

# The Time of Quotations: How do we Communicate with Quotations in Contemporary Culture and Literature?

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## **Abstract**

The term 'quotation' is connected with the concept of 'intertextuality'. The quotation as a segmental text is situated in a new text as a fragment from the pre-text, but at the same time the quotation must conform also the new text and new context. The quotation is a dynamic phenomenon in the context of intertextuality and poetic language. The function of quotation also depends on the context and what kinds of texts (poetic, scientific, political etc.) we use. The de-poetisation and poetisation of different texts and quotations, according to the text and context where the quotation is used, are also possible. So, the quotation would be proactive part in cultural and social production.

The quotations can be explicit, implicit or pseudo-quotations in the text. Even if explicit quotation exists in the text, it would be a trick of the author because the explicit quotation may be pseudo-quotation in the literary text, and the pseudo-quotation contains an allusive signal to the pre-text. Quotation, on the surface level of the text, may convey the denotative meaning and at the same time it can also be an allusive signal to the deep structure of the text, which includes the connotative meanings created by the reader's interpretation of the quotation. The boundary between quotation and allusion is always dynamic and variable: a quotation may transform into allusion.

The paper observes how quotations function in contemporary literary texts and society.

It is a fact that quotations are very important phenomena in contemporary culture. Mary Orr has written concerning electronic citation: «That quotation is as alive in recent popular forms as in epochs where excellence in forms of oral recitation also distinguishes social levels rests its case» (Orr 2003: 131). At the same time, as we know, the deconstructive post-modern (and also modernist) theories have concentrated on quotation as one of the key problems in language and written texts before the problem of electronic citation existed at all.

The following paper tries to discuss the operation of quotation as a communicative act in contemporary literature, especially in poetry. The examples given from the work of Estonian poetry demonstrate that the play with quotations is very frequent in written literary texts too.

## 1. THE DEFINITION OF QUOTATION

The simplest definition of quotation is that it is a segment or fragment of text in another text. Such a segment may be short or long, a whole or only a fragment. Text fragments exist in several ways because we can speak of different modes of quotations and, concerning intertextuality, several definitions of quotation exists.

### 1.1. Quotation and allusion

Quotations can be explicit, implicit or pseudo-quotations in a text. Quotations remain punctually unchanged in scientific texts, but in poetic texts they may be altered and create new meanings, distinguishing the two levels of texts: expression and context or, in other words, the surface structure and the deep structure of text (Plett 1988: 315). This fact allows a comparison with the literal and non-literal meanings in the rhetorical sense: the literary author may use quotations with the intention of accumulating meanings, ambiguity and polysemy (Plett 1988: 316-317). Even if explicit quotation exists in a text, it is a trick of the author, because an explicit quotation may be a pseudo-quotation in the literary text, and the pseudo-quotation contains an allusive signal to the pre-text.

Quotation, on the surface level of the text, may convey denotative meaning and, at the same time, it can also be an allusive signal to the deep structure of the text, which includes the connotative meanings created by the reader's interpretation of the quotation. Heinrich F. Plett explicates the difference between allusion and quotation: «Whereas the term «quotation» is strictly limited to intertextuality, the term «allusion» implies a twofold reference, one to a pre-text and another one to an external reality. In the field of intertextuality, however, the first term verges on the second, when the literalness of the segmental reproduction is diminished in favour of its non-literalness. In other words, [- -] the more allusion takes over the role of quotation.» (Plett 1988: 317-318) Therefore several theorists are of the opinion that allusion is close to the quotation, for example Udo J. Hebel: «Quotations, whether cryptic or marked, are nothing more, and nothing less, than specific fillings of the syntagmatic space of the allusive signal» (Hebel 1991: 131).

Consequently, the boundary between quotation and allusion is always dynamic and variable: a quotation or even pseudo-quotation may transform into allusion.

### 1.2. Quotation and intertextuality

Julia Kristeva, who is the inventor of the term ‘intertextuality’, uses the term ‘quotation’ when she explains the term ‘intertextuality’: «... any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another» (Kristeva 1980: 66). That definition is not clear, and it raises the question of what a quotation is. Roland Barthes uses the term ‘citation’ in a similar way: «The intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the ‘sources’, the ‘influences’ of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas» (Barthes 1977: 160). The theories of Kristeva, Barthes, Genette *et al* actually refer to texts as dialogical phenomena which have relations with other texts and society. This means that Kristeva’s and Barthes’ term ‘quotation’ should be understood as metaphor or, paradoxically, just «quotation» (with inverted commas). If we wish to analyse literary texts as well as non-poetic texts, then we still need a more exact paradigm of quotations.

According to Heinrich Plett, who relies on Saussure’s semiotics, intertextual relations manifest themselves in two basic types: text reference and system reference (Plett 1988: 314). He believes that quotation as an intertextual phenomenon is based exclusively on acts of reference to text. In other words, quotation «deals with the reproduction of material signs (*parole*); system reference concerns the reproduction of rules (*langue*),» as does imitation (Plett 1988: 314). So, the quotation is a dynamic phenomenon also in the context of intertextuality and poetic language.

## 2. QUOTATION AS A COMMUNICATIVE ACT

It seems that Plett emphasizes the idea that quotation is an individual communicative act which carries its context of utterance with it. If the quotation moves from one text to another it can also carry several contexts and contexts of utterances. The function as well as the meaning of quotation also depends on the context and what kinds of texts (poetic, scientific, political etc.) we use:

TABEL 1. A FUNCTIONAL PARADIGM OF FOUR CATEGORIES OF THE QUOTATION AND ITS CONTEXT BY H. F. PLETT (PLETT 1988: 324).

	Context 1	Context 2	Quotation
<b>a</b>	non-poetic	non-poetic	non-poetic
<b>b</b>	non-poetic	poetic	de-poeticized
<b>c</b>	poetic	non-poetic	poeticized
<b>d</b>	poetic	poetic	poetic

As with any communication, communication with quotations also involves the following factors: addresser, addressee, context, message, contact and code. Heinrich Plett adds other factors: sender, receiver, code, place, time, medium, function etc. (Plett 1988: 322). Plett presupposes that if a writer uses a quotation, he /she does it with a certain intention: «These intentions are in their turn modified by the conventions of the chosen communicative situation. As there are more or less conventionalized communicative situations, it follows that there are more or less conventionalized quotational functions, too» (Plett 1988: 323). Plett does not speak of anonymous quotations; he speaks of quotations that should be well-known, at least to the author.

### 2.1. Three functions of quotations

According to Stefan Morawski, there are three functions of quotations in non-literary texts: the authoritative, the erudite and the ornamental (Morawski 1970: 690-705). Heinrich Plett believes that these functions also exist in a literary text.

A communicative situation where authoritative quotations are used is connected with social institutions, and the act of quotation has a ritualized character. Such quotations are from sacral texts (Bible, Koran etc), law or political doctrine (the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin etc.). According to Plett, the function of authoritative quotations is also ideological.

It seems that authoritative quotations function in literary texts in a similar way. For example, the Estonian poet Kivisildnik's cycle «The Paradise of the Bible» (Kivisildnik 2004: 16-61) is composed solely of direct quotations from the Bible:

Mt 8:31

kui sa meid välja  
ajad siis läheta meid  
seakarja sisse

Mo 20: 19

ära raiu neid maha sest kas puud väljal  
on inimesed

Hs 17: 24

ja kõik metsa puud  
peavad tundma et mina  
olen jehoova

Jr 3:9

ta rüvetas maa  
ning rikkus abielu  
kivi ja puuga

But it is not enough for the reader to interpret the text only through the old Biblical context, because different quotations side by side convey a new meaning, perhaps contemporary

and/or even political, but there is also a possible ironic reading. In contemporary literature, we sometimes find authoritative quotations, but usually they have ironic meaning. This means that sometimes contemporary literature may destroy the authority. Mary Orr believes that, «The point is not authority at all, but how all quotation makes belief or unbelief» (Orr 2003: 138).

Scientific texts which refer to other scientific texts use erudite quotations. The main difference from authoritative quotation is that erudite quotation is open to discussion (Plett 1988: 323). At the same time, there are several authoritative persons who have great authority and whose scientific texts have been quoted many times (Lotman, Eco, Jakobson, Sebeok etc.).

Ornamental quotation in a communicative situation represents a very large spectrum, especially occasional discourse: letters, ceremonial speeches etc. Plett believes that ornamental quotations serve only a decorative function. At the same time, Plett also writes that «...the ornamental quotation shows the closest affinity to the poetic quotation. In this respect it differs remarkably from the ideological sway of the authoritative quotation and the persuasive force of the erudite quotation» (Plett 1988: 324).

I think that all these functions are mixed in the poetic text, and finally it depends on the reader how he/she interprets quotations. For example, the Estonian poet Kalju Lepik has an occasional poem, «Roosikrants» («The Rosary», 1978), dedicated to another Estonian poet, Artur Adson (to the memory of Artur Adson), where Lepik quotes the titles of Artur Adson's works and distinguishes the titles with majuscules:

### **Roosikrants**

Artur Adsoni mälestusele

Mis imelik valgus on Mälari jääl?  
Valus valgus käib üles ja alla.  
See on RAHUMÄE KANDLE kaeblik hääl  
Valu ukсед on pärani valla.

Valge luni katab vee ja maa.  
Valu katta keegi ei suuda.  
ROOSIKRANTSI JA VANA LATERNA.  
Neid täna ei lugeda suuda.

See, kes heitis KIVI kord SÜDAMELT,  
KIVI täna heita ei suuda.  
Tuli Toonelamees. Ta tuli siis,  
kui luni oli Mälari mäel.  
Ta tuli ja võttis ja ära viis.  
Meile HENGE PALANGOST alati viis  
jääb südames kumisema.  
(Lepik 2002: 461-462)

It seems that all the functions of quotations are mixed in this poem. Artur Adson is certainly an authority on Kalju Lepik, and the titles of Artur Adson's works (by the way, these are very poetic titles, without majuscules they would just fuse into the text) require erudition, because both the author and the reader must know these titles and works: without dialogue between the author and the reader these quotations do not work. And, finally, these quotations also have a decorative function, such as ceremonial speech, and they are also visually decorative in the text.

All these quotations mentioned above represent a kind of communicative situation where the author has a certain intention in regard to the quotations, and all are intentional quotations. At the same time, if we think of Kristeva's and Barthes' theories, it is possible that there are quotations in the texts which have been unintentionally used by the author. These are anonymous quotations which can be traced to Mikhail Bakhtin's theory on the social word or the word as discourse.

However, quotations without inverted commas are not always unintentional. It is not unusual that authors do not use punctuation marks at all in poetry, even if they use quotations. In this case, the authors have provided the reader with more opportunities for interpretation. Kalju Lepik has a poem, dedicated to another Estonian poet, Hando Runnel, for his 50th birthday. In this poem, Lepik uses punctuation, but when he quotes Runnel, he does not use inverted commas:

Koduaknas võõras nägu,  
hukku kukub võõras kägu  
kodukülas, kodumaal.  
[- - -]  
Võõrad tulnud, võõrad läinud,  
laulik oma teed on läinud,  
kodukülas, kodumaal.  
(Lepik 1992: 87; emphasis mine – A.M.)

Most probably, Lepik supposes that readers know these Runnel verses. However, it is possible that the reader does not know these Runnel verses and then the question of plagiarism arises. (For most Estonian readers this is unlikely, but it would happen with foreign readers as well as younger readers who do not know as much about Estonian poetry.)

Consequently, the receiver or the reader has a great role in this communicative process with quotations. Perhaps it would be still better if authors use quotations with inverted commas. Then plagiarism would be excluded, but at the same time the text would lose its playfulness. Plett writes that both the author and the reader «must be provided with a sufficient knowledge of literary history. This knowledge is stored in three types of memory depositories which mark three stages in the progress of civilization: 1. individual, 2. printed, and 3. electronic. Individual memory forms the basis of the tradition of oral literature in preliterate societies» (Plett 1988: 326). He also believes that electronic memory, when it forms part of the printed information, does not make individual memory superfluous, because it is just an instrument for decoding quotations in oral communication (Plett 1988: 327).

## CONCLUSION

Quotation is a dynamic phenomenon in the context of intertextuality and poetic language. The function of quotation also depends on the context and what kinds of texts (poetic, scientific, political etc.) we use. The de-poetisation and poetisation of different texts and quotations, according to the text and context where the quotation is used, are also possible. Quotation is a proactive part of cultural and social production, and the reader plays an important role in this communicative situation.

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