

Future of Books, Future of Literary Studies

“What Google Owes to Gutenberg”

Peter Shillingsburg (Loyola University)

Textual scholarship examines the provenance, manipulation, and reuses of text. The Internet is the most versatile engine for text manipulation and reuse yet devised. The majority of texts were written by authors who knew nothing of cybertexts. Their intentions for the words, forms, and uses of their works did not anticipate electronic forms or modern uses. Does that matter? Does the world of Google owe anything to the world of Gutenberg? And if so, how can that debt be understood and paid without breaking the freedom of Internet textuality?

“Textual Scholarship and Genetic Criticism: A Rapprochement”

Dirk Van Hulle (University of Antwerp)

Twenty-five years after the first publication of Pierre-Marc de Biasi's important article 'Vers une science de la littérature : L'Analyse des manuscrits et la genèse de l'œuvre', it is worth evaluating the 'scientific' nature of genetic criticism and its relation to European textual scholarship. A slight resistance in anglophone criticism against applying the term 'genetic' to a domain within literary criticism may result partly from the inheritance of New Criticism, but also from the dichotomy between 'textual scholarship' and 'literary criticism'. The theoretical issue at stake is the question whether the material basis of a genetic analysis implies a more 'empirical' methodology. An approach that presents itself as too strictly empirical runs the risk of limiting the exegesis to the material traces, which are often merely a fraction of what the author has read, thought or written. If this scientific approach is perceived as a methodological prescription, genetic criticism might involuntarily occasion a separation between a 'science of literature' and a non-falsifiable approach. Instead of creating such a sterile dichotomy, it seems preferable to actively facilitate a more productive cross-fertilization between the 'genetic' and the 'critical' dimension. This may be a way of bridging the gap between textual scholarship and literary criticism. The paper investigates how electronic genetic editions that make the 'avant-textes' accessible may be conducive to this process. Darwin's and Beckett's notes and manuscripts will serve as case studies to illustrate the theoretical issue.

“Respect for the Text”

Bodo Plachta (Free University of Amsterdam)

In a letter from 1912 to Reinhard Buchwald, philologist and biographer of Friedrich Schiller, Hermann Hesse wrote: "What I really appreciate in our literary critics is their faithfulness in dealing with the text, that is, the editorial work. As far as the critical evaluation of the artistic is concerned however, I find our histories of literature all weak; the distillation of the 'Classics' has been achieved by the reading public, not by researchers, who are logging behind by many steps."

At the point of this writing, many important complete editions such as the works of Wieland, Stifter and Grillparzer just got started, while others, such as the Lessing edition by Lachmann/Muncker, Goedeke's Schiller edition and Suphan's Herder edition and of course the big Weimar edition of Goethes works, were just about to be finished or already done. Despite these achievements however, philology was regarded as merely a helper of high science, and editions on a scientifically sound base only became a base for interpreting an authors work after 1945.

Today, the following can be said:

- 1) Philology is still the disciplinary kernel of German literary studies.
- 2) The "faithfulness towards the text", as Hesse called it, is still a major characteristic of editorial theory; editorial intervention should be limited and not distort the text. In recent years, the genesis of a text has also become a major focus of textual studies.

In the following, I would like to cover three aspects of German textual scholarship:

- 1) What role has traditional philological methodology in the area of new media?
 - Ensure accessibility for future generations.
 - Example: digitization of "Bibliothek der Deutschen Literatur" (Saur Verlag)
 - scanning of 15000 works by 2500 authors, based on "Taschengoedeke", publication as microfiche (early 1990s).
 - also partly available online since 2007.

Problems:

- only one copy of a text is digitized, not necessarily the best one
- this is especially dangerous for lesser known authors whose works have not yet been studied
- digitization without being accompanied by textual scholarship is dangerous and leads to a increasingly narrow view of cultural heritage
- the importance of a genetic analysis of texts can be illustrated by research that investigates the changes Goethe made to his works in his last "authorized edition", which

caused an upset in German Goethe studies

- selection of the texts is pragmatic, based on availability, not based on evaluation of the best sources, so the collection contains inferior editions

A positive example of the combination of textual scholarship and online publication is the Heine portal with the presentation of two different facsimile editions combined with manuscripts, prints and transcripts; and probably the new Mozart edition can also be mentioned here. Competence in textual scholarship is in high demand.

2) What place has the history of textual scholarship in the general history of science?

- Textual scholarship has shown a high continuity in the methodological debate.
- The series "Bausteine zur Geschichte der Edition" (Building blocks for the history of editing), since 2005 presents documentation and methodological reflection.
- Exemplary editions, like the Weimar Goethe edition, form influential paradigmata that are difficult to overcome and can block further developments for some time.

3) What should be done to make the fruit of more and more specialized editorial work available for literary studies?

- The "big" editions are only used with hesitation in daily work.
- Philological competence is needed on the side of the user, who is required to follow the argument and presentation of basic editorial operations.
- Does every piece left behind by an author need the same editorial attention?
- The series "Exempla Criteria" (since 2004), of which I am a co-editor, is trying to find an answer to this question, which will be different for different times and authors. This also includes a re-evaluation of the commentary.
- The role of the edition in the adaption and canonization of the work needs to be called to attention.
- Attempts at compilation of a "Handbook for textual scholarship" (not yet conclusive)

Conclusions

Respect towards the text is not only the basis of editorial scholarship, but a text confirmed and approved through a process of critical evaluation needs to stay at the center of any edition. Breadth of coverage in the digitization process should not replace scientific rigor in editorial work. Uncritical digitization might even block future attempts to produce true critical editions, since the texts are "already available online". However, textual scholarship needs to engage in a dialog with other disciplines to ensure that respect does not block necessary changes or result in manipulation.

(English summary by Christian Wittern)