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Envisioning the Digital Future of Literary Translation. A Hands-on Experience at the Whitman Archive.

As an Italian PhD student of American Literature (my research is dedicated to Walt Whitman's reception in Italy and to the translation of the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, still unpublished into Italian) at the University of Macerata, in 2011 I received a one-year Fulbright scholarship to work at the Walt Whitman Archive (www.whitmanarchive.org), based at the Center for Digital Research in the Humanities of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln,US, and directed by Professor Kenneth M. Price. There, I became familiar with digital editing methodologies and tools, but I also got a deeper theoretical insight into digital humanities (UNL is in fact investing more and more on its DH projects and it will be hosting the annual DH conference in July 2013.)

In my talk, I'll describe the Whitman Archive, its operating structure, the funds that support it, its agenda. I'll briefly show how it contributed to reconfigure Whitman studies in the last 20 years. The Archive continually engages itself (and I'm intentionally referring to it as a heuristic, collective, collaborative scholarly argument) in new projects, and it plans on expanding the section dedicated to the foreign editions of *Leaves of Grass* and to Whitman's reception all over the world. I am currently working at the Italian section and I am preparing the digital edition of my translation. In my presentation I will discuss some hands-on issues, but I'll also talk about the potentials of the interaction of DH with translation studies and translation praxis, as they are emerging from my present work.

I am in fact convinced that just as the concept of "reading" has lately been re-conceived by digital humanities, the same should be done with translating. If the key term for mobilizing the concept of reading within digital humanities is "distance," the equivalent for translating should be "visibility." As argued by Matthew Kirschenbaum, "Digital Humanities is about a scholarship and a pedagogy that are publicly visible in ways to which we are generally unaccustomed"

(*Debates in the Digital Humanities* 4). This is an appealing idea as applied to translation. Literary translation needs this visibility: it needs to show readers its decisional processes and to offer them a critical apparatus that traditional print-based editions do not allow, for space reasons, but also because of the fixed, classical idea of translation as a finite operation. Translation needs to expose its non-finiteness and its non-autonomy, it needs to denaturalize its supposed function of neutral communicative transfer.

Finally, I will underline what digital humanities and translation studies, in the end, have in common. These points of convergence include the anxiety for self-definition as a field; the tendency to produce "material" interpretations and arguments instead of theorizing them; a certain utopian excitement about their potential achievements; a counterbalancing dystopian sense of the limits of what can/not be done, considering one's resources and one's existing 'language,' a language that always has to be respected, and yet constantly challenged and renovated.