Introduction

Material Modernism argues for the ongoing revaluation of modernism, that once revered, then despised, and now enigmatic period of the first half of the twentieth century that beckons for recovery. Yet recovery does not mean simply reinstatement of the old reverence or the old canon. On the contrary, this book adopts a more critical stance than that which characterized the academic heyday of modernism, and it considers a wider range of figures. The book finds its special purchase in arguing that current constructions of literary modernism – like those that regard its achievements and attitudes as favoring the anti-historical over the historical, product over process, or totalizing rather than interrogative discourse – derive from current, material forms of availability and transmission of its texts as texts. In contrast, I contend that examining modernism in its original sites of production and in the continually shifting physicality of its texts and transmissions results in alternative constructions very different from current ones. Such views emphasize historical contingency, multiple versions, and the material features of the text itself. The project thus situates itself at the intersection of literary theory and of the rapidly growing area of textual construction. From there it reaches out into areas of cultural study including the material forms of cultural transmission, the hybridity of group identities, and the politics of literary gender. As the subtitle *The Politics of the Page* indicates, the book argues above all for modernism as a thoroughly historicized project both reflecting and contributing to the politics of its time and of our own.

Material Modernism proceeds in groups of chapters. Chapter 1, "How to read a page: modernism and material textuality," initiates construction of the theoretical frame for the entire book. It highlights the notion of material textuality as both the physical features of the text that carry semantic weight and the multiple forms in which texts are physically created and distributed. The theoretical section features the notion of "bibliographic code" of the text – features of page layout, book or periodical design, or aspects of the book giving physical information about itself – as offering important supplements to the "linguistic code" (or words). The chapter begins the construction of analogies to Walter Benjamin's notion of the "aura" or speech-act theorists' concept of "utterance" that will appear throughout the book. Just as Benjamin

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argues that the "aura" locates the work of art in time and space (that is, in history) and speech-act theorists contend that "utterance" (gesture, tone, and the like) functions as an important carrier of meaning, so do editorial theorists like Jerome McGann and myself see "bibliographic code" as an important constituent of meanings, particularly of historical or political ones. The chapter then proceeds to exemplary readings of four well-known sonnets – Keats's Romantic "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer," Emma Lazarus's turn-of-the-century "The New Colossus," W. B. Yeats's modernist "Leda and the Swan," and Gwendolyn Brooks's more contemporary "my dreams, my works must wait till after hell." In each case, recovery of lost bibliographic and contextual codes results in readings firmly situating the work in historical contingencies not recoverable from inspection of the mere words of the text in modern editions. The second chapter, "The once and future texts of modernist poetry," argues that texts by such key poets as W. B. Yeats, Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle (H. D.), Marianne Moore, and T. S. Eliot give a mistaken notion of permanence and completeness by being frozen and disseminated in only one of their multiple forms, and that recent version theory offers a richer account of them as processes rather than mere products of inscription. That "freezing" derives in turn from a confluence of social and economic forces (chiefly copyright law and the conditions of material production in the twentieth century) with editorial and critical ones (chiefly a covert agreement of premises between then dominant New Criticism, which favored notions of text as a well-wrought urn, and the New Bibliography, associated with Greg and Bowers, which sought to construct idealized forms of literary works even if the works had never existed historically in that particular form).

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the influential modernist W. B. Yeats, less in himself than as emblem for modernist projects. "Yeats and textual reincarnation: 'When You Are Old' and 'September 1913'" uses Yeats to exemplify the multiplicity, historicity, and materiality of the texts of modernist poetry generally. After exploring more deeply the analogies among the concepts of bibliographic code, historical aura, and speech-act utterance introduced earlier, this chapter then establishes the pertinence of material textuality first to Yeats's love lyrics and then to his more overtly political poetry, again focusing on an exemplary text in each case. As "When You Are Old" changes sites from the original manuscript album presented to Maud Gonne to first an individual volume of verse and then the collected *Poems* (1895 and 1899), it loses its original, courtly, medieval aura but still takes from its material instantiation a context both of love and of Irish nationalism, both of which disappear from contemporary collected editions and from anthologies. Similarly, the original newspaper publication of "September 1913" embeds it in an ongoing debate about the Dublin Strike and Lockout of 1913 as well as about founding a Municipal Gallery of Art; further, in that site the poem constitutes an intervention into the

debate itself. Later incarnations in the Cuala Press *Responsibilities* volume develop the political context in new ways, which again disappear from subsequent collected editions or anthologies. For example, publication by Cuala Press – a self-declared nationalist and feminist enterprise – importantly shapes the politics and reception of the poem, even as Cuala's physical page-layout and design echo the Guild Socialism of William Morris in gesturing toward an alternative to capitalist models of production. The different sites of publication indicate far deeper immersion in history than is often assumed of modernist works, one in which the works both participate directly in history and reflect that participation in mediated form. And Yeats's explicit involvement with the bookcovers, layout, and design of his volumes indicates the importance of such visual coding. The next chapter, "Building Yeats's Tower / building modernism," casts a wider net in taking not individual poems but rather the entire landmark 1928 volume *The Tower* (which includes such major modernist poems as "Sailing to Byzantium," "The Tower," "Leda and the Swan," and "Among School Children") as example of modernist projects that result more in processes than products. Now available only in the collected poems and in a paperback reprint that exclude several of the original codings, the unit known there as *The Tower* features different arrangements and different individual readings in the American and British versions. And the "volume" itself was composed of individual lyrics published first either singly or in groups in magazines, then in three small separate volumes from Cuala Press, then in the reordered Macmillan volume of 1928, and finally arranged and rearranged in subsequent orderings of the collected poems. The notion that there is a "the" text of *The Tower* obscures the protean changes of this key monument and of modernist projects generally.

The final three chapters extend material textuality to the networks that produced and distributed modernist texts from the 1910s to the 1930s, especially the interrelated small presses and little magazines, and to wider groups than comprised earlier academic valorizations of modernism. Chapter 5, "Pressing women: Marianne Moore and the networks of modernism," first examines the largely female construction of a network of editors and institutions for the distribution and reception of modernist literature by a wide range of writers. It then explores the effect of such gender coding through a study of Marianne Moore, first of her editorship of the influential literary magazine *The Dial* from 1925 to 1929 and then of the changing material texts of her often-anthologized early poem "The Fish," which largely as a result of the intervention of T. S. Eliot in the construction of Moore's *Selected Poems* of 1935 mutated from a poem heavily embedded in the First World War to an ahistorical lyric exemplifying aesthetic pattern. Similarly, the passage of time and her own rearrangement erased the original historical thrust of Moore's Irish poems "Sojourn in the Whale" and "Spenser's Ireland," just as her later revisions toned down the economic and racial critique of her related poem on colonization "Virginia Britannia."

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The last two chapters extend the argument to different countries or groups, all of which both expand traditional notions of literary modernism and include more overt cultural criticism and theory. "Joyce and the colonial archive: constructing alterity in *Ulysses*" begins with the stormy reception of the controversial Gabler edition. Taking as the core of that edition not the one-volume "reading text" but rather the three-volume "synoptic" text, the chapter analyzes the debate over the edition as one between two concepts of textuality – an older, more traditional notion of the text as fixed product championed by John Kidd and a newer conception of the text as a work in process exemplified by Gabler. The chapter then uses Gabler's synoptic encoding to study the changing representation of Others in the novel, especially of Jews, Blacks, and the Irish themselves. The final chapter, "Afro-Celtic connections: hybridity and the material text," foregrounds material textuality in discussing cross-cultural constructions of both Irish and African–American literature, and about the often suppressed links between them as examples of cultural hybridity that material textuality can help to recover. Looking at the original sites of publication of materials from Frederick Douglass's work in the abolitionist journal *The Liberator* through crucial documents of the Harlem Renaissance reveals the extent to which African–American writers often constructed accounts of their own resistance in terms of Irish comparisons and tropes, and in the Harlem Renaissance invoked Irish nationalist writing as an explicit model for a literature of resistance and uplift. Equally importantly, key works like *The New Negro* (1925) declared themselves deliberately biracial, whereas later reprints airbrush out that hybridity. And the eventual production and publication of Langston Hughes's and Zora Neale Hurston's collaborative play *Mule Bone* many years after the authors' deaths show material renderings of the play on stage and in print which drastically revise the representations suggested by the surviving typescripts. The problematics of *Mule Bone*'s textual construction and cultural reception bear intriguing analogies to those surrounding John Synge's controversial *The Playboy of the Western World* earlier in the century.

Material Modernism, then, deploys issues of textual construction to analyze cultural constructions like history, politics, and alterity. Modern theory has perceptively demystified the linguistic codes of the texts that it uses. *Material Modernism* argues that we must do the same to the physical texts themselves, rather than continue to treat them as transparent lenses offering us unproblematic access to authors or works. In an age of demystification, the physical text often remains the last mystified object. Distinguishing current material texts from earlier existent or future possible ones frees us to recognize the limits of any particular physical text and instead to recall or to fashion other textualities serving other enterprises. In the words of that arch-modernist Wallace Stevens in *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, it is "not a choice between, but of."

CHAPTER ONE

How to read a page: modernism and material textuality

I begin with a question helpful for understanding the radical implications for literary study of recent editorial theory: If the "Mona Lisa" is in Paris at the Louvre, where is *King Lear*?[1] The question opens important issues of what constitutes the (or is it a?) text. We accept that Da Vinci's famous portrait hangs in the French museum, and that reproductions of it are copies that lack one or more features of the original. But no such certitude underlies the reproduction of literary texts; indeed, the opposite condition may apply. That is, to find Shakespeare's *King Lear* we need not turn to the Pied Bull Quarto or to the First Folio; on the contrary, those *originals* of this work of literary art may themselves be inferior copies, either of a lost manuscript or of an ideal print version, and themselves full of deficiencies. Later "copies" may be superior to the originals, and critics may legitimately prefer to work with them. In our age of relentless demystification, the text itself often remains the last mystified object, with critics naively assuming that the paperback texts that they pull from their local bookstore somehow "are" *King Lear*, or *Pride and Prejudice*, or *The Souls of Black Folk*. But our opening question leads us to see that the work of literary art exists in more than one place at the same time. That means that any particular version that we study of a text is always already a construction, one of many possible in a world of constructions.

Besides the notion of the constructedness of all texts, a second important idea of recent editorial theory is that of multiple authorized versions.[2] We need to know what alternate versions to a text we are studying do or might exist, but we do not need to know that in order to choose just one version for exclusive attention. On the contrary, we might adopt the strategy that Emily Dickinson scholars describe as "choosing not choosing"[3] and instead elect to consider multiple versions of the text. We might, for example, prefer the folio version of *King Lear* with its streamlined action, but we might not want to omit the famous Mock Judgment Scene, which exists only in an earlier quarto version. In that case, we might want to consider both the quarto and the folio, perhaps together with a modern eclectic text that blends the two, even though no such text

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was attempted until nearly a century after Shakespeare's death. We
might want multiple versions of poems created by such notorious revis-
ers as Yeats or Moore, who rewrote their texts wholesale. Or we might
want to know that the most widely circulated version today of Martin
Luther King's famous essay "Pilgrimage to Nonviolence" (a crucial doc-
ument for me as for so many others of my generation) omits its critique
of Marxist thought. It would not be enough simply to choose any one of
the versions in these or other examples: many of the multiple versions
were authorized by the authors themselves, and we would want to have
them all. Indeed, the literary work might be said to exist not in any one
version, but in all the versions put together. In reading a particular page,
we would want to know of the other versions of that page, and the first
step in reading would then be to discover what other pages exist with
claims on our attention.

Such a strategy leads to a third way that recent editorial theory sug-
gests for reading a page, in addition to awareness of its constructedness
and of multiple alternatives. That is to recognize that the literary text
consists not only of words (its linguistic code) but also of the semantic
features of its material instantiations (its bibliographic code). Such bib-
liographic codes might include cover design, page layout, or spacing,
among other factors. They might also include the other contents of the
book or periodical in which the work appears, as well as prefaces, notes,
or dedications that affect the reception and interpretation of the work.
Such material features correspond to Walter Benjamin's concept of the
"aura" in his celebrated essay "The Work of Art in the Age of
Mechanical Reproduction." Largely concerned with film as successor to
both fine art and print, that essay posits the aura as the key aspect of a
work to disappear under conditions of mechanical reproduction:

Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element:
its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens
to be . . . The presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of
authenticity . . . The situations into which the product of mechanical reproduc-
tion can be brought may not touch the actual work of art, yet the quality of its
presence is always depreciated . . . One might subsume the eliminated element
in the term "aura" and go on to say: that which withers in the age of mechan-
ical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.[4]

For Benjamin the "aura" thus indicates particularly the presence of the
work of art in time and space (that is, in history) and proves particularly
vulnerable in an age of mechanical reproduction. Although Benjamin
himself saw the aura as "withering" in the age of mechanical reproduc-
tion, we may revise Benjamin by emphasizing that for literary works
original mechanical reproductions can create their own aura, and that
it is the earlier auras that wither under successive reproductions of the
work, particularly if the "work" is thought of as identical merely to its

words. The aura emerges in part from the material features of the text.
The original sites of incarnation thus carry with them an aura placing
the work in space and time, and constituting its authenticity as well as its
contingency. Removing that aura removes the iconicity of the page, and
thus important aspects of a text's meaning.

What Benjamin thinks of as aura finds its analogy in the concept of
bibliographic code put forward by recent editorial theorists such as
Jerome McGann. In *The Textual Condition* McGann enlisted the notion of
bibliographic code to critique the notion of eclectic editing and to advo-
cate instead a more socialized view of the text. Distinguishing between
a work's words, or "linguistic code," and its physical features, or "biblio-
graphic code," McGann argued for

the symbolic and signifying dimensions of the physical medium through which
(or rather *as* which) the linguistic text is embodied . . . Meaning is transmitted
through bibliographical as well as linguistic codes . . . As the process of textual
transmission expands . . . the signifying processes of the work become increas-
ingly collaborative and socialized . . . Correlative with this position is the argu-
ment that no single editorial procedure – no single 'text' of a particular work –
can be imagined or hypothesized as the 'correct' one . . . And it must be under-
stood that the archive includes not just original manuscripts, proofs, and edi-
tions, but all the subsequent textual constitutions which the work undergoes in
its historical passages.[5]

Bibliographic code can include features of page layout, book design, ink
and paper, and typeface as well as broader issues which D. F. McKenzie
might call "the sociology of texts," like publisher, print run, price, or
audience.[6] McGann deploys the concept in *The Textual Condition* to chal-
lenge Greg–Bowers conceptions of eclectic editing based on final autho-
rial intentions, but I would like to emphasize here instead its congruence
with Benjamin's notion of aura. The bibliographic code corresponds to
the aura and, like it, points to the work's "presence in time and space."
Subsequent representations, particularly if they emphasize only the lin-
guistic code, correspond to the withering of the aura. They tend to set
the text free from its original time and place, locating it in our own prin-
cipally as an aesthetic rather than historicized object.

A third notion helpful for exploring material textuality is the concept
of utterance from speech-act theory. First in his seminal article "Text as
Matter, Concept, and Action" Peter Shillingsburg argued for the perti-
nence of speech-act theory to concepts of text and editing by insisting
that texts involve matter (physical form), concepts (largely ideas in the
minds of authors and editors), and actions performed by the readers or
audience. In a short paper "Refining the Social Contract" delivered at
the Society for Textual Scholarship conference in 1995 and available in
expanded form in his recent book *Resisting Texts*, he elaborates the
argument:

> Authoring, manufacturing, and reading performances are seen more clearly if we keep in mind a distinction between the products of these performances and the uses to which they are put. John Searle insists on this distinction when he explains the difference between *sentence* and *utterance*. Sentence is the formal structure of the words and their relation. Sentence can be recorded as a series of words; sentences are iterable. Utterance, on the other hand, is the intended meaning in the use of sentence. The same sentence can be used on separate occasions to mean different things. The particular use of sentence on occasion in a specific setting is not utterance; utterance is not iterable . . . Sentence, not utterance, is what is recorded literally in written texts. Utterance is reduced to sentence in written works . . . In speech, these extra-textual elements include tone of voice, gesture and body language, place and time, and actual audience . . . In writing, the extra-textual clues are less immediate than in speech but include the 'bibliographic code' as a means writers, publishers, and readers use to help construct utterance from sentence.[7]

Just as McGann deployed his argument partly to answer Greg–Bowers eclectic editing, so has Shillingsburg pointed his to counter extreme claims of a social-construction argument. I emphasize here the correspondence of speech acts with our two earlier notions of bibliographic code and aura. In this analysis the bibliographic code is the textual form taken by speech acts. The physical features of the text correspond to the physical features of delivery of a speech act, to the factors that make it an utterance rather than merely a sentence. And those are the same features that help constitute a textual aura.

I suggest that McGann, Shillingsburg, and I have come to these conclusions through dissatisfaction with traditional theories of editing as applied to nineteenth and twentieth-century authors like Byron, Thackeray, or Yeats, whom we have respectively edited, or to ones like Blake, Dickinson, and Pound whom we have not. Put simply, it is difficult for traditional Anglo-American textual practice to deal adequately with the complex textual situations faced by editors of works from the last two centuries, where a plethora of materials and evidence rather than a paucity is the problem. Seen in that light, Anglo-American copy-text eclectic editing becomes *only one* way among many to deal with the materials, rather than *the only* way. Further, it seems to be a way that ignores important elements in the meaning constructed by the text, whether we compare those features to aura, bibliographic code, or speech act. Such elements help to *historicize* the work. In contrast, a common thread of both sophisticated eclecticism and naive reductionism is the equation of "text" merely with words or linguistic code, an approach that tends to *de-historicize* the work.

I explore these theoretical ideas in more detail in following chapters but want first to illustrate them concretely here with readings of four sonnets by poets of diverse backgrounds from different periods of the last two centuries. I have selected the sonnet form neither to privilege poetry

nor to appease any ghosts of New Critics like Brooks and Warren trailing wraithlike through the halls of contemporary academia, but rather for three main reasons. First, sonnets provide short, manageable examples of principles that apply to all forms of textuality. Second, the particular sonnets are ones that we often teach in our classes; all, for example, are in the latest edition of *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. And finally, the sonnet strikes most people as one of the most overtly "aesthetic" forms of writing; with the exception of overtly political sonnets like some of Milton's or Wordsworth's, sonnets seem to many people as far from involvement in historical contingency as literature is likely to get. And yet, as we shall see, the material textuality of sonnets imbricates them directly in political matrices both of their time and of our own. Let us proceed, then, to sonnets by the English Romantic poet John Keats, the later nineteenth-century Jewish–American writer Emma Lazarus, the Irish modernist W. B. Yeats, and the contemporary African–American author Gwendolyn Brooks.

Our examination begins with four material instantiations of Keats's sonnet "On first looking into Chapman's Homer," surely a standard text even in these anti-canonical times. They are the manuscript, first publication in the periodical *The Examiner*, first book publication in Keats's *Poems* of 1817, and current reproduction in *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* (fourth edition). The material form of each context highlights a different aspect of the poem, causing us to read each page differently. The manuscript (Figure 1), for example, emphasizes the poem as aesthetic object, a sonnet, with Keats endearingly drawing lines at the right margin to help him keep straight the exigencies of Petrarchan rhyme: gold, seen, been hold, told, Demesne, mean, bold; and skies, ken, eyes, men, surmise, Darien:

> Much have I travell'd in the Realms of Gold
>   And many goodly States, and Kingdoms seen;
>   Round many Western islands have I been,
> Which Bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
> Oft of one wide expanse had I been told,
>   Which deep brow'd Homer ruled as his Demesne;
>   Yet could I never judge what Men could mean,
> Till I heard Chapman speak out loud, and bold.
> Then felt I like some Watcher of the Skies
>   When a new Planet swims into his Ken,
> Or like stout Cortez, when with wond'ring eyes
>   He star'd at the Pacific, and all his Men
> Look'd at each other with a wild surmise –
> Silent upon a Peak in Darien.[8]

The manuscript also contains suggestive variants in its linguistic code, such as line 7 reading "Yet could I never judge what men could mean"
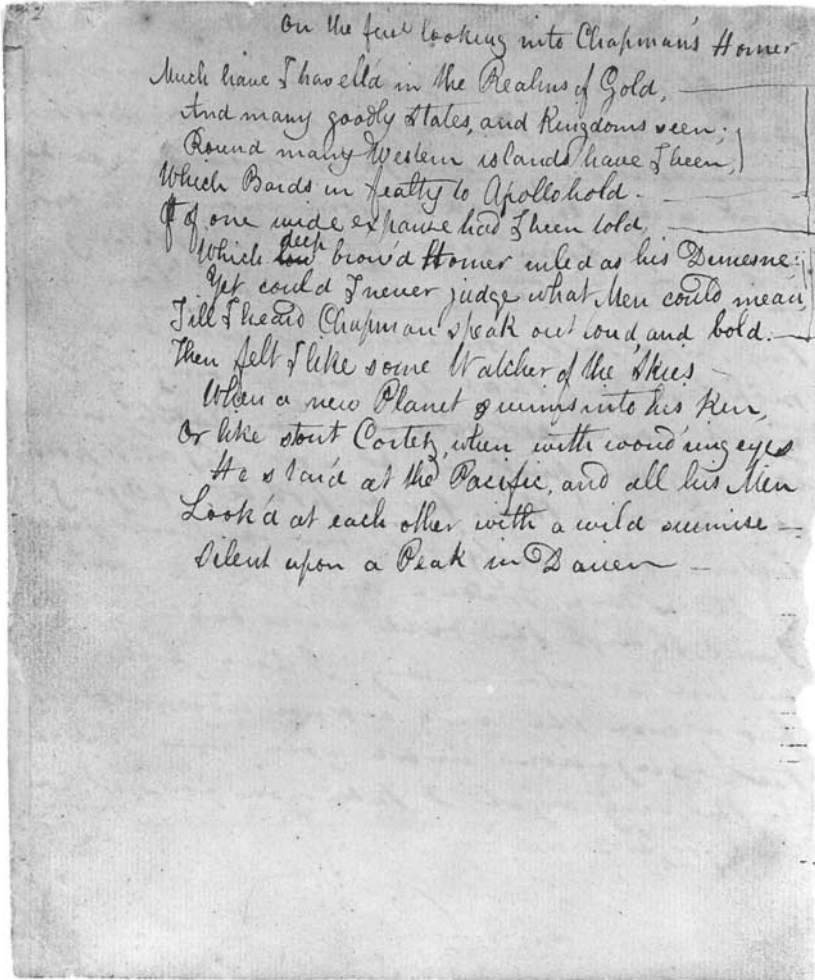
Figure 1 John Keats, "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer" in Manuscript.

rather than the later "Yet never could I breathe its pure serene," or those "wond'ring" rather than the later "eagle" eyes of Cortez in line 11. Besides foregrounding formal elements, it obviously heightens our awareness of the biographical John Keats inscribing the poem.

In contrast, the second bibliographic coding of the text, that of *The Examiner*, emphasizes the social and political aspects of the poem (Figure 2).[9] *The Examiner* was a left-leaning political and literary periodical run by Keats's friend and sometime mentor Leigh Hunt. *The Examiner* supported all the liberal causes of its day, and Hunt had been sent to prison for articles protesting the flogging of British troops during the Napoleonic wars. This particular number of *The Examiner* includes articles on Napoleon, on a mass meeting to demand food for the poor, on