

On textual and non textual quotations from historical works

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Abstract

Its very nature does not contribute to the textual quotation of prosastic (as distinct from poetic) texts, and usually some kind of alteration must be taken for granted, given the fact that textual accuracy in quoting is not a most valued quality in a considerably aural cultural world. Examples are taken from Photius' *Bibliotheca* and Diodorus' *Bibliotheca historica*.

When one faces the actual task of editing some historian's fragments, not even the apparently unquestionable principle that the edition must include all the texts quoted with the author's name goes without problems.

Its very nature does not contribute to the textual quotation of prosastic (as distinct from poetic) texts, and usually some kind of alteration must be taken for granted, given the fact that textual accuracy in quoting is not a most valued quality in a considerably aural cultural world. Inquiring into the ways followed by Plutarch when claiming to cite directly from the works of another, Frost,¹ after many other scholars, gets to the not unexpected conclusion that he does not always quote with the exactness that would be required of a modern scholar, and that sometimes he simply cites erroneously. On the other hand, argues Frost following Jones, where his latin sources can be checked, he is quite accurate. This would seem to suggest, in Frost's own terms, a general rule: that the more familiar Plutarch was with his source, or story, the more likely he was to be a bit casual with his data; when on unfamiliar ground, he is more careful and has perhaps made more precise notes.

One sobering lesson given to all of us by the studies which have attempted the rather invidious task of proving the worth of textual work by comparing it with subsequently recovered papyri, is that to hold the generic conviction of textual quotations' dubious reliability and to detect (not to speak of healing) a particular corruption are quite different things.²

Anyhow quotations from a historian's work will be, most of the times, not textual ones, but conformed in indirect style by the author who gives the quotation. Unfortunately (as one can easily verify from the study of the many quotations taken from

1. *Plutarch's Themistocles. A historical Commentary*, Princeton, 1980, p. 55.

Many times it will be difficult to get assured about a given quotation's end; cf. L. Edelstein-I.G. Kidd, *Posidonius I. The Fragments*, Cambridge, 1972, p. XIX.

2. In a field so full of uncertainties methodological issues become primordial, and one must take at face value the accuracy of a quotation unless one is ready to argue convincingly to the contrary.

attested works) "indirect style" nearly always brings with itself more than stylistic alterations. One must always take into account the possibility of (most frequently) abbreviations, dislocations, and even amplifications, mainly in the works of moralistically oriented authors, proclive to draw the lesson.

The quoted text provided with the author's name can, then, be problematical, the more so if the quotation is not a textual one in direct style. This is valid even for quotations provided by professed excerptors such as Photius, the ambiguous nature of whose *Bibliotheca* we know very well now. Recent work on it has taught us many lessons, but not very reassuring ones.

Already such a competent expert on the *Bibliotheca* as Severyns had warned us³ that "Photius is an author with whom one cannot afford the least distraction" and Hägg's chief conclusions are that to make inferences *ex silentio* about some author's historiographical method on the basis of Photius' testimony (as was done, for instance, by B. Henry in his edition of Ctesias' *Persika* and *Indika*) is a bold course of action. Hägg's remark that all the Ctesias given by Photius is filtered through this one is of no little consequence, given Ctesias' place in the development of greek historiography. Better knowledge of Photius' methods, such as has been gained by Hägg's study⁴ (and also, although from a different perspective, by W.T. Treagold's *The nature of the Bibliotheca of Photius*)⁵ makes a most welcome contribution to a proper delimitation of the danger so expressively alluded to by Severyns, but does not eliminate it.

Hägg's study, by making a careful comparison of Photius' excerpts of fully preserved works with these ones, has also very important consequences on our characterization of Diodorus Siculus' *Bibliotheca*, a work whose importance is only matched by its bewildering nature.⁶

We now see that, at least in this respect, Palm's⁷ conclusions were overoptimistic when he asserted⁸ that a joint study of the excerpts of Agatharchides' *On the Red sea* by Photius and the corresponding part in Diodorus' *Bibliotheca* yields Agatharchides' own work.

Even on a theoretical level Palm's conclusions have a distinctly artificial flavor. According to him, when Diodorus' and Photius' texts are of equal extent, the Patriarch preserves for us Agatharchides' "ipsissima uerba", because Photius' method was to provide a quite accurate excerpt when dealing with such geographical matters as those treated by Agatharchides in that work. But one unmistakably feels the characteristic weakness of so many doctoral dissertations: the need to prove a thesis.

3. *Recherches sur la Chrestomathie de Proclus I*, Liège-Paris, 1938, p. 176 n.1.

4. *Photios als Vermittler antiker Literatur*, Uppsala 1975, p. 201. In the course of this paper all references to Photius' *Bibliotheca* are to the excerpts; we are not concerned at all with his epitomes.

5. *Dumbarton Oaks*, 1980.

6. J. Lens, "Sobre la naturaleza de la *Biblioteca histórica* de Diodoro de Sicilia", *EFG* 2, 1986, pp. 9 ss.

7. *Ueber Sprache und Stil des Diodoros von Sizilien. Ein Beitrag zur Beleuchtung der hellenistischen Prosa*, Lund, 1955.

8. Pp. 15 ss.

Convinced (correctly) that Diodorus levelled the language and style of his sources throughout the *Bibliotheca*, Palm has found convenient to equate with Agatharchides' original the non-diodorean (that is, the phocian) excerpts. But he is unaware that to prove his thesis it is necessary to argue convincingly (as he does) that Diodorus has made Agatharchides into Diodorus, but unnecessary to argue (as he does quite unconvincingly) that Photius has literally transcribed Agatharchides. The obvious question is: what about the supplementary matter provided by Diodorus? The only possible answer, on Palm's terms, should be: it has been added by Diodorus himself. But, although today we are very far from the once generally accepted hypothesis that Diodorus was little more than an excerptor (so far, in fact, that the opposite view can now be considered the new orthodoxy), his main task was evidently that of abridging, not of amplifying his sources. On the other hand, we know that some of the remarks in the *Bibliotheca* are Diodorus' own, mainly remarks of a moralizing character. It is, then, extremely difficult to believe that when adapting his sources, not adding to them, Diodorus should amplify the narrative to the point of duplicating the number of words, as Palm would convince us he did when reporting the elephant-hunt.

We must face the rather uncomfortable fact that Photius' excerpts, even in the geographical parts, were not meant (or, at least, were not always meant) as textual ones.

This is perhaps a good place to take into consideration the important question of the relative informative value of fragments and epitomes. Recently, and in a book whose importance must not be misunderstood even if one does not partake its fundamental point of depart, Hornblower has argued⁹ that "whereas the 'fragments' of a historian represent the selection made by particular authors for their own purposes, and can be misleading as to the character of the original, an epitome tends to preserve the general assumptions and attitudes of the source". This is not only, I think, an incorrect assertion, but a potentially dangerous one, as it bears relation to a methodological topic, and these matters, when dealing with texts fragmentarily preserved, are fundamental.

Of course a collection, even a big one, of small fragments can be quite uninformative of an author's scope (so happens, to put an extreme example, with those preserved by many lexicographers), or not representative (such as is the case with many of those preserved by Athenaeus, not a few of them quite long ones). This is one of the main lessons one learns from recent work on Photius, which quite forcibly documents his fondness for selecting anecdotic and moralistic passages,¹⁰ and gives due relief¹¹ to the quite misleading view we would get of Plutarch's biographies if our only testimony were that of Photius. But just the same thing does happen with the

9. *Hieronymus of Cardia*. Oxford, 1981, p. 20. It is generally (and rightly) agreed that this is an extremely important book. In the course of this paper we have made use of the word "excerpt" for "extracting" and of "epitome" for "condensing".

10. Hägg p. 139.

11. Hägg p. 141.

epitomes, which do not necessarily offer a faithful miniature of the original as a whole.¹²

But, of course, the main problem when pondering how much to include in a collection of fragments is to take a resolution concerning the texts not provided with an author's name.

The problem arises from the well known fact that ancient authors were notably adverse to detailed references to previous work. Once again Photius provides welcome illustration. As Treagold puts it,¹³ what Photius most objected to in historical works was excessive detail and documentation that made boring reading. He roundly condemns Cephalion for listing too many sources, and Olympiodorus for merely assembling "materials for a history".¹⁴

The problem is a fundamental one, given the unavoidable fact that the greatest part of our information about the manifold aspects of classical antiquity which a scholar must know are provided by secondary authors.

The early answer to this problem was simplistic and optimistic; perhaps it was the only way to begin the study of this rather untractable theme. It was confidently (and reassuredly) affirmed that authors such as Diodorus or Cicero were not really original writers, but provided us with excerpts of their predecessors' work. So was inaugurated the age of *Hochkriticism*, the German idiom being more than justified, as this field, just as analysis in general, was for decades a German precinct.

The derivative nature of works such as Diodorus' *Bibliotheca* or Cicero's philosophical writings was apparently confirmed by comparison with the sources when these were extant, such as was the case with the Polybian parts of the *Bibliotheca*. But the fortuitous fact that, given the only partial preservation of Polybius' work, this comparison was not very illustrative, made that the greatest emphasis were put upon Diodorus' servile excerpting from Agatharchides' *On the Red Sea* and from Ephorus, as it was thought to be revealed by a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus.¹⁵ This papyrus' first editor was in fact Grenfell, for his usual collaborator, Hunt, was continually absent from Oxford on military duties during that volume's decipherment and editing, although he revised some of the papyri and the proofs. Grenfell, then, thought¹⁷ that "with the recovery of these fragments of Ephorus' history of the Pentecontaëtia the

12. Cf. P.A. Brunt, "On historical fragments and epitomes", *CQ* 30, 1980, p. 487. Hornblower's own theme, the relationship between Hieronymus and Diodorus, provides a striking example of the dangers involved, because the *Tendenz* of Diodorus' XVIII-XX is anything but favourable to the founder of the Antigonid house, Antigonus Monophthalmus, and extremely favourable to his rival Ptolemaeus son of Lagus. This conclusion, already adumbrated in the work of those who, like Seibert (*Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Ptolemaios I*, München, 1969) had postulated more than one source for this part of Diodorus' *Bibliotheca*, and which becomes evident from a literary study of the personages' characterization, is not easy to conciliate with Hieronymus' strong vinculation to the Antigonid house.

13. P. 100

14. Cod. 68 and cod. 80:56 b lines 12-29.

15. Number 1610, first edited in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri* part XIII, London, 1919, pp. 98 ss.

16. Cf. Preface to the above mentioned publication.

17. P. 113.

“higher criticism” of Diodorus not only can point henceforth to several substantial verifications of the methods of modern research in ancient history, but enters a new phase”. So Grenfell affirmed¹⁸ without the least doubt “the servility of Diodorus, who, as it now appears, followed Ephorus almost blindly through that period (i.e., the fifth century), and was practically incapable of original composition”, and concluded¹⁹ that “a future editor of Ephorus’ fragments will be able to include most of Diod. XI with confidence”.

The greatest authority on greek historiography, F. Jacoby, did not follow this counsel, but included the Oxyrhynchus papyrus in his edition of Ephorus, and in his commentary took into consideration, but rejected,²⁰ the possibility that the papyrus might be an epitome of Ephorus.

The identification of this papyrus as a fragment of Ephorus’ *Histories* was endorsed by G.L. Barber, the author of the only monograph written on Ephorus,²¹ and by Gomme in his most influential commentary on Thucydides,²² and so, on the basis of the proof it was supposed to give of Diodorus’ slavish dependence upon Ephorus, these small pieces of papyrus were transformed into decisive testimony of the servility of Diodorus in the whole of the *Bibliotheca*. So most recently Hornblower,²³ although writing at a time in which this is no longer the orthodoxy, makes great emphasis upon the “Ephorus-papyrus”, and quotes Grenfell’s words. The reason is not difficult to find: the writing of a monography upon Hieronymus of Cardia becomes impossible if one cannot take as starting-point the identification of Hieronymus with the main source blindly followed by Diodorus in Books XVIII-XX of his *Bibliotheca*.²⁴

18. P. 113.

19. P. 111

20. *FGHist* IIC, p. 90.

21. *The historian Ephorus*, Cambridge, 1935, p. 67, n. 1.

22. *A historical Commentary on Thucydides* I, Oxford, 1945, p. 286, n. 2.

23. Pp. 28 s. It is really instructive to contrast Hornblower’s “a papyrus fragment taken probably from Ephorus... or at least from a very good epitome of Ephorus” with C. Reid’s “It has been suggested to me that even though my objections to the text as Greek are reasonable, Grenfell and Hunt may nonetheless have restored the papyrus text accurately, if one assumes that the edition of Ephorus from which the fragments come was a very carelessly produced one... The hypothesis... would have the odd consequence of making Diodorus’ text resemble more closely a corrupt than an accurate text of Ephorus” (“A note on Oxyrhynchus Papyrus 1610”, *The Phoenix* 30, 1976, p. 363, n. 19).

24. We must emphasize that Diodorus’ *Hochkriticism* was concerned not only with the recovery of the primary sources for the various periods involved, but also with the recovery of the authors of those sources, and, for this end, it was extremely important, indeed vital, that Diodorus preserved not only the narrative but also the attitudes of these lost historians.

We are perhaps legitimize in saying that classical scholarship’s only chance of recovering some glimpses of Ephorus’ or Hieronymus’ historical methods rested upon the possibility of extracting them from Diodorus’ *Bibliotheca*, and it is perhaps only too understandable that every conceivable effort has been made in this direction.

As Drews most cogently argued (“Diodorus and his sources”, *AJPh* 83, 1962, p. 383 s.), Diodorus’ intentions in the course of the *Bibliotheca* are clear, but there were substantial differences in the way the various sources lended themselves to such an approach.

We must emphasize that now there reigns a new orthodoxy, whose main tenets are that Diodorus frequently made use of a diversity of sources for a given episode, and that he shaped his materials not only so as to provide his readers with moral edification, but also to prove the workings of the Divine Providence upon the course of human history, just as was announced in the general proemium.

The conclusion, then, is clear. An adequate edition of a historian's fragments must include all the fragments and epitomes given with the author's name, but textual quotations should be properly differentiated; Jacoby's typographical procedure is particularly convenient, as against the more cautious way of Edelstein-Kidd.²⁵

25. P. XIX: "Even in this collection confined to attested fragments, the term "fragment" has been used in a wide sense to cover all variations from what would seem to be a verbatim quotation to a reported statement of doctrine. Where there is reason to believe that a literal quotation was intended, this has been indicated by inverted commas. However, the evidence is always insufficient to decide how freely or accurately the report is related to the original. So no further distinction has been made in the text". Every user of von Arnim's *Stoicorum ueterum fragmenta*, with its enigmatically multifarious typographical variety, will sympathize with Edelstein-Kidd's choice, but Jacoby has shown us that a editor can be successful in attempting to distinguish typographically the historians' "ipsissima uerba".