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1. Introduction

*Ton van Kalmthout and Huib Zuidervaat**

Abstract

This introduction discusses modifications in the field of ‘philology’ in the nineteenth century and the discipline’s previous history since the late sixteenth century. Save in classical philology, the methods of this domain were also applied to other languages and periods. In the nineteenth century, the practice of philology passed through a crucial phase. In both the subject of study as the methods, fundamental changes occurred. Texts in the vernacular and national philologies attracted attention, and ‘neo-philology’ succeeded to take over the central position traditionally held by classical philology. Sub-fields such as ‘linguistics’, ‘edition technique’ and ‘historiography’ grew into new, more or less independent (sub)disciplines, whereas scientific methods such as stemmatology and comparative approaches were introduced in the humanities. The studies collected in this volume are devoted to a diversity of developments related to this fascinating process of professionalization and the search for new frontiers in Dutch philology of the nineteenth century.

The Netherlands can boast of a long and important tradition in scholarly philology. In the early days of Leiden University (1575) for instance, ‘philology’ or the critical examination of classical texts was regarded as a ‘cutting-edge science’. This field of scholarship had far-reaching implications on disciplines such as theology, chronology, astronomy, history, law, and other ‘demarcated bodies of knowledge identified as a separate science’.¹ Scholars like Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609) attracted students from all over Europe. But over the years, philology – both taken as written heritage and as the technique of preserving, restoring, and interpreting it – changed dramatically in content and scope. Next to classical philology, the tools of the trade were also implemented towards other languages and periods. In 1777, a Dutch manual defined the discipline as

that part of scholarship that covers the knowledge of languages and their proper use. Its components are grammar, rhetoric, declamation, metrics

* Huygens Institute for the History of the Netherlands (KNAW), The Hague.

E-mail: ton.van.kalmthout@huygens.knaw.nl & huib.zuidervaat@huygens.knaw.nl

¹ Cf. Olesko, ‘Disciplines’, p. 213.

and criticism. A philologist is someone who is a lover of languages and of the origin of words.²

But regardless of the exact field of inquiry, philologists as protectors and teachers of the written heritage always played a pivotal role in the formation of the cultural repertoire of the educated public. As men of learning and high esteem, philologists also exerted influence outside the cultural sphere, especially in politics and religion. The ever-changing composition of the philological frame of reference made no difference in this respect. A good philologist was a broadly educated man. According to a statement made in the 1840s, a philologist must master geography, chronology, historical criticism, political science, the history of ethics, the arts, and literature.³

In the nineteenth century, however, the practice of philology passed through a crucial phase. In both its object of study and its methods, several fundamental changes occurred.⁴ Texts in the vernacular and national philologies attracted more and more attention, and 'neo-philology' succeeded to take over the central position traditionally held by classical philology, although this discipline still enjoyed a high status at the end of the century. Subfields such as 'linguistics', 'edition technique' and 'historiography' grew into new, more or less independent (sub)disciplines, whereas scientific methods such as stemmatology and comparative approaches were introduced in the humanities. This redesigned the landscape of philology radically. New boundaries became apparent and existing ones were questioned or drawn sharper. At the time, philology underwent an accelerated process of differentiation and professionalization. This fascinating process of change and the search for new boundaries in philology put forward the following question: Which material and immaterial factors can be regarded as determinative for Dutch philology in the nineteenth century?

According to the historian Charles Rosenberg, historians of science should focus on – what he called – the 'ethnology of knowledge'. Rosenberg

2 'Philologia is eigenlyk dat gedeelte der Geleerdheid dat in de kennis der Taalen en derzelver regt gebruik bestaat. Haare Onderdeelen zyn Grammatica, Rhetorica, Oratoria, Metrica en Critica. Een philologus is iemant die een Liefhebber der Taalen en der woorddoorsprongke-lykheden is' (Buys, *Nieuw [...] woordenboek*, vol. 8, p. 684).

3 Witsen Geysbeek, *Algemeen Noodwendig Woordenboek*, vol. pp. 2010-2011 (lemma 'philologie'): 'Vandaar derhalve, dat een philoloog, die van zijne studie het volle nut wil plukken, geen vreemdeling moet zijn in geographie, chronologie, historische kritiek, staatkunde, geschiedenis van zeden, kunsten en litteratuur, enz.'

4 On the changing methods of (in particular Dutch) neophilology: Van Kalmthout, 'Bouwvakkers van de literatuurbeschouwing'.

used this metaphor to analyse entities such as discipline, sub-discipline and scholarly profession. This approach not only deals with the internal development of intellectual content, but also relates the studied processes with the social and institutional context in which the scholarly content is created and transferred.⁵ This volume has a similar orientation. It presents several articles discussing the practice of philology in the Netherlands in the period under scrutiny.

Philology in the nineteenth century

What is – and was – understood by philology? The literal meaning of the phrase is ‘Love for the word.’⁶ It concerns a cultural science which essentially has a high degree of continuity since Antiquity, but which is demarcated in different ways in the course of time.⁷ Since the Middle Ages, philology can be understood as the study of (textual) culture in all its facets. A comprehensive modern definition is:

the science of language and literature which investigates the relation between word and meaning, and in doing so the performance of creative writers in the language and spirit and culture of a nation in word and essence, in the broadest sense also, beyond the literary production, archaeology and ethnology, philosophy, music, the judicial system, religion, habits and customs, art, popular tradition (saga, fairy tale, riddle, proverb, myth) and so on. [Philology] is served by rhetoric, poetics, metrics, stylistics, phonetics, grammar, epigraphy, palaeography as sub-disciplines, and especially by literary history and linguistics.⁸

5 Rosenberg, ‘Toward an Ecology of Knowledge’, p. 447.

6 Helsloot, *Korte geschiedenis van de rede*, p. 9, however, gives a slightly different original meaning: the term would have meant ‘love for the logos’, love for ‘a regular creative power underlying all things’ (‘een wetmatig scheppende kracht die aan alles ten grondslag lag’).

7 See Bod, *De vergeten wetenschappen*, pp. 49–55, 139–144, 188–207, 338–348.

8 Von Wilpert *Sachwörterbuch der Literatur*, p. 567: ‘die Wissenschaft von Sprache und Schrifttum, die den Zusammenhang von Wort und Sinn, damit die Leistung der Dichter in der Sprache und Geist und Kultur e. Volkes in Wort und Wesen erforscht, im weitesten Sinne auch über den lit. Niederschlag hinaus Altertums- und → Volkskunde, Philosophie, Musik, Rechtswesen, Religion, Sitte, Kunst, Volksüberlieferung (Sage, Märchen, Rätsel, Sprichwort, Mythos) usw. Als Teilwissenschaften dienen ihr Rhetorik, Poetik, Metrik, Stilistik, Phonetik, Grammatik, Epigraphik, Paläographie und bes. Literaturgeschichte und Sprachwissenschaft’. See for instance Kuiper, ‘Wat is neofilologie?’, p. 4.

In the Netherlands, after the Middle Ages, the concept has also been used in a narrow scope. The lemma in the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal* (*WNT*) ('Dictionary of the Dutch language'), dating from 1921, expresses the nineteenth-century idea that philology only includes historical and literary studies, as well as linguistics. It describes the field as

The science of the practitioners of the language and literature of a nation, formerly especially with respect to those of the Greeks and the Romans, and subsequently also extended to the scientific study of the entire culture of classical Antiquity. Since the nineteenth century [philology is] also applied to the study of language and literature, history and archaeology of other peoples.⁹

In the twentieth century more and more restricted conceptions of philology emerged, for instance as the field exclusively devoted to linguistic and literary studies,¹⁰ or even as the study of a single text or author ('Shakespeare philology', 'Reinaert philology'). There are also views identifying philology as the field of study exclusively dealing with linguistics, whether or not it has an applied character,¹¹ or reducing it to the composition of scholarly editions of important literary-historical texts.¹²

In line with the nineteenth-century opinion, as reflected in the *WNT* definition, we regard philology as the study of historical texts in the vernacular, undertaken within (sub)disciplines such as linguistics, literary studies and historiography or their subfields, currently called 'textual scholarship' and 'language and literature didactics'. Along the same line, the authors in this volume have studied the practice of philology as it

9 *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal* (<http://gtb.inl.nl/>), s.v. 'philologie'. Cf. idem, s.v. 'philoloog' [in translation: 'Scientific practitioner of literary studies; formerly especially applied to practitioners of knowledge on the Antiquity (classical philology), at present [used] as the name of everyone devoting himself to the scholarly investigation of the language and literature of any nation, or in a broader sense for: someone who studies language and literature, history and archeology'.] On the nineteenth-century interpretation of philology, see also: Helsloot, *Korte geschiedenis*, pp. 47-48.

10 For instance Barnouw, 'Philology'.

11 For instance Meertens, 'Nederlandse filologie'; Neutjens, *De techniek van de filologische arbeid* (writing skills); Van Essen *Van praktische filologie tot onderwijslinguïstiek* (language acquisition). See also Weerman 'Taalkunde of filologie'.

12 For instance Van Dalen-Oskam & Depuydt, 'Lexicography and philology'. Confer, however, the broader definition of philology in Mathijssen, *Naar de letter*, p. 19: 'alle onderzoek naar teksten en hun verhouding tot de cultuur waarin ze ontstaan zijn' ['all research into texts and their relationship with the culture in which they arose'].

developed in the nineteenth century. In order to enhance our insight into the constants and innovations of nineteenth-century philological practice, Rens Bod's introduction discusses its previous history. Bod places this practice not only in a historical perspective and in an international context, but his essay also underlines the importance of research into the history of philology.

New perspectives for old skills

Traditionally, philology was closely related to biblical criticism, and in the nineteenth century it was still an important auxiliary science of theology, as Johannes Magliano-Tromp points out in this volume. At the same time, however, philology demarcated its own more or less independent sphere, with a specific authority. Gert-Jan Johannes, for instance, discusses the formation of national philology as an example of discipline formation in the humanities. Jan Rock elucidates another aspect of this interest in the national literary heritage. He explains the emergence of a renewed practice of Dutch textual scholarship from both an upcoming international historicism and a tradition already built up in the Netherlands to publish historical texts in the vernacular.

Kris Steyaert's contribution on the teaching of Dutch literature provided by universities in nineteenth-century Belgium demonstrates that this teaching was prompted by political-ideological motives; motives which also played a role in the more internationally oriented domains of philology. As Marie-Christine Kok-Escalte writes in her article, humanistic and liberal considerations inspired the teaching of modern foreign languages at the universities in the final decades of the century. And humanistic, nation-transcending ideas all the more influenced the emerging sub-discipline of comparative literature discussed by Ton van Kalmthout.

The construction of philology as a discipline in the nineteenth century

It is important to remark that the practice of philology in the nineteenth century is not identical to the application of knowledge and skills to secure an income and a living for the practitioners. A financial motive never played a decisive role in what at the time was considered as 'professional philology'. Other characteristics articulated in the study of professions were more

visible.¹³ At first, the professional practice of nineteenth-century philologists was set in an institutional context in which learned societies for a large part determined the agenda,¹⁴ as becomes clear in particular in the articles by Rita Schlusemann and Jan Rock. Here, personal networks were crucial. Schlusemann examines an example of a network from the first half of the nineteenth century, on the basis of the correspondence about Dutch language heritage, conducted by Jacob Grimm with representatives of the *Koninklijk Nederlandsch Instituut van Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schoone Kunsten* ('Royal Dutch Institute of Sciences, Letters and Fine Arts').

Because in the early nineteenth century the boundaries between amateurs and professionals were not clear-cut,¹⁵ academic philologists sought to develop their profile as a separate group by a narrower demarcation of their working field. The case of the historian Robert Fruin presents an excellent example. Considering Fruin's daily life, Jo Tollebeek demonstrates how in the second half of the century a small-scale professional community of academic historians was formed.

Professionalizing and specialization are often considered as characteristic for the institutionalization of knowledge in the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ An example of such a tendency towards specialization is presented by Jan Noordegraaf, who explains how the study of language developed from an auxiliary science of (classical) philology into the more or less independent comparative discipline of linguistics. In this process, philology was seen as occupying itself with the precise form of language and meaning of a single text, while linguistics was seeking for patterns in the use of language. A comparable difference was signalled between philology, concentrating on individual texts, and literary studies, which distanced themselves from them, trying to formulate more general statements.¹⁷ A similar distinction also was made with respect to history: in contrast to the single text the philologist was working on, the historian used an extensive body of documents for the reconstruction of a historical reality.¹⁸ Likewise

13 See for these properties and for processes of professionalization among others: Abbott, *System of Professions* 1988; Burrage & Torstendahl, *Professions in Theory and History*; Morrell 'Professionalisation'; Macdonald, *The Sociology of the Professions*; Jacobs & Bosanac, *The Professionalization of Work*.

14 See e.g. Miller, 'Professional Society'.

15 This situation was similar to the natural sciences. Cf. Barton, 'Men of Science'.

16 See for instance Higham, 'The Matrix of Specialization', esp. pp. 3-7.

17 Michels 'De plaats van de filologie', (repr.) pp. 56-57; Kuiper, 'Wat is neofilologie?', p. 171 and p. 192; Noordegraaf, 'Spelling, taalkunde en filologie', pp. 143-145.

18 Fraeters, 'Medioneerlandstiek in context', p. 300.

Tollebeek argues in this volume that historiography had to emancipate itself more from philology, even more than literary studies did.

In general, access to a discipline was regulated by procedures and codes of conduct, which the philologist had also to consider. He (or exceptionally: she) should possess special qualifications, whether or not acknowledged and sealed by diplomas. Such regulations led, as usual in processes of professionalization, to the foundation of different kinds of institutions: educational and research institutes, collection-forming bodies, professional organizations and publication channels. Just like other academic professionals, philologists not only sought scientific recognition, but also societal support. After all, for the legitimization and funding of their activities they were almost always dependent on public and private parties. In this volume, these facets of philological practice are discussed extensively.

Desiderata

Although during the nineteenth century the practice of the philologists became more and more embedded in an institutional context where learned societies played an important role, the contributions of Steyaert, Kok-Escalé and Tollebeek show that in this period the universities obtained a decisive share in the transfer of philological knowledge. This owed much, both in theory and practice, to classical and oriental philology. The history of this aspect of nineteenth-century Dutch philology requires further research and therefore remains a desideratum.¹⁹ This also applies to the role of several infrastructural facilities in the field of Dutch philology, such as scientific libraries, communication media, congresses, periodicals and – starting in the second half of the nineteenth century – some journals specialized in philology. Just like books, these journals were able to act as repositories of philological knowledge, being better equipped, however, to follow the contemporary debates. In addition, these specialized journals gave a larger public access to new insights, fields of philological interest, methods and results. Nevertheless, the large-scale investigation of the content of scholarly periodicals is still in its infancy.²⁰ However, ongoing digitization

19 For classical philology in the Netherlands refer to Krul, 'Klassieke studiën' and idem, 'Classicism and the Dutch State'.

20 Among the philological journals, especially the historical ones have attracted attention. See for instance Dann, 'Vom Journal zur wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift'; Middell, *Historische Zeitschriften im internationalen Vergleich*; Nissen, *Wissenschaft für gebildete Kreise*.

programmes and the raising accessibility of scientific journals from the past hold the promise for researchers of being able to reveal in detail processes of professionalization and discipline formation. This volume on the Dutch case provides some of the necessary preliminary explorations.

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