

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON

CAMIEL HAMANS

Introduction

Somewhere between 1811 and 1819 Rev. Stephanus Hanewinckel (1766–1856) translated the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15: 11–32) into the dialect of the Meijerij, a region in the eastern part of the Dutch province of North Brabant, not far from the city of ‘s-Hertogenbosch. Hanewinckel who was a minister and then held an incumbency in the villages of Warns and Scharn in Friesland, the northern part of the Netherlands far away from the southern province of North Brabant, became known in the Dutch literature because of his anti-papist travelogues about the region of the Meijerij, where he was born and to where he returned later in his life (Meijneke, 2009; Hamans, 2012).

In his travelogues of 1798 and 1799 Hanewickel also showed a certain interest in the dialects of this region. In these books he published three word lists containing dialect forms and their Dutch equivalents. In a fourth word list he collected High German words which were used as loanwords in the dialects of the Meijerij. In addition, he commented upon the different dialects of the region and its neighbouring regions, compared the difference between dialects, offered dialect expressions, quoted special jargons and produced etymologies of place names incidentally.

Although Hanewinckel is not very positive about the qualities of the dialects of the Meijerij, he nevertheless translated the Parable of the Prodigal Son into his native dialect. However, he never published the text. It was found in his papers and published for the first time by Meijneke 2009¹. The question is why Hanewickel chose this parable for his translation. This topic which will be discussed in the rest of this contribution.

¹ In Hamans (2012) one may find a revised version of the Parable.

Iconography of the Prodigal Son²

The Parable of the Prodigal Son only appears in the Gospel of Luke. However, it became one of the most popular parables of the New Testament. The parable is shown in art frequently, is a popular motive in literature and on stage and is even set on music regularly. According to Craig (1950: 71) the theme of the Prodigal Son became so popular in fifteenth and sixteenth century England that the Prodigal Son Play even can be seen as a subgenre of the English morality play.

Kat (1952) enumerates painters, sculptors, composers, playwrights, authors such as Albrecht Dürer, Jan Steen, Rembrandt, Jan Luiken, Gerard van Honthorst, Pompeo Batoni, James Tissot, Auguste Rodin, Gustave Moreau, Leonello Spada, Lope de Vega, Dumas Fils, Rainer Maria Rilke, André Gide, Carlo Goldoni, Amilcar Ponchielli, Daniel Auber, Claude Debussy, George Balanchine and many others who were inspired by the theme of the Prodigal Son. Maybe Rembrandt's 'The Prodigal Son Returns' (1669) is the best known artistic representation of the theme. However, it is rather unlikely that Hanewinckel knew this Dutch painting, since it was acquired by the Russian Empress Catherine the Great (1729–1796) for the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, where it still is one of the jewels of the collection.

On the other hand, it would come as no great surprise that a clergyman chose this very well known text from the Bible. However, this does not explain why in the same period and in the same province of Friesland Everwinus Wassenbergh translated the same parable into Frisian (Miedema, 1957). Wassenbergh who made his translation in 1812 was not a minister but a philologist.

Collections

Collecting dialect texts or language samples was not uncommon in the last decades of the 18th century and the early years of the 19th century. "However, it was only towards the end of the 18th century that in Europe the fashion arose of gathering wordlists in languages for comparative purposes. For example, the glossary in Latin of vocabularies in two hundred Asian and European languages, *Glossarium Comparativum Linguarum Totius Orbis* (1787–1789)³, compiled by Peter Pallas, dates from this period. The project was sponsored by the Empress Catherine the Great of

² I owe the suggestion to have a look at the cultural and literary success of the theme of the Prodigal Son and the possible influence of the popularity of this theme on Hanewinckel to prof. Adam Bzoch, Bratislava.

³ The correct title is: Pallas, Peter Simon (1786–1789), *Vocabularium linguarum totius orbis comparativum, oder Vergleichendes Glossarium aller Sprachen und Mundarten*. St.Petersburg: typis Iohannis Caroli Schnoot. 2 vols. Actually the first volume appeared in 1787.

Russia, and appeared in revised editions in Russian between 1790 and 1791” (Dimmendaal, 2011: 4). Pallas (1742–1811) was not a linguist or a philologist, but a German specialist in natural history, who received his PhD from Leiden University in 1760. He was offered a professorship in natural history at the Imperial Academy of Natural Sciences in St. Petersburg by Catherine the Great. He was a rather adventurous and inquisitive man. So he went on expeditions throughout the whole of Russia: to the remote parts of Siberia, to the Crimea, which was just acquired by Catherine the Great, as well as to the south-east of Russia. He published extensively about his journeys. In his travelogues he described the geography, topography, natural history, products, customs and languages of the provinces visited by him. “Pallas is only marginal a linguist. When he collected words on his travels, it was more in the interest of ethnography or natural history” (Lüdtke, 2009: 1111). However, “his fame was probably the reason why the empress commissioned him to compile and publish her universal *vocabularia comparativa*” (Lüdtke, 2009: 1111).

Catherine the Great wanted the Academy of Sciences to make a survey of Russia in which all aspects of Russian life and culture should be included. That is why she ordered the members of the Academy to undertake expeditions, to write reports about their travels and to draw illustrations and maps. “In the 1780s, when the British discovery of Sanskrit made comparative linguistics fashionable⁴, Catherine established a research project to assemble a comparative dictionary of all the languages, not only of the Russian Empire, but worldwide which she published” (Catherine the Great, 2005: XXXII, see also Key, 1980).

“Catherine had conceived the idea of this universal dictionary. F. Nicolai in Berlin contributed the list of languages, and H.C.L. Bacmeister was Pallas’s collaborator in St. Petersburg. Originally, G.W. Leibniz had suggested to Peter the Great the idea of compiling vocabularies and texts in the languages which were spoken in the Russian Empire. Catherine II herself had planned the collection, but handed over the task to Bacmeister and then to Pallas who carried out the plan. List of words were sent to the governors of the Russian Empire who translated the wordlists into the different languages of the Empire. Other wordlists were sent to Russian ambassadors and to scholars abroad, but the sources also include published material. (...) The result is a collection of material, comprising lists of 285 words each in 200 languages and dialects and for 12 numerals in 222 languages. The words were transcribed in Cyrillic letters. (...) The aim of this collection was to elucidate the origin of the nations through the affinity of languages and language groups and possibly to prove that all languages stem from one primitive language. The *vocabularia comparativa* was much praised but also much criticized by Pallas’s contemporaries. It inspired further collections of material” (Lüdtke, 2009: 1112).

⁴ William Jones lecture about the genetic relation between the Indo-European languages, presented in Calcutta in 1786, was published in 1788.

Mithridates

One of the scholars who was inspired by the Russian collection but who at the same time criticized the way Pallas collected his samples was the German lexicologist, librarian and philologist Johann Christian Adelung (1732–1806). He appreciated the idea of collecting language data very much, which “hat (...) viel Glänzendes, und er bekam einen noch höhern Werth, als eine grosse Monarchin [Catherine the Great CH] es nicht unter ihrer Würde hielt, dessen Ausführung zu veranstalten und die zur Vergleichung nöthigen Wörter selbst zu wählen⁵ (Adelung, 1806: vii, quoted from Metcalf, 2013: 160). However, Vater preferred a connected text instead of a list of basic words since these words may give the false impression of being related, because many similarities are remnants and relics of the primordial language.

So, Adelung followed a much older tradition and collected samples of the Lord’s Prayer. However, he passed away before he could finish his collection and the publication thereof, which was finalized in 1817 by Johann Severin Vater (1771–1826). In four volumes (1806–1817) they published an inventory of some 500 languages from all over the world by means of the Lord’s Prayer (Metcalf, 2013: 153). The title of the collection is *Mithridates oder allgemeine Sprachkunde mit dem Vater Unser als Sprachprobe in beynahe fünfhundert Sprachen und Mundarten*. The choice for the Lord’s Prayer may be explained since it is assumed to be the prayer given by Christ himself to his followers and is addressed to God (Luke 11: 1–4, Matthew 6: 5–13). So, in a way it can be seen as the word of God. However, it was not Adelung who made this choice. By using the title *Mithridates* he sought to join a tradition which started with a collection compiled by Konrad Gessner 250 years earlier and published under the same name. Gessner was the first to use the Lord’s Prayer as a sample text. “Konrad Gessner (1516–1565), one of the most important representatives of the Swiss humanist movement, had a special interest in the philosophical problem of diversity, which he addressed in his numerous monographs (see, e.g. his biological works, or his bibliographical *Bibliotheca universalis*, in which he attempted to overview the vast amount of published books). In 1555 he published a booklet entitled *Mithridates: De differentiis linguarum*. After a succinct general introduction, the author presented, in alphabetical order, about 100 languages known to him” (Van Hal and Van Rooy, 2013: 6–7). In a most recent edition of Gessner’s *Mithridates* 130 languages are included of which 39 with a translation of the Lord’s Prayer (Gessner, 2009).

The name *Mithridates* goes back to a famous polyglot ruler, *Mithridates VI* of Pontus (135–63 BC). According to Pliny the Elder’s account of famous polyglots, *Mithridates* could speak all the 22 languages of the nations he governed. He was said

⁵ ‘The idea is brilliant and became even more valuable when a great monarch did not consider it beneath her dignity to start this project and to select the words needed for comparison’.

to know all the names of his soldiers and to be able to address all of them in their own mother tongue. That is why his reputation led to the use of his name for comparative language collections, such as the publications of Gessner and Adelung and Vater.

Coquebert's survey

Although it is quite clear that Rev. Hanewinckel was not the only one of his time who was interested in collecting language data, the question remains why he chose the Prodigal Son as a sample text and not for instance the Lord's Prayer, an even more sacred text than the Parable.

However, Hanewinckel's choice had nothing to do with the sacred nature of the Biblical text, it was only a matter of statistics, as will be shown. A few years before Hanewinckel and Wassenbergh produced their versions of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the French palaeographer and archaeologist Jacques-Joseph Champollion-Figeac (1778–1867) published a book *Nouvelles recherches sur les patois ou idiomes vulgaires de la France et en particulier sur ceux du département de l'Isère suivis d'un essai sur la littérature dauphinoise, et d'un appendix contenant des pièces en vers ou en prose peu connus, des extraits de manuscrits inédits et un vocabulaire*⁶. The appendix to this study contains several translations of the Parable of the Prodigal Son among other dialect texts.

The book is a result of a request of the Minister of Internal Affairs who asked the prefect of the Isère department, which is the region around Grenoble, to inform him about the dialects spoken in this part of the Empire and to produce a few texts written in these dialects. In his letter of 13 November 1807 to the prefect the Ministry required that one should use the Parable of the Prodigal Son as one of the samples⁷. This request was part of a larger survey which Charles Etienne Coquebert de Montbret (1755–1831) and his son Eugène conducted between 1806 and 1812. Champollion-Figeac did not wait till the results of this survey for the whole of France were collected, received and processed, but published his own data almost immediately.

The aim of this survey, which was commissioned by the Emperor and conducted by the Statistical Office of the Ministry of Interior, was to get to know which dialects were used in the different 'portions of the French territory' and by whom⁸. In

⁶ Published in 1809 by Goujon, Libraire, 53 rue du Bac, Paris. Available at www.bibliotheque-dauphinoise.com/nouvelles_recherches_patois.html.

⁷ www.bibliotheque-dauphinoise.com/nouvelles_recherches_patois.html, Notes sur l'ouvrage (retrieved 25/08/2013).

⁸ As is well known, this is not the first time in French history that the government wanted to be informed about the linguistic situation of the country. In 1790 the Constituent Assembly, the revolutionary

addition, to be able to draw the limits of French in relation to other languages, such as Alsatian, Basque, Breton, Catalan, Flemish, German and Italian (Brunot, 1927: 525–530). The modern and well organised government of the Napoleonic era wanted to be informed about the precise demographic and thus linguistic situation of the whole empire. Therefore, all the 130 prefects, or their collaborators and advisors, had to answer the survey. Coquebert was the head of the statistical office and it was him who developed this and other demographic and economic surveys (Bulot, 1989).

Coquebert is an interesting figure. Before the revolution he has been French representative for maritime and commercial affairs in Ireland. He there showed an interest in the Irish language and other aspects of the Celtic culture and published his impressions of Galway (1791) (Ni Chinnéide, 1952). Coquebert did neither manage to finish the survey nor to publish the final results. It was only in 1831 that his son Eugène published part of the survey with a collection of hundred different versions of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Most of the translations sent to the Statistical Office are still waiting for publication in archives (Simoni-Aurembou, 1989).

However, in 1806 Coquebert published already an *Essai d'un Travail sur la Géographie de la Langue Française*⁹, in which he discussed the situation of Breton in full detail. He was the first to draw an exact map of the French-Breton language border. On the basis of his survey he estimated the number of Breton speakers at almost one million on a total population of the region of 1,35 million inhabitants (Abalain, 1998: 112).

Jacques Le Brigant

Coquebert's interest in Breton and other Celtic matters may shed a light on the question why he asked the prefects to produce a translation of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Among people with interest in Breton and Celtic languages the name and work of Jacques le Brigant (1720–1804), a lawyer and one of the most famous representatives of celtomania in France, was well known. Le Brigant claimed that Breton was the mother of all languages, the original protolanguage. Therefore, people who could speak Breton, were able to understand all other languages easily. Le Brigant's hypothesis about the primordial status of the Celtic language Breton is

highest authority in the period 1789–1791, ordered a linguistic survey, which resulted in the report of the Abbé Grégoire *Rapport sur la nécessité et les moyens d'anéantir les patois et d'universaliser l'usage de la langue française* (1794) 'On the need and the resources to annihilate patois and to universalize the use of French'. Grégoire noticed that only 3 million citizens spoke French, six million were not able of holding a conversation in French, whereas another six million had no knowledge at all of the national language. The report is available at <http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/francophonie/gregoire-rapport.htm> (retrieved 14/02/2017).

⁹ 'A Trial of a Work about the Geography of the French Language'.

in line with the speculative tradition founded by William Camden (1586) that the Celtic speaking population of Wales descended directly from Gomer, the eldest son of Japhet, Noah's second son and that therefore their language is much older and less corrupt than all the others.

In 1779 Le Brigant published a booklet *Éléments de la langue des Celtes Gomerites ou Bretons : Introduction a cette langue et par elle a celles de tous les peuples connus*^{10,11}. In this short study Le Brigant published examples of Breton texts next to the French translation. A short glossary closes the book. Among the texts Le Brigant presents one finds fables of Jean de La Fontaine, but also the Parable of the Prodigal Son, in Breton 'Ar Mab Prodig' and in French 'Parabole de l'Enfant Prodigue'.

One cannot prove that Coquebert borrowed the idea of using the Parable of the Prodigal Son as the basis for his survey from Le Brigant, because Coquebert nowhere and never explained why he took this parable. However, since Le Brigant's booklet is the first instance of a quasi-linguistic text in which the parable is used for a comparative linguistic goal and since Coquebert, although not being a celtophile or celtomaniac in the sense of Le Brigant, was highly interested in Celtic studies, he must have known the work of Le Brigant. In addition, since the Parable of the Prodigal Son is linguistically speaking a much richer text than the Lord's Prayer¹², it is not unlikely that the example of Le Brigant was the reason for Coquebert to choose the parable. Since the Parable of the Prodigal Son was such a popular theme and such a well know text, Coquebert could be sure that every educated man who was asked to produce a translation knew the verses or was able to find them in the Gospel of St. Luke. The fables of Jean de La Fontaine, which le Brigant also translated, were less widespread and therefore could not be used as the basis for translation.

First French Empire

So far we found a possible explanation for Coquebert's choice, but this does not explain why a minister and a scholar in Friesland, far from Paris and France, took the same parable for their translations. The vastness of the First French Empire offers an explanation thereof. Some years ago Ulrich Maes (2005) and Kruijssen and Bakker (2007) discovered translations of the Parable of the Prodigal Son in Limburger dialects in French archives. Limburg, the region around Maastricht, and the

¹⁰ 'Elements of the language of the Gomerite Celts or Bretons: Introduction to this language and through this language to those of all known peoples'.

¹¹ Strasbourg: Lorenz & Schouler. Also available at: <http://bibnumuniv-rennes2.fr/items/show/312>

¹² The parable is much longer, contains much more informal language and even dialogues. Therefore, the Parable is more apt to be used as a sample text than the Lord's Prayer.

neighbouring Rhenish-German region belonged to the French Empire and so the prefect of this department was asked to send in versions in local dialects, which he did. However, the province of North Brabant, which is north east and east of Limburg were not yet part of France. From 1806 till 1810 the Kingdom Holland was an officially independent but actually puppet kingdom under Napoleon Bonaparte's third brother Louis. Friesland, which is far more to the north, only became part of France together with the rest of the dissolved Kingdom Holland in 1810. However, this does not mean that Coquebert's survey was unknown in the rest of the Netherlands. Miedema (1957) shows that Wassenbergh's translation was meant as a response to Coquebert's request. This brings us to the provisional conclusion that after 1806/1807 most dilettantes with an interest in dialect and comparative linguistics in Western Europe were informed about Coquebert's initiative and therefore used the Parable of the Prodigal Son as a sample text. In what follows this claim will be strengthened and underlined.

Outside France

Coquebert's initiative did not stop at the borders of the Napoleonic empire. In Germany the linguist Johann Gottlieb Radlof (1775–1846(?)) published a voluminous book *Die Sprachen der Germanen in ihren sämtlichen Mundarten dargestellt und erläutert durch die Gleichniss Reden von Säemanne und dem verlorenen Sohne, samt einer kurzen Geschichte des Namens der Teiutschen*¹³ in 1817. In this study Radlof presents examples of the parables and of other dialect texts from the earliest stages of the Germanic languages till his days. So one finds Gothic texts next to the two parables in Negro Dutch, recorded in 1781. He does not restrict himself to German dialects. He includes Dutch, Dutch dialects, the Scandinavian languages and dialects as well as samples from the Alsatian speaking regions in France. Radlof enters into controversy with Adelung and Vater, who only offered language and dialect specimens of the Lord's Prayer. Radlof argues that his choice for the two parables not only offers more but also better data for the description of languages and dialects (Radlof, 1817: XIV). Radlof even questions whether the two parables offer enough language material to describe and compare the languages well. Therefore, he includes some more known poems and other prose texts (1817: XII). Radlof, who was a very polemic figure, was in contact with Jacob Grimm from 1810 on. However, Grimm was not very impressed by Radlof's 1817 book, of which he said that "seine Gleichnißreden in Mundarten sind mir nicht correct genug"¹⁴ (Jacoby, 1888: 138).

¹³ The languages of the German peoples in all their dialects, illustrated and explained by the Parables of the Sower [Mark 4: 2–9; Luke 4: 4–8 and Matthew 13: 3–9] and the Prodigal Son together with a short history of the name of the *Teiutschen* [Germans].

¹⁴ 'His parables in dialects are not correct enough according to my opinion'.

In Switzerland the Roman Catholic priest Franz Joseph Stadler (1757–1833), who had a serious interest in education, folklore and regional languages, felt stimulated by the initiative of the French government and collected 73 different dialect versions of the parable, which he published in *Die Landessprachen der Schweiz, oder Schweizerische Dialektologie mit kritischen Sprachbemerkungen. Nebst der Gleichnissrede vom verlorenen Sohn in allen Schweizermundarten*¹⁵ (1819). Stadler's work was known to Grimm (Bigler, 2012) and through him his collection also became noticed outside Switzerland.

In this way Johan Winkler (1840–1916), one of the founding fathers of Dutch dialectology, came to know Stadler's work. He refers to Stadler's 'excellent' work of 1819 in his collection of 186 Dutch, Low German and Frisian versions of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Winkler, 1874). According to Swanenberg and Brok (2008: 59) it was not only the model Stadler set, which influenced Winkler's choice. It was also since the Parable is one of the few parts of the Bible which is written in ordinary language.

Winkler's survey became the starting point for the comparative study of Dutch dialects (Brok, 1998: 13), just as Stadler's work must be considered the basis for Swiss dialectology (Bigler, 2012).

Winkler's data base offers an opportunity to check language changes. That is why Harrie Scholtmeijer (1999) repeated his survey, which resulted in a website 'De nieuwe Winkler'¹⁶, where already 83¹⁷ new translations of the Parable of the Prodigal Son have been collected. However, one does not have to wait till Stadler's work became known to Winkler before dialect translations of the parable were collected and published in the Dutch language area. In Flanders Jan Frans Willems (1793–1846), the father of the 19th century Flemish language movement, called up his colleagues dilettante linguists to send in dialect versions of the parable shortly after Eugène Coquebert published the French survey (1831). Willems who was the editor of the journal *Belgisch Museum* started a series of translations in this journal with his own version of the parable in the Flemish dialect of Brussels (Willems, 1837: 34–38). Recently Maes (2007) drew attention to this series again in an article about the historical sources of the dialect of Sint Truiden, a little town in the Belgian province of Limburg.

As late as in 1913 the authoritative Dutch scholarly journal *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsche Taal en Letterkunde* published an article by Prince in which he described Jersey Dutch, the then already almost extinct Dutch of the American settlers from the Netherlands. The Parable of the Prodigal Son served as a language sample once again. Prince's example has been republished by other scholars a few times afterwards (Noordegraaf, 2008: 7).

¹⁵ 'The vernaculars of Switzerland or Swiss dialectology with critical language remarks. Together with the Parable of the Prodigal Son in all Swiss dialects'.

¹⁶ 'The new Winkler'.

¹⁷ Most of these translations are the same as in the original Winkler collection.

In Germany Radlof was not the last one to use the parable to compare dialects. Albert Schott (1809–1847), a high school teacher from Stuttgart with a lively interest for regional history, folk tales and legends, collected dialect samples in the Swiss canton of Valais. In 1840 he published a small booklet of only 37 pages *Die Deutsche am Monte Rosa mit ihren Stammgenossen im Wallis und Üechtland*¹⁸. In this small study Schott compares four different dialects through the parable, but he mentions to have collected much more translations. Schott refers to the work of Stadler, but also to Horace-Bénédict de Saussure's¹⁹ *Voyages dans les Alpes* (1779–1796), the first work in which the mountains of the Alps were described as interesting and beautiful and which gave a blow to tourism to the Alps.

Doegen

Wilhelm Doegen (1877–1967), student of Henri Sweet when he spent a semester abroad in Oxford in 1900 and later founder of the sound archives now in the Humboldt University in Berlin, began to make recordings in Berlin in 1909. However, his archives only started to grow during the First World War when he was requested in 1915 to record the almost 250 languages and dialects spoken by prisoners of war in German camps. Doegen asked these POW's to read words and wordlists, to sing songs, to tell fairy tales, anecdotes and stories. In addition, he invited the POW's from France, England and some other European countries to read the Parable of the Prodigal Son in their native language, especially in their regional tongues. In this way Doegen was able to collect samples of dialects of all English counties and to start a comparative study of these dialects. (Mahrenholz, 2003). Doegen's data have been digitalized recently and are now available as part of the Imago database of the Lautarchiv, part of the Wissenschaftliche Sammlungen an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin²⁰. In 2008 the British Library acquired a subset of the Doegen Lautarchiv. This subset comprises 821 digital copies of shellac discs and includes recordings of British prisoners of war and colonial troops held in captivity on German soil between 1915 and 1918 and later recordings made by Doegen in Berlin and on field trips to Ireland and elsewhere²¹.

¹⁸ Available at: <https://books.google.nl/books?id=PJNEAAAACAAJ&pg=PP3&lpg=PP3&dq=albert+schott+Die+Deutschen+am+Monte+Rosa&source=bl&ots=AspPzkymOl&sig=ZPSFGLY5oigUxgk0vFoI VO9fMcw&hl=nl&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiP8qGk3cLLAhWKBSwKHZ7cB3MQ6AEIzAB#v=onepage&q=albert%20schott%20Die%20Deutschen%20am%20Monte%20Rosa&f=false>.

¹⁹ Great-grandfather of the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913).

²⁰ <http://www.sammlungen.hu-berlin.de/dokumente/125/>

²¹ See more at <http://sounds.bl.uk/Accents-and-dialects/Berliner-Lautarchiv-British-and-Commonwealth-recordings#sthash.nAh8yA4J.dpuf>

Doegen was quite successful in building his archives at the ‘Lautabteilung at the Prussian State Library in Berlin’ and because of his fame the Irish government sought his services to make recordings in the Irish speaking part of Ireland and in those regions where Irish had suffered a decline. Doegen accepted the invitation and came to Ireland with his assistant Karl Tempel in September 1928. Tempel returned to Ireland in 1930 and 1931. In total 216 recordings were made of which 212 still survive. These records contain some 400 tracks, which include all kind of texts and songs, but also versions of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Now the Doegen collection is digitalized and is part of the archives of the Royal Irish Academy Library. It can be found and consulted under the name ‘The Doegen Records Web Project’²².

Italy

Also in Italy Stadler’s survey was copied. Bernardino Biondelli (1804–1886), one of the great figures in Italian dialectology and linguistics (De Mauro, 1968), started to collect translations of the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the different dialects of Italy around the middle of the 19th century²³. Biondelli referred explicitly to Stadler’s survey (Biondelli, 1853: XXXII) and published himself 96 versions of the parable in the dialects of Piedmont, Lombardy and Emilia in a voluminous book in 1853. However, he collected much more translations, of which several have been published later by Carlo Salvioni in different publications from the years 1913 till 1918. Biondelli set the example. That is why the Parable of the Prodigal Son is still used frequently in Italian dialectology. For instance, by dialectologists such as Michele Melillo, who published several dialect surveys using the parable in the sixties, seventies and eighties of the last century. Franco Nicoli wrote a study on the grammar of Milanese in 1983, to which he added a version of the parable from Lombardy. In 2007 Sylvio Campagna published a study *La parabola del figliol prodigo nei materiali dell’Atlante linguistico italiano*²⁴ in which 103 transcriptions of the parable in Italian dialects are published.

The Italian department at the Humboldt University in Berlin hosts an online acoustic language atlas of Italian dialects and minority languages, called Vivaldi – *Vivaio Acustico delle Lingue e dei Dialetti d’Italia*²⁵. Part of this ongoing project is an acoustic version of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, Parabola del figliol prodigo, in the different dialects.

²² www.dho.ie/doegen/home

²³ I owe the suggestion to have a look at Biondelli’s work to John Charles Smith, St. Catherine’s College Oxford.

²⁴ ‘The parable of the prodigal son in the Italian language atlas materials’.

²⁵ <https://www2.hu-berlin.de/vivaldi/?id=0003&lang=de>

What is even more remarkable is that in Val d'Aosta, a mountainous region in the north-western part of Italy, the parable was the first written literary product: "The real novelty in the middle of the century, however, is represented by the birth of a literature in a Val d'Aosta patois (A French-Provençal language (...)) at the hands of Jean-Baptiste Cerlogne (1826–1910), harbinger of further and unforeseeable developments, to the extent that from then on it would be poetry in dialect that offered the best artistic results in Valle. The first poem in patois by the Val d'Aosta *félibre* [author in Occitan CH] was "L'infan predeggo" of 1855, that also marked the epochal and anthropological passage from a language that had always been oral to a written language. There were only sporadic written traces of the Val d'Aosta patois before then. (...) The first prose writings consist of the six different anonymous versions, in as many varieties of Val d'Aosta patois, of the *Parabola del figliuol prodigo* collected by the dialectologist Bernardino Biondelli in 1841 but published only in 1913 by Carlo Salvioni (and therefore unknown to Cerlogne himself and to subsequent local scholars)" (Zoppelli s.d.).

This last example shows how popular the Parable of the Prodigal Son was as a sample text in the 19th century. Almost from the moment Coquebert launched his survey in 1806/7, but especially after Stadler published his survey in 1819 the parable was 'in the air'. Almost everybody who wanted to show the characteristics of his or of any dialect chose a translation of the Parable of the Prodigal Son for this goal. This lasted till Georg Wenker (1852–1911) came up with a complete new idea, that changed the outlook of the discipline completely.

Wenker

Although the Parable of the Prodigal Son is a linguistically much richer text than the Lord's Prayer and although the parable contains dialogue and is written in more or less ordinary language, the language of the parable is not diverse enough to cover all possible linguistic phenomena. That is why Georg Wenker introduced a new system of collecting dialect data in the second half of the seventies of the 19th century. He constructed a questionnaire with a forty sentences in which were represented what he thought were the essential German dialect differences. Subsequently he sent the questionnaire to local teachers, first only in the region around Düsseldorf, later to the whole of Westphalia and finally to the whole German speaking area. The teachers were asked to translate the sentences in the local dialect. The sentences were constructed in such a way that specific phonological, morphological and syntactic peculiarities of the different dialects would pop up. In the end the Wenker sentences were sent in from 40.000 places, which offered Wenker and his successors of the Marburg dialect school the opportunity to draw precise dialect maps. This can be

seen as the starting point of modern dialect geography (Knoop, Putschke and Wiegand, 1982).

Sample texts disappeared from linguistics. Only in *The Principles of the International Phonetic Association* (1949) of the International Phonetic Association one still finds one and the same text about a dispute between the north wind and the sun as the model for all the transcriptions.

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