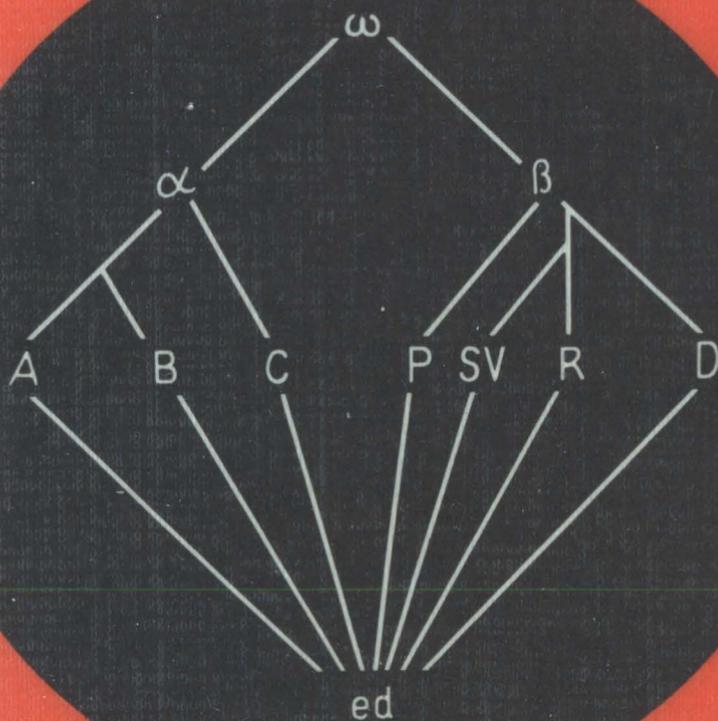


M. L. West

Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique



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Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique

applicable to Greek and Latin texts

By Martin L. West

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This book was written at the invitation of the publishers, who wanted a replacement for Paul Maas's *Textkritik* (3rd ed., 1957) and O. Stählin's *Editionstechnik* (2nd ed., 1914). Stählin's work, the only detailed treatment of editorial method, was excellent in its day, but many of its recommendations have been left behind by fashion. Maas's work will not date in the same way, for the canons of textual criticism have long been established, and fashion can only bring aberrations or alternative formulations; but it is too one-sided to be satisfactory as a general introduction. It emphasizes the stemmatic aspect of textual analysis, and treats contamination as a regrettable deviation about which nothing can be done, instead of as a normal state of affairs. I have tried in Part I of the present manual to redress the balance, and given some practical advice on dealing with contaminated traditions, which I think is new. Otherwise there is little here that cannot be found in other works on textual criticism, of which there are plenty.

I could draw up a formidable list of such works if I thought the student ought to read them. But textual criticism is not something to be learned by reading as much as possible about it. Once the basic principles have been apprehended, what is needed is observation and practice, not research into the further ramifications of theory. I therefore offer no formal bibliography, but content myself with the mention of three books that will be referred to several times in what follows.

1. Havet, *Manuel de critique verbale appliquée aux textes latins* (Paris 1911).

- G. Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo* (2nd ed., Firenze 1952).
- H. Fränkel, *Einleitung zur kritischen Ausgabe der Argonautika des Apollonios* (Abh. d. Akad. d. Wiss. in Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Kl., Folge 3, Nr. 55, 1964).
- Any of these may be read with considerable profit, especially Pasquali's wise opus.

1. Habent sua fata libelli

Eduard Fraenkel in his introduction to Leo's *Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* recounts the following traumatic experience which he had as a young student:

“I had by then read the greater part of Aristophanes, and I began to rave about it to Leo, and to wax eloquent on the magic of this poetry, the beauty of the choral odes, and so on and so forth. Leo let me have my say, perhaps ten minutes in all, without showing any sign of disapproval or impatience. When I was finished, he asked: “In which edition do you read Aristophanes?” I thought: has he not been listening? What has his question got to do with what I have been telling him? After a moment's ruffled hesitation I answered: “The Teubner”. Leo: “Oh, you read Aristophanes without a critical apparatus.” He said it quite calmly, without any sharpness, without a whiff of sarcasm, just sincerely taken aback that it was possible for a tolerably intelligent young man to do such a thing. I looked at the lawn nearby and had a single, overwhelming sensation: *νῦν μοι γάνοι εὐρεῖα γλῶν*. Later it seemed to me that in that moment I had understood the meaning of real scholarship.”

Textual criticism is not the be-all and end-all of classical scholarship, which is the study of a civilization. But it is an indispensable part of it. By far the greater part of our knowledge of that civilization comes to us from what the ancients wrote. In almost all cases those writings have survived, if they have

survived at all, only in copies many stages removed from the originals, copies of which not a single one is free from error. Often the errors are so great that it is no longer possible to tell what the author meant to say. It follows that anyone who wants to make serious use of ancient texts must pay attention to the uncertainties of the transmission; even the beauty of the choral odes that he admires so much may turn out to have an admixture of editorial guesswork in it, and if he is not interested in the authenticity and dependability of details, he may be a true lover of beauty, but he is no serious student of antiquity. The dangers are obviously more far-reaching if the text is being used as a source for historical events, ancient life and manners, Greek or Latin linguistic usage, or whatever it may be.

But the practice of textual criticism is more than a prophylactic against deception. It brings benefits which go beyond its immediate aims of ascertaining as exactly as possible what the authors wrote and defining the areas of uncertainty. When scholars argue about whether Aristophanes wrote $\delta\acute{\epsilon}$ or $\tau\epsilon$ in such-and-such a passage, the debate may seem trivial to the point of absurdity, and indeed the sense may not be affected in the least. But by asking the question "which in fact did the poet write?", scholars may be led to inquire into the usage of the particles and the habits of Aristophanes more closely than it would ever have occurred to them to do otherwise. In the same way, by asking such questions all the way through the text, they learn all kinds of things that they did not know and never wondered about, sometimes things that were not known to anybody. So our understanding of the languages, metres, and styles of the Greeks and Romans has been continually refined by the observations of clever critics. That in turn helps us to form correct judgments about passages where the sense is affected. This is to say nothing of the interest and value that the study of such matters as the proclivities of scribes, and the processes governing the spread of texts at different periods, has in its own right.

Students have sometimes said to me that they recognize the neces-

sity of textual criticism, but they are content to leave it to the editor of the text they are reading and to trust in his superior knowledge. Unfortunately editors are not always people who can be trusted, and critical apparatuses are provided so that readers are not dependent upon them. Though the reader lacks the editor's long acquaintance with the text and its problems, he may nevertheless surpass him in his feeling for the language or in ordinary common sense, and he should be prepared to consider the facts presented in the apparatus and exercise his own judgment on them. He *must* do so in places where the text is important to him for some further purpose. This book, therefore, is not intended solely for editors, but for anyone who reads Greek and Latin and desires some guidance on how to approach textual questions. Textual criticism cannot be reduced to a set of rules: each new problem calls for new thought. But there are general principles which are useful and not always self-evident, and these I shall try to explain.

Types of source

Most classical authors come to us in parchment or paper manuscripts which are seldom earlier than the ninth century and often as late as the sixteenth. Some authors and works are preserved in only one manuscript, in other cases the number may run into hundreds. There are also a few cases in which early printed editions serve as the only source, the manuscript(s) from which they were made having since been lost. Sometimes different works by the same author, or even different parts of the same work, are contained in different manuscripts. Most classical manuscripts are now in European libraries or museum collections, but some are in monasteries (particularly in Greece) or private ownership, and some are in such places as Istanbul or Jerusalem, or in American libraries. Among the larger collections may be mentioned those of the Vatican library, the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, the Ambrosiana in Milan, the Marciana in Venice,

the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and the British Museum in London.

For many Greek authors (and a few Latin) we possess also, or only, remnants of ancient copies on papyrus or parchment, often very small remnants but occasionally substantial. These continue to be published year by year. They are very rarely older than 300 B. C. and never older than about 350. The largest number date from the second and third centuries A. D., but they continue into the sixth and seventh.

Apart from straightforward copies of complete works there may exist excerpts in anthologies, epitomes, paraphrases, or translations, e. g. of Greek works into Latin or Arabic. In some cases these are the only sources extant, and even when they are not, they may be of use as evidence for the text from which they were made - which is not, of course, necessarily the true text, but may well be an older text than that of surviving manuscripts. Ancient or medieval commentaries and scholia hold out the same promise. Their evidence about the text is of three kinds. First, there are the actual quotations from the text, known as lemmata, which serve as headings to sections of the commentary. Second, there may be explicit statements of variant readings. Third, there is the interpretation offered, which may presuppose a particular version of the text. Unfortunately scholia are not usually documents with a definite date. They are added to as well as shortened or altered in the course of time, and are liable to contain a mixture of material of very different dates. At best they can inform us of Alexandrian scholars' readings, at worst they testify only to the obtuseness or perverse ingenuity of some medieval reader. It is also worth noting that as they are usually transmitted together with the text, the lemmata are liable to be adjusted to fit the accompanying text, which may cause a discrepancy between lemma and interpretation.

The evidence of ancient quotations, more surprisingly, is also affected by this interaction with the direct manuscript tradition of the author quoted. It might be thought that when one ancient

author quoted a passage from another, that passage would from then on be preserved in a manuscript tradition quite independent of the main one, so that agreement with the main one or with part of it would take us back to the time of the quoting author. But in practice it often happens that both traditions, that of the quoted author and that of the quoting, show similar sets of variants. In some cases these are such as could have arisen independently in the two traditions, in others it is necessary to assume interaction¹). A well-known instance is the quotation of Virgil, Ecl. 4,62, by Quintilian 9,3,8. Virgil must have written *qui non risere parenti, nec deus hunc mensa, dea nec dignata cubili est*, and Quintilian's comment on the change from plural to singular proves that he quoted it in that form. But his manuscripts, like those of Virgil, give *cui non risere parentes*, which must be an importation by a copyist familiar with the already corrupted Virgil. A more dramatic example of the possibilities of cross-contamination occurs in the Byzantine historian Nicetas Choniata (p. 772 Bekker), who quotes some lines of Solon that had earlier been quoted by Plutarch and in a rather different form by Diogenes Laertius. One of the manuscripts follows Plutarch's version, the other Diogenes'. Nicetas must have taken the quotation from one of the two authors, but a copyist who knew the other has seen fit to write it in – first no doubt as a marginal variant, but subsequently put into the text. More will have to be said presently on the limitations of quotations as evidence for the text.

Imitations and parodies are occasionally of use, especially in the case of verse texts. For example, in Iliad 1,4–5, where the main tradition gives *αὐτοὺς δὲ ἐλώρια τεῦχε κύνεσσιν οἰωνοῦσί τε πᾶσι*, Athenaeus records that the pioneer of Alexandrian scholarship, Zenodotus, read the more forceful *δαῖτα* instead of *πᾶσι*: it has been observed that this is supported by the echo in Aeschylus, Suppl. 800f. *κυσὶν δ' ἔπειθ' ἔλωρα κάπιχωρίοις | ὄρνισι δεῖπνον*. (But

¹) See E. R. Dodds, Plato: Gorgias, p. 64; W. S. Barrett, Euripides: Hippolytos, pp. 429f.; my Hesiod: Theogony, p. 69 n. 1.

the imitation could not have been used to infer a reading $\delta\alpha\tilde{\iota}\tau\alpha$ if its existence had not been recorded.) The text of an imitation, of course, may in its turn have light thrown upon it by comparison of the model. Thus in the case of Catullus 4 and the early parody in Catalepton 10 of the Appendix Vergiliana, each poem is partly restored from a corrupt manuscript tradition with the help of the other.

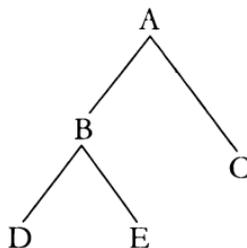
The nature of manuscript transmission

Whenever a manuscript is copied, some mistakes will almost certainly be made. But manuscript transmission is not simply a mechanical process of cumulative error. The scribe may notice errors in the exemplar before him and be able to correct them, even without recourse to another copy; so it is quite possible for his copy, the apograph, to be on balance more accurate than the exemplar. On the other hand, the number of errors corrected must always be less than the number made, and the overall trend will necessarily be towards a less correct text. Besides, some of the scribe's 'corrections' may themselves be mistaken, and this kind of corruption is often more insidious than inadvertent miscopying, being less easily detected afterwards.

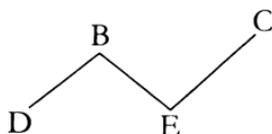
The fact that errors occur in copying, and that the comparison of different manuscripts brings variant readings to light, is no modern discovery. It was well known in antiquity, as well as in the Middle Ages, and the precaution was sometimes taken of checking a newly-made copy not only against its immediate exemplar but against another manuscript. When a variant was noticed, it might be introduced into the new copy by correction, or it might be noted in the margin or between the lines, preceded by some such expression as $\acute{\epsilon}\nu \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omega$ ($\kappa\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\tau\alpha\iota$), $\acute{\epsilon}\nu \acute{\alpha}\lambda\lambda\omicron\iota\varsigma$, $\gamma\grave{\eta}$, $\gamma\rho$. (= $\gamma\rho\acute{\alpha}\phi\epsilon\tau\alpha\iota$), *al.* (= *alibi* or *aliter*), *vel.* When a copy furnished with this kind of primitive critical apparatus served in its turn as an exemplar to another scribe, he might do any of four things. He might preserve both the variant in the text (t) and the marginal variant (v) in their

places; he might retain *t* and omit *v*; he might adopt *v* in place of *t*, without mention of *t*; or he might put *v* in the text and *t* in the margin.

This confluence of readings from more than one exemplar is known as *contamination*. When it is not present, the relationship of copies to exemplars can be represented by diverging lines. For example the diagram



expresses the fact that B and C were copied from A, and D and E from B. But if the scribe of E mingled readings from B and C, this calls for converging lines:



It is to be noted, however, that the line BE now represents a different relationship from the line BD, namely a *selection* from the readings that characterize B, instead of a more or less complete reproduction of them.

If we were in a position to see the whole tradition of any ancient author, that is to say if we had knowledge of every copy ever made, and knew in each case which other copies the scribe used, and if we had the patience and ingenuity (and a large enough sheet of paper) to set out their relationships in the way just illustrated, we could expect to see a complex system of lines ramifying from the point representing the author's original. Most of the lines would be diverging, and there might be considerable areas of the diagram where they were all diverging, corresponding to periods

at which cross-checking was not customary, whether from scarcity of copies or lack of awareness of the advantages. In other areas, there would be much convergence. There would also be many lines that came to a stop, corresponding to all the manuscripts from which no copies were made. These would become increasingly frequent as we approached the end of antiquity. In the case of some authors the transmission would here peter out altogether; for others it would be reduced to a single line, others again would be a little luckier. Then, from the late eighth or ninth century onward, the stream would begin to broaden out once more, though it would never recover its former dimensions, and might again run dry or be reduced to a trickle before the final salvation of the Renaissance.

That is the sort of picture that must be held in mind. But of all the manuscripts that existed, only a small fraction have survived, and often they all belong to the same small corner of the whole diagram that we have imagined. If they happen to come from an area where the lines are all diverging, we shall have what is called a closed recension, that is, it will be possible to construct a self-contained diagram (known as a stemma) which represents the historical relationship of the manuscripts accurately enough for useful conclusions to be drawn about the antiquity of individual readings. The principles on which this is done are explained in the next chapter. If the extant manuscripts do not come from such a straightforward area of the tradition, they may still appear to, if not enough of them are extant to reveal the complexity of their true relationships; or it may be apparent that no stemma can do justice to the situation, and we shall realize that we are faced with an open recension²).

²) The term and its opposite were invented by Pasquali, who also speaks of 'horizontal' as opposed to 'vertical' transmission when cross-contamination is involved. Note that if only two manuscripts are preserved from a contaminated area of the tradition, there will be nothing to show that it is contaminated: whatever errors they share can be attributed to a common exemplar. It needs a third copy to show that things are more complicated.