

Abstracts

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The Mechanic Reader. Instead of a Preface

Introduction to the proceedings of the Siena 2015 conference about *Digital Methods and Literary Criticism*, presenting the initiative within a history of the 'digital philology' research projects at the University of Siena and highlighting the impact of the new insights among the professionals of literary studies as well as the fluctuations of criticism against the quantitative methods, frequently swinging from apparent interest (more in the technological tools than in the theoretical methods) and awkward pedantry about its unavoidable imperfections, rarely offering alternative trials or advice for possible improvements. And yet the quantitative processing of texts proves to be one of the most promising innovations in the domain of literary criticism.

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Distant Episteme. New Conditions of Knowledge in Franco Moretti's *Distant Reading* (2013)

The aim of this paper is to show the advantages and potentiality of the application of 'distant reading'. By tackling Moretti's discoveries and outcomes, distant

reading, if conceived as a tool and not as final goal, can be a challenging and striking method to renew literary, historical, and sociological studies.

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On distant reading: a critical instance

Often in Digital Humanities the attraction for novelty leads to the enthusiastic adoption of new methods and tools, without an adequate epistemological and methodological consideration. How 'distant reading' fits in our tradition of theoretical and hermeneutical 'tools for thought'? The basic idea of this approach is that there are synchronic or diachronic literary and cultural facts that are undetectable to the usual deep reading and interpretation methods and that requires the scrutiny of hundreds or thousands of texts and documents. In this way we can gain access to otherwise unknowable information that plays a significant explanatory role in understanding literary phenomena. I think that the enthusiasm towards distant reading and data analytics methods overshadows some critical issues. Purely quantitative analysis can give some insights on the lexical level, but meaning in literary texts is multi-layered, and some layers do not have direct lexicalization or they have a very complex and dispersed one. Even

more relevant is the fact that literary texts, as any other cultural object, are essentially intentional objects and that critical discourse adopt intentional notions that are not reducible to a purely quantitative approach.

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Distant reading: some musings between world literature and digital humanities

Since the New York Times online series of articles in 2011, the idea of 'distant reading' grabbed the attention and the imagination of digital humanists and, to a certain extent, even of the general public. In the mind of digital humanists the work of Franco Moretti, the creator of this clever label, provided a methodology that developed organically from traditional methods of scholarships, paving the way to digital humanities. This paper critically discuss this idea, focusing on an analysis of the book *Distant Reading*. The focus will be in three problematic aspect: the origin of Moretti's methodology in 1970s Italian culture; the revival of the idea of world literature in the 1980s and 1990s; the way in which Moretti used data in the various period, starting with the time in which the idea of distant reading was first conceived.

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Computational Models (of Narrative) for Literary Studies

In this paper I argue that some of the computational methods and tools adopted by the CMN (Computational Models of Narrative) community can be beneficial for the scholars working in the area of Digital Humanities (in general) and, in particular, for those interested in Literary Criticisms studies. With this goal in mind, I will provide some examples of the methods and techniques coming from CMN and Artificial Intelligence that have been applied to the analysis of literary 'texts'. I will use the term 'text' or 'textual' here in a wide semiotic perspective (Fabbri and Marrone, 2000, pp. 7-11). Therefore also movies, paintings, pictures and not just books o written productions, can be considered as such.

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New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression. Reflections on a Thematic Project Sponsored by the Coordinating Committee of ICLA

Historically, textual study included writing and reading verbal texts in the medium of print. The final decades of the twentieth century, however, witnessed an explosion of new media forms as well as a shift towards the visual, the mass-produced, and the virtual text. This shift has opened innovative avenues in art and culture; it has also generated new ways of understanding the art and culture of the past, which have appeared more closely integrated with their medium (the book, the manuscript, the gallery, the museum) than was realized by previous generations. Entitled *New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression*, the volume published in 2014 and discussed in my article recognizes the global shift toward the visual and the virtual in all areas of textuality, as the printed, verbal text has been increasingly joined with the visual, electronic, and performative text. The contributors to this volume pursue a broad range of questions in the four sections of the book: 1) Multimedia Productions in Theoretical and Historical Perspective; 2) Regional and Intercultural Projects; 3) Forms and Genres; and, 4) Readers and Rewriters in Multimedia Environments. Beyond the specific analysis that each essay offers, they all emphasize the interplay between literature and other media (visual, performative, and electronic).

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LiteraMorphosis. Digital Technologies and the Transformation of Literary Culture

In presenting a special issue of «Between Journal» on *Technology, Imagination, Narrative Forms* (4.8, 2014), this article tries to define the contours of theoretical frameworks for a wider consideration of digital humanities, and explores the varied interconnections between literature and technology in the contemporary age. It does so by mapping some of their inflections in narrative at large, such as: the thematic or metaphorical representations of new or futuristic technologies in literature; the interaction between digital culture and more ‘traditional’ literary forms – from digital versions of classics to the use of IT technologies to facilitate experimental narrative techniques; the transformation of narrative under the influence of new mediascapes; the growth of intermedia or transmedia storytelling as a typical expression of the new convergent and participative culture.

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Archivi elettronici di poesia latina e opzioni multiple di ricerca intertestuale

An illustration of *Musisque Deoque. A digital archive of Latin poetry, from its origins to the Italian Renaissance* <www.mqdq.it>, and in particular of the most recent updates made. A number of examples, taken from Roman imperial and late ancient versification, demonstrate the way in which hidden intertextual connections can be automatically found by a mechanic word- search. These relationships often implicate rhythm and sounds without semantic implications, and in any case deal much more with significant than with significance.

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Computational Methods Of Literary Criticism: An Example Of Use In Marco Polo’s Devisement Du Monde

Textometry has developed powerful techniques for analysing large bodies of text using distant reading. For their part, many scholars in Literature stick to close reading. Inspired by the work of Anthropologist Jamie Tehrani on a famous fairy tale a new approach was taken using phylogenetics which reconciles close and distant reading. This method was applied to four episodes of Marco Polo’s *Devisement du monde*. Using software originally dedicated to genetics, it was possible to outline a cartography of the narrative structures and to underline their parenthood.

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Measuring the average population densities of plays. A case study of Andreas Gryphius, Christian Weise and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing

This paper is about computing the average population density of the stage (average configuration density) for 32 plays of German early modern period. As this value is likely to map the communicative structure of comedies and tragedies it is tested if plays of these genres from Andreas Gryphius, Christian Weise and Gotthold Ephraim Lessing differ significantly in this respect. The results of this case study show promise for investigations in a bigger corpus of German drama of that period. After this first, deductive approach the second one will be inductive. It is about learning what the plays in the quartile with the highest configuration density have in common.

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Manzoni's Electronic Interpretations

The case study of the famous Italian Alessandro Manzoni's novel: *I Promessi Sposi / The Betrothed*, and its complicated history of different writings, due to the author's searching for a real Italian Language, has given La Sapienza's researchers group the idea that every critical lecture may be a marking of text and leaves on the text a sign of its passage. Using a brand new informatic platform derived from European differences in law proposals, the research group has developed PhiloEditor 2.0, a tool that students, scholars and teachers may use to apply their critical categories to the text on line, sharing with other students, scholars and teachers their critical hypothesis, checking each other the rightness of markers. With PhiloEditor® 2.0 students can mark texts without computer skills, for learning and scientific purposes, annotating phenomena by choosing between a range of existing annotations – after turning to the traditional tools of literary studies – and connecting elements of different chapters that belong to the same category or methodology of correction, leaving a sign of a non-mechanical reading made with mechanical methods.

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Giacomo Leopardi's Zibaldone as a digital research platform: a methodological proposal for its semantic reconstruction and discursive mediation

Giacomo Leopardi's collection of fragmentary research notes known as the *Zibaldone*, has presented its author and scholars with challenges of semantic and discursive organization. The project of building a digital research platform for the *Zibaldone* aims to respond

to these challenges and to facilitate scholarly research by implementing the affordances of XML and HTML technologies to allow the reconstruction of its semantic and bibliographic networks, the strategic retrieval of Leopardi's own editorial annotations on the text, as well as the addition of user annotations.

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I Sistemi Artificiali Adattivi e l'opera di Fernando Pessoa: possibili applicazioni a finiecdotie critici

The work of Fernando Pessoa contains philologists and critics enigmas that traditional instruments have not always been able to solve. The paper describes some experiments carried out with the help of Artificial Adaptive Systems (AAS) in order to obtain a concise mapping of complex genetic relationships among the documents kept in the Fund Pessoa. The results provide valuable clues in the field of textual and literary criticism, underlining the effectiveness of integration between tools of the digital humanities, philology and literary studies.

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Biofiction, Documentality and the Internet: metamorphoses of a Literary Genre

Biofiction is a 'palimpsest', a story that someone has re-written on the basis of a true (or at least possible) biography. When we read such a text we generally assume that the narrated facts (and thoughts) are *true*, or at least likely, plausible, *in spite of* the fictional presentation of them, but after postmodernism, the distinction between referentiality and fictionality has become more problematic. Over the last 15 years, nevertheless, a new generation of Italian writers seems to handle the problem of referentiality much more carefully than postmodern authors, and in the hypermodernist biofiction the role of the 'mechanic reader' seems to be extremely important.