

European Science Foundation
Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH)

ESF SCH EXPLORATORY WORKSHOP

**Scholarly editing and nation
building in Europe**

Scientific Report



Vakbondsmuseum De Burcht
Amsterdam, Netherlands, 13-16 December 2005

Convened by:

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Executive summary

After the introduction by professor Stokhof of the ESF Standing Committee for the Humanities (SCH), the participants of the ESF Exploratory Workshop on 'Scholarly Editing and Nation Building in Europe' examined the cultural and social impact of scholarly editing in different language areas within Europe, focusing on the so-called 'Sattelzeit' (roughly between 1740 and 1840). In accordance with our objectives, we charted the editorial approaches in different European language areas (Baltic languages, Catalan, Dutch, English, Flemish, French, German, Occitan, Portuguese, Slovenian) in order to examine the wider social ramifications of editing texts in the vernacular.

The rationale of the programme was to confront national tendencies

- (1) between neighbouring countries and
 - (2) between language areas at opposite corners of Europe.
- (1) As Tom Shippey convincingly demonstrated, the tradition of editing a canonical work such as *Beowulf* interestingly shows that there is 'no English sentiment about this potentially English national epic', but that editing and interpreting this text did help 'to create national, sub-national, and supra-national feeling, in Denmark, in Germany, in Slesvig, in Holstein, in Norway (and eventually elsewhere).' The local rivalry between Denmark and Sweden was poignantly set forth by Paula Henrikson by means of the editorial history of the Scania province law. The difficult position of smaller language areas such as the Occitan and Catalan cultures are inextricably linked to respectively the French and Spanish cultures, as Philippe Martel and Magí Sunyer illustrated. Another interesting cluster of local endeavours to create or define a national identity by means of scholarly editing is the philological activity in Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Thomas Bein, Marita Mathijssen, Herman Brinkman, and Jan Pauwels examined not just the exchange of ideas between these neighbouring countries, but also local sensitivities, showing a sometimes paradoxical combination of admiration (mainly for the thoroughness of German editorial methods) and an urge to be recognized as a distinct national entity.



(2) These editorial activities are not just isolated phenomena. They are part of a broader endeavour, covering the whole of Europe. In two consecutive papers, the situation in Portugal was contrasted with contemporary developments in Lithuania. While in Portugal the emphasis on national identity and the awareness of the importance of preserving one's cultural heritage may have been influenced by the destruction as a result of the Lisbon earthquake of 1755, the nationalist tendency in the Baltic countries was a delayed phenomenon. According to Paulius Subacius the formation of a modern national identity in Europe may be said to have taken place in at least three stages, covering different nations. The earliest one was concentrated mainly in the 'old nations' – England, France etc. The second stage reached its peak between the 1830-31 uprising in Poland and the national uprisings of 1848 in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The third stage was characterized by the national movements in the Russian empire in the middle and the second half of the 19th century (the Baltic countries, the Ukraine, Byelorussia). In response to Mary-Ann Constantine and Darko Dolinar's written contributions, Joep Leerssen managed to find an unexpected link between two other corners of Europe by showing the relationship between Ireland and Slovenia through an intricate web of different networks set up by the Grimm brothers, Sir Walter Scott, and many others.

Apart from the *spatial* focus (mapping out the phenomenon of nation building and the role of scholarly editing in this process), we also traced a double movement on the *temporal* axis. The first movement is a tendency from editing as a 'European' enterprise to national interests, as Geert Lernout analysed at the opening of the workshop. Toward the end of the workshop, Dirk Van Hulle examined the second movement, i.e. the development of scholarly editing in the wake of the 'Sattelzeit'. One of the side-effects of the focus on nation building in this period was the development of different national editorial 'schools'. A better understanding of the cultural differences that have led to specific editorial approaches and traditions in the past may in the end result in more cooperation in view of the future of European scholarly editing.



Scientific content

During the Renaissance, scholarly editing was 'European' by definition. The wish to return *ad fontes* implied the edition of classical Greek and Latin texts as an effort to revive and explore a common European cultural background. Toward the end of the 18th and in the early 19th Century a huge number of (often medieval) texts in the vernacular were recuperated as part of the articulation of the different European nations' cultural heritage.

Geert Lernout described how before and to some extent during the *Sattelzeit*, the philological investigation of biblical and classical texts was an essentially international endeavour. Its language was Latin and critics from all over Europe freely cooperated (although they did not often agree on anything). This sense of a common project was present even when catholics and protestants were trying to translate or edit the text of the bible. The republic of letters, which did not yet distinguish between 'human' and other sciences, fell apart during the first half of the nineteenth century, when vernacular literature began to take precedence. Even the study of Latin and Greek was henceforth conducted in English, German or French.

By tracing the reception of *Beowulf* **Tom Shippey** came to the interesting conclusion that the English never seem to have regarded it as a crucial text that shaped their national identity. Other countries or cultural regions, however, have tried very hard to claim the poem as a founding *Urtext*, notably in Denmark, Germany, Slesvig, Holstein, and Norway. Gísli Brynjolfsson, for instance, argued that *Beowulf* is all about Danes and Swedes and Geats, and its characters are sometimes recognizable as figures known from Scandinavian legendary cycles. Karl Victor Müllenhoff, a disciple of Lachmann who dominated the field of *Beowulf* studies for forty years (1844-1884), had a completely different theory. There are several indications in his publications that he believed *Beowulf* to be a product of his native province Ditmarsch, and that he regarded Old English as a dialect of 'Alt-Niederdeutsch'. So, although this text is generally considered to be the



first poem in the history of 'English' literature, 'Anglo-Saxon England seems never to have rooted itself in the national imagination'.

On the basis of written communications from **Mary-Ann Constantine** (hospitalized at the time of the workshop) and **Darko Dolinar, Joep Leerssen** traced the emergence of two peripheral literary traditions into the European canonical system. Leerssen focused on the dissemination of South-Slavic oral epic (e.g. *Hasanaginica*) through French and German translations and re-translations, and juxtaposed this with the spread of Ossianic material in Europe. It was shown that the dissemination networks of these texts meshed from the moment onwards that they were jointly included in the work of Herder, and that from this moment onwards the stage was set [a] for a European vogue for "oral epic" and [b] for the national-political instrumentalization of such materials.

Thomas Bein traced the history of editions of the middle high German works by Walther von der Vogelweide. The most famous editor associated with this poetry is Karl Lachmann, because of his 1827 edition. But Lachmann was by no means the only 19th-century editor, nor was he the first who drew attention to the importance of Walther von der Vogelweide. Different editorial approaches have thoroughly influenced the interpretation of Walther's work. Critics depend on editions when they analyse a literary work, and depending on the edition they use, their interpretation will differ. Thomas Bein drew attention to the consequences for interpretive approaches to the lyrics of Walther von der Vogelweide that are provoked by scholarly editors.

Marita Mathijssen described the first period of Dutch medieval studies, which coincides with the first period of editing. It culminates in the foundation of the *Vereeniging ter bevordering van oude Nederlandsche Letterkunde* ('Association for the Advancement of Early Dutch Literature'). This was the formal body to unite the first group of scholarly editors in the Netherlands. She elucidated the objectives and the mode of operation of this Association, and distinguished between four successive stages in the process of historical editing. In the first stage the study of the language is at the center; in the second stage collecting and describing manuscripts is the aim; then individuals start to edit the texts and in the fourth stage editing is a scholarly



activity. A similar four-stage development may be encountered in other countries, as discussions confirmed.

At the end of the 18th – beginning of the 19th Century the Low Countries were lacking any philological and editorial tradition with regard to Medieval texts. To a large extent, the awareness that Medieval literature represented a valuable heritage that could be of use in nation building, is due to the diligence and enthusiasm of the German philologist August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben. His work encouraged a whole generation of Dutch and Flemish scholars to establish a canon of Middle Dutch literature and the creation of a dictionary of Middle Dutch. Precisely because of the unanimously positive assessment of Hoffmann's role as a pioneer in this field, the merciless criticism regarding his editions is all the more remarkable.

Herman Brinkman therefore examined, on the one hand, the role of the scholarly edition in the entire process toward a national consciousness, and on the other hand the significance of editions in Hoffmann's own opinion, by comparing his initial intentions to his reflections on the use of scholarly editions toward the end of his life.

Jan Pauwels explained how, from the years 1820-1830 onwards, the first generation of Flemish philologists (J.F. Willems, C.P. Serrure, Ph. Blommaert, F.A. Snellaert) started editing medieval texts in the Dutch vernacular. After the abolition of religious libraries around 1800 and before the foundation of the Belgian national library in 1837, these philologists (by necessity) had to be ardent book and manuscript collectors as well. Since their editions were entirely based upon manuscripts and rare books in their own collections or in those of friends and colleagues, a genuine network of mutual borrowing quickly developed. In the auction rooms they even battled fiercely over handmade copies of unedited manuscripts by their deceased colleagues, which were afterwards published in books or periodicals. Pauwels illustrated these phenomena with striking examples taken from unpublished letters and notebooks. Between 1840 and 1870, the Belgian state bought large parts of these private collections on behalf of its recently founded Royal Library or the two state universities (Ghent and Liège). Within a few decades, all but a few medieval manuscripts in the Dutch vernacular became the property of the Belgian state. However, while negotiating the



sale, relatives and friends of the philologists regularly insisted upon the recognition of the manuscripts as part of the national – i.e. Flemish – cultural heritage. The Belgian state met their demands in very different ways.

A particularly good example of the ways in which national sensitivities between neighbouring countries are reflected in scholarly editing is the Scania province law. Dating from the Scandinavian Middle Ages, it has been an important text for Danish as well as Swedish nation building. Particularly in the context of the Swedish conquest of Scania in 1658, the appropriation of its law can be looked upon as a parallel vaunting of a main spoil, followed by the Danish attempts to recapture its historical monument, and with it, symbolically, the lost province. **Paula Henrikson** examined the national connotations of four editions – two Swedish and two Danish – of the Scania province law. Her contribution scrutinized the explicit choices and decisions, as well as implicit ideological allegiances, of the editors, as these find expression both in introductions and commentaries, and in methodological preferences in the choice, evaluation, and establishment of texts.

Magí Sunyer charted the Catalan situation at the end of the 18th century, when Antoni de Capmany proposed a new concept of historical research based on the scientific study of documents that was to be the beginning of modern historiography. This initiative was given further impetus by the subsequent romantic medievalism, which was to have considerable repercussions on the new Catalan literature of the 19th century. Its influence is already clear in 'La Pàtria' (1833), an emblematic poem by Bonaventura Carles Aribau. Important figures in this development were historians and poets such as Pau Piferrer (particularly in the volume *Cataluña* (1839) from the series *Recuerdos y bellezas de España*), and editors and dramatists such as Jaume Tió i Noè (who were at the forefront of the historicist group and had great influence on the new Catalan literature through Manuel Milà i Fontanals, Marian Aguiló, Joaquim Rubió i Ors). Sunyer focused on the medieval texts published before 1840 and on the first examples of their impact on the literature written by Catalans up to this time.

In France, the rediscovery of Occitan culture and the poetry of the Troubadours began before the Revolution (Lacurne de Saint Palaye, Millot).



As **Philippe Martel** expounded, this rediscovery confronted French national ideology with an uncomfortable paradox: the prestigious Troubadour literature, although born on French territory, was not properly French. Several 19th-century intellectuals, such as Legrand d'Aussy for example, claimed that this 'oc' poetry had far less value than the 'oil'-speaking 'Trouvères's' production. When France's intelligentsia conveniently discovered the Oxford manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland* (1837) and other *Chansons de Geste*, they found an indigenous (though actually Anglo-Norman) production that could replace the Troubadours as Great Ancestors of French national literature. As a result, 'oc' poetry was bound to vanish from the canon.

Nonetheless, some southern French intellectuals, such as Raynouard and Rochegude, started to devote themselves to the promotion of the Troubadours in the years of the Restoration. By the middle of the century, some knowledge of these matters was sufficiently spread in less narrow areas of 'meridional' society and taken in account by those 'patois'-writers (the so-called 'Troubaires') who embody the beginnings of 'provençal' literary Renaissance. Later, Mistral and his 'felibres' turned this heritage into the basis of their ambition: to establish Occitan language and literature once again and give it the same prestige they once had.

However, the 'Felibres' had no significant political or intellectual power, nor did they attempt to gain institutional academic positions in Occitan research. As a result, this attempt to re-integrate Troubadours and Occitan literature and history in the mainstream of French culture did not succeed.

To analyse the Portuguese situation, **João Dionisio** focused on the works of abbé Correia da Serra (1751-1823). He was acclaimed by his American friends as 'our Socrates'. As one of the founders of the Royal Academy of Sciences in Lisbon (created in 1779) he became known as a diplomat and a naturalist and he was also a noteworthy editor of historical Portuguese texts. Dionisio's paper zoomed in on Correia da Serra's edition of the five volume *Colecção dos Ineditos da Historia Portugueza* ('Series of Unpublished [Texts] of Portuguese History'). According to the emphatic description given by an online encyclopedia, this series of books, which came out between 1790 and 1824, is 'an invaluable selection of documents, exceedingly well edited.' Dionisio analyzed the editorial procedures and some bibliographic features of this collection, taking into consideration documents from the Correia da Serra



Archive (now in the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Lisbon) and annotations by João Pedro Ribeiro, the father of modern Portuguese palaeography, in his personal copy of the *Ineditos* (University of Coimbra, General Library).

At the other opposite corner of Europe, in the Baltic countries and the Ukraine, the editions that were crucial to the formation of national identity were only sporadic in the first half of the 19th century (the earliest Byelorussian publications appeared only toward the very end of the 19th century). For example, the first secular work of fiction in Lithuanian was published in 1814, while the more active processes started only after 1840. In a rather paradoxical way, the first national editorial efforts already intended to show that an old local cultural tradition could be traced back to the Middle Ages. Its re-evaluation was embodied by folkloric publications. The nature of the first annotated editions in Lithuanian and Latvian was determined by the fact that they were addressed not only to the local readers, but to foreign linguists as well. The interest of the Indo-European linguists in the Baltic languages prompted an exact rendering of the accidentals of the texts. **Paulius Subacius'** paper slightly transcended the chronological range of the colloquium in order to be able to chart the influence of scholarly editing on the societies in the Baltic countries.

As the title of the workshop ('Scholarly Editing and Nation Building in Europe') indicated, the main focus was the influence of scholarly editing on nation building. Another aspect that was examined by **Dirk Van Hulle** is the reverse effect, i.e. the impact of nation building on scholarly editing. One of the side-effects of the 'Sattelzeit' phenomenon was the development of different national editorial 'schools'. To analyse this development, three schools were focused on: the German, the French, and the Anglo-American traditions. The same tool that had helped rediscover European history as a common cultural heritage was now employed to emphasize the cultural identity of nations and thus their individuality.



Assessment of the results / contribution to the future direction of the field

Spatial dimension:

In a summing-up of the various European currents and crosscurrents presented here, Joep Leerssen outlined a possible model for coming to terms with this complex issue. Network theory, in particular the so-called "small world model" elaborated in sociometry, can help to operationalize the great and diverse mass of individual data into a manageable topic.

In the decades between 1780 and 1820, sporadic cross-national contacts between textual scholars and men of letters intensify until a so-called "tipping point" is reached, a degree of density which allows texts and ideas to spread very rapidly from one corner of Europe to another, by way of circles of acquaintances and thence to the acquaintances-of-acquaintances. We can trace epidemiologically what Dan Sperber has described as the "contagiousness of ideas".

In applying network theory, it becomes important to identify the nodal players who function as a transmission nexus because of their prestige, great influence and wide circle of contacts. Individuals who come to mind are Walter Scott, Jacob Grimm, Jernej Kopitar and Claude Fauriel. Ironically, the philological invention of nationality was a transnational process affecting all of Europe. The cross-national study of such early cultivations of the national literary past poses an exciting challenge for future research. What is more, it can bring cultural and institutional factors meaningfully together in an integrated analysis, and avoid the chicken-and-eggs division between "culture" and "society" (with its drearily familiar "causality" or "representativity" quandaries).



Temporal dimension:

In the first half of the 19th Century, scholarly editing was mainly regarded as a tool to provide the audience with the stable, definitive text of 'national' poets. This may be an understandable consequence of the editorial practices rooted in the period of nation building, but it is also important to draw attention to another phenomenon that took place in the same period, which may have been equally, if not more decisive, in the development of national 'schools' of scholarly editing. In Germany, Goethe and Schiller were among the first authors who started preserving their manuscripts in a systematic manner. This is indicative of a contemporary tendency that contrasts sharply with the desire to fix the old texts that were employed to shape national identities. The reevaluation of 'unfinished business' was part of the cult of genius. The consequence was an enhanced interest in processes, not just products. What scholarly editors have increasingly learned to appreciate in the wake of the Sattelzeit is the value of 'mistakes' to understand the dynamics of the writing process. The notion of 'process' may therefore be a crucial concept in European scholarly editors' efforts to find a common ground and work towards a rapprochement. And it is important to realize that this international reevaluation has been made possible only by the decision of authors from the 'Sattelzeit' period to preserve their manuscripts at a time when editors were perhaps too busy building nations.



PROGRAMME

Tuesday 13 December 2005

Arrival

Wednesday 14 December 2005

- 09:00 *Welcome & Presentation of the European Science Foundation (ESF)*
Martin Stokhof (Standing Committee for the Humanities)
- 09:30 **Geert Lernout**, From the republic of letters to the fragmentation of Europe
- 10:15 **Tom Shippey**, The reception of *Beowulf*
- 11:00 *Coffee*
- 11:15 [**Mary-Ann Constantine**] – response: **Joep Leerssen**, 'Our ancient bards wrote before any modern language in Europe came into existence': Iolo Morganwg (1747-1826) and the retrieval and revival of the Welsh past
- 12:00 [**Darko Dolinar**] – response: **Joep Leerssen**, Early critical editions of Slovenian texts in the context of Slavonic philology and national literature and culture
- 12:30 *Lunch break*
- 14:00 **Marita Mathijssen**, The editing methods of the Society for the Advancement of Old Dutch Literature (1843-1850)
- 14:45 **Thomas Bein**, Analysis of the influence of early Walther von der Vogelweide editions on scholarship and cultural studies in the first half of the 19th century
- 15:30 *Coffee break*
- 15:45 **Herman Brinkman**, Triumph or trophée?: Early scholarly editions of medieval Dutch literature and the romantic hunt for folk poetry
- 16:30 **Jan Pauwels**, The shift from private to public book collecting and the rise of Dutch philology in Belgium (1830-1880)
- 19:00 *Dinner*



Thursday 15 December 2005

- 09:15 **Joep Leerssen**, National epics, national canons, national character:
Philologists and the emergence of romantic nationalism
- 10:00 **Paula Henriksson**, The Scania province law as an example of
Scandinavian nation building
- 10:45 *Coffee*
- 11:00 **Philippe Martel**, 'Occitania' found and lost again: French scholarship
and Occitan language and culture in the nineteenth century
- 11:45 **Magí Sunyer**, Taking down from the sacred wall the forefathers' lyre:
Medieval heritage in the beginnings of modern Catalan literature
- 12:30 *Lunch break*
- 14:00 **João Dionisio**, Is our Socrates a good editor?: Correia da Serra and
the Royal Academy of Sciences in Lisbon
- 14:45 **Paulius Subacius**, Sidelong recompense of medieval records: The
consciousness and impact of the first philological editions in Baltic
languages
- 15:30 *Coffee break*
- 15:45 **Dirk Van Hulle**, From national editorial traditions to international
dialogue
- 16:15 **Joep Leerssen**, Concluding remarks and discussion
- 17:00 *Reception*

Friday 16 December 2005

Departure



Statistical information on participants

Age categories:

30-40: Dirk Van Hulle, Jan Pauwels, João Dionisio, Paulius Subacius

40-50: Thomas Bein, Herman Brinkman, Joep Leerssen

50-60: Geert Lernout, Magí Sunyer, Tom Shippey, Marita Mathijsen, Philippe Martel

Countries of origin:

Belgium: Geert Lernout, Dirk Van Hulle, Jan Pauwels

France: Philippe Martel

Germany: Thomas Bein

Lithuania: Paulius Subacius

The Netherlands: Herman Brinkman, Joep Leerssen, Marita Mathijsen

Portugal: João Dionisio

Slovenia: Darko Dolinar

Spain: Magí Sunyer

UK: Mary-Ann Constantine

US: Tom Shippey



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