

The *Lyrical Ballads*

Stephen Miller
AAC / ÖAW
Texts & Files WS 2007/08
Institut für Germanistik, Universität Wien

Potential

- “An electronic edition has as many continuities with the past as radical departures. Its fundamental mission of transferring a portion of our cultural heritage to a new medium finds precedent in the humanist projects of Aldus Manutius in the early 1500s, when print was the new technology.”

Storage

- Similacrum v Object
- Digital Storage
 - Extensible
 - Assemblage
 - Network

Access

- Access not only to notes but can also link to the full text itself.
- Access to the whole body of a number of variant texts that **instantiate** a literary work.

Plurality

- “The Ancient Mariner”
18 versions
Each representing a distinct authorial intention at a particular time.
- How then can a “literary work” be located amid such a plurality of texts?

Literary Work as “Activity”

- Each version of a work seen as the embodiment of an intention at a particular point in time.
- Each version has an integrity.
- Edition should represent all of these multiple versions as all being equal.

Dispersal of Textual Authority

- Risk of information overload.
- “In theory, every version showing even the slightest typographical variant could be made available, but whether this *should* be the practice in electronic editions runs up against the limits of intelligibility.”

Key Aims of the *Lyrical Ballads* project

1. The complex interaction between authors, publishers, and printers that brought it into being and
2. The multiplicity of versions of the collection that readers had available to them in the early nineteenth century.

Wordsworthian Revision

- “Wordsworthian revision sustains the illusion of mastery but steadily postpones that achievement Revision is endlessly open, not simply because any field of vision is open to numerous, potentially infinite interpretations and organizations, but because each view discovers new motions, changes, and interchanges.”

Versioning

- Editing in the traditional sense gives way to what has been called "versioning" in which textuality comes to be represented more as a series of snapshots rather than a single, composite portrait.
- The result is a "genetic" edition which documents the historical development of the work, but which takes no single text as its standard.

"Dynamic Collation"

- Replacing the static footnote with active comparison

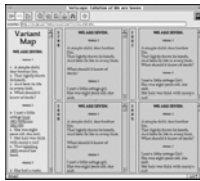
"Variant Map"

- David Greetham:
"dismembering the scholarly apparatus" will be a consequence of the transition to the new electronic medium
- "Variant Map"

“Variant Map”

- “Rather than footnotes which distract attention from a definitive text, the variant map is an abstraction of the poem which does not privilege one version of the text over another and that piques the reader’s curiosity by means of gaps in the text to pursue the significance of revisions made in successive versions. Together with its links to the four display windows, the variant map makes possible a dynamic collation of variant texts that cannot be achieved in print.”

Variant Map



Final Points

- Textual stability reinscribed as a series of moments
- The dimension of time must be added to those of space.
- Hypertext will enable us to represent this fourth dimension in a way readers will find comprehensible.

The Future Edition

- "It is not enough to produce texts that are indexed and searchable; like the Aldine editions of old, electronic texts must establish their own unique conventions and develop easily-understood forms of presentation that distinguish them from what went before. The new medium should neither replace nor reproduce the book, but must strive to do things books could never accomplish."

Jack Stillinger "Textual Pluralism"

- "Where "a work" of literature becomes an abstract organizing principle around which every *physically-embodied version* (published editions, manuscript drafts, etc.) is grouped, as a text among texts to be viewed both separately and simultaneously with all its cognates."

WWW Site

- <http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/LB/>
