Where is the editor?

Resistance in the creation of an electronic critical edition

by **Edvard Vanhoutte**

Abstract

Printed scholarly editions of any type suffer, for intrinsic and external reasons, from the lack of being incremental and re-usable, and fail in presenting both the results of the historical-critical research and the archive on which the research has been caried out in such a way that it is of use to literary and textual scholarship. The electronic paradigm has, despite its enourmeous storage capacities and intrinsic re-usability, not changed anything, but has on the contrary established the illusion that both the "objective" archive and the "subjective" edition could at the same time be presented in one product, be it called an electronic archive or an electronic edition.

In this article I suggest a model for electronic scholarly editing that unlinks the **Archival Function** *(i.e. the preservation of the literary artifact in its historical form and the historical-critical research) from the* **Museum Function** *(the presentation by an editor of the physical appearance and/or the contents of the literary artifact in a documentary, aesthetic, sociological, authorial or bibliographical contextualization). The* **digital archive** *should be the place for the first function, showing a relative objectivity, or a documented subjectivity in its internal organization and encoding. The* **Museum Function** *should work in an* **edition** *– disregarding its external form – displaying the explicit and expressed subjectivity and the formal orientation of the editor. The relationship between these two functions is hierarchical.*

The implementation of the **Archive/Museum model** *calls for a re-thinking and a re-orientation of the function of the editor.*

Contents

1. On exhibitions

Exhibitions are wonderful happenings. My visit to *Making & Meaning Holbein's Ambassadors*, an exhibition held in the National Gallery in London, [1] proved this once again to be true. Celebrating the 500th anniversary of Hans Holbein the Younger's (ca. 1497-1543) birth, this exhibition detailed the succesful cleaning and restoration of this most complex painting from 1533, and presented it in its newly-found splendour to the public. In eight different rooms, the visitor could not only look at the painting, but also learn a lot about Holbein's painting techniques and his painting practice including the several stages and kinds of drawings he may have needed in preparation of the actual painting. Further, there were rooms devoted to and focussing on the personal and political background to the creation of the picture (e.g. the Reformation), on the identification and biography of Jean de Dinteville and Georges de Selve, whose portraits are featured in the painting, on the identification and possible meanings of the books, the astronomical and musical instruments on the two shelves, on the contemporary fashionable technique of the *anamorphosis* which Holbein used to paint the skull in the foreground, and on other full-length portraits by Holbein. An easy-reference map prevented the visitor from getting lost and laid out the path the creators of the exhibition had intended to follow. Acoustiguide recorded tours were available and tired visitors – or let us be more positive and call them 'the more interested visitors' – could sit down and watch the projection of a video. But the greatest experience was that I could stroll at my own pace through the exhibition, visiting the rooms I was most interested in first, checking everything I learned against the actual painting, and coming back to agree or not with the information provided, knowing that what I read and saw was the result of profound scholarly research.

Why is it then that I have never had a similar experience when consulting a scholarly edition of a literary work, although the exhibition referred to and a scholarly edition are both a product of the study of and the interference with the perceivable state of a work of art, intended to preserve and rescue it as an artifact. [2] Probably, I will argue, because the editor tries to combine the functions of the *archive* and the *museum* in one and the same scholarly edition of a certain type. [3]

2. On editions

The German, and thus the Dutch, school of *Editionswissenschaft* traditionally distinguishes three types of editions, i.e. the historical-critical edition, the study edition, and the reading edition. Although each one of them is intended for a different audience with different expectations as to the contents and composition of the edition, they all should in theory be based on the same full historical-critical research needed to constitute a *Zitierbare* text. All three of them present the reader with a reading-text, but they differ in broad lines in the extensiveness of the commentary section and in the inclusion of an apparatus criticus or variorum. The smaller the intended public, the more extensive the report on the full historical-critical research will be. This research analyses the transmission of the text historically and comments on its genesis and history.

In the production process, the three types of editions stand in a hierarchical relationship to one another: a reading edition and a study edition can best be extracted from respectively a study edition and a historical-critical edition. But when putting this scheme to practice, the uncomfortable funding and publishing reality distorts this seemingly ideal and logical line which in theory runs from scholarly research to book-production. The high cost-factor of historical-critical research and the fact that these three types of editions are seldom published next to each other, dictates that this hierarchic line is seldomly respected: a reading edition e.g. is rarely based on historical-critical research. The financial reality of third parties forces the editor to make or accept a choice for one type of edition – with a limitation and product-orientation of the research as a result – or not to make an edition at all.

To overcome the impracticality of the rigid theory, the Swiss theoretician Hans Zeller proposed a sort of pick 'n mix model which he calls the *Baukastenprinzip.* [4] He sees the several parts of an edition as separable modules which are linked to each other, but can exist apart from each other. In practice, this means that a clear and edited text is published in one book volume (A) and further single volumes contain the apparatus (B), the commentary section (C) and further essays (D). By being incremental and easily updatable, this scheme has the great advantage of being 'publication friendly': the publication of the different volumes can be tuned to the publisher's or the project's financial situation and depending on the type of edition wanted for publication, the editor only prepares the volumes which are needed according to the scheme. Another type of edition can easily be produced by the publication of the missing volumes, and the revision and publication of only one of them can result in a completely updated edition. So, Zeller not only provided a model for the production of affordable editions, but also found a way to circumvent the costly and labour-intensive enterprise of making a complete new edition.

A	B	C	D
	Apparat	Kommentar	
edierter Text	Überlieferung, variante Fassungen, evtl. Paralipomena, Editionsprinzipien	Entstehungsgeschichte, Quellen, Sacherläuterungen, sprachl. Erläuterungen, (Zeugnisse), Register, evtl. Bibliographie der Primärliteratur	z. B.: das Werk im zeitgenöss. Kontext, Gattungsfragen, Intertextualität (Anspielungen usw.), der Vers, Rezeption, usw. evtl. Bibliographie der Sekundärliteratur
relativ hohe		mittlere Alterungs-Beständigkeit	geringe

Editionstypen	Editionsteile
1. Hist.-krit. Ausgabe	A, B. evtl. (separat): C, evtl. mit D.
2. Studienausgabe	A, Auswahl aus B; C; D ad libitum.
3. evtl. Leseausgabe	A, Auszug aus C, evtl. aus D.

Fig. 1. Hans Zeller's Baukastenprinzip

Contrasting with this first set of editions, German editorial scholarship also distinguishes a second set which is archival in its research, results, and purposes. This archival set comprises two more types of editions, i.e. the facsimile and the archive edition, [5] the latter of which presents diplomatic transcriptions of all the documentary sources. Whereas these two types are more likely to be published in combination with each other, editions from the first and the second set seldomly appear on the market together, although they are in their contents complementary to each other. Roughly speaking, the interested scholar either meets with a representation of the witnesses in an edition of the second type or has to accept the supplied display of the editor's editorial decisions conforming to his theoretical vision, together with the resulting edited text in an edition of the first type, without the opportunity to check the editor's work against the documentary sources or witnesses. This lack of information can impose a limitation on literary scholarship based on editions of either kind. Since one of the basic mottos of editorial scholarship is: 'Never trust the author, never trust the publisher and never trust your own eyes', why then should the user of an edition have to trust the editor? Of course, it goes without saying that scholars in preparing their editions 'do a lot of research and acquire thus a real expertise in the writings they edit', [6] but since editing always means human interference guided by a certain theory or theoretical paradigm, it cannot be done objectively. Consequently, it is the user's indisputable right to doubt the editor's paradigm and question his subjectivity on the basis of detailed knowledge of the editorial decisions made in the constitution of the edition. Therefore, and to contribute to a meaningful – be it technical – debate on the text and its genesis, the user of a scholarly edition must at least be provided with the possibility to check everything against a presentation of the original documents. Up to now, a printed scholarly edition does, by its form and formality, not seem to fulfill these requirements.

The very form of a printed scholarly edition is intrinsically even more problematic in that it does not carry in itself any *potential energy*. A hard-copy edition is merely the result of the transformation of *kinetic energy* into one fixed form. [7] This has two consequences:

1. The lack of potential energy discourages the researcher from including (parts of) the edition in his or her own research, because (part of) the productive process of the edition will have to be duplicated in order to be usable. [8]

2. The code used to establish the fixed form does not enhance the readability and consequently impedes the usability of the edition. The *apparatus variorum* for instance is a technical construct which visualises a presentation of the chronological and logical relationships among variants. In the best case, one can, however, only attempt to reconstruct the several versions of a text by unravelling the 'abbreviated and coded forms' in which 'the primary materials come before the reader' as McGann puts it. [9] That is, if the reader is presented with a complete and not with a selective apparatus, the latter for which the selection criteria are always arbitrary. Since an apparatus variorum is not meant for reading but for study and, since, as John Lavagnino points out 'There is little evidence that apparatus of this traditional sort gets used very much by literary scholars today', [10] the apparatus variorum fails in what it intends to do, i.e. being a substitute and a documentation of each complex source, and it instead enhances the tendency to identify its lay-out with its contents. The apparatus eventually becomes a mere cemetery of variants. [11] Elegant solutions to the disfunctioning and the unattractive extensiveness of the apparatus have been suggested such as providing the interested reader with a separate and complete list of emendations and alterations, but as André de Tienne admits: 'even the most patient and competent scholars are unable to reconstruct without error a manuscript from the sole study of these lists, and would thus be ill-advised to quote from their reconstruction without checking it against the original manuscript.' [12] The same difficulties appear when consulting a so-called *genetic edition* where all the evidence for the growth of a text is by a special lay-out provided within the text itself. [13]

To sum up: even the most brightly created scholarly edition in print suffers, for intrinsic and external reasons, from the lack of being incremental and re-usable, and fails in presenting both the results of the research and the archive on which the research has been carried out in such a way that it is of use to literary and textual scholarship.

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3. Archive/Museum model

By emphasizing the disadvantages and the problematic position of printed scholarly editions I might have given the impression that the solution for the future of scholarly editing could be found in electronic editions. It is indeed true that Roger Laufer turned to electronic editing because his own critical apparatus of his edition of A. -R. Le Sage's *Diable boiteux* had become even for himself completely illegible and it is true as well that an electronic edition carries in itself a lot more potential energy compared to its printed counterpart, but the optimism about hyperediting and the theoretically unlimited storage capacity of digital systems does not solve the main problem this paper wants to address, i.e. the seemingly practical impossibility to combine a critical and an archival edition in one product. Therefore I want to suggest a model for electronic scholarly editing that unlinks the *Archival Function* from the *Museum Function*. By *Archival Function* I mean the preservation of the literary artifact in its historical form and the historical-critical research of a literary work. *Museum Function* I define as the presentation by an editor of the physical appearance and/or the contents of the literary

artifact in a documentary, aesthetic, sociological, authorial or bibliographical [14] contextualization, intended for a specific public and published in a specific form and lay-out. The *digital archive* should be the place for the first function, showing a relative objectivity, or a documented subjectivity in its internal organization and encoding. The *Museum Function* should work in an *edition* – disregarding its external form – displaying the explicit and expressed subjectivity and the formal orientation of the editor. [15] The relationship between these two functions is hierarchical: there is no *Museum Function* without an *Archival Function* and an edition should always be based on a digital archive.
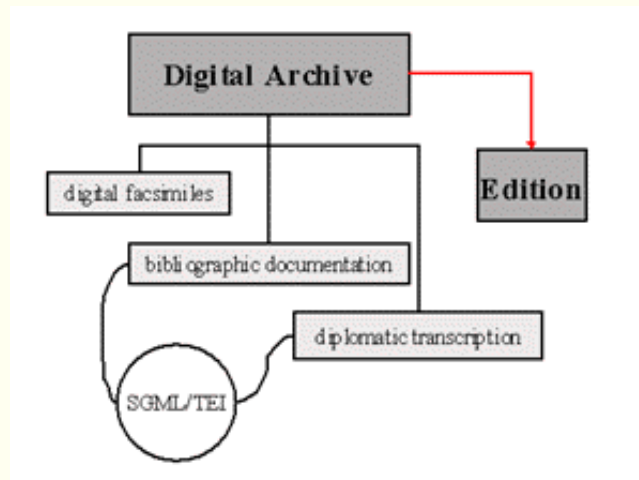

Fig. 2. The Archive/Museum model

The digital archive must at least contain the digital facsimiles of the comparable physical archive in uncompressed format, produced in conformance with the international consensus on digital imaging for preservation, [16] together with the corresponding bibliographical description and the diplomatic transcription of the primary sources. All texts should be encoded and stored in a standardized format in order to be machine-readable and processable, interchangeable and accessible in time. The archive itself must be incremental and its contents usable for scholarly research, e.g. by the development and inclusion of an intelligent search and retrieval engine. Since the creation of such a digital archive is and will always be the work of man, it cannot be valueless [17] or objective. One may argue that the production of digital facsimiles is an objective and mechanical operation, but trying to make an objective transcription of primary sources is a commendable but implausable project. Therefore, the objective should be a *documented subjectivity* from a historical point of view. This can be achieved by encoding the material, making use of the SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language) tag sets created by the TEI (Text Encoding Initiative). [18]

The data kept in the digital archive can then be used and tweaked by the editor to design and compose his own edition. [19] In this sense, the *Archive/Museum* model sees the edition, irrespective of its publication form, as a spin-off product based on the condition of the electronic archive at a certain point in time. For the rest, it should be what the editor wants it to be.

By adopting this *Archive/Museum* model, I believe not only that room is being created for alternative editions, but that the productive process of such editions are being facilitated by the existence of the digital archive. Next to this, the bringing into practice

of the model will in fact provide the editor or candidate-editor with the possibility to apply a Zellerian *Baukastenprinzip* to the creation of an electronic edition.

4. The electronic Streuvels project

The first fully electronic edition project on modern Dutch literature, the electronic Streuvels project concentrates on the 1927 novel *De Teleurgang van den Waterhoek* by the Flemish author Stijn Streuvels (1871-1969). *De Teleurgang van den Waterhoek* (The Decline of the Waterhoek), tells about the dramatic consequences of industrial technology (i.e. the building of a bridge with the purpose to connect two provinces) for a rural community in a small Flemish village called *den Waterhoek* at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1927 the novel was published in installments in the Dutch literary journal *De Gids* and in the same year it appeared in print both in Belgium and in the Netherlands as a separate novel. Twelve years after its first publication in print, the novel appeared in a second revised edition (*tweede herziene druk*) in 1939. Streuvels did revise the text of his novel a first time when preparing the text which had been published in *De Gids* for the first edition. But this time, he did it more drastically, only retaining 73.4% of the text of the first edition. Probably because the publisher wanted a shorter and hence a more marketable book, Streuvels decided to cut out especially those passages which the catholic critique had fulminated against in their reviews of the first edition. A major part of the novel deals with the relationship between Mira, an obstinate and voluptuous village girl and Maurice, the shy but promising engineer from the city, who is in charge of the bridge-building. In depicting this relationship, Streuvels had, according to the catholic critique, used a language which was too suggestive or sexually too explicit for that time. But it goes without saying that by leaving out these passages, sometimes as long as sixteen pages, the relationship between the two forementioned characters changes enormously. Nowadays the book is completely out of print, and one can buy in second hand bookshops only an edition based on this revised text which has been reprinted thirteen times up to now, with the fifteenth edition in 1985. [20]

This is, of course, excellent material for an edition, but by exploring the possibilities of the Archive/Museum model, the electronic Streuvels project, funded by the Royal Academy of Dutch Language and Literature of Ghent, Belgium (*Koninklijke Academie voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde*), wants to escape the bookish limitatons of a traditional edition project, by building a digital archive from which several spin-off products can and will be extracted. The first such products will be a scholarly reading edition published in bookform and intended for a large audience, and a new sort of study edition published on CD-Rom and intended for the academic communitiy.

The digital archive will eventually comprise the complete electronic version of the physical archive kept in the Archive and Museum for the Flemish cultural life in Antwerp (*Archief en Museum voor het Vlaamse Cultuurleven*, AMVC), i.e. electronic facsimiles of all the witness sources, [21] together with their full transcriptions and bibliographical details encoded in TEI compliant SGML markup. The electronic

study edition which will appear on CD-Rom, will include the fully searchable texts of the pre-publication published in *De Gids*, the first edition from 1927 and the second revised edition from 1939, the digital facsimiles of the manuscripts and typescripts, a glossary list, a (genetic) chapter on the production and the transmission of the work, including relevant correspondency between the author and his publisher, and a study on the reception of the work. Taking the (edited) text of the first edition as the orientation text, this hypertext edition will link the different versions of the text on the paragraph level in order to show the variant readings. By making use of the TEI tag sets for the production of the electronic study edition, the production of the reading edition, which will appear in book form, is being facilitated. The encoded files of the text of the first edition (in the original spelling) with its glossary list and the (genetic) chapter on the production and the transmission of the work will go to the publisher, accompanied by a chapter in which, by means of example, one or two passages of the text are studied and compared to one another in their separate versions. With a minimum of work, the publisher can then typeset the reading edition from the SGML encoded instances.

The study edition will be an explicit editorial re-organization of (part of) the digital archive by making use of hypertext, without the pretention to both construct a coherent display and collect every shred of evidence. And this is exactly the point where I locate the problems with editions/archives as Jerome McGann's *The Rossetti Hypermedia Archive* and Peter Robinson's *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, which look to combine both the *Archival* and the *Museum Function* on the same level of the product. By trying to minimize the presence of the editor in a so-called *objective* and *neutral* presentation and description of the material, the editor in fact reaffirms the need for his presence by burying the user with thousands or millions of 'empty' hyperlinks. Robinson himself acknowledges the problems with his edition/archive and 'His proposed solution is to provide the reader with explanations of the significance of the parts, to provide frankly interpretive signposts, to express editorial opinions about the value and significance of the materials presented.' But this only seems to solve the problem: it will in fact lead to a shift from the archival purpose of the edition to the presence of the editor in the archive. By using hypertext only on the display level, i.e. on the subjective and selective editorial level of the edition, for the creation of hypertext is by definition subjective and selective, and not in the organization of the digital archive, the *Electronic Streuvels project* not only hopes to provide an alternative for the limitations of a paper edition, it also wants to explore the possibilities and implications of electronic scholarly editorial work based on the *Archive/Museum model* and in doing so, the project wants to be of assistance in the development of a rationale of electronic scholarly editing.

5. Where is the editor?

The theory and practice of the creation of an electronic edition is being countered by resistance from the side of the hard-copy focussed German school of *Editionswissenschaft*. Seeing the products of electronic textual criticism as mainly undermining the past solid position of the editor, there are three important paradigm shifts to which resistance exists. First, the dogma of the solid text as presented by the editor is undermined and replaced by the tolerant acceptance of a text as a

contextualized possibility. Second, the presented text, together with the apparatus, the commentary section etc., is not the edition but one of many possible editions, composed and constructed by the editor as a spin-off product of the underlying digital archive, in a specific form and lay-out, serving a specific purpose and intended for a specific audience. The underlying digital archive is complete at any stage of its existence but is at the same time meant to expand continuously. Third, the function of the editor needs rethinking from the perspective of the theory and practice of electronic scholarly editing which also means the need for new skills. The implementation of the *Archive/Museum model* in the 'new' function of the editor results in a bifurcation of the job.

On the level of the *Archival Function*, he is a document and source manager with bibliographic, textuist and programming skills. He is responsible for the intellectually open organization of the archive through documentation of his decisions in a standardized way to guarantee the greatest possible usability, longevity, expandability and interchangeability. Since the argument goes that the editor of a work makes the best literary critic because of the acquired expertise on the subject, the argument can as well go that whoever builds the digital archive makes the best editor. In Belgium the structural organization of the physical archives and the funding policy of the Fund for Scientific Research of Flanders (FWO) towards projects on textual criticism leave the editor with no choice but to build the archive himself. Therefore, the function of the editor needs a re-orientation away from literary criticism to documentalism, analytical bibliography and textuism (and hence back to its roots).

On the level of the *Museum Function*, the editor is in his capacity of a textual critic a creator and a supplier of spin-off products which display a re-organization of and a coherent study based on the digital archive. This again needs programming and, very often, graphical designing skills.

With this new and more than full-time function of the editor, the question may not be: 'Where is the editor?', but 'Where is he now?'

About the author

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Notes

1. Making & Meaning. Holbein's Ambassadors. The 1997 Esso Exhibition at the National Gallery. 5 Nov. 1997 - 1 Feb. 1998. ([Back to the text](#))

2. Peter Shillingsburg defines a scholarly edition in this sense: 'I should like to use the name *scholarly edition* for editions that preserve or rescue a work of artistic , social, intellectual, or historical importance as an artifact.' (Shillingsburg 1996, 3) ([Back to the text](#))

3. For definitions of these *Functions*, see infra. ([Back to the text](#))

4. Zeller 1985, 321. ([Back to the text](#))

5. Kanzog 1970, 15-23. ([Back to the text](#))

6. De Tienne 1996, 36 note 5. ([Back to the text](#))

7. Van Hulle 1998, 95. ([Back to the text](#))

8. McGann 1996, 13. ([Back to the text](#))

9. Ibidem. ([Back to the text](#))

10. Lavagnino 1996. ([Back to the text](#))

11. Cf. Helmut Koopmann: 'Zeit eher wirkungsgeschichtlicher, sozialgeschichtlicher, literaturpsychologischer Orientierungen gleichen die Lesartenlabyrinthe gigantische Friedhöfen, in die sich nur wenige Besucher verirren.'Für eine argumentative Edition' in: *Edition et manuscrits*, p. 46: cited in Mathijsen 1997, 297. ([Back to the text](#))

12. De Tienne 1996, 34. ([Back to the text](#))

13. Definition of Bowers 1976, 247. ([Back to the text](#))

14. Five orientations defined and discussed in Shillingsburg, 1996, 15-27. ([Back to the text](#))

15. Ibidem. ([Back to the text](#))

16. At the moment of writing, capture of 24-bit images at 300dpi is recommended and storage in uncompressed TIFF-files (or any other 'non lossy' format). It is waiting now for the publication of the *Guidelines for Digital Imaging*, following the international 'Joint NPO and RLG preservation conference' coordinated by UKOLN at the University of Warwick from 28-30 September 1998. We should be aware that PNG might take over as the new standard on the Web: PNG, like GIF, offers lossless compression and indexed colour, but it also supports full 24-bit colour just as JPEG does.

17. See Small 1993. ([Back to the text](#))

18. The electronic facsimiles must be accompanied by a plain text or an SGML file, containing the technical details of the digitization process (format, resolution, compression scheme if any...). As for the diplomatic transcriptions, these will always be the identifiable work of the transcriber and hence must be documented in this way. By adopting the TEI encoding scheme, the header provides the possibility for such a documentation of e.g. the identity of the transcriber and the transcription principles using the same syntax as the text itself. The TEI header - together with the *documented subjectivity* of the tag usage - does not conceal but emphasizes the debatability of the transcription by the inherent explicit articulation of the system. Another important advantage of the TEI is the encoding of metadata using the same syntax as the text itself. See Sperberg-McQueen & Burnard 1994 for a complete documentation of the TEI. ([Back to the text](#))

19. Where a printing error in the machine readable transcription of e.g an edition of a text in the digital archive may be encoded as <SIC CORR="mother" RESP="TR">morher</SIC>, the same text in the electronic edition may be encoded as <CORR SIC="morher" RESP="ED">mother</CORR> (with TR referring to the transcriber and ED referring to the editor). Both examples, although they are the same for intelligent SGML-aware software, show the different methodological principles of the *Archive* and the *Museum Function*. ([Back to the text](#))

20. The version of the second revised edition has been reprinted in the *Collected Works* from 1972 which has been frequently used as a basis for literary criticism. ([Back to the text](#))

21. i.e. two manuscripts (1926 and 1927), corrected typescripts and proofs, the by Streuvels corrected versions of the pre-publication in the literary journal *De Gids* (1927), the first

(1927) and the second edition (1939), and several paralipomena. (Back to the text)

22. Part of which has already been published in De Smedt 1996. (Back to the text)
23. ca. 70 letters. (Back to the text)
24. See also De Smedt 1998. (Back to the text)
25. By 'empty' hyperlinks, I mean links, the rationale of which are not clear or made explicit. (Back to the text)
26. Shillingsburg 1997. (Back to the text)
27. For editing is by nature and by definition interference; it cannot be done objectively. (Back to the text)

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