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INDEX / CONTENTS

PALINSESTI / PALIMPSESTS

Un libello di citazioni. I "Frammenti morali, scientifici, eruditi e poetici" e la polemica fra Pietro Verri e l'abate Chiari
VALERIA TAVAZZI (Università di Roma La Sapienza) 3-29

"Quashed Quotatoes". Per qualche citazione irregolare (prima parte)
RINALDO RINALDI (Università di Parma) 31-52

Incesto travestito. "Sei personaggi.com" di Edoardo Sanguineti
JOLE SILVIA IMBORNONE (Università di Bari Aldo Moro) 53-74

"Civis romana sum". La Londra intertestuale di Bernardine Evaristo
SAMANTA TRIVELLINI (Università di Parma) 75-91

MATERIALI / MATERIALS

Echoes of Hylas and the Poetics of Allusion in Propertius
MARIAPIA PIETROPAOLO (University of Toronto) 95-107

I "gravissimi autori" del "Fuggilozio"
SANDRA CARAPEZZA (Università Statale di Milano) 109-122

Le parole degli altri. Due libri religiosi nella biblioteca di Guido Morselli
FABIO PIERANGELI (Università di Roma "Tor Vergata") 123-135

Stupr e pré. Giovanni Testori riscrive Iacopone da Todi
DANIELA IUPPA (Università di Roma "Tor Vergata") 137-148

LIBRI DI LIBRI / BOOKS OF BOOKS

[recensione/review] *"A Myriad of Literary Impressions". L'intertextualité dans le roman anglophone contemporain*, Sous la direction de E. Walezak & J. Dupont, Saint-Estève, Presses Universitaires de Perpignan, 2010
MARIA ELENA CAPITANI 151-158

[recensione/review] *Citation, Intertextuality and Memory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, edited by Y. Plumley, G. Di Bacco and S. Jossa, *Volume One: Text, Music and Image from Machaut to Ariosto*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2011
LUCA MANINI 159-164

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RECENSIONE / REVIEW

***Citation, Intertextuality and Memory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Edited by Yolanda Plumley, Giuliano Di Bacco and Stefano Jossa, Volume One: *Text, Music and Image from Machaut to Ariosto*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2011, pp. 272, £ 60.00**

A good way of approaching this challenging book (apart from reading the brilliantly clear *Preface* by the editors and the dense *Introduction* by Lina Bolzoni)[1] is skimming through the beginning paragraphs of each of the thirteen essays it is made up of; readers will thus gather the key words and the key tenets which will help them walk along the labyrinthine paths that the authors lay open to them. We can divide these key words and tenets into three main groups, while keeping in mind that the boundaries between them are ever-shifting and overlapping: the first one includes terms referred to, so to say, an operative mode (to translate, adapt, quote, allude, borrow); the second one comprehends the great issue of personal and subjective response (to absorb, appropriate, interrelate, manipulate, subvert, re-semanticize, vary, modernize, personalize, re-orient, re-use, re-shape); and the third one implies the aim

[1] See L. Bolzoni, *Introduction*, in *Citation, Intertextuality and Memory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Edited by Y. Plumley, G. Di Bacco and S. Jossa, Vol. I: *Text, Music and Image from Machaut to Ariosto*, Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2011, p. XIV.

and scope of the previous groups: to homage, emulate, mediate, negotiate, compete, challenge, defy, re-vitalize and, finally, to generate new meanings. The idea of memory as an ineludible source of knowledge and of confrontation looms large throughout the volume.

As clearly demonstrated by the various essays, the practice of citation is a dynamic process, looking backwards and forwards, conjoining past, present and future in a series of interlacing echoes which build up a network of words, sounds and images whose profound significance is to be explored singularly in each different author. In his *Orlando Furioso*, Ariosto uses the metaphor of weaving tapestries in order to present "his methodology of taking and combining different materials"; and his "imitative technique" is defined by Stefano Jossa as being "*double oriented*, facing in two directions, both towards the clearly recognizable source and towards the meaning within his new text."[2] The examples chosen by Jossa show the way Ariosto moved back to classical authors (Horace, Ovid, Virgil) via more recent authors (Petrarch, Poliziano, Sannazaro), gleaning imagery, single words, expressions, and re-using them in a personal perspective in his own poem; Jossa thus shows that Ariosto is working within the recognizable line of a literary tradition but also that he feels free to re-fashion it according to the poetic (and metapoetic) discourse he is carrying forth in his *Orlando Furioso*.

The practice of citation is never a neutral operation. Translating or adapting, imitating or alluding, quoting and borrowing are all acts that imply a subjective response, which, for its own nature, denies any mechanical rendering. It was so when Chaucer translated (and worked upon) Boccaccio's *Filocolo* into his *Troilus and Cryseide*; so it was when

[2] S. Iossa, *Classical Memory and Modern Poetics in Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso"*, ibidem, p. 88.

Spenser wrote *The Faerie Queene* to give England the epic poem it still lacked: his models were Ariosto and Tasso, he worked along the epic tradition going back to Homer and Virgil, but he immediately challenged the Italian models by adding one line to the Italian o*ttava,* creating the unique nine-line Spenserian stanza. So it was when early modern women poets encroached upon the codified language of Petrarchism and subtly re-utilized it to embrace feminine issues, replacing, say, the cruel and fierce beloved women with a faithful woman in love with a disloyal man (as is the case with Lady Mary Wroth) or with a widowed woman who lives in the continual memory of an idealized and lost husband (as Vittoria Colonna or Veronica Gambara did).

The author who figures the most prominently in the book is Guillaume de Machaut, the XIV century poet and musician, to whom five essays are dedicated, thus making him a sort of paradigmatic figure who can illuminate the discourse that the book builds up as a whole. Jacques Boogart explores his mastery in citation practice,[3] showing how the multifariousness of his borrowings (both in poems and in music pieces) corresponds to his will to manipulate them, to subvert their original meanings by fitting them into a new frame, where their significance is altered to his aim; from this point of view are also to be read his changes in the gender of the speaking voice, an aspect which still remains to be fully understood. Towards the end of his life, Machaut prepared an edition of his complete works, for which he wrote a *Prologue* that was meant as a general presentation to his life-long work; this poetic text is accompanied by two miniatures which "function as double author portrait." Dominic Leo investigates the pictorial styles of these miniatures, the insights they give

[3] See J. Boogart, *Citation and Transformation in Machaut's Musical Works: Gender Change and Transgression*, ibidem, pp. 15- 40.

into the poet's life and, most importantly, the "accumulation of visual signifiers"[4] that they contain in themselves. The two pictures enact a dialogue between themselves, readers and viewers, and the texts assembled in the manuscript, functioning as ever-renewed generators of meanings.

The practice of Machaut's self-allusion within his *œuvres complètes* is further investigated by R. Barton Palmer;[5] he focuses his attention on one of Machaut's most relevant works, the *Voir dit*, where citations from other writers mingle with quotations from Machaut himself, thus creating a network which, while relying on former authorities, sets out a new kind of authorial voice. The recognized greatness of Machaut's musico-poetical works raised a series of responses from other writers and musicians. Benjamin Albritton[6] analyses the different way Geoffrey Chaucer and Jean de Froissard responded to Machaut's works, both in terms of borrowing words and lines, and of imitating metric and rhyme schemes; while Anne Stones[7] analyses the presence of Machaut's music pieces in a XV century manuscript held in the Biblioteca Estense in Modena.

The classical tenets of *imitatio*, *variatio* and *emulatio* underlie most of the pages of this book. As a whole, it considers texts as citational sources, as entities able to raise responses, to invite other authors to imitate, re-use and appropriate them. To what aim, one may ask oneself. There is not, obviously, one single answer, but a multiplicity of answers, as these thirteen essays suggest. By imitating and citing, a writer may want to show his belonging to a tradition that he gives homage to, his respect for an

[4] D. Leo, *The Beginning is the End. Guillaume de Machaut's Illuminated "Prologue"*, ibidem, p. 96.

[5] See R. Barton Palmer, *Self-Allusion and the Poetics of Metafictionality in Guillaume de Machaut's "Voir dit"*, ibidem, pp. 127-140.

[6] See B. Albritton, *Translation and Parody. Responses to Mauchat's "Lay of confort"*, ibidem, pp. 1-14.

[7] See A. Stone, *Machaut Sighted in Modena*, ibidem, pp. 171-189.

auctoritas felt as such, so as to reinforce it and reaffirm it; at the same time, he may want to question that same *auctoritas*, to defy it, to go beyond it to create something new, to modify it subtly in order to give it a new significance within a new context. The practice of citation is a process of never-ending mediation and interconnection, of appropriating something to transform it into something new that, in its turn, will call for new appropriations and modifications.

This book brilliantly illustrates the multiple processes enacted by intertextuality in the minds of, on one side, writers, musicians, painters, and, on the other side, of readers, listeners and viewers; it illustrates the process of "absorbing, varying and competing",[8] as an *auctoritas* is not something fixed for good but something that is liable to be continually shifted, questioned and renewed, as any act of citing is an act of creativeness, charged with the burden of all issues that memory (either literary or historical or generally artistic) carries along with itself. It is impossible to go into the detail of all essays. Let us mention briefly that Medieval insular lyric and Middle English lyrics are dealt with by, respectively, Ardis Butterfield[9] and Kathleen Palti;[10] that two essays are devoted to medical texts (Monica Calabritto)[11] and to law books (Anthony Musson);[12] and that Jan Stejskal lead us into the territory of history with the "memorized word of Czech heretics" brought to Italy by Catholic

[8] S. Iossa, *Classical Memory and Modern Poetics in Ariosto's "Orlando Furioso"*, cit., ibidem, p. 83.

[9] See A. Butterfield, *The Construction of Textual Form: Cross-Lingual Citation in the Medieval Insular Lyric*, ibidem, pp. 57.

[10] See K. Palti, *Representation of Voices in Middle English Lyrics*, ibidem, pp. 141-158.

[11] See M. Calabritto, *Examples, References and Quotations in Sixteenth-Century Medical Texts*, ibidem, pp. 58-73.

[12] See A. Musson, *The Power of Image. Allusion and Intertextuality in Illuminated English Law Books*, ibidem, pp. 113-126.

refugees.[13] *Auctores* and *auctoritas* are tackled by Alessandro Daneloni,[14] while the book closes with the poignant study by Karel Thein of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Good Government* frescoes, considered in their relationship with Bernardino da Siena's sermons.[15]

All essays contribute to increasing the reader's awareness that, once detached from their original sites, words and images take on a new life, without deleting their old one; and this one of the major fascinations of this book.

LUCA MANINI

[13] J. Stejskal, *Memory and Heresy. The Perception of Hussite Reformation in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany*, ibidem, p. 159.

[14] See A. Daneloni, *"Auctores" and "Auctoritas" in the Preface to Angelo Poliziano's "Miscellaneorum centuria prima"*, ibidem, pp. 74-82.

[15] See K. Thein, *Image, Memory and Judgement. On Ambrogio Lorenzetti's "Good Government" Frescoes and his "Allegory of Redemption"*, ibidem, pp. 190-208.

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