

On HYPER

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HYPER started as the digital environment for the internet research platform HyperNietzsche. Meanwhile, it is fast becoming a generally utilisable digital infrastructure. Under the multiplicity of demands that user projects are expected to make on HYPER, the infrastructure is likely to expand and diversify in its functions. At present, however, its central features are still explicable mainly in terms of the pilot project HyperNietzsche.

HyperNietzsche is conceived as a research platform founded on document and text research, and at the same time devised as a meeting ground for scholarly exchange on the internet. 'Research founded on document and text research' means that HyperNietzsche is fed by a large reservoir of digitized Nietzsche manuscripts. (This was negotiated and effected in cooperation with Stiftung Weimarer Klassik, holding library of the original documents.) Alongside its reservoir of representations of Nietzsche originals, the platform accommodates transcriptions and edited presentations of them, 'paths' to guide users through them, and essays, reviews, commentaries etc. that engage with them. The digital infrastructure controls and coordinates the platform by two main features: its nodal structure, and its power of dynamic contextualisation.

HYPER 'knows' the platform's material as a catalogue of signatures, or sigla. These are formally devised as URLs, which the system deploys as nodes and links. The signatures/sigla constitute the only 'real presence' of the material within the system. Beyond, the entire platform content consists of scholarly contributions. First among these are the digital facsimiles submitted to visualize the catalogue listings of document signatures/sigla. In other words, each manuscript siglum is made visible by way of attaching the corresponding digitized original to it. A manuscript siglum refers in the first place to a material unit. In the physicality of the originals, the material units exist—at stages of increasing granularity—as book or notebook, folio, leaf, or page. In the virtual medium, the granularity may be further refined to extend to sub-divisions of the material units. This involves attributing sigla to individual page areas. It thereby becomes possible to conjoin page areas spread over two or more physical pages by means of one bracketing siglum. In formal terms, these bracketing sigla are simply—or rather, with increasing complexity—derivates of the document or page sigla. The conjoining is again the contributor's responsibility: he or she vouches for the devising of the bracketing sigla and the bracketing of the page sub-sections they imply. Throughout, a given

siglum may subsume, and have attached to it, more than one image of the original whose presence it marks—as a matter of fact, in the act of uploading a document facsimile, the system itself already generates several copies in different resolutions for deployment at various stages of the platform’s use.

The second large group of scholarly contributions to the platform are transcriptions. These are likewise attached to the catalogue base of sigla. For transcriptions, too, a contributor assumes individual responsibility, and more than one transcription of one and the same manuscript unit (page sequence, page, page area) may be incorporated in the platform. Two aspects should be particularly emphasized with regard to transcriptions: One is that HyperNietzsche has developed its own XML-based conventions for transcription markup named HNML (**H**yper **N**ietzsche **M**arkup **L**anguage). Yet the HYPHER system does not depend on HNML (or dialects of what ought to be named HML [**H**yper **M**arkup **L**anguage], such as HNML, or HW[oolf]ML, or HP[roust]ML, etc.). Instead, across a given platform, H[?]ML tagging in some documents may well coexist with XML/TEI encoding in others, as well as with other markup conventions once they have been defined for the system. The other and farther-reaching aspect to be pointed out is that HYPHER implements a variety of presentation and visualisation modes for both transcriptions and facsimiles, severally as well as in combination: ‘diplomatic’ and ‘linear’ text presentation (individually or synoptically visualized, and optionally brought alongside the correspondent facsimile, or HNML-encoded transcription record); and, lastly, the ‘ultra-diplomatic’ mode, which by definition superimposes text over image, or *vice versa*. The HML tagging, or a corresponding manuscript-sensitive encoding (such as, for example, XML/TEI), always enables a successive shifting between manuscript layers on the screen, and thus a visual alternation of the stages of a manuscript’s or text’s development.

A third type of scholarly contributions from originals (that is, documents) to a HYPHER platform are the so-called ‘paths’. These represent analytical passages through originals and the textual development in, and specifically between, these material documents. ‘Paths’ may be chronological, or genetic, or thematic—or organized in any other way imaginable. They record the results of a contributor’s analysis of source materials incorporated in the platform. Technically speaking, they are ordered in terms of the document or page-area sigla, and are input as ‘catalogue-excerpt’ lists of signatures/sigla. This enables the system to automatically calculate rhizomes—that is, graphic representations of derivations and relationships between signatures/sigla, and thus between documents and document sub-areas, respectively. A rhizome shows how a textual development progresses, a theme is developed, a motif or concept

reiterated, or a name (for instance) recurs, in shifting contexts throughout a platform's entire document contents.

Nor should further types of original-related materials integrable into a HYPER platform be overlooked. HyperNietzsche, but also for example the Beckett project in Antwerp, have begun to establish what may be named Nietzsche's, or Beckett's, library. For the HyperNietzsche platform, all Nietzsche's marginalia in his books (preserved in his own copies in the Weimar Nietzsche collection) have begun to be digitized as images and texts, and integrated into the HyperNietzsche sigla system. The Beckett project is proceeding similarly, but there is an interesting difference between the two enterprises. In the case of Nietzsche, the platform's material base is, as one might say, enriched homogenously: all platform divisions are formalised according to the same system of cataloguing by sigla. This formalising mode is adopted for Beckett's library, too. Yet other sections of the Beckett project are being constructed with electronic support different in design. This should in principle, however, cause little difficulty. The HYPER infrastructure is not proprietarily hermetic, and its *open access* and *open source* philosophy is also technically real.

Founded as they are in original materials, HyperNietzsche and similar platforms combine this quality with an additional capacity they possess as environments for scholarly publication. It is this combination, ultimately, that genuinely defines them as research platforms. The HYPER infrastructure provides facilities for publishing general scholarly contributions—essays, reviews, commentaries, translations—relevant to a platform's representations of source materials as well as to their respective subjects comprehensively. Publication is not uncontrolled. HyperNietzsche has formed an editorial board for quality control that reviews and assesses contributions. To effect the assessment, the platform incorporates a peer review module, template-controlled for automatic processing and operating in double anonymity (that is, the identities of both the contributors and the peer reviewers remain concealed during the reviewing process). When accepted, a general scholarly contribution is catalogued into the platform with its own signature, again structured as an URL; and to the extent that, in terms of its contents, it refers to other contributions on the platform, as well of course as to the platform's core of original-document materials, it is supplied with apposite anchor links that the system recognises.

With all nodes and anchor links catalogued as well as in place across a platform in its entirety, what ensures the platform's operability and ever up-to-date actuality is the infrastructure's core feature, HYPER's power of dynamic contextualisation. The dynamics is effected in such

a manner that, when a new contribution is uploaded, the system will recalculate all relevant links over night and bi-directionally distribute and re-distribute all necessary references automatically. At every consultation of a given document page or other screen content, every relevant link, whether of old standing or of most recent accession, appears in the left-hand screen column, where the references alter accordingly with every content shift in the main screen display.¹ A HYPHER platform thus becomes a virtual environment for generating and accessing knowledge.

¹ (See further Michele Barbera, “Hyper. The Software Architecture” and Paolo D’Iorio, “Nietzsche on New Paths”, both as PDF downloads on this site.)