The Continuity of Classical Literature through Fragmentary Traditions
Trends in Classics – Supplementary Volumes

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Volume 105
The Continuity of Classical Literature through Fragmentary Traditions

Edited by Francesco Ginelli and Francesco Lupi
Preface

The chapters collected in this volume originate from papers that were originally presented at the panel ‘From Sources to Editions and back again. The Continuity of Classical Literature through Fragmentary Traditions’. The panel was part of the 10th Celtic Conference in Classics (19–22 July 2017, McGill University and Université de Montréal) and saw a total of fifteen papers delivered over three days.

In sending this book to the press, we would like to express our gratitude to the organisers of the Montreal Conference, Elsa Bouchard (Université de Montréal) and William Gladhill (McGill University), who gave us the opportunity to set up our panel and wonderfully hosted us at both universities. We are also grateful to all the colleagues who attended the panel and contributed to it, either by presenting a paper or by joining the fruitful discussions that followed each presentation. We believe that the panel proved a success in promoting the academic cross-fertilisation policy that drives the Celtic Conference in Classics and wish to acknowledge the collaborative and friendly spirit that we experienced in Montreal. Gratitude is also due to Raymond L. Capra, Eva Falaschi, Patrick J. Finglass, Kyriaki Ioannidou, Chiara Monaco, Enrico Emanuele Prodi, and Effie Zagari. We are very grateful to Suzanne Sharland, for her thorough linguistic revision of the entire volume and for further valuable comments and suggestions on its contents. We also wish to credit the Yale Papyrus Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, as the source of the images reproduced in Giulio Iovine’s chapter (8), and express our gratitude to Ellen Doon, the Library’s Head of the Manuscript Unit. We also wish to thank Serena Pirrotta, Marco Acquafredda, and Anne Hiller for their interest in the project and thorough assistance throughout the editorial process; Katerina Zianna did a wonderful job in preparing the manuscript for publication and taking care of its editing.

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Francesco Ginelli
Francesco Lupi

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Introduction

1 The study of fragments and the search for a method

Fragmentary texts play a central role in the field of Classical literature. Modern understanding of ancient cultures is inevitably characterised by loss, since the greater part of what ancient Greece and Rome produced has not survived. With regard to written texts, such loss has come about through a variety of factors: from the weak physical composition of the materials employed to record texts in antiquity, to their destruction by human agency and the ravages of time, to deliberate selection (and concomitant exclusion) in the formation of literary canons.1

The sense of loss that accompanies the study of Classical literature, however frustrating it may be, poses a stimulating challenge to scholars and readers. In fact, the desire to restore what has been lost in the process of textual transmission acts as a sort of Aristotelian *primum motus* for the study of fragments. It is this desire that keeps motivating scholars in spite of the meagre state of the evidence at hand, with the result that fragmentary literary works are still nowadays collected, studied, and edited, possibly to an even greater extent than in the past.2

The paucity of textual material represents the most obvious and most challenging difficulty for those wishing to conduct research on fragmentary texts. In fact, the smaller the amount of available text, the higher becomes the risk for the intended research to lead to biased results, affecting, amongst other things, aims such as textual restoration, interpretation, and the tentative reconstruction of partially preserved works. Consequently, methodological concerns play a major role in the study of fragments.

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1 On the relationship between fragments and canon formation, see Most (1997) vi, paragraph ‘1. Fragments and Canons’.
2 The healthy state of fragmentology in contemporary Classical scholarship is demonstrated by the current wealth of conferences and multi-authored volumes addressing the topic of fragments from a variety of perspectives, including the theoretical: see, most recently and most notably, Derda/Hilder/Kwapisz (2017).

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role in the study of fragmentary literature. Just as in any other field of Classics, however, methods and principles should not be regarded as rigidly immutable. Constantly evolving factors such as scholarly trends and technical-scientific innovations have a considerable impact upon these methods and principles. Moreover, methodological principles are also influenced by practical considerations, and by issues arising from and sometimes peculiar to the texts under scrutiny. These aspects range from the physical condition of the evidence (e.g. in the case of a papyrus text, the degree of fragmentation of the papyrus itself), to the literary rules and conventions to which the fragment(s) may be subject. On the last point, fragments of a prose-text will necessarily entail different issues from fragments of poetry; such issues will both influence the questions raised by the fragments and limit the ways in which scholars are able to answer them. Likewise, the level of literariness of a fragmentary text will play, at least to a degree, a similar role. In other words, if different questions apply to different kinds of texts, it follows that the methods and principles employed in the study of fragmentary literature should also be tailored around the specific features of the texts to which those very methods and principles are applied.3

Therefore there is a need for a constant comparison between the methods, approaches, and goals with which textual fragments — be they Greek or Latin, poetry or prose, literary or para-literary — are investigated in current scholarship. The continuously changing nature of the study of fragmentary literature provided the stimulus for us to bring together scholars variously engaged with textual fragments, and to collect contributions across literary genres, on a wide range of aspects relating to textual fragmentation. The ultimate goal of this book has been to convene a discussion group on some of the most relevant issues that fragmentologists have to face. More often than not, such issues are of a methodological nature. It is our conviction, then, that bringing to the forefront the methodological implications of the study of fragmentary literature is the most viable way to promote debate in the field and to invite critical reflection on its common specificities and limitations.

The methodologies employed by this volume’s contributors, however influenced by the factors outlined above, all show common concerns. The purpose of this introduction, therefore, is to highlight some of the methodological concerns and principles that underlie the study of fragmentary literature, broadly defined, and which are fundamental to the field. Despite their differences in topic and

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3 Most (1997) vii (point 4) lucidly warns against treating poetic, philosophical, and historical fragments as if they were “all fragments in the same way”: in fact, different kinds of fragments lend themselves to different levels of accuracy in quotation.
aims, the contributions collected in the present volume provide illuminating examples of the application of such principles and methods. To account for those principles, the following pages offer a checklist of the steps needed to ensure that the study and editing of fragmentary texts rest on a methodologically sound base. We find the image of the checklist to be particularly vivid, as it is comparable to the tasks performed by airline pilots prior to taking off, comprising a set of complex and consequential operations aimed at ensuring the success of the flight. Likewise, in the study of textual fragments, preliminary steps need to be taken in order to increase the chances of ‘success’ of any research undertaken in the field. Without pushing the analogy too far, and in order to lay down, at the outset, a basic epistemological premise of fragmentology, it is crucial to point out that with textual fragments ‘success’ can only be measured in terms of likelihood of the results of one’s research being correct. This is due to the fragments’ status as remnants of a whole that is unable to be restored to its original completeness.

What strategies, then, should one adopt in studying what is no longer fully extant? How should one set about scrutinising texts affected by fragmentation? One possible route, we contend, is to ensure that any hypothesis concerning a fragmentary text is at least compatible with a set of conditions; failure to satisfy any such conditions will result in the hypothesis being heavily undermined. Establishing a checklist of tasks to be undertaken in the initial stages of one’s research will then be helpful in tracing those conditions and granting a methodologically sound approach to the study of textual fragments.

2 What is a fragment and how do fragments come about?

2.1 Direct and indirect tradition. Fragments and testimonies

The concept of a fragment implies that an entity, which was once whole, is broken and in pieces, indicating that something may be lacking or missing from what

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4 This consideration obviously does not apply to flights: a flight is successful as long as the aircraft lands safely at the intended destination, a result which can be objectively ascertained.
remains. The etymology itself of the English word *fragment* (compare Latin *fragmentum*) suggests the idea of a ‘fracture’ befalling an originally homogenous body or object, whatever its physical constitution, nature, and function may be.6

If we limit this observation to textual fragments, the subject of this volume, it becomes evident that a fragment exists so long as the work it originally belonged to does not survive in its entirety. To put it in other words, a portion \( p \) of a text \( T \) surviving ‘outside’ of \( T \) (e.g. if it is preserved as a quotation by a later author, or anyhow detached from the original text conceived as a whole) does not qualify as a fragment \( f \) of \( T \) until \( T \) is lost.7 As long as \( T \) is extant, in fact, \( p \) does not enjoy the status of fragment, not, at least, in the sense in which the term is generally used by Classicists; moreover, any observation on \( p \) can be verified against \( T \) — or, conversely, any observation on \( T \) can be verified against \( p \), at least for the overlapping portion. For instance, a quotation from Sophocles’ *Antigone* by a later author could be checked and verified against the text of that particular passage as preserved in the manuscripts of Sophocles’ *Antigone*. Any discrepancies between \( p \) (in this case, the *Ant.* quotation, an instance of *indirect* tradition of an ancient text) and \( T \) (the

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5 On the etymology of the English word *fragment*, “a sixteenth-century borrowing” from Latin, and the cognates Eng. *break* and Lat. *frango*, both going back to the Proto-Indo-European root *bhreg-*, ‘break’, see Katz (2017) 27–30. After all, the idea of material ‘brokenness’ implicit in the very etymology of *fragment* is still clearly felt by English speakers today; cf. the first definition given in the *OED Online*, s.v. ‘fragment, n.’: “A part broken off or otherwise detached from a whole; a broken piece; a (comparatively) small detached portion of anything”; with regard to works of art, under point 2b, the following definition is given: “An extant portion of a writing or composition which as a whole is lost; also, a portion of a work left uncompleted by its author; hence, a part of any unfinished whole or uncompleted design.” (accessed January 28 2020, https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/74114?rskey=Mgb0Dn&result=1#eid).

6 Fragments have stimulated scholars’ imagination through the centuries, eliciting various metaphorical (or analogical) descriptions to account both for their peculiar status as inherently ‘incomplete’ texts and for the no less peculiar approach required for such texts (Wright 2016, xxiv–xxv lists at least seven different images). The most widespread of such images probably is — as Rudolph Kassel named it — the *Schiffbruchmetapher*, which likens literary fragments to the disjointed timbers of a wrecked ship; on the image, see esp. Kassel (1991) 243 and n. 2, Dionisotti (1997) 26–27. Building on this image — and shifting the focus from the fragments themselves to the scholarship on fragments — we suggest conceiving collections and critical editions of fragmentary texts as a sort of castaway depot, meant to provide shelter to the ‘survivors’ (namely fragments) of the literary shipwreck that befell countless Graeco-Roman works.

7 The adjective *lost* is used here with the particular sense of ‘lost as a whole’, ‘not fully extant’, implying that the *lost* text actually survives in one or more discrete portions. Thus, unless further specified, *lost* is here virtually synonymous with *fragmentary*. Similarly, *extant* is here used with the marked sense of ‘fully extant’, ‘non fragmentary’ (see, however, n. 17 below).
play *Ant.* as transmitted by the *direct* tradition of Sophocles’ extant *oeuvre*) can be rather readily ascertained by means of a close comparison between the two.

For $T$ to exist, as we indicated above, the condition instead is that $T$ is lost. When this condition is fulfilled, in the simplest scenario what is known of $T$ ultimately derives from $p$ (or $p_1$, $p_2$, $p_3$ ...9), that is, from the sole surviving portion(s) of an irretrievable whole.9 Under these circumstances, such portions can be viewed as fragments in their own right (then $p_1$, $p_2$, $p_3$ ... = $f_1$, $f_2$, $f_3$ ...). Fragments, unfortunately, cannot be verified against the whole of which they were originally a part; to resort to yet another analogy, fragments are like glittering gems of a lost literary treasure: they shine, but just not enough for us to appreciate the full picture. The implications of this state of affairs are manifold and highlight the defective state of fragments:

a) Fragments are both detached (irreparably) from the original text,10 and are disjointed from one another;11

b) Their textual restoration and interpretation is hampered by the lack of the (original) context;

c) Various degrees of uncertainty apply, from case to case, to such issues as the fragments’ exact boundaries, authorship, and original placement both within the work (if known) to which they belonged,12 and, if only authorship is known, within their author’s *oeuvre*;13

d) Fragments are not representative of the lost whole.14

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8 This differentiation may be used where more than one portion of a lost text survives.
9 For the sake of clarity, this account is intentionally kept as simple as possible. In practice, however, our knowledge of a no longer extant text is in most cases advanced by a *variety* of sources, in addition to its surviving portions. At times such knowledge depends exclusively on what, for the moment, we may call external testimonies—that is, texts that tell us something about a lost work without purporting to be actual (i.e. literal) fragments of it. On the concepts of fragment and testimony and their shifting boundaries, see further below.
10 The concept of original is a contentious one: see e.g. Canfora (2019) 11–19. The term *original* is used in these pages with reference to quantitative aspects, the original amounting to a (virtually) complete text, as opposed to its fragments.
11 The relative ‘disjointedness’ of fragments of the same work is not always irreparable: the tentative joining together of fragments is indeed a well-known practice in fragmentology. For an instance of this see, in this volume, Lupi (ch. 2).
12 On the task of placing fragments within the original structure of a lost work, see Vecchiato (ch. 1) and, again, Lupi (ch. 2, section 4).
13 This last issue is particularly relevant to both Vecchiato (ch. 1) and Ginelli (ch. 5).
14 The point is made most lucidly by Olson in Baltussen/Olson (2017) 396–397. See also Most (1997) vi (paragraph ‘2. Fragments and Synecdoche’), remarking on the “tendency to regard fragments as *partes pro toto*, as though they contained locked within their narrow compass the secrets of the author’s work as a whole ...”.

In view of these deficiencies, it is necessary to examine fragments in the most accurate way possible and to devote a great deal of attention to every single facet,\textsuperscript{15} including the ways in which they have come down to us. Complying with this need for all-round accuracy will serve at least two purposes in the study of fragments:

1) To make as much sense as possible of the fragments themselves: What do they mean, deal with, or refer to? Are they textually sound?

2) To recover as much information as possible about the lost whole from which they come: How do the fragments relate to one another and to the original work? How do they influence our knowledge of that work and our understanding of its author?

\subsection*{2.2 Direct and indirect tradition}

The foregoing observations bring us to the first point of our checklist, which is: (i) to distinguish between directly and indirectly transmitted fragments. Making such a distinction is arguably the first task one has to undertake when approaching the study of a fragmentary text. The concept of directly transmitted fragments applies to fragments of an otherwise lost text,\textsuperscript{16} which are preserved without any intentional (textual) mediation by a later author.\textsuperscript{17} In this case, a fragment will have come down to us as part of a written medium (of varying material, format, and function) expressly meant to preserve the text of which the fragment is an extant portion (or, in some cases, the only one). In this sense, therefore, fragments are the remnants of a \textit{materially fragmented} manuscript item (e.g. a papyrus roll, a parchment codex, an inscription) that suffered physical damage over

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{15} Along similar lines, Wright (2016) xxiv–xxv, under point (iii) advocates, in the study of fragmentary tragedy, “a sort of micro-reading, in an attempt to push the fragments to their limits and squeeze out every drop of meaning and nuance”. This point applies, in principle, to all literary genres.

\textsuperscript{16} The definition is independent of the original nature and function of the lost work and applies equally to prose-texts, poems, official or private documents, and so on. Documentary evidence is at the core of Iovine’s chapter (8) on Latin military papyri from Dura-Europos.

\textsuperscript{17} However, the possibility is not ruled out that the quoting author and the one who is quoted are in fact \textit{coeval}: e.g. a Euripidean fragment retrieved from Aristophanes’ \textit{Acharnians} (425 BCE) — that is, from a play produced during Euripides’ lifetime — is an obvious instance of this possibility.
the course of time. Conceptualised in these terms, a textual fragment comes closest to the idea of physical fracture implicit in the word and its root.

On the other hand, a fragment belongs to the indirect tradition when it survives thanks to the mediation of an author who intentionally quoted or excerpted a portion of a work which was subsequently lost. Translations (e.g. Latin, Arabic, or Syriac translations of Greek texts) enjoy a sort of ‘in-between’ status: in one (admittedly oversimplified) sense they re-produce a text originally composed in a different language. By adopting a different linguistic code, however, translations inevitably produce new texts, which are different, in various aspects and to various degrees, from their source texts.

2.3 Fragments and testimonies

A second task required of fragmentologists — and the second point in our checklist — is (ii) to make as clear as possible a distinction between the concepts of fragment and testimony. Textual portions such as indirect quotations, summaries, or paraphrases in principle should be regarded as testimonies of a lost text, rather than fragments *stricto sensu*, in fact, they do not, nor do they aim to, re-produce the supposedly exact wording of a text, but consciously deviate from it, delivering, as André Laks puts it, an “élaboration secondaire” of that text.

However, we should not conceive of this distinction too rigidly, nor should it permit us to devalue testimonies as less worthy of scrutiny than fragments. As will be seen, both categories play a relevant role in a number of chapters of this book, and on occasion the distinction between the two is conveniently re-shaped according to the researcher’s aims and editorial principles, taking into consideration also the specific literary features of the texts under discussion. Generally, something that at face value would qualify as a testimony of a lost work (such as

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18 One may argue that even texts usually regarded as ‘extant’ are not *entirely* so. In fact, lacunae (evident or supposed) may affect single portions of a text, to the detriment of its completeness; nevertheless, while to some degree lacunose, such a text will be altogether intelligible and our overall appreciation of it will not be drastically undermined. From a different yet equally important perspective, Most (2010) 371 argues that complete works may be regarded as fragments “inasmuch as the larger cultural context that produced and enjoyed them has been lost”.

19 In this volume the question of whether translations should be considered proper fragments is lucidly tackled by Berardi (ch. 4): see esp. p. 95 n. 54.

20 Testimonies on broader issues such the author’s life and overall literary activity are not considered here.


22 On this, see Ginelli (ch. 5), pp. 104–111.
a paraphrase or a summary) is often no less informative than a fragment in the strict sense.23 If we adopt a content-based perspective, moreover, a text providing information on a lost text without quoting *verbatim* from it is in principle no different from a proper fragment, as both categories, in a way, allow us to recover ‘parts’ of a lost whole.24 It will be the task of fragmentologists, especially in their capacity as editors of fragments, to formulate explicitly and rigorously the criteria followed in arranging and allocating their material. Clarity and openness about the editorial or working criteria adopted constitutes yet another essential task for the fragmentologist.25 Criteria will vary greatly among editions of fragmentary texts and so will the extent and boundaries of the categories of fragment and testimony.

Indepedently of the fact that the criteria followed in collecting, arranging, and distinguishing between fragments and testimonies may vary according to the aims and methods employed, one must in any case take into careful consideration the manner in which particular fragments have been transmitted to us — whether, that is, they have been directly or indirectly transmitted. With regard, in particular, to the indirect tradition and the issues it poses to scholars, a few observations are appropriate:

(a) Indirectly transmitted fragments often reveal marked textual deviations and alterations compared to the supposed original text;

(b) The contexts in which these fragments are embedded may bias our interpretation;

(c) Both (a) and (b) ultimately originate from the fact that fragments belonging to the indirect tradition are the result of deliberate selection, a process which often entails *refunctionalisation* (the fragment is made to mean something different from what it meant in its original context, either through (a) or (b), or both) and *re-wording* (intentional or unintentional, as in the case of quotations from memory).

One may further note that (d) indirectly transmitted fragments also show different degrees of faithfulness to the original text. For instance, in the case of allegedly *verbatim* quotations of a lost work, the practice of quoting from memory, particularly common in antiquity, is likely to hinder our chances of retrieving the

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23 See West (1973) 94–95; most recently and with specific regard to the Presocratics and their doctrines, the point is made by Baltussen (2017) esp. 76–77.

24 On this point, see Laks (1997) 239.

25 See, along similar lines, Wright’s (2016) xxvi point (x) and, in this volume, Ginelli’s (ch. 5) considerations at pp. 108–109.
ipsissima verba of the quoted author. One should therefore exercise considerable caution in those cases where such practice is either hinted at or suggested by the author who quotes it, or is in some way detected by scholars. When analysing fragments that have come down to us in the form of quotations, as a general rule one should keep in mind that what we read today is the product of several layers of mediation. Of such layers, memory is but one. In fact, quotations may also be characterised to a degree by covert parodic intervention on the part of the quoter (e.g. the quoting author makes a pun on the prior text for his own purposes), thus carrying textual alterations liable to go unnoticed, at least in some cases, by today’s readers.

Another, more obvious layer of mediation resides in the textual transmission of the author who quotes the portion of text. One example will suffice: the poetic quotations preserved in Plutarch’s How to Study Poetry, for instance, are inextricably entwined in the textual history of Plutarch’s treatise; in other words, they are at the intersection of indirect and direct tradition. Fragments, and the contexts in which they are embedded, share the same manuscript fortunes, as it were.

A further layer of mediation applies to indirect (that is, not word-for-word) quotations conveying other people’s thoughts, as in cases of indirect speech (oration obliqua), paraphrases, summaries, allusions or generic references. All such texts will normally be less faithful to the original text that is summarised, paraphrased, or alluded to than verbatim quotations in fragments deriving from direct tradition. It will be the researcher’s task to isolate any interpolations that may have crept into these ‘second-degree fragments’, as we could label them, or to detect any instances of ideological manipulation of the original text (a phenomenon known to be highly relevant, for instance, for philosophical texts).

3 Philological analysis and textual history of fragments

As we saw in the previous paragraph, the methodological reflection on such concepts as the distinction between directly and indirectly transmitted fragments (i) and that between testimonies and fragments (ii) should constitute the preliminary two-step phase of any research on fragmentary texts. By duly pondering the

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26 On quotations from memory and their inaccuracy, see West (1973) 17–18.
27 On Heraclitus and the Presocratics, see Fronterotta (2013) iii–x.
specificities of the fragments at hand, researchers will be in a better position to
determine the exact nature of the evidence dealt with and, consequently, their
research objectives. It will only be when these steps have been performed that the
research should proceed to a proper philological analysis of the fragments’ text
(iii) — that is, to the third point of our checklist. In principle, this stage will entail
the same techniques employed in the study of complete texts, including:
1) Collection and collation of all available manuscripts of the fragments’ source
and of all types of available relevant evidence (also of a non-literary nature);
2) Analysis of such features as language, style, and, in the case of fragments of
poetry, metre;
3) Comparisons with other works, either extant or fragmentary, of the same au-
thor and/or with comparable works (i.e. belonging to the same literary genre
and period or relating to the same topic).

The researcher’s goals, as well as the attainability of these goals, will differ ac-
cording to the specific features and state of the fragments:
(a) Constitution and interpretation of the text will be influenced by such factors
as the actual amount of preserved text, its intelligibility, and soundness;
(b) Retrieval of the ‘original’ words of a lost work — should this be the objective
aimed at — will be bound by a high degree of uncertainty when dealing with
non-verbatim quotations (though, as we saw, caution must be exercised in
this respect also with purportedly literal quotations);
(c) Reconstruction of a lost work, an inherently speculative task, will depend on
how revealing and extensive the available evidence is.28

What is additionally required of fragmentologists is that they also try every pos-
sible way to extract useful information — or, conversely, to detect and isolate el-
ements with a potentially biasing effect — from the fragments’ source, which
brings us to the fourth point of our checklist (iv). In fact, it is crucial to stress that
one should not scrutinise fragments as absolute entities. Especially with frag-
ments belonging to the indirect tradition, whether they are actual or ‘second-de-
gree’ fragments as defined in the previous paragraph, the ‘context of their sur-
vival’29 will not only elicit as many questions as the fragments themselves, but
will on occasion yield relevant (and often overlooked) evidence for a better un-
derstanding of them. One of our contributors, Jarrett T. Welsh aptly describes this

28 Many gaps will inevitably be left unfilled in every attempted reconstruction of a lost work.
On the issue of reconstruction (and its limits), see now Baltussen/Olson (2017).
29 The phrase is borrowed from Welsh (ch. 6), p. 124.
as “new information [providing] a better guide to our speculations about [them]” (p. 124).

More generally, it follows that reassessment of the available evidence as well as its framing from novel perspectives are crucial tasks in the study of fragments, on the assumption that editions of any text can be improved upon. In fact, contemporary scholarship on fragments often relies on outdated editions, on which our interpretation of a fragmentary text ultimately depends. Many of the chapters collected in this volume stress the fact that new results in the study of Greek and Latin fragments can be obtained not only by scrutinising newly found texts, but also — and far more often — by painstakingly reassessing long-known evidence.30

There are a number of factors that invite caution in the handling of fragments, and several of these originate with the fragments’ sources and their manner of transmission. There may be, for example, conscious or unconscious textual manipulations (parodic and ideological alterations; linguistic adaptations affecting the dialectal facies of a text in the course of manuscript transmission), involuntary alterations (e.g. those originating from the practice of quoting by memory), and the implications of the specific format of the source (e.g. anthology, epitome, cento). All such factors can only be fully appreciated by paying close attention to the sources’ inner rules, aims, quotational techniques, and relationship with other works of a similar kind. Ideally, one should also strive to become acquainted with the sources’ textual history. In particular, the study of fragments should be framed within an overtly historical perspective, in a way that promotes the study of the contexts of their transmission as an equally important task of fragmentology.31 In other words, tracing the history of a fragment will also entail, to some extent, doing the same with its source(s).

Among possible questions, and with specific regard, again, to indirectly transmitted fragments, it is important to ask what reasons an ancient author had to quote an extract (not yet a ‘fragment’) from a subsequently lost work, and to quote it in that particular way.32 No less important is to ascertain, whenever possible, whether the quoting author had direct access to the quoted text, or whether he relied on intermediary sources (in other words, how far removed is the quoter from the text he purports to be quoting?). In the absence of a fragment’s original

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30 This is part of the continuous interest enjoyed by the study of fragmentary literature, either considered per se as a self-sufficient, specialised scholarly domain, or simply employed as source material for broader research in Classics.

31 The importance of the context of transmission is duly stressed by Conte (1992) vi, Most (1997) vi–vii (paragraph ‘3. Sources of Fragments’).

32 On this aspect, see again Most (1997) vi–vii, who draws an important correlation between an author’s reasons for quoting and his way of quoting.