

# Why are there no comprehensively digital scholarly editions of classical texts?

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## 1. We have a problem

There is a problem which seems to be mostly going unnoticed. There is no (not one) “comprehensively digital” scholarly edition of a “classical” text with a manuscript-based multi-testimonial tradition. So I’d like to ask: why not?<sup>1</sup>

Of course, a number of terminological implications lie behind that wording:

1. By a “comprehensively digital” scholarly edition, I mean here one based (1) on a complete digital transcription of all primary sources and (2) on an automated collation of those transcriptions – the main model that I have in mind is that of the *Canterbury Tales Project*.<sup>2</sup> In this admittedly rather restrictive concept of a “comprehensively digital” scholarly edition, I concur with Peter Robinson: “A digital edition should be based on full-text transcription of original texts into electronic form, and this transcription should be based on explicit principles”.<sup>3</sup> This leaves out wonderful projects like *TLG* and *Perseus*, which however do not give account of textual variance,<sup>4</sup> and interesting works like *Musisque Deoque*, which encodes some variants (in TEI/XML), but is based on the encoding of an already constituted text<sup>5</sup>, or the HTML editions with variants by Michael Hendry.<sup>6</sup> The *Euripides Scholia* by Donald Mastronarde, *Hyperdonat*, and especially *Catullus Online* by Dániel Kiss are, among existing classical digital editions, those closest to the *Canterbury Tales Project*-type of digital edition.<sup>7</sup> *Catullus Online* even has digital images of manuscripts. However, their apparatus has been directly written by the editor and does not result from a (semi)automatic collation of full digital transcriptions of the primary sources.
2. By “classical” text, I mean that in the dirtiest of senses: Greek and Latin texts from the

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<sup>1</sup> I published the very first draft of this paper on my website in April 2012 (<http://www.unipa.it/paolo.monella/lincei/why.html>) and submitted a version revised for publication in April 2014. The present version has been updated and submitted again in April 2017, in which I checked links (all links in this paper were last retrieved on 9 April 2014) and added new projects that had appeared throughout the years. I believe that the core point of this essay still holds.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://hrdigital.shef.ac.uk/canterbury-tales/> and <http://www.sd-editions.com/>. In an interesting e-mail conversation that I had on this topic with Michael Hendry, he suggested that if I base my argument on such a strict definition of “digital” edition, a more specific wording would be required. He tentatively suggested the phrase “comprehensively digital scholarly edition”.

<sup>3</sup> See Robinson 2006, proposition 2.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.tlg.uci.edu/> and <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/> respectively.

<sup>5</sup> See <http://www.mqdq.it/>

<sup>6</sup> See the current *Curculio* portal in [www.curculio.org](http://www.curculio.org), including digital editions of texts by Sulpicia, Propertius, Ovid, Martial, Juvenal, and Claudian (in section III. *My Old Texts* of the website). A new version of the portal, *Quot lectores tot Propertii*, is under development in <http://www.qftp.org/>. It will be based on a database rather than on plain HTML, but still not on the complete digital transcription and automatic collation of primary sources.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://euripidesscholia.org/>, released in 2010, <http://hyperdonat.huma-num.fr/> and <http://www.catullusonline.org> (the latter was constructed between 2009 and 2013).

classical civilization, *i.e.* those belonging to the of the canon of Classical literatures.<sup>8</sup> This restriction of scope will be critical for my argument, but has the effect of guiltily excluding excellent projects like the *Electronic Editions Of The Gospel According To John*, the *Digital Nestle-Aland*, the *Online Critical Pseudoepigrapha*, Galen and *Saint Patrick's Confessio*.<sup>9</sup>

These two restrictions, combined, exclude all projects currently listed in the *Digital Critical Editions of Texts in Greek and Latin* page of the *Digital Classicist Wiki*, except for *Homer Multitext*, a valuable project that, however, rather belongs to the realm of papyrology.<sup>10</sup>

With restriction n. 2 above, I am not trying to be just another haughty classical philologist who looks down upon Late Antiquity, Christian and medieval texts. This is not my point.

All that I am arguing is: digital textual philology, *in classics*, has just not taken off yet. Yet? Will it ever? As a matter of fact, digital philology has been around since at least the mid-'90s, and in other fields of the humanities it has already produced important outcomes, when it has not even hit the mainstream: think of editions of biblical and medieval texts, documentary and literary manuscripts, authorial variants of modern and contemporary authors, epigraphy, papyrology.

If the distinctive feature of a scholarly edition ultimately lies in how it accounts for (and discusses) the textual tradition and the resulting textual variance, we must conclude that in classics, “comprehensively digital” scholarly editions have simply not taken off. Great projects like *TLG* and *Perseus* do not (currently) give variants<sup>11</sup>, while existing digital scholarly editions like *Musisque Deoque*, *Curculio*, *Euripidis Scholia*, *Hyperdonat* and *Catullus Online* are not based on digital transcriptions of primary sources and the automatic collation of those transcriptions.

Now, if I have managed to discomfit digital classicists (the other categories of readers have most certainly abandoned me at an earlier point of the article), let us go back to the point. No comprehensively digital scholarly editions of classical texts exist. And back to the question: *why not?*

I asked this question to other classicists in person, through the *Digital Classicist* mailing list and on *Academia.edu*<sup>12</sup>. Common answers include the often insufficient digital literacy among “traditional” editors and the shortage of “friendly” digital tools for them, as well as the chronic shortage of funds. Furthermore, after spending years learning the relevant technologies, transcribing digitally all manuscripts and devising some sort of automatic collation, has the poor classical editor made any substantial progress towards tenure?<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> It is impossible to cite even a tiny portion of the bibliography available on the concept of “classical” literature and civilization. A critical analysis of it is in Cozzo 2006, 165-190.

<sup>9</sup> See *Electronic Editions Of The Gospel According To John In Greek, Latin, Syriac And Coptic* <<http://www.iohannes.com/>> (based on transcriptions of the manuscripts), *Digital Nestle-Aland* <<http://nestlealand.uni-muenster.de/>> (and the related *New Testament Transcripts Prototype* <<http://nttranscripts.uni-muenster.de/>>), *Online Critical Pseudoepigrapha* <<http://ocp.stfx.ca/>>, the *Kommentar zu Hippokrates, Über die Gelenke* by Galen, edited by Christian Brockmann in the context of the *Corpus Medicorum Graecorum/Latinorum*, <<http://pom.bbaw.de/cmgl/>>, and *Saint Patrick's Confessio* <<http://www.confessio.ie/#>>. On the latter project, for instance, what I gather from the very detailed methodological statement in <<http://www.confessio.ie/about/hyperstack#>> (paragraph 3.1) is that only “The original Latin text of Confessio and Epistola as well as the translations of both are delivered by the Stack as electronic texts in the strict sense. [...] All other text layers listed above appear as PDF facsimiles”. Which means that only “the canonical version of the critical text, established in the scholarly edition by Ludwig Bieler in 1950” has been transcribed in electronic form, while the other witnesses are only made available as digital images.

<sup>10</sup> See <[http://wiki.digitalclassicist.org/Digital\\_Critical\\_Editions\\_of\\_Texts\\_in\\_Greek\\_and\\_Latin](http://wiki.digitalclassicist.org/Digital_Critical_Editions_of_Texts_in_Greek_and_Latin)> and <<http://www.homermultitext.org/>>.

<sup>11</sup> As far as *Perseus* is concerned, however, this feature seems to be part of the development agenda of the project: see Boschetti 2007.

<sup>12</sup> The discussion that took place on *Digital Classicist* is available in this section of the mailing list's public archives: <<https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A1=ind1204&L=DIGITALCLASSICIST#13>>. The discussion on *Academia.edu* is no longer available on that social network.

<sup>13</sup> These opinions are very common: compare Robinson 2005 for an example. Personally, I do not see user-friendly tools as a panacea for the

Most common answers to my question boil down to two key factors: time and money. Transcribing manuscripts takes long and costs much – and we humanists are in dire straits. Well, I wouldn't contest the latter statement. But creating full digital transcriptions of primary textual sources is time-consuming and costly for anyone. Nonetheless, other fields of the humanities do produce such editions, while there are hardly any in classical philology.<sup>14</sup>

## 2. No need

I have a simple answer to my own question: classicists don't feel that they *need* comprehensively digital scholarly editions – at least, not badly enough to spend the time and money on research required to produce them. I am going to argue that they feel this way because of the peculiar process of “canonization” (and consequent “normalization”) of the classical corpus of texts throughout the centuries (still ongoing).<sup>15</sup>

I would like to start my argument from the Text/texts (Text/documents) dualism. In what follows, I will use “Text” for the abstract text of a literary work, and “texts” for each of the actual versions of the text as found in a single document (papyrus, inscription, manuscript, print edition etc.).

Digital scholarly editions are very good at two things:

1. At focussing on *documents*;
2. At accounting for the plurality of the *texts* – for the textual variance – that these documents bear.

So scholars who focus on documents and/or on textual variance, for one reason or another, are currently finding digital editions attractive for their own research agenda, are experimenting with them and base them on complete transcriptions of primary sources. They include:<sup>16</sup>

1. Scholars focussing on the document:
  - *Codicologists*, interested in the document as a cultural object (for example, an artistically valuable enlightened manuscript, or one having a specific historical value);
  - *Epigraphists*, *papyrologists* and editors of *documentary manuscripts* who mostly work on texts borne by one textual source only;
  - *Palaeographers*, studying the specific graphical encoding conventions of a document.
2. Scholars focussing on textual variance:
  - “*Genetic*” editors of modern and contemporary texts, for whom textual variants bear a high

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digital humanities, as I argued in Monella 2012, paragraph 3.

<sup>14</sup> I will limit myself to only a couple of examples for each research field: for medieval philology one could mention the *Canterbury Tales Project* (see footnote 2 above); the *Princeton Charrette Project* <<http://www.princeton.edu/~lancelot/ss/>>; and (for medieval rhythms and music) the *Corpus rhythmorum musicum (saec. IV-IX)* <<http://www.corimu.unisi.it/>> (compare Stella 2007); for modern authorial variants and genetic editions, *Digital Variants* <<http://www.digitalvariants.org/>> (compare Fiormonte 2003), *Wittgenstein's Nachlass. The Bergen Electronic Edition (BEE)* <[http://wab.uib.no/wab\\_BEE.page](http://wab.uib.no/wab_BEE.page)> (compare Huitfeldt 2006), the *Proust Prototype* <[http://research.cch.kcl.ac.uk/proust\\_prototype/](http://research.cch.kcl.ac.uk/proust_prototype/)> (compare Pierazzo 2009), *Digitale Faust-Edition* <<https://faustedition.uni-wuerzburg.de/>> (compare Bohnenkamp *et al.* 2012 and, on general methodological issues on digital genetic editions, D'Iorio 2010); for fragmentary texts (only known through quotations), see Berti *et al.* 2009, Romanello *et al.* 2009. See footnotes 9 above and 15 below for more examples.

<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, just one step outside the borders of the classical “canon”, digital scholarly editions flourish. This is the case of disciplines still somehow connected with classical antiquity, but not concerning canonical classical texts such as Euripides or Virgil: epigraphy and papyrology are forerunners in the digital humanities with projects like *EpiDoc* <<http://sourceforge.net/p/epidoc/wiki/Home/>>, *EAGLE - Electronic Archive of Greek and Latin Epigraphy* <<http://www.eagle-eagle.it/>>, *Vindolanda Tablets Online* (I <<http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk/index.shtml>> and II <<http://vto2.classics.ox.ac.uk/>>), *Inscriptions of Aphrodisias* <<http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/index.html>>, *Codex Sinaiticus* <<http://codexsinaiticus.org/en/>>, *Papyri.info* <<http://papyri.info/>> and so many other brilliant projects; biblical philology has the *Electronic Editions Of The Gospel*, the *Digital Nestle-Aland* and the *Online Critical Pseudepigrapha* (already mentioned in footnote 9 above). Even more interestingly, such editions exist for texts which by all means belong to Greek and Roman antiquity, but do not belong to the “canon”, including the *Kommentar zu Hippokrates* by Galen (also mentioned in footnote 9 above) or the *Homer of the papyri* – not the “canonical” Homer of medieval manuscripts – as published by the *Homer Multitext Project* <<http://www.homermultitext.org/>>.

<sup>16</sup> See footnotes 9, 14 and 15 for some examples of digital projects in the research areas listed here.

cultural value;

- *Historical linguists*, who may study the evolution of language and orthography through “errors” in inscriptions, in manuscripts and in modern print materials throughout the centuries.<sup>17</sup>

Very simply put, classical philology generally:

1. Does not focus on documents (and texts) but on *the* Text;
2. Considers the textual variance introduced in medieval times as merely instrumental to the goal of the (asymptotic) reconstruction of the “original” text.

Why?

### 3. Canonization

Other than being a classical philologist myself, I am also an Italian writing in English. I don’t know which of the two faults is less forgivable. So my patient reader will reasonably suspect that I am not aware that “canonization”, in English, only refers to the church declaring a person a saint. As a matter of fact, I wasn’t sure. But then I looked it up on a dictionary, and now I am. However, allow me to pun and use “canonization” here both in the Christian sense and to refer to the process of transforming a set of literary works into a revered “Canon”.

It is the case that most of the classical texts that made it through the centuries made it because they became “canonical”.<sup>18</sup> The example of Virgil would be too easy to make. But it is generally true that later ages have considered classical texts “classical”, that is first-class, “canonical”: both a linguistic model (for medieval monks, Renaissance humanists as well as for contemporary students learning Latin or Greek) and an unparalleled peak of literary and cultural achievement (for the whole Christian and European medieval literatures and cultures, and for the the many waves of classicism in Western cultural history).<sup>19</sup>

The canonization of “classical” texts determines several specific features of their textual transmission, and thereby the peculiar nature of their textual variance:

1. “Ancient” *intentional textual variance* consisted in the original authorial variants and multiple redactions, as well as in the “active” variance introduced by early editors in classical antiquity such as Varius and Tucca for the *Aeneid*.<sup>20</sup> This must have been very wide, but *has almost completely disappeared*, mostly because – well, ancient texts are ancient, that is to say very old. It is statistically difficult that an authorial variant of a work survives two millennia of textual tradition anyway. It is even more difficult due to the “normalizing”

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<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately linguists normally do not publish texts, so they must rely on philologists, who mostly have a different research agenda; see Toufexis 2010 for the resulting trouble.

<sup>18</sup> Most, not all of them. In an e-mail conversation, Eveline Rutten pointed my attention to the counter-example of Greek lyric poets, and others could obviously be made. Cayless 2010, 139 has an interesting discussion on three different ways through which ancient texts survived until today (Virgil: “canonization”; Sappho: quotation; *Res gestae Divi Augusti*: dissemination).

<sup>19</sup> As I will suggest below, in my last paragraph, we classical philologists are still mostly *in* this canonization paradigm (see Cozzo 2006 and Benozzo 2011), but at this point I mean to focus on the effects of canonization on textual transmission in the *previous* centuries.

<sup>20</sup> Compare Donatus, *Vita Vergilii* 39-42, and particularly 40-41: *Ceterum [Vergilius] eidem Varo ac simul Tuccae scripta sua sub ea condicione legavit, ne quid ederent, quod non a se editum esset. Edidit autem auctore Augusto Varius, sed summatim emendata, ut qui versus etiam imperfectos sicut erant reliquerit.* “For the rest, he [Vergil] committed his writings to the aforementioned Varius and Tucca, on the condition that they publish nothing which he himself had not revised. Nonetheless, Varius published them, acting under the authority of Augustus. But they were revised only in a cursory fashion, so that if there were any unfinished lines, he left them unfinished” (the English translation is by David Wilson-Okamura, <<http://virgil.org/vitae/>>).

tension that belongs to any “canonical” tradition.<sup>21</sup>

2. *Later intentional variance* (medieval, modern and contemporary) was strongly discouraged by the “reverence” that scribes and philologists felt (and still feel) towards “canonical” texts. A medieval medical doctor might feel allowed to add his own recipe against flu to the technical, practical, “non-canonical” text of Galen, but a medieval monk would not dare add an iota either to Christian canonical texts (like the Gospels) or to classical “canonical” texts (like Plutarch’s works).
3. *Medieval textual variance was largely unintentional*, as it originated
  - either (more seldom) by “pure” distraction errors: a scribe is distracted because lunchtime is approaching, so he writes “dii” instead of “diu” (no semantic relation exists between the two words);
  - or by unconscious or conscious normalizations of the text: a scribe might *unconsciously* write “Deus” (a form more familiar to him, *lectio facilior*) instead of “diu”, or he might *consciously* change a reading that he considers incorrect in order to “correct” the text (that is, to restore what he believes to be the “original” form).<sup>22</sup>

Curiously enough, most of the actual medieval innovations originated in attempts to neutralize alleged previous innovations. But, after all, isn’t this the way that we, modern textual philologists, still introduce new variance into ancient texts all the time?<sup>23</sup>

The resulting framework for classical texts is as follows:

- The textual variance that classicists might consider *culturally meaningful* (for instance, the “ancient” one – see point 1 in the list above) has faded out and has not been replaced by later “creative” innovations on the text (point 2 above) because of the “reverence” for classical texts, while
- The variance actually existing in our textual sources (point 3 above) is considered *hardly meaningful* from a cultural viewpoint, in that it is unintentional and therefore “erroneous” – originating as it did in most cases either by distraction errors or by erroneous attempts to correct alleged previous errors.

This is probably why classical philologists seem not to feel the allure of digital scholarly editions based on thorough electronic transcriptions of manuscripts. I will now refer back (though in inverted order) to what I mentioned as the two main strong points of such editions: (1) the representation of textual variance and (2) the focus on documents:

1. *Textual variance* in most classical texts is not considered meaningful in itself. The “variant readings” – confined in the *apparatus criticus* – are both a hindrance and a tool in view of the main goal of reconstructing a “good” text. Variants are a *hindrance*, in that they are living evidence of the distance that separates us from the “original” text.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, variants are a *tool*, in that *through* the critical examination of variants philologists aim to

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<sup>21</sup> On ancient intentional variance see: West 1973, 15-19 for a shorter classification; Pasquali 1952, 185-496 for an extensive and critical discussion, with examples of some permanence of this variance; and Canfora 2002, 9-14.

<sup>22</sup> Systematic lists of possible origins of textual variance in classical texts are in Fränkel 1964, 22-46 and in West 1973, 15-29.

<sup>23</sup> Compare Cozzo 2006, 252-253.

<sup>24</sup> Whatever “original” may actually mean, in light of the fact that there is a distance even between the mind of the author and his autograph. Compare Segre 1979 (b), 36: “Ogni testo scritto è in realtà trascritto: da un copista o da un tipografo. Anche l’autografo è una trascrizione... Insomma, *ogni trascrizione è anteriore o posteriore al testo: nessun testo può essere identificato col Testo*” (“Every written text is, in fact, transcribed: by a scribe or by a typographer. The autograph is also a transcription... So *every transcription is earlier or later than the text: no text can be identified with the Text*”; the translation is mine, while the italics are by the author).



reconstruct the oldest possible stage of the development of the text. This is the only reason why, after the *constitutio textus* – (re)construction of the text – the supposedly “wrong” variants are not thrown away, but kept in the recycle bin of the *apparatus criticus*: text editors must expose the process that led them to their choices, so that erudite readers can falsify their work and possibly make different choices by “recovering” readings from the apparatus recycle bin.<sup>25</sup> In any case, medieval variant readings of classical texts are *instrumental* towards the goal of the *constitutio textus* – they are not culturally meaningful *in themselves*.

2. *Documents* too (mostly medieval manuscript and early Renaissance print editions) are of little interest in themselves. They are just as instrumental (functional to the *constitutio textus*) as the variants that they bear. Needless to say, the early print philologists (humanists like Manutius) sometimes threw manuscripts into the (actual) waste bin after using them. Unfortunately, many such bins were emptied afterwards, and many documents are not to hand any more. Thank God most classicists today have a manuscript fetish.<sup>26</sup>

There is an insanely large number of manuscripts of the *Aeneid* around the world. Digitising the texts of all of them – or at least the most relevant – would take a *very* long while. A classical philologist would ask: what for?

## 4. A broader research agenda

Indeed, if our only really important goal is the *constitutio textus*, the traditional print apparatus – or at the most its digital direct derivative, that is the TEI *Critical Apparatus* module – are good enough already.<sup>27</sup>

Due to space constraints, the print *apparatus* tends to select “substantial” readings, thus freeing us from the entropy of the palaeographic or diplomatic variants that a comprehensively digital edition would record.<sup>28</sup> In fact, all this is very convenient if we only focus on the “Text”. The traditional layout of the print scholarly edition provides us with one “authoritative” text, reassuringly separated (emended) from “errors”, while allowing for some degree of Popperian falsification of the scientific process that led to the establishment of that text.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> See the *appendix* of Kenney 1974 for a history of the print layout of the apparatus, Flores 1998, 42-46 on its drawbacks and Cozzo 2006, 253-257 for a critical reading of the implications of the *mise en page* of print scholarly editions.

<sup>26</sup> In the words of Pasquali 1952, 49-50: “Quell’età [il Rinascimento italiano], ancora libera da quella religione del documento che minaccia ora talvolta di divenire superstizione, vedeva nel manoscritto solo il trasmissore di un testo nuovo. Una volta che il testo era stato copiato fedelmente, esso perdeva per gli umanisti quasi ogni valore. [...] Lo zelo per gli studi ha per centinaia d’anni non soltanto messo in luce testi, ma distrutto le pergamene che avevano rivelato quei testi” (“That age [the Italian Renaissance], still free from that religion of the document that today sometimes threatens to become superstition, saw in the manuscript only the bearer of a new text. Once the text was faithfully copied, it lost almost any value for humanists. [...] For hundreds of years, the zeal for our studies not only rediscovered texts, but destroyed the parchments that had unveiled those texts”; the translation is mine).

<sup>27</sup> See section 12 *Critical Apparatus* of the TEI P5: *Guidelines for Electronic Text Encoding and Interchange*, <<http://www.tei-c.org/release/doc/tei-p5-doc/en/html/TC.html>>.

<sup>28</sup> Digital scholarly editions allow us to go beyond the distinction between diplomatic and interpretive editions through the creation of a complex model that comprises both levels and their interaction: see Vanhoutte 2000 (a); 2000 (b) and 2010; Haugen 2004; Buzzetti & McGann 2006; Driscoll 2006; Huitfeldt 2006; Bodard & Garcés 2009; Sahle 2009 (chapter 2.1.4.2 *Zur Durchsetzung und Etablierung der digitalen Edition*); Gabler 2010, 49-51; Mordenti 2011, 659-660; Pierazzo 2011; Pierazzo 2015 (chapter 2 *Modelling (Digital) Texts*). However, I agree with Tito Orlandi that a more sophisticated model for digital scholarly editions, especially for those relying directly on the digital transcription of primary sources, is needed: compare Orlandi 2010, 55-119 (particularly 76-69); Gabler 2010, 47-48 and Bohnenkamp *et al.* 2012. I tried to give my own contribution to the creation of such an enhanced model by starting a prototypical digital edition of the *Iudicium coci et pistoris* in 2012 (see <<http://www.unipa.it/paolo.monella/incei/edition.html>> and Monella 2014), which I then abandoned. I recently (2017) produced an edition of another text following the same methodological principles: *Ursus from Benevento, De nomine, from the Adbreuiatio artis grammaticae, codex Casanatensis 1086, ff. 1r-11r* <<http://www.unipa.it/paolo.monella/ursus/>>.

<sup>29</sup> I was happy to hear that Francesco Stella, who spoke after me in this conference, shared and even surpassed my own skepticism on the potential of a print *apparatus criticus* to allow for falsification of the editor’s choices. As the variants in the apparatus are a selection, it is virtually impossible to recreate the text of each witness in its entirety, and therefore to appreciate each single variant in the context of the text it makes sense within (see Cozzo 2006, 255 and Lazzarini 1998, 243). Flores 1998, 42-43 argues that the selection of the variants to be included in the

The added value that a digital edition can provide only becomes worth the effort of a comprehensive digitization of the sources in the framework of a “plural” concept of text and language, while classical philology, still substantially immersed in the “canonization” paradigm, is still based on the concept of (1) *one* authoritative text and (2) *one* pure language.

1. *One text.* As far back as 1934, Giorgio Pasquali advocated a research agenda that included both the “critica del testo” (textual criticism, the attempt to reconstruct the “original” text) and the “storia della tradizione” (a historical inquiry into the textual tradition, the different stages of historical development that the text as a living organism has undergone).<sup>30</sup> However, the research program of classical philology is still firmly grounded on the attempt to reconstruct *one* “authoritative” text (which has to do with a specific notion of “author”).<sup>31</sup>
2. *One language.* Classical philology still substantially rests upon the concept of *one* “pure” Greek or Latin language. “Non-substantial”, “banal” errors in manuscripts often derive from the tension between the language of the text and the language of the scribe.<sup>32</sup> They are precious fossil evidence for historical linguists, but the later development of the Latin and Greek is not part of the research agenda of a classicist.<sup>33</sup>

This is why I suspect that, apart from the general issues of time and money, we will only see comprehensively digital editions of “canonical” classical texts with a multi-testimonial tradition when (or rather *if*) classical philology broadens its research agenda:

1. When (or if) it embraces a plural, fluid concept of text, a concept implying that each document’s text is worth studying as a historically determined cultural object. By doing so, classical philology would necessarily join forces with other sectors of cultural studies;<sup>34</sup>
2. When (or if) it expands its gaze upon “post-classical” Latin and Greek – thus joining forces with historical linguists and romance philologists.

Whether such a shift is likely to happen, I honestly don’t know. Altogether, I personally believe that our society may only benefit from an “open” and “plural” concept of text and language. But I also think that classical philology itself, being as it is today – alas! – a shrinking niche within the

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apparatus is based on the editor’s *stemma codicum* (on his hypothesis of relations between the manuscripts), but this implies that a learned reader, based on that apparatus, will necessarily confirm the correctness of that *stemma codicum*.

<sup>30</sup> See Pasquali 1952 (first published in 1934). An enlightening book on the (cultural) history of the tradition of classical texts is Reynolds & Wilson 1991. Also compare Canfora 2002 (particularly pp. 15-24).

<sup>31</sup> Paragraph 3.3 of Pierazzo 2015 has a thorough critical *summa* of the scholarly discussion on the issue. For a critical analysis of the notion of “author” see Barthes 1977 and Foucault 1984 (both essays originally appeared at the end of the 1960s, in 1967 and 1969 respectively). Also see Woodmansee 1994, pp. 35-55 for a historical perspective. Buzzetti & McGann 2006, 53-55, Fiorimonte & Pusceddu 2006 and Fiorimonte 2012, 65-67 tackle the issue with a specific attention to digital philology, while Cozzo 2006, 192-198 discusses it focussing on the classical world.

<sup>32</sup> Cesare Segre proposed seeing a manuscript, and any other kind of node in a textual transmission, as a “diasystem”, a gateway where different semiotic systems interact, namely the linguistic code of the exemplar and the linguistic competence of the scribe/philologist. The original formulation of this theory is in Segre 1979 (a). Tito Orlandi repeatedly suggested basing the digital edition of texts based on primary sources on Segre’s theory (Orlandi 1999 and, more recently, Orlandi 2010, 85 and 116).

<sup>33</sup> As a reaction to my point, Prof. Giorgio Di Maria, of the University of Palermo, Italy, argued that traditional print scholarly editions (especially those of the late XIX Century) also preserve a fair number of graphical variants and banal “errors”, thus providing classicists with the opportunity to create monographs such as Havet 1911 (discussing a variety of medieval scribal errors) and Schuchardt 1866-1868 (a work on the evolution of Latin). Toufexis 2010, however, points out how useful a series of digital editions including *all* variants of medieval Greek manuscripts of classical texts would be for scholars who study the history of the Greek language. An interesting case, though not directly related to classical texts, is that of the CLPIO project (*Concordanze della lingua poetica italiana delle origini*, <<http://www.accademiadellacrusca.it/it/attivita/1-concordanze-lingua-poetica-italiana-origini-clpio-dirette-darco-silvio-avalle-cura-lino-l->>). It is based on a complete transcription of all manuscripts bearing early poetic texts in Italian (until 1300 AD), and its primary linguistic interest is transparent in the very title of the project: “*lingua poetica italiana delle origini*”, “Italian poetic *language* of the origins”.

<sup>34</sup> I am thankful to Giorgio Di Maria for reminding me that the study of a manuscript of a classical text as a cultural object has a limitation: while we can date a codex with a precision of about 25 years today, we still do not have completely reliable techniques to determine the exact geographical area where it was produced.

already shrinking pool of the humanities, may only benefit from the opportunity provided by digital philology to open itself to a broader research agenda, and regain an organic osmosis with the rest of the humanistic studies.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> To do so, it should first engage in a self-reflexive epistemological reflection. Such investigations have been pursued in the last decades, probably stimulated by the general crisis of classics and the humanities. The most interesting cultural operations in this respect seem to me those that courageously reconsider the historical and anthropological/ethnological foundations of the discipline, such as Longo 1981 and Cozzo 2006 (particularly pp. 9-29, where the "self-historicizing" perspective of the author is explained). A similar goal, for philology in general (not only classical) is that of the "etnofilologia" proposed by Benozzo 2011. However, in classical research the theoretical perspectives of "New Philology", inspired by Nichols 1990 and Cerquiglini 1999, are largely disregarded and often unknown (see Driscoll 2010 for a historical and thoughtful discussion on that critical movement). Going back to digital philology, some humanities scholars took the advent of the digital humanities as an opportunity to rethink the methodological basis of philology and textual studies (in my opinion, this is a very intelligent approach and, in the long run, probably the most useful contribution that the digital humanities can give to textual studies and to the humanities as a whole): among many others, see Orlandi 1990 and 2010; Mordenti 2001 and 2007, 129-166 (also see the reaction by Fiormonte to this chapter in <<http://infolet.it/2009/02/07/il-senso-del-testo-digitale-tradizione-o-decostruzione/>>); Mordenti 2011; Bryant 2002; Fiormonte 2003 and 2012; McGann 2004; McCarty 2005; Buzzetti & McGann 2006 (particularly 67-70); Rockwell 2009; Gabler 2010; Mordenti 2011; Pierazzo 2015 (paragraph 3.3).



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