write a piece like Lydia Davis. (I'm not sure this wouldn't be an excellent way to teach PhD surveys in contemporary literature, by the way.) The results have been surprisingly good—the writing the students produce may not be any better or any worse, but they say they have a feeling of accomplishment and increased understanding, a sense that they have added tools to their toolbox. They think it is fun.

It takes a heap of loafing to write a book.

I was once asked in an interview why I wrote, and I said, only half-facetiously, "Because I feel worse when I don't." I doubt anyone writes very much if they can stand not to do it. But that belies the delight. When things are flowing, I find pleasure in the evolving line, pleasure in the developing story, in the endless surprises that result from pushing thought and image into the form of sentences and paragraphs. The essential efficacy of my plagiaristic pedagogy, my use of imitation in my classes, may be due simply to the pleasure students find in it. In erasing the anxiety about "finding one's voice," that most dubious of ventures, and allowing them to feel, however falsely, that the burden of creation has been lifted, they enjoy themselves. That pleasure may be the result of the mimetic impulse itself (the Lacanian in me dies hard), may be the submission to the law of genre, may be the Halloween freedom of it all, but in any case it works. They develop more good habits than bad, they think through issues of constraint and freedom, they learn tricks, they learn structures, they learn style.

One does not get better but different and older and that is always a pleasure.

After the novel, I've decided now I'm going to imitate the way people write photo essays. But I'm going to put my own stamp on it. And I'm going to have fun.

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Alvin Snider: What Is an Editor?

When I first took on the editorship of *Philological Quarterly,* a colleague from another university, a veteran editor, asked me what I planned for the journal, how I would redefine its mission and my goals in realizing it. An awkward silence followed as I joked that I had no idea what editors actually did but thought they enjoyed cushy sinecures. Today I could rhyme off a list of activities subsumed under the catchall term "editor" but still would not venture a definition. Much like the study of "literature," which *PQ* historically has served, the term remains elusive. My predecessors, the first editors of *PQ* at the University of Iowa, who brought it into existence some ninety years ago, could not have foreseen that philology would fall into disrepute and editing itself start to resemble a sort of genial (or surly) professional doorkeeping. If not as minor functionaries, colleagues tend to regard journal editors as akin to Samuel Johnson's lexicographers, harmless drudges who provide a worthy public service. The language you most often hear invoked in praise of successful editors is a discourse of anonymity, self-abnegation, and tireless industry. Editors represent the antithesis of Romantic expressivity, commendable in their

way but also nugatory in the tasks they perform, most themselves when speaking behind a generic mask (the Editor), or, even better, a fictitious collective (the Editors). In their own estimation editors might regard themselves as collaborators, silent partners, and universal benefactors, but for their colleagues they come closer to nameless factotums than trusted facilitators.

I want to suggest that editors play a role vital to the production of authorship as we ordinarily conceive it, that the categories of editor and author sustain one another. A comprehensive history of editing, if somebody undertook to write one, would overlap the history of authorship at many points, and the distinction between the two sometimes seems far from obvious. In the seventeenth century journals were treated as books authored by their editors, much like edited collections today. Yet even then editors covered their industrious networking under a cloak of humility. Henry Oldenburg, the "editor" and "undertaker" of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society,* launched in 1665, quietly set about enforcing a tone of civility among the fractious natural philosophers who published their results in the journal (Johns 497–99). A citizen in good standing in the republic of letters, he appeared to his contemporaries as at once indispensable and invisible. We can count Oldenburg, as Adrian Johns points out, among the first who "created a comprehensive approach to securing authorship in a natural philosophical community" (502). Present at the birth of the scientific periodical in Europe, Oldenburg emerges into history as something of a cipher, despite ample documentation of his activities in a voluminous correspondence. Steven Shapin notes the lack of "routine designations" for the role Oldenburg played in his day, characterizing his editorial and other faceless labors as those of "a servant, dependent upon the directions, commissions, remuneration, and pleasure" of his upper-class patrons (418). In his dedication to the first volume of the landmark *Transactions,* Oldenburg expressed a self-effacing wish "[t]o spread abroad Encouragements, Inquiries, Directions, and Patterns, that may animate, and draw on Universal Assistances"—not a bad summary of a contemporary journal editor's goals but perhaps overmodest for someone so innovative and well connected. Technical and scientific periodicals such as the *Transactions* emerged out of the gazettes, correspondence, catalogues, and other forms of ephemeral writing that filled the presses in the seventeenth century, just as contemporary humanities journals take their place alongside the mass culture and digital media with which they share the Web. Oldenburg temporized at every turn as he laid the foundation for modern journal editorship, performing a function that combined elements of pitchman, business manager, family retainer, and hack for hire.

Oldenburg oversaw and profited financially from the *Transactions,* operating as the journal's proprietor, and, in a sense, its author. Ownership of some scholarly journals, I have discovered, still rests in the hands of their editors, not the institutions that employ them. I don't want to overstate the unbroken descent of scholarly journals from the seventeenth century, but in our haste to divvy up culture by periods for various academic specializations we sometimes overlook hidden continuities that persist through centuries of epistemic change. If significant differences separate the *Transactions* and the *Journal des sçavans* from our own science and humanities journals, the rise of the editor marks a significant moment in the emergence

of modern literate culture. Any hard-and-fast distinction between editorship and authorship depends on a narrowly circumscribed, ahistorical, and probably under-theorized conception of the author. Arguments that challenge a simple notion of the author as an autonomous agent of creation or that proclaim "the death of the author" make good sense to most editors. Nobody better understands the Barthesian principle that words don't originate in an author, that scholarly articles, much like literary texts, stitch together a patchwork of quotations drawn from innumerable sources. The diligence that characterizes good editing, the near obsessive worry over style and accuracy, forces any conscientious editor to pay close attention to the conventions of authorship, to intertextuality as a form of praxis. At the same time, the anti-intentionalism of Roland Barthes' "The Death of the Author" will seem *vieux jeu* to theorists of authorship, insofar as gender, ethnicity, race, and class play vital parts in determining the institutional operations of what Michel Foucault (in an oblique response to Barthes) called the "author-function" (Bennett 9-28).

Foucault's famous essay inserts the author into a system of property rights and textual ownership, which came into existence at the end of the eighteenth century "once strict rules concerning author's rights, author-publisher relations, rights of reproduction, and related matters were enacted" (108). For Foucault, authorship stands as a form of ownership contingent on "penal appropriation" and other forms of regulation; in other words, texts historically acquired authors "to the extent that authors became subject to punishment" (108). Editors, we might say, superintend the boundaries of a Foucauldian regime of transgressive authorship when they ask authors to sign agreements and warrant that their contributions contain nothing obscene, libelous, blasphemous, inaccurate, in breach of copyright, or otherwise unlawful, etc. In the eyes of the law, editors can look very much like functionaries who ensure that owners are held harmless from and indemnified against claims that a work infringes upon the rights of a third party. Poststructuralist attempts to dissolve authors into *écriture,* into something transcendent and anonymous, stumble at the moment we consider authorship in relation to the legal and institutional forces that articulate and inform it, as all editors must.

The whole arena of editing scholarly journals, surprisingly enough, has not been subject to much sustained scrutiny or analysis. Editing, in my view, provides a ready-made site for posing a range of theoretical questions about authorship, the status of texts, the materiality of printed objects, originality, copyright, collaboration, book reviewing, and so forth. Working as an editor will force the hand of anyone who prefers to ignore such matters as typography, layout, paper grades, and print runs—none of which will seem inconsequential to those called upon to make judgments on such matters. At the same time, journal production projects scholarship into a realm of digital media and electronic resources, where arid debates on "the impact of information technology" and "the future of scholarly communication" have real consequences. Editorship, then, fills the gap between the author-function and new technologies, and thrives on contradictions between commercial interests and an ideology of scholarly disinterest and autonomy. Journal editors could do worse than seeing themselves as publicists and networkers, as essential links in the chain that binds together manuscript, print, and digital cultures.

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David Hamilton: Jim the Wonder Dog

"If my mind could gain a firm footing," writes Montaigne in "Of Repentance," "I would not make essays, I would make decisions; but it is always on apprenticeship and on trial" (611). So he continues to enlarge his essays and record changes in his thinking. I find similarly that each issue of *The Iowa Review* essays my discerning. If I could ever get one entirely right, I should retire.

"I'm sorry; we regret that we cannot use…." Thus the key phrase in the rejection slip I inherited and that we have come around to again. I felt embarrassed at first by its presumption, another subject of Montaigne's, as if some Deus applied his Machina to our unsolicited submissions, turned a crank and so separated, by universal law, those we could use from those we could not. Forces beyond my control made those determinations, and I was as subject to them as the writers. Feeling instead that our decisions, however flawed, or not, were choices we chose to make, neither bound nor threatened by forces beyond our control, I changed the wording over the years in a variety of ways to admit my responsibility for what we selected. But I have come around to that phrasing again because in a way it is so: to the extent that I aspire to make decisions, not just essays of choice, I owe it to myself, and to my sense of the magazine, to not use, to feel in fact that I simply cannot use, whatever fails to inform my sense of what getting it entirely right, just once, entails.

So the question of our panel is the only question. Writing I find I can use is my only excuse for a magazine and my belief that I have found it my only reason for continuing. Will we favor free-standing essays offered as art or are we seeking commentary? Do we want stories with beginnings, middles, and ends and a character making her or his way through crisis to a heightened discovery of being, or may they be metafictional, experimental, surrealistic, unrealistic, hyper-realistic, humorous, fantastic, or anything other than traditional? Then with poems, but calling upon terms that apply to the other genres equally, are we looking for the readerly in its