

INTRODUCTION

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Evert van der Starre had been editor of *Neophilologus* for 27 years, when he unexpectedly died in 2004. He had plans for a special issue of his beloved journal. The topic would be the composition of poetic collections, on which he had already published an article in this journal ('Editions de textes et structures du recueil poétique. Char et Queneau dans la Pléiade', *Neophilologus* 76 (1992), pp. 535–548). In his view the study of poetic collections had been unjustly neglected as literary scholars tend to focus one-sidedly on the individual poem. To rectify this deficiency he published a Dutch volume with articles (*De tweede gisting, Over de compositie van dichtbundels*, Amsterdam, 2001, edited together with Ad Zuiderent). Discussions with colleagues which lay at the basis of this book confirmed his view that the issue merited further theoretical reflection and a more diachronic and comparative approach. In the current issue we present a series of articles which show the rich variety of problems that are closely connected with the study of poetic collections.

In this introduction we like to share a couple of thoughts Van der Starre formulated on this topic. He was well aware of the many problems that confronted the scholar who strode out upon this neglected territory. In *De tweede gisting* he reviewed briefly some of these problems which had stifled the enthusiasm of many a scholar.

To name a few:

- the deliberate composition of poetic collections is related to modern and modernist poetics with no relevance for the study of early-modern or older literature;
- the terminology used to describe the structure of poetic collections is highly diverse and often metaphoric (structure, pattern of cohesion, design, architecture, etc);
- in many cases, external or material causes on which the poets has no real influence, seem to be decisive for the sequence of the poems in a certain collection;
- as the interpretation of a single poem often already poses insurmountable problems, the study of the meaningful coherence of a whole collection seems to augment these problems exponentially;

- the study of the composition of collections is at odds with the idea of the autonomy of the poem.

While none of these objections in itself may be decisive to let the matter rest, they at least do encourage some modesty. Undoubtedly this is one of the reasons why Van der Starre rejected the strong notion of “unity” to characterize the composition of poetic volumes, and restricted his reflections to the far more modest notion of “ordering.” Doing this, he came, in *De tweede gisting* and in his study *Au ras du texte, Douze études sur la littérature française de l’après-guerre*, Amsterdam, 2000, pp. 40–49, to a six-partite working typology, which we shall adopt here, and illustrate with some examples suggested by Van der Starre.

1. The collection’s ordering is based on formal principles. Van der Starre quoted some sophisticatedly structured sequences, such as the French *sonnet redoublé* (every line of the first sonnet or *sonnet magistral* is repeated as the final line of one of the 14 following sonnets) or its British counterpart, the so-called “crown of sonnets” (for instance John Donne’s *Corona*). One can however also think of more down-to-earth cases, in which the poet or the editor/printer has ordered the collection by genre, putting together in separate sections sonnets with sonnets, epigrams with epigrams, etc.
2. The collection’s ordering suggests a chronology of creation (e.g., Victor Hugo, *Les Contemplations*) or a real or fictional progress of the poet or the lyrical subject (Petrarch, *Canzoniere*; Du Bellay, *Les Regrets*).
3. The ordering is referential, i.e., it reflects the extra-literary order of the poems’ objects (e.g., the lion put at the beginning of the medieval bestiaries, thus reflecting the hierarchy of the animals).
4. The order is thematic. Strangely Van der Starre, did not give an example probably because this principle of ordering is the best known of all. Van der Starre limited himself to some skeptical considerations (‘l’ordre dans lequel les thèmes eux-mêmes sont traités n’est pas toujours riche de significations profondes’, *Au ras du texte*, p. 43) before going on to analyze some interesting cases in the poetry of Raymond Queneau.
5. The ordering is programmatic. This is the case when poems are deliberately put in strategic places: the beginning or the end of the collection, or the exact middle. Examples are given from “architectural” classical poetry (as analyzed by David H. Porter, *Horace’s Poetic Journey*, New Jersey, 1987), Apollinaire and, again, Queneau.

6. There is no apparent order. This could be characterized as *docta variatio*, a term that we prefer to the one of *ordo neglectus*, because even the apparent absence of order implies some element of motivation, thus excluding total negligence. There are no precise examples given by Van der Starre, but we can think of the first editions of Alciato's *Book of Emblems* (between 1531 and 1548; from the 1548-edition on, Alciato's emblems become thematically ordered).

Van der Starre's typology is very useful in that it provides a checklist of different ways of poetic ordering. But, as most literary typologies, this checklist appears to be superseded by the practice of collections – Van der Starre would be the first to admit this. Not only could a given collection be structured according to two or more of Van der Starre's principles, but the ordering can also come from quite other, external reasons which have nothing to do with an underlying poetic design.

The aim of this special issue is to take the discussion of this topic a step further, trying out the approach on quite different kinds of collections in different periods (from medieval manuscripts to neo avant-gardist experiments in visual poetry), and reflecting on different sorts of guiding principles (from editorial schools and metaphors to selection principles of anthologies). The contributions show the many-sidedness and complexity of this field of study, and give a range of suggestions for further research.

Franz-Jozef Holznagel gives a detailed overview of the tradition of German lyrical poetry from the 9th century to the 16th century. In this period poetry in the vernacular emancipated from notes in the margins of Latin manuscripts to autonomous collections used at the German courts and, later on, in bourgeois circles.

Nadia Altschul explores the relationship between editorial methodologies and national mentalities in the area of mediaeval philologies of Spain, Germany and France.

Clara Strijbosch focuses on the neglected topic of medieval miscellanies. A closer study of these compilations not only reveals interesting connections between German and Dutch language and literature, but also a difference between collections meant for women or men.

Mar Martínez Góngora reads the humanist poetry of Luisa Sigea against the background of the traditional masculine trajectory of the Petrarchean poetic subject as an early poetic expression of female subjectivity.

Diederik Oostdijk presents a thorough and critical discussion of the genesis of the prize winning poetic volume *V-Letter* by the American poet Karl Shapiro. From the correspondence between the poet and his wife the composition process is reconstructed in detail.

Hub. Hermans presents another case study, that of the Spanish poet Francisco Pino. A remarkable mixture of avant-gardist and traditional poetics is characteristic of Pino's poetry. The various editions, anthologies and editions of his complete works shed light on the relation between these two sides of his work.

Dirk van Hulle discusses two interesting metaphors that have dominated poetic ideas over a long period, that of organism on the one hand and that of construction on the other. He traces the influence of these metaphors on the composition of 20th-century poetic volumes.

Quite a different angle is taken by Ton Naaijken. He focuses on anthologies of foreign poetry, which he interprets as "moments of cultural dialogue," and reflects on the considerations that play a role in the selection of poetry from abroad.