Interface is Argument too
What Are You Trying to Say?

The Interface as an Integral Element of Argument

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Are You Trying to Say? -
Interface as an Integral Element of Argument.

Introduction

Interface often seems to be treated as a mere by-thought or afterthought of that which is actually considered the scholarly effort or work, that is: examining and preparing the text and argument, and preparation along scholarly lines. The creation and evaluation of user interfaces however, has grown into an (academic) expertise of its own: vivid debates on human computer interaction, graphical user interface, usability, and so forth testify to this. The 'interface effect' (Galloway 2012) that the digital interface exerts on scholarly texts has hardly, if at all, been researched. We know almost nothing of how the digital materiality, look and feel, structure, aesthetics, and interaction affordances of digital scholarly editions mean as to the experience of reading and other uses that these scholars have. Moreover: we do not understand very well, if at all, how these interfaces are part and parcel of the argument we want to convey about a text as textual scholars.

Interface as Argument

And here that user interfaces are a language through which arguments are made, even when the makers of these interfaces are not conscious of the language they are using. As such they reflect the intentions and motivations of the materials they are supposed to represent. They also reflect the culture, the politics, and motives of their designers.


Walking quite a fine line though it may be seen here, what is happening, what it means and to what it pertains. Do the interfaces express something about the editors' perspective on the text, the edition as a concept, or are they foremost about the text? i.e. is it a text critical point of view or a methodological point of view, or perhaps a mixture, is presented to us? In any case, the interface seems to convey a scholarly perspective, feel, or idea about the text. The editor takes to a very dense looking representation of the text with a lot of annotations. This interface says that the edition's primary aim is to recast, or adjust, the image of Cervantes to the fact that he was also a playwright. The default is to present the Spanish text with English appendices and paratext. It doesn't necessarily mean *anything* about the view of the editors on the text, or digital editions; could be a shear funding related issue obviously. In any case, the Thoreau gives a nice contrast, the aesthetics of the interface convey much more (to my feeling in any case, is this something that is *objectifiable*) an experience not merely of the text but of the editor's deliberation and reserve. This notion or suggestion, however, is very superficial. Actually the edition hides the text pretty well, makes it hard to read, and once you've found the text, it turns out to be just as 'densely scholarly' presented as the Cervantes text. Conjecture: these editions foremost want to be recognised and acknowledged as *scholarly* works that present themselves in this hermetic and densely annotated fashion.

A useful observation here is that a digital edition's interface is not *just* an argument about the text, but an argument about the 'attitude' of the editor, a window into his or her take on methodology. It's not just the digital edition itself, *and* a revelation of the technical skills available to the editor. The interface tells us something not only about the methodology but also about the import of the text. There is a lot of stylistic communication going on in the Thoreau, of exactly the sort of type that we're trying to get at. Argument not just through text but also through colors/mood, layout, etc. In contrast the Cervantes is not trying to communicate such a mood; it's clear that these editors would argue that the interface is beside the point, a more or less neutral technical means to the textual end.

Interface development is generally treated as a piece of design independent from the interpretative thrust of the actual content, and thus considered to lie well within the domains of engineering, design, and aesthetics. These are considered essential to communicating content to the user, but are also usually considered neutral and non-interfering, as being explicitly divorced from the text. Most of you will be familiar with the advice that is usually given to creators of digital editions, that for the sake of sustainability of their research data they should take care to separate the map and the territory. This is a very good idea for all sorts of reasons when it can be done - up to now, the database that drives your edition is easier to archive than the website functionality that it is, and as a result, whatever scholarly content is not cleanly separable from the display logic of your edition is likely to remain unarchived, and thus be lost sooner or later.

A notable, however, that *again* we are pretending that scholarly content and argument is clearly separable from design logic. If only...

Interface is an integral part of the argument that an edition makes about a text. The idea that an edition is a theory (and thus an argument) has been around for decades (Cerquiglini 1989; Shilling 1989). In practice this insight has not had much overt influence on how editions are presented, particularly in paper form. We cannot consider the interface of any edition as some neutral visualization of the argument. We cannot do this because interfaces are constructed objects, just as facts (Latour & Woolgar) and data (Gitelman, Drucker) are constructed objects.

The word for data derives from the Latin 'givem', data are all but given. As Drucker has most notably argued, the data we record are rather taken, formed. This process of forming and becoming data is a scientific context points to the careful selection and argumentation that underlies the presentation of data as meaningful and pertaining to a certain argument (As Latour and Woolgar have shown). It is not to say that data are not potentially solid facts, but it does point to the nature of data and facts as being in part argument themselves part of a larger argument. This argumentative nature of data and fact extends to objects. To put this in a more concrete perspective: bridges may have politics (Woolgar & Cooper 1999) and software code may have two (McPherson 2012).

Bridges I refer to are the bridges of Long Island that, so it was so were designed so low that buses that were the mainstay of black people's transportation in the time could not navigate them,
“Interfaces are not simply objects or boundary points. They are autonomous zones of activity. [...] Interfaces are [...] processes that effect a result of whatever kind.”

Alexander Galloway,
The Interface Effect (2012)
This is a mirror
You are a written sentence

Luis Camnitzer (1966)
Eight New Plays and Interludes, Never Performed.

by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

Dedicated to Don Pedro Fernandez de Castro, Count of Lerma, of Andrade and of Vitava, Marquis of Sarría, Gentlemen of the Royal Chamber, Commander of the territory of Peñafiel and La Zarza, of the Order of Alcantara, Viscount, Governor, and Captain General of the Kingdom of Naples and President of the Supreme Council of Italy.

In quarto

1615

With permission

Printed in Madrid by the widow of Alonso Martín, at the expense of Juan de Villarreal, bookseller, and sold from his house, in Observación de los Arzobispos.

La entretenida

Jornada primera

168v

Sale en Ocaña lacayo con un mandil, y hombre, y Cristina regresa.

Oca. Mi sorna 51 Cristina desmoro. 51
Crist. ¿Qué hemos de dar mi se Ocaña?
Oca. No, en su nula, no en humana, ni en tan amarga extremo.

Crist. Quería el sor que endulze de po, y venida 21 contino,

The precise meaning of de po y venida has eluded all editors of the play so far. It may be a contraction of compiler, in which case the following is illuminating: "En el compás de" and the following: "de prefacio y antología, 1. 3. 29: "The meaning of "..."

Venida. La senda, o centro angosto, distinto y separado del real. Muchos de vie edad, por ser el consumo ser más demorar."

168v

Motes, cuentos, chistes, dichos, panseamientos negados, muy buenos para pensados, y mejores para dichos.
Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written.
Eight New Plays and Interludes, Never Performed.

by Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra

Dedicated to Don Pedro Fernandez de Castro, Count of Lemos, of Andrade and of Vilaviva, Marquis of Sarria, Gentleman of the Royal Chamber, Commander of the territory of Perpiñán and La Zarza, of the Order of Alcantara, Viceroy, Governor, and Captain General of the Kingdom of Naples and President of the Supreme Council of Italy.

In quarto

1515

With permission

Printed in Madrid by the widow of Alonso Martín, at the expense of Juan de Villanueva, bookseller, and sold from his house, in Shore for this Account.

Jornada primera

168v

Salió Ocaña laciado con un mantel, y harnero, y Cristina regresa.

Ocaña. Mi sora Cristina dormíamos, ¿no?

Cristina. ¿Por qué nos despiertas, amigos?

Ocaña. Eso es lo que yo no entiendo, ni en la casa ni en los campos.

Cristina. Quieres el sol que anduvieses de paz y venidas con cesión.

The peculiar meaning of de paz y venidas has troubled all editors of this play so far. It may be a contraction of completed, in which case the following is illuminating: 'Por no dormir, no ir de paz y venidas. Si, el modo de proceder y accionas. Cervantes p. 344a, l. 18. "The meaning of venidas is unclear."

Venida. La senda, su centro angosto, distinto y separado del río. Sin ducado de vida, por ser odinamente estos más verdes." Cervantes p. 344b, l. 18.

169v

Mentes, cuentos, chistes, dichos, pensamientos sagrados, muy buenos para pensados, y mejores para dichos.
Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written.
How to Separate an Egg


Truck Drivers:
Don’t let this happen to you.

Commercial Vehicles, Trucks and Tractor Trailers are Not Allowed on New York State Parkways.

IT’S THE LAW!
Be Prepared for your Trip.

GOT STUCK?
the real face of white australia
In nomine Domini nostri Iesu Christi. Ego <name key="3044">Osuinus</name> rex Cantuariorum gratias refero miserenti Deo omnipotenti qui confirmavit me in regno patrum meorum et dedit mihi domum cognitionis mee. Quamobrem placuit mihi nunc ingratus beneficiis Domini uiderer, et terram que sita est in insula Tenet, xviii. manentes continentem, quam aliquando <name key="2942">Irminredus</name> possidebat, (et aliqua pars ipsius archiepiscopi erat, ipso tamen consentiente et aliam a nobis accipiente) monasterialii seruituti subieci; nuncque in presentia adiuuante Domino perpetraui sub manus Christicolarum, gubernatorici <name key="2765">Æbbe</name> perpetuali donatione <dispWord part="N">redegi</dispWord>, ut teneat, possideat ipsa semper, successoresque eius incommutabili decreto defendant; <curse part="N">atque ad confirmationem istius cordula scopite saecro suospete acco alteri supernaequi...
IV. Death by Water

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
Of his own country

IV. Death by Water

Pithecus the Phenomenon, a forlorn dead.
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell.
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What is the design language of Argumentatively-Expressive-Interfaces?

The full title of this image is “ubiquity-designing-a-multilingual-natural-language-interface-4-728”. It is a deceptively simple picture.
Samuel Beckett
Digital Manuscript Project

L’INNOMMABLE / THE UNNAMABLE: DEMO

< back to Synoptic Sentence View

Collatex Results: [0002]

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| Version 1 | MS-HRC-SB-5-9-1 | When | know |
| Version 2 | MS-HRC-SB-5-10  | When | now  |
| Version 3 | MS-Spectrum     | When | now  |
| Version 4 | MS-1956         | When | now  |

Collatex is a software collation tool developed by the Interedition Development Group. Go to [http://collatex.net](http://collatex.net) for further information.

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Editors: Dirk Van Hulle and Vincent Neyt.
the Word class to be able to annotate an individual word. For now you can gauge a word that if its surface makes up the word ‘willem’ it should go and find the sentences
The AnnotationGenerator of the last chapter needs to be integrated with the Word class to be able to annotate an individual word. For now as you can gauge from the code comments I will do so in a bluntly naive way. I just tell any word that if its surface makes up the word ‘Willem’ it should go and find the sentences in the introduction of our first source (see chapter 5) and use them as annotations. This is naive in at least three ways. First it will potentially yield a lot of false positives if we broaden the search to more source (that will yield sentences of or about different Willem). Secondly, the fact that one finds a ‘Willem’ in a sentence does not imply directly that it is a sentence about that Willem, although it is likely that the sentence is at least related to a ‘Willem’ at least. The third naive aspect is that as to object modeling this is probably not the right place for the AnnotationGenerator to make its performance. It is probably not the task of a word to know or mine annotations on its denotation (it would be more correct if it would be tasked with finding lexical or syntactic information I suppose).

Knowing about ‘Willem die Madocke maest’ seems to me to be a task that should be bestowed upon a Person object that represents this actual ‘Willem’. However, for the purpose of this chapter and notebook, this will do for the moment.

```ruby
In [3]: class Word

  attr_accessor :surface
  attr_accessor :next_word
  attr_accessor :denotation

  def initialize( str )
    m = str.match( / / )
    if m != nil
      index = str.match( / / ).end(0)
      @surface = str[ 0...index-2 ]
      @next_word = Word.new( str[ index..-1 ] )
    else
      @surface = str
    end
    # This is utterly simplistic, yet I have no better
    # Idea at the moment...
    # Probably this should also be done by models such as Person.
    # E.g. Person would determine if this Word is that Person.
    # That would also allow for competing interpretations btw.
    if surface.downcase == "willem"
      @denotation = Person.new( "Willem" )
      @denotation.annotations = AnnotationGenerator.get_annotations_for( "willem" )
    end
  end

  def as_text
```
Are You Trying to Say?

Interface as an Integral Element of Argument.

Production

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And here that user interfaces are a language through which arguments are made, even when the makers of these interfaces are not conscious of the language they are using. As such they reflect the traditions of the materials they are supposed to represent. They also reflect the culture, the politics, and motives of their designers.


Walking quite a fine line though to interpret what we see here, what is happening, what it means and to what it pertains. Do the interfaces express something about the editors’ perspective on the edition as a concept, or are they foremost about the text? i.e. is it a text critical point of view or a methodological point of view, or perhaps a mixture, that is presented to us? In any case the interface seems to convey a scholarly perspective, feel, or idea about the text. The reader is taken pretty quickly to a very dense looking representation of the text with lots of annotations. The question says that the edition’s primary aim is to recast, or adjust, the image of Cervantes to the fact that he was also a playwright. The default is to present the Spanish text with English sections and paratexts. Why? This doesn’t necessarily mean anything about the view of the editors on the text or digital editions; could be a sheer funding related issue obviously. In any case the Thoreau gives a nice contrast, the aesthetics of the interface convey much more (to my feeling in any case, is this something that is objectifiable?) an experience not merely of the text but also of the editor. Thoreau does not just tell us exactly what is in the text, it signifies to the editor: deliberation and reserve. This notion or suggestion, however, is very superficial. Actually the edition hides the text pretty well, makes it hard to read, and once you have found the text, it turns out to be just as densely scholarly presented as the Cervantes text. Conjecture: these editions foremost want to be recognised and acknowledged as "scholarly" works and present themselves in this hermetic and densely annotated fashion.

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