^h Pinnario

Natta.

Leg. Ta-

cit. Annal.

lib. 4. pag.

83.

Et de Sa-

trio. cons.

Senec. co-

sol. ad Mar-

ciam.

ⁱ Vid. Sen.

de Benef.

lib. 3. cap.

26.

Fig. 2: Sig. B1r of the 1605 quarto of *Sejanus*, by Ben Jonson.

The typographic layout of Jonson's dramatic dialogue is clearly a matter of two-dimensional spatial arrangement. So is the spatial organization of the Ellesmere manuscript. It thus seems legitimate to ask of how many dimensions my signifying bibliographical space consists. I will attempt an answer with the help of another illustration, an admittedly imperfect facsimile edition of the first quarto of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* of 1597 (Fig. 3). The text, mercifully for an editor, is not printed in black letter as most printed playtexts only ten years earlier had been, but in straightforward roman type. What makes reading the text on this page difficult, then, is not the typeface but the text printed on the verso that is visible on the recto, for which the technical term is bleed-through. The amount of bleed-through in this and many other playbooks of the late sixteenth century eloquently comments on the relatively low social cachet dramatic texts in quarto editions still had at that time, as reflected in the low-quality, thin paper used for them.

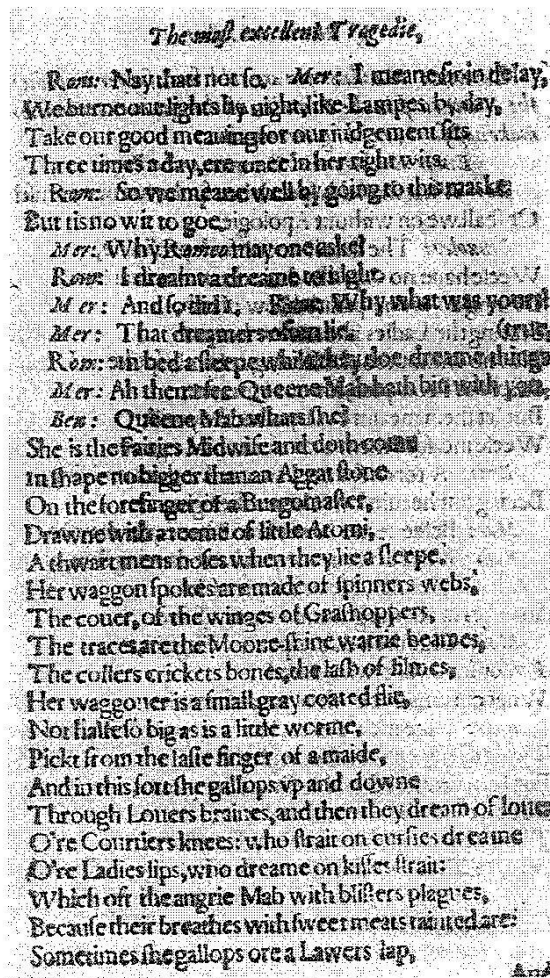


Fig. 3: Sig. C1v of the first quarto of William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597).

In other words, the quality, thickness, and consistency of paper on which texts are printed all carry significance that needs to be analyzed by the scholar in quest for historical meaning. The same applies to the watermark that is impressed in the substance of a sheet of paper during manufacture. Even though it is hardly noticeable except when the paper is held against strong light, the watermark is an element of the bibliographical space which we would be unwise to ignore. For example, if I may briefly return to the 1605 quarto edition of *Sejanus*, two scholars have recently discovered that some, though not all, of the surviving copies were printed on English paper manufactured in or shortly before 1605 with watermarks consisting of the royal initials, "IR," for Iacobus Rex, James the First, who had ascended the English throne on Queen Elizabeth's death in 1603, "AR," for Anna Regina, James's wife, Anne of Denmark, and "HP," for "Henricus Princeps," their son Henry, heir to the throne, who was to die in 1613 (Calhoun and Gravell). Just how unusual this paper and these watermarks were at the time is borne out by the fact that not a single one of the 595 English books printed between 1605 and 1610 that are now housed at the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C. was printed on paper bearing the same watermarks (Calhoun and Gravell 18-19). Whether or not Jonson had any say in the matter of what paper his play would be printed on, it seems significant that the playbook that makes a case for the legitimacy and prestige of printed drama by adopting typographic conventions with classical precedents was printed on English paper bearing the royal initials.

There is no extant evidence showing how Jonson's early readers responded to the materiality of the 1605 *Sejanus* quarto, but we do have evidence in a slightly later case. In 1633, the Puritan pamphleteer William Prynne was outraged by the quality of the paper used for the second folio edition of Shakespeare's plays, published the previous year. Prynne complains that "Shackspeers Plaies are printed in the best Crowne paper, far better than most Bibles" (**6v), a bibliographical reading that sheds light on the early rise of the prestige of Shakespeare's printed drama, which had been anticipated by earlier publications such as the 1605 *Sejanus*. The signifying bibliographical space I am interested in is thus emphatically three-dimensional, as evidenced by what the quality of the paper can tell us, and told others in the past, about the cultural capital of the texts imprinted on it.

It will be useful at this point to establish the theoretical distinction I am making between text, document, and work. These terms are tricky, and different people with different agendas use them in different ways. For instance, Roland Barthes' neat pronouncement, "The Work is in your hand, the text in the language," clearly does not employ these terms the way I do here.⁵ I am here using the word *text* to designate the order of words and punctuation as they occur in any one physical form, be it manuscript, typescript, or book. Accordingly, text does not refer to a specific material existence but only to a linguistic order not bound to time and space. A *work* has no material existence either, but constitutes the imagined whole made up by the various forms of a text which we think of as representing a single literary creation. Variant forms or versions such as, say, the 1799, the 1805, and the 1850 *Prelude* and the various extant material witnesses of each of these three versions thus all represent the work, but none is identical with it. The work, in other words, is a construct formed according to notions of authorial intention. The *document*, by contrast, is physical, consisting of paper and ink and bearing the signs that constitute a text. Since a document is a physical object, every copy of a text is a new document.⁶

If the semiotics of the page remain underexamined in the reception and reproduction of the literature we study, this is, I believe, because we have unduly favoured the work and the text at the expense of the document. Countless modern anthologies as well as standard modern editions of the poetry of Blake such as that by Penguin, reproducing the *text* of the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* but making no attempt at editing the *documents* in which they were first published, completely lose the tension, to give only one example, between the fearful tiger of Blake's poem of the same name and the harmless, pet-like tiger of Blake's engraving.

But this example really begs the question: for how can a document, a material object, be editorially reproduced? Facsimile editions constitute attempts to preserve the original documents' spatial arrangement, typography, layout, and so on. Yet even a facsimile edition, clearly, does not reproduce a document which, by definition, is a unique material object.⁷ An

⁵ See Louis Hay, "Does 'Text' Exist?", *Studies in Bibliography* 41 (1988), 64-76, esp. pp. 67-68.

⁶ For these definitions of text, work, and document, I am drawing on Shillingsburg (43-47).

⁷ See Dane, especially page 32. Among the other discontents with facsimile editions is their idealisation of the physical object, which fails to suggest the textual instability that usually reigns among different copies of the same edition of an early modern text owing to the common practice of stop-press correction.

editorial policy that calls for textual reproduction that considers the book's materiality as implicated in the text's meaning and therefore attempts to preserve it is, in a sense, self-defeating. For the one thing that cannot be reproduced is a book's materiality.

The awareness that no "presentation of a literary work can be made that does not involve some loss of desirable information" (Kastan 37) does not dispense us, I believe, from a reception of textual productions and reproductions that is at the same time linguistic and bibliographical.⁸ Rather, awareness of the limitations of the reproduction of bibliographical space means that editing always involves a material and spatial reconstruction which, in turn, bears meaning even though that meaning differs from the bibliographical meaning of the original document. Focusing on what facsimile editions cannot preserve construes this difference as a loss, but editing also constitutes a possibility to mediate meaning that would otherwise not be easily available to readers. In other words, knowing the inescapability of misrepresentation, editors can undertake their task with an awareness of how not only the reproduced, but also the reinvented, document signifies.

I shall attempt to unpack these remarks with an example. I am currently at work on an edition for The New Cambridge Shakespeare series of *The First Quarto of Romeo and Juliet*, the earliest and little-known version of Shakespeare's play which was published in 1597, while the version we all know was published two years later. The first quarto is significantly shorter but has more stage directions than the better known version; one scene is entirely different, and all the other scenes often depart from the better known text in a variety of ways. A decision any editor of *Romeo and Juliet* has to face is that of the layout of the dialogue of the first encounter of Romeo and Juliet at the Capulets' ball. What many people remember about this passage is that Romeo and Juliet share a sonnet when they first speak to each other. While this is not wrong, it is not the full truth either. In fact, we think Romeo and Juliet share a sonnet because that is what most modern editions suggest through annotation and layout. Figure 4, for example, presents the passage as it appears in the Oxford Shakespeare *Complete Works* of 1986 (Wells and Taylor). The

⁸ Kastan's view is neatly summed up in what he calls the "impossibility of editing and yet the inescapability of it" (37). Note, though, that Randall McLeod (often publishing under the pseudonym "Random Cloud"), whom Stephen Orgel has rightly called "the most brilliant and radically postmodern of textual scholars" (18), consciously refrains from editing and uses photographic reproductions for all his quotations.

layout serves to highlight the shared sonnet by means of indentation of lines two, four, six, eight, ten, and twelve. Illustrations 5 and 6, by contrast, show the same passage as it appears in the first and second quartos. Here, typography suggests dramatic continuity rather than a poetic set piece that stands apart from the rest.

ROMEO (*to Juliet, touching her hand*)
 If I profane with my unwortheiest hand
 This holy shrine, the gentler sin is this:
 My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand
 To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss. 95

JULIET
 Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,
 Which mannerly devotion shows in this.
 For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,
 And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

ROMEO
 Have not saints lips, and holy palmers, too? 100

JULIET
 Ay, pilgrim, lips that they must use in prayer.

ROMEO
 O then, dear saint, let lips do what hands do:
 They pray; grant thou, lest faith turn to despair.

JULIET
 Saints do not move, though grant for prayers' sake.

ROMEO
 Then move not while my prayer's effect I take. 105
He kisses her

Fig. 4: *Romeo and Juliet*, 1.5.92-105, as it appears in the Oxford Shakespeare *Complete Works*, gen. ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor.

What complicates matters is that rhymed verse in this passage is in fact not confined to the first fourteen lines of dialogue between Romeo and Juliet. Tybalt's four lines immediately preceding the lovers' dialogue form two couplets and, even more importantly, Romeo and Juliet's fourteen-line sonnet is followed by another quatrain with the rhyme scheme abab. In fact, it might be argued that Romeo and Juliet don't share a sonnet at all, or at least not in the narrow sense to which the use of the term has been restricted since the eighteenth century (see *OED*, sonnet, n. 2), but that they share an eighteen-line passage with three quatrains and a couplet. Another interpretation is possible too: it is a commonplace in criticism of *Romeo and Juliet* that Shakespeare dramatizes the various encounters between the two lovers in a way that announces their tragic deaths long before they actually happen. Their first encounter is usually considered the one exception to this, the one moment in which the intensity of their love is not overshadowed by premonitions of their deaths. But it seems possible to argue that Romeo and Juliet start a second shared sonnet that gets cut off as the Nurse interrupts them, doing to the lovers' sonnet what the play ends up doing to their lives.

Inevitably, any modern editor of *Romeo and Juliet* has to choose between various spatial arrangements of the verse in this passage, and just as inevitably that spatial arrangement will carry meaning, encourage a certain interpretation or not. Some editors prefer the dramatic continuity suggested by the spatial arrangement of the early quartos which does not draw attention to the pattern of the rhyming verse, and thereby refrains from privileging the young lovers at the expense of the other characters. Yet if an editor likes the idea of Romeo and Juliet sharing a sonnet and feeling so at home in the lyric form of Petrarchan love that they immediately start a second sonnet only to be cut off by the Nurse who, in such a reading, turns out to be the first of a series of external forces thwarting their love, then that editor may try to suggest that interpretation by means of layout, indented lines, and perhaps even additional space between the end of the first sonnet and the beginning of the second. In this case, the decision not to preserve the spatial arrangement of the copy-text in the original document turns out to be not a loss of meaning that an editor would deem worthy to preserve but a way of mediating to the reader meaning in a bibliographical way, meaning which the original document does not make as easily available.

I shall dwell on Shakespeare a little longer in order to present another example where the original arrangement of words in space is profitably changed by the modern editor. The one scholarly insight which, more than any other, has had an impact on our understanding of the semiotics of the Shakespearean page is Charlton Hinman's discovery that in the printing of the First Folio of 1623, the type was set by formes ("Cast-off Copy" and *Printing* 1.69-76). A "forme" is a "body of type . . . for printing at one impression" (*OED*, form n. 20), roughly the size of what we now call format A3. The First Folio consists of a series of so-called "quires," with three sheets of paper each folded once so as to form six leaves which, with each leaf printed on either side, makes for twelve pages of text. Before Hinman, scholars had assumed that the First Folio was printed in seriatim order from the first to the last page. Hinman showed that this was not true, that the type was not set by page, but by formes. What this means is that the compositors usually first set pages six and seven of a quire, then five and eight, then four and nine, and so on, finishing with pages one and twelve. In other words, compositors had to know what part of the text was going to occupy page six before pages one to five had been printed. Accordingly, "Setting by formes requires 'casting off' of copy" (Hinmann "Cast-off Copy" 261), that is, compositors had to decide in advance how much text was going to fit on a page. As long as the text consists of verse, this is not a major problem, but the more prose there is, the more difficult casting off becomes.

Once Hinman had established this, he could show that quite a number of pages in the First Folio show irregularities towards the bottom of the right-hand column, irregularities that are due to compositors working towards a casting-off point, while having too much or too little text for it to be an easy fit. Ways of solving this problem if there was too much text were abbreviations, or turning verse into prose, or, perhaps, even omitting some of the text. By contrast, when there was not enough text to fill the page, the compositors could cut regular iambic pentameter into shorter lines, as in the following example from *Titus Andronicus* where

The most excellent Tragedie,

Ca: *Goe too, you are a faucio knaue.*

This trick will teach you one day I know what.

Well said my hartes. Be quiet:

More light Yeknaue, or I will make you quiet. (sing)

Tibals: Patience perforce with wi full choller mee

Makes my flesh tremble in their different greetings:

I will withdraw, but this intrusion shall

Now seeming sweet, convert to bitter gall.

Rom: If I prephane with my vawordie hand,

This holie si rite, the gent'e time is this:

My lips two bluss'ing Pilgrims ready stand,

To smooth the rough touch with a gentle kisse.

Juli: Good Pilgrime you doe wrong your hand, too

Which mannerly deuotion st ewes in this: (much)

For Saints haue hands which holy Palmers touch,

And Palme to Palme is holy Palmers kisse.

Rom: Haue not Saints lips, and holy Palmers too?

Juli: Yes Pilgrime lips that they must vse in praier.

Ro: Why then faire faint, 'et lips do what hands doo,

They pray, yee'd thou, least faith turne to dispaire.

Ju: Saints doe not mooue though: grant nor praier
forsake.

Ro: Then mooue not till my praier's effect I take.

Thus from my lips, by yours my sin is purge.

Ju: Then haue my lips the sin that they haue took.

Ro: Siame from my lips, O trespasse sweetly vrgde!

Giue me my sinne againe.

Ju: You kisse by the brooke.

Nurse: *Ma'ame your mother calles.*

Rom: What is her mother?

Nurse: *Marrie Batcheler her mother is the Ladie of the
house, and a good Lady, and a wise, and a vertuous. I wurst*

Fig. 5: Sig. C3v of the first quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), by William Shakespeare.

of Romeo and Juliet.

He not endure him.

Capu. He shall be endured.

That goodman boy, I say he shall, go too,

Am I the master here or you? go too,

Youle not endure him, god shall mend my soule,

Youle make a mutinie among my guessts:

You wil set cock a hoope, youle be the man.

Ti. Why Vncle, tis a shame.

Capu. Go too, go too,

You are a sawcie boy, ist so indeed?

This trick may chance to scath you I know what,

You must contrarie me, marrie tis time,

Well said my hearts, you are a princox, go.

Be quiet, or more light, more light for shame,

He make you quiet (whar) chearely my hearts.

Ti. Parience perforce, with wilfull choller meeting,

Makes my flesh tremble in their different greeting:

I will withdraw, but this intrusion shall

Now seeming sweet, conuert to bitterest gall. *Exit.*

Ro. If I prophane with my vnworthiest hand,

This holy shrine, the gentle sin is this,

My lips two blushing Pylgrims did readie stand,

To smoothe that rough touch with a tender kis.

In. Good Pilgrim you do wrōg your hād too much.

Which mannerly deuocion showes in this,

For saints haue hands, that Pilgrims hands do tuch,

And palme to palme is holy Palmers kis.

Re. Haue not Saints lips and holy Palmers too?

In. I Pilgrim, lips that they must vse in praire.

Rom. O then deare Saint, let lips do what hands do,

They pray (grant thou) least faith turne to dispaire.

In. Saints do not moue, thogh grant for praiers sake.

Ro. Then moue not while my praiers effect I take,

Thus from my lips, by thine my sin is purgd.

In. Thē haue my lips the sin that they haue tooke.

Re. Sin from my lips, ô trespass sweetly vrgd:

Giuse

Fig. 6: Sig. C4r of the second quarto of *Romeo and Juliet* (1599), by William Shakespeare.

For now I stand as one vpon a Rocke,
 Inuiron'd with a wildernesse of Sea.
 Who markes the waxing tide,
 Grow waue by waue,

is followed by the catchword "Expecting" on the last line of the page (sig. Dd2v). The passage consists of three regular iambic pentameters, but the third, "Who markes the waxing tide, / Grow waue by waue," is cut into two short lines of three and two feet respectively.

A few years before Hinman's discovery, the renowned Shakespear-ean G.B. Harrison, drawing on passages like the above, had argued that in late plays such as *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare chose to break up regular iambic pentameters into two irregular lines, thereby creating a certain rhythm or a special emphasis. And he castigated Alexander Pope who, in his edition of Shakespeare's plays in the early eighteenth century, had regularized these lines and, Harrison believed, thereby failed to respect Shakespeare's intentions. In other words, the spatial arrangement of certain pages of the First Folio was correctly understood by Harrison and others as containing unusual signs that required decoding, but the signs were mistakenly believed to originate with the author when, in fact, they owed their presence to the compositors having failed to predict accurately how much text would fit on a page and therefore had to waste, or on other occasions, save, space.

I have hitherto refrained from exploring a space of textual reproduction in which much exciting work is currently being produced, namely cyberspace. With Jerome McGann, I believe that "The change from paper-based text to electronic text is one of those elementary shifts – like the change from manuscript to print – that is so revolutionary we can only glimpse at this point what it entails" ("Rationale of Hypertext" 40). What applies to the change of medium in general also holds true for the spatial disposition of text in particular, as some recent work makes clear. In a recent collection on the modern textual reproduction of early modern drama, two essays explore the immense potential and possibilities, but also the drawbacks, of spatial presentation in electronic text. Sonia Massai investigates innovative modes of presentation for textual variants such as flickering type, which can draw attention to textual instability in the main body of the text, where print editors have to confine their information to the collation or textual notes which occupy less privileged space on the page or in the back of the book. On the other

hand, John Lavagnino shows that for as basic a feature as annotation, electronic editors are still striving to come up with a spatial arrangement that can rival the convenience of the on-page footnote or of the extensive notes on the facing page, which dominate today's scholarly editions of Shakespeare plays in the codex form. The answer the 1980s and 90s seemed to provide – you click on a word and the note appears – turns out to be about as inconvenient after extensive use as having notes in the back of the volume rather than on the same page, or the same double page, where you need only to glance down or across. As these two examples illustrate, electronic text and the new possibilities and problems they represent for the spatial arrangement of textual reproductions offer an exciting field of investigation which I have only briefly touched upon because it presents, really, a topic for another article.

The editorial reproduction of texts, I have tried to suggest, is fraught with problems. Most of those who are engaged in editorial activity will agree that the accurate reproduction of the linguistic content of the original is a task that is difficult enough. The distinguished Shakespearean John F. Andrews is unlikely to disagree, having published an edition of Shakespeare's works in 1989, the *Guild Shakespeare*, which is chiefly remembered for printing the opening line of Hamlet's most famous soliloquy as "To be or to be, that is the Question." Yet apart from paying close attention to matters of linguistic content, we also need to attend to the physical space with which that linguistic content is inextricably bound up as we textually reproduce, and analyze textual reproductions of, the literature we study. In the past, bibliography and criticism were neatly separated. The *New Bibliographers*, led by Walter Wilson Greg, thought of theirs as a rigorous, scientific undertaking, eschewing all interpretation which would be subjective and thus unscientific.⁹ Greg believed 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" (247). While Greg's bibliographer was thus only interested in blots of ink on paper and parchment, many literary critics, even of a historical orientation, implicitly analyze texts as non-material entities. The emergence of book history as a vital new interdisciplinary approach in the last twenty years or so has done much to do away with

⁹ Laurie Maguire (29-30) has shown that Greg as well as his fellow *New Bibliographers* Ronald McKerrow and Peter Alexander had an academic interest in science and mathematics.

this artificial division. It has shown that textual criticism and bibliography on the one hand and literary criticism and history on the other hand are in no way antithetical but, on the contrary, intimately related (see McKenzie 23). Typography, layout, even the texture of paper, the book's binding, as well as its format all constitute a bibliographic space that deserves to be deciphered by readers in search of historical meanings, with no less attention than that paid to the meaning residing in the text's linguistic content.

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