Chapter One
Inventing the Linguistic Monuments of Europe[1]

No one, professional historian or member of the interested public, comes to the Middle Ages without preconceptions, assumptions, and expectations about this long period of European history. These preconceptions derive not only from popular media including film, fiction, and the internet, but also from centuries of debate and fashioning and refashioning of this long period by scholars who sought not only to understand the past but to mobilize it for debates about their own presents. The Middle Ages have never been merely academic—the continuing fascination with the medieval world has always had implications for the understanding of the present, a search for those models, paradigms, and structures, both social and mental, that define the present.

Essential to this process has always been the search for those objects and especially those texts generated during this period, and concomitantly the search for how to understand these documents. The two are intimately interconnected: the selection and privileging of specific documents has always been in relationship to the questions historians have asked, and documents, as they are discovered or rediscovered are made to fit into patterns of meaning by the scholars who have discovered them. While the search for medieval texts has been carried on since the sixteenth century for a spectrum of religious, political, and ideological reasons, the Middle Ages that we study is for better or worse largely a construct of the nineteenth century. Our corpus of sources owe their preservation and publication to the passion of long-forgotten scholars who sought them out because they hoped that they would answer specific questions about the past and the present, questions and interpretations that subsequent generations of scholars and the general public have largely accepted without question. My primary interest is understanding the distant echoes of the Middle Ages found primarily in written texts, but many of these, especially those that convey fragments of vernacular, were first discovered, edited, and categorized in the nineteenth century by a complicated network of extraordinary individual philologists, historians, and librarians. Not only did these men (and as far as I know, they were all men) discover these texts but they decided what they were and how they should fit into the various master narratives on the distant past and its relationship to the present. Thus these texts come to us not simply as manuscripts or critical editions; they come with a tradition of interpretation that sets the parameters within which they are to be understood—parameters that are seldom really questioned. Thus we cannot appreciate what it meant to use the vernacular in the Middle Ages without understanding their discovery, one might

---

[1] This chapter has greatly benefited from the advice of colleagues in the focus group Medievalism, archaic origins and regimes of historicity alternatives to Antique tradition in the nineteenth century in East-Central, Southeast and Northern Europe, as well as from Sarah Kay and the participants in Princeton University's Shelby Cullom Davis Center at which I presented a preliminary version.

almost say their *invention,* in the nineteenth century and their appropriation into alternate regimes of historicity.

As we saw in the Introduction, intellectuals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries developed a heightened sense of the importance of language for defining national character. An essential element of this ideology was not only the rejection of languages deemed "foreign" to the nation, especially, in the case of Germany, of French, but also Condillac's assertion that some languages, because of their purity, encapsulated a national identity from their beginning. Fichte, in his Fourth Address to the German nation, took this argument, which Condillac had applied to classical Greek, and applied it instead to German, arguing that the Germans alone of the "neo-Europeans" remained in the original dwelling place of their ancestral stock and retained their original language, a language that united the German people and put them in direct contact with each other and with the divine in a way that peoples such as the French that had adopted Latinized language could not hope to achieve. Thus, while for Condrillac, a language developed and improved as the population that spoke it matured in character, for the German romantic nationalists, the finest forms of character were fixed in the earliest expressions of a national language.

Thus by the early nineteenth century language and identity were increasingly viewed as inseparable, and the most primitive forms of languages as those that displayed most clearly the essences of separate peoples. Shorn of Condillac's developmental schema, the search for archaic origins rather than the striving for continuous perfecting, became the goal of philology.

Not surprisingly, then, philologists turned to the discovery and examination of the earliest vernacular texts in order to discover the first and purest records of national consciousness and identity. This search was by no means limited to German philologists: the assumption that the earliest monuments of language could be instructive for the present was widely held. However just how these texts might contribute to the construction of the present differed widely by national culture and individual interest. Nor were all of the philologists and archivists who discovered or edited these texts motivated by a search for monuments of national identity: Whatever uses their texts were put to by their contemporaries, the actual researchers who scoured Europe's libraries and archives for ancient texts did so out of a variety of motivations. While some were indeed on personal quests to find texts that would glorify their national heritage, others were traditional philologists simply passionate about linguistic research and still others were in the service of governments seeking evidence in territorial or political disputes. Scholars seeking out the earliest linguistic records of European languages undertook their research, as we do, for a wide spectrum of personal, institutional, and political reasons. However, in the atmosphere of competitive nationalism and romantic notions of philological authenticity, the texts that they discovered, edited, and created are the corpus of texts that today we have come to accept as forming the core of national literatures and linguistic heritages.

The first decades of the nineteenth century were a period of extraordinary discoveries for European philologists. At the same time that Indo-European

philology was making enormous strides and transforming the understanding of languages and their relationship to each other and to contemporary European civilization, the combination of the secularization of ancient monasteries, dislocations caused by the Napoleonic conquests, and the growing professionalism of philology led to major discoveries of long-lost or ignored medieval texts across Europe.[2] In the spirit of nineteenth century cultural and political nationalism, it was insufficient however simply to discover, edit, comment, and translate these texts. They had to be assigned to national cultures and languages so that they could become part of wider political and cultural programs of rights and claims not about the pasts in which they were produced but about the present in which they were found.

In the past decade or so, numerous detailed studies have appeared, studies that chronicle the processes by which philologists made such contributions to a wide spectrum of national cultural projects. This chapter, while drawing on a number of these case studies, seeks to reflect on some less obvious aspects of this process. Its case studies suggest something of the range of motivations and traditions that, collectively, led to the creation of the corpus of medieval vernacular texts.

Identifying and claiming these vernacular language texts for specific national traditions was seldom simple or straight-forward. As Joep Leerssen has pointed out, these texts, elevated to the classics of "national" traditions, emerged as such only in the process of serious contestation between competing scholars and interpretative traditions.[3] Many of the texts were discovered, and indeed produced, outside of the geographical boundaries of the nations that sought to claim them as their own cultural heritage. The languages in which they were written were often not easily or unambiguously connected to modern national languages. Moreover, not only were these texts often claimed by more than one national tradition, the national schools themselves were at the same time just beginning to be defined in an equally complex and competing process in which these discoveries became the medium through which conflicts were conducted.

Finally, one of the ironies of the entire process is that while individual scholars were searching and claiming these newly discovered manuscripts for their particularist national traditions, these scholars themselves were linked by personal contacts, similar experiences, and webs of correspondence on a truly continental-wide scope. They often shared similar educational backgrounds. A good number had met in Paris at the end of the Napoleonic wars as members of

---

[2] Joep Leerssen, "Introduction: Philology and the European Construction of National Literatures," in *Editing the Nation's Memory: Textual Scholarship and Nation-Building in 19th-Century Europe*, eds. Dirk Van Hulle and Joep Leerssen, *European Studies. An interdisciplinary Series in European Culture, History, and Politics* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008), 13-27; Ibid., "Literary Historicism: Romanticism, Philologists, and the Presence of the Past," *Modern Language Quarterly* 65:2 (June, 2004): 221–43.
[3] In particular his introduction to *Editing the Nation's Memory*.

delegations sent to recover manuscripts taken as booty by the French.[4] Many others exchanged letters with each other concerning their discoveries; they read the publications of scholars in other national and linguistic fields. The search for individual national identities was then paradoxically one of the most international cultural pursuits of the early nineteenth century.

Why such collaborative, international activities ultimately reinforced divisions rather than reducing them must be explained not so much in the content of the manuscripts uncovered from Italy to Scandinavia, but in the context of the competing ideological and cultural values of the scholars who discovered and published them. Thus these discoveries often became the immediate objects of controversy, pitting scholars against each other for reasons at least as much national and personal as scholarly.

Some of these discoveries were made by traditional philologists. Classical scholars such as the Italian Angelo Mai (1782-1854) continued to discover not only long-lost texts by ancient authors but vernacular texts as well.[5] Elsewhere, the most famous of these episodes for English speakers was that which resulted from the first publication of Beowulf in 1815 by the Danish Icelander Grímur Jónsson Thorkelín (1752-1829), an event that immediately became part of Danish and German ideological arguments concerning the Schleswig Holstein.[6] In the east, Jernej Kopitar (1780-1844) made important manuscript discoveries and editions, most significantly publishing the first fully annotated edition of the so-called Freising Fragments which came into the Bavarian Royal Library with

---

[4] Thus along with representatives of the Vatican Library, Jacob Grimm was sent to Paris to recover books from Hesse-Kassel while Jernej Kopitar was on a similar mission from Paris. Hans Ferdinand Massmann was in Paris at the same time as a member of a volunteer military unit and was able there to meet Grimm. On the recovery of manuscripts confiscated by Napoleon see Anthony Hobson, "Appropriations from foreign libraries during the French Revolution and Empire," *Bulletin du bibliophile*, no. 2 (1989): 255-72; Marie Pierre Laffitte, "La Bibliothèque nationale et les 'conquêtes artistiques' de la Révolution et de l'Empire: les manuscrits d'Italie (1796-1815)," *Bulletin du bibliophile*, no. 2 (1989): 273-323. For earlier reflections on the process from the German perspective see Ernst Steinmann, "Die Plünderung Roms durch Bonaparte," *Internationale Monatsschrift für Wissenschanft Kunst und Technik* 11,6 (March, 1917): cols. 641-676; 819-875. For a French defense of Napoleon's confiscations see Eugène Muntz, "Les invasions de 1814-1815 et la spoliation de nos musées (Episodes d'histoire diplomatique)," *La Nouvelle Revue*, (avril 1897): 703-716, (juillet 1897): 193-207; (août 1897): 420-439. I am grateful to Courtney Booker for bringing these studies to my attention.

[5] On Mai see Antonio Carrannante, Mai, Angelo, in the *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 67, (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2006), 517-520.

[6] Tom Shippey, "The Case of Beowulf," in *Editing the Nation's Memory,* 223-239 and especially eds. Tom Shippey and Andreas Haarder, *Beowulf: the Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1988); Magnús Fjalldal, "To Fall by Ambition: Grímur Thorkelín and his Beowulf Edition," *Neophilologus* 92 (2008): 321-332.

the secularizations carried out at the start of the nineteenth century.[7] In Germany, a number of nationally inspired philologists such as Eberhard Graff (1780-1841)[8] and Hans Ferdinand Massmann (1797-1874)[9] traveled throughout Europe uncovering and editing vernacular language texts that they believed formed the foundation of German culture and identity. In England, the young French philologist Francisque Michel (1809-1887) scoured British libraries for medieval French texts.[10]

With perhaps the exception of Kopitar, none of these men are remembered today as among the great philologists of the nineteenth century. Certainly none were in the league of the Grimm brothers Jacob (1785-1863) and Wilhelm (1786-1859). Nor did they, like Karl Lachmann, (1793-1851) develop significant new theories of editing. Their contributions were rather to the discovery and publishing of texts, glosses, and fragments of vernacular rather than elaborating the sophisticated rules of Indo-European grammar and language that came to dominate the new philology of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless in their various domains they, and others like them, created what would be seen as the medieval corpuses of their national languages. Their careers, their motivations, and their publications ultimately created the parameters within which much subsequent European scholarship would be conducted. Today, their editions are generally considered outdated and woefully inadequate, as indeed some were regarded by professionals such as Lachmann even at the time that they were published. Nevertheless these scholars remain, in the macabre but all too accurate phrase of Stephan Müller, *Untoten*," the "Living Dead," scholars whose all but forgotten work continues to influence not only philology but our very understanding of the past that they sought to resurrect.[11]

---

[7] See most recently Ingrid Merchiers, *Cultural Nationalism in the South Slav Habsburg Lands in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Scholarly Network of Jernej Kopitar (1780-1844)*, (Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner, 2007); Darko Dolinar, "Slovene Text Editions, Slavic Philology and Nation-Building," in eds. Dirk Van Hulle and Joep Leerssen, *Editing the Nation's Memory,* 65-78.

[8] On Graff see the biographical articles by Wilhelm Scherer in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* 9, 566-68, retrieved December 15, 2009 via http://mdz10.bib-bvb.de/~db/bsb00008367/images/index.html?seite=588 and Elizabeth Karg-Gasterstädt, in the *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, 6, 730, retrieved March 16, 2012 via: http://www.deutsche-biographie.de/sfz22007.html

[9] Joachim Burkhard Richter, *Hans Ferdinand Maßmann: Altdeutscher Patriotismus im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992).

[10] See in particular William Roach, "Francisque Michel: A Pioneer in Medieval Studies," *Proceedings of The American Philosophical Society*, 114,3 (June, 1970): 168-178; and R. Howard Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God: the Norman Conquest of 1066 and the making and meaning of the Bayeux Tapestry* (New York: Random House, 2006), chap. 1.

[11] Stephan Müller, *Vom Annolied zur Kaiserchronik: Zu Text-und Forschungsgeschichte einer verlorenden deutschen Reimchronik. Beiträge zur*

The activities of some of these scholars developed out of earlier traditions of religious and national scholarship already well established in the eighteenth century. The career of the Italian classicist and librarian Angelo Mai for example, developed in the tradition of classically trained, humanistic ecclesiastics of centuries before him, but the new circumstances of library consolidations as well as new technologies of research permitted him to make discoveries that electrified the world of learning.

Mai had been a member of the Jesuit order and a classics teacher in Naples but in 1811 was appointed to a position in the venerable Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan, founded by Cardinal Federico Borromeo (1564-1631). The Ambrosiana contained over 15,000 manuscripts including most of the collection of the monastery of Bobbio, dissolved in 1803, which had housed some of the most ancient manuscripts in Europe. Mai, who became the librarian of the Ambrosiana in 1813, was not only a gifted Latinist but an excellent paleographer and working through the manuscripts of Bobbio made discovery after discovery of fragmentary manuscripts of ancient classical texts that monks had reused for writing Christian texts.

Mai belonged both to the tradition of classical scholarship and to the world of nineteenth century science. In part his success in deciphering ancient manuscripts was the result of technology as much as philology. His methods for reading palimpsests depended on chemical technology, methods that were disputed even in his own day. He often treated manuscripts with a tincture of oak gall to bring out the underlying text. He found that even where the original writing had been scraped from the parchment so that it was almost invisible, enough ink remained that when the leaf was soaked in an a tannic acid solution made from the gall, blue or red outlines of the writing reappeared. The result may have permitted momentary darkening of the original text so that he could transcribe it, but could also result in the ultimate darkening of the manuscript leaf so that it was rendered permanently illegible. Nevertheless one could not dispute the importance of the discoveries he made by this methodology, which included fragments of Cicero's orations and the correspondence of Fronto. In 1819 he left the Jesuit order and assumed similar responsibilities at the Bibliotheca Vaticana, where he continued to make important discoveries, the most significant of which was a palimpsest of lost portions of Cicero's *De re Publica* which he published in 1822. Nor were his finds restricted to ancient Latin texts. He discovered and published Greek texts including previously unknown portions of Dionysius of

älteren Literaturgeschichte, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1999), 7. Hans-Harald Müller, in "Die Lebendigen und die Untoten: Lassen sich Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Wissenschaftskonzeptionen als 'Kontroversen' rekonstruieren? Am Beispiel von Positivismus und Geistesgeschichte," eds. Ralf Klausnitzer and Carlos Spoerhase, *Kontroversen in der Literaturtheorie/ Literaturtheorie in der Kontroverse* Publikationen zur *Zeitschrift für Germanistik*, n.F., Bd. 19 (Bern: Lang, 2007), 171-182, considers intellectual controversies in which the living attach representative dead scholars in a way that handles them as "Untote" because their ideas continue to have living defenders and opponents.

Halicarnassus's *Roman Antiquities* and an oration by Isaeus. His discoveries and publications, which regularly appeared in his series *Scriptorum veterum nova collectio* (1825-38); *Spicilegium Romanum* (1839-44); and *Patrum nova collectio (1852-1854)* won widespread admiration and envy of scholars across Europe.[12] But while Mai's greatest achievements were in the area of Latin and Greek manuscripts, in 1817 he made an announcement that caught the attention, indeed the passion, of German philologists: Among the palimpsests that he had discovered from the Bobbio manuscripts in the Ambrosiana and Vatican libraries were pages of the Gothic bible translation of Wulfila as well as portions of a hitherto unknown Gothic language commentary on the Gospel of John.[13] For national language scholars who already considered Gothic the earliest written form of German and imagined the Goths their own ancestors, the interest was intense. Mai wanted to be the one to publish these texts and consequently would not permit anyone to see these new fragments. However, in spite of his great learning, Mai was no Germanicist, and ultimately, he entrusted the work to the Italian orientalist and philologist Count Carlo Ottavio Castiglione (1784-1849), a fine scholar but who likewise had little knowledge of Gothic. Castiglione published a very problematic edition of one page of the manuscript in 1819, but years passed without the publication of the remainder of these Gothic texts.

Grímur Thorkelín's decision to travel to England in search of manuscripts was likewise within the context of a long-established tradition. Since the seventeenth century, Icelanders had made their way to Copenhagen for education and professional advancement and had found that their native language, with its very close relationship to Old Norse, made them ideal collectors, editors, and guardians of Old Norse texts. The most famous of these Icelanders was Árni Magnússon (1663-1730) who, as secretary of the Royal Danish Archives, traveled extensively in Iceland discovering and acquiring the surviving manuscripts in Old Norse which he brought back to Copenhagen and which became *Den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling*, the most important collection of old Norse manuscripts and papers in the world.[14] Although Árni himself seems to have been inspired primarily by a love of Icelandic language and culture, the royal support that he received for his collecting was inspired by political concerns. Árni had found in Iceland Swedes who were purchasing manuscripts of historical importance, and the Danish state, seeing this as a

---

[12] John Edwin Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship* 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), 241.

[13] On the discovery and early history of the manuscript leaves see William Holmes Bennett, *The Gothic Commentary on the Gospel of John: Skeireins aiwaggeljons þairh iohannen: A Decipherment, Edition, and Translation* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1960), 5-11. Some of the fragments remained in the Ambrosiana while others had been taken to the Vatican Library by Pope Paul V in 1618.

[14] On Árni Magnússon see Hans Bekker-Nielsen and Ole Widding, *Arne Magnusson* (Odense: University Press, 1972). On the history of Danish manuscript collecting see Fjalldal, "To Fall by Ambition."

threat to its claim to represent the continuity of medieval Norse legitimacy, forbade the export of these manuscripts and empowered Árni to collect them for transport to Copenhaven.

In the next generation the Keeper of the Royal Privy Archives, Jacob Langebek (1710–1775), had continued Árni's practice of discovering Norse materials and had traveled extensively in Scandinavia to copy manuscripts relevant to Danish history that he subsequently published in the series *Scriptores rerum danicarum medii aevi.* Thorkelín's decision to travel to England to do the same, and the Danish crown's willingness to support him was thus in keeping with a long-established royal interest in Danish history, an interest directly related to Denmark's imperial program in Iceland and Norway. Moreover, he may have already been aware that Humphrey Wanley's Catalogue of Anglo-Saxon Poetry from 1705 had listed a poem described as "A most noble description of the wars of one Scuylding king Beowulf against Swedish foes."[15] Such a text, particularly given the rivalry between the Danish and Swedish crowns, was an ideal text to bring to the attention of a Danish audience.

In Vienna, Jernej Kopitar, (1780-1844) like Thorkelín a provincial drawn to the imperial capitol for education and then a career, became the leading publisher and scholar of south Slavic linguistic material. Kopitar's early career followed a pattern that was firmly rooted in ancient traditions of patronage and private scholarship. He was from a small village in Carniola and had begun his studies in Ljubljana before becoming a private tutor in the home of Sigmund Zois, son of a Venetian merchant who had married into a Slovene family. Zois patronized a wide spectrum of writers and intellectuals and became the center of what would later be called the Slovene enlightenment. In 1808 Kopitar published his *Grammar of the Slavic Language in Krain, Carinthia and Steyermark (Grammatik der slavischen Sprache in Krain, Kärnten und Steyermark)*, which established his reputation as a philologist.[16] However in the same year he moved to Vienna to study law but became instead a librarian at the Vienna Court Library, where he continued his study of Slavic languages and developed his theory of the ethnic unity of the Slavic speaking inhabitants of what had been the Illyrian provinces under Napoleon. He considered Slovenian the most archaic, the closest to Old Church Slavonic, and thus the purest of all Slavonic languages.

Kopitar's intellectual horizons were not limited to Vienna or the world of Habsburg Slavicists. He corresponded with international scholars such as the great Czech philologist Josef Dobrovský and Jacob Grimm who shared his interests in philology if not in South Slavic languages. In 1814, he was sent to Paris as part of the Austrian delegation to reclaim the manuscripts that Napoleon had expropriated from the Imperial library. There he not only successfully completed his mission but spent his time examining Slavic manuscripts in Paris and meeting scholars from across Europe who had similarly been sent to recover

---

[15] Eds. Robert Dennis Fulk, et al., *Klaeber's Beowulf: And the Fight at Finnsburg* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), xxvi.
[16] Bartholomuäs Kopitar, *Grammatik der slavischen Sprache in Krain, Kärnten und Steyermark* (Laibach [Ljubljana]: W. H. Korn, 1808).

manuscripts confiscated by Napoleon. From France, Kopitar also traveled to England where he met with scholars in London and Oxford.[17]

Back in Vienna, which Kopitar hoped could be the capital of a South Slavic intellectual world, he continued to work on the origins and dissemination of Slavic language and particularly on the origins of Old Church Slavonic. For evidence, he relied on his network of scholars for information about new manuscripts and texts. He was aware of the extraordinary finds of long-forgotten manuscripts being made by Angelo Mai and sought to accomplish the same for Slavic manuscripts.[18] His interest in Slavic manuscripts led him to two extremely important early texts that fit closely into his Habsburg, Catholic interests. The first of these was the *Glagolita Clozianus*, a manuscript containing fragments of homilies of Athanasius of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Epiphanius of Salamis, and an anonymous homilist some identify as Methodius, Apostle to the Slavs. The manuscript is written in Glagolitic script in the first third of the eleventh century. For centuries it had been kept in the family of the Frangopani on the island of Krk before being acquired in the early nineteenth century by Count Paris Cloz who donated it to the city library of Trento. The second manuscript was of perhaps even greater importance to Kopitar. This was the Freising Manuscript, fragments of an even earlier Slavic text in Latin characters first discovered in 1806 among the manuscripts removed from Freising and taken to the Royal library in Munich.[19] In 1814 the great Czech philologist Josef Dobrovský published the first preliminary analysis of these texts.[20] Dobrovský described the manuscript, provided incipits and excipits of the texts, and postulated that they originated "In Karnten, oder Krain, oder gar in Bayern." However he intentionally refrained from publishing the texts:

> I intentionally abstain from any elucidation which these precious remains certainly merit, because I do not wish to anticipate natives of the Krain,

---

[17] Merchiers, *Cultural Nationalism*, 172-182.

[18] He explicitly compares his discoveries to those being made by Mai in his *Glagolita Clozianus* (Vienna: Carolus Gerold Bibliopola, 1836), xxxiv.

[19] On the discovery of the fragments see Josef Hahn, *Bartholomäus Kopitar und seine Beziehungen zu München* (Munich: R. Trofenik, 1982), "Der Entdecker derfreisinger Denkmäler," 135-139.

[20] Bernhard Joseph Docen, "Nachrichten von einigen alten Handschriften der ehemaligen Freysinger Stiftsbibliothek," *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Literatur, vorzüglich aus den Schätzen der pfalzbairischen Zentralbibliothek zu München*, ed. J. Chr. Freiherr von Aretin vii (Munich: In Kommission der Sehererschen Kunst-und Buchhandlung, 1806), 230; Josef Dobrovský, "Nachricht von drey slawischen Aufsätzen, welche in einer sehr alten lateinischen Handschrift der öffentlichen Bibliothek zu München gefunden worden sind," Josef Dobrovský: *Slovanka. Zur Kenntniss der alten und neuen slawischen Literatur, der Sprachkunde nach allen Mundarten, der Geschichte und Alterthümer* (Prag: In der herrlschen Buchhandlung, 1814), 249–51.

who will not tarry long to make known these ancient monuments of their language and to provide them with an appropriate commentary.[21]

Dobrovský presumably had Kopitar's patron Baron Žiga Zois in mind when he wrote these generous lines, but neither Zois nor any other South Slavic scholar immediately took up the task.[22] Ultimately the task fell to Kopitar, but it took him twenty-five long years before publishing his edition of the three Slavic fragments.[23] Instead, the first edition appeared six years later edited not by a South Slav at all but by two scholars from a very different and, for the Catholic, Habsburg Kopitar, problematic pole of the Slavic world: Moscow.[24] The first was Petr Ivanovich Köppen, grandson of a German who became physician to the Tsar and son of a well-respected geographer and ethnographer of Russian culture. The second was Alexander Khristoforovich Vostokov, an illegitimate son of Baron von Osten-Sacken, an imperial officer originally from modern Tallin who became the foremost Slavic philologist in Russia.[25] Both of these men, but especially Vostokov, were deeply interested in the history of Slavic languages and the relationship between early texts such as the Freising Fragments and the debates over the relative influence of Eastern Christian traditions represented supposedly by Cyril and Methodius on the one hand and Western Christian traditions emanating from Germany. Nor surprisingly, Vostokov and Köppen argued that the fragments were related to "Carniolan" language of the tenth century, closely related to Old Church Slavonic.[26] However the origins of Old Church Slavonic they saw as an eastern tradition closely related to Orthodoxy. Although Vostokov further acknowledged that the language of the texts was related to modern Serbian or Croatian, the suggestion that these texts were related to Old Church Slavonic, thus connecting these texts to an Eastern rather

---

[21] "Ich enthalte mich absichtlich aller Erläuterungen, deren diese schätzbaren Uberbleibsel gar sehr bedürfen, da ich gebornen Krainern nicht vorgreifen will, welche nicht lange mehr säumen werden, diese alten Denkmäler ihre Sprache öffentlich bekannt zu machen und sie mit einem zweckmässigen Commentar zu versehen." Ibid., 251.

[22] Merchiers, 62.

[23] Hahn, *Bartholomäus Kopitar und seine Beziehungen zu München*, 5-5.

[24] Александр Х. Востоков, Разсуждение о славянском языке – Труд общества любителей российской словесности при Императорском Московском университете 17, (Москва, 1820): 9-10, 543-55.

[25] For a brief introduction to these scholars with literature see Christiane Pankow, *Die Wirkung der Deutschen Grammatik von Jacob Grimm auf die grammatischen Ansichten russischer Sprachforscher im 19. Jahrhundert: ein Beitrag zur Theorienbildung in der Linguistik* (Tübingen: G. Narr, 2002), 23-32.

[26] Востоков, Разсуждение о славянском языке. I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Pavel V. Lukin for his help with this text. On this edition see Joep Leerssen, "Primitive Orality and Arhcaic Heroism: The Romantic Conception of Epic," ed. Marko Juvan, *Romantična pesnitev: ob 200. obletnici rojstva Franceta Prešerna* (Ljubljana: Univerza v Ljubljani, 2003), 22, cited in Merchiers, *Cultural Nationalism*, 159, n. 101.

than a Western tradition, were at odds with the Catholic Slavic tradition espoused by Kopitar and his Viennese Slovenian circle.

If Mai, Thorkelín, and Kopitar developed their knowledge and philological activities out of the paradigms of previous centuries, the Germans Eberhard Graff (1780-1841) and especially Hans Ferdinand Massmann (1797-1874) belonged to a new and quite different world of Romantic German nationalism at the center of which lay philology. Graff was a native Elbing (today Polish Elbląg) where, after studying at the University of Königsberg, he became a Gymnasium teacher and educational administrator. After holding various educational administrative positions, he served in the administrative council under the Freiherr von Stein and became a theorist of educational reform.

However his life was transformed by his encounters with Jacob Grimm's 1819 *Deutsche Grammatik* and with his acquaintance, in his capacity as educator, with Karl Lachmann, who in 1818 became professor extraordinarius of classical philology in the University of Königsberg. Lachmann lectured both on classical philology and on Old High German, lectures that Graff eagerly followed. The twin influences of Grimm and Lachmann on the Gymnasium teacher were enormous. Grimm had listed among the *desiderata* of Germanic philology a complete glossary of Old High German words, but neither Grimm nor Lachmann were personally interested in compiling such a list. Graff, who had been collecting Old High German words on his own for some time, immediately took up the challenge. Five years later, with the support of Lachmann and Grimm, he produced a study of Old High German prepositions that won him a professorship in Konigsberg, a position that allowed him to travel extensively in Germany, Switzerland, France and Italy searching for manuscripts containing Old High German glosses and texts. The first results of these travels appeared in a three-volume work entitled *Diutiska*.[27] The volumes were a hodgepodge of newly discovered or reedited texts, glossaries, and the like, but introduced by Graff's own poetry and odd bits of material, a reflection of a chaotic approach to his task that would be even more pronounced in his life's work, the six volumes of his *Althochdeutsche Sprachschatz*.[28]

Grimm and Lachmann had wanted a complete assembly of the vocabulary of Old High German. This Graff provided, but in an extraordinary and virtually unusable form. Fascinated by the relationship between Sanskrit and German, Graff rejected the simple idea of organizing this massive material alphabetically or by word stems, which would have been Grimm's preference. Instead, he decided to organize the entire collection according to what he assumed to be the Sanskrit roots of the individual entries. Moreover, he organized these in turn not alphabetically but phonetically. The result was an indispensable but unusable monument to Graff's erudition and eccentricity. This strange collection became

---

[27] *Diutiska, Denkmäler deutscher Sprache und Literatur aus alten Handschriften,* 3 vols. (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'schen Buchhandlung, 1826-29).
[28] Eberhard Gottlieb Graff, *Althochdeutscher Sprachschatz oder, Wörterbuch der althochdeutschen Sprache,* 6 vols. (Berlin: beim Verfasser und in Commission der Nikolaischen Buchhandlung, 1834-42).

usable only with the addition of a seventh volume, an alphabetical index to the *Althochdeutsche Sprachschatz*, created by an even more extraordinary figure in the history of German romantic philology, Hans Ferdinand Massmann.

Massmann was from the age of thirteen an enthusiastic follower of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn (1778 –1852), "Turnvater Jahn" as he was widely known, whose gymnastics associations were intended to restore the moral and physical strength of the German youth and whose populist activities, support of "altdeutsche" language and culture, and liberal political ideology made him both a powerful popular figure and a perceived danger to the Prussian state. Massmann became a devoted member of Jahn's circle although he was too young to join Jahn's Lützow Free Corps to fight the French. By sixteen he was composing patriotic verse and maintaining correspondence with the members of the corps. During the Hundred Days, he did briefly join as a volunteer, but Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo ended hostilities before he and his fellows saw any action. His unit did however march to Paris, and there he met other patriots including Karl Müller who in turn gave him entrée to Jacob Grimm and the circle of erudites who were in Paris to recover plundered manuscripts.[29] Following the end of the Napoleonic wars Massmann combined his gymnastics, his political ideology, and his study of German philology. He wrote pamphlets, poetry, and played a central role in Jahn's program to develop an alternative educational system in Prussia and elsewhere around gymnastics that was increasingly seen as "geistige Turnen," intellectual gymnastics, in which Massmann played a leading part. Massmann saw the gymnastics movement intimately connected to a constitutional movement to unite Germans under a "Turnmeister," who would protect the freedom of the community. The ideal, he suggested, would be "if the German Kaiser were himself our praiseworthy Turnmeister, as once were Henry the Fowler, Maximilian the First and the other emperors who were the protectors of the bodily art."[30]

In 1816 Jahn moved from Berlin to Jena to establish a gymnastics center at the university and where the gymnastics movement began to merge with the Burschenschafts movement to create a new synthesis of Burschenturner.[31] He also traveled widely in Germany as a gymnastics missionary before returning to Berlin and Jahn. However the next year the movement and in particular Massmann went too far for governmental authorities when they organized a large assembly of Burschenturner at the Wartburg on the 18th and 19th of October. Initially, in spite of the anxieties of the Hanover government at the prospect of a great number of students assembling at the Wartburg, the Grand-Duke Carl August welcomed them, providing wood for their bonfire and encouraging the local community to provide them with accommodations. However Massmann seized the opportunity to organize a book burning of "undeutscher and turnfeindlicher" books modeled on Luther's burning of the papal bull of

---

[29] Richter, 48.

[30] Cited by Richter, *Hans Ferdinand Maßmann,* 57.

[31] Ibid., 58, who refers to Willi Schröder, *Burschenturner im Kamp um Einheit und Freiheit* (Berlin: Sportverlag, 1967).

excommunication in 1520, although as Joachim Burkhard Richter points out, it actually more resembled the burning of forbidden books by the Inquisition.[32] These included works by collaborators during the Napoleonic occupation, the Code Napoleon, and Saul Ascher's *Germanomanie*. Both the book burning and Massmann's enthusiastic description of it which he published in the same year brought him into trouble with the Prussian authorities.[33] Threatened with legal proceedings, he moved to Jena but was pursued by his opponents and ultimately convicted of defaming Wilhelm Scherer, one of the authors whose book was burned, although the penalty, eight days incarceration, was only symbolic. By the next year, he had returned to his studies of Germanic philology and, as he wrote to the brothers Grimm in 1818, had decided to dedicate his research and his life to"The mother language and the lore of the fatherland in the widest sense of Germanism." [34]

Massmann's dedication to "Germanenthum" was matched by his polemical style and his extreme polemic and political radicalism. He carried on academic feuds with other scholars such as Heinrich Hoffmann and never won the trust or approval of Lachmann.[35] When Massmann learned of the unedited fragments of the Gothic Bible discovered by Mai, he attempted to secure financing from the Berlinische Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache to travel to Italy, but the Prussian foreign ministry opposed him because of his radicalism and his funding fell through.[36] Likewise, his radical background led the Freiherr von Stein, founder of the Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde to reject his bid to edit the *Kaiserchronik* for the Monumenta Germaniae Historica.[37] Unable to find a position in Prussia because of his politics, he did eventually manage to impress the Bavarian King Ludwig I with his knowledge of the *Nibelungenlied*, which led in 1830 to a position teaching the Bavarian cadet corps gymnastics and lecturing on Germanic topics in the university.

Massmann had retained his interest in Gothic, which he saw as the origin of the German language, and hoped to publish the long-announced but still unedited materials that Angleo Mai had discovered in Milan and Rome. In 1833 he obtained a three month leave from Munich to accompany the Crown Prince to Italy and to edit the Gothic fragments. But by then, Castiglione had begun

---

[32] Richter, *Hans Ferdinand Maßmann,* 76.

[33] *Kurze und wahrhaftige Beschreibung des grossen Burschenfestes auf der Wartburg bei Eisenach am 18ten und 19ten Siegesmonds 1817* (Jena: Frommann, 1817).

[34] "Muttersprache und Vaterlandeskunde in größten Umfange des Germanenthums," Richter, *Hans Ferdinand Maßmann,* 84.

[35] On his bitter conflict with Hoffmann over the Kaiserchronik see Müller, *Vom Annolied zur Kaiserchronik*.

[36] Richter, *Hans Ferdinand Maßmann*, 150-151.

[37] Richter, *Hans Ferdinand Maßmann*, 153; Müller, *Vom Annolied zur Kaiserchronik*, 17-18. Nevertheless, as Müller and Richter point out, he did later receive some support from the presidents of the Gesellschaft, Georg Heinrich Pertz and Johann Friedrich Böhmer.

publishing the first of a series of the Gothic fragments. Massmann wrote a vicious review of the editions which was rejected for publication in the Wiener *Jarhbüchern* by no less a figure than than Kopitar.[38] Frustrated that the only remaining Gothic texts that he could edit were the fragments of an anonymous commentary on the Gospel of John, he nevertheless did so in 1834 under the grandiloquent *title Skeireins aiwaggeljons þairh Johanna: The Exegesis of the Gospel of John in the Gothic Language From Roman and Milanese Manuscripts along with a Latin Translation, Accompanying Notes, Historical Investigation, Gothic-Latin Dictionary and Writing Samples. On Behalf of His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Maximilian of Bavaria, Described and Published for the First Time*.[39] In his dedication to the Bavarian king, Massmann emphasized the significance of the text particularly to Bavaria: "Germany, and especially Bavaria and southern Germany, on account of the kinship of dialects, deserves to bring at last to the light of day in a dignified and scientifically complete form the most ancient monuments of its original language, that of the Gothic Bible exegesis of the fourth to sixth centuries, finally united into a whole."[40]

One must credit Massmann with a tremendous effort to transcribe the palimpsests and to make sense of them. Still, the text itself must have been something of a disappointment to him. Although the longest Gothic text after Wulfila's Bible translation, Massmann recognized it not as an original composition by a Goth but as a translation from a Greek original, presumably by the fourth-century Bishop Theodor of Herakleia. Still, in his long commentary he emphasized the superiority of the Goths over the "decadent" Romans as well as their cultural autonomy: "Conquerors and conquered might have easily mixed together; but not so the morally strong Germans with the degenerate Romans. The 'Arian' Goths received and developed their independent national life in Greece and in Italy, they mixed neither customs nor language."[41] In Massmann's

---

[38] Letter of Kopitar to Jacob Grimm 17 September, 1834, in Max Vasmer, *B. Kopitars Briefwechsel mit Jakob Grimm* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1987), 124.
[39] *Skeireins aiwaggeljons þairh ïohannen, Auslegung des Evangelii Johannis in gothischer Sprache. Aus römischen und mayländischen Handschriften nebst lateinischer Uebersetzung, belegenden Anmerkungen, geschichtlicher Untersuchung, gothisch-lateinischem Wörterbuche und Schriftproben. Im Auftrage Seiner Königlichen Hoheit des Kronprinzen Maximilian von Bayern erlesen, erläutert und zum ersten Male herausgegeben* (Munich: Verlag von George Jaquet, 1834).
[40] Deutschland, Vor allem Oberdeutschland und Bayern, wegen Verwandtschaft der Mundart, gebührt es, in würdiger und wißenschaftlicher vollendeter Gestalte die ältesten Denkmale seiner Ursprache, jenes gothische Bibelwerk des 4. bis 6ten Jahrhunderts endlich zu Einem Ganzen vereinigt zu Tage zu fördern. *Skeireins*, vii-viii.
[41] "Sieger und Besiegte hätten sich leicht gemischt; nicht so sittenkräftige Germanen mit entarteten Romanen. Die ‚arianischen' Gothen erhielten und bildeten in Griechenland und Welschland ihr selbständiges Volksleben aus, sie vermischen weder Sitte, noch Sprache," *Skeireins*, 110.

hands, the translation of this Greek commentary becomes evidence of German superiority.

In 1833, the same year that Massmann was rushing to compete his edition of Skeireins, Francisque Michel, (1809-1887) a very young French romantic and part time transcriber of medieval manuscripts set sail for England in the hope of finding manuscripts of value to French history.[42] In some ways, Michel's mission resembled that of Thorkelín's two generations earlier. Both were on officially sponsored research trips undertaken to discover documents of importance to their nation's histories. However Michel belonged to a very different world. He was no government servant or fanatic nationalist but an independent man of letters in love with the Middle Ages, trying to make his way in Paris. The son of a schoolteacher in Lyons, he had joined the circle of Charles Nodier, the leading figure in the French romantic movement, and through his association had met Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Emile Deschamps, Alfred de Vigny, and other figures of the French world of letters. Michel even tried his hand at literature, publishing a series of stories in a florid and rather unsuccessful imitation of Sir Walter Scott. However, the Michel's romantic engagement with the Middle Ages was much more than that of a dilettante writer of gothic fiction. He was a passionate reader and editor of medieval French literature, earning his living in Paris by transcribing medieval romances in the Bibliothèque royale and republishing and even making new editions of texts. He also began to acquire professional paleographical skills by frequenting the lectures at the École nationale des Chartres that had been established in 1821 to train a cadre of specialists in the technical study of archival materials. Although he failed to win a scholarship to the École (ranking tenth in a competition for eight positions) he was allowed to continue to participate in the course and became an enthusiastic editor and publisher of old French texts.

By 1833 Michel had published six Old French texts and had established enough of a reputation in the small circle of scholars interested in the recovery of such texts that he could write to François Guizot, minister of public instruction and himself a major figure in early medieval historical writing in France, to offer to undertake an expedition to England for the purpose of investigating manuscripts in the libraries of England and Scotland that might be of interest for the study of French literature and history of the Middle Ages.

Guizot, (1787-1874), like his older contemporary the Prussian Freiherr von Stein (1757-1831), combined a passion for scholarship with his responsibilities for state-sponsored education and, again like Stein, the founder of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, worked to bring about the editing of those

---

[42] See in particular William Roach, "Francisque Michel," 168-178; and Bloch, *A Needle in the Right Hand of God:* chap. 1. On interest in the Roland legend in France prior to the discovery of Digby 23 and in particular on the manner in which nineteenth century national aspirations continue to shape assumptions about the manuscript and the text it contains see Andrew Taylor, "Was there a Song of Roland?" *Speculum* 76 (2001): 28-65.

medieval sources that would establish French historical traditions and rights.[43] After checking Michel's credentials, he agreed to arrange for a small stipend and sent the young scholar off to England with the assignment of copying two manuscripts whose contents bore particularly on the relationship between England and France in the Middle Ages: The *Estoire des Engleis* of Geoffrey Gaimar and the *Chronique des Ducs de Normandie* of Benoit de Sainte-Maure. In London, Michel diligently went about his assigned task, and only after a year managed to travel to Oxford where his real quarry lay. In 1775 an English editor of Chaucer had cited several lines from a French manuscript at Oxford that told the story of the hero Roland, an epic story well known in France but extant only in very late versions.[44] He was also aware of the work of Gervais de la Rue, who for his *Essais historiques sur les bardes, les jongleurs et les trouvères normands*, had probably examined the manuscript in Oxford.[45] From the start, Michel had recognized that this could well be the lost, authentic version of the Chanson de Roland.

By the eighteen thirties, then, across Europe a disparate group of manuscript enthusiasts, for a wide spectrum of reasons, had begun to edit texts ranging from major epics (Beowulf, Roland) to obscure treatises (Skeireins, the Freising Fragments), to anonymous glosses and marginalia. Each was eager to recover vernacular texts of his own national tradition: Grímur Jónsson Thorkelín sought Danish manuscripts and found Beowulf; Jernej Kopitar sought Slovenian texts and found the Freising Fragments; Hans Ferdinand Massmann sought German texts and found a Gothic commentary on John; and Francisque Michel, searching in Oxford for French historical texts, found the *Chanson de Roland* in Digby 23. But each of these texts presented obstacles to their discoverer's mission.

Thorkelín, whose long-delayed edition of Beowulf appeared in 1815, encountered perhaps the worst problems. He pronounced the text a *Poema Danicum Dialecto Anglosaxonica*, implying that Anglo-Saxon was a dialect of Old Norse, the ancestral language of the Danish. This in turn implied, as Tom Shippey points out, that not only were the English really Scandinavians "but that their homeland of Angeln, in Slesvig, had also been Scandinavian and should remain so."[46] Jacob Grimm had previously classified Old English as West

---

[43] Among the voluminous works on Guizot see Robert Legrand, *Guizot et son temps: propos et portraits* (Abbeville: F. Paillart, 2002) and ed. Marina Valensise, *François Guizot et la culture politique de son temps: colloque de la Fondation Guizot-Val Richer* (Paris: Gallimard: Le Seuil, 1991).

[44] Thomas Tyrwhitt, *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer: to which are added an essay upon his language and versification, an introductory discourse, and notes*, 4 volumes (London: T. Payne, 1775-1778).

[45] Gervais de la Rue, *Essais historiques sur les bardes, les jongleurs et les trouvères normands et anglo-normands*, II (Caen: Chez Mancel, 1834), 57-65. Francisque Michel graciously acknowledged both of these earlier scholars in his introduction.

[46] Shippey, *The Case of Beowulf*, 228.

Germanic rather than Scandinavian, and thus not surprisingly the language and origins of Beowulf became quickly embroiled in the Schleswig Holstein controversy. Supporters of the German position such as Nicholaus Outzen and Friedrich Christoph Dahlmann argued that the poem was not in a Scandinavian dialect but rather in a Low German branch of West Germanic, evidence that Northern Schleswig was *urdeutsch* and that the Danes had taken it over only after the emigration of the Angles to Britain.[47] The controversy became increasingly heated in subsequent decades as the dispute erupted into violence. The political issue was ultimately settled not by philology but by Bismark and the Second Schleswig War. The only group that showed no initial interest in Beowulf at all appear to have been the English, who did not adopt the text as part of a "national" literature for several decades.

By the time Jernej Kopitar had published his texts as old Slovenian, they had already been identified as Old Church Slavonic by his Russian competition. Kopitar honored Vostokov's earlier publication, presenting the text in four columns, the first a transcription of the manuscript; the second, his rendering into the Slavic orthography Kopitar himself favored; the third, Vostokov's Cyrillic transliteration, and the final, a Latin translation.[48] However his interpretation of the text and its meaning differed greatly from that of the Russians. He argued that based on his study of the Freising Fragments and the Glagolita Clozianus, Karantanija (the ancient region of Pannonia) was the original homeland of Old Church Slavonic which was essentially Old Slovenian, and that Christianization of the Slavs had proceeded from this western, Latin region rather than from an Orthodox missionary program.[49]

Francisque Michel's text too presented problems in terms of national identity. Why, after all, was it preserved in England rather than in France, and in a manuscript betraying Anglo-Norman dialect rather than in pure "Francien"?[50] Was it indeed a French national epic? The year after Michel's first publication of the manuscript, Wilhelm Grimm, in his edition of the Middle High German *Ruolandes Liet*, after reviewing all of the known versions of the Roland story, including Michel's newly published Digby 23 text, argued that: *The Song of Roland*, in which the German names of the heroes are still partly preserved, may well have been sung in the earliest time in the Frankish language, and is only after its disappearance, devolved exclusively into Romance poetry. Rightly did [Ludwig] Uhland express the view that in the strict gravity and in the in the

---

[47] Shippey, *The Case of Beowulf*, 229-231. The text is conveniently translated in Shippey and Haarder, *Beowulf: the Critical Heritage*, 123-131.

[48] Glagolita Clozianus, xxxv-xli.

[49] On Kopitar's Pannonian-Slovenian theories see Merchiers, *Cultural Nationalism*, 60-65.

[50] On the problem posed to theories of the Roland as a national epic by the fact that the Oxford version is in Anglo-Norman and presumably created for an Anglo-Norman audience in England, see Taylor, "Was there a Song of Roland?" 49-53.

coarseness of the Frankish heroic the German spirit from which they emerged, still shines through.....“[51]

Michel, while fully aware of the importance of his discovery for French culture, was not particularly interested in debates of national identity. A philologist and enthusiast of medieval texts generally, his intellectual activities were far from nationalist in scope. For example, in the same year that he published the *Chanson de Roland*, he also published a catalogue of publications on Anglo-Saxon compiled from the libraries of Oxford and Cambridge[52] as well as an anonymous Anglo-Norman poem on the conquest of Ireland,[53] neither of which were part of his commission from Guizot. With the Roland, he was less concerned with its national character than with understanding first, why, according to the twelfth century *Roman de Rou*, at the battle of Hastings a Norman trouvère named Taillefer supposedly sang “de Karlemaigne e de Rollant,/ e d'Oliver e des vassals/ qui morurent en Rencesvals (Of Charlemagne and of Roland, and of Oliver and the vassals who died at Roncesvalles).”[54] Secondly, Michel wondered whether the Digby text was that which Taillefer was singing. He believed that he had found his answer to the first question in lines 372-373 of the poem in which Blandandrin speaks of Charlemagne's journey “across the salt sea” to win for Saint Peter his tribute.[55] In his excited letter to Claude Fauriel announcing his discovery, he explained that “you see that the Norman trouvère, author or arranger of the poem, established a precedent in favor of William the Conqueror, who was going to conquer England in the shadow of the standard of Saint Peter.”[56] His response to the second question was affirmative, arguing that Taillefer's song was surely taken from a *chanson de geste*, and that this mention of fighting in England under the banner of Saint Peter as well as the antiquity of the language, which he considered the same as

---

[51] “Das Rolandslied, in welchem sich die deutschen Namen der Helden noch zum Theil erhalten haben, mag wohl in frühester Zeit auch in fränkischer Sprache gesungen worden sein, und ist erst nach ihrem Verschwinden der romanischen Poesie aufschließlich zugefallen. Mit recht hat Uhland die Ansicht geäußert, daß in dem strengen Ernst und in der Derbheit der fränkischen Heldensage der deutsche Geist, aus dem sie hervorgegangen sein, noch durchleuchte.“ Wilhelm Grimm, *Ruolandes Liet* (Göttingen: Verlage der Dieterichischen Buchhandlung, 1838), cxx.

[52] *Bibliothèque Anglo-Saxonne* (Paris: Silvestre, London: Pickering, 1837).

[53] *Anglo-Norman poem on the conquest of Ireland* (London: William Pickering, 1837).

[54] Roman de Rou, lines 8017–8019.

[55] Vers Engletere passait il la mer salse,/ Ad oes seint Pere en cunquist le chevage.

[56] Cited in ed. Joseph J. Duggan, *La Chanson de Roland The Song of Roland The French Corpus,* vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2005), 7.

that used in the laws of William the Conqueror, argued for the identity of Turold's poem and that of Taillefer.[57]

If Michel was not particularly interested in the national implications of his poem, neither, initially, was his patron Guizot. After his return to France Michel requested that his edition be published by the Imprimerie royale, but his request was refused and he had to publish it at his own expense in a printing of just 200 copies.[58] Only after its appearance was it hailed by others as "peut-être notre plus ancienne, notre véritable épopée nationale."[59]

If Francisque Michel was more interested in the historical than the national implications of his discovery, Hans Ferdinand Massmann was quite the opposite. His whole purpose in publishing the *Skeireins* was the glorification of the German people through this monument of their language. But its connection to Germany or Germans was perhaps the weakest of all. A text written by a Greek ecclesiastic and then translated, perhaps in Constantinople, for a society in an unknown location was perhaps a thin foundation on which to construct a theory of Germanic, let alone specifically German, cultural superiority, but such was his goal.

What can we conclude about the work of these "living dead" in terms of their own times and ours? First, we recognize that while coming from widely different parts of Europe, they continued to belong to a society of letters that drew them into frequent personal and literary contact. Nor was this always a case of national rivalry as it would be later in the century. If Danish and German scholars immediately saw the possible political implications of Beowulf and if Russian and Habsburg philologists saw the importance of disputing the language of the Freising Fragments, for the most part they did not see their pursuit of the monuments of their particular national traditions to be exclusive or, perhaps with the exception of Massmann, necessarily antagonistic. Kopitar maintained a long and lively contact with Germanic philologists, especially Jacob Grimm, who indeed was the central node for communication about all vernacular philology, edition, and folklore regardless of language. Michel worked closely with English scholars such as Thomas Wright and John Kemble and later published not only on Old French but also English, Scottish, Spanish, and even Basque literature and texts.[60]

The second conclusion concerning the success of these early scholars in claiming their vernacular texts for their national tradition is more complex. Is *Beowulf* Danish or German, or is it a monument of Anglo Saxon culture? Is the *Chanson de Roland* a French national epic? Is *Skeireins* a monument of German language? Are the Freising Fragments the earliest record of Slovenian? These

---

[57] Michel, *Chanson de Roland ou de Roncevaux* (Paris: Chez Silvestre, 1837), xi-xii.

[58] Duggan, *La Chanson de Roland*, 7.

[59] Xavier Marmier in his review in *Le Monde*, quoted in Duggan, *La Chanson de Roland*, 8.

[60] See the list of his publications provided as an appendix to Roach, "Francisque Michel", 173-178.

questions, first posed by this pioneering generation of philologists, have cast a long shadow across not simply European philology but European history. In the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these texts would continue to be claimed as essential elements in the elaboration of competing national pasts. But do these arguments make historical sense today?

About the only thing that philologists seem to be able to agree on concerning the date and composition of Beowulf is that it is entirely irrelevant to the issues of Danish and German identity politics to which Thorkelín and his opponents attempted to use it. The date of its composition still ranges between the seventh and eleventh centuries; why this poem, which never mentions England and takes place in what are today southern Sweden and Denmark, should have been composed in Anglo Saxon is unclear, and virtually every other contextual issue remain debated.[61] The question of whether *Skeireins* is merely a translation of Theodor or an original Gothic compilation drawing on Theodor but other Greet patristic texts as well continues to be discussed, but the general consensus today is that the commentary is indeed a translation and as such belongs to the world of fourth-century Greek patristic literature and has no connection with the Völkerwanderungzeit.[62] The *Song of Roland* in Digby 23 is indeed a French language text, but it is equally an English one, evidence of the transnational culture of the Anglo-Norman elite of the twelfth century. And finally the Freising Fragments, even today venerated in the young republic of Slovenia as the foundational documents of their language,[63] are being reassessed, not as early Slovenian but as texts prepared for a now long-disappeared Alpine Slavic community somewhere considerably to the west of Slovenia and even Carinthia. In the final analysis, Josef Dobrovský may have been right in his early suggestion that these monuments of "Slovenian" may actually have been intended for a community in Bavaria.

In suggesting that the ways that these early texts were first brought to light and appreciated may have set their analysis on courses that have been more a distraction than a help in no way should detract from the extraordinary

---

[61] Most recently on attempts to date Beowulf see Roberta Frank, "A Scandal in Toronto: The Dating of Beowulf a Quarter Century On," *Speculum* 82/4 (2007): 843-864.

[62] For a recent evaluation of the text see Knut Schäferdiek, "Die Fragmente der 'Skeireins' und der Johanneskommentar des Theodor von Herakleia," *Zeitschrift für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur: mit Anzeiger für deutsches Altertum und deutsche Literatur* 110/3, (1981): 175-193. Reprinted with corrections in Knut Schäferdiek, *Schwellenzeit: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Christentums in Spätantike und Frühmittelalter* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996), here 83.

[63] See especially the new edition *Brižinski spomeniki: Znanstvenokritična izdaja,* ed. Jože Faganel, et al. (Ljubljana: Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, Inštitut za slovensko literaturo in literarne vede, 1993). And the volume of essays on the manuscript, *Zbornik Brižinski spomenik*, (Ljubljana: Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU, Inštitut za slovensko literaturo in literarne vede, 1996).

scholarship of these early scholars. While others worked out theoretical frameworks of Indo-European philology, they provided the raw material for all subsequent studies of early European vernaculars, and did so largely without the grammars, dictionaries, and other apparatus that could only be created simultaneously with the appearance of these texts. That their efforts were part of wider political and ideological programs inevitably influenced their results, and it takes nothing from their achievement even if we must understand these often forgotten intellectual horizons so that we do not allow the nationalist ghosts of these living dead to haunt the present.