

## "Type-facsimiles, photo-facsimiles and new media" by Gabriel Egan

A little over half way into the first 100 years of Malone Society publications--and I say first 100 years with intentional optimism--John Russell Brown published a stinging criticism of them. Brown complained that the kind of play edition that the society was producing, type facsimiles, would not do for serious bibliographical work, and instead editors should concentrate on making photographic facsimiles (Brown 1960a). Brown gave an example of textual corruption (from 2 *Honest Whore*) where the Malone Society type facsimile masks the fact that irregular spacing in the original quarto suggests that a word was removed during proof correction, and you need a photographic facsimile to spot this (Brown 1960a, 51-52). Brown outlined a host of features that the Malone Society Reprints did not reproduce with sufficient accuracy for the modern student, including relative place of line-endings, location of stage directions, and use of skeleton formes.

Brown advised the Malone Society to go over to photographic facsimile reproduction to meet its stated aim of making continuous resort to the originals unnecessary, and he mentioned two printing technologies that should be favoured, collotype and fine-screen offset (Brown 1960a, 56). These methods of printing are superior to the cheaper line-offset method of reproduction, as used in the unreliable 1955 Yale University facsimile of the 1623 Shakespeare Folio, for which the images had to be touched up at the printers in order to restore detail lost by the method of reproduction.

Of course, a photographic facsimile of a particular book reproduces only one state of the text and because of press-correction there may other states that the reader would be interested in. Brown advised that although the photographs should come from the "cleanest available copy", there could also be included in a Malone Society Reprint a selection of images from other copies to make "a composite copy" that gave the preferred states of all variant formes, and ideally there should also be reproduction of the rejected variant formes too (Brown 1960a, 56).

The Malone Society Reprints series is roughly the same age as the intellectual tradition of the New Bibliography, for the instigation of which many of the same people were responsible. Brown pointed out that in the first 50 years, the success of the latter had increased the range and number of readers to be served by the former ". . . the textual student now asks questions which, in 1907, concerned only the bibliographer, and he has won for himself the new and barbarous name of 'biblio-textual student'". Unlike the literary student of the past, this new reader must be "on the lookout for the slightest irregularity in the original printing" (Brown 1960a).

In the same volume of the same journal, Studies in Bibliography, Arthur Brown (newly appointed as General Editor of Malone Society Reprints) responded to John Russell Brown's call for a move to photographic facsimile by arguing that for the purposes described one really needs to see the original, not a photograph, and that for all purposes short of going to the original a Malone Society Reprint type facsimile will do (Brown 1960b). Arthur Brown pointed out that the spacing of words (the matter particularly stressed by John Russell Brown) is particularly distorted by photography if the words are near the binding. Also, where ink has not been applied to type a photograph usually shows nothing, whereas the original might have dents where the uninked type pressed into the paper.

Brown's position was one always has to return to the originals for serious textual bibliographical work; before recourse to that expedient, a Malone Society Reprint type facsimile--in which the editor has looked out for and will comment upon the things that are worthy of attention, including word spacing and indistinct readings--is just as good, if not better, than an average photographic facsimile (Brown 1960b, 73). Like John Russell Brown, Arthur Brown thought that the means of print reproduction was crucial, and complained that the Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles series had abandoned collotype and was using a cheaper method that gave rise to justifiable concerns from scholarly reviewers.

Strikingly, what did not come up in the exchange between Brown and Brown was the philosophical problems of making a facsimile, and the matter of whether one is trying to show what got made by the printers, or what they intended to make. Facsimiles of the kind proposed by John Russell Brown that pull together images from different copies of the book to produce an idealized version are now thought to lack theoretical sophistication, and are even accused of misunderstanding what a facsimile is supposed to be. As Terence Hawkes complained of Charlton Hinman's Shakespeare Folio facsimile that exemplifies the practice, "You can't have a 'facsimile' of an idea" (Hawkes 1999). Actually, one could argue precisely the opposite of Hawkes's position and assert that only an idea, not its physical embodiment, can be the subject of a facsimile.

There is abroad at the moment a considerable reluctance to deal in ideas rather than raw physical reality. Indeed, the belief that one may act upon one's estimate of the another's state of mind (authorial intention, printer's intention) has become disreputable: only material objects, it is asserted, should be considered by scholarship. Fortunately, there remains a vast and socially fundamental area of human activity, that gathers and weighs evidence in order to reach verdicts about intentions, where the post-structuralist terror of ideas has not taken hold: the criminal justice system.

But crime, you might think, deals with acts and deeds, and (outside of George Orwell's Thought Police) not with the state of mind of the accused. In fact, thoughts are always part of the definition of crime, since rendering someone unconscious and inserting a knife into her is illegal when done with the removal of her purse in mind, but not when done with the thought of removing her gall-stones. If, as some maintain, only existing objects and not ideas may be the subjects of facsimile creation, one could not make a facsimile of Q1 Hamlet, a book that exists in just two copies, both of which are incomplete. A strict understanding of the extreme materialist position would be that Q1 Hamlet really does not exist but is merely a formerly existing object now only imperfectly witnessed by two, fragmentary pieces of evidence. As far as I can tell, this kind of question simply was not on the critical agenda in the early 1960s and arguably it is late 1960s high French theory that has put them there for us now.

Rather than pursue here the role of post-structuralist theory in recent textual work (a role that I think has been largely damaging), I would like briefly to survey what the Malone Society Reprints (MSR) series actually has done in the last 10 of its 100 years. 12 reprints appeared between 1996 and 2005, of which 7 were photographic reproductions of printed plays and 5 were type reproductions of manuscript plays. There were no type reproductions of printed plays and no photographic reproductions

of manuscripts: the form of the original seemingly determined the form of the reproduction.

One aspect of this is perfectly understandable: a photographic facsimile of a manuscript would be usable only by the relatively small subset of scholars who are capable of reading early-modern handwriting. However, we could pause to reflect that it was not until the printing in 1912 of a facsimile of the autograph manuscript of Anthony Munday's play John-a-Kent and John-a-Cumber (Munday 1912) that anyone noticed that the handwriting was the same as that in the manuscript called The Book of Sir Thomas More. W. W. Greg, having already done his Malone Society edition of Sir Thomas More, spotted the likeness and had to revise his conclusions (Greg 1913)

Still, the general point that manuscripts are better reproduced in type rather than by photography should perhaps stand, for in general the greater good is done by aiming for the widest possible readership. (Admittedly, of course, this view is in tension with the Malone Society's aiming at a niche academic market.) But what about the reprinting of existing print editions as photographs rather than in type? In the case of the Malone Society output in the last 10 years, it is perhaps not a debate worth having, since all 7 of the printed plays for which the society produced photographic facsimiles were already available in type facsimile in electronic editions such as Chadwyck-Healey's Editions and Adaptations of Shakespeare (Chadwyck-Healey: A division of ProQuest Information and Learning 1995), now subsumed within their Literature Online product (Chadwyck-Healey: A division of ProQuest Information and Learning 2004), and as photographic facsimiles in Chadwyck-Healey's Early English Books Online (ProQuest/Chadwyck-Healey/University Microfilms International 2004).

Leaving aside the means of reproduction, it is hard to see what scholarly purpose is served by the Malone Society attending to such widely available materials. One might argue that the Malone Society can do these things much better than others can, and certainly in respect of the accuracy of type facsimiles and the quality of commentaries this is true. But in respect of the quality of photographic reproduction it is not clearly true. I do not know what went wrong with Malone Society Reprint 163, the photographic reproduction of Q1 Romeo and Juliet published in 2000 (Shakespeare 2000). It might seem rude to bring the matter up at this meeting, but I think it illustrates some wider points worth pondering. The deficiencies in this reprint are seemingly not in the source photographs, for these looked fine when they were used in the collected facsimile edition of Shakespeare quartos published by University of California Press in 1981 (Allen & Muir 1981). The concern for what happens to images after photographing shown by Fredson Bowers in the mid-1950s when reviewing the Yale Folio facsimile (Bowers 1955) and by Brown and Brown at the start of the 1960s remains relevant now.

John Russell Brown's paper was motivated by two factors that should sound familiar to us: a changing readership for early-modern dramatic materials (back then this was driven by the success of the New Bibliography), and the emergence of a relatively cheap new form of reproduction (fine-screen offset printing) that would enable the society to serve the new needs of its readership. Another 50 years later, the parallels for us now are a greatly reduced confidence in the capacity of bibliography to generate valuable knowledge and yet cheaper still technologies of reproduction.

The new media of electronic dissemination guarantee that, once digitized, images can be reproduced infinitely without degradation. This means that one can at least be sure that in the further dissemination, beyond the original capturing of an image, the object cannot come to harm. In this context, to be circulating printings of photographic facsimiles that are inferior to predecessor printed facsimiles and inferior to electronic versions must surely seem perverse.

What to do, then, in the new media in respect of manuscript and print play reprints? In one respect manuscripts are easier to handle because, for the same number of words communicated, they are smaller and more self-contained than printings. That is to say, manuscript plays exist essentially in one body of papers in one place. On the other hand, to take a typical example, there seem to be 10 surviving copies of the first printing of George Wilkins's The Miseries of Enforced Marriage, and they are almost identical and dispersed around the world.

The very textual copiousness generated by the Gutenberg revolution in mass dissemination 500 years ago has created for us a dilemma because it was accompanied not by perfect fidelity but rather by very nearly perfect fidelity. For almost all uses, the differences between copies of an early book are unimportant and the lesson of electronic projects such as Early English Books Online seems to be that for most uses these differences pale into insignificance when compared with the new techniques of examination made possible by electronic media.

But what of those readers who do care about the differences between copies of a book? I should have thought it is this small and demanding group that the Malone Society exists to serve, and the solution would seem to be digital projects concerned specifically with all forms of variance generated by early printing practices. Peter Robinson's electronic editions of the many early manuscripts of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales provide one model, in which the reader is presented with high-quality digital surrogates of the primary materials and with the tools for comparing and collating them electronically. Such a project would necessarily engage with the current scepticism about the capacity of reproductions to embody the labours infused in the originals they purport to simulate. I am gesturing here at the New Textualism's widespread displacement of New Bibliography. As an organization with a close connection to the tradition that has been displaced, this development is, I am sure, of special interest to the Malone Society.

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