Homer and the New Testament as "Multitexts" in the Digital Age

Claire Clivaz
University of Lausanne, Switzerland

Abstract
The field of classical studies has undergone a radical transformation with the arrival of the digital age, particularly with regard to the editing of ancient texts. As Umberto Eco (2003) pointed out, the digital age may mean the end of the history of variants and of the notion of the "original text." Among the texts of antiquity, the editing of Homer and of the New Testament are especially susceptible to the effects of digital technology because of their numerous manuscripts. Whereas the "Homer Multitext" project recognizes that the notion of a synthetic critical edition is now seriously brought into question, the prototype of the online Greek New Testament continues to be based on the aim of obtaining a unique text, in the style of a printed critical edition. As it moves from a printed culture to the digital age, the editing of the Greek New Testament is also confronted by the emergence of non-Western scholarship. Of note is the presence of Arabic Muslim websites that examine Greek New Testament manuscripts, without directly interacting with Western scholarship.

Claire Clivaz is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the Institute of Biblical Sciences, University of Lausanne, Quartier UNIL-Dorigny, Bâtiment Anthropole 5025 CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland. Email: claire.clivaz@unil.ch .

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> The true locus of writing is reading.
> *Roland Barthes (1967)*

Introduction: A recent bombshell in the editing of the Greek New Testament[1]

We can take as our starting point a very recent "bombshell" that occurred at the end of 2010 in the scholarly world of the editing of the Greek New Testament (NT). Since the 19th century, the critical edition of the NT has been controlled by the *Institute for the New Testament Textual Research* (INTF, Münster, Germany) for the main printed edition (see the New Testament according to Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland known as the NA27, 1993), and by the International Greek New Testament Project (IGNTP) committee in charge of a slowly emerging, comprehensive critical edition of the NT that was inaugurated in 1949.[2] At the last general meeting in the field of biblical studies – the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) annual meeting in November 2010 in Atlanta – a new, independent edition of the Greek NT was presented and offered to all participants, published by a respected scholar in the field, Michael Holmes, with the support of *Logos Software* and the Society of Biblical Literature (Holmes, 2010): neither the INTF nor the IGNTP had been informed of the project. This edition came as a shock for scholars working in the field.[3] Why?

The new product is now freely available online, whereas the printed NA27 edition is available in a complete way only in paper form[4] and has to be purchased. As a consequence, for practical reasons this new edition of the Greek NT could well become the main one, which is problematic because of the scientific quality of the edition. Indeed, even though SBL justifies the project by making a financial case,[5] this "new" edition implies overall a return to the 19th edition of Westcott and Hort (1881; 2007) wherein all of the information provided by the papyri, for example, is omitted. Moreover, the apparatus is not based on the manuscripts but on previous printed editions (see Holmes, 2010, p. xi). In other words, this edition represents a conservative shift, now available online for free and sponsored by the American SBL, and with the chief purpose of conveying the impression that scholars have finally achieved a stable, unified, and simplified Greek text of the NT.[6] There is nothing surprising in this turn of events; it is, in my opinion, a logical reaction at a time when digital culture has the potential to redefine entirely our way of thinking about the editing of ancient texts, particularly texts supported by a large number of different manuscripts, as is the case with Homer and particularly the NT. It will be useful to map out the general situation of the editing of ancient texts.

Toward Homer and the New Testament as "Multitexts"

Viewed in the second part of the 20th century as a subsidiary task, today textual criticism is one of the most rapidly expanding fields in NT studies. Notably, this is due to the explosion of new manuscripts discovered or published online. David Parker has already drawn attention to the significance of computers and the new tools they provide for the present "dramatic change" (Parker, 2008 p. 1) in textual criticism and the editing of the NT, but the extent of this change is currently still underestimated. After describing the two main transformations brought about in the edition of texts by digital means, I will argue that a decisive shift is taking place at this very moment in the editing of the Greek NT, a shift that can be expressed, on the one hand, as an "institutional deregulation" of the scholarly critical edition, but also, on the other hand, as an opportunity to reconsider the way this text should be edited.

Two principal changes are brought about by digital culture in the editing of ancient texts: the end of the stabilized, printed text, with the potential loss of its history and its variants; and the emergence of a collective and interactive authorship of the critical edition, based on the possibility of online access to the manuscripts. Both points are in no way specific to the editing of the NT, but are particularly sensitive ones with regard to this text, which has been perceived in Western culture over the last two centuries as the representation of a fixed and sacred religious text, in a "religion of the book," as I will go on to demonstrate.

The Loss of the Illusion of the "Original Text"

The first point has been underlined by Umberto Eco (Eco & Origgi, 2003): he announced the end of the variant in a digital culture, noting that the notion of the "original" text "certainly disappears" (p. 227). For him, the problem is not really the loss of the "original" production of an author – unless one wishes to reconstruct her/his psychology, but rather

> the alterations that I can make myself to the texts of other people. Let's assume that I download onto my computer *La critique de la raison pure*, and that I start to study it, writing my comments between the lines; either I possess a very philological turn of mind and I can recognize my comments, or else, three years later, I could no longer say what is mine and what is Kant's. We would be like the copyists in the Middle Ages who automatically made corrections to the text that they copied because it felt natural to do so – in which case, any philological concern is likely to go down the drain. (p. 227)

Reading Eco's thoughts, it is helpful to bear in mind that the gradual disappearance of the notion of the "original text" and the undermining of the philological approach are tinged with nostalgia for all scholars whose roots are in classical, philosophical, or linguistic studies. It would be a mistake to consign the new emphasis on variants in NT textual criticism to an ideological debate of "postmodern scepticism" versus "the quest for the genuine autographa" (Wallace, 2009, p. 80). While Eco observes a progressive cultural weakening, and even a "disappearance" of the notion of the "original text," he does so in a context that has nothing to do with the Bible: the phenomenon is indeed very much wider than a controversy internal to NT studies, and carries an element

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of nostalgia for a variety of fields in the Arts and Humanities, even for Eco himself. In my opinion, we are facing here a real transformation of the Western relationship with textuality. I do not discount the importance of the nostalgia felt by many people in the face of this transformation. Nevertheless, this nostalgia can be usefully counterbalanced by a kind of release from the rigid boundaries that have been imposed on our minds by the printed culture of the book.

Indeed, the modern belief in the existence of a completely stabilized text, clearly attributed to a specific author, is no older than the middle of the 19th century. It has its roots in the final steps taken to fix the legal status of the author and the text around 1850 – a legal status chosen and promoted by booksellers for economic reasons, and not by the authors themselves (Chartier, 1996). It is my belief that this legal development led to the Western fascination for the fixed "book" and the so-called "religions of the book." At first glance, the expression "religions of the book" seems to be based on the Quranic expression *ahl al-kitab*, the "people of the Book," as stated, for example, by Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1989, p. 30).[7] In his wide-ranging article, Smith also makes reference to the programmatic lecture given in London in 1870 by Friedrich Max Müller, "Sacred Books of the East" (Smith, pp. 30 & 33), but he makes no mention of what is repeatedly overlooked in research – the gap between the Quranic expression, "the people of the book" and the notion, widespread in Western culture, of the "religions of the book." In fact, it is only in the second part of the 19th century that this notion was popularized, from a variety of perspectives, in Western academic discourse. Max Müller (1870) sought to present a classification of religions, starting from the notion of the "book" applied to eight religions: "With these eight religions the library of the Sacred Books of the whole human race is complete, and an accurate study of these eight codes, written in Sanskrit, Pâli, and Zend, in Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic, lastly in Chinese, might in itself not seem too formidable an undertaking for a single scholar" (p. 56).

His point of view is clear: thanks to the notion of the "book," a universal picture of religions can be obtained; the sacred books are understood as reflecting the image "of the real doctrines of the founder of a new religion" (Müller, 1870, p. 53). In this context, the modern concept of *illiteracy/literacy* drastically influences the perception of extremely diverse religions.[8] At that time, the idea of the "religions of the book" met with considerable success among Protestant theologians such as Friedrich Heinrich Geffcken or Carl Theodor A. Liebner, who anachronistically linked Calvin's doctrine to the idea of *Religionbuch* (Geffcken, 1875). On the basis of these observations, I adopt the hypothesis that the fixation of the legal status of the author and the text around 1850 was behind the Western fascination with a fixed "book" and the so-called "religions of the book." Nevertheless, neither Judaism, nor Islam, nor Christianity can be reduced to such a label (on Christianity as a religion not of the book, see Clivaz, 2011). This example of the 19th century emergence of the expression "religions of the book" highlights the fact that we are now only just beginning to unravel all the unconscious cultural statements that the sanctification of printed culture has imposed on us.

Toward an NT collaborative edition
The second main transformation brought about by digital culture in the editing of ancient texts is the emergence of a collective and interactive authorship in the editorial process, based on the possibility of online access to the manuscripts. We possess

more than 5,700 Greek manuscripts of the NT, from fragments of papyri to complete ancient codices. The possibility of a collaborative authorship for the edition of the NT has already been highlighted by scholars such as David Parker or Ulrich Schmid, who have recommended the creation of "an interactive *apparatus criticus* in which the kind of information visible will be partly controlled by the user… In the digital edition, the transcription of the verse will be available, and the user will be able to scrutinize the editorial decisions," even if it means "a weakening of the status of standard editions, and with that a change in the way in which users of texts perceive their tasks" (Parker, 2003/4, p. 404). Schmid (2010) has called for a "fully interactive digital edition," with the possibility of also incorporating the data available for the NT from the various ancient languages and not just the Greek manuscripts (p. 190). The fact that scholars can now compare a baseline text with real manuscript photographs highlights what has only too often been forgotten: a critical edition is a reconstructed text, according to some point of view or another. This main text always belongs to a period of history, as has long been known: Codex Sinaiticus represents the NT according to the Sinaiticus community, those who also read the *Shepherd* and the *Epistle to Barnabas* as Scripture (Codex Sinaiticus, n.d.); the *textus receptus* represents the NT according to Erasmus and his followers; and the NA27 represents the NT according to Eberhard Nestle and Kurt Aland, in discussion with other scholars in a modern context. There has never existed an edition of the NT without an "according to," or, in other words, without a cover – the symbol of institutionalization and power – to hold the folios or pages together.

Even though reflections such as these can be found in NT scholarship, *no real, fresh conception of a digital edition of the NT has emerged to date*. This situation can be explained on the grounds of an ideological cause and of institutional factors that are currently leading to an emerging deregulation of the scholarly editing of the NT. The ideological reason becomes apparent when comparing the digital edition of the NT with the Homer Multitext project, which has opted to develop a digital tool based on the history of readings rather than on the edition of the Homeric "text." As their website states, "the Homer Multitext views the full historical reality of the Homeric textual tradition as it evolved for well over a thousand years, from the pre-Classical era well into the medieval. It is an edition of Homer that is electronic and web-based. Unlike printed editions, which offer a reconstruction of an original text as it supposedly existed at the time and place of its origin, the Homer Multitext offers the tools for reconstructing a variety of texts as they existed in a variety of times and places" (Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University, 2009, para. 5). Consequently, access is provided to photographs and diplomatic texts of the manuscripts, not to a classical critical edition. It goes without saying that in NT scholarship no one has yet dared present an NT "Multitext" edition, since the relationship of NT scholars with their text has been so strongly determined by the culture of the "religion of the book." That said, it is the institutional factors that currently play an even bigger part in the absence of any real new project for a digital edition of the NT. What is the institutional situation?

Until recently, 95% of NT manuscripts were only available on microfilms at the INTF in Münster. The numerous NT manuscripts now available online have clearly been the first step toward what can be called today call a deregulation of the NT critical edition, arguably with the hope that in years to come the deregulation will be viewed as a transformation of this edition. This first step can be illustrated, for example, by

the enormous undertaking carried out independently by the *Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts* (2010a) known as CSNTM based in Plano, Texas (USA). Apparently in receipt of private funds, the CSNTM sends teams to European libraries to photograph new NT manuscripts, which are quickly put online long before having received a Gregory-Aland number by the INTF, as would be the usual scholarly procedure. The second step is the emergence of a culture of collective work, a "wiki-culture," in the field of NT textual criticism (NTTC), as found on a Yahoo forum moderated by Wieland Wilker: two to three messages arrive every day on this forum and important new findings in the field are starting to be discussed there.[9] This new scholarly culture has not been taken into account by the INTF, which has begun to build a "Digital Nestle-Aland" prototype, called "New Testament Transcripts" website, that "gives you a glimpse of what you can expect from the transcripts function in the Digital Nestle-Aland" (Digital Nestle-Aland, 2003-2010, para. 4). At the moment, the prototype does not include an interactive apparatus that would keep traces of the scholarly discussions. Should a scholar put forward a suggestion to the INTF or voice it in a public lecture, it might happen that it is rapidly incorporated into this digital NA prototype without any trace of the scholar's name or any possibility to return to the previous status of the variant. Historical memory and individual interaction are lost in the process; the only possibility of preserving some trace of the history of the prototype is to make screenshots of this digital prototype before a page changes (Clivaz, 2011). Digital culture, however, allows traces of all the individual scholarly interactions to be accurately preserved, as well as the record of the various stages of a digital object/application.

Whereas the classical institutions in charge of the critical edition of the NT interact insufficiently with the new digital culture, the very active CSNTM takes initiatives, such as the "Textual Criticism Chart Timesaver" managed by Dan Wallace. After paying a few dollars for the subscription fee, it is possible to add details read in manuscripts to a shared apparatus. The purpose of the website is "to eliminate the guesswork and correct the inaccuracies, enabling you to have a chart of accurate data from which you can begin to make your text-critical decisions" (NT Textual Criticism, 2007).[10] This objective is guided by the idea of achieving a "perfect," complete text by eliminating "the inaccuracies." Executive director of the CSNTM, Dan Wallace, even claims to look not only for an accurate text but also "for the genuine autographa," as has been seen above (Wallace, 2009, p. 80). As I have explained in the introduction of this article, the very recent initiative from another director of the CSNTM, Michael Holmes, effectively confirms that the Greek edition of the NT has entered a time of deregulation: *The Greek New Testament, SBL Edition*. An event as recent as this is still difficult to evaluate, but it probably means that a new era has begun (Clivaz, 2010a), in which several NT editions could be produced if other scholars share the following opinion: "It is good to see this new critical text by Mike Holmes. There are too few today. My opinion is that creating a critical text is the crowning achievement of a textual critic's career. Textual critics should produce more texts" (Wilker, 2010). I totally share Wilker's ambition – in fact, digital means could allow scholars to be more involved in making their critical NT text – but the initiative of the SBL NT has led in completely the opposite direction: we now have a free, outdated online edition of the Greek NT that does not comply with the most exacting academic standards. There is a real risk that this version will meet with some success since it is freely available: other attempts will likely be discouraged by such an initiative.

This clearly is a sad situation, which underlines an important fact: as far as I can see, only the public European universities are presently able to offer a sufficiently independent framework for imagining a real, new digital edition of the NT, as will be confirmed below in considering what is happening today in Middle-Eastern scholarship. Possibilities such as a wiki-apparatus criticus and the formation of a "multitext," which would throw light on the main manuscripts of the NT, really ought to be explored. In my opinion, the edition of Homer's work points in the right direction here.

The digital emergence of hybrid scholarship beyond Western frontiers: The example of the Greek and Arabic NT manuscripts

The digital revolution is also transforming the familiar Western boundaries of scholarship, as can be demonstrated by the example of the Greek and Arabic NT manuscripts. This topic presents a very interesting case of cultural studies by explaining why, until now, the Western academic world has not really been interested in the Arabic manuscripts of the NT. Since Graf's volumes (1975), the 20th century has not produced any important work on the subject.[11] The textbooks of NT textual criticism make very brief mention of the Arabic NT manuscripts, sometimes without presenting a bibliography (See Aland & Aland, 1989; Vaganay & Amphoux, 1991; Parker, 2008). Two factors account for this situation. The first is the complexity of the relationship between Western and non-Western cultures, as analyzed by Said and developed in cultural and post-colonial studies (see Said, 1978). The following quotation by Kurt and Barbara Aland (1989) is symptomatic of that point: "But unfortunately the arabists of today are hardly concerning themselves with the transmission of the New Testament, although there are many interesting problems here…" (p. 214). There is a double assumption in the Alands' statement: the interest should necessarily go *from* Arabic studies *to* Greek studies, and it should be obvious that everybody ought to be interested in working on the NT manuscripts. The second factor is that the main quest of NT textual criticism has been the establishment of the earliest and most accurate NT text, based on the oldest manuscripts. Within that perspective, the Arabic NT manuscripts have always been disqualified because of their rather late dating, as can be seen in Ewert's statement: "Since the Arabic versions are so late, they are not useful as witnesses to the original text of NT" (Ewert, 1990, p. 171). On that point, the thrust of *narrative textual criticism* (Parker, 1994, p. 195) shows the usefulness of manuscripts like these, in terms of the history of reading and the history of early Christianity. From that point of view, the Arabic NT manuscripts represent an incredibly rich field of research.

Nevertheless, since the beginning of the 21st century, research into the Arabic NT manuscripts does seem to have been reactivated. My claim is that this renewed interest should be interpreted within the framework of what can be called an *emerging digital Christianity*. Classical Western scholarship on Christian Arabic in the past 30 years has advertised a new publication of Graf's *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur* (Graf, 1975; Samir, 2007) and regularly produces a Christian Arabic bibliography in the *Journal for Eastern Christian Studies*, as well as projects such as that of Professor J. P. Monferrer-Sala on Greek-Arabic NT manuscripts.[12] But the more lively productions come from Beirut, in connection with the CEDRAC (*Center of Documentation and Arabic Christian Researches*): a critical edition of the Arabic Gospel according to Luke has been produced by Sister Josephine Nasr (unpublished), as well as an important study by Hikmat Kashouh, published by de Gruyter in 2011, *The Arabic Versions of the Gospels*. This

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is a PhD dissertation carried out under the supervision of David Parker, and it is freely downloadable online. It throws light on a discrete but ongoing work on these manuscripts from Graf up to today, offering an abridged list of 200 Arabic gospel manuscripts which are grouped into families (see Aland & Aland, 1989; Vaganay & Amphoux, 1991; Parker, 2008).

While this PhD dissertation is a fine Birmingham product, it nevertheless shows distinct signs of the agenda of a particular identity; for example, when Kashouh concludes that "this thesis suggests that the Gospels were first translated into Arabic in either the sixth or early seventh century" (Kashouh, 2011, p. 380). A sentence like this could have huge implications in terms of cultural identities, for it means that Christian texts could have existed in Arabic before Muslim texts, a difficult question and one argued over by both communities. Similar identity quests can be observed on certain Muslim websites that show the emergence of a *hybrid Western scholarly discourse*. Due to the less institutionally regulated place of expression offered by the Internet, this discourse appears on certain Muslim websites devoted to the study of Greek NT manuscripts. They often set out accurate information, as can be found on the website *Islamic Awareness*. An ideological point of view is nevertheless clearly expressed on the homepage of this website: "The primary purpose of Islamic-Awareness website [*sic*] is to educate Muslims about the questions and issues frequently raised by the *Christian Missionaries* and *Orientalists*. You will find a variety of excellent articles and responses to missionary and orientalist writings"(Islamic Awareness, n.d. para. 1). An extended inquiry into some of the Muslim websites that study the Greek NT manuscripts in English and Arabic would be in order here so as to understand their interest in these manuscripts.[13] The image below clearly illustrates how apparently separate scholarly worlds are meeting on the Web, but without supposing any interaction between them for the time being.[14]

Figure 1. Source: http://www.sheekh-3arb.net/bible/ [February 12, 2011].

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The digital emergence of a hybrid Western scholarly discourse, can also be discerned on, for example, a website such as the Arabic Language Computing Research at Leeds University, announced on the Ancient World Online (AWOL) (2010). Indeed, the link indicated by AWOL, rather than leading to an Arabic Studies department of the University of Leeds, leads to the Faculty of Engineering.[15] This surprising fact merits closer investigation.[16] In any case, it is clear that digital media offer new opportunities for developing a hybrid Western scholarly discourse, as these Christian and Muslim examples show. Within this hybrid scholarly discourse, the Arabic and Greek NT manuscripts become the pretext for new identity quests and tensions between groups/communities. The phenomenon contributes to the shaping of an emerging digital Christianity, out of which will come perhaps a multitext edition of the NT. As this piece sought to demonstrate, the fields of NT manuscripts and of the editing of ancient texts are particularly sensitive to the emergence of digital humanities. Consequently, I would like to conclude this article with a call for the writing of a cultural history of digital humanities, under the banner of the programmatic article by Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," first published in 1967.

Conclusion: "The True Locus of Writing is Reading" (Roland Barthes)

The question of the writing of a history of digital humanities has now been raised in the online Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO) forum.[17] If this issue arises now, it is because a first period in the not so short history of digital humanities is coming to a close. Several institutional signs of digital humanities' existence were seen during the first decade of the 21st century, such as the creation of ADHO in 2002, or the online publication of the *Companion to Digital Humanities* (2004).[18] This represents a point when the Humanities began to understand that something was profoundly changing, not only in their tools of research but also in their very definition. According to Willard McCarty (1998) and Susan Hockey (2004), the starting point for this new field of knowledge was the "application of computing to the humanities… about 50 years ago, in the late 1940s, by a Jesuit scholar, Father Roberto Busa, in the *Index Thomisticus*" (McCarty, 1998, para. 1).

Moreover, it cannot be forgotten that scientific research in the U.S.A. during the Second World War was the milieu for the production of the first digital inputs, as attested by the important article by Vannevar Bush – "As We May Think" (1945) – where he asks: "What are the scientists to do next [after the war]?" (Bush, 1945, para. 1). The sixties later played a very important role, as stressed by Hafner and Lyon (1998). Computers were already at work in the literary imagination and in the scholarly perception of culture, as the novel *Le Littératron* by Robert Escarpit (1964) shows, or this 1968 statement by the French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (1973): "Tomorrow's historian will either be a programmer or will not be" (p. 14). It was also at that time that Roland Barthes wrote his famous article "The Death of the Author." If a cultural history of digital humanities were to be written, it should shed light on this "blind spot" in the scholarly perception of the thinking of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault on the author (Barthes, 1968; Foucault, 1969).

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Barthes and Foucault seemingly spoke about the disappearance or the death of the author at a time when the hypertext and the cyberworld did not exist, as Roger Chartier summarizes: "the world of digital texts is a world where texts are displayed, modified, rewritten, where writing takes place within an already existing piece of writing, a world where the reader is involved not outside the text but within the texts themselves, a world where, as Foucault sometimes imagined, texts would not be assigned to an author's name, where the "author's function" would lose its importance in a kind of textuality formed by layers of discourses that are continually being rewritten and in a permanent exchange between writers and readers – readers who in their turn are authors" (Chartier, 2001, pp. 17-18). As we have seen, however, the factor of the computer was already in operation in the Western culture of the sixties. The search for the very first version of Barthes's article "The Death of the Author" never fails to occasion surprise. This first version was written in English – and not in French – and appeared without pagination in a multimedia-box, in the experimental American review *Aspen* (see Figure 2). The first appearance of the topic of the death of the author is therefore represented by a few floating English pages, in a box containing also four films, five records, eight boards, ten printed data and texts. This being so, it is now time to acknowledge that the "death of the author" was proposed in a framework that was itself already influenced by the emergence of the English multimedia culture, as symbolized by the first publication of Barthes's article. As the question of the twofold emergence of the codex and of Christianity shows (Clivaz, 2011), ideas and new writing materials always develop in synergy. The Foucauldian "author's function" is probably too narrowly defined for it to function now in digital culture,[19] where, as Chartier indicates, "readers in their turn are also authors" (Chartier, 2001, p. 17).

Figure 2 : The first publication of Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," Aspen 5-6 1967. Source: Stafford, n.d.

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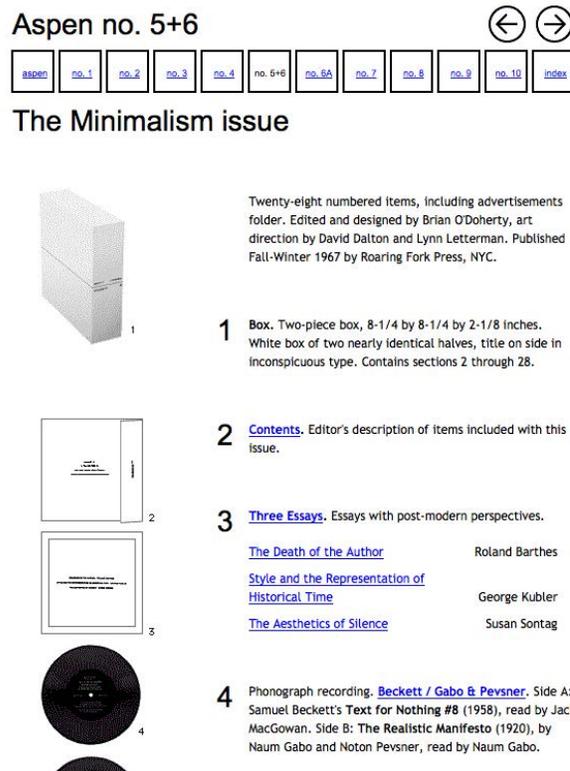
Such an observation was already at the heart of Barthes's 1967 article, where he states that

> the true locus of writing is reading. … In this way is revealed the whole
> being of writing: a text consists of multiple writings, issuing from several
> cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into
> contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected,
> united, and this place is not the author, as we have hitherto said it was,
> but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed,
> without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of
> a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination. (para. 7)

Nevertheless, Barthes (1967) does not resist the temptation to render the reader absolute with respect to the author: "but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted" (para. 7). Ultimately, this total and disembodied reader will in a sense reinforce the strength of the ideology of the author during the end of the 20th century.

With the digital writing medium, we have a very different perception today of the phenomenon of writing, profoundly marked by the plurality of authorship as well as of readership. As I have suggested elsewhere (Clivaz, 2010b), the classical triad "author–text–reader" could be replaced by a plural triad: "authors–scribes–readers." The "text" is replaced here by the scribes: they are the people who literally *make* the text. The scribe is the last author and a particularly influential reader. In digital terms, we could call the ancient scribe the *scriptor*,[20] the one who writes and reads, reads and writes, and rewrites again. The exhausting, age-old fight between the author and the reader has probably come to an end with the digital medium of writing and with the figure of the scriptor. Within the digital context there emerges a mass of authors-readers, who seek to understand, speak, and write. They are the *scriptors* of our move beyond the Western cultural boundaries, whatever that will look like.

Notes

1. Many thanks are due to Jenny Read-Heimerdinger for revising the English of this article.

2. Only two NT gospels, Luke and John, have so far been published in this comprehensive edition, and John only in part. The IGNTP committee comprises 22 international scholars working in collaboration toward an edition of the Greek New Testament. Source: The International Greek New Testament Project, n.d.

3. A panel will be organized on this new Greek NT edition at the next SBL meeting in November 2011.

4. The Greek text of the NA27 is freely available at the website Bibelwissenschaft: Bibeltex, but without the apparatus and other complements of the printed text. Source: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft (2010).

5. "The many benefits and features of the widely used "standard text" of the Greek New Testament (i.e., the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies editions) are

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well known and widely appreciated, but it does not meet the needs of all users. For example, many scholars and students, especially those living in under-resourced regions, do not have easy access to an up-to-date critically edited Greek New Testament in electronic form" (Society of Biblical Literature, 2010, para. 2).

6. An initiative such as this cannot but serve as a reminder of the heated debate in the summer of 2010 in the SBL forum, following the resignation of Professor Ronald S. Hendel because of the overly conservative direction taken by SBL (see Society of Biblical Literature, 2011). This new Greek NT edition would appear to confirm the new direction.

7. Smith, 1989, p. 30: "It is illuminating, I suggest, to begin with the seventh century A.D. as the virtually culminating stage of the process, and to trace it then backwards in time." I am indebted to my research assistant Nicolas Merminod for providing useful bibliographical information on the topic.

8. The term *illiteracy* appears in a dictionary of 1839, and *literacy* in a dictionary of 1913, see Barnton, 2007, p. 19.

9. See Biblical Textual Criticism (n.d.).

10. It is difficult to evaluate this enterprise yet, since it is in its early days.

11. New publications have been arriving over recent years: see Thomas, 2007. The online version of the PhD is available from the source Pearse, 2010. My thanks are due to my research assistant Sara Schulthess for the bibliographical references and her thoughts on the topic.

12. A project in Cordoba, BFF2002-02930.

13. It is at one and the same time frustrating and interesting for me, as a New Testament scholar, to see a Muslim Arabic website providing photographs of Greek NT manuscripts: what view of my field of research is given by such a website?

14. Most surprisingly, it should be noted that the website of the Center for the New Testament Manuscripts (Texas) has borrowed a webpage from www.sheekh-3arb. net, without noting their choice to do so (see the Vaticanus Scripture Index on the website by the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts, 2010b).

15. See the Arabic language computing research at Leeds University website (University of Leeds School of Computing, n.d.). This website leads to Quaran Concepts/Topics website (n.d.).

16. Sara Schulthess is presently completing a PhD on the topic (University of Lausanne, CH).

17. See Association for Computers and the Humanities, n.d.

18. See *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, 2004; King's College London, 2011; Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations, 2011.

19. I am exploring ideas on that topic with a colleague in French Literature, Jerôme Meizoz, and our research assistant Elsa Neeman, in a study on "Authorship in a Digital Age." See also Elsa Neeman (with Jérôme Meizoz and Claire Clivaz), "Culture numérique et auctorialité: réflexions sur un bouleversement," *A Contrario*, forthcoming.

20. See Barthes (1967): "the modern writer (scriptor) is born simultaneously with his text; he is in no way supplied with a being which precedes or transcends his writing, he is in no way the subject of which his book is the predicate; there is no other time than that of the utterance, and every text is eternally written here and now." (para. 4)

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