Afterword

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At certain points in history, certain words take on a positive aura that makes it difficult to openly express dissenting or sceptical views about the objects, processes, or qualities they denote. Right now, *social* has this aura. This word's role as a modifier to make the noun after it refer to society and other kinds of human association—as in social law and social life—emerged at the end of the sixteenth century (OED 'social' *adj.* 5a, 5b). Most recently, the word has attached itself to a relatively new word, media— first used to denote mass communication in 1927 (OED 'media' *n.*[2])—to denote a new kind of technology of communication. Whereas the ordinary media provided only one-way, one-to-many, communication, the social media allow 'users to create and share content or to participate in social networking' (OED 'social' Special Uses S2 'social media' *n.*).

In the field of textual editing, being social is not so new. The French theorists of the 1960s Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault considered authorship itself to be an inherently social phenomenon. For Barthes, texts were not spun like webs out of the solitary minds of lone individuals but rather woven together from existing ideas and sayings: 'The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture' (Barthes, 1977, p. 146). According to Foucault, we are thinking about creativity itself in the wrong way if we concern ourselves too much with authors as persons, for in truth we as readers collectively construct the author to suit what we want to do with the text. In this view, we have to speak not of the author but of the author function that we use to constrain the range of interpretations that a text may be subject to. These reader-constructed authors become 'the

principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning' (Foucault, 1994, p. 352), saving us from outlandish misinterpretations. In their original French-language publications—much translated and anthologized—Foucault's essay was a direct response to Barthes's, and their shared aim was a thorough transvaluation of the notion of authorship by socializing it (Barthes, 1968; Foucault, 1969).

In literary studies of authorship, this French post-structuralist and post-modern view still holds considerable sway, although research in computational stylistics is showing that in fact authorship is a good deal more personal and less socialized than Barthes and Foucault had us believe (Craig, 2009-10). The claim that authorship is a fundamentally social phenomenon became popular in the fields of book history and textual scholarship with the publication of Jerome J. McGann's *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (McGann, 1983). McGann argued that we see the idea of socialized creativity in practice most clearly when we think about how literary works reach their readers: 'the production of books, in the later modern periods especially, sometimes involves a close working relationship between the author and the various editorial and publishing professionals' (McGann, 1983, p. 34). These various others, apart from the author, whose labour goes into making a book—including its printers— should not be seen as contaminating the work (as a previous generation of textual scholars believed) but rather as completing the authorial intention. D. F. McKenzie offered a practical illustration of this claim in Jacob Tonson's 1710 edition of the works of William Congreve, designed by master printer John Watts, who made extensive use of typographic distinctions to embellish scene

divisions. According to McKenzie, this landmark edition must be seen as an active collaboration between the author, the publisher, and the book designer, and hence only a notion of the book as a social object can fully account for its meanings. To respond to this reality, McKenzie called for a 'new and comprehensive sociology of the text' (McKenzie, 1981, p. 118). Like the French theory from which it derives, these Anglo-American notions of the socialized text are susceptible to considerable critique in practice and they often overstate their claims (Egan, 2010, pp. 129–66; Egan, 2014).

The essays in this special issue invite us to consider the notion of social editing, and just as one would hope from thoughtful experts, they are all undazzled by the idea's fashionable aura and think through carefully what it means for that adjective to qualify that noun. But what exactly is social editing? Scholarship by McGann and McKenzie in the 1980s told us that the text itself is inherently social, so what implications might that have for a socialized approach to editing the text? Might social editing be a portmanteau term invented merely to enable the staid scholarly endeavour of editing to dress itself in Web 2.0's gladrags? The strongest claim so far made for the endeavour of social editing (Siemens, et al. 2012) invokes social media in its title and describes the dispersal of editorial authority in terms that are strikingly similar to those previously used to describe the dispersal of authorial authority, first by the French theorists in the 1960s and subsequently by McGann (whom it repeatedly cites on the nature of textuality), and McKenzie, and others. What is new are the opportunities offered by the latest technologies of connectivity: it is now practicable to share out the work that was formerly done by one scholar or a small team of them. But here a potential contradiction arises. If the first wave of authority-dispersal theorists were right—if the authority of a text was always already (to use one of this school's favourite expressions) dispersed before its first readers clapped eyes on it—then what authority remains to be dispersed in the editing? In a penetrating survey of the claims made for a social turn in textual studies, Peter Robinson is deeply sceptical that the new technologies fundamentally alter the power relations between authors, readers, editors, and critics,

and he is excoriatingly blunt in his conclusions that: '... neither ''social text editions'' nor ''social editions'' exist and that the phrase ''social editing'' is misleading' (Robinson, 2015-16).

Social editing can mean the eliciting of the contribution of labour from the general public during the creation of an edition, for example in transcribing primary documents. It can mean the eliciting of scholarly (rather than public) collaborative input during the creation of an edition. It can mean the eliciting of scholarly debate and reuse during the consumption of an edition. And it can mean eliciting public debate and reuse during consumption of an edition. New technologies for scholarly publishing—the ubiquitous XML markup and dissemination via the WorldWide Web—have not merely enabled scholars to be collaborative in their editorial labours, they have positively demanded it. This is because most textual scholars do not know how to use XML or publish online and need training in these ways of working. According to Robinson, the large accumulations of technical expertise in centres such as the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities in Virginia, the Humanities Text Initiative at Ann Arbor, Michigan, the King's College London Centre for Computing in the Humanities, and the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities are not an efficient way for digital scholarly editions to get made (Robinson, 2010). He points out that much scholarly expertise in textual matters remains embodied in the minds and labours of lone scholars who are unlikely ever to acquire the resources—the grant awards, the sabbaticals—that are needed to take up a residential course in XML and related technologies at such a centre. We need better ways of harnessing lone scholars' textual expertise.

In his essay in this special issue, on 'Project-Based Digital Humanities and Social, Digital and Scholarly Editions', Robinson observes that for most of the history of scholarly editing, we did not need such large centres nor did we organize ourselves into projects. Yet scholars were still being social because the very means of scholarly communication are inherently social. In Robinson's example, lone scholars working individually elucidated the opening lines of Dante

Alighieri's *Inferno* by each providing individual parcels of knowledge—on the calendar, on the writer's biography, and on the movements in the cosmos—that cumulatively illuminate Dante's poetic purpose in these lines. This, according to Robinson, is a way of being social that has served us well for many years. The new technologies certainly offer us new possibilities, according to Robinson, but they are best exploited not in big projects organized within big centres but in genuinely dispersed scholarly labour. For this, Wikipedia provides the most well-known model, but the underlying principles are embodied in the Internet and the WorldWide Web themselves as vast collaborative endeavours running on simple open standards and based on the assumption that humans tend towards intellectual generosity rather than hoarding. These principles keep the bar for engagement as low as possible.

Writing that is circulated in print has long enabled collaborative, that is social, endeavours between scholars who never meet. We might think of the big institutional centres of digital research as somewhat like the medieval monasteries, with their special textual expertise and means of reproduction. In this analogy, the lone scholars are like the many potential intellectuals of medieval Europe who could not enjoy the life of the mind because they lived and worked outside of these institutions. In the somewhat disputed history of technology offered by Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, the technology of print itself was the catalyst that brought us the Renaissance by ending this institutional dominance (Eisenstein, 1979; cf. McNally, 1987). Less contentiously, we can at least acknowledge that the circulation of the catalogue of the Frankfurt Book Fair created a kind of social network among the thinkers of early sixteenth-century Europe who thereby knew—at least insofar as they could infer it from book titles—just what other members of the group were working on (Wootton, 2011; Wilding, 2014).

Making sure that everyone knows what you are working on is the theme of Murray McGillivray's essay in the present issue called '"Why Don't We Do It in the Road?": The Case for Scholarly Editing as a Public Intellectual Activity'. He finds that the old ways of working were 'anti-social', and as such is

the only contributor to use that antonym of this issue's key term. Just as bad, according to McGillivray, the old ways of doing scholarly editions do not meet the political and social agendas that dominate university life in the twenty-first century: We are in danger of simply not being allowed to do them any more. To counter this threat, we should stop doing our editions in secret, says McGillivray, and we should display our activities for all to see. This does not mean crowdsourcing the construction of the edition itself, but simply revealing our working processes and publishing parts of the edition as they are completed. McGillivray describes two of his own projects that have proceeded like this, and he is frank about this method's necessary public disclosure of the imperfect documents made, and of the abandoned blind alleys followed, along the way. McGillivray recommends using the scientists' notion of Minimum Publishable Units as a way of giving to junior individuals—students, fixed-term researchers—the credit they deserve by explicitly self-publishing their contributions to the project. Opening up the creation of an edition to the world's public in this way gives that public an opportunity to answer back, and McGillivray recounts valuable textual corrections that resulted from his approach. This is not quite the engagement of the public in the creation of an edition proposed by Ray Siemens, but it goes some way towards it (Siemens, *et al.* 2012).

Involving students and fixed-term researchers in the creation of editions is one thing, but surely bringing in the public at large is a recipe for disaster. Peter Shillingsburg, in 'Reliable Social Scholarly Editing', worries out loud that crowdsourcing some of the editorial work such as the proofreading of transcriptions might be just giving into laziness and that it necessarily constitutes a threat to the maintenance of high quality. Shillingsburg expresses a widespread scepticism that we can ensure the quality control needed to exploit the free labour of the crowd without admitting egregious errors into our editions. Somebody, somewhere needs to be checking what is being done, and surely it is still true that '... what is everyone's job is no one's job'. The place where Shillingsburg least objects to the public having a role is in 'the analytical and explanatory commentary and critical engagement

with works'. These are opinions, so in a sense they cannot be wrong.

Paul Eggert too sees problems in the model of editorial crowdsourcing proposed by Siemens, and his essay's title 'The Reader-Oriented Scholarly Edition' indicates the kind of thinking that he believes is needed to avoid them. Eggert proposes that we conceive of the scholarly edition as a transaction with the reader rather than as a model of what the text really is. Eggert gives an account of the post-war tension between the German editing tradition in which it was not permitted to mix readings from different witnesses—each witness was presented as a coherent singularity and its differences from the others recorded—and the more eclectic Anglo-American editing tradition. In this narrative, literary critics have largely ignored editorial work on textual variation because either they just wanted a singular reading text to interpret (as did the New Critics) or they entirely distrusted the categories used in that editorial labour, such as author, intention, and even the work, and treated everything—including things never written down—as a kind of text (as did the Literary Theorists).

Understood as a transaction with the reader, writes Eggert, the scholarly book has to be constructed with a particular market in mind, and we have to answer questions such as whether the identified readership needs a clean reading text or should be given some sense of the text's genesis, for example by presenting alterations *in situ*. As Eggert asks, should we assume the existence of readers 'who can cope with information needing to be decoded rather than just straightforwardly read'? If we do assume this—and as editors we are temperamentally inclined to—then the market for our editions gets smaller, and Eggert thinks that in the print medium this reduction in market size may be unsustainable. Perhaps digital editions can help us by separating the archive, on the evidence of which the textual choices are made, from the reading text itself, which is thereby made freer to engage in broader critical debates. Eggert conceives of a digital edition being just '... a list of emendations, supported by justifications for them, of one or more of the texts already stored within the digital archive'. Thus the edition is 'an argument directed at the

reader about the archive', and this model restores the transactional relationship.

Reflecting on this suggestion as one of the General Editors of the forthcoming *New Oxford Shakespeare* Complete Works, it occurs to me that we could directly apply it to our Original Spelling texts but not to our Modernized Spelling texts, since in the latter we depart from the forms in the archive for most of the words. Shakespeare and the dramatists of his time are rather an editorial oddity in this regard. English writings from just before Shakespeare's time are so unlike modern English that scholars do not consider modernizing them for other scholarly readers. A modernized Chaucer, for instance, is only ever created to provide a crib to help students learn Middle English or else to attract lay readers to this field. On the other hand, writings from shortly after Shakespeare's time are widely considered to be so like modern English as to need no modernization. Shakespeare and his contemporaries lie in between these periods and are now routinely modernized for lay and scholarly readers. Yet, the great textual theorists of the twentieth-century New Bibliography generally opposed the modernizing of Shakespeare, and the view that it is unnecessary is still occasionally expressed even today. The linguist David Crystal reckons that with only 5–15% of the words and only 7% of the grammatical constructions in early modern English being substantially different from those of modern English, today's readers get a good-enough sense of what Shakespeare meant from an unmodernized text and that to go further specialist study is in any case required (Crystal, 2002). However, since the publication of Stanley Wells's scholarly argument for modernizing Shakespeare's spelling, which included his guide on how to do it (Wells and Taylor 1979), the case for original spelling editions is seldom made, and the remaining scholarly arguments revolve around particular words that present special obstacles to modernization (Bevington, 2004).

When planning a scholarly edition, the mere fact that it is to be a digital edition should necessarily put the social aspect in a new light. One might try to be social by broadening the contributor base to bring in more scholars than would normally be involved, without letting in anyone else. But according to Joris Van Zundert, even a few too many

scholars can spoil the broth, not least because some of them—especially the non-digital ones—might not be able to see beyond the existing conceptual model of the printed book. In 'The Case of the "Bold" Button: Social Shaping of Technology and the Digital Scholarly Edition', Van Zundert complains that we are still essentially making digital versions of books rather than editions that could only exist as digital editions. Van Zundert describes the makers of an XML annotation tool at his institution giving in to the scholarly editors' request to implement a 'Bold' button, allowing annotation of a section of text to show that it appears in boldface type in the documentary witness. This Van Zundert thinks was a mistake, as it constituted a reversion to a metaphor from the older textual form—the printed book—in place of a forward-looking consideration of what is possible in the new digital medium.

Van Zundert calls the 'Bold' button error an example of the endemic 'paradigmatic regression' that plagues all our efforts. The last really big leap forward in the ability of new technology to express the true essence of text was, he argues, the Hypertext Reference (HREF) property of HTML's <a> (for anchor) element. The hyperlink gave us for the first time a way to embody the interconnectedness of texts. But digital editions have not in general used hyperlinks to point to things outside of themselves and confine their use to internal linking. This is true, but I would say that we must blame the inadequacies of our current ways of handling external linking: the Domain Name System, Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP), and more recently Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs). The last of these, as applied to the problem of scholarly referencing by the CrossRef consortium—a non-profit publishers' organization initiated at the Frankfurt Book Fair in 1999—might one day solve the linking problem. However, there is no essentially new technology at work here: the DOI system and CrossRef merely formalize the apportioning of responsibility for the maintenance of the records that keep cross-references alive.

According to Van Zundert, to really think big about this topic, we need to provide users with the application programming interfaces (APIs) to our editions; doing this will be the final and essential break from the book metaphor. But what of the analyses that the API-driven, distant-reading model promotes? Van Zundert characterizes them as 'lossy' and 'reductive' when compared to close reading. I would object here that in fact all interpretations—distant and close—are equally lossy but in different ways. Criticism is necessarily reductive and that is a good thing, since the only non-reductive account of a text being interpreted is that text itself. Van Zundert thinks that our scholarly editions need to narrow the widening gap between close and distant reading. One way, he suggests (without pushing it as a universal panacea), is to consider texts as what computer scientists sometimes call 'graphs': that is, chains of 'nodes' (say, words) connected by 'edges' that represent their relationships.

Roger Osborne, Anna Gerber, and Jane Hunter seem to have avoided the kind of error that Van Zundert discloses in the making of their Australian Electronic Scholarly Editing (AustESE) Workbench software for collaborative editing, as described in 'Archiving, Editing, and Reading on the AustESE Workbench: Assembling and Theorising an Ontology-based Electronic Scholarly Edition of Joseph Furphy's *Such is Life*'. They describe the history of the publication of Furphy's 1903 novel and the complexities of revision that make a critical edition particularly desirable. The AustESE Workbench software is meant to enable non-technical editors to work digitally, and its main contribution seems to be that it allows us to describe artefacts (such as manuscripts, typescripts, and editions), events (such as the writing of revisions), and persons (such as publishers and authors) in the life of the literary work being edited, and to indicate how these various entities relate to one another. If I understand it correctly, this identification of phenomena is rather like that in Peter Robinson's Textual Communities software, the alignment with which suggests that investigators are happily converging on particular ways of thinking that will take us past the intellectual impasses that several contributors here identify in the state of the art of scholarly digital editing.

Apparently, the objects in the AustESE Workbench can be as small as single pages in a book, so it is possible to describe in detail how an

author revised a work by transposing material. I would have thought, however, that much finer granularity than the single page would be needed for most attempts to account for transposition-in-revision. In my field, Shakespeare's writing, we find alterations to, and transpositions of, individual words and even letters as the reviser hunts for the precise *bon mot:* 'too sallied flesh' (*Hamlet*, 1604-5) versus 'too solid flesh' (*Hamlet*, 1623) for instance. And what if the change is not even Shakespeare's own but someone else's? We have experience in recording the changes that multiple hands make to a work, of course, as pointed out by Meg Meiman in 'Documentation for the Public: Social Editing in The Walt Whitman Archive'. As she observes, we are quite used to figuring out just how to record the multidimensional changes to an XML document when many people work on it, and so in a way we have already achieved a degree of social editing. The very headers of our machine-readable documents contain this sort of information, and—as Meiman implies without stating it so baldly—we perhaps are making a meal of things when we treat the multiple hands and multiple revisions present in our primary texts as if they present an almost intractable intellectual problem. Touché! Or as Osric put it, 'a palpable hit'.

If we are going to undertake crowdsourcing of some of the work in scholarly editing, what does practical experience tell us to plan for? Kenneth Price, in 'The Walt Whitman Archive and the Prospects for Social Editing', reckons that crowdsourcing efforts work best when there are no tricky conceptual questions at stake, no training is needed, and when we have mountains of simple, repetitive labour to complete and the vetting procedures can be made simple. The project to crowdsource the transcription of Jeremy Bentham's works found that there was an extraordinarily long tail to the volunteer profile: thousands of people transcribed just one or two documents and a handful of them transcribed many hundreds. Like other essayists in this special issue, Price is sceptical of Siemens' suggestion that editorial authority can also be socialized, and he asks of the Bentham contributors 'What was the quality of their contributions?' and were they in fact not

ordinary citizens as the project hoped but 'other scholars, perhaps not affiliated with the project but nonetheless possessing expert training in early modern texts'? Price considers the ideas of other investigators, including Martin Mueller, who hope to bring in masses of students to get undergraduate credit for their performance of 'lapidarian' tasks such as 'proofreading, checking part-of-speech tagging, and correcting or creating a cast list'. Offering degree-level credit might, it seems, act as an incentive to maintain high quality in the labour. We are, of course, only at the beginning of our exploration of the possibilities of social editing and it occurs to Price that such experiments might have unanticipated spin-off benefits. For example, if we leave open a public poetry-annotating site for several decades, we would end up with a useful snapshot of changing public perceptions around various topics. Our secondary material might turn into a social historian's primary material.

All the essayists here are agreed that new technologies are changing our ways of thinking about our scholarly editing activities. For Allison Muri, Catherine Nygren, and Benjamin Neudorf ('The Grub Street Project: A Digital Social Edition of London in the Long Eighteenth Century'), one of the most important changes might be a departure from our traditional fixation with the author. The Grub Street Project aims to be a 'collaborative social edition of eighteenth-century London' itself, bringing together texts and images about books, artworks, people, places, and trades. There is a relational database holding all the data together and they have 2000 texts as transcribed by the Eighteenth Century Collections Online Text Creation Partnership. But why is it an 'edition' not an archive? The authors explore the limitations of our standard nomenclature. Digital archives, they argue, are themselves oddly metaphorical in using that name, since they do not really preserve anything in the way that professional archivists would understand in relation to their preservation of physical documents. (Actually, I would contest that assertion: keeping old digital files useable is a kind of preservation.) Moreover, many of us are no longer especially author centric even when we work on one writer: we acknowledge that writers exist in social

networks that enable the reading of their words. So, it does not make sense, this essay's authors argue, to confine the word *edition* to works by one author. Like the place name Grub Street itself—a real location in London and an imaginary place of low culture and despicable behaviour—the term *edition* is freighted with connotations about how people interact with one another that take us far beyond its simple denotation. As the French theorists told us, texts are inextricably embedded in wider social practices.

Some of those wider social practices can seem to be ranged in direct opposition to our efforts. This is the topic of Wout Dillen and Vincent Neyt's 'Digital Scholarly Editing within the Boundaries of Copyright Restrictions'. They start with Robinson's exhortation to digital scholarly editing projects that they drop the Non-Commercial and No Derivatives qualifiers that are often put on to a Creative Commons licence. The trouble is, Dillen and Neyt observe, that the editors might well not possess those rights that an Attribution and Share-Alike licence would give away. A case study for this problem is the Samuel Beckett Digital Manuscripts Project, for which the primary documents are in libraries in different national jurisdictions and so are subject to differing copyright restrictions. The Beckett Estate requires that the project put the materials behind a paywall, which virtually everyone in academia finds objectionable. Dillen and Neyt detail the other irksome restrictions that must necessarily be accepted by editors of materials that are encumbered by copyrights unless we are willing to just give up working on these subjects altogether. They observe that we can almost always safely give away our own project documentation files, and also if we use the Text Encoding Initiative (TEI) standard we can give away the One Document Does It All file that describes the schema used for the encoding; these actions go a long way towards helping others understand what we have done. Moreover, even copyright materials themselves may be reproduced under the Fair Use doctrine (called Fair Dealing in the UK), and Dillen and Neyt offer a couple of notable examples while cautioning that this principle merely provides a possible line of defence for those subject to a legal challenge from rights holders. No academic wants to have to

actually fight such a case, and the law, being thus weighted towards rights holders, probably makes us much too timid in the exercising of our Fair Use/ Dealing rights.

Encroached upon by rights holders from one side and on the other by political and institutional leaders who cannot easily see the value of a new edition of the writings of a dead author, the scholarly editor is in an invidious position. The long-term economic viability of our traditional allies, the commercial publishing houses, is uncertain, and there are undoubtedly some politicians who would regard their disappearance and ours as no bad thing. This is not because these politicians believe that electronic dissemination is better than print dissemination, but because they believe that we scholarly editors have nothing of great value to offer society. In the idea of 'wisdom in the crowds', some people would see an alternative to the putative wisdom of the scholar. From this perspective, the democratization that comes with crowdsourcing aligns discomfortingly well with what in the UK is called the Impact Agenda, which may not unfairly be characterized as a rather brusque enquiry of 'what have you done for us lately?', addressed to academics by those whose taxes pay for our research. The question is in fact a fair one, so long as we have the confidence to give it a considered response rather than slip into the habitual insecurity of our profession.

As Terry Eagleton remarks in his memoir *The Gatekeeper*, middle-class academics 'have a problem about patronizing the working class and worry about their posh accents', whereas 'working people themselves are usually quite prepared to accept them if they have something useful to offer'. This observation is illustrated by an anecdote about

> an Oxford academic who was invited to deliver a lecture at Ruskin, the Oxford trade union college, and who began with the typically donnish, self-deprecating ploy of claiming to know very little of the subject in question. A voice from the back boomed out in a rich Lancashire accent 'Tha'art paid to knoow!' (Eagleton 2001, pp. 89–90)

There is no shame in knowing more about something than other people do, of course, but the point of the anecdote is that academics are in this position because they have an economic role in society, even when (as in Eagleton's case) they are committed to fundamental social change to transform that economy.

None of the contributors to this special issue—certainly not those actively involved in crowdsourcing aspects of the editorial process—takes the view that the wisdom of the crowd surpasses that of the paid expert. But those like Shillingsburg who worry that such an idea might underlie some people's conception of a social turn in scholarly editing are right to be worried. There has been a general devaluing of scholarly expertise across the Western democracies in recent years, and the Impact Agenda and its expression in such things as the UK's Research Excellence Framework are symptoms of a political desire to hold academics to a merely economic accountability. At their most extreme, the instincts at work here arise from a managerialist, business-like approach to what happens in universities. In short, there is a discounting of scholarly knowledge except where it can directly be assigned a value by commercial exploitation. As any Marxist would predict, the new technologies are double-edged in that regard, for as well as enabling the monetization of scholarly expertise they enable the scholars themselves to directly reach the great many ordinary readers around the world who value scholarly expertise for its own sake and not in monetary terms. As described in this special issue, there are opportunities for expert individuals to bypass the usual commercial and institutional channels for scholarly interchange and to involve their readers more directly in their editorial practices. The new technologies can enable a new compact between editors, as the expert curators and disseminators of extraordinary writings, and the worldwide readerships that want to read them.

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