

## Working Towards a Born-Digital Commentary: Methods, Concepts and Building Materials

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This paper stems from doctoral research in three late Greek epic poems: the *Posthomerica* by Quintus of Smyrna, *The Sack of Troy* by Triphiodorus and *The Abduction of Helen* by Colluthus. Dated between the 2nd and the 6th century AD, they are all re-workings of the Epic Cycle, relate the events which either precede or follow the *Iliad* and observe the linguistic and metrical conventions of archaic epic poetry.

Bearing in mind the wider cultural processes they emerged from, they are examined in terms of their interdependence with earlier texts with an objective to establish that their composition follows a complicated scheme, largely dependent on the narrative context. Following the theoretical framework of intertextuality and the idea that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations” (Kristeva 66) and taking into consideration that epic composition is based on the repetition of regular expressions, which are “used under the same metrical conditions, to express a particular essential idea” (Parry 80), late epic poems can be thought of as highly-structured hypertexts, with each word having a specific function within the system and indicating the relationship of the text with others.

Applying a combination of close and distant reading, based on the theory of macroanalysis, according to which the “reading and gathering evidence from individual texts” and the “accessing and mining [of] digital-text repositories” (Jockers 9) need to supplement each other, we identify marked verbal types, presumed to signify intertextuality, and we corroborate this with a series of targeted searches in the digital versions of Ancient Greek texts, included in the TLG databank.

The resulting dataset forms the basis of the electronic component of the project, a resource conceived as a commentary focusing on the digital representation of intertextuality. Defined as a “a systematic series of comments or annotations on the text of a work” and also as a self-conscious and “continually evolving organism”, the commentary is practically a form of reading where “texts are responding to earlier ones through revision, contestation, addition and continuation” (Kraus and Stray 1-2) and establish a relationship with their prospective readers/users.

The idea of the digital commentary combines the digitisation of existing print resources, the building of born-digital tools and the exploration of possibilities in the interconnectedness and interoperability of digital collections. The architecture will allow for the integration of annotated texts, linked to one another and to information which can be extracted from them and represented as maps, diagrams and networks. Questions addressed include the representation of and distinction between different types of intertextuality and the visualisation of extensive arguments.

Being the output of a personal philological project, aiming to highlight intertextuality as a constituent “ingredient” of poetic composition and, therefore, as a necessary companion for the study of these texts, the resource will present a self-contained discourse, but with the flexibility required for the digital medium, in order to support a multidimensional reading. It will be open-ended, user-oriented and will prioritise the incorporation of various sources and resources, in order to broaden perception and understanding, without imposing a single opinion.

### Works cited

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