Manual of Discourse Traditions in Romance

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Robert Kirstein

36 Discourse traditions and literary studies: the example of Ancient Greek and Latin literature(s)

Abstract: This chapter explores possible applications of discourse traditions (DTs) within literary studies, using ancient Greek and Latin authors as examples. Topics include the analysis of literary genres across linguistic boundaries and epochs (the example of medieval and ancient Latin love poetry) and the development of new genres out of already existing conventions and traditions (Ovid's exile poetry). The phenomenon of the Berliner Schnauze 'Berlin snout', discussed by Koch (1997) as an introductory example, proves fruitful for literary processes observed in Greek Hellenistic and Roman literature by expanding aspects of intertextuality (the "Callimachean voice"). The DT model is further used to investigate how conventional epoch attributions can be used also time-independently (Ovid as "postmodern" author) and how traditions that have actually outlived themselves find reactivation ("republicanism" in Tacitus' early imperial writings).

Keywords: 'Berlin snout' (Koch), Callimachus, development of genres across time, development of new genres, discourse traditions, Ovid, postmodernity, revival of traditions, Tacitus

1 Introduction

In linguistics, discourse traditions (DTs) are an established model. At the same time, the ongoing theoretical discussion, particularly in Romance studies, reveals that it also offers new perspectives for neighboring research fields such as literary studies. Koch already conceptualized this dimension of DT in his seminal 1997 essay (cf. ↗Koch, this volume) and programmatically pointed out its further reaching potential (Koch 1997, 55–56). The reflections presented in this chapter link directly to these considerations on DT and literary studies. One example that makes the potential of DT immediately apparent can be found in the analysis of literary genres: '[L]ooking at aspects of the particular language, we are concerned with historical languages and their varieties such as German, English, French, Russian, Moselle Franconian, Cockney, Argot etc. From the perspective of discourse tradition, we are looking at text types, genres, styles, rhetorical *genera*, forms of conversation, speech acts etc. such as the medication package insert, the sonnet, Mannerism, panegyrica, talk shows, feudal

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oaths and so on' (Koch 1997, 45/this volume).[1] Thus, language historicity is a key aspect of DT (see ↗4 Discourse traditions and the historicity of language: discourse traditional knowledge and discourse universes), but the same is true for the historicity of literature and literary genres (Koch 1997, 59–61). Genres such as lyric poetry or epic have – partly continuously, partly intermittently – developed from the Ancient Near East over Greece and Rome to modern European cultures and languages in a fluid and dynamic interplay of tradition and innovation (see ↗6 Discourse traditions and linguistic dynamics).

2 Synchronic and diachronic perspectives: the example of Ancient Latin love poetry

The central differentiation in Koch's model consists in a doubling of the historical level (*particular language – discourse tradition*; Koch 1997, 45, Figure 1). As a result, particular language phenomena are distinguished from those that are language-independent, the latter being defined as DTs. The example of medieval troubadour and *Minne* poetry brought forward by Koch illustrates on the one hand language-independent correspondences between texts from a variety of language traditions (Old Occitan, Old French, Middle High German, Old Italian). Among other traits, these texts characteristically display a use of metaphorical language that shifts concepts of medieval feudalism and the power relations associated with it – such as *Lehnsdienst* 'service' – to the realm of love and interpersonal relations (Koch 1997, 46–49). On the other hand, however, it shows that the DT model is also applicable to diachronic and comparative studies even over large time intervals, e.g. the one between medieval and ancient literature(s). Indeed, a similar metaphorical language – and similar discourse rules – can be found in ancient Latin love poetry (Sharrock 2002; Gold 2012; Thorsen 2013): examples include the lyric poet Catullus (ca. 84–54 BC) and representatives of Roman love elegy like Tibullus (ca. 55–19 BC), Propertius (ca. 47–2 BC), and Ovid (43 BC–ca. 17 AD). In this poetry, the relationship between women and men is negotiated with poetic tropes like *servitium amoris* 'slavery of love', *militia amoris* 'the lover's military service', or *foedus aeternum* 'eternal pact' (cf. Kennedy 2012). It might be worth noting that the emergence of this poetry takes place against the backdrop of a fundamental social and political change between the end of the Roman Republic and the early imperial period, marked by the rise of Emperor Augustus (63 BC–14 AD; cf. Habinek

1 "unter einzelsprachlichem Aspekt beschäftigen wir uns mit historischen Sprachen und ihren Varietäten wie z.B. Deutsch, Englisch, Französisch, Russisch, Moselfränkisch, Cockney, Argot usw.; unter diskurstraditionellem Aspekt beschäftigen wir uns mit Textsorten, Gattungen, Stilen, rhetorischen Genera, Gesprächsformen, Sprechakten usw. wie z.B. Beipackzettel, Sonett, Manierismus, Prunkrede, Talkshow, Lehnseid usw.".

2002; Harrison 2013). Of course, differences remain between ancient and medieval love poetry. Thus, to take just one example, intertextual references to Hellenistic Greek poetry – represented by authors like Callimachus (ca. 305–240 BC; see also section 4 below) – play a central role for the Romans, but no longer for the texts of the Middle Ages. Even if one puts aside the question of the direct reception of ancient Latin literature in the Middle Ages, the DT model proves helpful in analyzing the development of literary forms and genres across languages, language varieties, and epochs (cf. especially Figures 2–3 in Koch 1997, 60; on epochs, see section 5 below; on the reception of classical texts in medieval Latin literature, cf. Kretschmer 2013). As Koch notes – taking up Wittgenstein's term *Familienähnlichkeit* 'family resemblance' –, in such grand scale developments we observe an interplay of tradition and innovation: 'The crucial fact is that [...] at the end of such a genealogy we have a substantially different discourse traditional reality [...] than at the beginning [...]' (Koch 1997, 60/this volume; Wittgenstein 1953, §§ 66–71; cf. Lakoff 1987).[2]

3 Discourse traditions and new literary genres: the example of Ovid's exile poetry

A closely related question is that of the development of wholly new literary genres: 'If cultural traditions, and specifically discourse traditions, do not appear *ex nihilo*, the question arises how precisely they continue established traditions in the newly formed ones' (Koch 1997, 63/this volume).[3] Ovid's exile poetry, the *Tristia* 'Sorrows' and the *Epistulae ex Ponto* 'Letters from the Black Sea', offers an example of how the emergence of the new can be described via DT. Both works were written towards the end of the poet's life and thus represent a counterpart to the *Amores* 'Love Elegies' (see section 2 above), which were composed early in his career (for general interpretations of Ovid's poetry from exile see Williams 1994; Claassen 2008). To some degree, this poetry from exile can be understood as a continuation of love elegy with its emphasis on power relations, imbalances, the feelings of separation and unfulfillment. But at the same time, there are elements that do not fall under the heading of continuity. By making exile – ordered by Augustus and never revoked – its key motive and by following additional traditions from Greek and Roman literature like funeral elegy, epistolography, the ancient novel, and epic, Ovid has achieved to create something new in literature (Nagle 1980, 19–70; Harrison 2002; Williams 2002, 350–353; Holzberg ^{4}2017, 181–183). His poetry of exile provides an almost prototypical example of the formation

2 "Entscheidend ist folgendes: [...] am Ende einer Filiation [steht] eine erheblich andere diskurstraditionelle Realität [...] als am Anfang [...]".

3 "Wenn kulturelle Traditionen und speziell Diskurstraditionen also nicht *ex nihilo* entstehen, stellt sich die Frage, wie sie das Hergebrachte im Neuen weiterführen".

of a new literary genre: '[In the *Tristia*] the development of that new variation of verse epistolography which will then predominate in the *Epistulae ex Ponto* can be traced in statu nascendi' (Harzer 1997, 51; translation RK; cf. also Wulfram 2008, 214–404).[4] More precisely, observations by Koch on both *differentiation* and *blending* of cultural traditions apply to the emergence of this new genre (cf. Figures 7 and 8 in Koch 1997, 66–67). The transformation from love elegy to exile poetry is exemplified, among others, by the shift of the unattained object of longing: the 'beloved woman' (*puella*) is replaced by the 'city of Rome' (*urbs Roma*) or by the Roman emperor Augustus receiving the role of the *dura puella* (the 'harsh girlfriend' who will not allow Ovid to return home) for which the exiled poet longs and from which he is separated, like the so-called 'excluded lover' (*exclusus amator*) languishing in front of closed doors (Holzberg [4]2017, 182). This change of perspective is particularly easy because Roman love elegy by Ovid and his other fellow poets has its regular setting in the city of Rome (unlike other genres in which love plays a central role, such as bucolics with its countryside settings). Moreover, Rome is often portrayed in personified (feminine) form in the visual and textual discourses of ancient Rome. Ovid's exile poems belong to the poet's last period of creativity. Looking back on a long career, featuring widely different genres spanning from large to small, encompassing non-mythological and mythological themes, and addressing both the (fictional) past and the present, all this made Ovid perhaps particularly qualified to artfully play with the rich resources of discourse traditions of his time.

4 Beyond individual languages: the 'Berlin snout' and the 'Callimachean voice'

As mentioned above, the engagement with Greek literature plays an essential role in the development of Latin literature. Most of the literary genres in Latin literature can be found preshaped in Greece in one form or the other. This continuity of literary motifs, themes, genres, and manners of speech across linguistic boundaries has always puzzled the field of Classics. A particular challenge is posed by phenomena that cannot be simply described as the adoption of traditional material and its innovative application to the new context. One such phenomenon is the "Callimachean voice" found in a variety of texts, especially among authors of the Augustan Age, and intensively discussed at least since Wimmel's (1960) seminal study *Kallimachos in Rom* (Thomas 1993; Asper 2004, 53–56; Hunter 2006; on the reception of Hellenistic poetry in Rome in general, see Fantuzzi/Hunter 2005, 444–485): the abovementioned ele-

4 "[*In den Tristien*] läßt sich die Entwicklung jener neuen Variante der Versepistolographie, die in den *Epistulae ex Ponto* dann vorherrschen wird, in statu nascendi nachzeichnen".

gists, but also poets like Catullus, Horace and Vergil, belong to this group (on Callimachus and Ovid, see Acosta-Hughes 2009; on Callimachus' influence on Roman elegy, Hunter 2013, 31–37).

But what exactly is the Callimachean voice? Essentially, this literary phenomenon is understood as a reception of central aesthetic positions that are implicitly and explicitly expressed in the work of the Greek Hellenistic poet Callimachus (see also section 2 above). These positions include a rejection of older large-scale poetry, a preference for small forms, a select and erudite poetry that avoids the commonplace and the ordinary, seeks and recreates rare words and remote cultural traditions, is innovative, sophisticated, and presuppositional (cf. also Asper 2004, 51–53, who emphasizes surprise, intertextuality, and wit as main characteristics). Latin poets placed themselves in this Callimachean tradition by adopting a Callimachean voice in their own writings (Hunter 2006, 2 speaks of a "code"). In doing so, they faced, among other things, the pragmatic challenge of traditionalizing an innovative poetry through the act of reception, but at the same time keeping the idea of the innovative alive. Thus, when one characterizes poets like Catullus or Ovid as being particularly "Callimachean", more is meant than just the intertextual reference to their Greek predecessor.

The "shadow of Callimachus" (Hunter 2006) – i.e. the return of a "Callimachean voice" in an epoch distant in time, space, and language – is in several respects reminiscent of the *Berliner Schnauze* 'Berlin Snout' example presented by Koch (1997, 44/this volume): 'We are faced with two fundamentally different types of traditions of speaking here: with the use of Berlin dialect as a diatopic tradition of the particular language, and with the 'snout' as a tradition which, in a way, runs transversely to the former, but which definitely transcends the individual, situational discourse'.[5] In the case of Callimachus in Rome, too, we are dealing with a tradition of speaking that is not dependent on a particular language or a particular language variety. While the language of the Callimachean texts is Greek, his successors in Rome write in Latin. Furthermore, we are dealing with a literary expression that is not individual, but is found in different texts and authors like Catullus, Horace, Ovid, Propertius, Tibullus, and Virgil, to mention a few. Moreover, the typicality of the "Callimachean voice" cannot be explained solely by the intertextual processing of Greek literature in Rome, which is also common otherwise: many other Greek authors are cited with similar frequency and complexity as Callimachus – some even to a far greater extent, as in the case of Homer alone. Nevertheless, there is little evidence of phenomena comparable to the "Callimachean voice" (on the "prominent position" of Callimachus see Thomas 1993, 197–199; Hunter 2006, 1–3; Asper 2004, 51). Finally, a restriction similar to Koch's can be made in the case of the reception of Callimachus in Augustan Rome,

5 "Wir haben es hier also mit zwei grundverschiedenen Typen von Traditionen des Sprechens zu tun: mit dem Berlinern als einzelsprachlich-diatopischer Tradition und mit der 'Schnauze' als einer dazu gewissermaßen 'querliegenden' Tradition, die aber den individuellen, aktuellen Diskurs eindeutig transzendiert".

since we are also talking about a relatively close-knit linguistic community of Roman authors writing between ca. 84 BC and 17 AD: 'One further problem is that the tradition in question – it appears – is only found in Berlin. [...] As our Berlin example and the material [...] have shown, particular languages and discourse traditions are linked in manifold ways, but they have to be distinguished all the same' (Koch 1997, 49/this volume).[6] The validity of the DT model is not least demonstrated by the fact that it brings phenomena as different as the 'Berlin Snout' and the "Callimachean voice" into mutual conceptual dialogue across time: while the 'Berlin Snout' belongs to contemporary everyday communication, the "Callimachean voice" is a historically distant and at the same time highly literary, not to say elite phenomenon.

5 Discourse traditions and epoch boundaries: Ovid as a postmodern author?

In recent years, Ovid has become one of the most celebrated authors of ancient literature. This was not always the case; in the 19th and much of the 20th century, Ovid was rather considered an author of secondary quality. Originality and "genius" were denied him in favor of the Greek models and more "classical" Latin authors like Virgil (Ziolkowski 2004; Janka 2007). The new *Aetas Ovidiana* seems to be linked not by chance to the rise of postmodernity and postmodern literary debates (Fowler 2000, 5–33; Ziolkowski 2004, 170–184; Rimell 2019; Roynon/Orrells 2019). Among the narrative qualities that have earned Ovid this characterization as "postmodern" are a tendency toward the fragmentary, the disruptive, and the violent (Hinds 1987; Gildenhard/Zissos 1999; Hardie 2002; Spentzou 2009; Kirstein 2021); his play with elements of metafiction and his use of illusion-breaking devices such as metalepsis also belong in here (Hinds 1998, 90; Krupp 2009; Wolf 2013, 330). In addition, the contemporary reception of Ovid's works has been analyzed under the aspect of postmodernity, as in Ransmayer's 1988 novel *Die letzte Welt* (Glei 1994). Regarding antiquity and authors like Ovid, a double challenge arises when one speaks of postmodernity or postmodernism: on the one hand, defining the term to grasp a particular period or epoch in the course of (contemporary) history; on the other hand, the question whether (and if so, to what extent) the term might be applied in a more general sense to other epochs. No other concept in recent cultural studies seems to be as controversial as that of postmodernity. When did it begin? Is it an epoch at all, and if so, how does it relate to other epochs, especially modernity and the Enlightenment? Is it part of modernity or some-

6 "Ein Problem besteht hier darin, daß die betreffende Tradition – so scheint es – nur in Berlin beheimatet ist. [...] Wie unser Berliner Beispiel und auch das Material [...] gezeigt haben, sind Einzelsprachliches und Diskurstraditionelles zwar vielfältig miteinander verwoben, aber dennoch streng zu trennen".

thing different? Or has there never been a postmodernity, the term being only an empty formula under which everything and nothing can be subsumed, and which delegitimizes itself through its inner contradictions? The complex and ongoing discussion both in literary studies and in other areas such as the arts, architecture, philosophy, social and political sciences cannot be followed in detail here (on the rejection of a too broad concept of postmodernism, cf. e.g. Welsch [7]2008, 41; Fowler 2000, 5–33). It may suffice to assume the following characteristics as in some way typical of postmodern literature: 'uncertainty, fragmentation, dissolution of the canon, irony, carnivalization' (Zima [4]2016, 25, following Hassan [2]1994, 49–55; translation RK).[7] Furthermore, it is noteworthy that some theorists rank among the early precursors of postmodernity novels like Lawrence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* or the work of Friedrich Nietzsche (e.g. McHale 2015, 8–13).

For the model of DT, those approaches seem to be of particular interest that describe postmodernity as a time-independent mode, a mode which can also be uncovered in cultures distant in time and space. Welsch, following Lyotard, provides an example of this stance: 'Postmodern' is someone who is aware of the irreducible diversity of forms of language, thought and life beyond obsessions with unity and knows how to deal with it. And for this you don't have to live in the late 20th century but can already have been Wittgenstein or Kant, can have been Diderot, Pascal or Aristotle' (Welsch [7]2008, 35, cf. 10; translation RK).[8] Ovid and especially his *Metamorphoses* can easily be included in this series under the premises mentioned above, similarly to Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (Ziolkowski 2004, 176–184). Another example can be found in Umberto Eco's interpretation of the Middle Ages, with its emphasis on multiplicity and diversity (Eco 1985, with Welsch [7]2008, 57–59). At least two benefits derive from applying the DT model to readings of Ovid as a "postmodern" author. On the one hand, it allows for diachronically comparable modes of thought to be related across particular languages and historical epochs – while at the same time not necessarily having to assume the whole package of features that comes along with traditional epoch ascriptions. One could thus argue that Ovid's or Stern's works include elements of certain "postmodern" DTs without making overly generalizing and sweeping attributions that would imply an inaccurate modernization of the authors.

Second, the general notion of DT allows for parallel and synchronic views of other cultural traditions. Following Koch: 'I will assume that discourse traditions are essentially only *one* type of the manifold hoard of human traditions, and insofar, despite all the differences in terms of 'matter', share fundamental features with other types of traditions: [t]raditions of fine arts, [m]usical traditions, [v]estimentary traditions, [g]as-

7 "Unbestimmtheit, Fragmentierung, Auflösung des Kanons, Ironie, Karnevalisierung".

8 "'Postmodern' ist, wer sich jenseits von Einheitsobsessionen der irreduziblen Vielfalt der Sprach-, Denk- und Lebensformen bewusst ist und damit umzugehen weiß. Und dazu muss man keineswegs im zu Ende gehenden 20. Jahrhundert leben, sondern kann schon Wittgenstein oder Kant, kann Diderot, Pascal oder Aristoteles geheißen haben".

tronomic traditions, [t]raditions in sports, [r]eligious traditions, [t]raditions in the aesthetic design of technical objects [...]' (Koch 1997, 61/this volume; emphasis original).[9] This aspect is of particular interest when looking at the increasingly discussed epoch boundaries and periodization attempts in historiography, literary studies, historical linguistics, and related disciplines. In particular, the debate about the positioning of postmodernity has shown that such transformations often do not develop simultaneously, but rather phase-shift across different cultural traditions (Welsch [7]2008, 16; cf. Meier 2012 for the example of Late Antiquity; cf. Kiening 2002 for the Medieval Ages and Modernity; Landwehr 2012).[10]

6 Discourse traditions and the revival of traditions: the example of Tacitus' historical writings

Finally, not congruent but related is another phenomenon that can be described as the continuation or revival of traditions that have essentially been overcome. One example is provided by the much-discussed question of what part republican convictions still played in Rome's early imperial literature. In particular, diametrically different views have been expressed concerning the historical work of the Roman historian Cornelius Tacitus (ca. 58–120 AD; for historiography as part of narrative literature in Antiquity, cf. de Jong 2014, 172). Was Tacitus, more or less voluntarily, a monarchist (as Theodor Mommsen wanted) or, after all, a republican at heart who rejected the new political realities? Syme has therefore identified a double stance in Tacitus: "As

9 "Dabei gehe ich davon aus, daß Diskurstraditionen im Grunde nur ein Typ der vielfältigen kulturellen Traditionen des Menschen sind und insofern, bei allen Unterschieden in der 'Materie', wesentliche Gemeinsamkeiten aufweisen mit:
- Traditionen der bildenden Kunst,
- musikalischen Traditionen,
- vestimentären Traditionen,
- gastronomischen Traditionen,
- Traditionen des Sports,
- religiösen Traditionen,
- Traditionen der ästhetischen Gestaltung technischer Gegenstände [...]".

10 'One of the consequences of the intensified detailed analysis is: The event recedes into the context of discursive entanglements. The perspective shifts from the radical breaks to the multi-layered superimpositions of continuous and discontinuous phenomena. A simultaneity of the non-simultaneous becomes visible. New and old interpenetrate in interplay and counterflow' ("Eine der Konsequenzen aus der intensivierten Detailanalyse ist: Das Ereignis tritt in den Kontext diskursiver Verflechtungen zurück. Die Perspektive verschiebt sich von den radikalen Brüchen auf die vielschichtigen Überlagerungen kontinuierlicher und diskontinuierlicher Phänomene. Sichtbar wird eine Gleichzeitigkeit des Ungleichzeitigen. Neues und Altes durchdringt sich in Wechselspiel und Gegenlauf"; Kiening 2002, 268; translation RK).

a Roman historian, Tacitus had to be a Republican: in his life and in his politics he was a monarchist" (Syme 1939, 517; cf. Wirszubski 1950; Strunk 2017, 183–186). Understanding early imperial republicanism as a (literary) DT frees one from the need to commit authors like Tacitus to one stance or another (cf. also Schulz 2019, 63–166; Fuhrer 2021). In this way it becomes easier to understand how Tacitus was able to recognize in the transition to the adoptive emperorship under the emperors Nerva and Trajan (reigning 96–98 and 98–117 AD) a kind of "republican" restart, generations after Augustus had established the monarchy in the form of the Principate in 27 BC (Geisthardt/Gildenhard 2019, 269: "[...] a return, that is, to a quasi-republican mode of imperial rule that will come into being with Nerva and Trajan"). Further possible links arise here, such as to sociological role theories. Thus, the different roles of Tacitus as a historian on the one hand and a politician and citizen on the other, as identified by Syme, can be grasped more precisely if one of the facets, in this case the republicanism, is understood as a certain DT that transcends the changes in the political system within and *via* literature.

7 Conclusion

Discourse traditions prove to be a promising field of research for literary studies. The examples from ancient Greek and Roman literature examined here include topics such as the development of genres across linguistic and epochal boundaries, the development of new genres, phenomena such as the "Callimachean voice" that recall Koch's example of the 'Berlin snout', the application of postmodernism as a time-independent concept to a pre-modern author like Ovid and the reactivation of outlived concepts as in the case of "republicanism" in Tacitus' writings from the early imperial period.

These, however, are only a handful of examples, which could be further extended to include other areas of interest. One could think, for example, of the cultural relations between East and West, as exemplified by the *Gilgamesh Epic* and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In general, the DT model can help to better understand what is often referred to as "Classical Antiquity" in terms of a polyphonic cultural area that consisted of many more than just the two languages Greek and Latin and hence carried a wealth of language-independent discourse traditions. Thus, for instance, the Hebrew literature of ancient Judaism can be brought back into a closer dialogue with the often predominant Greek and Latin sources. Such an approach could also be applied to other languages and epochs, supporting comparative literary studies in general. In addition to the study of language-independent correspondences between texts from various traditions both in a synchronic and a diachronic perspective, Koch's observations on *differentiation* and *blending* of cultural traditions might also be extended to the relationship between literary genres on the one hand and professional and scientific language discourses on the other, e. g. from physics, medicine, and law. In modern literature, one could think of the discourse-traditional influence of natural sciences in the

works of e. g. Robert Musil or Thomas Mann (cf. Herwig 2004), or of the influence of legal thinking in the works of E.T.A. Hoffmann or Franz Kafka.

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