Studi umanistici – Philologica

Edizioni Critiche Digitali Digital Critical Editions

Edizioni a confronto Comparing Editions

a cura di Paola Italia e Claudia Bonsi





Studi umanistici Serie Philologica

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Edizioni a confronto **Comparing Editions**

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Digital Scholarly Edition. Interface issues*

Paolo D'Iorio

How to transpose the traditional infrastructure of the humanities in a digital medium switching to the virtual to solve some of the traditional infrastucture's problemas without losing any of its virtues? This article, a part of a more comprehensive scholarly information model called Scholarsource, will focus of interface design. Interface is a very important element for any information system in general and particularly for a website aiming to represent the complex knowledge relationships used in scholarship. We can be sure that an unique interface cannot fit the needs of different scholarly communities. Therefore, instead of describing the model of an ideal scholarly interface, I present a feedback of my own trial and error process in designing an interface capable of representing the concept of "Dynamic Contextualisation", a key function of our model.

3.1. HyperNietzsche

In the print culture, scholarly knowledge came under the form of well defined genres shaped by the physical structure of the book: treatises, critical editions, journals, collected papers, catalogues, etc. The problem is that these genres stored in the same container heterogeneous kinds of information. For example, a critical edition contains in a single book several types of scholarly contributions: manuscript transcriptions, texts editions, philological commentaries, critical commentaries, cross references, bibliographical references, introductive

^{*} This article is a part of a more comprehensive scholarly information model called Scholarsource; see D'Iorio-Barbera 2011 and D'Iorio 2015.

or critical essays and so on. From a logical point of view - and even more from an information technology perspective - this way of collecting and mixing different types of scholarly contributions is not satisfying because it is then difficult to query, assembly and redeploy them according to different purposes. In theory, digital technologies will allow users to collect and compare different editions or translations of the same texts, or to read all the philological commentaries concerning a certain text but excluding the philosophical ones, or to create a diagram showing all the cross references concerning a certain text, etc.; but for this to be accomplished the different kinds of scholarly contributions and their parts need to have been previously clearly distinguished. Otherwise, digital technologies cannot deploy all their possibilities and the user is only allowed to search for words thus getting endless lists of occurrences without being able to retrieve and compare the information he or she needs (this can be observed in digitization projects like Google Books and many others). In order to allow advanced scholarly information retrieval, in HyperNietzsche we established a scholarly ontology containing a catalogue of all the different types of primary and secondary sources used by Nietzsche specialists, and built the database which powered the HyperNietzsche website on this ontology. This way it was possible to perform all the kind of queries needed for what we called "The Dynamic Contextualisation" [D'Iorio 2000 and 2006].

3.1.1. HyperNietzsche Dinamic Contextualisation

Thanks to this feature, when a user selects a critical essay he will be automatically presented with a list of all the primary sources cited in the essay, a list of all the articles cited by the selected essay, and, more importantly, a list of all the essays in which other authors cite the essay currently being viewed. When a user selects a manuscript page, the system will immediately present all the transcriptions, editions and translations available for that page, as well as all critical essays commenting the selected page. Often research infrastructures for the humanities are completely based on search engines; to the point that they are actually more search infrastructures than research infrastructures. Dynamic Contextualisation attempts to provide a complementary model, in which you do not need to search words to find that fundamental piece of information that allows the production of

new interpretations, that is: who has previously commented on this passage and how? Scholarship, indeed, is the capacity to analyze the same object with different criteria, and different objects with the same criteria, and this is important not only from a methodological, but also from an epistemic and cognitive point of view. The objects of the hard and human sciences always result from a process whereby meaning is constructed within a research community. The increase in the number of contributions concerning a certain object actually represents a progressive transformation of this object, insofar as each essay discovers unknown properties. To know that an aphorism is genetically or thematically related to other texts and manuscripts can radically change our comprehension of this object of study: it is as if one had identified a gene on the basis of a certain number of characteristics and then ten scientific articles illustrated hitherto unknown properties and unsuspected relations with other genes, thus appreciably transforming its very definition. This is the epistemological value of the Dynamic Contextualisation, which makes it possible to follow very concretely and very closely the epistemological process of object construction. Dynamic contextualisation can also be seen as a new form of scholarly citation in the digital era, more powerful than the old citation system because it is bi-directional and dynamic. Bi-directional means that the system can not only point towards a textual passage but also go backwards to the origin of all the references which quote it. Dynamic means that the list of articles that refer to a certain passage is updated automatically without the need to peruse all journals and monographs manually, as in the case of the Science Citation Index. With this system you can develop automatic bibliometric surveys without using core journals arbitrarily chosen and manually browsed and it would be the actual give-and-take of real academic discourse registered automatically on the network through citations that would determine the reputation of scholars – and not a tiny number of core journals chosen by the editors of the *Science Citation Index*. I am against the use of impact factor for the evaluation of scholarship, for a number of reasons I will not mention today, but if we are going to use impact factor, the Dynamic Contextualisation could offer a fairer way to realize it.

3.1.2. HyperNietzsche Interface

As we explained, Dynamic Contextualisation would have not been possible without such a disassembling of scholars' activities in their constitutive parts that were hidden in the book form. But what we did not understand at the time was that this way of structuring information, which was entirely appropriate to construct the database, could not be suitable for interface design. Dynamic Contextualisation is a coherent and rigorous concept, but quite difficult to transpose in an intuitive and easy navigable interface. In the HyperNietzsche website, designed in 2000, contextual information was displayed using a vertical bar on the left of the screen: while navigating the website, the contextualisation sidebar presented the user with all of the contributions related to the document in the form of a list of hyperlinks. It seemed a simple, reasonable and standard solution (if standard means the fact that a lot of websites were designed using a left sidebar and users were increasingly familiar with it). Nevertheless, users experienced difficulties with the navigation and they were not even able to visualise the facsimile or the transcription of a Nietzsche manuscript. Starting from the version 0.4 of HyperNietzsche, we therefore introduced a series of new web pages, called 'views', which did not contain contextual information and made navigation easier and more perspicuous. Finally, at the end of 2007 we decided to radically modify the interface and the conception of the website and to mark this turning point we changed the name of the project from HyperNietzsche to Nietzsche Source.¹

3.1.3. From HyperNietzsche to Nietzsche Source

To understand why the HyperNietzsche interface was not satisfying, let us try to consider the principles on which it was built: we will see that the difficulty here was probably not the design of the sidebar, but the organisation of the content, namely the general structure of knowledge that this design was expected to express. Transposing the

Besides, 'hyper', 'hypertext' has always been rather vague and foggy concept and the attempts to make it more precise haven't been particularly successful; and now it sounds quite retro. 'Source', on the contrary, is an old idea in the humanities but one that is just as relevant as it has always been. More vintage than retro. It also has a technological meaning (code source) and a political one (open source), but it's true that the principal meaning refers to knowledge in general and to the philological sources in particular. It suggests the concrete and documented nature of research and it also indicates that in the Web sites bearing this name we could find the essential primary and secondary sources for anyone who wants to study the life and work of an author.

logical structure of Dynamic Contextualisation directly in the interface, abstracting from old forms of knowledge organisation like editions or journals, was not a good idea. In fact, the use, the manipulation, the construction of knowledge objects do not depend on logic, but on history. Scholars cannot work well if their materials are organized in conceptual structures which are too innovative, too different from the long term scholarship practices of work with objects showing a certain layout and presenting a certain affordability. We finally came to the idea that, without giving up the novelty of the system we were designing at the database level, the interface should support as much as possible scholars' habits and expectations. The solution was to separate navigation from contextualisation. The interface of a suitable scholarly information management system should thus be divided into two communicating parts: a part A to browse and navigate easily in the documents and a part B to contextualise and compare them.

3.2. Nietzsche Source Editions

In part A, the electronic medium should try to recreate the traditional formats of scholarly communication: improving them, if possible, but without altering their form and usability. When browsing documents, the interface should be designed using common templates which make the navigation intuitive for those who have a common practice of the Web. Functions are reduced to a minimum and contextualisation is absent. This part is divided into different subparts corresponding to the traditional formats of scholarly communication. The most common of these are:

1. The Facsimile Edition, which usually contains a catalogue, a material description and a digital reproduction of all the primary sources, be they documents, artefacts, movies, etc. Nietzsche Source publishes the Digitale Faksimile Gesamtausgabe (DFGA) which aims to provide for the first time a digital reproduction of the complete Nietzsche Estate, including first editions of works, manuscripts, letters and biographical documents. These are the primary sources for the study of Nietzsche's works and life and for the interpretation of his

Even when new media permit a different and more logical organisation of content, at the beginning new media mimic the old ones: it is well known that the first printed books imitated manuscripts books and the first CD-ROMs tried to reproduce the look and feel of printed books.

philosophy. The facsimile edition will allow scholars to verify, for example, the genuineness of the different text editions, which are the basis of any subsequent philosophical interpretations. The reader is provided with high-resolution colour facsimiles and will be able to browse, enlarge, print or download them. The DFGA relies on a specific digital classification system providing each page with a unique and stable Internet address. The abbreviation used in the URLs corresponds to the standard abbreviation used by Nietzsche scholars worldwide.³ For example, page 194 of the manuscript named 'M II 1' in the standard abbreviation system can be found at the following address: www.nietzschesource.org/DFGA/M-II-1,194. This makes the DFGA one of the first electronic editions that can be quoted and referred to easily in academic research [Fig. 3.1.].

2. The Critical Edition, which publishes a textual version of the primary sources including a critical apparatus, commentary and often a critical introduction. Nietzsche Source publishes the Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe (eKGWB) which is based on the German reference edition of Nietzsche's works, posthumous fragments, and correspondence edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari [D'Iorio 2010a, 2010b and 2011]. The quality of the text has been achieved through meticulous text collation, carried out by philologists who compare each word of the digitized text with the printed edition. Moreover, all the about 6,600 philological corrections that are scattered in the critical apparatuses of the different commentary volumes of the print edition have been integrated directly into the electronic text. All corrected passages are highlighted and, with a mouse click, readers can see the previous uncorrected passage of the print version. The result is the most correct version of the Colli/Montinari critical edition. Previous electronic versions, sold on CD-ROM or available on the Internet, not only did not integrate the corrections, they added their own errors due to insufficient collation work. Besides, They offered only the works and posthumous fragments while this electronic edition will also include, for the first time, the electronic version of Nietzsche's correspondence. The reader can freely consult and cite the text with ease, search for words or phrases either in the edition as a whole

The standard abbreviation system for referring to Nietzsche manuscripts has been established in Mette 1933.

or selected parts, and then print these passages or lists of occurrences. The Ekgwb relies on a specific digital classification system providing each work, chapter, aphorism or fragment with a unique and stable Internet address. The abbreviation used in the URL corresponds to the standard abbreviations established by the printed version, thus ensuring communication between paper and digital world. See, for example, the first section of *The Antichrist*, which can be reached at the following address: www.nietzschesource.org/eK-GWB/AC-1. This makes the eKGWB one of the first digital editions that can be quoted and referred to easily in academic research. At present, all Nietzsche works, posthumous fragments and letters are published in Nietzsche Source. The letters written to Nietzsche are in progress [Fig. 3.2.].

3. The Genetic Edition, which reconstructs and represents the genesis of the work. The general aim of our digital genetic edition is to publish all the Nietzsche Papers so as to represent the genesis of Nietzsche's writing projects and to reconstruct the development of his thought. There are three aspects in which our genetic edition differs from a standard critical or diplomatic edition: a) the transcriptions, b) the relationship between textual units and c) the arrangement of document types. a) Critical editions usually establish the text of the last writing stage. Printed diplomatic editions reproduce all of the writing stages, but often the reader experiences difficulties distinguishing the different writing levels. Our digital genetic transcriptions separate each writing level present on the page and then produce a diplomatic and a linear version of each. b) In a diplomatic edition, the order of units is topographic: you browse the documents following the order of the pages. In a critical edition, the textual units are usually put in chronological order. In our genetic edition, by contrast, the main navigation system is formed by genetic paths. If the reader selects a textual unit, the electronic system will automatically display all other textual units that are genetically related to it, whether they are preparatory stages or further developments. From the paths established by scholars, Nietzsche Source is able to automatically generate a diagram that graphically indicates all the paths that "pass through" a given piece of material, whether it be an aphorism, a manuscript note or a whole notebook. c) Finally, concerning the general division of the material, our genetic edition will be organized using the notion of "genetic dossier". Traditional editions use the arrangement based on document types: the letter edition on the one side, the works on the other side, on a third shelf the posthumous fragments, the biographical documents and so forth. We find it more appropriate to gather together all the documents concerning what we call a "writing project": that is the preparatory manuscripts of the work, the manuscript for the printer, the corrected proofs, the author's letters containing instructions to the publisher, the books the author consulted or annotated, as well as biographical documents like contracts and invoices [D'Iorio 2010c]. All of this will be contained in a unique genetic dossier and the whole edition will be formed by a collection of genetic dossiers. The genetic edition of two of Nietzsche's works: The Wanderer and his Shadow and Daybreak, including all related manuscripts is in preparation.

4. If the primary sources contain the personal library of an author, the library catalogue along with digital reproduction of the books, transcription of the annotations, commentaries and a general introduction produce a separate format. Friedrich Nietzsche's personal library is preserved at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek in Weimar (Germany). It includes more than 2,000 titles, about 750 of which contain reading marks. Based on the catalogue of Nietzsche's library published in print [Campioni et al. 2003], Nietzsche Source will publish the whole Nietzsche library on the web, including the collation with previous catalogues and other witnesses and adding the facsimile reproduction of all the books (about 500,000 pages).

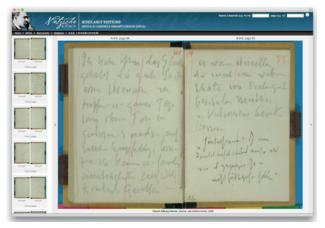


Fig. 3.1.

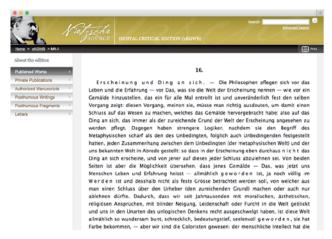


Fig. 3.2.

- 5. A Journal will publish essays, reviews and commentaries. Nietzsche Source publishes Studia Nietzscheana,4 which is an international peer-reviewed journal of Nietzsche studies aiming to publish the best philosophical research about Nietzsche. It welcomes research articles, reviews, translations, and philological commentaries written in six languages (English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish). Its layout mimics the normal presentation of a scholarly text in a traditional journal with footnotes in the lower part of the windows and a minimum of links so as not to disturb the reading [Fig. 3.3.]. The text is not segmented in pages but in paragraphs whose numbers are indicated in the left margin. Users wanting to refer precisely to the second paragraph of an article need to simply use the standard abbreviation of the article (SN/s-barbera-2014) and add a comma followed by the paragraph number, e.g. s-barbera-2014,2. To refer to a footnote, 'n' can be added before the footnote number: s-barbera-2014,n1 and the browser will show and highlight the appropriate footnote text. Clicking on a reference to the Nietzsche critical or facsimile edition opens a new window containing precisely the cited passage.
- 6. Bibliographies will contain lists of secondary sources compiled according different subjects. The Weimarer Nietzsche-Bibliographie is the most comprehensive and scholarly relevant Nietzsche bibli-

See www.nietzschesource.org/SN.

- ography. It was printed in five volumes in 2000 and it is continued on line at the Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek website. It includes about 30,000 bibliographical entries and mentions all the relevant titles written on Nietzsche since the beginning of the 20th Century. Negotiations are underway to republish and continue this bibliography in Nietzsche Source.
- 7. Catalogues and Concordances. Catalogues are registers of items in systematic order, which refer to a collection of objects, texts, etc. and their parts. Each one of the above mentioned eight components is based on a specific catalogue and the nature of the catalogue changes according to the nature of the object registered: manuscripts catalogue for the facsimile edition, text-units catalogue for the critical edition, bibliographic entries catalogue for the bibliography, etc. Some catalogues are not used for an edition and are not associated with digital objects, e.g. the classification of Nietzsche manuscripts in Goethe und Schiller Archiv in Weimar which was established for pure archival use.



Fig. 3.3.

Concordances are cross-referencing tables between two or more catalogues or other systematically organized sets of information.⁵ For

We use the term *concordance* in its original classical meaning as used first by Eusebius of Caesarea (circa d.C. 263-339) in his *Tables of Concordance* (also called *Canon Tables*) among the chapters of the four canonical Gospels and the which had a long future in medieval book production [Nordenfalk 1938]. See also the manuscript British Library, Add. 5111, fol. 10 v, www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_5111_f010v. We

example, a concordance between the catalogue of the facsimile edition and the catalogue of the critical edition will allow connections of each page of a Nietzsche manuscript with the related text in the critical edition and vice-versa. Using the concordances interface, a scholar can select one of the catalogues which compose the concordance in the first column and see in the other columns the corresponding value in the related catalogues. Catalogues and Concordances are prepared by researchers using manual or semiautomatic procedures and, together with *Studia Nietzscheana*, are the main sources of input for the Contexta component.

3.3. From Dynamic Contextualisation to Contexta

The diagram in Fig. 3.4. shows the main navigation paths throughout the first four Nietzsche Source components and the Contexta module. Starting from the home page, a reader can have access to the four components dedicated to the consultation of philosophical content which correspond to four traditional formats of scholarly communication in the print culture: the journal, the facsimile edition, the critical edition, the catalogue and concordances. In this part of Nietzsche Source, as we said, the electronic medium recreates the traditional formats of scholarly communication. From each page of part A, a link allows the user to switch to the corresponding page of part B (and vice-versa). In part B, called Contexta, all the documents which in part A appeared organized in different formats are completely atomized. It is now possible to use a set of tools to retrieve them according to different criteria and above all to contextualise and compare them. The term Contexta comes from Latin and means: "Things which are connected" and this component of our model, is precisely about relationships among different types of content. The connexions between scholarly objects are shown in Contexta within two different layouts: a synoptic mask and column navigation module.

do *not* use *concordance* in the meaning "alphabetical arrangement of the principal words contained in a book, with citations of the passages in which they occur" (OED, 6b) which is currently used within the computational linguistic and which should be properly indicated by 'verbal concordance' (between *verba*, words) as distinguished from the 'real concordance' which is the concordance between res, things, subjects, topics or passages.

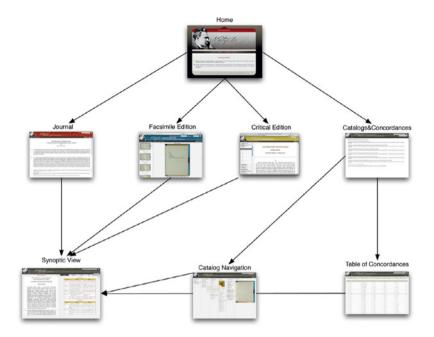


Fig. 3.4.

The *synoptic representation* is widespread in erudite tradition at least since the time of synoptic gospels and scholars should therefore not be lost. With this mask they will be able to compare not only different versions of a text, but any kind of contributions. If in the first column of the synoptic mask we select, for example, a passage of an article published in the journal (the format number 5 of part A described above) containing the reference to a Nietzsche aphorism, the second column will automatically display the related aphorism extracting it from the critical edition (from format 2), while the third column will reproduce the genetic path (extracting from the genetic edition, format 3) containing all the preparatory jottings Nietzsche used to write it. If it happens that the first step in the genesis of the aphorism was the page from an other author's work contained in Nietzsche's personal library, a column could display the facsimile of such a page containing, if present, the annotation Nietzsche wrote on it (from format 4). On the side of secondary sources, the user can choose to display in a column the text of other articles criticising, praising or complementing that precise passage of the selected article (from format 5) and, finally, an additional column could list a bibliography of other articles written

by the same author of by different authors of the same subject. The synoptic mask can be also accessed by simply writing the standard abbreviation of any document directly in the URL, after the name of the website, for example: to display all documents related to the aphorism 1 of *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* (*Things Human, All Too Human*), the user just types www.nietzschesource.org/MA-1. In this case, the left frame displays the aphorism 1 of *Things Human, All Too Human* and the right frame shows all the articles having quoted and commented this aphorism. This is a very useful piece of information for scholars, which cannot be obtained from traditional bibliographies or other electronic referencing systems [Fig. 3.5.].

The *columns navigation* will allow more experienced scholars to skip the normal navigation through the different pages of an edition and to browse very quickly the catalogue of the edition to find the document to contextualise [Fig. 3.6.].



Fig. 3.5.



Fig. 3.6.

From a technical point of view, each format of part A can be a subpart of a unique website or an autonomous website hosted by a different server and created and managed by a different scholar or research team. And the synoptic view of the part B can collect contextual information coming from different websites for comparisons, e.g., different transcriptions of the same manuscript published by different critical editions produced by different teams. To be able to communicate, part A and B should simply use a compatible scholarly ontology and a common communication protocol which can be a reduced and customized version of the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting.

3.3.1. Contexta use cases

1. A scholar made an important discovery concerning a Nietzsche text. For example an important source of this text, which explains why Nietzsche used the figure of Zarathustra as a protagonist of his famous book. How to make sure that everyone who reads that text will be aware of his discovery? Today there is no way to ensure that. The *Nietzsche-Studien* dedicated a volume of indexes only to the *Quellenforschung* to solve this problem. It covers the first twenty years of the journal. But it was soon obsolete anyway and besides will probably not be updated for another twenty years. With Contexta, the authors of an important discovery could be confident that it will be inserted automatically in the right place for it to be found

- by the maximum number of scholars. This applies to sources, but also to every kind of philological or philosophical commentaries.
- 2. Nietzsche's manuscripts are written in gothic handwriting and therefore are very difficult to read. The reference critical edition transcribed all of them, but the table of concordances which from the manuscript page refers to the related transcription is incomplete and the concordances for the inverse relationship (from the text to the manuscript) do not exist. Thanks to the table of concordances between the critical edition and the facsimile edition and the Contexta synoptic mask, scholars will consult the facsimile of the original manuscripts and related transcriptions automatically synchronized.
- 3. A scholar has to give a lecture where, among other topics, he would like to speak about an aphorism written by Nietzsche. He is fortunate to work in a big library but still, he has no way of knowing who wrote on this particular aphorism. A Google search for the title of the aphorism is likely to produce a list of hundreds of occurrences not always relevant especially from a scholarly point of view. If he uses Nietzsche Source, by selecting the aphorism in the critical edition and then clicking on the Contexta button, the synoptic mask will display all the commentaries, articles or books containing passages related to the selected articles, as well as genetic path showing how Nietzsche wrote and rewrote this aphorism in his manuscripts and reproduction of the first edition published by the author. Maximum relevance and zero noise, because Contexta only shows connexions established by authors' references contained in scholarly articles.

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Convegni

► Studi umanistici – Philologica

Sono sempre più numerosi i progetti di Edizioni Critiche Digitali che permettono di studiare, per mezzo di sistemi open source, il processo di genesi ed evoluzione delle opere attraverso la rappresentazione e interpretazione delle varianti d'autore. Il Seminario Internazionale ECD/DCE Edizioni a confronto/Comparing editions – organizzato nell'ambito del Progetto multidisciplinare THESMA (Sapienza Ricerca 2014) – ha riunito i maggiori esperti in Italia e in Europa di DH per presentare alla comunità scientifica internazionale i principali modelli di edizioni critiche digitali realizzati sulle opere di grandi autori italiani ed europei, da Leopardi a Gadda, da Jane Austen a Proust, da Nietzsche a Pessoa.

There is an increasing number of *Digital Critical Editions* which clarify, by means of *open source* systems, the genetic process and the evolution of literary works. This has been achieved by representing and interpreting the author's variants. The International Conference *ECD/DCE Edizioni a confronto/Comparing Editions* – organised within multidiscipinar THESMA PROJECT (Sapienza Research 2014) – has shown to the scientific community the main models of digital critical editions, produced at national and international levels, on the works by important Italian and European writers, from Leopardi to Gadda, Jane Austen to Proust, Nietzsche to Pessoa.

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