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Definitions of the unstable notion of citation.

A brief survey of the practices of text re-use and citation in Antiquity

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Abstract

Text re-use is more difficult to determine in Antiquity than in our times. This paper aims to remember some definitions and functions of the citations taking into account the specificities of ancient Greek and Latin literature (methods of transmission of texts, the question of literary genres).

keywords

Antiquity; citation; intertextuality; quotation; text re-use;

INTRODUCTION

According to [Svenbro, 267]'s elaboration on Wittgenstein, a language which would refuse the re-use and the systematic creation of words would qualify as a “private language” whose meaning would be known to the speaker alone. In contrast, real languages re-use time and again the same words, word-phrases, and phrase-formulae. Repetition and word recycling are basic operations belonging to the language itself. Moreover, Charlotte Rouéché [see her contribution below] considers that, for humanists, re-using texts is a real “raison de vivre”. If in our times quotation and other forms of intertextuality are relatively easier to recognize, in Antiquity they used to be, as it has already been pointed out in this workshop, rather fluid and far more difficult to determine. So much so that Christian Nicolas, in his introduction to the conference proceedings “Mécanismes de la citation et de la mention dans les langues de l’Antiquité” qualifies the phenomenon of citations in Antiquity as “nebuleuse” or a “nebula” [Nicolas, 12]. “Quotation marks” (“as Homer says”, “in the words of Hesiod”) are not so frequent and ancient texts are most often sprinkled with “unbranded quotations”, allusions, paraphrases and other forms of text re-use [Svenbro, 269].

I DEFINITIONS

Citation was defined as a particularly powerful “intertextuality operator”, as both centripetal and centrifugal [Bouvier, 33], as a “specific form of metarepresentation” and as a complex and multifaceted phenomenon [Derbo-Peshanski, “Introduction”, 1]. Recent research on citation tried to bring together the philosophical and linguistic traditions, which “share a common interest, namely the exploration of meaning”. “Analyses of citation benefit from new linguistic and philosophical approaches to the interaction of semantics and pragmatics and vice versa, the study of semantics and pragmatics in the philosophy of language and in linguistics profits most definitely from a deeper exploration of the meaning of citation” [Derbo-Peshanski, “Introduction”, 5].

As remembered by [Compagnon, 56], from a semiological point of view, citation is a “relationship between two texts”. Compagnon insists on the importance of the “travail de citation”, of the “act of citing”, the process of the integration of a text in another text and implicitly in another “way of thinking”.

II SPECIFICITIES OF CITATION IN ANTIQUITY

As well known, there is no exact correspondent, neither in Greek nor in Latin, of the noun “quotation” or “citation” or of the verb “quote” or “cite” (it is perhaps better to say that there are different words close to this notion). But this lack of exact terms makes the study of introductory verbs (*verba dicendi*) and of the different marks of “citation” particularly significant and often reveals the very meaning of the text re-use. For instance, when Christian Greek exegetes introduce a biblical quotation, they sometimes use μαρτυρέω or ἀποφθέγγομαι, and other verbs belonging to the prophetic inspiration vocabulary (ἐπιθειάζω, θεσπίζω), referring to the divine origin of the text cited, or the prophetic status of a biblical character. Other specific features of citation are more easily understood in relation to the oral dimension of ancient cultures. An ancient author has less control of his own production than a modern one. One pertinent example is the “treatment” of Socrates’ teaching by Plato, or *mutatis mutandis*, the transposition of the words of Jesus in the Gospels. But, as noted by [Clivaz], even if writing seems to be the “law” in the digital era, we are witnessing the decline of the author’s control of his own work. From this point of view, we are now closer to the ancient authors than we could ever imagine.

The passage from orality to written tradition has changed our relationship to the texts of the ancient authors themselves. For instance, it is not possible to consider the oral formulas in poetry as citations. “However, once a text was set into writing, the citation was born and with it emerged all the problems of the links with the speech into which it fits. The challenge of any project of text re-use detection in ancient texts – tracing unsuspected citations – deals with the fact that memory was part of the rhetoric and the whole educational system was based on it”. Ancient authors used to store extensive data in their memory. These remarkable skills allow us to suspect in every ancient text the existence of more citations than we could believe.

III THE METHODS OF TRANSMISSION OF TEXTS

Quellenforschung is intimately linked to the study of the mode of transmission of texts. The question of whether a particular author had direct access to the source he cites, or, as is often the case, a collection of “prefabricated” texts, arises systematically in our studies.

Christian literature is full of not only biblical quotations, but also an entire background of Greek literature and the projects presented in this workshop are an illustration of this exceptional literary tradition. The citation system often takes the form of ‘Russian dolls’ nested within each other.

Thanks to citations, parts of ancient literature are today known to us. I will not insist on fragments (modern editions and/or ancient collections), a central point of the LOFTS project, I just want to point out that, as noted by [Gosserez, 210], modern linguistic and semiotics “raise a different appreciation of literary genres long despised, such as paraphrasing or cento, long time blamed for their imitative character and their lack of originality. On one hand, the concept of hypertext includes simple transformations, paraphrases and imitation that were the basis of the aesthetics of ancient authors. On the other hand, the concept of intertextuality, as created by Julia Kristeva, includes the citation as a constitutive phenomenon of any text. Gérard Genette has distinguished different ways: in its most explicit and most literal form, that is quotation, in a less explicit form, that is plagiarism, borrowing undeclared, in a less explicit form and less literal - the allusion.”

IV THE QUESTION OF LITERARY GENRES

This leads us to link citation and literary genres, some of them proving, although based on citation, very respectable in every historical period: the apophthegms, the *memorabilia*.

The analysis of oracle collections invites debate on the form of oracles and, in particular, on the form of Pythia's oracle (whether they have been issued in prose or rather in verse form). The conclusion of Plutarchus' *De Pythiae oraculis* is that Pythia, a simple and uneducated woman (at least for the second century BCE) doesn't "quote" Apollo, she paraphrases him using her own words. Of course, an educated woman would have been able to ... "quote".

V FUNCTIONS OF CITATION

Ancient citation has several functions: a scholarly function, an invocation of authority, amplification, or an ornamental function. In *Tusculanes*, Cicero assigns an ornamental role to poetic citations. In contrast, philosophical citations are the basis of his topic. Because of the nature of this work, which is intended as a textbook, Cicero cites his sources accurately ("as Plato says", "in *Phaidros*", etc.) and one of the functions of these quotes is to make Plato's philosophy available in Latin [Salomon, 68-80].

Texts from Homer and later on, Plato, appear quoted with a sense of great testimonial responsibility. The same can be stated about the use of the Bible for the Jewish and the Christian traditions. And yet, this strong testimony is used in different ways: for instance, Philo is "retelling" the Bible in the *De Vita Mosis*, mostly by way of paraphrase. Most of the direct speech present in the Bible and attributed to God (use of the first person) becomes indirect speech in Philo's texts when these texts are addressed to a pagan audience; but he literally and accurately quotes the biblical texts when he intends to comment on them...allegorically, for a Jewish/initiated audience. One may remark a similar process in Josephus' *Judean Antiquities*. Josephus focuses on rewriting the biblical story for pagans and he often uses the same method: in his paraphrase, the direct divine biblical speech turns into an indirect report. In other terms, text re-use has ideological and theological motivations.

On the contrary, in plenty of historical texts (Cesar, Sallustius, Titus Livius – in order to again cite Latin authors), many fictional direct speeches are attributed to significant historical characters, which leads us to the relationship between auctorality and authority.

Conclusion

Considering all these aspects, my conclusion will be...a question! How are we to deal with all these ποικιλία? Pertinent answers have already been offered. Maybe one of the best ways to "catch" the unstable notions of quotation/citation and text re-use in Antiquity is to keep an open ear to the incessant echoes and dialogues between authors, texts and cultural heritages.

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