

New Philology and New Phylogeny: Aspects of a Critical Electronic Edition of Wolfram's *Parzival*¹

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Abstract

Karl Lachmann's edition from 1833 still provides the basis for *Parzival* scholarship. Although the text has subsequently been revised in parts, a fundamentally new edition considering all extant manuscripts is required. Computer technology offers means for tackling this task in an effective and reliable manner. A critical electronic edition will give access to the manuscript material, which may be published stage by stage, corresponding to different sections of the text. Such an edition will allow users to consult a base text, electronically linked to an apparatus of variants, to manuscript transcriptions, and to facsimiles. Browsing among these components, readers will experience the extent to which the *Parzival* romance was open to textual variance in the course of its transmission (an aspect stressed by theories of the so-called 'New Philology'). Furthermore, new stemmatological methods borrowed from evolutionary biology (phylogeny) will provide insight into manuscript groupings that may reflect early textual versions that relate to the semi-oral status of vernacular literary culture. Thus, an electronic edition will be the essential prerequisite of any new *Parzival* book edition. But it also constitutes an edition in its own right, revealing the discursive and visual richness of medieval text traditions and involving the readers in the editorial process.

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Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* ranks as one of the most significant narrative works to emerge from medieval Europe. Composed between 1200 and 1210, it combines the Arthurian material of Celtic origin with the religious subject matter of the Holy Grail. From a lay-theological perspective, piety is explored in the tension between secular and spiritual values. An omniscient narrator manipulates this material, consciously distancing himself from the conventions of contemporary scholastic poetics. His narrative stance reveals an enigmatic sense of humour, which leads to unexpected twists and turns, casting light upon the narrated events from the most varied of angles. This switch of perspectives has as its ultimate aim a twofold process of cognition: Parzival's growth in self-knowledge, and the progression in the reader's thoughts—the audience is

expressly invited to participate in the unfolding of the narrative process. The central question that emerges in this process is how a world torn apart by contradictions and conflicts can again be rendered whole.

Within the fictitious garb of the romance, Wolfram confers upon this question a shape that transcends time, and that gave rise to intense interest on the part of listeners and readers. The sheer number of medieval manuscripts preserving *Parzival* today speaks for itself—we know of sixteen manuscripts that have preserved the entire text, sixty-eight fragments, and a print dating from 1477.² Estimates of the number of written sources extant in the Middle Ages point to up to 1,000 texts.³

Ever since the late eighteenth-century revival of interest in the vernacular poetry of the Middle Ages, modern literary scholarship has concerned itself with Wolfram's Grail romance. The interpretations that have been arrived at are as varied as they are controversial. Exegesis has, however, been based upon an edition that, although a masterpiece of its time, can no longer meet today's expectations. Karl Lachmann's *Parzival* edition of 1833 formed the standard basis for interpretation for generations of Germanists, and revised editions were published up to 1998.⁴ It is because of the abundance of manuscript sources and the sheer size of the romance—almost 25,000 lines—that it has remained irreplaceable. It is nevertheless the case that recent scholarship is agreed upon the necessity for a new edition, and has become increasingly discontented with working with a text that is generally acknowledged to be in need of revision.

Criticism has been directed at Lachmann's method of arriving at a text, which seeks to reconstruct an authorial original that lies beyond the scope of the texts transmitted by the manuscripts. Criticism has also been levelled at numerous editorial decisions on Lachmann's part, particularly his choosing not to denote the data of transmission precisely in his apparatus, but to veil them by sigla relating to groups of manuscripts. Finally, criticism has been directed at the fact that new editions dependent upon Lachmann do not give adequate consideration to the large number of manuscript sources that have emerged since 1833. The desired criterion for a new, comprehensive edition was recently succinctly formulated by the German medievalist Joachim Bumke: 'The most important task of *Parzival* scholarship is a new critical edition of the text on the basis of all manuscripts now known to us [...] It is far from being to the credit of German studies that Lachmann's edition has for so long been left untouched by scholars'.⁵

The challenge presented to the editor of *Parzival* also affects central problems in the theory of medieval philology today. Worthy of note in this context are phenomena such as the relationship between oral performance and its literary codification, the ensuing variability of medieval texts, as well as concepts of authorship and transmission, and their effects upon the way in which a text is presented.⁶ To put it in its simplest terms, scholarly debate hinges upon two pivotal positions, which may be denoted by the keywords *New Philology* and *New Phylogeny*. New Philology emphasizes the variety in transmission and the ensuing instability of medieval texts. Its tendency is to renounce the hierarchy of individual

2 See Bonath (1970/1971), Becker (1977, pp. 77–98), Schiroke (1982, pp. 28–56), and Bumke (1997a, pp. 169–74).

3 See Schiroke (1982, p. 62).

4 See Nellmann (1994; without a critical apparatus, but containing an important new commentary) and Schiroke (1998; containing an excellent overview on *Parzival* philology, pp. LIII–XCVI).

5 See Bumke (1997a, p. 174f.): 'Die wichtigste Aufgabe der *Parzival*-Forschung ist eine neue kritische Ausgabe des Textes auf der Grundlage der gesamten heute bekannten Überlieferung. [...] Es ist kein Ruhmesblatt für die Germanistik, dass Lachmanns Ausgabe schon so lange keine wissenschaftliche Betreuung mehr findet.'

6 See, in respect of medieval German studies, Schnell (1998), and, more recently, Müller (2001).

manuscript sources in the interest of the fundamentally variable, unstable status of medieval manuscript culture.⁷ New Phylogeny, by contrast, focuses on manuscript interrelations and groupings as the basis for the critical determination of the text. The concept of 'phylogeny', which derives from evolutionary biology, denotes the racial history of breeds. Recently it has been applied to questions of manuscript interrelations. Research on Chaucer, for example, has attempted to establish *The phylogeny of the Canterbury Tales*.⁸

A new critical edition of *Parzival* will have to come to terms with the abundance of variant readings and the not inconsiderable problems of establishing a text against the methodological background of the polarity of New Philology and New Phylogeny. A challenge voiced in the *Parzival* scholarship of the 1960s now seems more relevant than ever before. It was then argued that it would be necessary 'to publish all the material that was collected for critical assessment before the question of manuscript interrelation could be clarified'.⁹ Perhaps the idea, when it was voiced in 1968, had a Utopian ring. Today, however, it can be put into practice, step by step, with the aid of computer technology, and at reasonable expense. A critical electronic edition of the manuscript sources would constitute a work-base that would be an indispensable prerequisite for any new printed edition of Wolfram's *Parzival*.

One of the oldest and most reliable textual sources provides the obvious base manuscript: St. Gall Stiftsbibliothek, codex 857 (MS D in *Parzival* scholarship, dating from the middle of the thirteenth century, presumably written in Southern Tyrol).¹⁰ By employing transcriptions, facsimiles and collations, cross-referencing, and data-banks of variants, the text of this manuscript can be compared with the versions preserved in other codices. Flexible computer programs such as COLLATE¹¹ or TUSTEP¹² will also allow scholars to choose a different base manuscript, if this should suggest itself as productive in the course of computer-based investigations.

Moreover, by means of digital databases the interrelations of manuscripts can be explored in a new way. One approach that suggests itself here is applying the stemmatological processes developed by the Dutch Romanist Anthonij Dees.¹³ Instead of proceeding from the historical genealogies of manuscript stemmata, Dees takes as his base chains in what he terms 'unrooted structures'. The difference is clear from the figures overleaf:

The first diagram (Fig. 1) presents a traditional stemma with an archetype; the second (Fig. 2) shows an 'unrooted structure' with its branches. Such a 'rootless tree' is capable of describing manuscript interrelations at different levels: on the level of individual variants, individual sections of text, or, if need be, entire manuscript versions of texts. The 'unrooted structure' has no single root, and dispenses with branches deriving from an archetype. The diagram devised here is merely a conceptual model for relations between texts. This level of abstraction renders it possible for relations between manuscript variants to be depicted, without genealogical dependence being the necessary conclusion. Phylogenetic analyses

7 This approach was emphasized by Cerquiglini (1989), Nichols (1990), and Wenzel (1990). In medieval German studies it is reflected by Stackmann (1994), Schnell (1997), and Strohschneider (1997). Instead of *New Philology*, Nichols (1997) speaks of *Material Philology*.

8 See Barbrook *et al.* (1998). Sometimes the expression 'New Stemmatics' is used instead; see Peter Robinson's 'Analysis Workshop' in Solopova (2000).

9 See Nellmann (1968, p. 20): 'vor der Klärung der Hss.-Verzweigung das gesamte Material, das zur textkritischen Auswertung gesammelt wurde, [...] publizieren'.

10 This important manuscript contains Wolfram's *Parzival* and also his *Willehalm*; furthermore, the anonymous *Nibelungenlied* and *Klage*, and Stricker's *Karl*. See most recently Schirok (2000, pp. IX–XV), and the information offered by the 'Marburger Repertorium der Handschriften des 13. Jahrhunderts', online: <http://www.uni-marburg.de/hosting/mr/mr13/mr0074.html> (14 April 2003, date last accessed).

11 See Robinson (1994).

12 See Ott (2000).

13 See Dees (1975, 1976), and the excellent survey in van Mulken (1993, pp. 45–61).

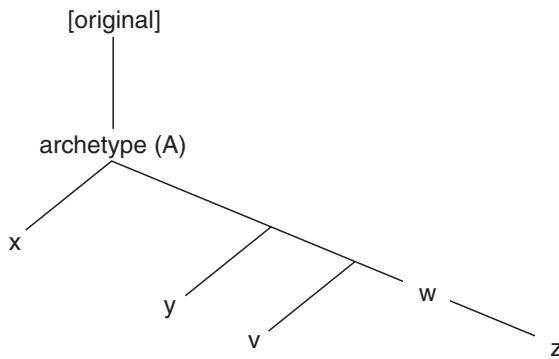


Fig. 1 Oriented stemma.

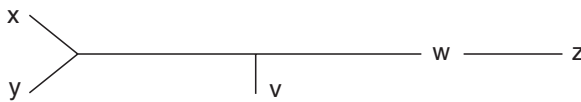


Fig. 2 Branching off into an 'unrooted structure', missing a single root (A).

in evolutionary biology adhere to a similar principle. On the basis of the defined properties of individual breeds they determine their interrelations and groupings, before they derive conclusions concerning stemmatic lineage.¹⁴

The cooperation of biologists and philologists has indeed demonstrated that both disciplines are confronted with similar problems. Computer programs developed for the analysis of biological interrelations here prove decidedly useful in determining relations between manuscripts. In a markedly shorter time than can be covered by conventional processes, they can make groupings of manuscripts evident.¹⁵ The following model (Fig. 3) for the prologue to *Parzival*, produced by using the program SplitsTree,¹⁶ was established in collaboration with English scholars.¹⁷

Models of this kind cannot replace traditional philological methods of analysis, but they do offer a meaningful supplement to them. At one glance, Fig. 3 shows the distinctive group of the manuscripts m, n, o (deriving from the Alsatian scriptorium owned by Diebold Lauber in the fifteenth century)¹⁸ and the print W (produced by Johannes Mentelin at Strasbourg in the year 1477).¹⁹ Aided by such an approach, the determination of early parallel versions close to the author's original and of their codification in the process of transmission can be tackled. In recent research on Middle High German narrative this approach has increasingly gained favour and has indeed virtually ousted the assumption of a single original autograph.²⁰

The possibilities offered by the synoptic representation of the manuscript sources on screen will, in what follows, be illustrated by reference to a short extract from the *Parzival* prologue.²¹

The screen presentation (Fig. 4) created by an internet browser shows, in the upper part of the left window, a normalized text, based on the main

14 See the broader discussion of phylogenetic analysis in Sober (1988), especially Chapter 1, and Brooks and McLennan (1991).

15 See Howe *et al.* (2001).

16 Developed by Daniel H. Huson, now University of Tübingen and Princeton; see http://www-ab.informatik.uni-tuebingen.de/people/hudson/old_homepage/phylogenetics/splitstree.html (14 April 2003, date last accessed). At

<http://bibiserv.techfak.uni-bielefeld.de/splits/> (29 December 2002, date last accessed) an introduction to the program is available.

17 I am especially grateful to Dr Peter Robinson (De Montfort University, Leicester) for offering his help during the preparation of this research.

18 See below, p. 138 and note 28.

19 The sigla follow the system proposed by Heinze (1993, p. 62). For technical reasons the sigla m, n, o had to be rendered as mklein, nklein, oklein in the diagram.

Numbers refer to fragments; see Bonath and Lomnitzer (1989). The group mnoW confirms older results achieved by conventional methods; see Nellmann (1968, p. 16f.) and Ulzen (1974, p. IX).

20 See Bumke (1996).

21 The starting point was the conventional test edition undertaken by Heinze (1993, p. 61).

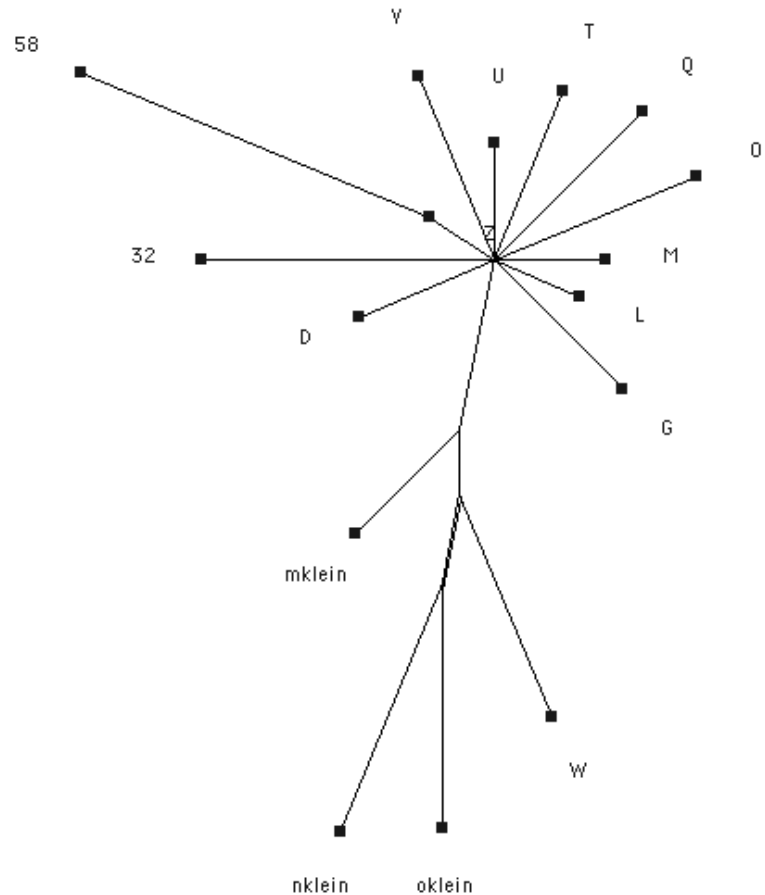


Fig. 3 Stemmatic model of the *Parzival* prologue.

manuscript D. In the lower part of the left window is the apparatus of variants relating to this text. The windows on the right contain the transcriptions and facsimiles of the various manuscript sources. All windows are linked. Thus, users may easily change between base-text, apparatus of variants, transcriptions, and facsimiles.

The base-text denotes in cursive script significant deviations from the main manuscript; for example, the singular *gelichet*, as opposed to the plural *gelichent* in MS D. Underlining refers to variants in the manuscripts that are regarded as being of equal validity; for example, the ambiguous adjective *lihete*, which has various possible meanings in MS D. It can be understood as *lihete* ('(s)light') or as *liehte* ('bright, clear'), and discrepancies occur in the transmission that reflect this ambiguity.

The lines chosen to illustrate these points occur shortly after Wolfram's celebrated magpie image. The magpie represents morally black-and-white, chequered people, who belong half to hell, and yet may be saved. For simple-minded listeners, the narrator says, this flying magpie image is too fleet; they would not be able to follow it, for it would double back before them like a startled hare.

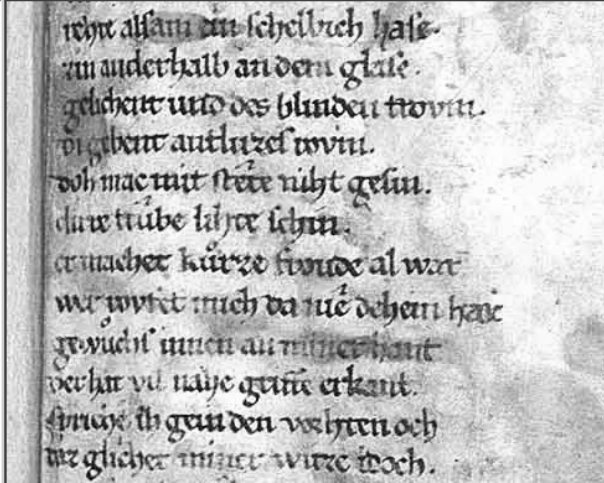
<p>1.20. zin anderhalb an dem glase</p> <p>1.21. <i>gelichet</i> und des blinden troum, Hs. D: 'gelichent'</p> <p>1.22. die gebent antlützes roum</p> <p>1.23. doch mac mit stæte niht gesîn</p> <p>1.24. dirre trübe lihte schîn: Hs. D: 'lihte' (mehrdeutig: 'lihte' oder 'liehte')</p> <p>1.25. er machet kurze froude alwâr.</p>	<p>D 1.20. zin anderhalb an dem glase .</p> <p>D 1.21. gelichent und des blinden troum .</p> <p>D 1.22. di gebent antlützel roum .</p> <p>D 1.23. doh mac mit stæte niht gesîn .</p> <p>D 1.24. dirre trübe lihte schîn .</p> <p>D 1.25. er machet kûrze froude al war</p> <p>Die Buchstaben sind teilweise in anderer Tinte ausgebessert (vgl. auch Ulzen, S. 57).</p>
<p>1.21. gelichet] gelichent D, Gelicket Q T U, Gleichet W, Geliht Z 58 und] sich L blinden] blindem M troum] trôm o, troyrn M, traŵrn Q, troume 32</p> <p>1.22. antlützes] anders M, alle antlütiz W roum] rôrn o, roum M, raŵrn Q, zoûme 32</p> <p>1.23. 1.23...1.24 <i>fehlt</i>: G</p>	

Fig. 4 Screen presentation.

The following lines (1.20–1.22) may be translated as follows: ‘tin on the other side of glass—i.e. a mirror—is pleasing, as is also the dream of the blind man. They only reflect the milky shimmer (*roum*) of a face.’ The verb *gelichet* is cognate with English *to like* and means ‘to please’. That a blind man takes pleasure in shadowy dream-images is an idea attested by a Middle High German proverb, which reads: *Dem blinden ist mit troumen wol*.²² In lines 1.23–1.25 such hazy images are unmasked as deceptive: ‘Yet this dim, indeed insubstantial, fleeting apparition cannot be constant; truly it makes for short-lived joy.’ Here the adjective *lihte* is taken to mean ‘light, insubstantial, fleeting’. If the variant *liehte* were chosen, the sense would be ‘bright, clear’. In this case an oxymoron would emerge: the apparition would then be both ‘dim’ and ‘brilliant’.

A glance at the manuscript transmission may serve to illustrate what a wealth of variants emerge for these few lines.²³

The St. Gall codex (MS D) offers the unique reading *gelichent*; in view of the plural form *gebent* (‘they give’) in the following line this might be a scribal error.²⁴

Another major manuscript dates from the middle of the thirteenth century: Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cgm 19 (MS G).²⁵ It was

22 See Schirok (1986).

23 For the sigla of the manuscripts mentioned in the following paragraphs, see again Heinzle (1993, p. 62). Sometimes there are differences between Heinzle’s system and that of traditional *Parzival* scholarship, presented by Schirok (1998, pp. XXVII–XLVIII). In this case the older sigla are added in square brackets.

24 See Schweikle (1992, p. 99).

25 See Klein (1992).

written in a South German scriptorium, the hands being of both the Alemannic and Bavarian regions. In this version the lines in question have a very different appearance:

- G 1.20 Zin anderhalb ame glase ·
 G 1.21 gelichet vñ des blinden tröm ·
 G 1.22 die gebent anlutztes röm ·
 G 1.23
 G 1.24
 G 1.25 vnde machent churze fröd^c al war ·

Here lines 1.23 and 1.24 are missing. Thus in line 1.25 the singular of the verb *machen* has to be changed. In the Munich manuscript the plural form *machent* forms the link with the preceding lines 1.20ff.; we now hear of the mirror and the dream that they make for short joy: they *machent churze fröd^c al war*.

By contrast, the manuscript Donaueschingen, Fürstlich Fürstenbergische Hofbibliothek, Cod. 97 (MS V [G⁸], now in Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek), written between 1331 and 1336, has a complete and corrected text:

- V 1.20. Zin anderthalben am glase
 V 1.21. Glichet vñ des blinden tröm
 V 1.22. Die gebent antlitzes röm
 V 1.23. O^vch mag mit stete niht gesin
 V 1.24. Dirre trübe liehte schin
 V 1.25. Der machet kurze fröude al war

In line 1.21 one meets with the form *glichen*, as opposed to the St. Gall alternative form *gelichent*. Line 1.24 has the simplified adjective *liehte* ('bright, clear'). It was indeed the case that the redactors of this manuscript were credited with an awareness of textual criticism, and entrusted with sifting through several manuscript sources on a comparative basis. This is a communal creation of the Strasbourg nobility, commissioned by an Alsatian nobleman, called Ulrich von Rappoltstein.²⁶

Alsace is also the area of origin of Hamburg, Codex germanicus 6 (MS L [G^σ]), which dates from 1451.²⁷ In contrast to the Donaueschingen manuscript, only one hand was at work here. The scribe Jordan, who expressly designates himself to be the owner of the codex, may have been active as a notary or chancery clerk in the Strasbourg area. In lines 1.20 and 1.21 he offers a noteworthy textual variant:

- L 1.20. Schin anderhalb an dem glase
 L 1.21. Gelichet sich des blinden trovnm

The *zin* of the older manuscripts has here become *schin*; the verb *gelichet* appears in the reflexive form, with a dative complement: 'The apparition behind the glass'—so the scribe's version reads—'may be compared with the dream of a blind man'.

One final example from the transmission may serve to illustrate the corruption to which the text of *Parzival* was subject, about the same time,

26 See, most recently, Bumke (1997b) and Oltrogge and Schubert (2002).

27 See van Eerden (1938).

in nearby Hagenau. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex 2914 (MS m), derives, as do two other *Parzival* manuscripts, from the scriptorium of Diebold Lauber.²⁸ These are products of serial manufacture, such as became customary on the cusp of the age of printing. The format was determined by commercial interests; copious illustration sought to promote sales. The passage here reads as follows:

- m 1.18. Wenne er kan vor jn wencken
m 1.19. Recht also eyn schilbechter hase
m 1.20. Züanderhalb dem grase
m 1.21. Glichet vnd des blinden troum
m 1.22. Die gebent antliczes raum
m 1.23. Doch mag mit stette nit gesin
m 1.24. Drre trube liechte schin
m 1.25. Er machet kurzze frode al war

In line 1.20 the noun *zin* has been replaced by the preposition *zû*; *dem glase* has become, following an erasure, *dem grase*. The doubling-back here, which is the subject of the preceding lines, may have led to these changes. In the Vienna manuscript it hobbles *zuo anderhalb dem grase*, but then loses itself in the syntactical tangle of the following lines. From the point of view of the critical reconstruction of the original text, this version has no value, but it provides an eloquent comment on the varying fortunes to which the *Parzival* text came to be subjected.

To conclude, the possibilities that electronic media open for the presentation of medieval texts will be summarized in the context of the dichotomy between New Philology and New Phylogeny.

There is no doubt that, on screen, the variance postulated by New Philology can be presented in much more lucid, visual terms than in conventional editions of texts. The critical apparatus of the traditional kind generally present readings only in point by point fashion, reproducing word-for-word variants. On the screen, however, the range of readings can be assessed in the context of the manuscripts.

The second important advantage of electronic display lies, however, in the presentation of manuscript groupings advocated by New Phylogeny. In this context, computer programs open new fields of experiment and accelerate analytical processes. They facilitate the flexible arrangements of manuscript groupings and allow the rapid revision of philological judgements concerning base manuscripts and stemmatological interrelations.

Thus electronic display allows a synthesis of philological positions, which at first sight appear contradictory. Such a synthesis offers a work-tool, and an indispensable prerequisite for any future critical edition of *Parzival*. At the same time, the electronic display amounts to a form of edition, which has its own peculiar nature and justification. Its concept results from the discussion concerning New Philology in the last decade, and offers a pragmatic editorial solution. From this a new *Parzival* edition can emerge, which, to some extent, enables its users to participate in the

28 See Gebert (1920). The manuscripts deriving from the scriptorium of Diebold Lauber are treated most recently by Saurma-Jeltsch (2001) and Fasbender (2002).

editorial process, and leaves them the freedom to decide between different textual variants and the form in which they are transmitted in the manuscripts. The manuscript data produced by this process would be of interest to both literary and linguistic historians.

In employing this electronic medium, users are embedded in a century-old process of transmission—from the post-Gutenberg era they go back to the age before Gutenberg. Here the cultural and scholarly relevance of electronic editions of medieval texts becomes evident: they merge with a development in historical scholarship that is increasingly concerned with the mediality of manuscript transmission, as well as with questions of discourse analysis and anthropology. Political historiography, concerned with the great events of history, and social history, as defined in relation to human labour, have yielded place to aspects of materiality, mediation, and the transmission of historical data. The *homo laborans* thus gives way to the *homo tradens* of historical anthropology.²⁹ This new trend may in turn favour a culturally based ‘rephilologization’ of linguistic and literary scholarship.³⁰

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29 See Raulff (1999, p. 7).

30 See Gleßgen and Lebsanft (1997, p. V), where a ‘kulturwissenschaftlich fundierte “Rephilologisierung” (der Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften)’ is required.

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