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*Textual Units of Transmission vs. Texts. Towards a Normalisation of Apparent Anomalies and Particular Cases in Textual Transmission<sup>1</sup>*

My approach to multiple-text manuscripts is not a codicological one, since I first started to pay attention to miscellanies as structures in order to solve textual problems concerning the relationships between manuscripts sharing exactly the same content or a series of works in the same order (what one could label a ‘cluster’). Or more precisely, at the beginning I merely wanted to see whether, in regard to a single text, the structure of multiple-text manuscripts could provide any evidence about the genealogical relationship between witnesses to that single text when they share two or more works in the same order.<sup>2</sup> It was only later that I realised that the structure itself could provide genealogical information, since it grows and changes from copy to copy (or may do so) following certain patterns: therefore, the coherence of a multiple-text manuscript must not be investigated in a purely synchronic way (i.e. why someone has copied more works together in a multiple-text manuscript) but also in a diachronic way (i.e. which works were already side by side in the model/s of a multiple-text manuscript and to which extent the copy is faithful or innovative).<sup>3</sup> Such a diachronic approach could also be useful to codicologists, who often tend to forget that behind a single manuscript, unless it is an autograph, there are one or more models which the copy does not reproduce in all the material aspects. Thus, if in the model a change of hand or quire occurs, or there is a marginal note written with a different ink (elements which, on the other hand, textual scholars tend not always to take into account), such material features are usually flattened in the copy.

Both textual scholars and codicologists would benefit from an interdisciplinary dialogue on methodology: the former by taking into account the material features of

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<sup>1</sup> A first version of this paper was read at the conference “The Emergence of Multiple-Text Manuscripts” (Hamburg, 9-12 November 2016). It represents further development of the concepts and theory presented in Divizia 2017a and Divizia 2017b.

<sup>2</sup> Divizia 2007; Divizia 2009.

<sup>3</sup> Divizia 2017a.

their “witnesses”,<sup>4</sup> the latter by taking into account the transmission of the texts preserved by their “codices”.

Indeed, the content of a multiple-text manuscript is not necessarily the result of an individual, deliberate choice. This might be the case, but more often a multiple-text manuscript is the result of sedimentation and erosion, which means that it is a diasystem (in the sense given to the expression by Segre 1978 and 1979, not Weinreich 1954), that is, a mixture of innovation and conservation.<sup>5</sup>

Concerning the transmission of texts, on one hand, more texts can be copied together from the model as if they were a single unit; on the other hand, scribes can change their model while copying a single text. I am not talking about contamination of readings, but contamination by the juxtaposition of exemplars, which can, in turn, be horizontal (when connected with a ‘before and after’) or vertical (when connected with hierarchical distinctions such as text and rubrics or text and glosses).<sup>6</sup>

How can the two phenomena, that is, texts transmitted together and texts depending on two or more exemplars, be dealt with at the same time? Manuals of textual criticism usually claim that one monogenetic/conjunctive error/innovation shared by two or more witnesses is enough to prove their mutual relationship. Sometimes they suggest that more than one shared innovation is needed, or, at least, preferred. Nevertheless, one seldom, if ever, encounters manuals of textual criticism explaining what sort of evidence a shared innovation provides, and to which extent.

In my opinion, a shared innovation provides evidence of a relationship only at the precise point in which it occurs. Whether it does, or does not, anywhere else, is a matter of probability: the further one goes from the shared innovation, the smaller the chances that the relationship persists. Shared innovations work more or less like buttons on

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<sup>4</sup> Avalle 2005: 166 defines this attitude of textual scholars as «‘rimozione’ del codice in quanto tale» [i.e. ‘repression’ – in psychoanalytic terms – of the codex as such]. See also Leonardi 2002: 575 who points out that the single-text approach, termed anachronistic, may raise doubts when applied to medieval texts.

<sup>5</sup> The risk of a material philology flattened on synchrony – which is different from the always-diachronically-aware synchronic approach of Avalle – has already been pointed out by Leonardi 2006: 17–18.

<sup>6</sup> Divizia 2017b.

clothing: each of them buttons only where placed. The question therefore is to which extent proof provided by a shared innovation persists as proof.

One should never take for granted that a textual unit of transmission corresponds with a text: sometimes it is does, sometimes it is longer than a single text, sometimes it is shorter. Thus, the extension of a textual unit of transmission has to be proved by a regular series of shared innovations: when the latter are quite close to each other, one can assume that the portion of text in-between also reflects the same relationship among witnesses; on the other hand, concerning the portions of text before the first shared innovation and after the last, or when the gap between two shared innovations is quite large, one should take into account the chance that a change of exemplar has occurred; in such case a coherent series of weaker proofs is stronger than a distant strong proof. The extent of textual units of transmission always has to be defined and proved before one can infer genealogical relationships among witnesses to “a” text.

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