

Editing a Text (Editing Women Writers, Phase 3)

For EWW1 you learned the basics of editorial theory, and for EWW2 you analyzed anthologies. Both of these exercises have prepared you for this Phase 3, where you will select and edit a text for inclusion in our class-wide anthology. Below I include further instructions on what this assignment involves. **This assignment is due by email, as a Microsoft Word document, by 11:59pm on Wednesday, March 28.** I'd also like you to **send me an email with what text you are thinking of editing by Monday, March 19** (so we can have a class discussion about how we will organize our anthology).

Group Decisions

In our class discussion about priorities for our anthology, we decided that the key concept uniting the anthology should be diversity: diversity of race, of religion, of country of origin, and possibly even of language. We also discussed diversity of genre or type of text (so, including not only literary texts and poems, but potentially parts of plays, or diaries, or even things like recipe books). We decided to edit early modern women writers, so roughly 1500-1700; if you have a writer you think should be included whose work falls outside those dates please check with me.

We decided to modernize our texts, to make them easier to potentially teach, and to add notes that will be present on the same page as the texts themselves (with the exception, perhaps, of very long notes, which could be located elsewhere to be less distracting).

We tabled the discussion of organization (whether we want to group topics or writers, chronological or not) until we have a better sense of who is editing what; we'll return to organization later.

Selecting your Text

Your first task will be to select a text to edit. This will require some research on your part. You read a range of writing while skimming your women writers anthologies for EWW2, and there are also numerous sources and resources you might look to when discovering a text you think is worth editing, for example Women Writers Online (<http://www.wwp.northeastern.edu/wwo/>) or, for thinking beyond England, the "Other Voice" series (<http://www.othervoicemc.com/othervoice-chicago.html> and <http://www.othervoicemc.com/othervoice-toronto.html>). If, for example, you wanted to work on Arabic women writers, or writing, then you should research the history of Arabic writing by women, and find sources / resources. Get other anthologies, or books by some of the authors you are told are major authors, and read through to find texts you like.

Because you are being asked to edit only a short text, if you pick a longer text it will be up to you to decide how and where to split things. For example, do you want to edit only one Act, or one scene, of a longer drama by someone? Or maybe only a couple diary entries or recipes? You should decide how long you want your excerpt to be, and how you will choose to excerpt (will you take a representative section? The most interesting section? Etc.).

Editing your Text

Once you have selected your text, you will need to do the work of editing – establishing the text, correcting any textual errors, justifying those corrections, etc. Remember that proper editing is based on a number of factors, including research into the early editions of a text (how many editions were there? Does it exist in manuscript, print, or both? Are there many revisions or changes across editions?), how the book came into existence (has it been copied out by a scribe? put into print by a

friend? by the woman herself?), and the textual context (e.g., what difference does it make to print just Lanyer's "To Cookham" when it's the last poem in her larger *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*?). The more you can learn about how the book came into existence – its textual history – the better you can determine what textual features are intentional and what may be errors. Note that textual historical research is different than, e.g., biographical research into the author herself. Keep track of what you learn as you conduct this research, because you will need it to write your editorial introduction.

If you find that multiple copies exist, you should collate – compare the two texts closely and look for any accidental or substantive differences. Create a list of all differences – this is called a collation (you can decide if you want to only note substantive differences). If you find substantive differences, you will need to decide how to treat them. Do you decide to do base your text on one edition only, and make notes on differences in other editions? If so, do you choose the first edition, or the latest edition, or another one? Do you do best-text editing, where you choose what you think is the best option on a case-by-case basis? How do you justify one option over another? Make sure that you keep track of what choices you are making, and of any emendations that you make – you may want to include them in textual notes (Paul Salzman, for example, notes substantive variations in his Wroth website that you looked at for EWW1).

Once you have conducted the necessary research, you will be ready to edit. You should start by transcribing your text, as a base copy (and check your transcription carefully!). You will then edit – establish your text, fixing any potential errors, resolving any substantive differences, finalizing the text for your readers. Keep track of any emendations, because you will want to clearly signal them to your readers. The next step will be to modernize, since we agreed we wanted to modernize all texts in our group discussion – to make words and punctuation conform to modern expectations. You should use the *Oxford English Dictionary* to look up any words you don't know, and also use their headwords as a guide – the *OED* includes all variant forms (every way a word has ever been spelled), but the *headword*, the large bolded word at the top of an entry, gives the "right" way to spell it. Make sure to use the *OED* rather than some other online dictionary, because the *OED* will have words not present in most dictionaries. You can get to the *OED* through the U of T libraries website.

Footnotes

Once you have edited and modernized, you should add footnotes. These may be textual notes (notes that describe and possibly even justify emendations, or that note variants among different copies or versions of a text), or they may be explanatory notes (giving definitions for difficult words, explaining references to proper names in the context of a poem, paraphrasing particularly difficult lines). It is up to you whether you want to segregate your textual notes from your explanatory notes or not.

Note that if you have included information on your footnotes that you had to look up (a definition, information on who a mythological figure is) **you should include a citation** for where you acquired the information. If possible try to cite a book, or an edited or peer-reviewed text, rather than a website; if you pull up something on Google Books, cite the book itself rather than including a Google Books link.

Introduction

At the beginning of your text you should provide an introduction to your text. You may look in a couple different textbooks that you have for other classes to see what these typically look like; people may sometimes make a brief reference to an author's biography, or may talk about the text in the larger scope of the author's work (e.g., this is her only book of plays; she also wrote several treatises), or may provide historical information relevant to the text (e.g., Askew is responding to debates around the Protestant reformation, particularly about the Host and transubstantiation), or

literary-historical information relevant to the text (e.g., Cavendish with her Prince(ss)'s references to melding friendship souls may be referencing the philosophical metaphysical poetry of Katherine Philips, or the homoerotic poetry of Aphra Behn, where a female exterior authorizes erotic encounters). You should take this intro seriously, and give yourself time to conduct research for it. As it is a research assignment, **make sure to cite all sources you use**, including any online sources. You may also consider including a “further reading” section at the end of your introduction, common in introductions – texts that you find helpful for learning more about your author. You don't need to summarize them, just list a few.

Note that an editorial introduction is not a space for you to close read or provide your own interpretations: you want to leave these texts suggestive and interesting, but not fully answered (because then what is the point of reading them?). You may note that one particular section is particularly ripe for interpretation (for example, you might note that the Duke finishing Cavendish's *Convent of Pleasure* potentially complicates the presumed feminist project as a whole, but you wouldn't want to specify how you yourself resolve that question). Think about this with respect to historical information as well: you don't want to provide historical information as a way of shutting down debate, but as opening it up, providing your readers with enough information to know what your writers are responding to, without assuming that, e.g., Lanyer's religious affiliation solves everything there is to know about *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*.

Take this introduction seriously, as a way of allowing you to introduce research and think about how to write a very different kind of genre than you normally are asked to write for your coursework. I am not asking you to write a strong, thesis-driven argument (you will be asked to do that for the final paper); instead, I am asking you to write a suggestive, researched introduction that sets up the stakes and questions that you encourage your readers to ask of your text.

I would recommend that you make your introduction **between 1-2 double-spaced pages** – so, at least 1 full page, and *no more* than 2 pages (you don't want your reader to skip your introduction because it is loaded with irrelevant detail). Don't just dump research; there is an art to paring down a large amount of research to what is really essential. The 1-2 pages does not include your textual introductory paragraph (more on this below), or your further reading section, if you decide to include one.

Textual introduction

At the end of your introduction you should also include a brief *textual* introduction. A textual introduction is about not the content of the text, but how it exists in its various forms. Are there multiple editions? Tell me what years they are from, and what their relationship is to one another. If it exists in manuscript and print versions say what libraries hold the manuscripts, and give the shelfmarks if possible. Note the textual situation of the text; for example, it would be worth noting that Lanyer's “To Cookham” is a poem affixed to a larger poem about the passion of Christ. You will be giving your reader a text isolated – tell them what its textual context(s) are. You will be able to find much of this information if your text has been edited before, because including this is a standard thing to do! But if you get stuck on this please get in touch with me.

You should also explicitly spell out *your role* in editing: if you favored a manuscript version over a print version; how you reconciled multiple versions (did you go with a later one or an earlier one?); etc. How did you decide which text had more “authority”? You should also be explicit about what kinds of changes you made while editing (so, e.g. admit to modernizing and talk about how many changes to punctuation you made). Be transparent as possible about what you did to your text.