# The .txtual condition, .txtual criticism and .txtual scholarly editing in Spanish philology

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## Abstract

The impact of New Technologies on writing proccess is not new at all. This digital revolution first resulted in the appearance of new text formats and the development of an ad hoc literary theory. In Angloamerican area, this revolution made philologists and patrimonial institutions reflect on the necessity of developing formats of study, edition and perennial conservation of these new formats of digital texts. What is the reason for such a delay in these disciplines that can be observed in Europe? Why can we say that *digital forensics* and *media archaeology* (Kirschenbaum) are not trasnational disciplines? In this paper, I assess the impact in Europe and in Angloamerican area of *.Txtual condition*. Moreover, I make a contrast between these conclusions and the answers given by three emblematic writers of the 'new Spanish narrative' to a survey about ways of managing and preserving digital files.

**Keywords** Spanish .txtual condition · .txtual criticism · .txtual editing · New comparative filology · Spanish filology

## 1 The .txtual condition and .txtual criticism in Spanish philology

A little more than ten years ago, in June 2007, around forty representatives of contemporary book culture—among them, authors, critics, journalists, publishers and booksellers—gathered in Seville at the initiative of a prestigious Spanish publishing house, Seix Barral, and the José Manual Lara Foundation. The aim of the three-day summit and its round-tables was to exchange ideas about and survey into the achievements, objectives and innovations of a

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group of writers who were born between the early 1960s and mid-1970s and began publishing their work in the early years of this millennium.

Although, for many of these writers, the meeting in Seville was not strictly speaking a debut—and neither were they members of the so-called "Nocilla generation", which, nonetheless, became synonymous for the group after the event[1]—it was a fortunate choice of timing to bring together such a heterogenous group of authors. By biological age, they could belong to different generations, but this meeting proved to be the foundational act of the "New Spanish Narrative."[2]

While a reader of their works will notice many compositional, stylistic and thematic differences between these authors, there are two features many of their works have in common and which have received scholarly attention in the form of doctoral theses (Calles Hidalgo 2011; Barker 2011; Pantel 2012; del Pozo Ortea 2012; Saum-Pascual 2012): hypertextuality, on the one hand, and inter-, multi- or transmediality on the other. As is widely known, both concepts have been usually linked to the impact that new media has had on literary production and creative writing and this has most prominently been reflected in the pioneering and internationally well-known studies by Bolter, Landow, Ryan, Douglas, etc.

Compared to the most influential works in the Anglo-American area (Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story*, Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden*) Spanish electronic literature has received less scholarly attention so far (Pérez 2015), especially in Spain. This might be understandable in some cases with respect to limited innovative aesthetic quality and the ephemeral character of the digital works in question. As a matter of fact, several works of Spanish electronic literature which have been collected, preserved and presented in a section of the institutional online portal Virtual Library Miguel de Cervantes are not available online anymore.[3]

There is a risk that some of the "expanded literature" texts—or *exonovels*, to use the neologism one of the New Spanish Narrative's most famous representatives coined (Fernández Mallo 2012: 67)—will sooner or later be confronted with digital obsolescence. The second part of this article discusses this problem, but will also address another issue. I will look beyond contemporary literary studies, focused on the interpretation of singular authorised texts published under their author's name, which often fail to recognise the multitude of reprints,[4] and instead turn to questions of the (digital)

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[1] The label "Nocilla generation" refers to the title of a novel by Agustín Fernández Mallo called *Nocilla Dream*. Nuria Azancot reused part of the title in an article published just a few weeks after the meeting (07.07.2007). Other labels used - related to monographs, anthologies or compilations - are "afterpop", "mutant", "last generation Spanish narrative", "pangeic", "postmodern", "New Spanish Narrative", "posthumanist narrative".

[2] According to the literature, the number of writers that would be part of the group varies from six to twenty. Among them, it is common to find Lolita Bosch, Javier Calvo, Harkaitz Cano, Jorge Carrión, Diego Doncel, Domenico Chiappe, Álvaro Colomer, Juan Francisco Ferre, Javier Fernández, Agustín Fernández Mallo, Eloy Fernández Porta, Salvador Gutiérrez Solís, Robert Juan-Cantavella, Milo Krmpotic, Gabi Martinez, Javier Moreno, Vicente Luis Mora, Sofia Rhei, Isaac Rosa, Mario Cuenca Sandaval, Germán Sierra, Manuel Vilas, etc.

[3] Literatura Electrónica Hispánica 2018 Fundación Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (Ed.): Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes. URL: http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/bib/portal/literaturaelectronica/obras.html (accessed 06/27/18).

[4] An exception is the three volumes: *Nocilla Dream* (2006), *Nocilla Experience* (2008) and *Nocilla Lab* (2009) that form a trilogy, republished under the common title *Proyecto Nocilla* (2013).

writing process, scholarly editions (of born-digital material) and (born-digital) ar-chives.[5] In this area, the landscape of European research, especially for Spanish studies, seems to offer less encouraging prospects.

It is clear that European research in Digital Humanities lags behind its counterpart in the Anglo-American world for reasons that are not easy to overcome. Matthew Kirschenbaum's concept of the ".txtual condition" in the digital age does indeed apply to many European writers—Spanish in particular—and I will refer to three of them in the second part of my study: "In the specific domain of the literary, a writer working today will not and cannot be studied in the future in the same way as writers of the past, because the basic material evidence of their authorial activity—manuscripts and drafts, working notes, correspondence, journals—is, like all textual production, increasingly migrating to the electronic realm" (Kirschenbaum 2013: par. 4). However, very little, if any, scholarly attention has been paid since to this change that will affect *in crescendo* four branches of literary studies—analytical bibliography, philology, scholarly editing and interpretive studies—when it comes to the literary production of the twenty-first century. It is useless to bemoan the situation. It is much more interesting to try to understand the causes and to examine the difficulties, or perhaps the resistances, that will have to be overcome in Europe in order to create the digital humanities community that Kirschenbaum has called for.

## 2 Digital forensics: a transnational discipline?

In the context of Anglo-American academia and research, authors, textual scholars, editors and, above all, cultural and memory institutions work hand in hand to meet the ".txtual Condition" (Kirschenbaum 2013: par 38). Regarding European countries where English is not the official, but rather a second language, the delay of GLAM institutions (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums), the lack of digital edition projects that are comparable to the pioneering work in the Anglo-American area[6] and the scarce curiosity of researchers for the impact of the digital transformation on literary ways of writing that Kirschenbaum exhibits in *Track Changes* (2016) cannot be properly explained unless we make explicit how an apparently transnational discipline—the adaptation of *computer forensics* methods in archival science and philology—is rooted in the specific philological tradition of Anglo-American analytical bibliography and textual criticism. This is probably the key reason for the success of this approach.

> Media archaeology […] offers one set of critical tools for coming to terms with the .txtual condition. Another, of course, is to be found in the methods and theoretical explorations of textual scholarship, the discipline from which McGann launched his ongoing program to revitalize literary studies by restoring to it a

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[5] *Text* in the broad sense of the word, that is, as defined by Donald McKenzie: "I define 'texts' to include verbal, visual, oral, and numeric data, in the form of maps, prints, and music, of archives of recorded sound, of films, videos, and any computer-stored information, everything in fact from epigraphy to the latest forms of discography" (1999: 13).

[6] In *Mechanisms*, Kirschenbaum cites, as a representative sample button, *The Electronic Beowulf*, *The Canterbury Tales Project*, *The William Blake Archive* and *The Rossetti Archive* (2008: 16 note 26).

sense of its roots in philological and documentary forms of inquiry. As I've argued at length elsewhere, the field that offers to most immediate analog to bibliography and textual criticism in the electronic sphere is computer forensics, which deals in authenticating, stabilizing, and recovering digital data. […] Digital forensics is the point of practice at which media archaeology and digital humanities intersect (Kirschenbaum 2013: par. 31).

The double philological root to which Kirschenbaum refers is undoubtedly at the center of the success and fruitful development of this research paradigm within the digital humanities in his field of research. However, it might be more straightforward to say that the analogue precursor of the adaptation of *computer forensics* as a tool in born-digital philology was McKenzie's "*heterodox bibliography* or *sociology of texts*" and McGann's "*New Textualism or Modern Textual Criticism*". The reference to Jerome McGann, who is given the honor of having revitalised literary studies, may be seen as proof of this assertion.

In textual criticism and scholarly editing of *modern* English literature texts—the stress on "modern" is essential here—the names Donald McKenzie, "heterodox" bibliographer (Darnton 2003: 43) and book historian, and Jerome McGann, American critic and philologist of modern texts, are often mentioned together and may seem synonymous with the paradigm shift that took place in literary disciplines during the mid-1980s (Greetham 2013: 37, Sutherland 2013: 57; Shillingsburg 1996: 24). McGann's and McKenzie's books *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (McGann 1983, 1st ed., 1991, 2nd ed.) and *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (McKenzie 1986, 1st ed., 1999, 2nd ed., the result of the *Panizzi Lectures,* McKenzie 1985), published within a narrow time frame, have contributed to this misconception. The fact that the two authors sought to distance themselves almost at the same time—though they did it regarding different corpus and interests—from the "Greg-Bowers-Tanselle theory", which at the time was the predominant paradigm in the field of textual criticism and scholarly editing of premodern texts (Lernout 1996), may also have contributed to the shakeup of the discipline.[7]

A survey into the academic reception of the two scholars not only in the Anglo-American sphere, but also in European research, reveals, however, that things are not simple at all, and neither their names nor their proposals are interchangeable. McKenzie is an undisputed authority on Anglo-American bibliographical research. However, it is the name and the work of Jerome McGann that has become the most emblematic reference among the representatives of *New Textualism*. His book *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* became part of the school's "canon" (Greetham in Shillingsburg 1996: vii). The earlier *The Textual Condition* (1991) is one of the most frequently cited works among researchers interested modern scholarly editing, such as *Scholarly Editing in the Computer Age* (Shillingsburg 1996), *The Fluid Text. A Theory of Revision and Editing for Book and Screen* (Bryant 2002) and the *.txtual Condition* (Kirschenbaum 2013), to mention just three important works by McGann's followers.

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[7] In his assessment of Anglo American textual criticism, Lernout (1996) suggests that McGann calls into question Greg's "base text" theory and the concept of "authorial aim" later introduced by Bowers in the context of his philological study on manuscripts and modern texts. McKenzie, however, tries to widen the field of analytical bibliography with his new definition of "text" and his reflection on the production and spreading of printing history.

In the part of Europe where English is not a lingua franca, however—particularly in Romance-speaking Europe (e.g. France, Italy, Spain)—with the exception of English literature studies, the work of McGann is hardly known, while "the second McKenzie" (Willison 2002: 204) enjoys international reputation throughout Europe, although more among book historians than among modern philologists. The French book historian Roger Chartier is the one who mainly disseminated McKenzie's work and ideas in the European context.[8] The absence of a modern philology in France and Spain at the time allowed Chartier to leave out the dominant bibliographical facet in the New Zealander's work by skipping the outset of his reflection to highlight the second key idea[9] underlying McKenzie's *Panizzi Lectures*: the *material* and *social* dimensions of *text*, which led to his own *history of books, reading and readers.* In this way, Chartier did away with the strong link between librarianship and bibliography, between archives and editing, in McKenzie's work and diluted his very early concerns about the emergence of new technologies that were substantially affecting the understanding of text and its circulation (Vauthier 2018a, b).

> These lectures were conceived and prepared, not as a text destined for print, but as lectures occasions. The challenge, as I saw it, was to sketch an extended role for bibliography at a time when traditional book forms must share with many new media their prime function of recording and transmitting texts.

could we read in the preface to the first edition of his book (1986: IX). In its second edition, following a review of McGann's (1988) response and, thanks to Chartier's work, the unexpected international reception of the book in Europe (McKenzie 1986: 23; 1999: 6); he resumes:

> The familiar historical processes by which, over the centuries, texts have changed their form and content have now accelerated to a degree which makes the definition and location of textual authority barely possible in the old style. Professional librarians, under pressure from irresistible technological and social changes, are redefining their discipline in order to describe, house, and access

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[8] McKenzie's book, *Bibliography and sociology of texts*, was translated to French in 1991, to Italian in 1998 and to Spanish in 2005. In all three cases, translations were accompanied by a substantial prologue by Chartier, who has channeled the author's reception, very particularly in France and then in Spain, in the somewhat exclusive direction of the history of the book (Vauthier 2018a).

[9] These three ideas are: 1. "an extended role for bibliography", as it is shown in the first lines of the preface that follows. In the second paragraph, McKenzie specifies: "there were *two other considerations* which it seemed timely to voice" (1986, ix, italics are mine).

2. The acknowledgment of historical bibliography as a discipline in itself: "Historical bibliography (as distinct from descriptive and analytical bibliography and stemmatics) has gained acceptance as a field of study" and

3. The essential instability of the text and the impossibility of fixing it for good: "Definitive editions have come to seen an impossible ideal" and "each version has some claim to be edited in its own right" (1986, 2).

These three ideas clearly show McKenzie's wide oversight, as bibliographer and book historian. Chartier is a book historian, not a philologist, and consequently only refers to the first and second idea.

sounds, static and moving images with or without word, and a flow of computer-stored information (1991: 1).

These two dimensions—the impact of new technologies and the necessary renovation of the traditional *bibliography*—explain the honored place that Donald McKenzie now occupies among Anglo-American scholars of modern text, particularly in the works of McGann and Kirschenbaum.[10] Although in *The .txual Condition* (2013: par. 7, 31 and 41) and in *Mechanisms* (2008: 9) Kirschenbaum admits his debt to McGann, in the opening pages of his collective report *Digital Forensics and Born-Digital Content in Cultural Heritage Collections*, he asserts very clearly that the necessary connections and interactions between the world of archives and digital forensics stem from McKenzie's work, particularly from his early attention to new technologies:

> We maintain that such parallels are not coincidental, but rather evidence of something fundamental about the study of the material past, in whatever medium or form. As early as 1985, D. F. McKenzie, in his *Panizzi lectures*, explicitly placed *electronic content* within the purview of bibliography and textual criticism, saying, 'I define *texts* to include verbal, visual, oral, and numeric data, in the form of maps, prints, and music, of archives of recorded sound, of films, videos, and any computer-stored information, everything in fact from epigraphy to the latest forms of discography (1999, 13) (Kirschenbaum et al. 2010: 5).

In the same way, McGann's recent popularity among modern philologists may be a consequence of the fact that he knew how to minimize his first book's precedence to McKenzie's *Panizzi Lectures*, which would be published two years later, and, consequently, could make McKenzie 'the Hero of Our Own Time', that is, the Hero of Scholarly Edition.

> D. F. McKenzie became The Hero of Our Own Time not because he discovered the sociology of the text – we've known about that for a long time. He became The Hero because he knew that *the idea* of the social text *had to be realized as a scholarly edition*.
> Such an edition would be addressing and answering some key – basically philological – questions. Could one develop a model for editing books and material objects rather than just the linguistic phenomena we call texts? To pose that question, as McKenzie did, was to lay *open the true dimensions of what he was after*: a model for editing texts in their contexts (McGann 2013: 281-282, italics are mine).

After having clarified the intrinsic alignment between the adaption of *digital forensics* as a philological and archival scientific method, on the one hand, and the traditions of theory and practice of modern scholarly editing, textual criticism and analytical

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[10] It is very interesting to note that in the section "The History of the Book" of his review of "Textual Scholarship", Marcus does not mention McKenzie, but only Chartier and Darnton. Instead, he mentions McKenzie along with McGann in the section "Textual Scholarship in Present" (2010).

bibliography in the Anglo-American academia and research, on the other, I turn the scope of this survey back to Europe.

Unlike the Anglo-American context, where authors, textual scholars, publishers and, above all, cultural and memory institutions work hand in hand to meet the ".txtual Condition", the European cultural and research landscape features neither such a clear, nor such an unanimously shared strategy among the involved parties.[11] Moreover, there is no such thing as a standardized "continental" or "European theory of scholarly editing", nor are there language-specific models for scholarly editions (Lernout 2002, 2013; Vauthier 2018a, b). Even TEI encoding and TEI-based editions still face difficulties in establishing a standard model for digital scholarly editions (Marcus 2009: 93–94), which may complicate the long-term preservation of editions.

Last and above all, the idealistic understanding of the modern text that prevails among European philologists and an individualist or romantic concept of *authorship* have been the main factors which impeded studies focused on the materiality of the textual media, on the graphic dimension of prints and books, and on non-authorised or posthumous[12] versions of texts (Vauthier 2017; Vauthier 2018a, b). An article penned by Rüdiger Nutt-Kofoth illustrates this point, which allows me to further detail and expand my above claims regarding the lack of scholarly reception of McGann's work in Europe. In *Editionsphilologie als Mediengeschichte* (*Scholarly Editing as Media History*, Nutt-Kofoth 2006)—the simplicity of the title should be noted as meaning-ful—a German literary scholar and specialist for scholarly editions invites his col-leagues to stop focusing solely on the "linguistic" dimension of the text and instead turn to the concept of "bibliographical orientation"[13] by Peter Shillingsburg (2006: 19), the representative of the *New Anglo-American Textualism*, which, in recent years, has made large efforts to build bridges between the scholars of German and English literature.[14] It is too early to see whether his colleagues will follow this invitation,[15] although it may

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[11] Kirschenbaum's article illustrates how the invaluable legacy of an author, editor and educator like Deena Larsen, a pioneer of electronic writing, to an institution (the MITH) is not a result of chance, but of friendship that unites the writer to the center and its researchers. That is to say, the same scenario as the one at the origin of the legacy or the sale of working manuscripts of contemporary writers to memory institutions is repeated: Louis Aragon at the *Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes* in Paris, Miguel Ángel Asturias at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Friedrich Dürrenmatt in Switzerland. In all three cases, the legacy was made with the explicit desire for exploration and evaluation using latest editing techniques.

[12] The geneticists—members of both French and German schools—have put a lot of emphasis on the materiality and the graphic substance of the drafts, of the *avant-texte*, a characteristic that they have not granted to the text completely (Lebrave, 2009; Mahrer 2017 Reuss 2005). In the same way, even among those who declare to be interested in the process, the death of the author remains an insurmountable frontier (Lebrave, 2009, Mahrer 2017) or remains clearly on the side of the history of reception (Reuss 2005). And that is what the Anglo-Americans question with the idea of "versioning" (Reiman 1987), "fluid text" (Bryant 2002), etc.

[13] "Based in the bibliographical studies of D. F. McKenzie, this orientation enlarges the definition of text to include all aspects of the physical forms upon which the linguistic text is written. This approach does not admit to any parts of the text or of the physical medium to be considered non significant and therefore emendable. […] all aspects of the physical object that is the book that bear clues to its origins and destinations and social and literary pretentions […] are text to the bibliographic orientation" (Shillingsburg 1996: 23–24). Two recent books of Italian philology (Cadioli 2012, Italia 2013) also draw attention to the importance of the works of McGann and even more of Peter Shillingsburg.

[14] Like the German editor of *Ulysses*, Hans Walter Gabler, did at his time and like it is still done by Belgian Anglists Geert Lernout and Dirk van Hulle (Lernout 2013: 74–75).

[15] That invitation is the same that Margarita Santos Zas and I made to edit Valle-Inclán (2017).

seem unlikely that it will be possible to put an end to the debate about the issue of textual versions that opposes the scholars of German and English literature— an issue that hinges on questions of materiality on the one hand and "authorial intentionality" on the other (Shillingsburg 1996: 99–100).[16] More instructive may be Patrick Sahle's work (2013) on the typology of digital scholarly editions and on the definition of the term "text",[17] in which the historian reflects upon its polysemy and, instead of one definition, proposes a dynamic wheel of terminological perspectives on the term "*text*". In this way, he intends to overcome static definitions that construe "text" in antagonistic terms.

After this overview, in which some light was shed on the specificity of modern textual criticism and scholarly editing of modern texts both in European traditions and in the Anglo-American research context, it is necessary to return to memory institutions and to the urgent issue of the long-term preservation and curatorship of writers' private digital archives.

## 3 'I unpack my digital library and show you my digital desktop'

In their studies of librarianship and digital curatorship, Becker (2014) and Weisbrod (2015) highlighted the challenges and deficits that research and memory institutions— they take libraries and literary archives in Germany, Austria and Switzerland as an example—need to address in terms of long-term preservation, curatorship and scholarly appreciation of born-digital heritage and digital culture in comparison to memory institutions, archives and research in European countries where English is not the main language spoken. Both books seek to understand how writers write, how they organise their working process, and how they organise and preserve their documents in the digital era. Yet, the question arises: to what extent authors have an interest in and are willing to receive support from memory institutions to ensure long-term preservation of their literary and personal digital archives. Additionally, Dirk Weisbrod complemented the empirical part of his doctoral thesis with in-depth expert interviews with archivists and directors of memory institutions. Both authors in their conclusions put emphasis on the need for archivists to establish contact between memory institutions and likely donors or depositors of private digital archives as early as possible in order to make writers aware of the need and possibilities in place to preserve their published or ongoing work, for instance, in an institutional archive cloud (Weisbrod 2015: 416– 453, here 423). In the course of his argument, Weisbrod forges the neologism 'präkustodiale Intervention' (*pre-custodial intervention*), which refers to the intervention of archivists with possible donors or depositors as a preliminary measure to ensure long-term preservation of and access to their archives. This conclusion is very much in line with the institutional collaboration with writers advocated for by Kirschenbaum.

From the more modest academic perspective of a scholar of contemporary Spanish literature, who is not directly connected to particular memory institutions and who does

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[16] In *From Gutenberg to Google*, Shillingsburg lists the main works of the polemics (2006: 173–174) and Vauthier analyzes some of the editorial implications of the two paradigms (2017 and 2018a).
[17] This polysemy is activated or reactivated, if we consider McKenzie, through the problems of coding. That is, from what new technologies make the editors see.

not feel inclined to acquire *digital forensic* skills anytime soon, I still find it important to scrutinize the implications of the digital media turn for the scholarly edition and interpretation of twenty-first century literature.

It was Jean-Louis Lebrave's research program[18] that guided my steps when examining the hybrid *dossier génétique* of Robert Juan-Cantavella's transmedial novel *El Dorado*, a born-digital novel (Vauthier 2014: 2016). This research program, proposed to the French *critique génétique* by one of its pioneers, put forward his scholarly attention for the changes that the arrival of personal computers on the authors' writing desks meant for their ways of working. Having studied the *dossier génétique* of *El Dorado*, it became very clear to me that the *critique génétique* and scholarly editions of twenty-first century literature will depend on the preservation state of the private digital archives and that these disciplines will have to focus on the question of digital versions and variants—and on the complexity of the problem of the *versions* (Lebrave 2011: 145). Consequently, I contacted three writers of the "New Spanish Narrative" to start a survey about their way of working in the digital age.[19]

Without being aware of it at the time—given that I formulated my questions based on my years-long practice as a scholarly editor of *avant-textes* and modern Spanish texts and not aimed at the interviewees' way of writing—I happened to collect data about their methods of organising their work on the computer and about how they ensured the preservation of their creative work at the same time.

Despite the relatively small sample of three writers, the data collected is relevant in the context of the methodological framework of qualitative survey (Heigham and Croker 2009). Qualitative surveys gather generic information, illustrate general trends, may seek answers to research questions that cannot be operationalised and addressed in quantitative surveys or questions where the personal relationship and the interaction between interviewee and researcher may play a key role. In short, my survey responds to the research question formulated by Becker in her conclusion: "It would be interesting to have a closer look at the youngest generation of writers with respect to their ways of writing" (2014: 70).

In the present case, the answers are interesting with respect to two dimensions. *Nocilla Dream* (2006) by Agustín Fernández Mallo (1967), *El Dorado* (2008) by Robert Juan-Cantavella (1976) and *Alba Cromm* (2010) by Vicente Luis Mora (1970) are among the most representative *inter- and transmedial* works of the New Spanish Narrative. All of them meet the definition of the *exonovel*, a neologism coined by Fernández Mallo.[20]

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[18] "It would be a much greater matter of urgency to mobilize the energy for approaching two crucial questions for the future of genetic criticism. First, it is about really knowing how the writers appropriate the computer, and which are the effects of this appropriation on writing. The second concerns the way in which geneticists will be able to construct real scientific objects based on data of a new type stored on computer memories" (Lebrave 2010: 155).

[19] The mention of the personal relationship and friendship is necessary, since the access to author files must be approved by the authors and / or beneficiaries. In the case of digital archives, the question of trust placed in the researcher and the confidentiality of the documents to which they may have access is more crucial than ever. I sent the questionnaire "I unpack my digital library and show you my digital desktop" during the Christmas period of 2017 and the answers came between 26th December and 25th January, allowing me to request additional information.

[20] In addition, Agustín Fernández Mallo and Vicente Luis Mora also have articles and / or essays that focus on the impact of new technologies and they maintain blogs of literary criticism.

A neologism, based notion of a exoskeleton, *exonovel* refers to "that which sustains to novel, providing internal solidity and protection, without which the novel itself is not possible" (Fernández Mallo 2012: 68). "The model that this Exonovel follows is that of a protective shell on the outside of the book's body, but it is dislocated." (2012: 69) The examples that the author provides between the two definitions refer to digital formats that the three authors use on a regular, varying basis: websites, blogs (either installed for the purpose of a specific writing project or their pre-existing blog), videostreams on YouTube or other platforms, Facebook accounts operated by the authors under their real names or avatars, etc.

With respect to the problem of digital obsolescence of electronic literature, which has already been briefly addressed, this calls for precautionary measures; it is time to be concerned about the impact that a partial or complete loss of the elements "without which, the novel itself is not possible" would have on our understanding of the *exonovels*. I will postpone dealing with the private digital archive, the submerged part of the iceberg— the digital files poised to possibly disappear—and first address the work's digital representation in the public sphere.

Although the *texts* seem to be independent from the "cinematic poetics of their provenance", what would happen if the readers of the *Nocilla* trilogy—*Dream* (2006), *Experience* (2008), *Lab* (2009)—had no longer access to the movie *Proyecto Nocilla*?[21] Accordingly, what would happen to our understanding of the work if Cantavella's *Punk Journalism* website—available on punkjournalism.com—that complements the novel *El Dorado*, the URL of which already no longer corresponds to the one mentioned on the back cover, ceased to exist? Even so, if the two *texts* are autonomous, the parodistic weblog will not stop laying open its deck of cards, revealing to its reader parts of the documentary (digital photos, cutouts of scanned texts, etc.) and critical material (articles of the fictive character published in the press) that the author's alter ego Trebor Escargot used to write his *road movie*, a remake of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998),[22] inspired by Hunter S. Thompson's homonymous 1971 novel (Vauthier 2014, 2016). Furthermore, how could we not think about the implications for our understanding of *Alba Cromm* (2010) if we know that the author's logbook "Alba Cromm y la vida de los Hombres" ("Alba Cromm and the Life of Man"), which Vicente Luis Mora wrote parallel to his novel and to which the novel refers, and also know that this logbook "is only accessible through the *Internet Archive* search engine" (Ilasca 2015: 3)?

These preliminary observations may be sufficient to illustrate why it is essential to understand how writers imagine the future of their work, which they develop, almost exclusively, in digital media. Despite the fact that all of the authors' answers to the various survey blocks are interesting and relevant with regard to the issue, I will not document them in full. It would be impossible for several practical reasons, mainly because some of them are very long and some contain confidential information. Even without having access to the authors' computers or, in this case, their files,[23] but having seen some of their

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[21] The film is available in the writer's blog "El hombre que salió de la tarta": "Proyecto Nocilla, la película" http://fernandezmallo.megustaleer.com/proyecto-nocilla-la-pelicula/ (accessed 13/2/19).

[22] *El Dorado* is based on both Thompson's novel and the film directed by Terry Gilliam, which stars Jonny Depp as Raoul Duke.

[23] The work on *El Dorado* was realized through the examination of the material collected in a USB key that the author gave me in 2011, along with personal documents (DVD, press, logbook, etc.) kept in a backpack (Vauthier 2014, 2016).

screenshots, it is clear that "access to someone else's computer is like finding a key to their house, with the means to open up the cabinets and cupboards, look inside the desk drawers, peek at the family photos, see what's playing on the stereo or TV, even sift through what's been left behind in the trash" (Kirschenbaum 2013: par. 3). This is the natural and understandable reason for the cautious reluctance of the authors to deposit or donate their private digital archives—and surely one of the greatest challenges for the effort of building future born-digital archives and pre-custodial interventions.

To give an overview, three quarters of the questions asked were related to what Weisbrod describes as "ways of administrating and managing work on the computer" (2015: 391–394, 524–525), one quarter was about the "methods to ensure preservation of the archives" (2015: 383–390, 523–523). To be more precise, I was interested in the following topics:

- how do authors organize their digital work and when do they start organizing their materials;
- the metadata and criteria they use to organize their work (date (timestamps), file name, file type, extension, title, etc.) and their possible variations according to textual genre (narrative, essay, poetry, academic work, etc.);
- the time and naming schemes according to which they create and name versions, the timing and regularity when they do so;
- the possible metadiscursive component ("notes de régie") in their work and the way they use visual queues for marking up certain digital writing operations (color, strikethrough, bold, track changes, etc.);
- the way of documenting their work in the digital environment (type of used sources and consulted documents) and, if applicable, the way this "external" material is stored;
- the possibility of recycling documents, versions, own and/or "external" texts and the concrete way this is done (duplication of documents, copy and paste, etc.);
- the use of the operating system's virtual recycle bin;
- the preservation of digital files and hardware (self-archiving): what do they keep (own and/or external documents, draft versions, final versions etc.)? When does the author self-archive their born-digital materials? Where is the archive stored (cloud, hard disk, hard copy)?;
- their possible representation of a digital library of literary authors that would replace traditional, paper-based archives, and their willingness to deposit or donate their born-digital archives.

Due to my interest in the writing process, on the one hand, and in scholarly editing of both *avant-textes* and authorised texts, on the other, I was especially interested in the way the authors document their own working materials and even more in the management of possible versions of their work. Moreover, their answers to my questions regarding their willingness and interest to deposit or donate their digital files to archives and about their self-archiving practice seemed somewhat unexpected to me, if not alarming. In the following section, before commenting on them altogether and coming to a conclusion, I will reproduce the answers they gave to the first block of questions— documentation and version-management– and I will outline the answers to the second block—archive preservation.

## 4 "Version"

Staying within the methodological context of a philological study that does not utilise *digital forensics* (Ries 2010), during the interviews, I used the term "version" in the sense of "text" that slightly differs from another text, saved by the author before or after the first text. A comparison between both texts would show a variation, that is, would allow a researcher to reconstruct the writing process.[24]

I did not try to establish a new definition of the term "version" in the context of this study that would allow to include, in a strict sense, textual versions in automatically saved backup or temporary files (von Bülow 2003: 3). I also did not take into account the definition of the term version that Kirschenbaum refers to, for whom "versioning is a hallmark of electronic textual culture—as a thriving industry of content management systems, file comparison utilities, and so-called version control or concurrent versions systems, […]", that is, Concurrent Versions System (CVS) (2008: 197).

I will argue, however, that the issue of "textual identity" still needs to be at the center of scholarly interest. With this clarification, my question and the answers by the three authors are documented below.[25]

**Bénédicte Vauthier:** What is your criterion to be met in order for you to save a new version or to duplicate the document on which you are currently working? What do you do with previous "versions"? How do you name them? How often do you save what you wrote?

**Agustín Fernández Mallo**: I create a new file version if the novel is very advanced and it seems that I can open a path that will radically change things. I usually keep the name of the original file and simply add a number at the end. "[...] 2," "[...] 3", etc. Sometimes I specify the reason of the change in order to remember it: "[…]SUBSTITUTIONdistortion". I keep the previous versions, even if I consider them complete failures—you already know my opinion about garbage and about how it can be recycled. Years may pass until I am able to see that something I had discarded was waiting for its natural place somewhere else. (email on 10 January 2018).

**Robert Juan-Cantavella:** The criterion is not very scientific. I save a new version every time I think that I have made many changes to a document, just in case I may have to review later once more what I discarded. Sometimes a long time passes (months), sometimes very little (days), depending on the changes made. When I return to a version, I usually save a copy of the previous version when I start, because I do not have everything under control; I keep the copy just in case. Previous versions are saved in a dedicated folder. I usually name it "out" or "ant", although it can be a different name. (email on 14 January 2018).

**Vicente Luis Mora**: [...] When I spoke about versions, I was referring to the same base document with some changes; sometimes with many changes, sometimes with

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[24] Technically it would have been perhaps more accurate to speak about the "state of a text", to distinguish this *rewriting,* typical of "avant-texte", from another possible *rewriting*, posterior to a first publication.

[25] I translated my questions and their answers to English for this documentation.

fewer. The base document, however, is always the same and therefore keeps the same creation date.[26] Each one of these digital copies that you have is a backup copy of the same document in progress, in continuous change: I enter the document and I add new things, correct or delete some of the old ones, so the document is not the "same" anymore when I finish. This is why I said it is a version, while you called it a "changed draft". When I create a digital copy, it is because I think that I have made enough changes in the original to save it separately, and the chronological order is not marked by the date of the file, but by [...] [the date of the backup]. [This latest file] [...] contains the most recent version of each of the [texts]. [...] As I sometimes change minor things here and there in the document that are difficult to remember, and I hate the "track changes" mechanism of [Microsoft] Word, this is the only solution for me not to get lost: by successively saving multiple backups of the same document while it transforms towards its final "gestalt". It is possible that between these copies there are only a few variants, but all of them together are the writing-polishing process of the novel, the demanding toil of writing, which [...] includes even the proofeading. (email 24 January 2018).

## 5 Preservation

With a nod to Walter Benjamin's essay "Ich packe meine Bibliothek aus" ("Unpacking My Library", 1931), which is echoed in the title of my questionnaire, I formulated the following two blocks of questions that refer to the preservation of digital files.

1.  Where do you keep the digital files related to the writing process of your works? Hard disk, cloud, hardcopy? Do you also keep the external documents that you have consulted?
2.  How do you imagine a future library/digital archive of authors (for example, *Residencia de estudiantes*)? Can you imagine depositing or donating the digital archive of your works to a public research library? Do you organize your folders with this in mind when you finish a work? Do you manipulate them? Are there any documents that you would like to delete? When you buy a new computer, do you keep the hard drive of the one you dispose of?

To the first question, the three authors declared that they save their material to one or several hard drives separately. They save their work with varying regularity and, in any case, when they move or migrate to a different computer. Two of them also use email as a save and backup tool and none of them seem to use the cloud. Agustín Fernández Mallo even declared that he does not trust it. In general, working on paper, either for proofreading or to keep hardcopies of their work, has rather a marginal role in their working process. They may use it merely for "more sentimental than practical reasons", as Fernández Mallo puts it, referring to the gallery proofs his publisher sends him. The

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[26] On my initiative, the author returns to the response he had given me in the first place: "I do not usually make different versions' (26.12.2017), which contradicted the status of a digital file to which I was given access." Specifically he refers to the 28 "digital versions" of the novel *Alba Cromm* that he sent me in 2014 through a cloud. I gave up studying them because I did not find a satisfactory form of exploring the genetic dossier composed of versions which, in addition, as the author suggests, all have the same date of creation.

three writers seem to move only a few of their digital documents to the virtual trash bin, and never while they are still in the writing process. Some of these documents end up bloating folders named "discard", "keep" or "out", which leaves the writer the option to recover or reuse the text, immediately or later. Draft versions may also be found in these folders. They mostly move material to the trash folder that may have turned up in the phase of documentary research, excerpts, early notes and drafts and that is not regarded as useful any longer (downloads, photos, etc.) or which is considered "external" to their work. Agustín Fernández Mallo and Vicente Luis Mora said that they keep their old computers when buying a new one. Vicente Luis Mora said that once when he was abroad (in the USA), he disassembled a laptop "in order to puverise all its main components one by one with a hammer" as a measure of destroying his data. In addition to laptops, he also has a personal desktop computer which serves as a "method of general physical backup of everything."

The answers referring to their interest or willingness to deposit or donate their digital archive to a library that ensures their preservation cannot be easily summarized, nor do they show an unified tendency. Agustín Fernández Mallo said that he imagined "a library in which the digital and the analogue are perfectly intermeshed, what I call Postdigitalism: I organize the folders thinking about my personal organization and nothing else." Robert Juan-Cantavella imagines "a library that is accessible from computers. I do not know whether one would be required to enter a physical space (a building) to go and consult them. I would not donate the digital working documents of my books to a library or to any other type of institution. When I finish a work, I do not organize the materials thinking about any later external research consultation. There are usually no documents that I want to eliminate more than others." As for Vicente Luis Mora, he seemed to doubt that there will be such libraries "when I will be older", imagining, in addition, a careful process of selection of "writers who wish to be included in their archive". However, he expressed his concern about the idea that "textgenetic researchers like me" could dig into his computer and into the drafts of his works, with which, even when finished, he is usually not satisfied. Hence, he declares: "you may be able to understand my feelings about the materials I have put aside. I guess, I will make many things disappear that would interest you, although I will keep others because the love for the work that took place during the consecutive drafts does not allow me to get rid of them." Having documented these answers by the authors, I would like to conclude by returning to the question of born-digital and the scholarly edition.

# 6 .txtual editing

Anyone who knows anything about digital files and is familiar with the concerns of writers —and even more those of their relatives—about the idea that researchers will search through their drafts as they please, have access to private materials, potentially reveal well-guarded or forgotten secrets, will understand certain fears triggered by the idea of delivering not just previously selected drafts and prints, but also the key to their digital "home" to unknown philologists, who would use *forensic methods* in order to access those digital secrets.

Regardless whether out of fear, lack of confidence or interest, if the artists of the 20th and twenty-first century do not deposit or donate their digital archives to professional memory institutions or take curatorial measures in order to preserve them, an important

resource for understanding the works of this era would be lost. They would end up only printed and published, making them appear curiously single or decontextualised if we think of the heterogeneous modern archives that may consist of drafts, notes, gallery proofs, prints, annotated books, correspondences, photos, etc.

The apparent reluctance towards the archives of the future on the side of those authors who turned to and embraced the new media and their technologies to the extent of even becoming strongholds of the worldview of a connected society seems somewhat puzzling.

If these authors did not give researchers access to the materials and traces of the creation of their works, geneticists and philologists would have to, like other critics, turn to texts published in book format in the future—e.g. in the form of works reedited and republished by the authors themselves. The majority of scholars, who do not seem to feel much curiosity for the unpublished, archived part of the work, usually accept this situation and base their work on the texts that circulate in the public realm. Without reiterating the interpretation problem posed by *transmedia* works here, it obvious that failing to apply curatorial measures would risk losing the published, and even more these works' unpublished parts and materials, rendering their historical record incomplete, historically inaccurate and potentially incomprehensible.

In cases where authors give philologists and textual geneticists access to the folders of one or more of their works, e.g. via a pen drive or their cloud account containing a complete record of unaltered documents that could belong to the constellation of the works, the challenge for the researcher with standard user skills will be to determine the possible or actual number of textual states or versions of the work exist. Even if we content ourselves with the versions saved voluntarily by the authors, we could see that they do not hesitate to duplicate the most complete version of the text in order to avoid regrets in case they have to "come back" to a previous one. Although this duplication is not merely mechanical, it is – from a *critique génétique* perspective—a fundamentally different process compared to the isolated revision and the revision by rewriting of a text in the analogue medium.

In addition to this challenge, there are two other problems to be addressed: first, as the authors do not see their desktop full of drafts, they tend to avoid disposing of their things, which raises the issue of textual garbage and recycling that some of them have inscribed at the center of their work—this is, for instance, the case with Fernández Mallo (2009: 105–119) and Mora (2007: 29–31, 184–188). The second difficulty is related to the size of the digital files of narrative works: the systematic analysis of these is impossible without the aid of text collation tools such as included in Juxta, MEDITE, CollateX, iTeal. I would like to highlight a conclusion drawn by Lebrave at the end of his review of the Kirschenbaum's and Ries' work: "It is very likely that genetic *forensics* has to renounce being a poetic of processes and instead will content itself with being a poetic of transitions between textual states" (2010: 145). I think this is accurate.

However, as I do not want to give in to pessimism (Lebrave 2010: 145), I hope that the unexpected multiplication of "versions" or "states" of a text with which a researcher is confronted when accessing a digital archive, will prove an invitation for them to address the question of "textual identity" under a new digital perspective. Faced with "different states of what we *can suppose to be the same text*, with all the epistemic difficulties posed by the problem of simultaneously identical and different texts" (Ganascia and Lebrave 2009: 74, [italics mine]), it is time to *stop supposing* and start investigating this theoretical issue. However, it is necessary to

investigate it before launching a digital collation tool (Mahrer 2017: 36–37) or before making available for the reader or user all the versions of a text to be edited (Bryant 2002: 87). To argue that beyond their differences two texts that can be compared, which is to say textually aligned, must be considered *together* in a genetic perspective (Mahrer 2017: 36–37), or that "a version, like any text of a work, is effectively an approximation of the attempt to achieve the work" (Bryant 2002: 86) is equivalent to solving the problem that was to be elucidated "in favor of identity" (Reuss 1990: 5–10).

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