

Critical Digital Humanities: texts, codes and algorithms

Writing is a technology and technology is never neutral. Furthermore, in the digital environment everything is writing: behind every piece of content “is a written system of protocols and controls” (Seymour, 2019). Digital technologies, in our case the different kinds of software used in Digital Humanities, help researcher all around the world with new tools to analyze texts, but what do we know about these software? About how they are built and structured? About the codes and algorithms they contain? Some researchers have argued that we can bring the critical approach we use in Humanities to the Digital (Berry, 2014), also with the trans-disciplinary help of Modern Languages studies (Pitman - Taylor, 2017): Critical Digital Humanities. But there are other ways to participate “critically” in DH. First, we can consider electronic literature as DH on the basis that “a computer is not a tool or prosthesis that helps us to accomplish our work; rather, it is the medium in which we work” (Grigar, 2021). Second, since we are in a digital environment, we can use the concept of “hacking” as a method (Saum-Pascual, 2020; Klein, 2011), not limiting it to the software world. If this approach is workable, it can help to overcome the postmodernist “naive trust in the screen which makes the very quest for ‘what lies behind’ irrelevant” (Žižek, 2008). Codes and algorithms are languages - “the *ur*-writing of contemporary civilization” (Seymour, 2019) - and, as languages, shape our experience of reality: understanding them, especially in the research field, is a necessary step to have an approach that is not just instrumental but also critical.

Bio-bibliography

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