

Charles Harpur: The Editorial Nightmare

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Coming to grips with the literary-historical phenomenon that Charles Harpur represents requires a shift in focus and a querying of traditional assumptions about the shape and manifestation of literary careers. The failure to make that shift editorially for Harpur has hindered the efforts of ordinary readers and literary critics for nearly 150 years now. Harpur's poetic works have been accessible only partially or misleadingly, despite some very considerable editorial efforts stretching back to the late 1940s. As Australia's most significant colonial poet Harpur deserves a fully informed hearing; but such a thing has so far been impossible. The shifts and contrivances to which Harpur as a poet had inevitably to resort—manifested mainly in his voluminous manuscripts and prolific newspaper appearances—mandate an editorial solution that takes the book-historical situation of his mid-colonial period fully into account. This, and the postwar history of editing his works, form the principal subject of the present essay. The last section looks forward to a solution that is both archival and editorial: the Charles Harpur Critical Archive, an online project that is currently in preparation.

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Born in 1813 at Windsor in New South Wales of ex-convict parents only twenty-five years after European settlement, Charles Harpur was Australia's first important native-born poet of European ancestry. By the time he came to live in Sydney in 1833 he was sufficiently well read to be able to take part almost immediately in the nascent literary culture of the day. The library of the new Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, established in 1833, was open to him and he began contributing poems to the Sydney newspapers that same year.

He was jealous of the importance to the young colony of the literary tradition into which he had read his way and of which he would soon become an intelligent critic. Inevitably adopting inherited literary attitudes and diction until he could find his own, Harpur's poetry would be deeply in tune with the contemporary taste for wild nature and the sublime. In his childhood in the fertile Hawkesbury River valley around Windsor, with the Blue Mountains looming in the distance; with similar scenery when farming in the Hunter Valley in the 1850s; and finally, in south-eastern New South Wales, as a gold commissioner and farmer in the Tuross River valley in the 1860s, Harpur enjoyed something of a Wordsworthian advantage. Each site was more picturesque and forbiddingly beautiful than the last: that is, for one who was attuned to it both temperamentally and through his reading of poetry. Although Harpur would never become a radical original, he was easily able to master eighteenth-century verse forms. He was equally at home with the blank verse of the Romantics, with its flexible imitation of the movement and tones of the speaking voice and the inner rhythms of thought. These talents he saw to be at the disposal of the shared colonial experience of a natural antipodean world that needed to be given poetic expression. This would be his vocation, about which he was and would remain both serious and high-minded.

But he was not only high-minded. Although he was heavily influenced by English and, from the 1840s, American book culture, his years in Sydney meant that, in the newspapers, he soon became adept at scrapping in verse with his opponents, especially those he despised. He could be witheringly satirical and, at times, quite amusing. Of Emancipist (ex-convict) stock himself, he was the natural enemy of the Exclusivists who separated themselves from those with the convict taint. Harpur would take particular delight in skewering the pretensions of the large-landholding squatters.

His evolving prose notes to his poems are significant here. Over the years, Harpur republished many of his newspaper poems in other newspapers, often adding notes to each new printing, or revising the existing ones. The notes are occasionally more interesting than the poems themselves. They constituted an attempt on his part to key the poems into the changing political, cultural and ecological agendas of the day.

An Australian patriot, he was soon preaching republican politics in the vain attempt to secure independence from Britain for the still-young colony. He signed some of his manuscript volumes resonantly: 'By Charles Harpur/ An Australian.'¹ In his republican endeavours Harpur was joined by the young firebrand Daniel Deniehy and the Reverend John Dunmore Lang. Harpur's native capacity for abstract thought drew him towards this political ideal. He was living, as he saw it, in a corrupt society where rewards were periodically doled out, but rarely to those from convict stock and especially not to one like himself who could not help but rock the boat. He seems to have had something of the martyr's instinct about him.

Harpur's satires, squibs and rhyming criticisms gave play to this side of his personality. Always witty, they parade a scorn that half-reveals and half-suppresses an underlying seriousness of purpose. How this young society was going to define itself politically, culturally and socially was a burning debate, one which would allow Harpur to give expression to his natural role.

He would aim to be the poet as public figure. This was an aspiration that his dealings with the Sydney lawyer and influential literary patron N.D. Stenhouse no doubt encouraged. In 1859 Stenhouse invited Harpur to come to Sydney to give a lecture on poetry. Though still sheep-farming, Harpur obliged. His lecture, 'The Nature and Offices of Poetry,' shows his familiarity with a wide range of poetry across the centuries and a practitioner's inwardness with its forms and rhythmic possibilities. The quality of the lecture suggests that he could easily have become the foremost literary critic of his day in the colonies; and a number of other essays and notes reinforce the impression. But Harpur did not have the leisure to pursue this secondary vocation very far.

His poetry came first. It would traverse a wide historical terrain, which in turn meant addressing broader questions of ethics, aesthetics and political philosophy. The ambitiousness of his poetry, especially in light of his circumstances, is striking.

Newspaper Poet, and Author of a 'Poetical Works'

In his high ambition to become known as the singer of a nation-in-the-making, Harpur would be unsuccessful, at least as judged by the appearance of his works in conventional book form. The only significant exception during Harpur's lifetime was his play *The Bushrangers*, published in

Sydney in 1853 in a volume that also contained some of his poems. W.R. Piddington was the publisher.

Besides this publication, only a handful of pamphlets and broadsheets appeared, including *Songs of Australia, First Series* printed by D.L. Welch in Sydney, probably around 1850–51. Preserved in the Mitchell Library, this unique copy—which was either a broadsheet or a galley sheet, subsequently torn into segments—is pasted face down (it is not known by whom) to show what Harpur would newly write on the blank versos, which are face up. Until very recently unable to be read, the item typifies the abiding problem in coming to grips with Harpur’s works, a problem that is materially based and interpretative at once.

Harpur’s failure to achieve his longstanding aspiration for book publication of a substantial collection of his poetry either locally or, more desirably, in London (described below) ought to be unsurprising. In fact, no one in the Australian colonies was successful in carving out a professional literary career until the last decades of the nineteenth century, and even then it was exceedingly rare. The London book trade dominated the colonial literary and bookselling scene, especially from the 1860s once large-scale book-distribution arrangements were put efficiently into operation in Melbourne and Sydney. There was little if any place locally for literary book-publishing unless financed by advance subscription or by the author. In 1874 George Robertson of Melbourne paid Marcus Clarke £50 for the copyright of *His Natural Life*, and there were other, similar experiments, although the evidence is thin. But when, in the mid-1890s, Angus & Robertson of Sydney introduced royalty-based or half-profits publishing of literary works where the publisher took the financial risk as a norm, it was widely hailed as a breakthrough for authors.²

Harpur’s reception in his contemporary colonial print culture was nevertheless real. So far, 821 appearances of poems by him in colonial newspapers have been identified as part of a new project on Harpur, outlined in the final section of this essay. He published mainly in Sydney newspapers but also in those in the country areas in which he lived, including Maitland (on the Hunter River), Braidwood and Moruya (just north of the Tuross River) and also, indeed, much further afield in Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, Tasmania and New Zealand. There were almost certainly more appearances of his poems than we shall ever identify, as newspapers were not systematically collected by the fledgling public libraries of the time.

However, in the 1860s his production—as judged by his newspaper appearances—fell away. With a well-paid but demanding job as a gold commissioner Harpur’s time for writing would have been limited.³ He explained the case in correspondence with the much younger poet Henry Kendall.⁴ The latter approached Harpur in 1862 and proceeded enthusiastically to support his senior fellow-poet, acting as both a discerning commentator on Harpur’s earlier and new productions, and as his unpaid literary agent, placing the poems for publication with Sydney newspapers.

The results were not always happy, however, and Harpur grew disheartened and then angry. Finding poems rejected by the *Empire* in early September 1867 he wrote to its co-proprietor and editor Samuel Bennett (1815–78): ‘[I] shall ever henceforth be most feelingly reminded of the Scriptural injunction “Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they turn and rend you!”’

In a PS he continues:

Since the above was written, I have recd. from Mr Kendall a note in which he says that on returning my MSS to him, you were pleased to say that they were not declined from any want of appreciation on your part, but simply because they were insuitable [*sic*] for publication in a mere Newspaper. Now in this there is somewhat in the way of amends, but not to my thinking enough. But in one respect you are quite right. To publish such poetry as mine or like mine in a paper such as the *Empire* or *even* the *Herald*, is indeed a[t] some cost to profane it: papers that seem to delight—that seem to find their mission—in the publication of the veriest trash.

Proceeding then to give an analysis of a particularly weak phrasing in a poem that the *Empire* had recently published but that Bennett had evidently thought publishable, Harpur concludes, witheringly:

such men as you are utterly unfit for the positions you occupy; because so far as true Literature—the Literature of *power*—is concerned, you are but as blocks and impediments in the way of all advancement; and should, in fact, be wholly and always engaged in doing nothing higher than devising bill-heads & setting up advertisements.⁵

This outburst had been brewing for some time. Harpur had despaired of his colonial reception and was turning his attention instead to preparing for the desired book publication of his Works in London.⁶ He studiously revised, sequenced and resequenced his poems in manuscript books.⁷ But that intended publication in London was never to be, so that when the idealistic Harpur died the following year, from consumption, it was in the bitter knowledge of defeat.

In 1883 his widow Mary Harpur managed to get a large selection of his poetry published by George Robertson in Melbourne. But the poems were abridged and edited—in effect, bowdlerised—by a literary friend of the family in Adelaide, Henry M. Martin.⁸ He evidently felt he was bringing them up to date: that is, up to a date that is now itself only historical. The cost of the printing and binding was borne by relatives, and the book was sold by subscription in an attempt to recoup the anticipated outlay in advance. Despite this precaution, a large number of unbound copies, evidently left unsold, were reissued in 1899 in paperback format by the Sydney bookseller-publisher William Dymock, following a campaign over several years by Harpur's loyal widow to achieve republication.⁹ She died in that same year.

The Editorial Challenge

Even had Harpur been successful in placing his Works volume with a book publisher in London, the colonial back-story would have been its obscured context, in need of later illumination. Oddly, the first major endeavour to recapture Harpur's works in their entirety did this latter requirement no favours, despite the undoubted significance of the editorial achievement.

In 1984, under Elizabeth Perkins's editorship, Angus & Robertson in Sydney published *The Poetical Works of Charles Harpur*, drawn for the first time from the manuscript books and newspapers. It was the first successful attempt to capture at least one version of all of Harpur's

poetry. The volume appeared without textual apparatus or annotation, the poems were not accompanied by Harpur's notes; and, regrettably because of a publisher's decision, Perkins's prepared list of the sources from which the texts were drawn was not included.¹⁰

The imposing 1,000-page volume tended, inevitably, to isolate Harpur's works from the colonial contexts from which they arose. The ordering of the contents was not chronological. Rather, it aimed to respect Harpur's own groupings in those late manuscript books where the poet had in mind the British audience. Texts were taken from 'the estimated final versions,' respecting Harpur's shifting manuscript sequences (Holt and Perkins, xiii). But since this approach, if consistently followed, would have meant the sacrifice of those earlier poems that Harpur, late in life, left to one side, compromises were necessary. The stated aim was to allow 'the unity of his work to emerge' in this 'non-definitive, first collected edition' (Perkins viii). In the absence of supporting textual commentary and contextual annotation the only way on offer of reading *Poetical Works* was the traditional aesthetic one, oriented wherever possible around versions from the 1860s deemed to be final.

Clearly, another way is needed if the Harpur encountered by his own, mainly newspaper readers to whom he predominantly addressed his works until late in his life is to be made accessible. An important aspect of this will be the exposure of Harpur's prose notes to his poems. Partly because of their voluminous extent and also, perhaps, out of a certain reluctance to break the normal generic expectation, the notes were not accommodated within Perkins's edition of *Poetical Works*. This was a pity since they are integral to his poetic productions and their address to his readerships. Harpur's habit of annotating was magnified in its effects, as his fame grew, by the tendency of some newspaper editors to collect several of his poems for simultaneous publication so that, in the 1850s in the *People's Advocate* especially, he became, as a poet, virtually a regular columnist with a very identifiable voice.

Spanning as they do the period 1833–68 Harpur's poems and their notes can be taken to index his sense of a continuously evolving colonial culture. Exposing that indexicality is the broader editorial challenge for Harpur scholars, and success in meeting it would give a new burst of life to the study of colonial culture.

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Elizabeth Perkins's edition of *The Poetical Works of Charles Harpur* of 1984 came after a couple of abortive attempts in the 1940s and 1950s to edit the complete poetry. They in turn followed the discovery by the bibliographer and literary historian Cecil W. Salier (1880–1949)—announced in a series of articles written from 1943—of the importance of the earlier forms of Harpur's poems in providing authentic sources for their texts. Salier showed that the 1883 collection arranged by Harpur's widow had put texts into circulation that were seriously misleading not only in comparison with earlier versions published when Harpur was in the prime of manhood (as Salier put it), but also in comparison with the manuscript books that he prepared in the last few years of his life. This 1883 volume had been the trusted source of all selections of Harpur in anthologies hitherto; Salier believed it was time to change tack.¹¹ He began work on a complete edition.

The first, and as it turned out only, editorial fruit of Salier's efforts was the slim volume '*Rosa*': *Love Sonnets to Mary Doyle*, whom Harpur courted for seven years until her father allowed them

to marry in 1850. The collection contains 38 sonnets in 48 pages; it was published in Melbourne by the London firm Hutchinson and subsidised by the Commonwealth Literary Fund (CLF). Soon after Salier's death in late 1949 the literary academic Guy Howarth, acting for the CLF, approached the poet, reviewer, public servant and later journalist Muir Holburn (1920–60) to finish Salier's work. Although the rest of it was unpublished, Salier's remaining editorial work was well advanced. It is not clear whether the size or comprehensiveness of the new volume was a settled thing, but it was to be accompanied by a brief biography. This was June 1950.

A letter from Holburn to Howarth on 28 July 1950 shows his preference: 'if a selection is to be published which will truly show Harpur in a new light, as a vigorous poet capable of appealing to the present day imagination, a certain amount of his work could profitably be eliminated.'¹² A more considered letter to the secretary of the CLF, H.S. Temby, on 31 July 1955 shows that Salier's organisation had been or had attempted to be chronological but that Holburn doubted its practicability 'in the present state of our knowledge.' He proposed instead, in the second letter, 'a thematic treatment' even though it would be

out of the question if we were contemplating a definitive variorum edition. As I understand it, however, we have in mind a volume with some definite 'popular' appeal ... [I]n the two chief revisions which Harpur prepared (in 1863 and in 1867/68), the poems were also arranged thematically, even symbolically in some places, so it may be said that the author has given us some authority for the plan which I have proposed.¹³

As a literary critic trained in the belles-lettristic tradition, rather than a scholarly editor or biographer, Holburn turned to the schoolteacher and literary and political historian James Normington Rawling (or J. Normington-Rawling as he styled himself for a time) to undertake the short biography that was to accompany the edition. Rawling was the obvious choice since he had received a CLF fellowship in 1947 to write a biography of Harpur.

The papers of both men are preserved in the Mitchell Library. They show that Rawling laboured mightily on the biography manuscript and Holburn on transcribing the poems. This latter task appears to have been undertaken more with a view to writing what would have been his literary-critical introduction to the selection rather than an editorial introduction to the texts and their histories. Holburn would copy out poems or parts of poems, often adding stress marks to sound out their rhythm. He also added comments as he went, some in capital letters. These seem to have been basic thematic markers that he would later index on cards.¹⁴ Their randomness shows the weakness of an unfettered literary-critical approach to his editorial duty.

In comparison, Rawling had the historian's touch, including a surpassing zeal for documentary comprehensiveness. Unlike Holburn (who was married to the poet and small-press publisher Marjorie Pizer), Rawling did not see himself as a literary man. As he became further immersed in the biographical project, it grew and grew. In 1953 Rawling stated in a letter that the biography was virtually finished at 250,000 words.

Apparently he wanted to complete it first and then draw the briefer version from it for Holburn, reasoning perhaps that he would not know how to summarise a life until he had fully understood it by writing it. In any case, the saga of incompleteness went on. His excuses for not finishing-up

the relatively brief assignment included the pressure of his work as a schoolteacher and illness. By February 1958 when the extant correspondence breaks off it is not clear that he had actually submitted a finished text.

But Rawling did go on to complete, separately, his full-scale biography of Harpur; it was finally published in 1962 by Angus & Robertson in Sydney. An earlier and much longer version of it is preserved amongst his papers.¹⁵ Rawling had been intending in 1953 to produce a definitive edition of the poems once his biography was published: thus Holburn's preferred form for his edition and Rawling's might have complemented one another. But as the biography stalled, Rawling was getting older. (He was born in 1898 and would die in 1966.) In any case, the edition did not proceed.

Meanwhile Holburn had finished *his* editorial work. A typescript of an extensive but undated edition, together with Salier's preceding one dated 1947, are preserved in Holburn's papers.¹⁶ Neither edition appeared in print, nor does the correspondence explain why. Presumably, either the financial support for what would necessarily have been a very large volume was not available, or the Fund committee grew tired of waiting. If the latter, then that may have been because the Fund did not give clear-enough guidelines to begin with. It would scarcely have been in a position to appreciate the nature and intimidating scope of the editorial problem.

The project was in any case superseded in 1963 by a small volume published in Angus & Robertson's Australian Poets series and edited by Donovan Clarke. Disappointingly, Clarke returned to the texts of 1883, admitting that, although aware of Salier's arguments, 'the present editor has been unable to examine the matter fully' (54).

Thus was promisingly fertile ground tilled—if not harvested—for the editorial labours of others yet to come. There were advances made in two Masters theses that examined some of the Harpur manuscript evidence before Adrian Mitchell's selection of Harpur's poems, prose and letters appeared in 1973.¹⁷

This selection benefited from the new awareness of the manuscript books and in the main drew its texts from them, but without listing the exact sources or providing textual commentary, variant readings or annotation. Mitchell commented that 'Harpur still remains unknown to us, and will remain so until the manuscripts are collated and the complete works are published,' adding that 'Much work needs to be done on the dating of the various versions of his poems' (xxx–xxi). However, the 'enormously demanding task' of collating the texts of the versions could not be undertaken for Mitchell's edition itself.

That left the door open for Perkins but, as mentioned above, she was only able to secure publication of one version of each poem (just as Mitchell had) if now for the entire poetic works, though once again without undertaking the full, detailed survey of the evidence that a textual collation would enforce. Her decision to privilege the final manuscript versions also meant that the principle of organisation was not chronological.

She returned to the task in 1993, beginning then to prepare for a full-scale scholarly edition in two volumes for the Academy Editions of Australian Literature series. The Editorial Board favoured a chronological approach; Perkins herself, aware that her 1984 edition had favoured a

final-intentions approach, was unsure.¹⁸ Other projects, then ill health and finally her death in 2005, prevented significant progress. Fortunately however in 2002, Perkins together with Elizabeth Holt managed to finish compiling and editing the essential preliminary to a scholarly edition of Harpur: *The Poems of Charles Harpur in Manuscript in the Mitchell Library and in Publication in the Nineteenth Century: An Analytical Finding List*. Its identification and dating of versions was an important bibliographical and codicological undertaking.

Meanwhile, in 1987 Perkins had followed up the *Poetical Works* with an edition of Harpur's bushranger play *Stalwart the Bushranger* in its 1867 version, together with its earliest version 'The Tragedy of Donohue,' originally part-published in 1835. And she would edit a selection of Harpur's prose notes to his poems in 1998 in a collection of colonial republican writings: *Our First Republicans: John Dunmore Lang, Charles Harpur and Daniel Henry Deniehy*, edited by David Headon and Perkins.

Michael Ackland was Perkins's principal editorial successor. His *Charles Harpur: Selected Poetry and Prose*, which appeared in 1986, offered a shrewdly chosen selection of the poetry and prose, ordered thematically. Their texts were drawn mainly from the manuscript books and retain Harpur's sometimes idiosyncratic spelling, with a statement of the source in each case. These practices were commendable, and the sacrifice of chronology to content was, for a selection, a sensible way of introducing new readers to Harpur's works.

Since 1986 no fresh edition of Harpur's poetry, selected or complete, has appeared, although individual Harpur poems have continued to appear in anthologies, just as they had done since the late 1880s. Nor has the long-promised granular collation and survey of the textual materials materialised.

This tale of editorial incompleteness, failure and unavoidable compromise would be depressing were it not so entirely explicable—and were there not good precedent. Preparation and publication of the Herford and Simpson Works of Ben Jonson, for instance, spanned the late 1890s to the early 1950s.¹⁹ In the present case the peculiar book-historical and personal circumstances of the colonial newspaper poet form part of the explanation. The confusing state of Harpur's manuscript books make up the rest. Their inscriptions bear witness both to his tireless revisionary and re-sequencing habits *and* to the efforts of his family after his death to secure his legacy by preparing for further publication.

Digital Solution?

The only adequate editorial solution, I concluded some years ago, would be found, if at all, in the digital medium. So, fortunately, it is proving to be. A digital archive made up of facsimile images of all the manuscript pages, newspaper and other nineteenth-century printings has been gradually assembled, and encoded transcriptions of the documents made and checked. As of mid-2016 the count is 685 works of poetry represented in 2,724 documentary transcriptions (versions).

The coding of the transcription files involved the clarification of their work–version relationships, including establishing the status of the very many fragments Harpur left behind; this scrutiny has inevitably led to corrections of Holt and Perkins's *Analytical Finding List*. Capturing the layering of revisions on any one manuscript page in a way that would allow collation of variant versions

has proved to be as much a technical as an interpretative challenge, as the Coda to this essay explains. Indeed the two developments have gone hand in hand, and the process is not finished yet.

Textual collation has turned out to be the only way to make sense of the abundant but confusing evidence in the manuscript books. The alternative approach—recovering the series of steps that would explain the present internal arrangement of the manuscript books before and soon after they reached the Mitchell Library—has not proved feasible. This fact helps explain the saga of editorial incompleteness described above. The would-be editors of the 1940s and 1950s would not have been able to make sufficient sense of what they were looking at. The job was too hard, the evidence overwhelming.

New digital tools, developed for and alongside the Harpur archive, are finally making the various tasks of organisation, arrangement and comparison feasible. Because they are still in development it would be rashly tempting Fate to declare, now, that the situation is finally under control and the end in sight. That said, as of the second half of 2016, the archival effort is nearly finished. An announcement will be made, probably in 2017, when it is ready for inspection and use. The project is called the Charles Harpur Critical Archive.

The more interpretative editorial effort, on the other hand, is only just beginning. It has awaited the assembly and organisation of the materials and the development of the digital tools (software) with which to interact with the documents on screen. The editing will involve determination of the significant versions that each work went through—as opposed to the archive’s transcription of every documentary representation, including the layers of revision they typically exhibit. This will be followed by the establishment of reading texts. Textual commentary and historical and literary annotation will be written to accompany the version-texts. Only a versional approach will capture the chronological stages that Harpur’s poems, and indeed his whole career as a poet, went through. Only then will it become possible to understand him freshly in the present and to assess his contribution to colonial culture justly.

The categories of Australian literature and colonial literature have tended to turn attention away from the fact that Harpur was, despite his family’s convict origins, a surprisingly well-read commentator on and practitioner of late eighteenth-century and Romantic habits of mind and poetic practice. In order to bring this out, the site will be opened up to collaborative input in a way that will formally publish and permanently preserve the contributions of participating scholars. The very many senses in which Harpur could be a man of his colonial setting and also, more generally, a man of his transnational era will be thereby revealed, it is anticipated, in some detail. By this collaborative means Harpur will, it is hoped, enter into the informed reception that he deserved but that has eluded him for almost 150 years since his death.²⁰

Coda: Tool Development

Some readers may be interested in the technical developments being pursued for the Charles Harpur Critical Archive. They emerge from a history and critique of earlier online archival and editorial efforts.

The recent past has seen a transition from print to hybrid scholarly editions that provide online, as

a supplement to the print edition, facsimiles of manuscript or early printed materials. The edited reading text, together with commentary, annotation and introductory matter appears in book form, as may a traditional textual apparatus as well. My recent edition of Henry Lawson's *While the Billy Boils: The Original Newspaper Versions* was of that kind, with the Sydney University Press, the book's publisher, arranging for archival storage of the image files in the Library's flat-file archival database. Each image file was given a name that will not change; nor can the files be removed or edited. This solves the problem of online permanency but at the cost of utility, since the book remains the central, static artefact. The commentary following each Lawson story or sketch in the printed edition gives the online manuscript address. The service is free.

The recent Cambridge Works of Ben Jonson Online, which is much more ambitious in its remit, does something similar.²¹ The business model requires paid subscription, as does another recent initiative, the Oxford Scholarly Editions On-Line. Cambridge is soon to follow suit. These major university presses are converting their existing print editions to an online format. They are gradually being input to computer and marked up with XML codes for their significant features. Character-string and more complex searching across the volume (and across collections of volumes) becomes possible, as well as the capacity to put a page of reading text alongside, and scrolling synchronously with, the relevant editorial annotation and the record of variant readings. These are useful advances but the approach is a derivative one as it assumes the existence of the printed editions in the first place. It is modelled around the logic of their internal organisation and dependent on their establishment of content.

Clearly, the next step would be an approach that took advantage of a Web 2.0 environment and that used Creative Commons licensing, thereby dispensing with subscription payments. It would be one that works from the ground up, making the manuscript and early printed versions of the work available in facsimile image and transcription, generating automatically the data about variant readings, version by version (which printed textual apparatuses have, in the past, painstakingly and, for the reader, often painfully provided), then presenting a readable edition, established according to argued principles. Finally it would act, not just as a publication venue, but as a workbench, providing, archivally, all the primary materials that other editors, annotators and commentators might need to pursue their interpretative activities.

The digital edition would simply be another file or set of files within the archive—not a replacement for the archival transcriptions and images, as was inevitably the case with printed editions. Typically the editor engaged with the original documents, but he or she was usually the last one to do so. Once the archive is finished and the image and transcription files locked, there would be an open environment for collaborative research using those files. Print outputs or e-books could be envisaged, assuming there was a demand for them, as derivatives of the born-digital project—a neat reversal of the Scholarly Editions Online initiatives.

The most successful, continuing pre-Web 2.0 (1990s) literary archival projects are the Blake Archive and the Rossetti Archive.²² But many others fell by the wayside, uncompleted or neglected, or victims of their dependence on proprietary software and operating systems that were no longer supported. That period of naivety has long since passed, and the emergence in the digital humanities community of a text-encoding standard, TEI-XML, is widely believed to have assured a future for digital research that is designed to be very long-term.

But there are disadvantages to TEI. Its complexity presents a steep learning curve to neophytes; but, once its basics are learned, TEI's flexibilities give experienced transcriber-encoders freedom to mark up textual and material features as they see fit—provided they choose from TEI codes within a hierarchically ordered document structure. However, textual features tend, in actual practice, to overlap other elements within the document's 'grammar'; and no two encoders, or even the same encoder at different times, will necessarily mark up, for instance, the same site of layered revision on a manuscript identically. As a result, developers have had, and continue to have, a very hard time writing tools, including automatic collation tools, that can anticipate the range of outcomes of such encoding—especially when, in the broader computing environment outside the digital humanities, developer support for XML seems to be fading. The original goal of TEI of allowing interoperability of TEI-marked-up files has had to be abandoned, although reusability after some manual intervention remains an option.

The Charles Harpur Critical Archive is the principal testbed for a new way of cutting through this problem while taking advantage of a Web 2.0 environment. Its solution is too technical to be fully described here. Suffice it to say that, when processing transcription files of different versions of a work, the text of each one is broken down into fragments but the relationship of the fragments to one another is preserved. Fragments (say, a phrase or phrases) that may be shared among several versions are stored only once. The resultant storage system—what the project's programmer and tool developer Desmond Schmidt calls a Multi-version document file format (MVD)—then allows the equivalent of a textual apparatus to be visualised automatically since it has already been computed in the process of creating the MVD. This technique affords any would-be editor immediate access to the textual history of the work being edited. This visualisation is called the Multiway Compare tool.²³

Because document images are available alongside the transcriptions of them, there is no longer any need to take the (print) editor's word for it that the textual report in an apparatus entry is accurate. When in doubt the user need only look at the relevant images. The two need to scroll in synch even though one is an image and the other a text file. Achieving this, even semi-automatically, is a lot harder than it sounds. Schmidt is currently at work on a tool to be called TILT, which will permit this synchronous scrolling. Without it, one gets repeatedly lost as one's eyes scan two contiguous windows, trying to achieve match points between the visible text in the two files.

Throughout the project development, the watchword has been simplicity. The aim has been that a non-technically-minded humanities scholar will be able to use the resulting tools intuitively and that they will be freely adaptable to other literary and historical projects.²⁴ There are other tools behind the scenes but no proprietary or other formal content-management system as such. It hasn't proved necessary: traditional folder and file systems have done the job. In due course a tool will be written to facilitate collaborative interpretation of the files in the archive. I welcome offers of collaboration. Colonial historians, Romanticists interested in transnational Romanticism—as well as critics and historians of Australian poetry—may well be interested.²⁵

NOTES

¹ E.g. A87-1 ‘Manuscript No. 11’ in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales (hereafter in notes, ‘ML’).

² See further, Eggert 2013: p. 50 n. 11, p. 79 n. 15, p. 215 n. 49 and, for the literary income of Henry Lawson and Rolf Boldrewood in the 1880s and after, pp. 207–21.

³ It is unlikely that he was offered the inducement of payment for his poems, despite the emergence of prestigious newspapers and magazines such as the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Empire*, the *Australian Journal* and others by then. The prospect of payment may have been in the air. But no definite evidence of payment for his contributions in the 1860s has so far emerged from his correspondence; and it remains highly unlikely that he was paid for publications earlier in his career.

⁴ Letter, CH to Henry Kendall, 9 November 1863 (ML C199).

⁵ Partial draft of a letter, CH to [Samuel Bennett], undated (ML MS A87-2). The draft can be dated ‘[by 8 September 1867]’ since, in a letter to Henry Kendall of that date, CH describes the letter corresponding to the draft that he had just sent Bennett (MS 9368/4, National Library of Australia).

⁶ Letter, CH to Henry Kendall, 15 October 1867 (ML C199). He had already announced his ‘intention to “shut up”, for the next five or six years’ in a letter to Kendall, 19 January 1867, ML C199.

⁷ They were later acquired by the collector David Scott Mitchell and are now preserved at ML.

⁸ The edition’s Preface is signed ‘M.’ (Harpur, *Poems* xvi).

⁹ For example, see the letter, Angus & Robertson (George Robertson) to Mary Harpur, 11 July 1896 (ML Angus & Robertson Letter Books).

¹⁰ The list was subsequently issued as a pamphlet (Perkins, *Supplement*).

¹¹ In 1943 Salier could already see that Harpur was ‘a poet of very great talent—if not genius, versatile, virile and originally Australian’ (Salier 1945, 74). By 1951 in a posthumously published article, Salier was declaring Harpur ‘a deeper-thoughted, wider-interested, more varied and versatile, a more masculine poet than has hitherto been conceived . . . truly Australian’ (54).

¹² ML MSS 530 Add-on 2069.

¹³ ML MSS 530 Add-on 2069.

¹⁴ The cards are at ML MSS 530 Add on 2069 Box 2.

¹⁵ ML MSS 1326/ K21933.

¹⁶ ML MSS 530 Box 7 and 8.

¹⁷ MA theses by Alfred Gray, University of Sydney, 1965; and Elizabeth Perkins, University of Queensland, 1972.

¹⁸ The author of the present essay was general editor of the series.

¹⁹ C.H. Herford had signed the contract with Oxford in 1902, and the first volume appeared in 1925. It was completed in 1952. See further, Connor.

²⁰ Elizabeth Webby has already committed to contribute explanatory notes; others are very welcome to join the effort. Intending collaborators are encouraged to contact the author at pauleggert7@gmail.com. The software to facilitate the collaboration should be ready in 2017.

A fuller biographical, book-historical and editorial background than offered in the present essay will appear in due course on the project’s homepage at <http://www.charles-harpur.org>. That still uncompleted work is the source for some of the background material here and also in Eggert 2017.

The Charles Harpur Critical Archive project was funded until 2014 by an Australian Research Council grant awarded to Paul Eggert and Elizabeth Webby and by the University of New South Wales Canberra. Since 2015 it has been supported by Loyola University Chicago. The digital archivist for the project was Meredith Sherlock, the programmer is Desmond Schmidt and the editor is Paul Eggert. Fuller acknowledgements will be given on the Harpur site when it is formally launched. I thank the anonymous reviewers of the present essay for their helpful suggestions.

²¹ Its achievements and its shortcomings are discussed at length by Connor.

²² At <http://www.blakearchive.org/blake/> and <http://www.rossettarchive.org> The Blake Archive is showing its age but the Rossetti, with its last instalment not completed until 2008, presents as more up to date. However, a side-by-side image and transcription presentation is not offered by either. More recent ongoing projects include Textual Communities (<http://www.textualcommunities.usask.ca>—a platform for collaborative projects; the originating one is the Canterbury Tales Project II), the Walt Whitman Archive <http://www.whitmanarchive.org> and the Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscript Project <http://beckettarchive.org> All accessed 2–3 August 2016.

²³ As there is no technical standard for standoff properties our long-term text-file storage will be in the nearly universal markup language of the web, HTML.

²⁴ The Harpur files were originally transcribed in TEI, but the MVD does not require it, thus opening the door, for other projects, to simpler forms of markup from the start.

²⁵ Interested readers who desire further technical background are directed to the Technical Design essay on the project's homepage, <http://www.charles-harpur.org>. Citation of and direction to technical articles, primarily by Schmidt, will be mounted there in due course. For the present author's papers, see Eggert, 'The Reader-Oriented Scholarly Edition,' forthcoming 2016 (from a paper given in 2013), Eggert 2017 (a theoretical defence of versional editing, and then as applied to Harpur), and the unpublished: 'The Archival Impulse and the Editorial Impulse' (a theoretical account of the relationship between digital archives and digital editions, a further development from the 2013 paper, and as applied to Harpur), European Society for Textual Scholarship annual conference *Digital Scholarly Editing: Theory, Practice, Methods*, Antwerp, October 2016.

An early-2000s experiment used some related technologies to produce a digital edition of Ned Kelly's Jerilderie Letter with facsimiles, transcription and collaborative commentary, as well as another incomplete one using the resources gathered and transcribed during the preparation of the printed Academy Edition of Marcus Clarke's *His Natural Life*, ed. Lurline Stuart (St Lucia: U of Queensland P, 2001). See <http://asecentre.org/JITM/index.html>. Papers of the research group involved in the experiment, which terminated in 2005 (Graham Barwell, Phill Berrie, Paul Eggert and Chris Tiffin) may be found at http://asecentre.org/current_projects/jitm/jitm-publications.html. A more developed argument (including a defence of the ongoing utility of print editions) may be found in Eggert 2005. See further, Berrie et al. 2006, and Eggert 2009.

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