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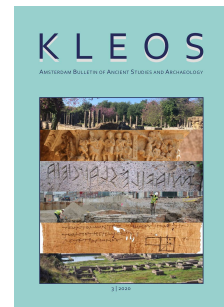
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OIKOS Nunspeet Seminar: Methods and Techniques (November 8-9, 2019)

Margriet ten Broecke and Hanna Hoogenraad

INTRODUCTION

The Nunspeet Seminar is an annual event organised by OIKOS, the national research school in Classical Studies. This year, the seminar was opened by André Lardinois, professor at the Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen and academic director of OIKOS. Lardinois explained that within OIKOS, five academic disciplines are represented: Greek, Latin, Ancient History, Ancient Philosophy and Classical Archaeology. Although most research is carried out within one of these subdisciplines, it is important that everyone also has some knowledge of what is going on in the other subdisciplines. It was the aim of the seminar to share information about the developments and methodological practices in the fields, but also to talk about the challenges that one may encounter in their subdisciplines. After this short introduction, Lardinois continued with the first lecture of the seminar.

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SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS

In the first lecture, **André Lardinois** (Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, *Ancient Greece and the Near East: How to Measure Influence*) discussed parallels between Ancient Greece and the Near East and the question of what constitutes a real parallel. He focused on literary motifs and presented a set of four conditions necessary for recognising a literary motif in Greek literature as oriental. These included: a reasonable correspondence between the Greek and Near Eastern text, the possibility of oral transmission, the text not being part of Indo-European tradition or common human experience, and the fact that the parallel is unique. Subsequently, Lardinois examined several similarities between Near Eastern and Greek stories, such as the parallels between Gilgamesh and Achilles, who both have a mortal father and a divine mother, and experience the death of a close friend that has a deep impact on them. Lardinois questioned whether these parallels are striking or are explained by no other means than reasonable correspondence between the Near East and

Greece or oral transmission. Although the similarities between some stories are obvious and we can try to reconstruct the lines of transmission, Lardinois clearly showed the difficulties that occur when speaking of literary parallels between Ancient Greece and the Near East.

Monica Berti (Universität Leipzig, *Digital Humanities and the Classics*) demonstrated some developments in the field of Digital Humanities, which are important for researchers of the Ancient World and Classical Texts, in the subsequent lecture. Nowadays, there are many databases that provide data relating to Ancient Greek and Latin sources, for example *Trismegistos* and *Perseus*. The collections of these databases show great variety, but the accessibility and business models of these databases differ greatly. Berti explained that it is important that all digital databases make use of the same standard format to present their information and use the same citation system to avoid losing track of all online data. Furthermore, Berti also showed how Optical Character Recognition (OCR) can contribute to an increase of the number of digital data, since it is an easy way to digitise printed text editions. From Berti's lecture, it became clear that there are many developments in the field of the Digital Humanities, but that it remains important to think about how digital data can be published sustainably.

Gerard Boter (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, *Theory and Practice of Textual Transmission and Criticism*) showed the challenges that one can encounter when making a new edition of a classical text. As a result of the long process of textual transmission, there will never be a definitive and correct version of a text. However, it is the task of the editor to present a text that is as trustworthy as possible and that contains as few errors as possible. Since there is not one correct reading of the text, it is important that the editor also shows on which information and sources he has based his edition. Boter explained that there are many reasons to prefer one reading of the text over another. Sometimes it is clear that a reading in a manuscript is an error made in the process of copying the text. Also the use of particular words or metrical irregularities can be a reason to suspect a certain reading. Boter demonstrated how difficult it can be to produce a reconstruction of a classical text. It is important that all researchers who work with these classical texts are aware of these difficulties and always consult the original text and the critical apparatus when they base arguments on these texts.

This second day began with **Luuk Huitink** (Leiden University, *Linguistics and Lies: How not to lose the plot in Greek linguistics and narratology*). In his lecture, he discussed the characteristics of Greek historiography. Greek historiography, as a genre, is

particularly narrative, especially when compared to modern historiography, which is often told in a more descriptive way. Greek historiographers often want to create suspense in their narrative. In order to do this, they manipulate the narrative in several ways. For example, an author can choose to use certain *topoi* (or stock motives) to build up his narrative. Also, focalisation and covering or uncovering his role as an author are ways in which the narrative can be manipulated. It became clear that Greek historiography is quite a flexible genre. However, as Huitink showed with some examples from later and modern historiography, there are also ways of storytelling and features that you definitely do not find in the work of Greek historiographers. In conclusion, it is important to be aware of the role of the author when using Greek historiography as a source, and to keep in mind that the author always manipulates the narrative in a certain way.

In the last lecture, **Fleur Kemmers** (Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main, *More than Money? Possibilities and Limitations of Numismatic Material in Historical and Archaeological Research*) presented on the opportunities and difficulties of using coinage in research on the ancient world. She provided an elaborate overview of the ways in which coins can provide important information for dating archaeological sites; they are also useful for examining the identity of rulers and political communication as well as studying the economic history. Kemmers also demonstrated the difficulties that numismatists encounter when dating Greek coins and when studying the changing iconography of Roman republican coins. She also touched on the ethical standards of collecting and buying ancient coins. Lastly, Kemmers also explained how digital humanities can be used to research larger sets of coins and how it provides other possibilities for the study of numismatics, although she notes that the information is scattered over many websites that are not all interlinked.

SYNTHESIS

The five lectures were concerned with a great variety of topics. Nevertheless, there are several parallels between the five presentations and several overarching themes that can be distinguished:

DIGITALISATION

Several recent developments of digitalisation in research of the Ancient World were highlighted. Berti addressed the developments and progress of digitalisation for research on Antiquity, both from an ancient historical and classical studies standpoint. Likewise, the development of digital numismatics was

illustrated by Kemmers, who demonstrated the benefits of digitalisation for the examination of large corpora of coins. However, Boter explained the editing of classical texts still needs human judgment and cannot be performed through digital means yet.

LIMITATIONS OF ANCIENT LITERATURE

Literature is often an important source for historical research, but there are also various limitations to the use of ancient literature. Lardinois showed that literary parallels are not always the result of direct influence of one culture on the other. Subsequently, Boter explained that scholars can only rely on reconstructions of a text and that the original text may have had a different reading. Finally, Huitink showed that every historiographical author manipulates his historical narrative to accommodate his own interests. As it became clear, when using ancient literature as a historical primary source, it is important to keep these limitations in mind.

RESEARCH WITHIN ITS CONTEXT

Several lecturers underscored the importance of involving the wider context in research, instead of just focusing on a specific research topic. From Lardinois' lecture, it became evident that one should also take into account shared human experience when looking at parallels between the ancient Near Eastern and Greek culture. Berti argued that new digital databases should interlink their data with other databases and should use stable citation systems in order to keep track of all online data. Lastly, Huitink explained that it can be difficult to point out characteristics of classical historiography, since it is such a flexible genre, but that comparing historiography to other genres can help to find the particularities of this genre.

CONCLUSION

The Nunspeet Seminar was successful in bringing together scholars and students of the different fields of OIKOS and provoking the discussion about methods and techniques between different disciplines. The speakers showed the relevance of being aware of the difficulties outside your own field and were encouraging people to include insights of different disciplines in their own research. For example, the ancient historians were familiarised with the idea of evaluating difficulties regarding the transmission of classical texts and consulting the critical apparatus while using these texts in their research. On the other hand, the classicists became acquainted with the opportunities of coinage as a complementary source to classical texts for insights

into several aspects of the Greek and Roman world, such as identity. This seminar allowed participants to gain insights into the various challenges in disciplines outside their own and how they can include other disciplines in their own research.