Variants

The Journal of the European Society for Textual Scholarship

14 | 2019
Varia

Analysis of Ancient and Medieval Texts and Manuscripts: Digital Approaches

Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2014

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Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/variants/778>

DOI: 10.4000/variants.778

ISSN: 1879-6095

Publisher

European Society for Textual Scholarship

Printed version

Number of pages: 191-193

ISSN: 1573-3084

Electronic reference

Simon Mahony, « Analysis of Ancient and Medieval Texts and Manuscripts: Digital Approaches », *Variants* [Online], 14 | 2019, Online since 10 July 2019, connection on 24 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/variants/778> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/variants.778>

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Review of *Analysis of Ancient and Medieval Texts and Manuscripts: Digital Approaches*, edited by Tara Andrews and Caroline Macé. Turnhout: Brepols, 2015. 346 pp. ISBN 978-2-503-55268-2.

The scholarship on texts and manuscripts is wide ranging, even more so when it comes to digital approaches, as is the content of this stimulating volume. This review thus gave me the opportunity to critically update my own perspectives on this important area of study. As the editors rightly point out, a work like this is only ever going to provide a snapshot. Nevertheless they raise important questions about how digital techniques have changed the way in which their work is conducted, and put to rest some of the scepticism of the value of digital methods witnessed within the discipline. There is always a time lag in quality publications and this volume is no exception; projects presented here will have moved on with some reaching the end of their funding period and now deemed to be complete. Overall, this volume covers an impressive expanse of material pulling together many fields of interest beyond the ability of any individual to be an expert in them all. It is usefully divided into specific sections to make things more manageable: Stemmatology, Statistics and Stylistics, Intertextuality, Script Analysis, and Codicology.

In all areas, and especially stemmatology, there is a need for transparency (Heikkilä) and particularly so with computer-assisted scholarship, in order to remove the “black box” effect as we tease out the significant aspects for examination from a tool. The contribution of Camps and Cafiero includes helpful information for the non-specialist and extensive explanatory footnotes. The Stemma, they say, is always a “simplification” and we need to acknowledge the effects of time and space on vernacular texts. These effects are more than a medieval “localisation” effect, but rather conscious changes to make the text more “modern” or “appealing” to their specific audience. Understanding the mechanisms implicit in the copying of texts helps us to understand variants. It is a well-argued position, and the same applies to the following chapter (Cantera) that discusses the movement from the oral to written tradition. This movement makes the archetype model redundant, particularly in the case of the Avestan texts and the wide geographic dispersal of the rituals on which they are based. Something that is becoming an essential feature of research is that the source data itself should be openly available for future researchers to check and verify in order to support their own conclusions and arguments. It is good to see that development in process here, particularly as we see the important

distinction being made between “unconscious mistakes” and “conscious corrections”. Simulating copyist and expected errors in artificially created corpora is an interesting approach to test algorithms looking at the accuracy of transmission (Hoenen). Cluster analysis and other statistical procedures borrowed from very different academic disciplines are indeed effective tools when looking at stylistic variations (van Dalen-Oskam) and open up the possibilities for measuring linguistic deviation and variation (Stella).

Beyond transparency, a major emphasis should be on openness and sharing. This is evident along with more technical methodologies in the chapters looking at intertextual research. The collections of wise sayings in SAWS are encoded in TEI/XML and RDF to make them not only sharable, but also to identify who it was that made various assertions about the texts and to facilitate conflicting opinions (Tupman). Importantly, it also allows the editors to express their degree of certainty about those assertions, making the whole editorial process explicit and transparent. I trust there was ample opportunity to discuss the encoding of Arabic texts with Romanov and, with the recent developments, it may be possible to move that encoding to sharable TEI/XML.

The changes to methodology that the digital turn brings to the interdisciplinary field of palaeography is explored in the penultimate section. Despite technological advances, human intervention is always going to be needed for the selection of features to be examined (Castro). The *Hesperia* project has many useful features and provides good faceted browsing to allow direct access to the texts, but the authors should (if they have not already done so) take a look at EpiDoc and the range of epigraphic corpora making use of this dedicated subset of TEI.

The concluding section on codicology pulls together pertinent projects on the identification of inks using sophisticated imaging techniques (Rabin), the divergent interests of manuscript scholarship and the removal of error through avoiding repetition of data (Andrist). Such processes can never be fully automated, as intervention and interpretation is always an essential part of the workflow. We need to move away from a focus on speed and ease of search to being able to ask new and better questions of our source material, in whatever form. One central element to that, and presented here, is that the research should be a shared partnership between so-called traditional scholarship and that of the technologists. It needs to address and drive forward the research agendas of both disciplines; not a case of technology simply being a tool to ease the workload of the textual scholar but one in which both parties benefit. Getting computer scientists involved in the research process, not just as tool builders but by giving them interesting problems to address, as Van Zundert suggests, will go some way to achieving this goal.

Nevertheless, as the Introduction clearly points out, the intellectual focus must be on method and technique rather than specific software packages as these become outdated and obsolete whereas the method does not. Make explicit the links that existed previously only in the mind of the scholar and

build on this to facilitate the serendipitous discovery of the intertext that was not previously recognised. Making data open and linked in order to allow interaction is the way things are moving and the projects in this volume support that.

The high editorial standard of this publication series is maintained in this volume with very few typos apparent. The occasional US English spelling creeps in along with the increasingly common but incorrect use of “digitalisation”. Overall, the strength of this volume is in its diversity both in terms of range but also the depth that is managed in a series of articles limited by word count; it represents a significant contribution to the field.

Simon Mahony