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Whereto? Directions in Genetic Criticism (*Genetic Criticism in Motion. New Perspectives on Manuscript Studies*, eds. S. Katajamäki, V. Pulkkinen, T. Dunderlin)

One of the conceptual barriers separating genetic criticism from the field of critical editing is the focus of the former on textual production, whereas the latter is concentrated on text as product. As scholarly format, the edition has long ceased to contribute to the existence of this boundary for even if genetic critics are devoted to the study of texts *in fieri*, to account for the transformations involved in such a process, the stages they go through have to be fixed in order to allow for the historical viewpoint that underlies the genetic perspective. Despite this approximation, a formal inclination has tended to dominate in textual scholarship, in the light of what W.W. Greg argued almost a century ago: “the study of textual transmission involves no knowledge of the sense of a document but only of its form” (“Bibliography – an apologia”. *The Library* 4th series, vol. XIII, no. 2, September: 113–43.1932, 122). The introduction to *Genetic Criticism in Motion*, by drawing attention to the fact that “digital technology and tools have [...] been widely adapted especially in scholarly and genetic editing” (p. 9), underscores how the form of the document has weighed on its representation. Indeed, the identification of a form – beyond differences in language, in genre, in the historical period of the text that is transmitted by the document, or in the scholarly perspectives framing its interpretation – has a mixed impact on textual studies. On the one hand, it allows for the possibility of scholars working in different cultural contexts of sharing their experiences in the field: without the identification of a shareable form, such transactions would be impossible. On the other, it emerges in the guise of yet another dream of the tower of Babel: the already shared form, rather than a point of departure, would also be the end of scholarly research in the field, thus standardizing to an extreme the variety of approaches to the ways documents, versions, texts and works communicate among them.

Because the discussion underlying this tension is especially lively in Europe, it is always interesting to see how collective publications assembling experts from different countries in the “old continent” respond to questions and challenges arising from the role ascribed to form in textual studies.

The title of the volume plays on how the object of study (textual mobility) is pervious to a given scholarly perspective, also in motion in at least two manners: it evolves as to the ways the object is approached (hence, the subtitle “New perspectives on manuscript studies”) and it is not geographically confined to what is taken as the motherland of genetic criticism, France. This expansion of sorts is explained in the introduction by the editors, aptly titled “The widening circles of genetic criticism”. The circles widen mainly because of a threefold reason: (a) the linguistic traditions the texts under analysis belong to (English, Finnish, Dutch, German, Polish, Russian), (b) the genres that are considered (poetry, short story, philosophical aphorisms, fictional essay, children’s illustrated fiction), (c) the nature of the objects under analysis (original works or translations, analogue or born digital literature, strictly textual or mixed textual and iconographic pieces), *inter alia*. As to the chronological periods of the works under consideration, they fall under the limits that were pointed out at the beginning of French genetic criticism: the 1800s and beyond.

The volume was issued in the “Studia Fennica” series and testifies to the dedication of several Finnish scholars in the germane fields of textual scholarship and genetic criticism. Among them, the editors of this volume stand out. An active board member of the European Society for Textual Scholarship, Sakari Katajamäki was the chair of the 11th Conference of the ESTS, which was held in Helsinki in 2014, and his research interests are a good example of diversity in the approach to texts and documents. Additionally, both Sakari Katajamäki and Veijo Pulkkinen, also a long-standing member of the ESTS, were in the organizing committee of the first Genesis conference, held in Helsinki (7th–9th June 2017): Creative Processes and Archives in Arts and Humanities, which was jointly organized by the Finnish Literature Society and the Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes, Paris. The present collection of essays results from this conference.

The volume is divided into four sections (1. Writing technologies; 2. Digitality and genetic criticism; 3. Draft reading; and 4. Multimodality), each one of them including two contributions. In the first section, Wim van Mierlo explores the benefits that genetic criticism may take from palaeographical analysis (“Genetic Criticism and Modern Palaeography: The Cultural Forms of Modern Literary Manuscripts”). In the second chapter, Veijo Pulkkinen’s “A Curious Thing: Type-scripts and Genetic Criticism”, the role of the typewriter in the composition of a poem – “Kuun pata” (“The Cauldron of the Moon”) by the Finnish writer Elina Vaara (1903–1980) – comes under scrutiny. The second section opens up with Dirk Van Hulle’s “The Logic of Versions in Born-Digital Literature”: based on an experiment with the Dutch writer Ronal Giphart, it is argued in this article that the notion of version should not be discarded when scholars deal with

born-digital texts. Chapter 4 is Paolo D'Iorio's "The Genetic Edition of Nietzsche's Work", the most product-centered contribution in the volume, since it is focused on the edition (and its theoretical foundations) of Nietzsche's texts curated by the author. Next, section III begins with an essay by Mateusz Antoniuk, "Dying in Nine Ways: Genetic Criticism and the Proliferation of Variants". Taking up as model a study of Raymonde Debray-Genette, Antoniuk contextualizes, transcribes and analyses 9 different endings to the unpublished work *Narzezona Attyli* ('Attila's Betrothed') by the Polish writer Zbigniew Herbert (1924–1998). Then, Julia Holter's "The Translation Draft as Debt Negotiation Space" studies the negotiation between domestication and foreignization in the translation of the Russian poet Vadim Kozovoi's *Hors de la colline* (1984). The last section includes Claire Doquet and Solène Audebert-Poulet's chapter on "Text and Illustrations as Producers of Meaning: A Genetic Study of a Children's Illustrated Book". It is centered on the genesis of a book by a well-known French children's author-illustrator, Yvan Pommaux, who allowed both authors to access and analyse the genetic materials of *Puisque c'est ça, je pars* ("Since that's it, I'm leaving"), which was published in 2018. Central to this chapter is the attention given to how text and image interact in the communication process. The volume is wrapped up by Hanna Karhu's "Use of Folklore in a Writing Process of Poetry: Rewritings of Folk Songs and References to Oral Poetry in Otto Manninen's Early Manuscripts". In this concluding chapter, Karhu documents and reflects upon how oral and literary traditions are interwoven in the genesis of some poems by the Finnish writer Otto Manninen (1872–1950).

All these contributions are solid pieces of scholarship. But additionally, the reader can also look up in them for answers to the questions formulated above about form and context. For instance, in which ways do they give credit to form as the touchstone of comparison? Do they look at it as the point of departure that enables scholarly conversation or else is it seen as the ultimate goal of textual scholarship?

It is noteworthy that by far the most hermeneutic of the chapters of *Genetic Criticism in Motion*, by Mateusz Antoniuk, does not evade an apologetic remark at a given point: "The focus will be on a specific, individual, unique (which does not mean 'not comparable to anything') genetic case." (p. 95) Antoniuk's approach is inspired by the study that Raymonde Debray-Genette made of the ending of Flaubert's *Un Cœur Simple* "Un Cœur simple ou comment faire une fin – Étude des manuscrits" (in Bernard Masson ed., *Gustave Flaubert 1*, La Revue des Lettres Modernes, 1984). The analysis carried out by Antoniuk is carefully developed, allowing any reader who is ignorant of the Polish literary tradition to witness the intricacies of the genetic process of Herbert's *Narzezona Attyli*. It also pays due attention to the indeterminacy of some passages as motivated by a tabular lay out (on p. 107, Antoniuk warns the reader about such a zone of indeterminacy: "Should we read 'darkness of the void or mercy' or rather 'darkness or mercy of the void?"). Since this chapter is strictly focused on the possible endings

to a prose piece, it is feasible to accommodate within its boundaries both textual transcription and interpretation. The latter proves to be of general interest in its contingency, but, according to Antoniuk, it should also answer a theoretical question: “what (if anything) changes in the genetic reading of the variant when we are dealing with an inconclusive text-forming process, with an ‘avant-text’, that does not refer to any final text?” (p. 95). Although the question is pertinent, in my view any particular answer will discard many importantly contingent elements that are part and parcel of the genetic process of any two comparable cases. And Antoniuk produces a persuasive reading of these contingent elements.

Form as the touchstone of comparison also emerges, albeit in different ways, in other chapters of *Genetic Criticism in Motion*. In one of them, Wim van Mierlo argues for a comparative study of cultural facets of the modern manuscript (p. 29). Such comparative study, which would focus on aspects such as the dynamics of handwriting and the economy of the manuscript page, would accordingly include, besides what is strictly individual, largely shared dimensions in literary genesis. This is a relevant follow-up to the envisaged project of an “histoire de l’écriture” as a *desideratum* foreseen by several genetic critics, namely Almuth Grésillon in her *Éléments de Critique Génétique* (1994). Unsurprisingly, it is Van Mierlo’s contribution that deals with the largest *corpus*, with examples taken from writers as different as Keats, Tennyson, Yeats or Ted Hughes.

In Pulkkinen’s chapter the identification of what is subject to comparison is subordinated to a functional and historical perspective. In other words, in his case study it is less relevant to determine quantitatively the presence of typewritten documents in Vaara’s archive than to identify the function of the typewriter over time in her mode of composition. As Pulkkinen recognizes: “It is hard to generalize about Vaara’s use of the typewriter because it changes from one poem to the next.” (p. 53) And on the following page: “instead of contrasting different writing means and technologies, such as handwriting and print, it would be better to look into the various and changing roles these technologies take in the overall context of the genetic process.” (p. 54). Taking this into account, one would be led to reason that, somehow against what Greg thinks about form in the transmission of texts, in textual genesis some of the categories of comparison can only be discerned after a scholarly engagement with the content and the sense it produces via documents.

This brings us to Van Hulle’s chapter, which is the most theoretically minded contribution in the volume. It consists of a discussion of (the viability of) the concept of version in born digital literature, contending for a conventional-cum-practical definition of this notion. The author points out that most definitions of the term ‘version’ oppose it “to the terms ‘text’ and ‘work’, rarely to the term ‘document’, which confirms the conceptual nature of the ‘version’” (p. 64). The point of departure is the acknowledgment of the impracticality of a radical definition of version (such as Hans Zeller’s) as a textual entity that stands out from other textual entities on account of a single variant. Instead of this large scope, Van

Hulle proposes that “it is useful to work with smaller textual units and make a distinction between versions of a novel, of a chapter, of a paragraph, of a sentence or even of a word.” (p. 68) This seems to be a necessary practical step from outside of the genetic process: a breaking down of the text into smaller units that allows for comparison in order to bring us closer to identify the length of the unit that the writer elected to work with. Such action of deconstruction would then be a preliminary move, prior to an in-depth understanding of what is at stake in literary genesis.

The preliminary dimension of the scholarly approach that is evident in most contributions would be especially expected in genetic studies, to the extent that in this disciplinary field the end product is less interesting than the process that led to it and, as is often said, only after the end of this process can one engage in interpretive activities. Such dominant view can be seen, for instance, when Pulkkinen delimits the timeframe during which the poem “Kuun pata” was written, by the end of the 1950s, arguing that Vaara’s collection of poetry *Mimerkki* “can be thought of as a genetic context for ‘Kuun pata’, which may be significant for the interpretation of both texts.” (p. 43) But the chapter that most patently touches on this matter is Paolo D’Iorio’s. His article is anchored in the dominant view that genetic (or, for that matter, philological representation) precedes interpretation and accordingly the conclusion points to a moment coming after that agency that no longer falls within the boundaries of the edition: “it [i.e., the edition] opens the road, in turn, to a philosophical interpretation which, by carefully tracing out the paths taken by the concrete acts of writing, can perhaps help us better to understand, in all their richness, the Wanderer’s thoughts.” (p. 87) It is in the very last note of D’Iorio’s chapter, which precisely regards this passage, that such a view is discussed, via the philologist and semiotician Cesare Segre (1928–2014). Segre held that the frontiers between philology and literary criticism are not impervious, having gone as far as to stating that there is “a zone in which textual philology and literary criticism end up becoming more or less identical with one another”. How does Segre profile this zone? He describes it by stating that some genetic phenomena, namely the transition from notes to texts, cannot be reduced to a formal representation and instead call for a narration. The reconstruction of such a transition leads to the following rhetorical question: “is a reconstruction of this kind and amplitude – a reconstruction so internal to the artistic elaboration itself – not already an act of criticism, and specifically of literary criticism?” (cf. “Tempo e critica del testo. Venti domande di Roberto Antonelli a Cesare Segre”, *Critica del Testo* 1998, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 605–620).

At the beginning of this review, I mentioned that both organizers of *Genetic Criticism in Motion* were known to act in the framework of the European Society for Textual Scholarship. Only they can accurately explain the reasons that led them to open up another avenue of international cooperation within the large field of textual studies. Besides the evident goal of joining textual scholars and genetic critics (which is an accomplished goal: four out of the nine authors of the volume

belong to ITEM), my uneducated guess is that also a terrain for the exploration of what lies beyond editing was being sought for. The chapters in *Genetic Criticism in Motion* respond successfully to this search, against the overall impression that form, as argued by W.W. Greg, lies in the horizon.

Early View