Champions of the Word:

Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494) and his literary forebear Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457)

By

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Abstract

This dissertation focuses on the poetry and philology of Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494) and reveals the methodological consistency of his major works, from the vernacular poetry of the 1470s to the Latin poetic and prose compositions of the 1480s. In creating his *Stanze per la giostra, Fabula d'Orfeo*, components from the Latin *Silvae*, and the philological interventions of the *Miscellanea*, Poliziano followed a consistent methodology: he relied on a combinative method, pulling carefully chosen fragments from various literary sources to develop an original authorial voice and to guide the reader in the interpretation of these texts. Moreover, Poliziano based the language of his poetry on his training as a philologist or *grammaticus*. It was from this philological training that Poliziano developed the guiding doctrine for creating his assorted works: words could not and should not be separated from their contextual meaning and literary history.

Consequently, the secondary intention of this dissertation is to uncover the methods that Poliziano derived from an earlier philologist, Lorenzo Valla (1407-1457). Valla equally relied on an eclectic selection of authorities which he blended together in order to create his own literary voice. He also championed the method of focusing on language and on the proper reading of ancient texts in the creation of his works. In each chapter I thus compare Poliziano's text to an earlier model provided by Valla. The first two chapters look at Poliziano's Italian poetry of the 1470s. In addition to analyzing the poetic practice of blending varied sources and uncovering the subtexts imparted by these authorities, I compare Poliziano's vernacular poems to dialogues originally written by Valla in the early stages of his career. The following two chapters focus on the Latin poetry of the *Silvae* and the philological studies in the *Miscellanea*, both noted for their *varia lectio*, which find precursors in Valla's *Ars grammatica* and *Elegantiae*. The findings of these investigations will reveal a rich, complex web of associations between the two humanists, their works, and their methodologies. The study concludes with a discussion of the Renaissance philologist and the promotion of political and personal ideologies through philological study.

Introduction

"Our resuscitated spirit was not a pagan philosopher, nor a philosophising pagan poet, but a man of the fifteenth century, inheriting its strange web of belief and unbelief; of Epicurean levity and fetichistic dread; of pedantic impossible ethics uttered by rote, and crude passions acted out with childish impulsiveness; of inclination towards a self-indulgent paganism, and inevitable subjection to that human conscience which, in the unrest of a new growth, was filling the air with strange prophecies and presentiments." George Eliot, *Romola*

If one were to identify Angelo Poliziano's official debut into the Florentine literary culture of the 1470s, he or she would likely look to a particular letter written by Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499) in either 1473 or 1474 to Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1494). Rather than touting the near completion of his magnum opus in eighteen books, the *Platonic Theology*, Ficino wrote this letter to his patron in order to praise Lorenzo for *his* recent scholarly achievements.[1] The first of these accomplishments was the procurement of ancient manuscripts containing the poetry of Homer in Greek.[2] Ficino's words in his letter to Lorenzo underscore that the Magnifico's action

[1] Copenhaver, Brian and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 149. In the 1975 English edition of Ficino's *Letters*, the letter is numbered 17. A more recent edition of the letters in the original Latin, edited by Sebastiano Gentile, numbers this letter, "Quantum utile sit alere doctos," as 16. Sebastiano Gentile ((Ficino, Marsilio, *Lettere*, ed. Sebastiano Gentile [Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1990]) dates most of the the letters exchanged by and Lorenzo de' Medici in this first volume of Ficino's *Letters* as written between January and March of 1474, though their dates on the letters themselves indicate that they were composed in 1473. This letter, however, is not dated, but

[2] Ficino writes, "Divites alii ferme omnes ministros nutriunt voluptatum, tu sacerdotes Musarum nutris. Perge, precor, mi Laurenti: nam illi voluptatum servi evandent, tu vero Musarum delitie. Summus Musarum sacerdos Homerus in Italiam te duce venit, et qui hactenus circumvagus et mendicus fuit, tandem apud te dulce hospitium repperit. Nutris domi Homericum illum adolescentem Angelum Politianum, qui Grecam Homeri personam Latinis coloribus exprimat" (Ficino, Marsilio, *Lettere*, ed. Sebastiano Gentile [Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1990], 40). The English translation of the letter reads as follows: "Almost all other rich men support servants of pleasure, but you support priests of the Muses. I pray you, continue, my Lorenzo, for those others will end up as slaves of pleasure whereas you will become the delight of the Muses. It was due to you that Homer, the high priest of the Muses came into Italy, and someone who was till now a wanderer and a beggar has at last found with you sweet hospitality. You are supporting in your home that young Homeric scholar, Angelo Poliziano, so that he may put the Greek face of Homer into Latin colours" (Ficino, Marsilio, *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, vol. 1 (London: Shepheard-Walwyn, 1975), 56). Within this study, translations of the Latin and Greek texts are

had confirmed his rightful place in the upper echelons of academic achievement. According to Ficino, Lorenzo's literary pursuits separate him from other rulers of the day, marking him as one who refuses to cater to his own pleasures, choosing instead to nurture the priests of the Muses (which, in turn, could only impart further glory on Lorenzo himself as one beloved of the Muses). Ficino then singles out one particular "sacerdos Musarum" that Lorenzo de' Medici had recently taken into his patronage: the young poetic wunderkind, Angelo Poliziano.

Though Ficino carefully chose the words of this letter in order to pay tribute to his patron, a closer inspection of these words indicates that the true object of praise is Poliziano. In equating Lorenzo's actions of bringing Homeric poetry to Italian lands and of bringing the young Poliziano into his household, Ficino in essence identifies Poliziano as the Italian incarnation of Homer. Indeed, beyond Ficino's designation of the youth as a "Homericum…adolescentem," Poliziano's own life exhibited similar traits to those found in the legend of Homer. Like the ancient Greek poet who, as even Poliziano would later describe in his *Silvae*, wandered throughout his life, Poliziano, too, was a wanderer in his early years following the death of his father.[3] It was not until Lorenzo de' Medici hired him as a personal clerk and tutor for his son in 1473 that Poliziano found some stability.[4]

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provided when available. In certain instances, I have provided my own translations which are indicated as such.

[3] Born in Montepulciano in 1457, Poliziano (Angelo Ambrogini) was only seven years old when his father, the jurist Benedetto Ambrogini, was murdered in a vendetta that was directly related to his professional involvement with the Medici family. After being shuffled from the homes of one cousin to another, he came to Florence in 1469 where, on account of his connections and especially of his poetic talents (he was already composing Latin epigrams at the age of 13), he caught the attention of Lorenzo de' Medici who ultimately received the youth into his house in 1473. The violence and turbulence of his early years unfortunately set a trend that would see itself repeated at least twice more in the course of the young humanist's life: the death of a patron, at times in brutal circumstances, resulting in both Poliziano's search for a new source of political and economic protection as well as the threat of danger to his own person. See Orvieto, Paolo, *Poliziano e l'ambiente mediceo* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2009), 51-53. Other themes in Ficino's letter that find articulation within Poliziano's *Silvae* are precisely that of the patron as *nutrix* for poets such as Poliziano. See chapter 3 of the present study.

[4] Orvieto, 54.

This stability was not to last, however, as the strife following the 1478 murder of Lorenzo's brother, Giuliano de' Medici, by members of a conspiracy led by the Pazzi family ultimately resulted in fractured ties between Poliziano and his patrons, particularly Lorenzo's wife, Clarice Orsini. The young humanist was thus compelled to wander again, this time passing a period of two years in the Veneto.[5] Ultimately, Lorenzo and Poliziano mended ties when the Magnifico hired him as the professor of rhetoric at the University of Florence in 1480, a post that he held until his death in 1494. In addition to this proclivity for wandering, Poliziano demonstrated a prodigious gift for poetry, which at the time of Ficino's letter had recently manifested itself in a Latin translation of the second book of the *Iliad*.[6]

As with most letters written during the *Quattrocento*, including those that Poliziano would later assemble for his own collection of epistles, Ficino's use of near hyperbolic levels of praise directed at Lorenzo and Poliziano conform to the generic conventions of the time. It would be unwise, however, to discredit Ficino's letter on this account, especially considering that Ficino's words within this letter, and his repeated designation of Poliziano as the "poete Homerico" in subsequent letters, presage later developments and themes that characterize the literary career of Angelo Poliziano. Though unaware of what the future held for Poliziano's literary pursuits, Ficino was completely accurate in portraying Poliziano as a great intellect who, in both poetry and prose, would seek to restore the words of lost, ancient authors. Ficino's declaration that the young poet would transmute Homer's Greek persona into Latin colors ("qui Grecam Homeri personam Latinis coloribus exprimat") promised a great poetic legacy for Poliziano. In essence, Poliziano's poetry would prove that more than just the words of Homer

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[5] Orvieto, 89-91; 96-98.

[6] It was this translation of the second book of the *Iliad* which caught Lorenzo de' Medici's attention. Poliziano began the translation in 1469, taking up the project that Carlo Marsuppini had begun by translating the first book. Like Marsuppini, however, Poliziano did not complete the project (Orvieto, 74).

had reached Italian soil, but rather that the very spirit of the ancient master had taken root in the Italian poets of the day, specifically those within the Medici circle, including Lorenzo de' Medici and Poliziano himself.

Later letters, however, reveal a different side to Poliziano's literary contributions. Pomponio Leto (1428-1498), a correspondent who appears frequently in the collected volumes of Poliziano's letters, praised his friend in a correspondence from 1491 with tones rivaling, if not surpassing, the exaggeration found in Ficino's letter. Rather than emphasize Poliziano's poetic abilities, which would not have been out of place even at this stage in the humanist's career, Leto drew attention solely to Poliziano's erudition as a philologist:

> "Nam quisquis est qui de se bene senserit gratulari plurimum debet saeculo nostro, cum tales habeat viros quales maiores nostri in summa gloria habuisse duxissent…Cum de altitudine tui ingeii cogito, non possum non admirari cur nostri gracculatim et sturnatim (ut ita loquar) ad te non advolent. Legi opus tuum, in quo apertissime doctrina quadam singulari veteres ab inferis revocasse videris."[7]

The book to which Leto refers is not a collection of poetry, but rather the first *centuria* of Poliziano's *Miscellanea* – a work whose sole focus was the philological explication of words, phrases, and literary enigmas taken from all genres of texts. It was within this text in particular that Poliziano demonstrated the encyclopedic learning for which he would become famous.[8] Leto recognized and was not alone in commending Poliziano on the remarkable and extensive knowledge demonstrated within his book. Other authors whose missives appear in the *Letters* confirm this judgment of Poliziano's talent. Battista Guarini, writing to Pico della Mirandola in late 1489, referred to Poliziano as one "cuius ego copiosam et arcanam multiplicis disciplinae

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[7] Poliziano, Angelo, *Letters*, vol. 1, edited and translated by Shane Butler (Cambridge, MA: The I Tatti Library Harvard University Press, 2006), 54-56. Butler translates Leto's letter thusly: "anyone who is not insecure should warmly congratulate our age, since it possesses the sort of men the possession of whom our ancestors counted toward the summit of glory…When I think about the lofty heights of your genius, I cannot help wondering why my circle doesn't flock to you jackdaw-like and starling-wise, so to speak. I have read your book, in which you plainly seem, by a kind of unparalleled learning, to summon the ancients back from the underworld" (55-57).

[8] Orvieto, 329.

lectionem ita complector, ut admirer, ita admiror, ut commendare non desinam."[9] Pico himself, in a letter to Poliziano, declares to his friend that he (Pico) is "nec poeta nec rhetor sim, neque philosophus," but Poliziano so fulfills "utrunque…ut untrunque magis haut satis constet,

> qui et Graecam et nostram Minervam ita pulchre amplectaris, quasi cinnus utriusque linguae, ut quae insiticia sit, quae genuina, non facile discerni possit…Is es mi Angele (facessat adulatio) cui ex nostris unus aut alter…conferendus sit. Quod si plures essent tales, non haberent haec saecula cur inviderent antiquitati."[10]

Though the words of his correspondents were, like Ficino's, steeped in the conventional flattery of the period, they nevertheless indicate both the shift in Poliziano's public persona and his own literary interests that occurred later in his career. As a result, what emerges within Poliziano's own lifetime is a division between his youthful activities as a vernacular poet and his later, more learned Latin poetry and philological studies.

This chasm between Poliziano's early poetry and his Latin poetry and philological interests of the 1480s and '90s continued after the humanist's death. In a study of the critical attention and publication history of Poliziano's works, Renzo Lo Cascio indicates that in the *Cinquecento* and beyond, Poliziano remained a widely discussed and emulated figure as the wealth of reprintings of his assorted texts can attest.[11] In Italy, argues Lo Cascio, the 16th-century interest in Poliziano largely regarded his vernacular poetry instead of his philological practices,

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[9] Poliziano, *Letters*, 60. Butler offers the following translation for Guarini's words: "whose extensive and arcane reading in various branches of learning I hold so dear that I long to possess it, and such is my longing that I do not stop praising it to others" (61).

[10] Poliziano, *Letters*, 28-30. "I am neither orator nor philosopher. You so fulfill both roles that it is not quite clear which you do better. For you so embrace both Greek talent and our own – like a cocktail of the two languages – that it cannot easily be determined which is foreign and which is native…My dear Angelo, you are the sort of person (let flattery be far from my mind) to whom just one or two of our contemporaries…ought to be compared. But if there were more men like you, our age would have no reason to be jealous of antiquity" (translation by Butler, 29-31). The letter is undated in Butler's edition, yet one of the manuscripts adds "July 15, 1481" (Butler, 325n).

[11] Lo Cascio, Renzo, *Poliziano* (Palermo: Palumbo, 1970), 25. Lo Cascio points to the no less than twelve different printed editions of Poliziano's *Opera omnia* in circulation during the first half of the *Cinquecento*, both in Italy and especially abroad, as a testament to the continued importance of Poliziano within high Renaissance culture.

though this interest appears indirectly: rather than systematic critiques, studies, or pointed imitations of Poliziano's verse, echoes of his *Stanze per la Giostra* and *Fabula d'Orfeo* were present in the works of the great poets of the century, in particular Ludovico Ariosto and Torquato Tasso, demonstrating the continued influence of the late *quattrocento* poet.[12] Anthony Grafton paints a slightly different picture, emphasizing the clear impact of Poliziano's philological methodologies on prominent 16th-century Italian humanists such as Pietro Bembo and Pier Vettori.[13]

Lo Cascio and Grafton agree, however, that it was Poliziano's poetry in Latin and Greek and, especially, his philological interventions which found greatest popularity abroad. The many published editions of these components of the humanist's work that appeared in Germany, France, Holland, Switzerland, and other European nations confirm their popularity.[14] Erasmus was the first noted European imitator of Poliziano's method of textual exegesis, a fact to which

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[12] Lo Cascio contends that "la presenza del Poliziano non è soltanto avvertibile nelle stanze liriche continuate e nei poemetti epico-lirici, mitologi e didascalici del Cinquecento, ma anche in episodi e comparazioni e locuzioni del *Furioso* e della *Gerusalemme* e perfino, come a qualche studioso è avvenuto di rilevare, nel rifacimento dell'*Innamorato* compiuto dal Berni" (Lo Cascio, *Poliziano*, 35).

[13] Anthony Grafton notes that Bembo was an early follower of Poliziano's philology, even creating a fictional dialogue between Pomponio Leto and Ermolao Barbaro that highlighted the methods that he learned from the late humanist. The work's idiosyncrasies and Bembo turn towards his own scholarly interests, however, kept this work unpublished until 1530 and "did not contribute to the diffusion of Poliziano's methods" (Grafton, Scaliger, 45-46). Vettori, by contrast, was more interested in faithfully following Poliziano's philological model throughout his career (52-62). Vettori's interest in Poliziano is likely due, in part, to his relocation to Florence, which offered him the opportunity to review the large patrimony of literary works left behind by the 15th Century humanist. Grafton also argues that Vettori, after coming into contact with the assorted works left behind by Poliziano, "decided that his mission was to complete what he regarded as Poliziano's unfinished life-work. Poliziano's annotated book…were the *disjecta membra* of a great enterprise. They were the first step toward the production of critical editions of and commentaries on the major ancient authors" (53-54). Notwithstanding this noble plan to continue Poliziano's work, Vettori's imitation of his methods was done "in a rather one-sided way…though he understood Poliziano's exegetical method perfectly well, his applications of it were less original and distinctive than his use of manuscripts" (Grafton, Anthony, *Joseph Scaliger: a Study in the History of Classical Scholarship* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983], 54).

[14] Lo Cascio, *Poliziano*, 25.

he himself admitted in his published works, such as the *Adagia*.[15] Moreover, Grafton contends that many of the French humanists in the early half of the 1500s incorporated the teachings of Poliziano's philology to some degree. Guillaume Budé utilized Poliziano's methods while simultaneously criticizing the Florentine philologist.[16] Jean Dorat, the leading scholar in Greek and Latin texts in the mid-1500s, appeared to revive the philological style of studying poetry that was particular to Poliziano, influencing, in turn, the lyrical production of some of the great French poets of the age, including Pierre de Ronsard and Joachim Du Bellay.[17]

Subsequent centuries, both in Italy and abroad, however, showed a decline in attention devoted to Poliziano. The paltry number of new publications of his works in 17th-century Italy confirmed the slump in popular and, to some extent, critical attention.[18] Nevertheless, Lo Cascio contends that the Italian vernacular poetry produced during this century, as in the previous, still demonstrated the influence of Poliziano's poetic language and style.[19] Over the next century, this oscillation between the waxing and waning of interest in Poliziano among the critics continued.[20]

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[15] Grafton, 71-72.

[16] Indeed, Budé's work was "closer than Erasmus's to Poliziano's variety of scholarship. Accordingly, he made even heavier use of Poliziano's methods, though his explicit references to Poliziano were for the most part severely critical. He attacked him for everything from plagiarism to bad handwriting" (Grafton, 72).

[17] Grafton, 75-79.

[18] Lo Cascio, *Poliziano*, 38. In the *Seicento*, contends Lo Cascio, the critical interest in Poliziano abroad continued apace, but, as in the previous century, this interest was limited predominantly to Poliziano's Latin and Greek works.

[19] Lo Cascio looks primarily to the various works of Marino, particularly the *Lira, Sampogna*, and *Adone*, and the poetry of Chiabrera as manifestations of the continuing appeal of Poliziano's vernacular works (Lo Cascio, *Poliziano*, 46).

[20] Lo Cascio reports that between 1728 and 1797 there appeared at least thirteen new editions of the *Stanze*, all published in Italy, though some purport to have been published in London. Some of these editions were created by the Accademici della Crusca primarily as a language text instead of a poetic work. New editions of the *Orfeo* were less common, typically included in a collection with other plays of a similar nature, such as Euripides' *Cyclops*. The editions and copies of manuscripts dedicated to Poliziano's Latin works were far fewer in number with respect to previous centuries. According to Lo Cascio's history, roughly thirty new publications appeared both in Italy and abroad, scattered in Holland, France, Germany, Switzerland, and England. Of particular interest considering the renewed attention to collecting Poliziano's different philological works and creating, through them, a sense of the humanist's

The 1800s, however, marked a change in the fortunes of Poliziano's legacy. The Florentine poet and philologist reentered the cultural scene with great fanfare when foreign scholars such as William Parr Greswell and the Italian critics Giosuè Carducci and Isodoro Del Lungo published new, critical editions of Poliziano's works.[21]

Again, the "dueling Polizianos," that is, the two contrasting figures of vernacular poet and classical *grammaticus*, which had been established during the humanist's lifetime, and sustained by the divergence between foreign and Italian critical attention, reappeared in these 19th-century editions. Greswell focused his attention on the Latin, Greek, philological, and philosophical works of Poliziano, placing him in context with other humanists, philosophers and Latin poets, of his day and of the 16th century.[22] Carducci, by contrast, collected and annotated Poliziano's major vernacular poems: the *Stanze per la giostra* (1475-1478), the *Fabula d'Orfeo*

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history and career, was Federico Ottone Menckens's 1736 monograph, *Historia vitae et in literas meritorum Angeli Politiani, ortu Ambrogini, grammaticus et omnis doctrinae elegantioris instauratoris felicissimi* (Lo Cascio, *Poliziano*, 47-53).

[21] Greswell published his *Memoirs of Angelus Politianus, Joannes Picus of Mirandula, Actius Sincerus Sannazarius, Petrus Bembus, Hieronymus Fracastorius, Marcus Antonius Flaminius, and The Amalthei* in 1805, while Carducci's *Le Stanze, L'Orfeo, e le rime di messer Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano* appeared almost sixty years later in 1863. Del Lungo's *Prose volgari inedite e poesie latine e greche edite e inedite di Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano*, was a collection of an assortment of items in Latin, Greek, and Italian published in 1867. Most of the components in De Lungo's collection were items that Poliziano did not intend for publication. Many of these pertain to the phase in the humanist's life when he was an intimate of the Medici family, such as correspondence between himself and Lorenzo de' Medici or his wife, Clarice Orsini, early Latin and Greek poems, and the history of the Pazzi conspiracy (Perosa, Alessandro, *Studi di filologia umanistica*, vol. 1, edited by Paolo Viti [Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2000], 17-18).

[22] Greswell's preface to his *Memoirs* indicates that he viewed Poliziano's contribution to literature and learning as stemming from his philological and philosophical works, stating that "those distinguished scholars who form the subjects of the following pages, are justly numbered among the brightest luminaries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries; and the restoration of letters, which was attended with effects so beneficial to society, is in some degree to be attributed to their efforts and example" (Greswell, W. Parr, *Memoirs of Angelus Politianus, Joannes Picus of Mirandula, Actius Sincerus Sannazarius, Petrus Bembus, Hieronymus Fracastorius, Marcus Antonius Flaminius, and The Amalthei: Translations from their poetical works: and notes and observations concerning other literary characters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries* [London: Cadell and Davies, 1805], iii).

(1480), and assorted *Rime* (1473-1479).[23] The result of Carducci's intervention, in addition to the renewed popular and critical attention to Poliziano, was a reevaluation of the author's works which not only expanded this divide between the two sides of his career, but also established a hierarchy of his works within the Italian literary canon. Francesco De Sanctis was instrumental in promulgating the critical perception of Poliziano's works which persists to this day. Both he and, later, Benedetto Croce, tended to privilege the vernacular poetry and, expressly in the case of Croce, to dismiss Poliziano's forays into Latin lyric as an "exercise in style."[24]

De Sanctis in particular established the critical stance towards Poliziano's poetry that would persist even to today's scholarship on the author. His treatment of Poliziano's literary *oeuvre* in the *Storia della letteratura italiana* focused almost exclusively on the vernacular poetry, with one or two brief references to the Latin poems of the *Silvae*.[25] No mention is made of the prose work composed by Poliziano during his career. Regarding the vernacular poetry, De Sanctis offered the following assessment: Poliziano's verse was almost all form with little to no interest in content. His *Stanze* lacked cohesiveness: they were a series of images or small, self-contained worlds. Moreover, his lyric was characterized by a voluptuousness that highlighted the pleasure of poetic style. In essence, aesthetics, not substance, were the cornerstone of Poliziano's poetry.[26] As Lo Cascio reports, Croce echoed much of De Sanctis's judgment in his study on

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[23] While the critics largely agree on the dates of composition or publication of the *Stanze per la giostra* and *Rime*, there exists a great divide among scholars of Poliziano regarding the dates of composition of the *Fabula d'Orfeo*. See chapter 2 of the present study.

[24] Croce, Benedetto, *Poesia popolare e poesia d'arte: studi sulla poesia italiana dal Tre al Cinquecento* (Naples: Bibliopolis, 1991), 389.

[25] De Sanctis references Poliziano's Latin poetry in comparing the *Rusticus* with Pontano's *Lepidina*, declaring that the former presents a "latino maneggiato con tanta sveltezza, modulato con tanta grazia, non cade nel vuoto, come lingua morta, e questi canti non sono stimati lavori di pura erudizione e imitazione" (De Sanctis, Francesco, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, edited by Gianfranco Contini [Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1968], 383.

[26] De Sanctis declares Poliziano's Italian poetry to have "uno squisito sentimento della forma nella piena indifferenza di ogni contenuto. Il tempio era vuoto: vi entrò Apollo e lo empì d'immagini e di armonie…Ciascuna stanza è un piccolo mondo…Perciò non hai fusione, ma successione…La stanza non

Poesia popolare e poesia d'arte, repeating the word "voluptuousness" in conjunction with Poliziano's poetic style.[27]

Arriving finally at the latter half of the 20th century, though the critical attention to Poliziano had corrected both the dismissive attitude toward the poet exhibited by Croce and the one-sided study of Poliziano's works offered by De Sanctis, the influence of these two scholars remains. The disconnect between Poliziano's two personas as well as the tendency to approach Poliziano's poetic style of combining and conflating textual authorities as a purely aesthetical choice that lacked a philological basis became to a certain degree the characterizing feature of this humanist and his literary career. Vittore Branca, not only one of the principal scholars of all facets of Poliziano's works, but also one who himself fundamentally added to the textual scholarship in his discovery and study of the second *centuria* of the *Miscellanea*, maintained this divide between the two phases of Poliziano's career. The poetry of the *Stanze*, for example, substantiates for Branca a refined exercise in blending different literary styles, genres, and registers, but it is still based on a beautiful but anarchic language that limited Poliziano's poetry and influence to the cultured, aristocratic circle of Lorenzo de' Medici.[28] He contrasts this linguistic style with Poliziano's later works, which were informed by his philological practices and by the influence of other renowned scholars and philosophers of the day. The resulting

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ti dà l'insieme, ma le parti…Qui è una voluttà tutta idillica, un godimento della Natura senz'altro fine che il godimento, con perfetta obblivione di tutto l'altro" (De Sanctis, 387-393).

[27] Lo Cascio, *Poliziano*, 94. Croce actually does not create a greater divide between Poliziano's vernacular and Latin poetry, proclaiming that the Latin poetry of the *Silvae* shows the same characteristics that "si osserva altresì nei suoi componimenti toscani, e in particolare nelle *Stanze* e nell'*Orfeo*, dove alla voluttà delle cose si unisce la voluttà dell'elegante letteratura e dei fini svolgimenti retorici, che tuttavia, cangiandosi in elementi decorativi, sono a lor modo vivi" (Croce, 397).

[28] Branca, Vittore, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola* (Turin: Einaudi Editore, 1983), 19-23. Branca calls the combinative language of the *Stanze* "un linguaggio che, anche raffinandosi all'estremo, restava linguaggio da circolo aristocratico e da esercizio letterario squisito…più che mezzo di comunicazione chiaro e universale," a "geniale anarchia linguistica laurenziana" (19-20).

language that dominates the *Silvae* and the *Miscellanea* is precise, historically accurate, and contains not mere allusions to ideas but the ideas themselves.[29]

The pervasiveness of Poliziano's fractured literary legacy in critical works has not been lost on subsequent scholars. In the introduction to the acts of the 1994 conference, *Agnolo Poliziano: poeta, scrittore, filologo*, commemorating 500 years since the humanist's death, Alberto Asor Rosa addresses what he terms the "problema aperto" of Poliziano scholarship. Though students of Poliziano have offered new perspectives on the poet-philologist's collected works, there persists a tendency among the most preeminent scholars (indeed, Asor Rosa names the greats of 20th-century Poliziano scholarship: Emilio Bigi, Eugenio Garin, Branca, and Alessandro Perosa) to view Poliziano's literary contributions as a puzzle of fragments that do not necessarily fit together, and his career in terms of irreconcilable dichotomies.[30] Thus, while scholarly interest in Poliziano's works remains strong today, examining in detail all of the

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[29] Branca indicates that both philology and an increased interest in Aristotelian philosophy were the primary factors drives this change in poetic style and creation: "Quella aristotelica e rigorosa analisi del linguaggio e quella religione umanistica della parola dovevano…fare avvertire al Poliziano la provvisorietà della sua esperienza poetica in volgare…L'ideale è, dunque ora per il Poliziano, un linguaggio preciso e fatto di cose…la parola non è solo elemento o strumento di pensiero ma pensiero essa stessa (21)."

[30] Asor Rosa, Alberto, "Un problema aperto: Agnolo Poliziano," *Agnolo Poliziano: poeta, scrittore, filologo. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Montepulciano 3-6 novembre 1994* (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1998), xiii-xv. Asor Rosa states that the express purpose of the conference is to correct the long-standing view of Poliziano's works as "un bellissimo *puzzle* di frammenti separati" which even the most adept scholars of the previous fifty years have perpetuated. Regarding Poliziano himself, he, contends Asor Rosa, has long been presented as "un personaggio esemplare della dicotomia, come una figura per eccellenza, scissa, separata. Dicotomia tra cultura e poesia, come osserva anni fa, – con un linguaggio datato, ma ponendo un problema reale, – Emilio Bigi in un suo bel saggio. Dicotomia, degenerata poi nel punto di vista di alcuni critici e di molti lettori in una opposizione manichea tra una sua poesia volgare del canto limpido e giovanile e una rigorosa filologia nutrita di prodigiosa erudizione e di folgoranti intuizioni (come osservava Vittore Branca in un saggio affascinante fin dal titolo, *Umanesimo della parola*). Dicotomia, aggiungerei io, tra un'immagine di lui come letterato puro, poco incline ai piaceri della riflessione filosofica, e un'idea della cultura polizianea molto più complessa e curiosa, secondo l'ipotesi più volte autorevolmente affacciata da Eugenio Garin. Dicotomia, infine, tra una figura di filologo tutto chiuso nelle sue pratiche erudite e linguistiche e una figura di finissimo lettore dei testi, che, attraverso l'analisi delle lingue e la ricostruzione testuale (la quale va verso le moderne edizioni critiche), comincia ad elaborare un abbozzo di vera e propria 'critica letteraria,' ben al di là della pura erudizione (si tratterebbe del dittico «*grammaticus-interpres*», acutamente richiamato da Alessandro Perosa" (xii-xv).

humanist's literary output, the question remains as to how to bridge the gap between these two periods of Poliziano's life and career. Is it possible to reconcile the figure of the vernacular poet associated with the Laurentian circle in the 1470s – whose lyric can be construed as mishmash of poetic references, of clashing registers, styles and genres, seemingly with little attention to form or content – with the meticulous and refined Latin poet and philologist who served as professor of rhetoric at the University of Florence for the last fourteen years of his life?

This study aims at showing the through line that exists in all of Poliziano's works, from the early, *giovanile* vernacular poetry to the later, more erudite Latin poetic and prose compositions of the 1480s. While the style and tone of the *Stanze per la giostra* and the *Fabula d'Orfeo* varied substantially from the Latin poems of the *Silvae* and the philological interventions of the *Miscellanea*, my study reveals a consistent methodology that links these works together: in creating each of these texts, Poliziano relies on a combinative method, pulling carefully chosen fragments from various literary sources to develop his own, original poetic or authorial voice. Moreover, in all his works, Poliziano based the language of his poetry on his training as a *grammaticus* which he honed over the course of his career. It was from this philological training that Poliziano developed the guiding doctrine for creating his assorted works: words could not and should not be separated from their contextual meaning and literary history.

The *grammaticus* as envisioned by Poliziano was, furthermore, one who demonstrated an innate gift for copious reading and encyclopedic knowledge. As Poliziano affirmed in one of his later works, the *Lamia*, the *grammaticus* does not limit his study to one genre or discipline, but investigates all sorts of texts, from poetry and oratory to philosophy, law, and medicine.[31] Consequently, in the Italian poetry as in the Latin components, Poliziano was omnivorous in his

[31] Poliziano, Angelo, *Angelo Poliziano's Lamia*, ed. Christopher Celenza, (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2010), 244.

selection of allusions to and quotations of ancient and modern authorities, bringing their different genres and disciplines into dialogue with each other. In utilizing the words of other authors, Poliziano succesfully imbued his own words both with greater lyrical beauty on the surface and more complex meanings for those able to look beyond the text and follow the allusion to its source. Such a methodology, however, was not unique to Poliziano. Indeed, this interaction between the philological practices of the *grammaticus* and the creation of literature based on eclecticism calls to mind another humanist whose works, which likewise ranged in subject, style, and genre, serve as a model for Poliziano's techniques: Lorenzo Valla.

Though Poliziano was only three at the time of Valla's death, this humanist nevertheless had a profound influence on the young scholar. Later philological studies of texts conducted during his tenure at the University of Florence, such as analyses of Ovid's *Fasti* and Terence's *Andria*, among others, show that Poliziano was both aware of and respected Valla's literary criticism and erudition. Though Valla's interests tended more towards theological questions that were largely absent from Poliziano's works, one can see many parallels between the two scholars. Like Poliziano, Valla was a wanderer: his career first brought him to Pavia where he taught rhetoric at the university in the early 1430s, until his polemics forced him to find employ elsewhere, first in the court of Alfonso V of Aragon from 1435 to 1448, and finally in Rome under Pope Nicholas V until Valla's death in 1457.[32] The criticism dedicated to Valla has also been largely divided on how to regard this early 15th-century humanist. Some, from his contemporaries to later scholars, viewed Valla's methodology as that pertaining to a lowly language scholar interested only in the pedantic minutia of Latin grammar and not capable of handling deeper, philosophical questions. Others praised Valla for his unique approach to some

[32] Copenhaver, Brian P. and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 210-215.

of the most hotly debated questions of his time – free will, the value of pleasure, the role of the Church in earthly affairs – declaring his methods to be inherently modern.[33] More to the point, however, Valla, in creating his various works, which included dialogues on moral and theological questions, polemical orations, a miscellany on Latin grammar, and even poetry, relied on an eclectic selection of authorities which he, too, blended together in order to create his own original literary voice. Like Poliziano after him, Valla championed the method of focusing on language and on the proper reading of ancient texts in the creation of his own works.

This study therefore is a systematic examination of not only the interaction between Poliziano's literary works – his poetry in particular – and his philological interests, but also the affinity between this humanist's literary career and that of Valla's. The findings of these investigations will reveal a rich, complex web of associations between the two humanists, their works, and their methodologies. The first two chapters look at the vernacular poetry of the 1470s, the *Stanze per la giostra* and the *Fabula d'Orfeo*, in order to analyze Poliziano's poetic practice of blending varied sources with the intention of uncovering the subtexts imparted by these authorities. I aim at demonstrating how these subtexts subtly guided the reader's understanding of Poliziano's text and communicated the themes present in much his poetry, such as the study and celebration, in verse, of the development of various poetic genres, the refashioning of the pastoral realm as the birthplace of poetry, and the very nature of poetic inspiration itself.

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[33] John Monfasani treats and disputes the trend in the criticism on Valla that reduces this thinker to a philosopher of language in his article "Was Lorenzo Valla an Ordinary Language Philosopher," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50:2 (April-June 1989): 309-323. Copenhaver likewise reevaluates Valla's philosophical and philological practices in his article "Valla Our Contemporary: Philosophy and Philology," viewing Valla's methods as precursors to the analytic method of the twentieth-century philosopher Bertrand Russell. See Copenhaver, Brian P., "Valla Our Contemporary: Philosophy and Philology," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 66:4 (Oct. 2005): 507-525.

I compare Poliziano's vernacular poems to the dialogues originally written by Valla in the early stages of his career, the *De vero falsoque bono* and the *De professione religiosorum*, in order to show the parallels between Valla's methods and those later utilized by Poliziano.

The following two chapters focus on the Latin poetry of the *Silvae* and the philological studies in the two *centuriae* of the *Miscellanea*, both noted for their *varia lectio*. In an effort to avoid perpetuating the dichotomy between this literary phase and the previous one, I continue my investigation of both the subtexts and related themes that emerge from Poliziano's blending of authorities, as well as the comparison between these texts and the exemplars offered by Valla, namely the *Ars grammatica* and the *Elegantiae*, respectively. In these works, Poliziano and Valla drew on the same encyclopedic reading to render judgment on linguistic and literary disputes. Moreover, in the *Miscellanea* Poliziano attempted to adopt the language, if not the active engagement, of civic humanism employed by Valla in presenting his philological studies, and, indeed, hoped to surpass the previous scholar in his erudition. The study concludes with a discussion of the figure of the Renaissance philologist, how Poliziano and Valla conceived of this role, and how their philological works both promoted the political agendas of their patrons and, more importantly, revealed their own personal ideologies.

Chapter 1

Blending authorities (I): the *contaminatio* of Poliziano's *Stanze* and the eclecticism of Valla's *De vero bono*.

In one of Angelo Poliziano's dispatches to Clarice Orsini, wife of his patron Lorenzo de'Medici, the young poet described a scene that would not be out of place in his early epic, *Le stanze per la giostra*. Written a month before the famed tournament that would inspire the vernacular poem, Poliziano gaily recounts Lorenzo's infatuation with one of the falcons used for hunting:

> e maestro Giorgio fece volare el falcon pellegrino a campagna, e tornò molto degnamente al lógoro. Lorenzo n'è sì innamorato, che è una cosa incredibile…Mentre eravamo a campagna, tornò Pilato col falcon suo da riviera il quale aveva perduto; che ha raddoppiato a Lorenzo il piacere…ora solo mi resta di darvi aviso di questo suo uccellare, perchè né mattina né sera non si fa altro.[1]

Poliziano's characterization of the Magnifico completely removed from civic life and devoting himself to the hunt, foreshadows the characterization of Iulio, the hero of Poliziano's *Stanze per la giostra*. In the mythical realm into which Poliziano places Iulio (the literary rendering of Giuliano de'Medici) the seemingly unremarkable aspects of this epistolary description of Lorenzo, and Poliziano's humorous warning to Clarice about her husband's obsession with the sport, take on dramatic dimensions. To commemorate the younger Medici and his victory at the tournament in January of 1475, Poliziano refashioned the prince as a virginal hunter who dwells in a mythologized Tuscan countryside, devoting his life to hunting and sport, thereby scorning love and all those entrapped in its snares.[2] Such dalliances come to an end, however, when an

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[1] Poliziano, Angolo, *Stanze Per La Giostra, Orfeo, Rime: con un'appendice di prose volgari*, edited by Bruno Maier, (Novaro, Italy: Istituto geografico De Agostino, 1969), 296-297.

[2] By establishing Iulio as a virginal hunter, Poliziano taps into themes of the pastoral genre present both in the works of Euripides and Ovid and in later examples of the genre from Tasso, namely that to abstain from sex is to disengage from society and, as a result, precipitate the hero's own demise. Stephen Hinds

enraged Cupid forces the youth to become enamored of Simonetta Cattaneo. Though history would write its own end for Poliziano's unfinished poem, with the early death of Simonetta followed closely by murder of Giuliano at the hands of the Pazzi conspiracy, Poliziano nevertheless realized one goal of the poem: transforming the Medici into mythical heroes whose lives rivaled those of the fabled figures that peopled the poems of Homer, Vergil, Ovid, and Dante.

This particular ambition of Poliziano's is not, however, the only interpretation that emerges from the *Stanze*. Critics over the centuries have offered diverse readings, almost all of them well-reasoned, ranging from a manifesto of unfiltered Medici propaganda, to an allegory of civic engagement, to a text intended for initiates into the cult of Ficinian Neoplatonism.[3] That so many well-founded interpretations lie in one unfinished poem is a testament to the form of poetic creation individual to Poliziano. The poetry of Poliziano, from these early vernacular experiments to later Latin works, is best described as a hybrid. Whether dabbling in the seemingly indiscriminate blending of different literary forms in his poetry of the 1470s, or

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locates this theme in the figures of Euripides' Hippolytus and Ovid's Narcissus, the "extreme virgin." Kristin Phillips-Court sees this same formula in Tasso's characterization of the nymph Silvia in *Aminta*. The nymph, like Narcisuss and Poliziano's Iulio, tends to revere chastity and "removes herself from the pastoral society of the poem." See Hinds, Stephen, "Landscape and the Aesthetics of Place," in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. Philip Hardie, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 133 and Kristin Phillips-Court, *The Perfect Genre: Drama and Painting in Renaissance Italy*, (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2011), 169-171.

[3] Jeanie Grant Moore emphasizes the political purpose of Poliziano's poem: "Ultimately the poem will attempt to move the Medici into the even loftier sphere of immortality where they will remain untouched by 'fortune, death, or time.' Poetry thus becomes a means for Poliziano's patron to exercise *virtù* in overcoming fortune: the Medici will triumph in the games and government of the city, in the mythological realm of the gods, and in the world beyond time and death" (Moore, Jeanie Grant, "Medici Myth-making: Poliziano's *Stanze*" *Renaissance Papers* (1989): 13. David Quint, meanwhile, in his introduction to his verse translation of the *Stanze* reads the poem as an allegory of the passage of the Medici prince from carefree adolescence to adulthood, and his socialization into the civic world of Florence, all of which is precipitated by him falling in love with Simonetta (Quint, David, Introduction to *The Stanze of Angelo* Poliziano, trans. David Quint [Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1979] xv-xvii). Quint and Mario Martelli both underscore the interaction between the *Stanze*, particularly the figure of Simonetta, and Ficino's treatises on love (Quint, xviii; Martelli, Mario, *Angelo Poliziano: storia e metastoria*. [Lecce: Conte Editore, 1995], 104-105, 131).

engaging in learned imitation in his works of the 1480s, Poliziano continually creates poetry that questioned and defied the limits of genre, united disparate literary authorities, and from the fragments or reproductions of other sources created a new type of poetry all his own. The *Stanze* in particular demonstrated the hybridity of Poliziano's poetry, exhibiting elements of different genres and incorporating countless echoes of other authors.[4] Indeed, Poliziano's pastoral epic is a pastiche of the most desirable elements culled from classical literature, Italian poetry, and popular culture: Ovidian epithets, Petrarchan women, *stilnovistico* love, chivalric traditions, and Neoplatonist philosophy all find their place amidst the hunters, gods, and lovers of the poem.

From the incipit to the final *ottava*, each word of the *Stanze* unfurls in a web of allusions. A cursory study of the *Stanze* reveals that harmony through imitation is the force that drives the epic structurally, thematically, and lyrically. The poet Giosuè Carducci and the literary critic Natalino Sapegno have dutifully examined and annotated the *Stanze*, endeavoring to delineate all the sources that find references or echoes within the verses of Poliziano.[5] This study does not hope to replicate their work, for, among other reasons, to do so might, in the opinion of Ida Maïer, do the *Stanze* an injustice either by detracting from the genius of Poliziano or going beyond what the text suggests.[6] Rather this study proposes to examine a few moments in the

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[4] Martin McLaughlin argues that even if Poliziano had completed the poem, "it would never have been an epic on a grand scale, but would have remained within the genre of the epyllion. The title itself suggests a modest work, a number of stanzas not an epic 'Iulieid'. The content, structure, and style of the work confirm that it belongs to the genre of the brief, erudite poem in the middle rather than the grand style…Structurally, it exhibits one of the standard ingredients of the short epic: the ekphrasis describing a work of art and occupying a disproportionately large part of the narrative. The language is not on the heroic level, but instead observes a kind of middle elegance, which is at times varied to include technical or pastoral diction." See McLaughlin, Martin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 212-213.

[5] Poliziano, Angelo Ambrogini, *Le Stanze, L'Orfeo E Le Rime*, Edited by Giosuè Carducci, (Bologna: Nicola Zanichelli, 1912), 1912; Sapegno, Natalino, *Commento alle Rime del Poliziano*, (Rome: Edizioni dell'ateneo, 1952-1953), 1921.

[6] Maier, Ida, *Ange Politien: La Formation D'Un Poète Humaniste (1469-1480),* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1966), 293.

Stanze in which the author utilizes the direct literary references or lyrical allusions for more than purely aesthetic purposes: namely to imbue the text with richer meanings and convey the philosophical and ideological leanings of the poet. Within the first two stanzas alone, as has been noted by Maïer, Sapegno, Renzo Lo Cascio, and others, Poliziano weaves together explicit references to Latin epic, medieval cosmology, Neoplatonism, and recent Italian poetry.[7] These references are of course deliberate and meant to resonate with Poliziano's initiated readers. Poliziano's method of creating poetry and enhancing his lyric by stitching together the words of others represented a specific poetic program that the poet would continue even with his later Latin poetry. In essence, Poliziano endeavored to create a particular brand of poetry that could achieve linguistically what his near contemporary Leon Battista Alberti encouraged painters to do visually: "take from every beautiful body each one of the praised parts and always strive by your diligence and study to understand and express much loveliness. This is very difficult, because complete beauties are never found in a single body, but are rare and dispersed in many bodies."[8] Alberti advised his artist-reader to "give our every care to discovering and learning beauty," and Poliziano clearly acknowledges these lessons in the creation of his poem.[9] While

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[7] In tracking the literary authorities for Poliziano's *Stanze*, some of the most indispensable texts are those by Ida Maier and Lo Cascio, Renzo, *Lettura del Poliziano: Le «Stanze per la giostra»*, (Palermo: S. F. Flaccovio, Editore, 1954). Sapegno's lengthy comments on the text are also invaluable though they reproduce much of Carducci's annotations to the poem.

[8] Alberti, Leon Battista, *On Painting*, ed. and trans. John R. Spencer, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956) 92-3. Alberti attributes the combinative method to the painter Zeuxis who "did not rely rashly on his own skills," believing instead that "he would not be able to find so much beauty as he was looking for in a single body, since it was not given to a single one by nature. He chose, therefore, the five most beautiful young girls from the youth of that land in order to draw from them whatever beauty is praised in women." This, contends Alberti, is why Zeuxis is revered as an excellent painter, whereas the antique painter, Demetrius, "failed to obtain the ultimate praise because he was much more careful to make things similar to the natural than to the lovely" (Alberti, 92-93). Orvieto declares that Poliziano is in "totale sintonia con Leon Battista Alberti, convinto che non c'è niente da dire di nuovo…tutto è già stato detto, solo che non basta una vita per aquisire e assimilare quello sterminato 'già detto'" (Orvieto, Paolo, *Poliziano e l'ambiente mediceo*, [Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2009], 73-74).

[9] Alberti, 93.

the *Stanze*, like the majority of Poliziano's original poetic output of the late 1470s, was very much in keeping with the style of the poets of the Medici circle, Poliziano's combinative method qualitatively outshone that of his contemporaries in its erudition and purpose.

Unlike the frequent criticism lobbied at the poets of the Laurentian circle, Poliziano did not just haphazardly blend the various voices of disparate genres and registers, but rather he closely followed the rhetorical teachings of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*. In the tenth book of his tenets for young orators, Quintilian reminded his students that their best resource for achieving eloquence in presenting their cases is a great stock of subjects and words. Such resources could only be acquired from copious readings of all subjects, ranging from other celebrated orators, to historians, to philosophers, and finally, most prominently, to poets.[10] Poliziano had these precepts at heart as he crafted his verse, hoping to, like Quintilian's ideal students of oratory, imitate the words and exempla of great authors and indeed surpass them. The rhetorical substructure underlying the *Stanze* offers another literary forerunner for Poliziano: the philologist and rhetorician Lorenzo Valla.

No stranger to the teachings of Quintilian, Valla sought to enact in prose what Poliziano would later create in poetry. This was to create a lengthy discourse on a particular subject that melded together the diverse words, subjects, and philosophies of disparate sources. Valla's much labored over dialogue, the *De vero falsoque bono* is one such example of this Quintilian-inspired prose.[11] Though this text is a treatise on the subject of pleasure and not a pastoral epic poem, many similarities arise between Valla and Poliziano's works. Like the *volgare* poetry of the

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[10] Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 4, ed. and trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler, (London: W. Heinemann, 1921), 2-28.

[11] Valla's dialogue on pleasure appeared in many forms with different titles over the years. An ealry draft entitled *De voluptate* appeared in circulation as early as 1431.Within this study I will refer to the work with the shortened version of the final title, *De vero bono*.

Stanze, Valla's dialogue in three books is also a text that relies on the assemblage of many voices. As in the *Stanze*, present within the speeches of Valla's text are the voices of numerous authors, both in the form of direct quotation and indirect allusion. Furthermore, like Poliziano after him, Valla endeavored to advocate a particular viewpoint by knitting together varied literary exempla in the creation of a unified work.

Indeed, the hybridity of the *Stanze* and *De vero bono*, that is the blending of quotations of or allusions to previous works in order to create a literary whole, is what at first glance links Poliziano and Valla's works together. In both texts, the various references, even the most oblique, emphasize the content of the work. A second affinity appears when one considers the goals of these two texts, goals that are inherently linked to their hybrid nature. Poliziano, under the guise of celebrating his patrons in song, sought to create an epic poem that redefined the genre, integrating it with two questionable literary choices: namely the use of the vernacular and the celebration of pastoral poetry.[12] Valla, too, develops his dialogue with the purpose of establishing what philosophy, Stoic or Epicurean, constitutes the true good. As Maristella Lorch contends, however, the unstated true purpose of the text is to grant Valla the space and freedom to thoroughly debate the merits of pleasure through a rhetorical framework, and ultimately confirm the supremacy of Christian doctrine, a philosophy that was not always popular among

[12] Though one of the oldest forms of poetry (dating back to Theocritus), pastoral has often been either dismissed or maligned for a variety of reasons, not least of which was its dissociation with reality. The trend of unreality can be traced as far back as Vergil, whose eclogues ignored the realistic depictions of shepherds found in the poetry of Theocritus, favoring instead the undefined, mythical landscapes filled with comely youths, beautiful nymphs, and gods that would become emblematic of the genre. Though for Vergil the ends of writing pastoral and writing epic were mostly the same, namely both were written to glorify a particular city or ruler, pastoral, unlike epic, served "the menial part of a vehicle of sycophantic praise" which is "less easily pardoned" (Greg, Walter W, *Pastoral Poetry And Pastoral Drama*, [New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1959], 15-16).

contemporary humanists.[13] Thus, with Quintilian as a guide, both Valla and Poliziano utilize imitation and allusion to accomplish a common purpose: by appropriating the words of past great authors they seek to champion philosophies, literary modes, and literary languages oft ignored or maligned. Moreover, this method allows them to assert their own individual philosophies that will distinguish them from their *quattrocento* peers while remaining fully in the realm of humanist teachings.

Quintilian, oratory, and ideal imitation

Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* was a significant text for Valla and Poliziano. In the course of their respective careers, both scholars annotated manuscripts of the Late Roman's teachings on oratory.[14] Valla most likely worked on his notes to the *Institutio oratoria* in the mid- to late 1440s. While this was well after the completion date of the original version of Valla's dialogue, the *De voluptate* (1431), it bears reminding that Valla continued to amend his text, including renaming it *De vero bono*, from 1444 to 1449.[15] Poliziano likewise finished his notes to Quintilian's treatise years after the completion of the *Stanze*, but this does not negate the

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[13] Lorch, Maristella de Panizza Lorch, Introduction to Valla, Lorenzo, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, ed and trans. A Kent Hieatt and Maristella Lorch, (New York: Abaris Books, 1977), 30-31. Though Lorch's editions and criticsm on the *De voluptate / De vero bono* are some of the more complete treatments of the text, there are certainly other scholars who have investigated this work from its publication history to its themes. See, for example, Gaeta, Franco, *Lorenzo Valla: filologia e storia nell'umanesimo italiano*, (Naples: Istituto Italiano Per Gli Studi Storici Nella Sede Dell'Istituto, 1955), 15-53; Fois, Mario, *Il pensiero cristiano di Lorenzo Valla nel quadro storico-culturale del suo ambiente*, (Rome: Libreria editrice dell'Università Gregoriana, 1969), 95-167; Fubini, Riccardo, *Umanesimo e secolarizzazione*, (Rome: Bulzoni Editore, 1990), 339-394.

[14] Valla, Lorenzo, *Le postille all' 'Institutio oratoria' di Quintiliano*, Ed. Luisa Cesarini Martinelli and Alessandro Perosa, (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1996); Daneloni, Alessandro, *Poliziano e il testo dell'*Institutio oratoria, (Messina: Centro interdipartimentale di studi umanistici, Università degli studi di Messina, 2001).

[15] Lorch, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 25-26.

influence of the *Institutio* on this Renaissance thinker as well. In fact, Poliziano's championing of this Roman author is in keeping with his tendency to favor the "less favorable" authorities. In the *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis* (1480), the oration with which he began a course of study on these two authors as chair of rhetoric at the University of Florence, Poliziano acknowledges that in privileging these two writers, he will surprise and perhaps incur the wrath of his contemporaries:

> "Non enim sum nescius fore aliquos quibus meum non satis iudicium probetur, quod ex tanto optimorum probatissimorumque numero voluminum Statii potissimum *Sylvas* Quintilianique *Oratorias institutiones* enarrandas susceperim…neque autem discentium consulere utilitati, qui eis maxime senibus scriptores praelegamus, quo iam romanae nobilitas eloquentiae et quaedam quasi ingenuitas degeneraverat, multoque nos profecto fuisse rectius facturos, si Virgilium Ciceronemque ipsos, latinae facundiae principes, exponere essemus aggressi."[16]

Poliziano counters the hypothetical criticisms he mentions above by reminding his detractors that no student in his early stages should immediately attempt to vie with the greats of that same medium, but should first emulate those of a humbler status, hoping gradually to reach the loftier levels, just as the farmer will cultivate new vines on lower supports and then gradually encourage them to grow higher.[17]

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[16] Poliziano, "Oratio Super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis," in Garin, Eugenio, *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento,* 870. «Non ignoro infatti che vi saranno alcuni i quali disapproveranno il mio proposito di commentare fra tanti libri di eccellenti autori proprio le *Selve* di Stazio e l'*Istituzione oratoria* di Quintiliano…Con ciò non baderemmo all'utilità degli scolari, a cui leggiamo scrittori di un tempo in cui la nobilità e la purezza dell'eloquenza romana si era già corrotta, laddove avremmo fatto molto meglio a esporre Virgilio e Cicerone, veramente principi delle lettere latine» (translation by Garin, Garin, Eugenio, *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento*, [Milano: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1952], 871).

[17] Poliziano, "Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano...", 870. It is not coincidental that the language employed by Poliziano in this *apologia* of the study of Quintilian borrows heavily from the *Institutio oratoria* themselves: "Nam quemadmodum novellis vitibus humiliora primum adminicula atque pedamenta agricolae adiungunt, quibus se gradatim claviculis illis suis quasique minibus attollentes in summa tandem iuga evadant…Itaque neque qui aurigari discunt valentissimas statim ac praeferoces ad currum quadrigas adhibent, nec qui navali erudiuntur praelio non in portu prius tranquilloque mari aliquandiu exercentur." The agricultural simile, for example, is clearly a reworking of Quintilian's own pronouncements on the methods in which young pupils will learn gradually: "vix enim se prima elementa ad spem tollere effingendae, quam summam putant, eloquentiae audebunt; proxima amplectentur magis, ut vites arboribus applicitae inferiores prius apprehendendo ramos in cacumina evadunt" [For children still in the elementary stages of education can scarce dare hope to reach that complete eloquence which

Notwithstanding his inferior position to Cicero, Quintilian's lessons for the ideal orator were well known to any learned man in the Quattrocento and appear as an influence to all sorts of different texts.[18] For a culture enamored with the study and imitation of Classical authors, Quintilian's treatise in twelve books served as the clearest guide to accomplishing this goal. In addition to the basic lessons regarding the rudiments of language, the choices of cases or material for any given speech, and the arrangement of said material, Quintilian spoke at length on ornament, style and eloquence. Style and eloquence seem to be the most elusive qualities and hardest to teach without recourse to exempla taken from past authors, most of them poets. In book IX of the *Institutio,* Vergil's *Aeneid* provides positive examples for almost all the lessons that Quintilian wishes to impart, particularly in implementing figures and tropes in orations. Quintilian illustrates each of the uses of irony, for example, by means of a citation of the *Aeneid*.[19]

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they understand to be their goal: their ambition will not soar so high, but they will imitate the vine which has to grasp the lower branches of the tree on which it is trained before it can reach the topmost boughs]. Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. by Harold Edgeworth Butler, (London: W. Heinemann, 1921), 52-53.

[18] In addition to Valla and Poliziano, McLaughlin sees in the treatises of the educator Antonio da Rho a tendency to rely on Quintilian-inspired structures. This is particularly evident, and fitting, in his text *De imitationibus* (McLaughlin, 110-111). D.R. Edward Wright similarly argues that Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* forms the basis of Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura*, noting the correspondences between the incremental presentation of information in the three books of Alberti's text and the manner in which Quintilian presents his lessons on oratory (Wright, D.R. Edward, "Alberti's De Pictura: It's Literary Structure and Purpose," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 47 [1984]: 52-71).

[19] Quintilian's explication of irony demonstrates, through the use of Vergil, that the orator should know that irony has many uses beyond that of simple negation. For instance, "Εἰρωνεία est, et cum similes imperantibus vel permittentibus sumus: *I, sequere Italiam ventis ;* et cum ea, quae nolumus videri in adversariis esse, concediumus eis. Id acrius fit, cum eadem in nobis sunt et in adversario non sunt: *Meque timoris / Argue tu, Drance, quando tot caedis acervos / Teucrorum tua dextra dedit.* Quod idem contra valet, cum aut ea, quae a nobis absunt, aut etiam quae in aversarios recidunt, quasi fatemur: *Me duce Dardanius Spartam expugnavit adulter*" [It is also *irony* when we assume the tone of command or concession, as in Virgil's "Go! / Follow the winds to Italy;" or when we concede to our opponents qualities which we are unwilling that they should seem to possess. This is specially effective when we possess these qualities and they do not, as in the following passage, "Brand *me* as coward, Drances, since thy sword / Has slain such hosts of Trojans." A like result is produced by reversing this method when we pretend to own to faults which are not ours or which even recoil upon the heads of our opponents, as for

Given the ambiguous nature of eloquence and his own reliance on literary models to identify it, it is not surprising that Quintilian devotes his tenth book to the reading and imitation of the masters as a means of achieving the appropriate style for one's speeches. He emphasizes that even a seasoned orator should read copiously from all disciplines, "nam neque solida atque robusta fuerit unquam eloquentia nisi multo stilo vires acceperit, et citra lectionis exemplum labor ille carens rectore fluitabit" [For eloquence will never attain to its full development or robust health, unless it acquires strength by frequent practice in writing, while such practice without models supplied by reading will be like a ship drifting aimlessly without a steersman].[20] Quintilian accordingly presents a lengthy list of all the authors worthy of further study, their attributes, and what tools they can offer the orator.

Interestingly, in both the lists of authors that Quintilian recommends as models, that is, the great learned authors of both Greek and Roman literature, precedence is granted to poets. Reading the works of Homer and Vergil is paramount, for, in the case of Homer, "quemadmodum ex Oceano dicit ipse omnium amnium fontiumque cursus initium capere, omnibus eloquentiae partibus exemplum et ortum dedit"[21] In Vergil meanwhile there is "curae et diligentiae vel ideo in hoc plus est, quod ei fuit magis laborandum, et quantum eminentibus vicimur, fortasse aequalitate pensamus."[22] These same authors should also be models for

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example, "'Twas I that led the Dardan gallant on / To storm the bridal bed of Sparta's queen!"]. From Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 3, ed. and trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler, (London: W. Heinemann, 1921), 402-403.

[20] Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 4, 2-3.

[21] Translated by Butler as follows: "He is like his own conception of Ocean, which he describes as the source of every stream and river; for he has given us a model and an inspiration for every department of eloquence" in Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of* Quintilian, vol. 4, 28-29. This designation of Homer as the source of all eloquence and learning becomes a focal point for Poliziano in his later Latin poetry, the *Silvae*, particularly the poem "Ambra." See Chapter 3 of the present study.

[22] Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of* Quintilian, vol. 4, 48. From Butler's translation: "there is greater diligence and exactness in the work of Virgil just because his task was harder. And perhaps the superior

imitation, for though orators are not expected to write poetry, they can make use of the examples of eloquence in their cases. Poetry offers the orator "in rebus spiritus et in verbis sublimitas et in adfectibus motus omnis et in personis decor" [inspiration as regards the matter, sublimity of language, the power to excite every kind of emotion, and the appropriate treatment of character].[23] Successful orations, much like masterpieces of the poetic and visual arts, necessitate the ability to both stir the emotions of the audience and vividly depict the subject at hand.

Perfect imitation, however, should not be the intention of the orator-in-training. Rather, declares Quintilian, the young orator must endeavor to surpass his models, to add something new to already existing material. Without surpassing models in any area of study or practice, greatness would never be attained, for "quid erat futurum, si nemo plus effecisset eo quem sequebatur? Nihil in poetis supra Livium Andronicum…ratibus adhuc navigaremus; non esset pictura, nisi quae lineas modo extremas umbrae, quam corpora in sole fecissent circumscriberet."[24] A second and related rule advocated by Quintilian is to imitate more than one author. Quintilian argues that a speaker cannot hope to surpass a model like Cicero should his cases differ from those handled by the famous Roman orator and that required Cicero's particular style, and, similarly, imitating solely Ovid will not aid an orator in speaking on weighty matters.[25] For this reason, exhorts Quintilian "plurimum bona ponamus ante oculos, ut aliud ex

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uniformity of the Roman's excellence balances Homer's pre-eminence in his outstanding passages (Quintilian, 49).

[23] Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 4, 16-19.

[24] Translated by Butler as, "what…would have been the result if no one had done more than his predecessors? Livius Andronicus would mark our supreme achievement in poetry…We should still be sailing on rafts, and the art of painting would be restricted to tracing a line round a shadow thrown in sunlight." In Quintilian, *The Instituio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 4, 77-79.

[25] Quintilian, *The Instituio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 4, 86-87. Quintilian here does not mention individual literary models, but rather particular styles that do not readily lend themselves to all types of cases: "Etiam hoc solet incommodi accidere iis, qui se uni alicui generi dediderunt, ut, si asperitas iis placuit alicuius, hanc etiam in leni ac remisso causarum genere non exuant; si tenuitas ac iucunditas, in asperis gravibusque causis ponderi rerum parum respondeant…quorum omnium dissimilis atque diversa

alio haereat, et quod cuique loco conveniat aptemus" [we shall do well to keep a number of different excellences before our eyes, so that different qualities from different authors may impress themselves on our minds, to be adopted for use in the place that becomes them best].[26] This rule promoting the blending of various styles is particularly relevant to a study of Valla and Poliziano. That Quintilian does not limit this imitation to words but rather encourages the study and emulation of a model author's propriety, judgments, and sentiments is of equal import.

Imitation and ancient authorities in Valla's *De vero falsoque bono*

Lorenzo Valla clearly took these lessons to heart in the composition of his dialogue *De vero falsoque bono*, particularly the imitation of various authorities instead of adhering only to the precepts of Cicero, a tendency that was common among *Quattrocento* humanists.[27] The influence of Quintilian is evident in the manner in which Valla constructs his contrasting arguments in the three books of the dialogue and in the structure of the various orations. The speakers in the *De vero bono* utilize passages from diverse authors—ranging from poets to philosophers to orators—in order to illustrate their points, much in the same way that Quintilian borrowed the words of Vergil and others to underscore his precepts on eloquence. Likewise,

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inter se ratio est" [There is a further fault to which those persons are liable who devote themselves entirely to the imitation of one particular style: if the rude vigour of some particular author takes their fancy, they cling to it even when the case on which they are engaged calls for an easy and flowing style; if, on the other hand, it is a simple or agreeable style that claims their devotion, they fail to meet the heavy demands of severe and weighty cases…in all these instances dissimilar and different methods being necessary].

[26] Quintilian, *The Instituio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 4, 88-89.

[27] Valla's continued imitation of multiple authorities (and privileging of Quintilian) was in fact a point of contention between him and other humanists, particularly Poggio Bracciolini. McLaughlin concurs, noting Valla's opinion on pluralism in his dispute with Poggio: " 'At in lingua Romana non me ad unum Ciceronem astringis. Igitur aliorum quoque testimonia possum repetere' (But in the use of Latin you cannot bind me just to Cicero. I am therefore free to seek out the testimony of other writers')" (McLaughlin, 135-136).

Valla the author relies on Ciceronian rhetoric, Platonic dialogue, Vergilian poetics, and Christian doctrine to develop the text of the dialogue. Even Valla's thesis for the work, namely that pleasure is an extension of Christian love, the *voluptas-caritas*, derives from an amalgamation of various literary and philosophical elements.[28] As Lorch emphasizes, these authorities do not just bolster Valla's argument, but serve as guides for Valla, and for Valla's reader, as he explores the topic of *voluptas*.[29] Much like Dante and his fictional guide "Virgilio" in the *Divina Commedia*, Valla engages these long dead thinkers in a dialogue by means of the various allusions to and citations of them in the speeches of the text.[30] This is Valla's explicit intention for his eclectic imitation: since few of his contemporaries have completely accepted the arguments of Lactantius

[28] Valla. *De voluptate*, 266-7. Lorch notes in her introduction to Valla's dialogue that the basis of Valla's thesis, which he develops throughout the text, lies in "Christian as well as classical sources" that assert that "Christianity is the kingdom of God's providential love for humanity. Only by grasping this principle can man fully participate in life within the cosmos and realize himself completely. Every single action of his daily life must bear the stamp of love for God as efficient cause of all that is life. Here then is the guarantee of human earthly happiness" (29). This thesis is of course provocative and is intended to be so. As Poliziano will later do with his *Stanze*, Valla takes a familiar genre and topic among humanists and uses them to assert his own authorial voice and philosophical viewpoint. Valla is fully aware of this; in the preface to the 1431 draft of the text, *De voluptate*, Valla emphasizes the controversial nature of his text and the outcry it is bound to provoke among other humanists. Yet Valla is unapologetic: "Quid tu, ille inquiet, aisne voluptatem esse verum bonum? Ego vero aio atque affirmo, et ita affirmo ut nihil aliud preter hanc bonum esse contendam. Cuius causam suscipiendam mihi ac probandam putavi" ['What?' this friend might ask me. 'You say that pleasure is the true good?' I say so, and I declare it, and I declare it in such away as to maintain that no other good but this exists. Here is the cause that I have decided to take up and to demonstrate] (Lorch, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 34).

[29] Lorch, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 30. In order to properly explore the concept of *voluptas*, these sources are invaluable to guide the arguments that Valla presents in his dialogue. This concept was appropriated by Valla, declares Lorch, "from Epicurus, unfavorably presented by Cicero, developed in an unacceptable manner by Lucretius, intuitively appreciated by Vergil, and radically criticized by Lactantius. And Valla finds in the Bible its richest form…Augustine teaches him how to strip human nature of every pretense…Cicero and Quintilian, as teachers of eloquence, the queen of the arts, are constantly present as guides for achieving the most precise, fitting, decorous, and persuasive expression of an idea…The poets, Vergil in particular, offer the poetic element so necessary to the *suasio*" (30).

[30] Though not as evident an influence as the ancient orators and poets, Dante's impact on Valla is discernable in various aspects of the dialogue, in particular in Valla's concluding triumph of Paradise. Lorch notes this presence as well: "by imagining or 'picturing' the permanent happiness in Paradise, Valla hopes to infuse in man the strength to control instinctive pleasures. Valla's route is an old one. Even Dante, within a completely different context, had confessed that the desire to return to the paradisiac triumph he had once seen often made him cry bitterly for his sins…Like Dante's, Valla's description of the triumph of Paradise obeys the traditional use of persuasive power (*suasio*)" (Lorch, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 32-33).

and Augustine on the true good, choosing instead to follow the examples of pagan philosophers, "ego e contra planum faciam, non nostris, sed ipsorum philosophorum rationibus nihil cum virtute gentilitatem, nihil recte fecisse" [I on the contrary shall make plain, with the arguments not of our side but of these same philosophers, that paganism has done nothing virtuously, nothing rightly].[31]

The manner in which Valla opens the dialogue of the *De vero bono* instantly demonstrates the influence of ancient authorities. Though set in the contemporary era and peopled with well-known intellectual figures of the time, Valla's description of the meeting evokes Ciceronian dialogues, particularly *De oratore*. The suggestion of the group's Stoic, Catone Sacco, to debate on a topic in the style of the ancient philosophers ("ut video, estis otiose, cur non commentemur aliquid more veterum et de honesto ac bono disputemus") recalls the similar suggestion of Scaevola in the *De oratore*, who looked upon his relaxing comrades ("cum illi maiores natu satis quiessent"), and inquired "cur non imitamur…Socratem illum, qui est in Phaedro Platonis?"[32] Much like his Ciceronian precursor who quickly denied any value to eloquence, in the course of his first speech, Catone would also deny all value to *voluptas* and the Epicurean philosophy.[33] Thus, through the association between these two figures at the dialogue's *incipit*, Valla has already prepared the reader to employ skepticism when following Catone's arguments.

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[31] Valla, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 50-51.

[32] Valla, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 54-55; Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De oratore libri tres*. ed. Augustus S. Wilkins, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 92. Scaevola's words in English, as translated by John Selby Watson, read as "Why should not we…imitate Socrates in the Phaedrus of Plato" (Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *Cicero on Oratory and Orators*, ed. and trans. John Selby Watson, [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970], 12).

[33] In her study of this text and Valla's treatment of *voluptas*, Lorch indicates that the Catone Sacco of the Dialogue is not an authentic portrayal of his friend's beliefs, which were quite similar to his own, but rather a mask that allows him "to fill a position contrary to his own ideas and beliefs" (Lorch, Maristella De Panizza, *A Defense of Life: Lorenzo Valla's theory of pleasure,* [Munich: Wilhem Fink Verlag, 1985] 42).

Indeed, Valla further signals the errors in Catone's philosophy through this speaker's use of literary references. To begin the discussion of what is the true good, Catone first declares that men tend to seek out things that are not good nor virtuous, ignoring the only good qualities which "nimirum…sunt que pertinent ad honestam."[34] Catone contends that to reach such a good requires extensive contemplation not by the eyes, which typically leads to some base pleasure, but by the mind and the soul. To emphasize these points, Catone borrows the words of "Virgilio nostro", who in the Stoic's estimation shares his philosophy. Looking to the final portion of Vergil's second *Georgics* (lines 475-513), Catone sees in the poet's words his same views on the hollow pursuits of men:

Nam ea superior in quibus assequendis a genere humano laboratur talia aut his similia sunt que a Virgilio nostro dicuntur:

Solicitant alii remis freta ceca ruuntque
In ferrum, penetrant aulas et limina regum.
Hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque penates
Ut gemma bibat et Serrano dormiat ostro.
Condit opes alius defossoque incubat auro,
Hic stupet attonitus rostris, hunc plausus hiantem
Per cuneos geminatus enim plebisque patrumque
Corripuit. Gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum
Exilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant
Atque alio patriam querunt sub sole iacentem.

Satis hoc erit de multiplicibus hominum cupiditatibus et erroribus attigisse, cuius rei exemplorum plena est vetustas, plena etiam nostra etas…Ac Virgilius ut eorum hominum quos significavit curas videtur plane damnare, idque non iniuria, ita haud scio an recte unam agricolarum vitam statim post tantopere commendarit dicens:

Agricola incurvo terram dimovit aratro

et insequentes deinceps versus. Notum est enim vobis carmen in quo carmine non suam sed molliculi illius atque enervis Epicuri sententiam, ut aliquid publicis auribus blandiretur, exposuit. Siquidem quid ipse sentiret paulo ante commonstrarat ubi ait:

Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Muse,
Quarum sacra fero ingenti perculsus amore,
Accipiant celique vias et sidera monstrent,
Defectus solis varios luneque labores,
Unde tremor terries, qua vi maria alta tumescant
Obiicibus ruptis, rursusque in se ipsa residant,

[34] Valla, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 56.

Quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles
Hiberni vel que tardis mora noctibus obstet.

Videtis ut ego ductus rerum honestarum dulcedine longior fui.[35]

It is the position of Catone that in this first citation of the *Georgics*, Vergil confirms that the desires of men, that is those things that are the antithesis of *honestum*, the true good, do indeed lead only to the most perverse actions seen in history. Rather than seeking virtue, men are compelled by greed to ruin cities and homes ("hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque penates / ut gemma bibat") or by bloodlust to slay their own brothers ("Gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum"). Catone's third quotation of this Vergilian passage further underscores the position of this poet as a stoic philosopher: Vergil declares that over such evil desires, he prefers a life of contemplation of the higher sciences and deeper mysteries ("accipiant celique vias et sidera monstrent"). Why then do the Epicureans claim Vergil as one of their own? Catone argues that Vergil's brief praise of the farmer and the natural world in his second citation of the *Georgics* ("agricola incurvo

[35] Valla, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*. The translation of this passage, provided by Lorch, reads as follows: "In fact, what I spoke of before, that is, the things for which mankind strives are, or are similar to, what our Vergil describes. 'Others vex with oars the seas unknown, dash upon the sword, or press into courts and the portals of kings. One wreaks ruin on a city and its hapless homes, that he may drink from a jewelled cup and sleep on Tyrian purple; another hoards up wealth and broods over buried gold; one is dazed and astounded by the rostra; another, open-mouthed, is carried away by the plaudits of princes and of people, rolling again and again along the benches. Gleefully they steep themselves in their brothers' blood; for exile they change their sweet homes and hearths, and seek the country that lies beneath the sun.' We have sufficiently dealt with the numerous stupidities or passionate desires of man and with his errors, examples of which we can find as abundantly in antiquity as in our own time…As Vergil seems to condemn openly the preoccupations of those men that he mentioned, and quite rightly, so a little later he only seems to find praiseworthy (I know not with what justice) the life of peasants saying: 'Meanwhile the husbandman has been cleaving the soil with a crooked plow.' And so forth in the lines that follow. You are acquainted with the poem in which he expresses not his opinion but that of the soft and effeminate Epicurus in order to flatter a little the ears of the public. For he had shortly before portrayed his own thought in the passage where he says: 'But as for me – first above all, may the sweet Muses whose holy emblems, under the spell of a mighty love, I bear, take me to themselves, and show me heaven's pathways, the stars, the sun's many lapses, the moon's many labors; whence come tremblings of the earth, the force to make deep seas swell and burst their barriers, then sink back upon themselves; why winter suns hasten so fast to dip in the ocean, or what delays clog the lingering nights.' You see that I have been rather long-winded, influenced as I was by the attractiveness of matters pertaining to virtue" (56-59).

terram dimovit aratro") is but an example of the poet pandering to the public. Vergil had already expressed his own views on virtue and the true good in the third passage cited in Catone's speech. What these words of Vergil convey to Catone is that "agricolarum igitur vitam, nisi volumus si diis placet epicurei esse, totam abiciamus," that is, the idealized representation of peasant life is not an example of the pure and honest life, but rather a celebration of base pleasures.[36]

At first glance, Catone creates an effective argument that both supports his original claim and also meets all the rhetorical requirements stipulated by Quintilian. Valla, however, expects the astute reader to recognize the falseness of Catone's argument through his use of Vergil. Catone makes a grave error in this passage; namely, he engages in a clear misreading of Vergil's text that divorces the *verba* from the *res* of the passage (and from the *res* of his own argument).[37] Catone reads this passage of the *Georgics* out of order, ignoring the poet's lengthy encomium to the natural life and its epicurean underpinnings (lines 458-478), and beginning instead with the condemnation of the ills of mankind (lines 503-512), a section meant to serve as a counterpoint with the natural realm in Vergil's poem.[38] Furthermore, in declaring that any admiration felt by Vergil towards the natural realm is mere pandering, he equates Vergil's entire point in the latter portion of this poem with that of Lucretius, specifically that the only type of poetry worthy of practicing is that which examines the philosophical questions of life. This, of course, completely ignores that Vergil equally praised both the poetry of Lucretius, with its focus on *honestum*, and

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[36] Valla, *On pleasure / De voluptate*, 58; "We must, then, completely reject the life of peasants unless, God help us, we want to be Epicureans" (59). For a further breakdown of Catone's argument and its relationship to Vergil's *Georgics*, see Lorch, *A Defense of Life*, 46-48.

[37] That the *res* and *verba* of authorities must always connect to the *res* of Valla's text, lest his oration devolve into a useless debate between contrasting philosophies, demonstrates the influence of Quintilian. Lorch maintains that "the echo of Quintilian's words" on this subject "must have been a warning for Valla to keep the word always as a direct reflection of the *res*, and to make the *res* live through the word: 'Vivunt omnia enim et moventur, excipimusque nova illa velut nascentia' (*Inst. Orat,* X.1)" (Lorch, *A Defense of Life*, 117).

[38] Lorch, *A Defense of Life*, 50.

that pleasurable poetry of the pastoral realm.[39] In misunderstanding Vergil's words, contends Lorch, Valla implicitly demonstrates that Catone misunderstands the human heart as well, and consequently his argument suffers.[40] By extension, this incorrect application of Vergil allows Valla to censure the concept of *honestas* so privileged by Catone.[41] Thus the references to literary authorities employed by Valla serve more than a rhetorical purpose: Valla utilizes them to guide the reader in understanding this portion of the *De vero bono*. Indeed, Valla further stresses this link between literary references and textual exegesis in the Epicurean's speech, which makes reference to these same passages from Vergil's *Georgics*. In Maffeo Vegio's rebuttal, the Epicurean properly exploits the Vergilian verses; thereby correcting his friend's reading and demonstrating the superiority of his argument.[42]

More than an explication of Valla's text, the literary references work in concert to promote Valla's particular philosophy: the true good is a Christian *voluptas* that "duplex est: altera nunc in terris, altera postea in celis…altera mater est vitiorum, altera virtutum" [This experience is twofold: one pleasure now on earth, the other hereafter in the heavens…one

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[39] Lorch, *A Defense of Life*, 50.
[40] Lorch, *A Defense of Life*, 51.
[41] Lorch argues that "this excursus on Vergil's poetry…creates the background for [Valla's] whole theory of pleasure. *Voluptas* emerges powerfully beyond the shadows of *Honestas* as a basic force of life…It is, in fact, the most positive force man can count on in his existence. Vergil's *agricolae* called on stage by Valla, misinterpreted by the Stoic, reveal this basic truth through the miracle of poetry" (Lorch, *A Defense of Life*, 52).
[42] Vegio, like Catone, first examines the concept of contemplation, whether it is an activity best done with the eyes or the mind. As the exponent of the Epicurean philosophy, he prefers contemplating with his eyes for the purpose of pleasure and declares that Vergil was in agreement: "Nunc vero contentus sum…Virgilio testimonio, qui in his ipsis versibus quos tu, Cato, recitasti de naturalibus questionibus manifesto docet nil aliud se optare quam voluptatem. Quippe ubi dicebat: 'O fortunatos nimium bona si sua norint Agricolas….' et cetera, tu plane concedis de voluptate locutum fuisse. Cum vero paulo post subiecit: 'Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Muse' et que sequuntur, quid indicavit aliud quam malle se illam felicitatem physicorum, sin minus hanc agricolarum…"(Valla, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 206); Lorch, *A Defense of Life*, 52; 188-190.

pleasure is the mother of vices, the other of virtues].[43] In the third book Antonio da Rho (Raudensis) offers this nuanced judgment to the debates of the previous two books. As he confutes and corrects the positions of the Stoic and the Epicurean, respectively, Valla through Raudensis' voice utilizes an assemblage of ancient and theological references to fortify his argument.

Returning to the concept of contemplation, for example, already explored by Catone and Vegio through the words of Vergil, Raudensis contrasts the empty contemplation of beauty of Epicurean *voluptas* with the pure joy of the contemplation of the divine. In demonstrating the former, Raudensis blends together various authorities, availing himself of biblical myths and the words of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which stress the vanity of such pleasure:

> nihil esse quod eque iuventutem a rectis studiis et ab omni virtute avertat atque amor pulchritudinis vel aliene vel sue…Hic ergo…feminarum appetitus…Sampsonem, quo nemo unquam fortior quem Herculem ut opinor vocavit antiquitas, domuit et ad necem induxit. Hic David, plane principem prophetarum cuius cantu Deus oblectabatur in quo sibi placebat in quo gloriabatur, et ad adulterium et ad homicidium impulit. Hic Salomoni omnium eminentissimo tenebras extreme dementia obduxit ut lapides, era, ligna pro deis adoraret idque, quod detestabilius est, in senectute. Sue autem amor pulchritudinis non parve et ipse amentie causa est. Ideoque a poetis fingitur Narcissum sua ipsius forma captum quia semet ipso frui non posset extabuisse et amore deperisse.[44]

All the authorities cited in this passage, Christian and pagan, tell the same story: the man who allows his desirous gaze, instead of the will of God, to rule him will find only death and punishment. Little distinguishes David and Narcissus: both gave into an inordinate desire for their own person, defied God, or in Narcissus' case the natural order, and in turn received

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[43] Valla, *On Pleasure / De Voluptate*, 266-267.

[44] "Nothing draws youth more strongly from right studies and every virtue than the love of beauty, either another's or one's own…This appetite for women…overcame and violently destroyed Samson, than whom no one was ever stronger and whom classical antiquity (as I believe) called Hercules. By this appetite, David, clearly chief among the prophets, in whose song God took delight so that David was pleased with himself for being so glorified, was driven to both adultery and homicide. By this appetite Solomon, greatest of all, was incited in his old age (a most detestable circumstance) to the darkness of extreme madness, so that he worshipped as gods pieces of stone, bronze, and wood. The love of one's own beauty is also the cause of no little insanity. Thus the poets have created the story that Narcissus fell in love with his own beauty and fell sick and died of love because he could not enjoy his own favors." Valla, *On Pleasure / De Voluptate*, 292-293.

punishment. Ovid's depiction of Narcissus in the *Metamorphoses* presents a youth that destroys himself in worshipping his reflection in the pool. Raudensis recounts that Solomon, too, madly worshipped empty idols leading to the destruction of his kingdom. It is perhaps Valla's brief reference to Sampson that confirms this association between the truths of the Bible and the intuitions of the pagans: in alluding to this biblical story, the author notes that the figure of Sampson existed in classical antiquity as the demigod Hercules ("quem Herculem ut opinor vocavit antiquitas"). Thus, unlike the previous speeches of the Epicurean and the Stoic that fully ignored the Christian faith and tradition, Raudensis, when he turns his attention to the concept of Christian *voluptas*, does not set one tradition aside for the other. Rather he marries these two traditions together to show that the truth of Christian *voluptas* was always present. The ancients, though they did not follow this truth, still intuited it.[45]

Ultimately, Raudensis turns to Ovid and not to Church teachings to offer the final judgment on this concept of earthly pleasure derived through contemplation of the material world: "Dum sibi quisque placet credula turba sumus" [As long as everyone is pleased by himself, we are a credulous mob].[46] The *De vero bono*, therefore, reveals numerous ways in which Valla engages with authorities. In some instances, Valla displays a learned imitation of these authorities, such as Quintilian and (to a lesser extent) Cicero, which aids in building the structure of his dialogue. In others, such as the ones examined above, Valla combines the references to further explicate his own text and promote his viewpoints.

[45] Lorch, *A Defense of Life,* 277-8.
[46] Valla, *On Pleasure / De Voluptate*, 294-295.

Imitation and *contaminatio* in the *Quattrocento*

Composed forty years later, Poliziano's *Stanze per la giostra* exhibits a similar use of intertextuality, perhaps with the exception of learned imitation. Modern critics, such as Vittore Branca and Paolo Orvieto, tend to associate learned imitation more with Poliziano's later Latin works than his early vernacular poetry. Instead, the term typically reserved for this early phase of Poliziano's poetry is *contaminatio*. Originally used by the Roman playwright Terence, his detractors, and later scholars of Terence's comedies, *contaminatio* describes the process by which this particular author appropriated the source material of various authorities in the creation of his works.[47] In some instances, such as the *Andria*, the *Eunuchus*, and the *Adelphoe*, the result of Terence's borrowings from various sources was the creation of comedies that, while not completely original, were new additions to the genre and provided interesting variations to the original.[48] For these comedies, as Walter Chalmers and W. Beare have both noted, the tendency is to understand *contaminare* as " to combine". The other related, and far more negative, translation of *contaminare* is "to spoil": Terence had spoiled the comedies by translating them from the original Greek and by blending these translations with outside source material. This particular understanding of *contaminare* formed the basis of criticisms levied against Terence

[47] Maïer, 207.

[48] Poliziano himself highlights some of the examples of *contaminatio* in the Terence's works in his study of the Latin playwright and ancient comedies: "Graeci prologos non habent more nostrorum, quos Latini habent. Deinde deos argumentis narrandis machinatos ceteri Latini instar Graecorum habent, Terentius non habet. Ad hoc προτακτικά πρόσωπα et personas extra argumentum accersitas non facile ceteri habent, quibus Terentius saepe utitur, ut per has inductiones facile pateat argumentum" (Poliziano, *La commedia antica e l'Andria di Terenzio*, ed. Rosetta Lattanzi Roselli [Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1973], 24).

during Antiquity. Neither Bear nor Chalmers, nor the centuries of scholars preceding them, is able to fully overlook this particular disparagement.[49]

In the *Quattrocento*, Poliziano's vernacular poetry, particularly the *Stanze per la giostra*, appeared to continue Terence's tradition of *contaminatio* as well as the polemic that surrounded it. In fact, Poliziano seemingly made further transgressions in the creation of his works: rather than mingle together one or two easily recognizable, and, more to the point, *complete* sources in the creation of his text, Poliziano selected multiple literary fragments that, combined together, created a whole.[50] The dispute that arises in the critical tradition regards not whether or not a previous work was contaminated, as in the case of Terence, for no one authority can be identified as the basis for Poliziano's epic poem, but whether the *Stanze*, notwithstanding the fact that they were left unfinished, could ever be regarded as achieving unity and balance with so many loose literary threads lying about.[51]

This dispute is not found exclusively in the critical tradition – even contemporaries of Poliziano questioned the poet's method of creation by assimilation. A series of correspondences between an older Poliziano and the humanist Paolo Cortesi underscores that Poliziano's assimilative view of poetry and writing separated him from many of his contemporaries.[52] In Poliziano's estimation, to imitate only one model is to never fully realize one's potential or personal style. Like Quintilian before him (whom he cites in the letter to Cortesi), Poliziano

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[49] Beare, W, "Contaminatio", *The Classical Review*, 9:1 (March 1959): 7-11; Chalmers, Walter, "Contaminatio", *The Classical Review*, 7:1 (March 1957): 12-14.
[50] Martelli, *Angelo Poliziano: Storia e metastoria*, 274; Greene, Thomas M., *The Light in Troy: imitation and discovery in Renaissance poetry*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982),153; Maier, 207. Maier contends that Poliziano uses *contaminatio* "constamment avec une rare élégance" throughout his career.
[51] Greene, 158-159. Greene is quick to temper his praise of the conflative tendencies in Poliziano's *Stanze* by noting some of the unintended consequences of jumbling together multiple references. Greene contends that the multiple subtexts permeating the *Stanze* inadvertently lend to the overall unresolved sense of the work, independent of the fact that Poliziano left the work unfinished (159).
[52] Garin, 904; Greene, 149-151.

declares that "one who takes care to place his foot in another's tracks cannot run well, nor can one write well if he lacks the courage to leave the beaten path. Bear in mind finally that to draw nothing from the self and to imitate always is the mark of an unhappy mind."[53] As Thomas Greene details in *The Light in Troy*, Cortesi takes issue with the constant absorption of contrasting authorities, believing that such a method can only lead to a literary indigestion rather than fullness.[54] It is striking to note the shift of significance concerning *contaminatio* that occurred between Terence's time and the *Quattrocento*. As evidenced by the debate between Poliziano and Cortesi, it is no longer a question of blending two or more source materials in the creation of a new work that vexes the "purists"; instead the question of *contaminatio* had been displaced from treatments of the original text to treatments of imitation. What ruffled Cortesi so is not that Poliziano would pollute an original text by adding apocryphal elements, but that the elder humanist would intentionally choose to model numerous authorities rather than to perfect the imitation of one author.[55] In this sense, the discourse about *contaminatio* in the *Quattrocento* mirrors the poetry that Poliziano championed in the early stages of his career: one that was displaced from an original source, built on allusions, and lacked the historicity and philological reality which would color his later works.

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[53] Garin, 904; translation by Greene, 150.
[54] Greene, 151.
[55] In these exchanges with Poliziano, the young Cortesi, "speaking in this dispute for the generation to follow, denies the possibility of forming a stylistic unity out of a flotsam of literary history…Cortesi's response goes so far as to question the very possibility of a richly assimilated selfhood. Who wants the clutter of a pawnshop? Isn't there a limit to each man's capacity for absorption?" (Greene, 151-153).

An assemblage of allusions: the *incipit* of the *Stanze per la giostra*

Regardless of its detractors, in the 1470s this form of *contaminatio* was to Poliziano the only way to create poetry. It is not accidental that in his later philological study of ancient comedy, and Terence in particular, Poliziano reaffirmed his belief that "ex imitatione igitur et concentu naturalis poetices ortus est" [it is therefore out of imitation and harmonious blendings that natural poetry is born].[56] The opening octaves of the *Stanze* exemplify this interpretation of *contaminatio* that is particular to Poliziano. As befitting an epic poem, the incipit contains immediate allusions to the celebrated ancient epics, particularly the *Aeneid*. Though he does not sing of "armum virumque…Troiae qui primae ab oris" like Vergil[57], there is no doubt that the shadow of the clash of Troy and the Italian battles to come lies in the *Stanze*'s opening lines:

Le glorïose pompe e' fieri ludi
Della città che 'l freno allenta e stringe
A' magnanimi Toschi, e i regni crudi
Di quella dea che 'l terzo ciel dipinge,
E i premi degni alli onorati studi,
La mente audace a celebrar mi spinge;
Si che i gran nomi e' fatti egregi e soli
Fortuna o morte o tempo non involi.[58]

The substitutions of "glorïose pompe" for "virum" and "ludi" for "armum" are in keeping with both the themes that Poliziano would develop over the course of the epic and, of course, with the context of the poem. Rather than celebrate the one man, Aeneas, and the battles he fought as a stand-in for the emperor Augustus, Poliziano celebrates the joust that inspired this work and the pomp and circumstance surrounding not just Giuliano but the entire Medici family. The specter

[56] Poliziano, *La commedia antica e l'Andria di Terenzio*, 3.
[57] Vergil, *The Bucolics, Aeneid, and Georgics of Virgil*, ed. J.B. Greenough, (Boston: Ginn, 1881), 36.
[58] Book I, Octave I. 1-8. All citations of Poliziano's *Stanze* come from Poliziano, Angelo, *Poesie volgari*, ed. Francesco Bausi, (Rome: Vecchiarelli Editore, 1997), 3-42.

of Augustus and the Roman Empire still remains, imbuing the court of Lorenzo il Magnifico with the attributes associated with the golden age of the Roman Empire.

The presence of Vergil is not limited to the evocative beginning: Carducci and Sapegno identify traces of the *Aeneid* in the *Stanze*'s second verse. Poliziano's description of Medici Florence as the city "che 'l freno allenta e stringe / ai magnanimi Toschi" recalls another line from book I of the *Aeneid*, here referring to Aeolus, who "foedere certo / et premere et laxas sciret dare iussus habenas" (*Aen*. I. 62-63).[59] Again the parallels created by Poliziano's allusions are curious: in describing the city of Florence with this image, Poliziano appears to displace the focus of the Vergilian passage from the king Aeolus as the master of winds to the cave from which the winds are loosened and reined in. This displacement, taken in concert with the substitutions of the first verse, serves to immediately relocate the realm of this epic to the pastoral realm. Games replace the severity of battle, and modern Florence becomes associated with a mythical locale. Poliziano emphasizes myth again in the third and fourth verses, in which he lists the second focal point of his poem: the kingdom of Venus. Poliziano hints at the pastoral realm that will become the locus of much of the poem's action through the use of "regni crudi." Both Carducci and Sapegno link this lexical choice to one of the elegies of Propertius dedicated to his mistress and muse, Cynthia. In that poem Propertius fashions Cynthia as a woodland nymph or an ancient goddess, exhorting her to crown her temples with flowers and praying that she will forever "inque meum semper stent tua regna caput."[60] This echo of Propertius, though seemingly minor, heightens the feel already established in the opening verses, namely that

[59] Vergil, 38; Carducci, ed. *Le Stanze, L'Orfeo e le rime*, 247n.; Sapegno, *Commento alle rime del Poliziano*, 8.

[60] Carducci, 247; Sapegno, 8. The reference to Propertius comes from the tenth elegy (lines 16-18) of the third book. See Propertius, Sextus, *Sexti Properti Elegos*, edited by S.J. Heyworth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 119. Also worth noting, particularly when looking ahead to Poliziano's later poetry, is the repeated imagery of adorning one's head with flowers, an image which becomes prominent in the poet's Latin piece, *Ambra*.

though grounded in a contemporary event in Florence, Poliziano's poem would adhere to the themes and language dear to the pastoral genre: nostalgia, the triumph of love, and the mythical realm.

In the *Stanze* Poliziano does not completely ignore the present and the historical reasons for his epic; rather through his many allusions and references he seeks to bring the past and the present into further contact. Though no longer the focal point in verses 3 and 4, contemporary Florence is associated with the mythical realm of Venus though the literary allusion employed by Poliziano in describing the goddess. Poliziano alludes to Venus with the description of "quella dea che 'l terzo ciel dipinge," referencing Dante's poem that opens the second book of the *Convivio*, "Voi che 'ntendendo il terzo ciel movete."[61] Poliziano thus strives, linguistically and thematically, to create an atemporal space in which these two poles, the ancient and the modern, can coexist and interact throughout the poem.[62]

This atemporal referentiality is inherent to pastoral: in Vergil's *Eclogues*, the epitome of classical pastoral, the ancient setting of shepherds and their experiences therein serve as proxies

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[61] Alighieri, Dante, *Opere minori di Dante Alighieri*, vol. 2, edited by Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti (Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1983), 101. Renzo Lo Cascio also sees the influence of Dante in the phrase "magnanimi Toschi" in the third verse, though Poliziano's bias is far more positive than that of Dante (Lo Cascio, Renzo, *Lettura del Poliziano*, 88).

[62] Both Thomas Greene and David Quint comment on the lack of historicity that is present in the *Stanze*. Such a lack of historical grounding is due largely to the *contaminatio* employed by the poet which then extends to the themes and the structure. According to Greene, those humanists who followed the anti-Ciceronian tradition, Poliziano included, tended to "deny the sacred status of the of the original text and to stress the creative freedom of the imitator" thus producing a "crisis of historicism" (Greene, 154). Quint expands on this idea, stating that the "meanings of the *Stanze* depend upon a continuous literary tradition which their poetic text reveals to be the product of a history of imitation. The literary historian who traces the imitated figure to its original contexts understands poetry as a human artifact whose meaning depends upon the historical circumstances of its author. Yet the very continuity achieved by the imitation and repetition of poetic meaning over the centuries may lend that meaning an aura of timelessness and autonomy from human history…The conflict between poetry and history in Poliziano's thought is not resolved; rather it is manifested in the thematic enterprise of the *Stanze*, which is the transformation of historical events into poetic myth" (Quint, Intro. *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*, xiv-xv).

for the current members and events of Emperor Augustus' Rome, a fact which was as evident to Vergil's contemporaries as it was to later scholars.[63] This tradition continued into the Renaissance, and the poets of the period, from Petrarch to Sannazaro, spoke openly of contemporary events by veiling them in the allegory of the pastoral setting.[64] The atemporality of Poliziano's *Stanze*, however, is slightly more nuanced, for unlike in the eclogue tradition current events of Medici Florence serve primarily as the impetus of Poliziano's poem, not its *raison d'être*. Poliziano does not wish to allegorically record minor court events through pastoral, but rather to memorialize the court by building a hybrid of pastoral and epic. The closing line of the first octave indicates that the poem should be read as such. Poliziano blends the atemporality of the pastoral genre and the ahistoricity of *contaminatio* with the monumental nature of epic, seeking almost to negate history through poetry: he declares that his bold genius compels him to celebrate and, more to the point, preserve in song the Medici, so that they will never be destroyed by the vicissitudes of history, namely "fortuna o morte o tempo."

These elements of epic language and imagery remind the reader that though borrowing from the pastoral tradition, the *Stanze* is not a true pastoral.[65] Written in *ottava rima*, the *Stanze* do not follow what had become the standard metric scheme for pastoral poetry after Petrarch and

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[63] Greg contends that in Vergil's *Eclogues*, the "a conversation between shepherds becomes an expression of gratitude to the emperor for the restitution of a villa, a lament for Daphnis is interwoven with an apotheosis of Julius Caesar, and in the complaint of the forsaken shepherd, whom Apollo and Pan seek in vain to comfort, we may trace the wounded vanity of his patron deserted by his mistress for the love of a soldier" (Greg, 16).

[64] Similar to Vergil's *Eclogues*, the "Latin eclogues of the renaissance are distinguished from all other forms of allegory by the obscure and recondite allusions that they affected. There were few among their authors for whom the narration of simple loves and sorrows or the graces of untutored nature possessed any attraction; we find them either making their shepherds openly discuss contemporary affairs, or more often clothing their references to actual events in a sort of pastoral allegory" (Greg, 29).

[65] Greg considers the *Stanze* to be "less pastoral in motive and less connected in narrative." Nevertheless, he groups the *Stanze* with the other clear Renaissance pastorals for Poliziano's work "constantly borders upon the kind, and evinces a genuine sympathy with rustic life" (Greg, 37-38).

Boccaccio, the *terza rima*.[66] Nor, however, is it a true epic in the tradition of Homer and Vergil: while Poliziano utilizes the plot points expected in the start of an epic poem, through the language and the narrative he subverts these traditional moments, steering them away from the epic expectations and imbuing them with elements of the pastoral genre. In essence, the poet revels in the hybrid: Poliziano's assimilative lyric fuses together two genres from their basic lexical choices all the way to their depictions of heroes and overall themes. Such is apparent in the subsequent octaves.

A connoisseur of classical epics would anticipate the poet's invocation of a god or muse following the strong, heroic beginning. Poliziano does not disappoint, yet the chosen god is rather unexpected when viewed through the lens of epic poetry:

O bello iddio ch'al cor per gli occhi inspiri
dolce disir d'amaro pensier pieno,
e pasciti di pianto e di sospiri,
nudrisci l'alme d'un dolce veleno,
gentil fai divenir ciò che tu miri,
né può star cosa vil drento al tuo seno;
Amor, del quale i' son sempre suggetto,
porgi or la mano al mio basso intelletto.[67]

Poliziano may delay his nomination of "Amor" until the seventh verse, but the description of the god in lines 1-2 leaves no doubt to whom he is speaking. Once more the literary allusions in these verses, coupled with the identification of the god of Love, take this classically epic moment and place it in the world of pastoral. Carducci recognizes the influence of Euripedes' *Hippolytus* in Poliziano's invocation of Love, citing the chorus's lament and prayer to the god to not hurt them as he has Phaedra: "Eros, Eros, you make the eye misty with longing, you import a sweet

[66] Greg, 31.
[67] Book I, Octave II, lines 1-8.

delight into the hearts of those against whom you march."[68] The allusion to *Hippolytus* is doubly important for it both returns the reader to the rustic world and prepares the reader for the hero of the *Stanze*: Iulio, when he is introduced in the eighth octave, appears as a modern Hippolytus.[69] The shades of Hippolytus and Phaedra reappear in the fourth verse as well, this time harkening back to the Senecan iteration of the tragedy. The image of Love nourishing the soul with a sweet poison ("nudrisci l'alme d'un dolce veleno") recalls the nurse in Seneca's *Phaedra* admonishing the queen that "qui blandiendo dulce nutrivit malum, / sero recusat ferre quod subiit iugum" (vv. 133-4).[70] The speech of the nurse looks forward to the transformation that will befall Iulio: prior to falling under the yoke of love, Iulio was, in the words of Phaedra's *nutrix*, "tutus ac victor."[71]

In this same invocation, however, the presence of Petrarch looms largely. The "dolce disir" that Love inspires in the second verse of the octave recalls Petrarch's "dolce disio che Amor mi spira." This represents another intriguing association, particularly considering that the Petrarchan poem Poliziano cites falls in the category of those written *after* the death of Laura and, more significantly, Petrarch's sweet desire "menami a morte ch'i' non me n'avveggio (*RVF* CCLXVI. 5-6)."[72] The use of Petrarchan lyric in these lines is thus in keeping with the reference to Euripides in the same verses: together they both emphasize the inherent violence associated with love and the bucolic realm. Sapegno identifies at least twenty Petrarchan references within

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[68] Carducci, 248n; Lines 525-527 of *Hippolytus*. Euripides, *Ten Plays by Euripides*, Trans. Moses Hadas and John McLean, (New York: Bantam Books, 1981) 78. The original Greek reads as follows: "Ἔρως Ἔρως, ὁ κατ᾽ ὀμμάτων / στάζων πόθον, εἰσάγων γλυκεῖαν / ψυχᾷ χάριν οὓς ἐπιστρατεύσῃ" (Euripides, *Children of Heracles; Hippolytus; Andromache; Hecuba*, ed. David Kovacs, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995], 174).
[69] Greene, 158.
[70] Carducci, 248; Seneca, L. Annaeus, *Tragoediae*, ed. Rudolf Peiper & Gustav Richter, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1921) 162. "Whoever at the outset has resisted and routed love, has been safe and conqueror; but whoso by dalliance has fed the sweet torment, too late refuses to bear the accepted yoke."
[71] Seneca, *Tragoediae*, 161.
[72] Petrarca, Francesco, *Rime e Trionfi*, ed. Mario Apollonio and Lina Ferro, (Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 1972), 508.

this one octave, the majority of them stemming from the contrast of "dolce" and "amaro" in the second verse.[73] Instantly Poliziano evokes the sweetness and pain of love of which Petrarch wrote so frequently, and given the importance of Petrarchan lyric to Poliziano, it is hard not to read more into these allusions.

While most of Petrarch's poems that use this contrast speak of the intertwined negative and positive effects of love (which is a theme that Poliziano will explore later in the *Stanze*), two of these components from the *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta*, "Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte" and "I dì miei più leggier che nessun cervo," stand out as significant for Poliziano's epic, for their themes and imagery foreshadow later developments in the *Stanze*. For example, a prefiguration of the *Stanze*'s central metamorphosis (of the deer into the nymph Simonetta) and the resulting love-sick solitude that strikes Iulio appear in the *canzone* "Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte" (*RVF* CXXIX). This poem presents the love-sick Petrarch in an isolated wood constantly seeing natural elements transform into images of his beloved: "e pur nel primo sasso / disegno co la mente il suo bel viso…ne l'acqua chiara e sopra l'erba verde / veduto viva, e nel troncon d'un faggio / e 'n bianca nube" (vv. 28-29; 41-43).[74] In the other component, sonnet CCCXIX, Petrarch compares the fleeting days of his life to the "leggier…cervo" (1), a bucolic image that will be fundamental in the plot of the *Stanze*.[75]

The remainder of the second octave continues this trend of Petrarchan references imbuing Poliziano's lyric with hidden depths. In the third and fourth verses, Poliziano declares that Love

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[73] Sapegno, 9-10. Sapegno cites the same contrast at least ten poems from the RVF: CXXIX.21, CLXIV.10, CLXXIII.5, CLXXV.4, CCV.6, CCX.12, CCXL.2-3, CCXCVI.3, CCCXIX.4, and CCCXXIX.11. Component CLXIV, the sonnet "Or che 'l ciel e la terra e 'l vento tace," is also a literary authority for the use of the verb "pascere" in the third verse of Poliziano's octave. The entire Petrarchan terzina reads as follows: "Così sol d'una chiara fonte viva / move 'l dolce e l'amaro ond'io mi pasco; / una man sola mi risana e punge;" (vv. 9-11; Petrarca, 362).
[74] Petrarca, *Rime e Trionfi*, 311-312.
[75] Petrarca, *Rime e Trionfi*, 583.

feeds on weeping and sighs, nourishing the soul with a sweet venom. The language and imagery are thoroughly Petrarchan; Sapegno correlates Poliziano's use of "pasciti di pianto e di sospiri" with three of Petrarch's sonnets from the *RVF*: "Poi che 'l cammin m'è chiuso di mercede" (*RVF* CXXX.5-6, "pasco 'l cor di sospir, ch'altro non chiede, / e di lagrime vivo"), "Del cibo onde 'l signor mio sempre abonda" (*RVF* CCCXLII.1-2, "Del cibo onde 'l signor mio sempre abonda, / lagrime e doglia, il cor lasso nudrisco"), and "Più volte Amor m'avea già detto: Scrivi" (*RVF* XCIII.14, "ch'i' mi pasco di lagrime").[76] This final allusion strikes as significant considering that the opening line of Petrarch's sonnet links to the focal point of this portion of the *Stanze*, namely the exhortation to or from Love to write.

Already in sonnet CCCXLII we see the continuation of the imagery that Poliziano borrows for his *Stanze*, that of nourishing the soul or heart with a bittersweet sustenance. Though in the fourth verse Poliziano replaces Petrarch's "lagrime e doglia" with a "dolce veneno," this does not negate Petrarch's status as a model for these lines. In fact, the oxymoron of "dolce veneno" (and slight variants) appears twice in the *RVF*.[77] The use of the sonnet "Questa umil fera, un cor di tigre o d'orsa," which has the exact phrasing of "dolce veneno" ("quel ch'io sento al cor gir fra le vene / dolce veneno", *RVF* CLII.7-8) once again reveals the structural and thematic purposes of Poliziano's *contaminatio*. This poem begins with a portrait of Laura, in which Petrarch depicts his beloved as having "un cor di tigre o d'orsa, / che 'n vista umana o 'n forma d'angel vene."[78] The juxtaposition of the tiger and the unearthly beautiful woman also occurs in the *Stanze*, specifically when the nymph Simonetta, catalyst for Iulio's transformation into epic

[76] Sapegno, 9.
[77] Sapegno, 9. This phraseology appears in sonnet CLII.7-8 and the slight variant "dolce *veleno*" appears in the *canzone* "Ben mi credea passer mio tempo omai" (CCVII.83-83, "et ancor non men pento / che di dolce veleno il cor trabocchi.").
[78] Petrarca*, Rime e Trionfi*, 342.

hero, appears during the hunt. Poliziano follows his description of the nymph's metamorphosis ("li apparve / lieta una ninfa, e via la fera sparve"[79]) with the simile of a tigress:

> Ivi tutto ripien di maraviglia
> pur della ninfa mira la figura:
> parli che dal bel viso e da' begli occhi
> una nuova dolcezza al cor gli fiocchi.
> Qual tigre, a cui dalla pietrosa tana
> ha tolto il cacciator li suoi car figli,
> rabbiosa il segue per la selva ircana,
> che tosto crede insanguinar gli artigli;
> poi resta d'uno specchio all'ombra vana,
> all'ombra ch'e suoi nati par somigli;
> e mentre di tal vista s'innamora
> la sciocca, el predator la via divora.[80]

Like the feral hunter of the fable, Iulio is bewitched by a beautiful image and, as a result, allows his prey to become predator. While it is unknown if the first readers of Poliziano's *Stanze* would make such literary associations based solely on the phrase "dolce veneno," there is no doubt that the use and imitation of authorities is more than a question of taste. Regardless of Francesco De Sanctis' dismissive view of Poliziano's poetry as form with no thought to content, a thorough investigation of each reference reveals that each allusion functions as more than aesthetic embellishment: rather the strata of intertextual allusions immediately create a foundation for the poem that consistently foreshadows and underscores important elements which the erudite reader will bear in mind while reading the work.[81] In fact, the selection and use of these literary subtexts will also allow Poliziano to engage in a discourse on the contemplation of beauty similar to that seen in Valla's *De vero bono*.

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[79] Book I, Octave XXXVII.7-8

[80] Book I, Octaves XXXVIII.5-8 – XXXIX.1-8. As Sapegno notes, the story of the tiger is a common simile found in many Latin poets and, most notably for students of Poliziano, in the poetry of Lorenzo de' Medici (Selve, II ss): "'Siccome il cacciator che i cari figli Astutamente al fero tigre fura; E benchè innanzi assai campo gli pigli, La fiera più veloce di natura Quasi già il giunge e insaguina gli artigli, Ma veggendo la sua propria figura nello specchio che trova in sull'arena, Crede sia il figlio e il corso suo raffrena'" (Sapegno, 36-37).

[81] De Sanctis, Francesco, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, Ed. Luigi Rosso, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1960) 369.

Furthermore, the *contaminatio* of this second octave highlights Poliziano's other linguistic intent of the *Stanze*, specifically the elevation and promotion of the vernacular. As Sapegno rightly notes, in addition to Petrarch, Poliziano utilized the images and expressions of many classical Latin poets. The result is a piece of poetry that is not wholly original but rather the clever interweaving of multiple references into a "new" text.[82] Alongside the intimations of Vergil, Seneca, and Ovid, however, there is an overwhelming number of references to the Italian love poetry tradition, most of them taken from the premier poets of recent memory.[83] The opposition of *dolce* and *amaro*, for example, also appear in the *canzone* "Quando Amor" by Cino da Pistoia: "Questa troppo mia dolce e amara vita" (v.11).[84] Likewise, Poliziano's portrayal of Love as the agent that elevates his followers ("gentil fai divenir ciò che tu miri, / né può star cosa vil drento al tuo seno;") has clear Dantesque undertones. The most famous poems from the *Vita nuova*, "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore" (*Vita Nuova* XIX), "Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore" (*Vita Nuova* XXI), and "Tanto gentile tanto onesta pare" (*Vita Nuova* XXVI) all contain the similar related concepts of a Love that ennobles its subjects by looking upon them and is incapable of existing near base creatures.[85] These references are not ornamental; on the contrary

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[82] Sapegno, 10. "Tutta l'ottava è intessuta di immagini ed espressioni dei lirici antichi e specialmente del Petrarca; è una trama di luoghi comuni."

[83] Carducci, 248; Sapegno, 9. The image of feeding on tears and sighs is also present in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (X.75). In addition to the Senecan reference noted above, the "dolce veneno" of the fourth verse has antecedents in Vergil's use of "Fallasque veneno" in book I of the *Aeneid* (v. 688).

[84] Sapegno, 9.

[85] Sapegno, 9-10. The reader should not equate Poliziano's view of Love with that of Dante, particularly considering that Dante's notions of love in the *Vita nuova* are intrinsically linked to the figure of Beatrice and to divine love. Regardless, the similarities in language and imagery are clear. In the *canzone* "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore" Dante describes those in contact with divine Beatrice as "qual soffrisse di starla a vedere / diverria nobil cosa, o si morria" (XIX). In the sonnet of chapter XXI, Beatrice, imbued with love, is portrayed thus: ""Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore / per che si fa gentil ciò ch'ella mira" (XXI). Finally, the first quatrain of the sonnet "Tanto gentile tanto onesta pare" concludes with the idea of one so ennobled by love that "li occhi no l'ardiscon di guardare" (*Vita nuova* XXVI; Alighieri, Dante, *Opere minori di Dante Alighieri*, vol. 2, edited by Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti, Sergio Cechhin, Angelo

they serve the same purpose that the closing portion of Poliziano's later Latin poem, *Nutricia*, serves: they create a chain of poets that connects the great classical bards to those of the modern age.[86] The use of "gentil", for example, is not limited to Dante. Crystallized within this one word, and the concept surrounding it, is a brief history of Italian love poetry, beginning with Guinizelli and the *stilnovisti*, then leading to Dante, to Petrarch, to Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione*, and to two very significant contemporary texts: Luigi Pulci's *Giostra di Lorenzo* (1468) and the poetry of the Magnifico himself, before concluding with the *Stanze* as a rightful member of their group.[87] Though Lorenzo de'Medici describes the eyes of his lady, the language is almost verbatim with Poliziano's verse: "fan gentil ogni cosa che li miri."[88] These references to Lorenzo, both in word and in deed, are doubly important, for not only do they underscore Poliziano's implicit ennobling of vernacular poetry, specifically Lorenzo's, but they also prepare the reader for the following octaves which celebrate Lorenzo and the Medici family.

The exhortation to Love continues into the third octave. Here, by contrast, the language of ruling that Poliziano deploys in the first four verses – that is the verses leading up to the transition from Love to the Medici family – is the language of a subject thanking a patron:

> Sostien tu il fascio ch'a me tanto pesa,
> reggi la lingua, Amor, reggi la mano;
> tu principio, tu fin dell'alta impresa,

Jacomuzzi, and Maria Gabriella Stassi [Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1983], 103-105, 109, 128).

[86] Renzo Lo Cascio concurs, stating that in this octave we see a precursor to the "Nutricia," in that through connecting two simple yet potent poetic words Poliziano recalls a history of love and love poetry, encompassing the philosophy of Plato and the erotic verses of Catullus and Sappho all the way to the lyric of Petrarch and Lorenzo de' Medici (Lo Cascio, *Lettura del Poliziano*, 20-21)

[87] Sapegno, 10; Carducci, 248. Sapegno does not give precise examples from the poetry of Guinizelli and the other *stilnovisti* that utilizes this concept of the *gentilezza* of love. Guinizelli's poem "Al cor gentil rempaira sempre amore" establishes this trope of the reciprocity between love and the noble-souled lady. The sonnet "Io voglio del ver la mia donna laudare" continues this theme, adding to it the idea that no one base can exist near it: "e sì gentile / ch' abassa orgoglio a cui dona salute…e non 'lle po' apressare om che sia vile" (Guinizelli, Guido).

[88] De' Medici, Lorenzo, *Tutte le opere*, vol. 1, ed. Paolo Orvieto, (Salerno, Roma, 1992), 415.

tuo fia l'onor, s'io già non prego invano;
di', signor, con che lacci da te presa
fu l'alta mente del baron toscano
più gioven figlio della etrusca Leda,
che reti furno ordite a tanta preda.[89]

While Love is the focus, Lorenzo and the Medici rule are understood in these lines. For Poliziano, Love, like the prince of Florence, lifts the burden through his patronage. He literally rules ("reggi") Poliziano's tongue and hand, and he, like the *giostra* that Poliziano seeks to memorialize, is the beginning and the end of this poetic endeavor. Most importantly, Poliziano through the *Stanze* will honor his ruler through his poetic inspiration. Equating Lorenzo de' Medici with the god of love once again moves this tribute into the hybrid space of epic and pastoral. The line "tu principio, tu fin dell'alta impresa," for example, contains allusions to both leaders of men in battle and to the gods in the pastoral realm. For the former, the authority is Homer, specifically the words of Nestor addressing Agamemnon in the ninth book of the *Iliad*: "'Son of Atreus, most lordly and king of men, Agamemnon, / with you I will end, with you I will make my beginning."[90] A tribute to the king of the gods, Jove, occurs in this same line. Vergil's pastoral poetry, the *Eclogues*, is the authority here rather than the epic *Aeneid*: "Ab Iove principium, Musae; Iovis omnia plena."[91] It is only fitting that this scene from the third *Eclogue* centers on the beginning of a poetic duel between the shepherds Damoetas and Menalcas.

Epic and pastoral, history and myth all continue to collide in the concluding four lines of the octave. The appeal to the god in the fourth verse to speak of how he captured Iulio in his snares recalls, in theme if not in exact language, the first book of Vergil's *Aeneid*, in which the

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[89] Book I, Octave III, lines 1-8.
[90] Carducci, 249; Homer, *Iliad*, Trans. Richmond Lattimore, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951) 200. The original Greek reads as follows: "'Ἀτρεΐδη κύδιστε ἄναξ ἀνδρῶν Ἀγάμεμνον /ἐν σοὶ μὲν λήξω, σέο δ' ἄρξομαι" (Homer, *Homeri Opera*, vol. 1, ed. D.B. Monro and Thomas W. Allen, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1912), 197.
[91] Carducci, 249; Sapegno, 10; From the third eclogue, line 60 in Vergil, 9.

poet appeals to the muse to "mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso / quidve dolens, regina deum tot volvere casus / insignem pietate virum, tot adire labores / impulerit" (I.8-11).[92] Like Aeneas, Iulio is forced to deviate from his planned course of life through the machinations of an angered deity. The epic allusions do not stand alone, for, as in the first octave, Poliziano injects the standard tropes of epic poems with elements of the pastoral. Notably, in place of an enraged Juno or Poseidon instigating the lengthy sea voyages of Aeneas and Odysseus, it is Love who ensnares the hero. The language is that of hunters and fishers: Iulio is "preda," captured by Love ("da te presa") using snares ("lacci") and nets ("reti"). Poliziano maintains the interaction of pastoral and epic through the use of mythical references. Figures of epic poetry, for example, continue to pervade the octave. Poliziano rechristens Lucrezia Tornabuoni, mother of Lorenzo and Giuliano, as the Etruscan Leda, instantly recalling three important figures of Homeric epic: Helen and the twins Castor and Pollux.[93] Though stemming from the epic tradition, elements of pastoral are present in this usage, for, as Lo Cascio contends, the term "etrusca" further distances the historical events of the joust from reality, moving it into the mythical realm.[94]

Historical reference returns at the start of the fourth octave, as the poet's invocation focuses in on the person of Lorenzo de' Medici. In boldly identifying Lorenzo in the first verse of this stanza as the "ben nato Laur, sotto il cui velo / Fiorenza lieta in pace si riposa", Poliziano exposes the structural and thematic intent behind the previous two octaves. In essence, the encomium to Love that dominated those stanzas was but a prelude to invocation of the true muse of the work, Lorenzo himself, who by means of his leadership, patronage, and poetic ingenuity not only rivals but surpasses the god. The second octave presented Love through the lens of

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[92] Vergil, 36.
[93] Helen names her siblings to Priam in the third book of the *Iliad*, when the aged king asks the lady to identify the great warriors of the Achaean host for him.
[94] Lo Cascio, *Lettura del Poliziano*, 27.

centuries of poetic inspiration, predominantly the Petrarchan tradition; the third octave re-introduced the god as a ruler presiding over his subjects, guiding their course of life both poetically (Poliziano) and civically (Giuliano). By invoking Lorenzo as the "ben nato Laur" in the first verse of the octave, Poliziano in one epithet fuses together both of these images of Love. The allegory of the laurel tree has numerous classical and Petrarchan allusions, harkening back to the poet's quest for literary fame and the enduring love of Laura. Furthermore, as a symbol of literary fame, the laurel becomes immortal. Poliziano reminds the reader that the laurel tree was impervious even to the wrath of Jove: "non teme…Giove irato in vista piú crucciosa." Thus the association of Lorenzo with the laurel also makes explicit the prince's infallibility as a ruler.

Of greater import to Poliziano, and even to Lorenzo, is the association of the laurel tree with the loftiest achievements of poetry. In the praise of Lorenzo, this attribute is twofold in nature: Poliziano underscores that Lorenzo is the great patron of the arts and a formidable poet.[95] As a patron of the poetic arts, Lorenzo shares even more in common with the depiction of Love in the second and third octaves, a fact made clear by the repetition of language and concepts from these passages. Continuing the arboreal imagery, Poliziano beseeches Lorenzo to "accogli all'ombra del tuo santo stelo / la voce umil, tremante e paurosa," thus echoing his plea to Love in the second stanza to "porgi or la mano al mio basso intelletto." Moreover, Lorenzo, like the god of Love in the third octave, is the "causa, o fin di tutte le mie voglie." In the final verse of the octave, Poliziano binds together the patron with the poet, noting that all his poetic desires "sol vivon d'odor delle tuo foglie." The use of "foglie" continues the allegory with which the octave opened, and, significantly, alludes to the pages ("fogli") of Lorenzo's poems. Poliziano's poetic

[95] The dual nature of Lorenzo de' Medici's relationship to poetry returns later in Poliziano's poem "Ambra". There, too, Poliziano praises his ruler for both his patronage and for his own poetic endeavors.

existence, therefore, according to his encomium, is bound to the patronage of Lorenzo the prince and to the imitation of Lorenzo the poet.

Poliziano emphasizes implicitly another point in his praise of the prince: the elevation of vernacular poetry. The "foglie" from which Poliziano claims to draw strength are explicitly those of Lorenzo, who wrote his sonnets in the vernacular and encouraged members of his circle to follow suit. Moreover, in this octave, the language of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* reigns supreme. This placement is significant particularly when compared with the overabundance of classical references in the preceding octaves. Such a championing of the *volgare* poetry and its authors again leads the poet and reader back to Lorenzo, who expressed these views in his *Comento de' miei sonetti*:

> "Resta adunque solamente rispondere alla obiezzione che potessi essere fatta avendo scritto in lingua vulgare, secondo il giudicio di qualcuno non capace o degna d'alcuna excellente materia e subietto…E però, volendo provare la degnità della lingua nostra, solamente dobbiamo…vedere se la lingua nostra facilmente exprime qualunque concetto della nostra mente; e a questo nessuna migliore ragione si può introducere che l'experienza. Dante, il Petrarch e il Boccaccio, nostri poeti fiorentini, hanno, nelli gravi e dolcissimi versi e orazioni loro mostro assai chiaramente ogni senso…Chi negherà nel Petrarch trovarsi uno stile grave, lepido e dolce, e queste cose amorose con tanta gravità e venustà trattate, quanta sanza dubbio non si truova in Ovidio, Tibullo, Catullo, Properzio o alcuno altro latino?"[96]

The "experience" of vernacular, and predominately Tuscan, poetry promoted by Lorenzo is put into poetic practice as his subject offers him homage. Read thusly, the *contaminatio* and the content of this stanza suggest that Poliziano adds a third level of tribute for his leader: patron, poet, and language philosopher.

[96] De' Medici, Lorenzo, vol. 1, 364-368.

Fashioning characters from subtexts: Iulio and Simonetta

Notwithstanding the advocacy of the common tongue and recent love poetry as worthy guides, Poliziano does not abandon the touches of classical epic and pastoral poetry that colored the opening lines of his poem. On the contrary, as the *Stanze* continues, Poliziano touches upon some of the most common plot points of epic poetry, but, as before, tinged with pastoral imagery. The formal presentation of Iulio, octaves seven through eleven, is one such moment. After bringing his invocation of Love and Lorenzo to a close, in the seventh octave Poliziano returns to the subject of the *incipit*, declaring once more, with language echoing the *Aeneid*'s famous opening, that he will sing of "l'amor di Iulio e l'armi."[97] Also of note in this octave is the figure to whom Poliziano addresses his words: Achilles. It is not the shade of the great warrior that Poliziano wishes to appease, obliquely referencing how he abandoned his Latin translation of Homer's *Iliad* in favor of writing the *Stanze*, but the figure of Achilles as a lover: [98]

E se qua su la fama el ver rimbomba,
che la figlia di Leda, o sacro Achille,
poi che 'l corpo lasciasti intro la tomba,
t'accenda ancor d'amorose faville.[99]

[97] The intertwining of these two figures continues in the fifth and sixth cantos. Though Poliziano declared himself to be "sempre suggetto" of Love in the second stanza, in the fifth he declares a similar allegiance to Lorenzo: "lo spirto delle membra, che devote / ti fuor da' fati insin già dalla cuna." The tree imagery with which Poliziano identified his patron also resurfaces in the close of the invocation. Poliziano, like a bird, has "posto il nido in tuo [Lorenzo] felice ligno," seeking not only protection but inspiration. By residing among the Medici prince, Poliziano prays that he "di roco augel diventi un bianco cigno." The swan imagery is equally of note in this passage for it will return as a powerful image in the "Nutricia." Finally, though the poem has finally shifted its focus to the proposed hero, Poliziano does not forget his patron. Rather, he introduces Iulio using the same tree metaphor that is now forcefully linked to Lorenzo: "lo glorioso tuo fratel cantiamo…il chiaro sangue e di secondo ramo."

[98] Sapegno records that Poliziano began his translation of the Homeric epic into Latin in 1469 and left the work unfinished around 1475, or possibly a bit after (Sapegno, 14). See also Lo Cascio, *Lettura del Poliziano*, 33-34.

[99] Book I, Octave VII, lines 1-4.

This particular story of the posthumous marriage of Achilles and Helen is not Homeric in origin. Instead the source materials that form the basis of this account, stemming mostly from the Hellenistic mythographers such as Lycophron's *Alexandria* and Ptolemaeus Hephaestionis' *New History*, further exhibits Poliziano's rigorous study of ancient texts (no doubt pursued in the course of his translation of the *Iliad*).[100] Poliziano's choice of which version of Achilles to highlight bears light on the character of Iulio and the tone of the *Stanze*, for the epic hero becomes an exemplar of the glory of battle and the glory of love.[101]

Beyond these implicit associations, Iulio does share some attributes with the Homeric hero. Like the oft-used epithet for Achilles – "swift-footed" – Poliziano repeatedly emphasizes Iulio's speed, declaring that the youth "a correr contendea co' venti" (VIII.8). During the hunt, Iulio demonstrates great dexterity with the spear ("or fea ronzar per l'aere un lento dardo," IX.3), a weapon choice that further links him to the leader of the spear-fighting Myrmidons."[102] Furthermore, the two heroes share a love of the lyre: in the ninth book of the *Iliad*, the embassy

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[100] Poliziano, Angelo, *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*, Ed. David Quint, 5n. Written in allegorical language, Lycophron lists the five spouses of Helen, of which Achilles is the last: "And the fifth she shall cause to pine upon his bed, distracted by her phantom face in his dreams; the husband to be of the stranger-frenzies lady of Cyta; even him whom one day the exile from Oenone fathered, turning into men the six-footed host of ants, – the Pelasgian Typhon, out of seven sons consumed in the flame alone escaping the fiery ashes" [ἐν δὲ δεμνίοις / τὸν ἐξ ὀνείρων πέμπτον ἐστροβημένον / εἰδωλοπλάστῳ προσκαταξανεῖ ῥέθει, /τὸν μελλόνυμφον εὐνέτην Κυταϊκῆς, / τῆς ξεινοβάκχης, ὅν ποτ᾽ Οἰνώνης φυγάς, / μύρμων τὸν ἐξάπεζον ἀνδρώσας στρατόν, / Πελασγικὸν Τυφῶνα γεννᾶται πατήρ, / ἀφ᾽ ἑπτὰ παίδων φεψάλῳ σποδουμένων /μοῦνον φλέγουσαν ἐξαλύξαντα σποδόν, 171-179] (Callimachus, *Hymns and Epigrams. Lycophron. Aratus,* trans. A. W. Mair & G. R. Mair, Loeb Classical Library Volume 129. [London: William Heinemann, 1921], 508-509).

[101] Lo Cascio in particular notes the analogous treatment of Achilles and Iulio, contending that "il fatto che [Poliziano] si rivolga all'eroe omerico in nome di un mito amoroso anche ricordato nell' «Ambra»" renders Achilles "un esemplare personaggio in cui amore e prodezza s'incontrano." In Lo Cascio's view, "amore e prodezza" are the focal points of the joust itself and Poliziano in his celebration of it (Lo Cascio, *Lettura del Poliziano,* 34-35; 18-19). Noteworthy too is the reference to Achilles' musical prowess. This will be of greater significance in the "Ambra," in which Poliziano equates the relationship of Achilles and Homer – inspiration and patron – with that of Poliziano and Lorenzo.

[102] Achilles' weapon of choice, as we see in the *Iliad*, is the spear: ἐγχεσιμώρους. This reference to the Myrmidons that fight with the spear comes from book III of the *Odyssey*, line 188 (Homer, *Opera*, vol. 3, ed. D.B. Monro and Thomas W. Allen, [Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1912]).

to Achilles finds the hero "delighting in his heart in a lyre…With this he was pleasuring his heart, and singing of men's fame, as Patroklos was sitting over against him."[103] Poliziano evokes a similar scene in his depiction of Iulio, recounting how the prince would return home after the hunt "e 'n compagnia delle nove sorelle

> celesti versi con disio cantava,
> e d'antica virtú mille fiammelle
> con gli alti carmi ne' petti destava[104]

One last affinity between the ill-fated son of Peleus and Iulio, is the strong presentiment of an unfortunate end. Though the *Iliad* concludes with the victory of Achilles, numerous characters hint at his fated death, casting a pall over the hero. Poseidon admonishes Aeneas to hold back from fighting Achilles, stating that "once Achilleus has fulfilled his death and destiny, then take courage, and go on, and fight with their foremost."[105] Poliziano hints at Iulio's bitter destiny multiple times in the poem's preamble, noting again in the description of Iulio that the prince "viveasi…gagliardo / né pensando al suo fato acerbo e diro, / né certo ancor de' suo' futuri pianti" (IX.6-7). This ignorance on the part of Iulio, however, separates Poliziano's hero from his Homeric precursor. Achilles appears to be aware of his fate, for, when consoling the grieving Priam in the final book of the *Iliad*, he remarks on gifts and ills sent to his father from the gods, bestowing upon him an immortal wife and yet "there was not any generation of strong sons born to him in his great house but a single all-untimely child."[106]

While the general themes found in these octaves show the influence of epic poetry on Poliziano's *Stanze per la giostra*, the language and imagery employed betray a powerful affinity with pastoral poetry. In order to present Iulio and to begin the narrative of the *Stanze*, Poliziano

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[103] Book IX.186-190 from Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, 203.
[104] Book I, Octave XI, lines 3-5.
[105] Book XX.331-338 from Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, 413.
[106] Book XXIV.534-540 from Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, 489.

paints his hero with characteristics found in Euripides' *Hippolytus* and a few figures from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[107] As Poliziano explores the prince's naivety and disdain towards love, the *contaminatio* and content again work in concert to further emphasize the mythical, rustic theme. The young hunter who "solea gabbarsi delli afflitti amanti" evokes the eponymous hunter of Euripides' *Hippolytus*. Just as Hippolytus "spurns love and will have nothing to do with sex" instead honoring Diana and consorting "with her continually in the green forests, clearing away the beasts of the earth with his swift dogs, pursuing more than mortal companionship," so too does Iulio comport himself in the *Stanze*.[108] Poliziano recounts how the arrogant ("altero," IX.2) youth Iulio spent his days "dando sovente a fere agro martiro" (IX.4), and making his home in the forest ("facea sovente pe' boschi soggiorno," X.5). He spurned love completely, "chiamando amor lascivia umana" (XI.7), preferring, like Hippolytus, to devote himself to the chaste deities, such as Diana ("si godea con le Muse o con Diana," XI.8). Additionally, both Hippolytus and Iulio anger a god of Love. Hippolytus' disdain draws the ire of Aphrodite who then seeks retribution, and Iulio equally enrages Cupid.

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[107] As an authority, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* offers both ample material for imitation and a text that is kindred to the *Stanze*. Like Poliziano's epic, the *Metamorphoses* is a curious text that brings together past and present with the hopes of making a "continuous" poem ("ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen" *Met.* I.4). E. J. Kenney also picks up on Ovid's use of the word "perpetuum" in this verse, noting that it complicates the sense of a continual poem, for it "must also be read in the technical literary sense as connoting orthodox epic. That, however, contradicts the further implication of *deducite*, that the poem, when 'brought down', that is finished, will be a *deductum carmen* in another sense, the 'fine-spun', unpretending – in a word, *unepic* – kind of poetry written by Callimachus…What sort of poem is this which thus, obliquely and by way of verbal paradox, apparently subscribes to two incompatible poetics, will remain to be seen" (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Trans. A. D. Melville, Introduction E. J. Kenney [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986] xv).

[108] The characterization of Iulio also promotes the most explicit intention of the poet, namely to create Medici propaganda: more than great civic leaders, Lorenzo and Giuliano were, by their station and their ability, nearly gods. As Jeanie Grant Moore observes, "the rural was traditionally, of course, the land feudal aristocrat, and a poem located in this milieu takes on aristocratic tones from the setting…The picture of Giuliano…riding out to hunt with his friends in the countryside and then associating with the pastoral gods not only links him to aristocratic pursuits and marks the territory of his dominance, but it also transports him to the realm of the superhuman" (Moore, 11).

Based on the language of the text, Hippolytus is not alone as a model for Iulio. Touches of Narcissus and Daphne from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* also color the image of the Medici prince.[109] In the tenth octave, Poliziano focuses on the indifference of Iulio towards the nymphs of the wood:

> Ah quante ninfe per lui sospirono!
> Mu fu sí altero sempre il giovinetto
> che mai le ninfe amanti nol piegorno
> mai poté riscaldarsi il freddo petto[110]

This is, in essence, an Italian recapitulation of an Ovidian passage from the story of Narcissus: "multi illum iuvenes, multae cupiere puellae. / Sed fuit in tenera tam dura superbia forma: / nulli illum iuvenes, nullae tetigere puellae" [Many youths and many maidens sought his love; but in that slender form was pride so cold that no youth, no maiden touched his heart].[111] Daphne, too, becomes a model for Iulio. The description of Daphne's rejection of love and potential lovers in particular links her to Iulio and this passage from the *Stanze*: "Multi illam petiere, illa aversata petentes / inpatiens expersque viri nemora avia lustrat, / nec, quid Hymen, quid Amor, quid sint conubia curat."[112] Furthermore, the nymph shares the same qualities as Hippolytus, namely avoiding love and seeking refuge in the woods ("protinus alter amat, fugit altera nomen amantis / silvarum tenebris captivarumque ferarum / exuviis gaudens innuptaeque aemula Phoebes").[113]

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[109] Sapegno, 16-17.
[110] Book I, Octave X, lines 1-4
[111] From Ovid's *Metamorphoses* book III, lines 353-355 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 148-149.
[112] "Many sought her; but she, averse to all suitors, impatient of control and without thought for man, roamed the pathless woods, nor cared at all what Hymen, love, or wedlock might be." From Ovid's *Metamorphoses* book I, lines 478-480 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol 1, ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 36-37.
[113] Miller offers the following translation: "straightaway he burned with love; but she fled the very name of love, rejoicing in the deep fastnesses of the woods, and in the spoils of beasts which she had snared, vying with the virgin Phoebe." From Ovid's *Metamorphoses* book I, lines 474-476 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol 1, ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 34-37.

Once more these associations create a confusing understanding of Iulio as a character. Greene, for example, views Iulio as a tenuous and even unstable figure. Having assumed attributes of these Ovidian models, the reader expects Iulio to undergo some substantial transformation, one that connects a character originally separated from reality to the material world (Narcissus into a flower, Daphne into the laurel tree). In Greene's opinion, Poliziano does not realize this transformation.[114] One aspect that further compounds this tension surrounding Iulio is the knowledge that all these characters – Achilles, Hippolytus, Narcissus and Daphne – are tragic figures that met violent ends. Since a conclusion to the *Stanze* is lacking, one will never know Poliziano's intentions for his hero at the poem's end. Given the celebratory nature of the text, however, it seems unlikely that the author would violently kill his patron's younger brother. Thus, in this instance the *contaminatio*, while expertly evoking the pastoral realm, works against the narrative of the text, leaving the reader with a complicated hero and hints at a tragic end that will never be resolved.

In these passages introducing Iulio, the promotion of pastoral poetry and the promotion of vernacular Italian appear to coincide. Considering the overwhelming presence of classical themes and allusions, it is significant that Poliziano draws on the language of Petrarch's poetry to present his hero and set the scene. This is apparent in the start of the eighth octave, in which Poliziano boldy appropriates well-known Petrarchan verses to introduce his hero. Little distinguishes Poliziano's depiction of Iulio's youth ("nel vago tempo di sua verde etade /

[114] Regardless if the work remained finished or not, it is these blendings of Ovidian precursors with Hippolytus in the creation of Iulio that leaves Greene with the conclusion that the *Stanze* are unresolved. That Iulio lacks the grand metamorphosis that is central to Ovid's poem, these "antecedents can only underscore the absence of a resolution in the *Stanze* comparable to those of the *Metamorphoses*. In the fates of Narcissus and Daphne, as in those of so many other Ovidian figures, the metamorphosis out of the human represents doubtless a loss but nonetheless a solution that integrates the creature into a dynamic, living cosmos. But in the *Stanze* this integration is lacking" (Greene, 159).

spargendo ancor pel volto il primo fiore," VIII.1) from Petrarch's reference to his own inexperienced youth, such as in the first two verses of *canzone* XXIII of the *RVF* ("Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade, / che nascer vide, ed ancor quasi in erba") and in the opening verse of sonnet CCCXV ("Tutta la mia fiorita e verde etade").[115] The substitution of "vago" for Petrarch's "dolce", does more than separate Poliziano's verse from his authority. Rather, as Sapegno contends, this particular word immediately transports the reader to the realm of pastoral long before introducing the references to Hippolytus, Narcissus and Daphne. [116] Poliziano's use of "vago," with it mixed senses of wandering, desirous, and graceful, connotes a mythical realm of love poetry removed from reality. It also ties the poet and poem to the Florentine literary tradition. Petrarch's sonnet "Vago augelletto che cantando vai," Dante's siren in *Purgatorio* who declares that she "volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago," and the numerous referenes to the "vaghe donne" in Boccaccio's *Decameron* all coexist in Poliziano's use of the term.[117]

Iulio himself is "vago" in the sense that he is a wanderer, not yet tied to the Medici splendor that his elder brother has already achieved. Such is the understanding that Poliziano intends to convey through the *contaminatio* found within the hero's praise of the rustic life. After

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[115] Petrarca, 92; 579; Sapegno, 14.

[116] Such is the analysis of Sapegno in his notes to the *Stanze*. The term "vago" is enough to "imprimere a tutta la frase un sapore e un suono nuovo: dopo l'introduzione rettorica, ha qui inizio la parte veramente poetica delle *Stanze*, e subito il lettore è transportato in un mondo di favola remota. Fin da ora appare chiaro il carattere fondamentale della poesia del Poliziano che trasfigura i dati realistici allontanandoli nello spazio e nel tempo, proiettandoli in un'atmosfera mitica." The literary allusions, both Latin and Italian, only add to the idyllic and atemporal feel of this poem (Sapegno, 14-15).

[117] In his notes to Petrarch's sonnet, Mario Apollonio maintains that "vago" primarily means "one who wanders" but this does not "escludersi…insieme con questo, il senso di 'leggiadro'" (Petrarca, 642n). Similarly the use of "vago" in Dante's text has divided the critics with regards to its meaning. Hollander notes that the commentators are evenly divided, "with more early ones opting for *vago* as modifying *cammin* (and meaning 'wandering, indirect'), and more modern ones, beginning with Torraca (comm. to these lines), believing that it modifies Ulysses (and means 'eager')" (Alighieri, Dante, *Purgatorio*, ed. and trans. Jean and Robert Hollander, [New York: Doubleday/Anchor, 2003], 396).

he thoroughly excoriated love and the pitiful fools that bend themselves under its yoke in a lengthy invective against Cupid, Iulio ends his diatribe with a praise of the rural life:

Quanto è piú dolce, quanto è piú securo
seguir le fere fugitive in caccia
fra boschi antichi fuor di fossa o muro,
e spirar lor covil per lunga traccia!
Veder la valle e 'l colle e l'aer piú puro,
l'erbe e' fior, l'acqua viva chiara e ghiaccia!
Udir li augei svernar, rimbombar l'onde,
e dolce al vento mormorar le fronde![118]

As in previous octaves, Poliziano borrows themes and imagery from the classical poets, and weaves these elements together with explicit lexical references to recent vernacular poetry. Sapegno holds that here Poliziano reproduces sentiments from Vergil's *Georgics* and Horace's *Epodes.*[119] The passage from Vergil is, interestingly, the same piece that Valla utilized on multiple occasions in his *De voluptate*: the close of the second book of the *Georgics*, in which the poet concludes his lengthy discussion of agricultural practices and the struggle against the elements to dominate the land with a paean to the rustic life, far removed from civilization: "O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint, / agricolos! quibus ipsa procul discordibus armis / fundit humo facilem victum iustissima tellus…at secura quies et nescia fallere vita, / dives opum variarum, at latis otia fundis – / speluncae vivique lacus et frigida Tempe…illic saltus ac lustra ferarum."[120] As seems to be a common occurrence in the *Stanze*, by borrowing the imagery and ideas of Vergil, as Poliziano so clearly did in this passage, the poet emphasizes the narrative themes already in development through said borrowing. As formerly seen in Valla's dialogue,

[118] Book I, Octave XVII, lines 1-8
[119] Sapegno, 21.
[120] From book 2 of the *Georgics* lines 458-471 in Vergil, 191-192. L.P. Wilkinson offers this English translation: "How lucky, if they know their happiness, / Are farmers, more than lucky, they for whom, / Far from the clash of arms, the earth herself, / Most fair in dealing, freely lavishes / An easy livelihood…Yet peace they have and a life of innocence / Rich in variety; they have for leisure / Their ample acres, caverns, living lakes, / Cool Tempês…Coverts of game are there / And glades" in Virgil, *The Georgics*, trans. L.P. Wilkinson, (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 91-92.

Poliziano too makes use of the *Georgics* in order to offer to the reader the proper way to interpret this part of the *Stanze*.

Critics often read the *Georgics* as an allegory of civic life: the ability to tame the wilds of the land becomes analogous to the ruler's ability to tame the wilds of civic strife.[121] The tone of the second book of the *Georgics*, particularly in this ode to the bucolic, suggests that Vergil the poet wishes to disengage himself from the difficulties of civic life by adjourning to the countryside. [122] The farmer is blest, Vergil continues, for he is not touched by "populi fasces, non purpura regum…et infidos agitans discordia frates / aut coniurato descedens Dacus ab Histro, / non res Romanae perituraque regna; neque ille / aut doluit miserans inopem aut invidit habenti."[123] Consequently, although this octave of the *Stanze* contains no mention of the city and princely duties, the astute reader by means of the Vergilian authority understands such an association in Iulio's rejection of love and advocacy of rural life.

The inclusion of references to Horace's text complicates this understanding, underscoring the fallacy of such a viewpoint. In the second poem of his *Epodes*, Horace, too, extolled the simple life utilizing similar imagery and opinions. The speaker in this poem longed for distance from commerce rather than civic discord: "Beatus ille qui procul negotiis, / ut prisca gens

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[121] Gale, Monica, "Poetry and the Backward Glance in Virgil's 'Georgics' and 'Aeneid,' *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 133: 2 (Autumn, 2003), 328-329.

[122] This is Monica Gale's reading of these lines in the second book of the *Georgics*. If the entire work can be read as an allegory of civic life, than the close of the second book suggests that Vergil advocates "instead a withdrawal into the private world of self-sufficient calm, embodied here in the just and peaceful life of the farmer. Here poet and statesman stand at furthest remove from each other, the latter associated with the violence and corruption of urban life, the former with the self-control and carefree tranquility of the humble farmer or the Epicurean sage" (Gale, 330).

[123] From book 2 of the *Georgics* lines 495-499 in Vergil, 192. Wilkinson's translation reads: "The fasces, nor the purple robes of kings, / Nor treacherous feuds of brother against brother / Disturb him, not the Danube plotting raids / Of Dacian tribesmen, nor the affairs of Rome / And crumbling kingdoms, nor the grievous sight / Of poor to pity and rich to envy" (Virgil, *The Georgics*, trans. L.P. Wilkinson, 93).

mortalium, / paterna rura bubus exercet suis / solutus omni faenore."[124] This epode also embraces the solace found in the beauty and simplicity of nature, waxing lyrically about making one's home under trees and on grassy lawns ("libet iacere modo sub antiqua ilice, / modo in tenaci gramine"), all the while enjoying the musical rustling of birds and cascading water ("querentur in Silvis aves / frondesque lymphis obstrepunt manantibus").[125] In the context of the overall epode, however, Horace's speaker reveals himself to be disingenuous: the usurer of the second *Epode* dreams of escaping the evils of commerce in search of a "simpler" life, yet he will ultimately remain a usurer and a hypocritical one at that. The reference to this text thus adds another layer of meaning: Iulio's rejection of the ills of love, much like the usurer's rejection of the ills of commerce, is disingenuous and will be proved as such as the poem continues. Thus, Vergil and Horace's texts lend more than their pastoral imagery to the *Stanze*: they also serve as a primer for how to read this portion of the *Stanze*.

Equally significant in the seventeenth stanza are the lexical references to more modern poets. Petrarch is noticeably absent from the octave, and instead Poliziano makes clear references to Lorenzo de' Medici and Dante Alighieri.[126] The second verse ("seguir le fere fugitive in caccia") reproduces word for word a line from Lorenzo de' Medici's bucolic poem, *Corinto*: "non c'è pastor o più robosto o dotto / a seguir fiere fuggitive in caccia."[127] The allusion to Dante is this passage, while not verbatim, is no less noticeable. Poliziano's description of the ancient woods "fuor di fossa o muro" recalls a similar reference to cities in the *Purgatorio*,

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[124] "Happy the man who, far way from business cares, like the pristine race of mortals, works his ancestral acres with his steers, from all money lending free;" lines 1-4 of the second book of the *Epodes* in Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. C.E. Bennett, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 364-365.
[125] Lines 23-24 and 26-27 of the second book of *Epodes* in Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, 366.
[126] Carducci, 262; Sapegno, 22.
[127] From Lorenzo de' Medici's "Corinto" (lines 83-84) in de' Medici, Lorenzo, *Tutte le opere*, vol. 2, ed. Paolo Orvieto, (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 1992), 866.

"muro e una fossa serra."[128] As with the passages from Vergil and Horace, Poliziano chose these allusions specifically to focus attention on the interplay between his chosen references and his literary intentions.

The words from the *Purgatorio* form part of a lament of the woes befallen Italy in recent ages. Though in no way evocative of the pastoral, these verses of Dante further add to the association between the pastoral realm, or the realm outside of the noxious city, and the rejection of civic strife that Vergil established in the second poem of the *Georgics*.[129] Dante grieves for enslaved Italy which has degraded to a place that is "di dolore ostello / nave senza nocchiere in gran tempesta," whose citizens now "non stanno sanza guerra…e l'uno l'altro si rode / di quei ch'un muro e una fossa serra."[130] Dante's lament thus colors Iulio's invective and praise: in both the world within the "fossa" and "muro" – be it the world of civic strife or of lovers in pain – becomes associated with death. The word "fossa" particularly stresses this point with its dual meaning of "moat" and "tomb."

Given the homage that Poliziano paid to his patron at the beginning of a *Stanze*, such an association between the city and death would be troubling. The inclusion of an overt reference to Lorenzo appears as a counterpoint to the sentiments expressed by Vergil, Horace, and Dante. Lorenzo's *Corinto* is itself a forerunner of Poliziano's *Stanze*. Like his protégé, Lorenzo set the *Corinto* in the pastoral realm, incorporated allusions to classical authors (Vergil, Ovid, Horace, and others) and more contemporary ones (Dante, Petrarch), and blended these references together to create the natural and playful tone of the poem for which the Laurentian circle was famous. This suggests that the allusion to Lorenzo's text underscores the delusion inherent in

[128] Canto 6, line 84 in Aligheri, Dante, *Purgatorio*, 112.
[129] It is worth noting that this aside regarding the sorrows of Italy follows the meeting of Virgilio and his fellow Mantuan, Sordello.
[130] Canto 6, lines 76-84 in Alighieri, Dante, *Purgatorio,* 112.

Iulio's words: hardly a source of strife, the city is now at peace due to the beneficent presence of so learned a ruler. It therefore follows that love is not a source of strife either. The subtexts of these references seem to work in concert to direct the reader's understanding of the text. They are in dialogue with each other, adding different layers of meaning and balancing each other out.

Poliziano makes manifest this interplay between various literary subtexts as he returns to the narrative of the *Stanze*. While Poliziano's lyrical descriptions of Iulio and of the rustic world of mythical Tuscany call for the lyricism found in texts that are amorous or pastoral in nature, the poet always returns to the epic genre to signal new developments or scene changes in the poem. After Iulio's lengthy digression on the joys of the countryside and the golden age that it evokes – subject matter at the very heart of pastoral – Poliziano returns forcefully to the epic narrative structure to set in motion the heroic journey of Iulio. This scene change comes in the form of the prayer to the god which triggers the action of the narrative. As already indicated, Iulio's lengthy invective against love does not go unnoticed by Cupid. One of the miserable lovers angered by Iulio's contempt sends prayers for retribution, and the god of Love hears him:

> ma qualche miserello, a cui l'ardente
> fiamme struggeano i nervi tutti quanti,
> gridava al ciel: «Giusto sdegno ti muova,
> Amor, che costui creda almen per pruova.»
> Né fu Cupido sordo al pio lamento[131]

The prayer to the gods is a common plot device in the epic genre, particularly within the Homeric tradition. The action of the *Iliad* is predicated upon the angry prayer of Chryses, seeking justice for the theft of his daughter at the hands of Agamemnon.[132] The priest of Apollo calls upon his patron god asking him that "'if ever it pleased your heart that I built your temple…then bring to pass this wish I pray for: let your arrows make the Danaans pay for my

[131] Book I, Octave XXII lines 5-8 to Octave XXIII line 1.
[132] Lo Cascio, *Lettura del Poliziano*, 60.

tears shed.' So he spoke in prayer, and Phoibos Apollo heard him."[133] The *Odyssey*, too, features a prayer that sets the hero's journey in motion.[134] Seeking justice for the trick played upon him by Odysseus, the Cyclops Polyphemus calls out to his father Poseidon, asking "if truly I am your son, and you acknowledge yourself as my father, grant that Odysseus, sacker of cities, may never reach that home…So spoke he in prayer, and the dark-haired god heard him."[135] Cupid's response in the following octaves also has an epic precursor. The god's series of rhetorical questions ("'Dunque non sono idio? dunque è già spento / mie foco con che il mondo tutto accendo?'" XIII. 3-4) recall the words of Juno as she devised her plan to steer Aeneas from his rightful course ("'mene incepto desistere victam / nec posse Italia Teucrorum avertere regnum?'").[136]

Homeric epic is not alone as source material in this octave, for Poliziano dips once more into the well of pastoral. The brevity and language of the prayer reveals the continued influence of the Narcissus story in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Poliziano's *miserello* who in his ardent agony

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[133] *Iliad*. I. 39-42. Homer, *Iliad*. Trans. Richmond Lattimore, 60; The language of this prayer ("εἴ ποτέ τοι χαρίεντ᾽ ἐπὶ νηὸν ἔρεψα, /…, τὸ δέ μοι κρήηνον ἐέλδωρ: / τίσειαν Δαναοὶ ἐμὰ δάκρυα σοῖσι βέλεσσιν. / ὣς ἔφατ᾽ εὐχόμενος, τοῦ δ᾽ ἔκλυε Φοῖβος Ἀπόλλων") recurs with slight variations later on the the same book when Chryses beseeches Apollo to lift the plague in lines 451-457 (Homer, *Opera*, vol. 1, 2).

[134] While the adversary's prayer for vengeance is similarly worded, there is a notable variant between this poem and its predecessor: like the introduction of Odysseus, Homer displaces the prayer from the poem's *incipit*, to the start of his hero's account of his many wanderings in the ninth book.

[135] *Odyssey*. IX.519-522 ("τοῦ γὰρ ἐγὼ πάϊς εἰμί, πατὴρ δ᾽ ἐμὸς εὔχεται εἶναι. / αὐτὸς δ᾽, αἴ κ᾽ ἐθέλῃσ᾽, ἰήσεται, οὐδέ τις ἄλλος /οὔτε θεῶν μακάρων οὔτε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων. / ὣς ἔφατ᾽, αὐτὰρ ἐγώ μιν ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπον," Homer, *Opera*, vol. 3). In the *Odyssey*, unlike the *Iliad*, Homer crystalizes the entire plot of the epic within Polyphemus' prayer. The full prayer asks not only for Odysseus to never return home, but also "buf if it is decided that he shall see his own people, and come home to his strong-founded house and to his own country, let him come late, in bad case, with the loss of all his companions, in someone else's ship, and find troubles in his household" (Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, [New York: Harper Perennial, 1991], 150-151). Consequently, Poliziano's use of the Homeric prayer has greater ties with the *Odyssey*, for he too encapsulates the plot of the epic within the prayer.

[136] Lo Cascio points to these lines of Vergil (book I, 37-38) as a source for Cupid's words, while Carducci sees traces of Statius and Claudian poetry in this same passage (Lo Cascio, *Lettura del Poliziano*, 61: Carducci, 267n). Vergil, 37; Fitzgerald's faithful translation reads " 'Give up what I began? / Am I defeated? Am I impotent / To keep the king of Teucrians from Italy?'" (Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans, Robert Fitzgerald, [New York: Vintage Classics, 1990], 4);

cries out to the heavens is a vernacular adaptation of Ovid's scorned youth who equally raised his hands to the sky seeking retribution: "Inde manus aliquis despectus ad aethera tollens / 'sic amet ipse licet sic non potiatur amato!'" Nemesis hears the prayer and agrees ("Adsensit precibus Rhamnusia iustis"), yet unlike Cupid, he remains silent.[137] The intertwining of these allusions to Homer, Vergil and Ovid further supports the structural and thematic intentions of Poliziano's *contaminatio* in the *Stanze*. As we have already seen in the depiction of Iulio in the eighth through tenth octaves, the literary references temper one another, keeping this character and his story balanced between epic and pastoral. Lest the reader equivocate Iulio's tale with that of Achilles or Odysseus, Poliziano includes potent allusions to the story of Narcissus and Hippolytus, thereby reminding the reader that love, not war or sea voyages, is the central theme. By the same token, the reader should not view Iulio as just some modern copy of Narcissus. Unlike that tragic figure, Iulio will undergo some epic quest which will prove worthy of an Aeneas or an Odysseus.

The form of Cupid's retribution ushers in a new scene of the *Stanze*: the meeting of Iulio and Simonetta. Like Iulio, whose character Poliziano developed implicitly through the literary references that surround him, Simonetta, too, owes her character more to the subtexts of Poliziano's allusions than to his explicit words regarding her features. She is an amalgam of various figures: women and goddesses in disguise from classical epics, the beloved muse from the *stil novo* tradition, and Petrarch's Laura. In fact, the *contaminatio* in Poliziano's treatment of Simonetta is so pronounced that it displays all the intentions of this literary method that the present study has heretofore examined: first, the blendings of sources further enhance the content

[137] From book III of the *Metamorphoses*, lines 402-404. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 1, 152.

and characters of the poem; second, they give equal attention to epic and pastoral; and, third, they promote the vernacular.

When the nymph appears, the description devoted to her beauty truly does seem to be the textual rendering of Alberti's combinative process. Attilio Momigliano asserts that the representation of Simonetta not only borrows elements from Dante's Matelda, from Petrarch's Laura, and from the ladies of the *stil novo* tradition, but unites and, as a result, surpasses these figures. The effect that Simonetta's appearance creates is, according to this critic, the transcendence of reality and the entrance into a dream-like world of springtime solitude punctuated only by birdsong.[138] Notwithstanding this perfectly pastoral scene and figure, the exchange between Iulio and the nymph is not without epic precedent. After the poet's digression on Simonetta's beauty, the action of the scene resumes with Iulio speaking these words of wondrous greeting: "«O qual che tu sia, vergin sovrana, / o ninfa o dea, ma dea m'assembri certo; se dea, forse se' tu la mia Diana; / se pur mortal, chi tu sia fammi certo, / che tua sembianza è fuor di guisa umana" (XLIX.1-5). These words recall two famous moments from epic, one from the Homeric tradition and one from the Vergilian. The first is the greeting of the shipwrecked Odysseus to the maid Nausicaa, which appears as an almost perfect template for Iulio's words, for Odysseus too says,

> "I am at your knees, O queen. But are you mortal or goddess? If indeed you are one of the gods who hold wide heaven, then I must find you in the nearest likeness to Artemis the daught of great Zeus, for beauty, figure, and stature. But if you are one among those mortals who live in this country, three

[138] It is, in fact, Momigliano's view that these passages dedicated to Simonetta's beauty demonstrate that alchemical shift from imitation to creation and contain within them the very crux of Poliziano's *Stanze*: "Le reminiscenze dei più candidi poeti d'amore si fondono in una visione che non è più quella della Matelda dantesca, nè di Laura, nè dei poeti del dolce stil novo, perchè la grazia, la soavità e l'idealità di quei ricordi si uniscono, e si dipingono sopra uno sfondo diverso, di solitudine primaverile, sottolineata dalla nota isolata degli uccelli: ne vien fuori una realtà sfumata di sogno, un sorriso contemplative che traduce in immagine il sentimento del poema, e perciò non è piu imitazione ma creazione" (reprinted in Sapegno, 39).

times blessed are your father and the lady your mother…I have never with these eyes seen anything like you, neither man nor woman. Wonder takes me as I look on you."[139]

The exchange between Aeneas and his mother Venus in the first book of the *Aeneid* is another clear authority for Iulio's words to Simonetta, though the language is not as exact as the Homeric passage.[140] Disguised as a Spartan girl, the goddess appears to her son, who, like Iulio, is at a loss as to how to address her: "O quam te memorem, virgo? Namque haud tibi voltus / mortalis, nec vox hominem sonat; o, dea certe – / an Phoebi soror? an nympharum sanguinis una?"[141] In blending these two particular epic authorities with the already cited ladies of Dantesque and Petrarchan poetry, Poliziano creates another unresolved figure. Orvieto goes so far as to call her schizophrenic, and, indeed, in Poliziano's rendering she does manifest two contrasting qualities, namely her purity and her sexuality.[142] Incorporating the figures of Matelda and Laura (to a lesser degree) into Simonetta's characterization establish her chastity. The references to Diana in Iulio's apostrophe, which are equally present in the Homeric and Vergilian sources, further emphasize this association. Yet simultaneously, considering the addressee of Aeneas' question

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[139] This passage comes from the sixth book of the *Odyssey*, lines 149-161 as translated by Lattimore (Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer*, 106. The original Greek reads as follows: γουνοῦμαί σε, ἄνασσα: θεός νύ τις, ἦ βροτός ἐσσι; /εἰ μέν τις θεός ἐσσι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν, / Ἀρτέμιδί σε ἐγώ γε, Διὸς κούρῃ μεγάλοιο, / εἶδός τε μέγεθός τε φυήν τ᾽ ἄγχιστα εἰσκω: / εἰ δέ τίς ἐσσι βροτῶν, τοὶ ἐπὶ χθονὶ ναιετάουσιν, / τρὶς μάκαρες μὲν σοί γε πατὴρ καὶ πότνια μήτηρ /… οὐ γάρ πω τοιοῦτον ἴδον βροτὸν ὀφθαλμοῖσιν, / οὔτ᾽ ἄνδρ᾽ οὔτε γυναῖκα: σέβας μ᾽ ἔχει εἰσορόωντα (Homer, *Opera*, vol. 3).

[140] Lo Cascio also cites these two passages as models for Poliziano's text, but it is his opinion that the Vergilian citation is a more direct precursor to the apostrophe in the *Stanze* (Lo Cascio, *Lettura del Poliziano*, 103).

[141] Lines 326-329 in book I of Vergil, 46. In Fitzgerald's English translation, Aeneas asks, "how / Shall I address you, girl? Your look's not mortal, / Neither has your accent a mortal ring. / O Goddess, beyond doubt! Apollo's sister? / One of the family of nymphs?" (Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. Fitzgerald, 15).

[142] Even without taking the literary references into account, Orvieto considers Simonetta's character to exhibit this schizophrenic duality throughout the course of the poem. The nymph is basically two opposing figures: "una ancora fedele a Venere e ad Amore, e l'altra che è passata al servizio di Pallade-Atena; una ancora simbolo erotico e l'altra di integerrima castità" (Orvieto, Paolo, *Poliziano*, 247-248.) Greene also notes the vagueness of Simonetta's character, positing that "the reader may well echo this question: what in fact *is* she? The dramatic immediacy of the question is qualified by its Virgilian and Homeric associations, just as the long, exquisite portrait has interwoven phrases from Theocritus, Petrarch, Cavalcanti, Horace, Claudian, Dante, and Boccaccio. The very intricacy of allusion cannot fail to affect the ontological status of this figure, however fresh and distinct she emerges on the page" (Greene, 161).

(Venus) and the lust that Laura inspires in Petrarch, one cannot ignore the heightened sexuality that is linguistically associated with this figure.

This duality is present from the beginning of Poliziano's introduction of Simonetta. Returning to her first appearance on the stage of the Stanze, Poliziano describes Simonetta as some divine creature ("un non so che divino") and the presentation of her beauty in the forty-third through forty-fourth octaves comes forth in the celebrated hyperbolic language of love poetry:

Candida è ella, e candida la vesta,
Ma pur di rose e fior dipinta e d'erba:
Lo inanellato crin dell'aurea testa
Scende in la fronte umilmente superba.
Ridegli attorno tutta la foresta
…
Folgoron gli occhi d'un dolce sereno,
Ove sue face tien Cupido ascose:
L'aer d'intorno si fa tutto ameno,
Ovunque gira le luci amorose[143]

The repetition of *candida* in the first line of Simonetta's description is striking for it manifests the contrasting qualities of purity and eroticism. Though the anaphora emphasizes the whiteness of her body, the many literary references surrounding this lexical choice underscore the erotic undertones. A first allusion naturally is to Poliziano's own poem: the splendor of Simonetta's skin and dress, coupled with her "umilmente superba" demeanor, recalls the pure whiteness ("candida tutta") of the "cervia altera e bella" created by Cupid to ensnare Iulio. This in turn reminds the reader of the Petrarchan sonnet that supplied this same image, "Una candida cerva sopra l'erba," which was no doubt already present in the reader's consciousness when the doe appeared in the thirty-fourth octave. This word also evokes the tradition of classical love poetry.

[143] Book I, Octave XLIII line 1 to Octave XLIV line 4.

The *Elegies* of Propertius often employ this epithet to describe the physical beauty of women, typically with highly sexual connotations.

This poet, in explaining his philandering, vividly paints an image of an alluring female that resembles not a little Poliziano's opening image of Simonetta: "sive aliquis molli diducit candida gestu / bracchia, seu varios incinit ore modos! / interea nostri quaerunt sibi vulnus ocelli, / candida non tecto pectore si qua sedet, / sive vagi crines puris in frontibus errant."[144] Ovid too emphasized the eroticism of the woman's white body in his account of the virgin Atalanta in the *Metamorphoses*.[145] Though known for her great speed ("quae…Scythica non setius ire sagitta"), it is Atalanta's beauty that draws the eyes and captures the heart of Hippomenes as they race: "tamen ille decorem / miratur magis…tergaque iactantur crines per eburnea…inque puellari corpus candore ruborem / traxerat, haud aliter, quam cum super atria velum / candida purpureum simulatas inficit umbras."[146] Like Simonetta, Ovid's virgin runner is a figure of both purity and lust, for Atalanta ultimately succumbs to Hippomenes' love (through the happy influence of Venus) and then both the lovers, due to their lack of honor for the goddess (and defiling a holy temple with their desire) were punished.

It is Petrarch's vernacular voice, however, that dominates these octaves dedicated to Simonetta. Poliziano essentially superimposes Simonetta's face and person over the figure of Laura, and the language of the octaves bears this out. Simonetta's white dress, "di rose e fior

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[144] From the component 22a (lines 6-9) of book II in Propertius, *Sexti Properti Elegos*, 70.

[145] While "candida" is a common adjective in Latin poetry, Propertius and Ovid in particular capture the same mixture of beauty and highly charged eroticism when using this adjective to describe the desired woman. Interestingly, Ovid's fourth letter of the *Heroides*, from Phaedra to Hippolytus, includes imagery similar to Poliziano's portrayal of Simonetta: "Candida vestis erat, praecincti flore capilli, / Flava verecundus tinxerat ora rubor" (lines 71-72). In this instance, however, the poet describes *Hippolytus* and not Phaedra (Ovid, *Amores, Epistulae, Medicamina faciei femineae, Ars amatoria, Remedia amoris*, R. Ehwald. edidit ex Rudolphi Merkelii recognitione, [Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1907], 83).

[146] "Yet he admired her beauty still more…her hair was tossed over her white shoulders…and over her fair girlish body a pink flush came, just as when a purple awning, drawn over a marble hall, stains it with borrowed hues." From book X, lines 589- 596 of Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, 106-107.

dipinta," harkens back to Laura's "purpurea vesta d'un ceruleo lembo / sparso di rose" in sonnet CLXXXV. Laura's dress is not the only feature of this sonnet that is relevant for Simonetta. The phoenix/Laura has an "aurata piuma" which falls around her "bel collo candido." This figure, too, sweetens the hearts of those around her and consumes that of the poet, ("ogni cor addolcisce e 'l mio consuma," *RVF* CLXXXV. 1-4). Poliziano's representation of Simonetta's golden hair ("lo inanellato crin dell'aurea testa") reworks two Petrarchan conceits: Laura's "laccio d'or" which is " 'nnanellato ed irto" in the *canzone* "Amor, se vuo' ch'i' torni al giogo antico" (*RVF* CCLXX) and her "aurea testa" in the sonnet "Ripensando a quel ch'oggi il cielo onora" (*RVF* CCCXLIII). Poliziano borrows the description of Simonetta's eyes, "folgoron gli occhi," from a number of authors, including Petrarch's similar portrayal of the luminosity of Laura's eyes in sonnet CCLVIII ("Vive faville uscian de' duo bei lumi / ver me sì dolcemente folgorando"). Moreover, these eyes of Simonetta lighten the air around her ("l'aer d'intorno si fa tutto ameno, / Ovunque gira le luci amorose"), much like how Petrarch describes " 'l ciel di vaghe e lucide faville / s'accende intorno, e 'n vista si rallegra / d'esser fatto seren da sì belli occhi" (*RVF* CXCII.12-14).[147]

Once more the intertextuality between Poliziano and Petrarch goes beyond lexical similarities. Poliziano utilizes these particular pieces of Petrarchan verse to remind the reader of the whole text being referenced. These precursors thus imbue these parts of the *Stanze* with further meaning, emphasize the interpretation of the text or add additional information for the reader. Poliziano's incorporation of Petrarch's sonnet CXCII into his portrayal of Simonetta does just that: Petrarch's sonnet alerts the reader of the *Stanze* to the purpose of this lengthy

[147] Both Carducci and Sapegno note these correspondences between Poliziano's representation of Simonetta and the language of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* presented in this study. Carducci also includes a reference to the Petrarchan verse "gli occhi pien di letizia e d'onestade" as a source of the beatific nature of Simonetta's face (Carducci, 280-281n; Sapegno, 39-41).

description of Simonetta's beauty. Poliziano essentially asks the reader to do in these octaves what Petrarch calls for Love (and his reader) to do in the sonnet, namely to pause "a veder la gloria nostra / cose sopra natura altere e nove" (CXCII.1-2). To behold Simonetta is both for Iulio and the reader a way to enter into the mysteries of beauty and the supernatural, perhaps revealing the influence of Ficinian Neoplatonism in this passage.

The allusion to Petrarch's sonnet is not alone in provoking an examination of the purpose of the love's gaze. The theme of contemplation recurs when one looks at the entirety of other authorities referenced in the description of Simonetta's beauty. The language employed to depict Simonetta's flashing eyes, for example, has a number of classical precursors: the violent anger of Cynthia relayed in Propertius' *Elegies* ("fulgurat illa occulis"), the image of Briseis's pleasure at the touch of Achilles in the second book of Ovid's *Ars amatoria* ("oculos tremulo fulgore micantes") and the account of Apollo gazing on Daphne's beauty that enflames his desire in the *Metamorphoses* ("igne micantes Siderebus similes oculos").[148] Like the allusion to Petrarch's sonnet CXCII, all these authorities referenced by Poliziano attest to the power of the gaze, here its carnality and eroticism. Propertius watches his lover in a rage that is as erotic as it is terrifying, and their quarrel is resolved in bed. Apollo sees the beauty of Daphne's eyes and is not content with looking – he must possess her body. In the *Ars amatoria*, the author's voice transitions from Briseis's beauty during moments of pleasure to a conversation with the reader, encouraging him to visualize his lover during sex: "cum loca reppereris, quae tangi femina gaudet…aspicies

[148] Sapegno, 41. Sapegno does not list which specific texts by Propertius and Ovid serve as authorities. The eighth poem of book IV of Propertius' *Elegies* contains the phrase "fulminat illa occulis" in line 55 with "fulgurat" as a variant (Propertius, *Opera omnia*, ed. Ch. Th. Kuinoelis, [London: A. J. Valpy, 1822] 710). The referenced line of the *Ars amatoria* appears in the second book, line 721 (Ovid, *The Art of Love*, trans. James Michie, [New York: The Modern Library, 2002] 106).

oculos tremulo fulgore micantes." The concomitance of the Petrarchan articulation of voyeurism and that of Propertius and Ovid thus creates a dialogue between these references.

Another speaker in this subtextual dialogue is Dante of the *Vita Nuova*. As Poliziano continues building the image of Simonetta, he draws upon *stilnovismo* and imbues the lady with the attributes typically connected to the *gentil donna* of that tradition:

> Ira dal volto suo trista s'arretra;
> E poco Avanti a lei Superbia basta:
> Ogni dolce virtú l'è in compagnia
> …
> Con lei sen va Onestate umile e piana
> che d'ogni chiuso cor volge la chiave;
> con lei va Gentilezza in vista umana,
> e da lei impara il dolce andar soave.
> Non può mirarli il viso alma villana
> se non pria di suo fallir doglia non have;
> tanti cori Amor piglia fere o ancide,
> quanto ella o dolce parla o dolce ride.[149]

In addition to two duos of standard *stilnovismo* adjectives or attributes, "umile e piana", "Onestate" and "Gentilezza", the essence of the forty-fifth octave plainly recalls the ninth strophe of Dante's *canzone*, "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore." Like Beatrice who "quando va per via / gitta nei cor villain Amore un gelo," Simonetta opens closed hearts when she passes. Moreover, Dante and Poliziano both emphasize similar powers of contemplation. Dante proclaims that should one insist upon looking at his lady ("e qual soffrisse di starla a vedere"), that person will either "diverria nobil cosa, o si morria." So too does regarding Simonetta's beauty precipitate momentous changes in the one who engages with her ("tanti cori Amor piglia fere o ancide"), yet it is unclear whether the love that she engenders is as ennobling a force as it is in Dante's song. In the *Vita Nuova*, there is no doubt of the positive power of contemplation: when the lady chooses a man worthy to gaze upon her ("e quando trova alcun che degno sia / di

[149] From Book I, octave XLV line 5 to octave XLVI line 8.

veder lei"), he moves closer to divine salvation ("quei prova sua vertute, / ché li avvien, ciò che li dona, in salute…Ancor l'ha Dio per maggior grazia dato / che non pò mal finir chi l'ha parlato").[150]

The subsequent octave includes another clear Dantesque reference. The image of vices retreating from Simonetta's presence shows the influence of Dante's sonnet "Ne li occhi porta la mia donna Amore," which also describes how these personified vices flee from such a virtuous creature: "fugge dinanzi a lei superbia ed ira." As in the previous poem, Dante underscores how to look upon Beatrice and to be regarded by her is beneficial for the viewer. Not only does Beatrice hold Love within her eyes (a characteristic that Simonetta shares, for "sue face tien Cupido ascose"), but when others regard her, "bassando il viso, tutto smore, / e d'ogni suo difetto allor sospira."[151] The unworthy must repent of their sins and hope to improve themselves after looking upon such a noble lady. In this manner, Dante and Petrarch share some similarities, for Petrarch, too, ruminated at length on his faults and hopes to better himself when contemplating the beauty of Laura. It appears then, that Petrarch and Dante's *Vita nuova* serve as a counterpoint for the eroticism of Iulio's gaze that the classical allusions of the earlier octaves emphasize. Thus, in these passages dedicated to Simonetta, owing perhaps more to the subtexts of their allusions than to the poet's actual verse, Poliziano investigates the same duality of the contemplation of beauty examined by Valla in the *De vero bono*.

[150] *Vita nuova* XIX.32-42; Alighieri, Dante, *Opere minori di Dante Alighieri*, vol. 1, 104-105.
[151] *Vita nuova* XXI.5-7; Alighieri, Dante, *Opere minori di Dante Alighieri*, vol. 1, 109-110.

Contaminatio as a textual utopia

These philosophical correspondences between the *De vero bono* and the *Stanze* reveal that the two texts share more than a comparable approach to authorities. Valla and Poliziano also manifest similar philosophical inquiries and attitudes towards literary creation. For both authors, the act of blending sources to create new texts is to create a utopia, in the sense of a perfect world (*eu-topos*) and in the sense of an impossible world (*ou-topos*). While the utopia of Poliziano's *Stanze* is well documented – Iulio's Tuscan countryside is in no way intended to be a realistic representation of the lands surrounding Medici Florence – Valla too presents a utopia when he sets the scene of the *De vero bono*. Only in a perfect or non-existent literary world would all these great thinkers gather together to debate on pleasure, and only in this world would noted figures of Italian civic life take on positions wholly contrary to their actual beliefs, as was the case with Catone.

Both Poliziano and Valla develop explicit utopias in their texts as well, utopias whose atemporality is heightened by the coexistence of many literary authorities. Poliziano's ideal realm of beauty and love is the focus of the close of the first book of the poem: the kingdom of Venus. While the entirety of the *Stanze* demonstrates the disintegration of temporal barriers, it is the poet's creation of this earthly paradise that fully moves the poem from allegorical representation of the real to the ideal utopia. To visualize this land, Poliziano begins with a foundation of Claudian's *Epithalamium de Nuptiis Honorii Augusti* and Sidonius Apollinaris, upon which he then adds layers of Petrarch, Ovid, and Lorenzo de' Medici.[152] Lo Cascio also

[152] Sapegno, 59.

sees the influence of the biblical "Song of Songs" in Poliziano's depiction of Venus' kingdom.[153] The imagery of the landscape and the entire scene is that of an immobile world, untouched by time. [154] The literary allusions only heighten that feeling, as ancient and contemporary voices speak simultaneously, much like in the second octave of the poem, which, in many ways, hinted at the perpetual realm of love. One stanza in particular captures this timelessness:

L'alba nutrica d'amoroso nembo
gialle, sanguigne e candide viole;
descritto ha 'l suo dolor Iacinto in grembo,
Narcisso al rio si specchia come suole;
in bianca vesta con purpureo lembo
si gira Clizia palidetta al sole;
Adon rinfresca a Venere il suo pianto,
tre lingue mostra Croco, e ride Acanto.[155]

All the flowers that Poliziano nominates in this octave are the results of transformations undergone by the lovers recounted by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses*. Yet in Poliziano's perpetual spring, these figures seem frozen and out of place – neither returned to their original state, nor fully integrating into what Greene called the "dynamic, living cosmos."[156] Instead these figures seem frozen in the moment of transformation, still demonstrating attributes of their human selves while encased in a new form. Even as a flower, Narcissus is still enamored of his reflection ("Narcisso al rio si specchia come suole"), the Adonis flower still weeps at his sorry plight, and Clytie does not renounce her love for the sun. Time and history stop in the mythical realm.

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[153] Lo Cascio, *Lettura del Poliziano*, 129.
[154] Lo Cascio is equally lyrical in his description of the eternal realm of Venus, stating that it is "in effetti un mondo di estrema agevolezza, descritto come vedremo, in un immobile presente…né c'è azione se non quella che sia contenuta entro i modi normali del suo perpetuo essere…È un mondo d'atmosfera immobilmente primaverile, privo di quegli accenti realistici e di quel movimento e di quelle trepide venature che pure abbiamo colto nella primavera dell'episodio della caccia e dell'innamoramento" (Lo Cascio, *Lettura del Poliziano*, 129).
[155] From book I, octave LXXIX, lines 1-8.
[156] Greene, 159.

Valla, too, concludes his dialogue with the description of a timeless place: heaven. Still under the guise of Antonio da Rho, Valla offers a description of paradise, which is the apotheosis of *voluptas-caritas*. Evoking the ascent of Dante's pilgim in the *Paradiso*, Valla recounts in vivid detail what the follower of divine pleasure will see as he enters the kingdom of heaven, beginning with "celum unum, alterum, tertium ingrediens res illas contemplaberis «que non licet homini loqui,»."[157] Again the gaze is paramount: to follow the pleasure of divine love is to be granted access to the deepest mysteries. Moreover, this paradise is the greatest delight to all the senses, demonstrating that no pleasure on earth can compare to the *voluptas* of heaven:

> De generalibus gaudiis loquamur! Omnes illi latissimi campi, omni colorum gratia vernantes et divinis odoribus fragrantes, omnis ille letissimus aer lucentibus et discoloribus angelis miscebitur. Hi tibi cornu tubaque resonabunt, illi canent, hi pedibus plaudent choreas, uti decet felices spiritus sonare, canere, saltare.[158]

Valla's paradise exhibits little difference from the classical, pastoral havens, a fact which he makes abundantly clear in the choice of his literary references. For coupled together with the many references to liturgical texts, such as 2 Corinthians above ("quoniam raptus est in paradisum et audivit arcana verba *quaenon licet homini loqui*" 12:4) and the Psalms, Valla also includes at the most dramatic moment of his description, a quote from the sixth book of Vergil's *Aeneid*. Indeed, to illustrate the moment when the righteous man beholds God, Valla invokes the moment of greatest joy and pathos, when Aeneus is reunited with the shade of his father in the Elysian fields:

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[157] "Entering now the first, the second, and the third heavens you will gaze upon 'things of which it is not given man to speak'," translated by Lorch in Valla, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 306-307.

[158] Translated by Lorch as, "Let us speak of the general joy. All those broad fields, in a springtide graced with every color and fragrant with divine odors, and all that most delightful air will be enlivened with gleaming and many-hued angels. Some will sound the horn and the trumpet for yo; others will sing; yet others will stamp out choral dances with their feet; and all of them will place on insturments, sing, or dance in a way that suits happy spirits" (Valla, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 312-314).

Tunc vero quis erit tue mentis status cum Deus deorum…immo adeo innumerabilium deorum tibi in occursum veniet? Te pectori suo, ubi creatrix rerum sapientia sedet, admovebit. Tibi etiam si fas est, cum lacrimis et voce erumpente dicet:

Venisti tandem tuaque expectata parenti
Vicit iter durum pietas, datur ora tueri,
Nate, tua et versa audire et reddere voces.
Quas ego te terras et quanta per equora vectum
Accipio, quantis iactatum nate periclis.[159]

Valla, like Poliziano's realm of Venus, thus collapses together the pagan and the Christian tradition, negating all sense of time and history in one ideal locus of beauty and love. Though they do not renounce nor even acknowledge the ahistorical results of the literary *varietas* that they promote, historicity and the position of the humanist within history will become a concern for both Valla and Poliziano in subsequent works.

[159] "But what will be your state of mind when the God of gods…comes up to you…in the midst of innumerable divinities? He will take you to his breast, the seat of Wisdom, who is the creator of all. If it is lawful for me to speak thus, I tell you that he will say to you, his voice breaking out among his tears: You have come at last, and the love that your father looked / for has conquered the toilsome way. It is given to me to see / your face, my son, and to hear and utter familiar speech. / Through what lands and wide seas have you journeyed to my / welcome! What dangers have tossed thee!" (Valla, *On Pleasure / De voluptate*, 316-317).

Chapter 2

Blending authorities (II): rethinking *contaminatio*. A study of Poliziano's *Fabula d'Orfeo* and Valla's *De professione religiosorum*.

"Orpheus went leaping through the fields
Strumming as hard as he did please
Birdies detonated in the sky
Bunnies dashed their brains out on the trees"
Nick Cave, "Lyre of Orpheus"

A recurring theme that spans Angelo Poliziano's poetry is the intersection and interplay of history and myth. Medici sponsored pageantry became mythologized into an allegorical epic poem in the *Stanze per la giostra*. Later in the poet's career, the occasional pieces of the *Silvae* presented the history of poets and poetry in similarly atemporal and mythical settings. Less expected, however, is how this intersection between history and myth often inspired Poliziano's creative process as well. Just as the events of Giuliano de' Medici's life influenced the creation of the *Stanze*, the patron's death, too, left its mark on Poliziano's *Fabula d'Orfeo*. The violence of the Pazzi conspiracy parallels elements of Poliziano's play: Orfeo's death at the hands of angered *Baccanti* appears as the mythological representation of what Poliziano vividly depicts in his treatise on the *Congiura de' Pazzi*.[1] Though not present for the bloody affair, Poliziano recounts how the unfortunate prince was caught unawares, surrounded, and viciously murdered:

"Ibi primum peracta Sacerdotis comunicatione, signo dato, Bernardus Bandius, Franciscus Pactius, aliique ex conjuratis, orbe facto, Julianum circumveniunt. Princeps Bandinus, ense per pectus adacto, juvenem transverberat. Ille moribundus aliquot passus fugitare; ille insequi. Juvenis, cum jam sanguis eum viresque defecissent, terrae concidit. Jacentem Franciscus repetito saepe ictu, pugione trajecit. Ita pium Juvenem neci dedunt."[2]

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[1] Thomas Greene accepts this reading of the *Orfeo*, though he attributes the mutilation brought upon Orfeo not to the death of Giuliano but to the participants in the Pazzi conspiracy. He notes the resemblance between the actions of the Bacchantes to rip apart Orfeo and the actions of Medici supporters against the conspirators. Greene, Thomas M., *The Light in Troy: imitation and discovery in Renaissance poetry*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 162-163. See also Donato, Eugenio, "Death and History in Poliziano's *Stanze*," *Modern Language Notes* 80 (1965): 27-40 and Branca, Vittore, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), 64.

[2] Poliziano, Angelo, *Congiura de' Pazzi narrata in latino da Angelo Poliziano*, ed. Anicio Bonucci (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1856), 50-54. Isidoro del Lungo offers the following Italian translation: "E

Poliziano emphasizes the brutality visited upon Giuliano's body by the conspirators, a brutality which continued even after it was clear that the youth had died. The frenzied wish of the *Baccanti* to pry out Orpheus' heart from his chest and their repeated calls to make him die at the close of *Orfeo* echo the gratuitous violence of the Florentine murderers. Likewise, the various punishments accorded to members of the conspiracy recounted in this same tract coincide with the dismemberment of the Thracian poet.[3]

The violence in *Orfeo*, however, is not limited to the hero's death: it appears even on a lexical level. Poliziano, in his appropriation of the Orpheus myth, calls into question the practice of *contaminatio* that had come to characterize his vernacular poetry. Poliziano's play underscores the violence inherent in creating a poetry of allusion, or, more to point, a poetry composed of poetic fragments. Like the ancient singer, whose limbs are rent from his body, a style of poetry built on snippets of references seems to be similarly lacerated. Indeed, just as Poliziano the member of the Medici court was traumatized by the threats to corporeal wholeness prompted by the death of Giuliano de' Medici and subsequent murders of the conspirators, so too was Poliziano the poet now traumatized by a textual *horror fragmenti* which called into question his acts of combinative poetic creation.[4]

If the *Stanze* represent an exercise in seamlessly blending and weaving together numerous sources, to the point where the reader could not locate where the voices of ancient and

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subito che il sacerdote si fu communicato, dato il segno, Bernardo Bandini Francesco de' Pazzi et altri congiurati fecero un cerchio intorno a Giuliano: et il Bandino fu il primo che gli passò el petto con un pugnale; il quale fuggito alcuni passi et essi seguitandolo, il misero giovane mancandogli lo spirito casò in terra, dove che Francesco gli dette poi più e piu pugnalate, e così miseramente l'amazzorono" (Poliziano, Angelo, *Prose volgari inedite e poesie latine e greche edite e inedite di Angelo Ambrogini Poliziano*, ed. Isidoro del Lungo, [Florence: G. Barbèra Editore, 1867], 95).

[3] Poliziano, *Congiura de' Pazzi*, 62-78.

[4] Much of this line of reasoning is indebted to Greene's discussion of personal wholeness, philology and the *Orfeo* (Greene, 162-168).

contemporary authors ended and where Poliziano's own poetic voice began, then the *Fabula d'Orfeo* is the *Stanze*'s dark mirror.[5] At first glance, this text brings to light not the harmonious marriage of discrete authorities, but the fissures that arise among them, an inevitable result of extracting and piecing together components of texts. Here Poliziano presents the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice in the form of a pastoral play, this genre itself a blending of the traditions of recent allegorical lyric and classical mythology.[6] Pastoral, however, then veers abruptly into classical epic, only then to turn into Greek tragedy. The result of these many lyrical tangents is a tangle of confusion, with no clear consensus regarding the play's significance or Poliziano's intentions.

Indeed, this uncertainty among the critics arises even when examining the most foundational information about Poliziano's *Orfeo*: the dates of composition. Given the poet's reference in the dedicatory letter to "nostro reverendissimo cardinale mantuano," Francesco Gonzaga, there is no doubt that Poliziano composed the play before the cardinal's death in October of 1483.[7] This *ante quem* is perhaps the only date that the critics agree on. Hypotheses

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[5] The overarching messages of the *Orfeo* – such as the fragility of life, the triumph of death, and the illusion of poetry – lead Vittore Branca to declare that a "rovesciamento più totale di questo, avvenuto fra le *Stanze* e l'*Orfeo*…non si potrebbe pensare" (Branca, 64). Giuseppe Mazzotta tends to agree, indicating that "it can be inferred that for Poliziano the death of Orpheus signals the death of a certain way of doing art. It is the death of an aesthetic attitude and of a specific philosophy of harmonious order that provided the theoretical underpinning of the political myths of Lorenzo's Florence." See Mazzotta, Giuseppe, *Cosmopoiesis: The Renaissance Experiment*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 7.

[6] Even the subject of Poliziano's play, the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, demonstrates its incongruous nature, as the poet fuses together two different accounts from the classical tradition, namely the pastoral account from Vergil's *Georgics* and the epic interpretation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The meat of both stories is the same: Eurydice dies suddenly, prompting Orpheus to journey to the Underworld and convince, by the power of his music, Hades (or Pluto) to let his wife return to earth. Orpheus must agree to not look back at Eurydice's shade as they proceed from the Underworld, a promise which he fails to keep and she is lost to him forever. Back again in the world of the living, his disdain for all other women leads to his death at the hands of Bacchantes. See pages 27-28 and 33-39 of this study for a lengthier discussion of the plot of Poliziano's play and its differing classical sources.

[7] All quotations of the *Fabula d'Orfeo* come from Poliziano, Angelo, *Poesie volgari*, ed. Francesco Bausi, (Rome: Vecchiarelli Editore, 1997), 45-59. On the dating of the *Fabula d'Orfeo* see Tissoni Benvenuti, Antonia, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano*, (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1986), 63.

regarding the time and environment in which Poliziano began the work, on the other hand, run the gamut from before the composition of the *Stanze* to just prior to when Poliziano's tenure as chair of rhetoric at the University of Florence began in 1480. Antonia Tissoni Benvenuti argues the former, contending that the text, from its language to its themes, is more in keeping with the *Stanze*. She cites some compelling textual evidence to support her claims, such as the appearance of almost identical verses and themes in the *Stanze* and *Orfeo*, as well as the notable similarity between Aristeo's song in lines 88 to 93 of the *Orfeo* and an eclogue by Girolamo Benivieni sent to Giovanni Pico della Mirandola in 1479.[8] These linguistic similarities, in addition to the strained political relations between the Medici and Cardinal Gonzaga following the Pazzi conspiracy, lead Tissoni Benvenuti to argue in favor of locating the composition of the *Orfeo* in the period of 1471-1473, confirming a similar proposal by Isodoro Del Lungo in 1897.[9] Tissoni Benvenuti is not alone in advocating for this time period: Mario Martelli and Francesco Bausi also locate the composition of the *Fabula d'Orfeo* well within the 1470s and still during Poliziano's association with the Laurentian circle.[10] Vittore Branca and fellow scholars such as G. B. Picotti, Ida Maiër, Giuseppe Mazzotta, and Nino Pirotta instead offer substantial evidence that the proper dating of the *Orfeo* is in June of 1480.[11] Branca cites in particular the influence of two factors that shaped not only the creation of the *Orfeo* but later influenced Poliziano's Latin components written during the 1480s: his firsthand experience of Venetian culture and his

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[8] Tissoni Benvenuti, 66-70.
[9] Tissoni Benvenuti, 63-64; Orvieto, Paolo, *Poliziano e l'ambiente mediceo* (Rome: Salerno, 2009), 312-313.
[10] Martelli, Mario, *Angelo Poliziano: storia e metastoria*, (Lecce: Conte, 1995), 80; Bausi, xxii.
[11] See Picotti, G. B., *Ricerche umanistiche*, 1st ed., (Florence: Nuova Italia, 1955), 102, Maïer, Ida, *Ange Politien: La formation d'un poète humaniste, 1469-1480*, 1st ed., (Geneva: Droz, 1966), 387-390, Pirrotta, Nino, *Li due Orfei: da Poliziano a Monteverdi*, (Turin: ERI, 1969), 16-17, Mazzotta, 9-11, and Branca, Vittore, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), 70n.

inclusion in the circle of the most learned philologists of the day.[12] Establishing a date of composition for the *Orfeo* is paramount, considering that both camps of scholars – those who advocate the early 1470s and those who advocate 1480 – ground their interpretations of the play largely in the cultural environment in which Poliziano wrote it.

Though I accept the traditional dating of 1480 for the *Orfeo*, Tissoni Benvenuti's proposal of the early 1470s and her corresponding arguments are not without merit. If anything, the contention between these two camps of critics underscores the transitional nature of the *Orfeo*. This text appears to present the same themes, images, language, and structure that characterize the *Stanze*. The ultimate outcome, however, reads as a correction of that previous poem, of the philosophy that guided its themes and the literary methods that guided its creation. While the pastoral imagery and the presence of the gods and other figures of ancient myth, particularly the poem's own hero, Orpheus, all speak to a poetic text that, like the *Stanze*, is affiliated with the Neoplatonic culture of Lorenzo de'Medici's literary circle, critics such as Maïer and Branca note in the *Orfeo* a marked distance from the encouraging or edifying messages of Ficinian philosophy.[13] In fact, Branca views Poliziano's Orfeo as a direct response

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[12] Branca, 57-62. Branca examines in depth the influence of the culture of Venice, in particular its theatrical culture epitomized by the celebratory "momarie," staged pageants that ranged from costumed and masked tableaux to scenes depicting allegorical and mythological tales. While these *momarie* served as an excellent model to emulate in *Orfeo*, and indeed the very designation of the play as a "fabula" or "festa" confirms its heritage in the tradition of Venetian spectacles.

[13] Maïer considers Poliziano's Orfeo to be a direct descendent of the versions of the myth presented by Virgil and Ovid, sharing little in common with the mythical Orpheus so revered by Ficino and the Neoplatonists of the Laurentian circle: "Le personage d'Orphée mis en scène dans la *Favola* descend en droite ligne des récits d'Ovide et de Virgile…On ne saurait charger cet Orphée, très humble, somme toute, de responsabilités symboliques excessives et par trop subtiles. Le personnage et le développement de la *Favola* de Politien ne comportent aucune de ces hardies transpositions chères à Ficin et à ses amis philosophes. On sait que les humanistes platoniciens donnaient au mythe d'Orphée une signification métaphysique: ils voyaient dans le pouvoir miraculeux de la voix de l'homme-poète, une manifestation de la puissance de l'âme sur les êtres de la creation…La *Favola* de Politien suit justement le développement de ces derniers épisodes du mythe: mais rien ne permet d'affirmer que l'auteur ait songé à exprimer dans

to Ficinian philosophy: the hero is no longer a positive message of the triumph of the human spirit, but rather an indication of the illusory, or delusory, nature of that philosophy. In Poliziano's rendering, Orfeo is but a lover and poet who, notwithstanding his innate musical gifts, cannot adequately confront the violence of reality.[14]

On a textual level, Poliziano's use of various literary authorities to construct his own verse corrects the often-haphazard combinations of allusions with which he wrote the *Stanze*. Instead, the fervor for philology typified the period of Poliziano's life in which he wrote the *Orfeo*. In 1479, following the parting of ways between Poliziano and his longtime patron, Lorenzo de' Medici, the young philologist travelled to Venice. This visit would have a profound impact on Poliziano, for not only would it expose him to a culture highly different from that of his native Tuscany, but it would also put him in the company of the renowned philologists of the time, such as Ermolao Barbaro.[15] This philologist in particular, as Branca argues, was a highly influential figure for the poet, imparting to him a new interest in Aristotelian philosophy and poetics that would later inform his own understanding of creating poetic texts.[16] Thus, as his

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la pièce l'édifiante leçon prônée par Ficin…En tous cas le message n'est pas de nature philosophique…on doit bien reconnaître que l'interpretation du mythe depend essentiellement de la littérature" (395).

[14] With each of *Orfeo*'s plot points, Branca argues, Poliziano rejects the Ficinian interpretation of the Orpheus myth: "La Potenza miracolosa della voce di Orfeo non simboleggia certo la potenza dell'anima sugli esseri materiali, come voleva il Ficino, ma soltanto l'illusione sulla forza della poesia; Orfeo non rappresenta, come per la nuova mistica ficiniana, «la comunione totale con la natura e l'abbandono totale a Dio», ma solo un amante tenero e appassionato e poi disperato fino all'imprecazione e alla morte; la sua discesa agli inferi, la sua sconfitta, il suo strazio da parte delle Baccanti non indicano ficinianamente «le prove straordinarie che incontrerà l'uomo spirituale e contemplatore» ma l'illusione della poesia e la sua fragilità di fronte alla realtà e alla sua violenza" (63).

[15] Branca, 57-62. Ermolao Barbaro was a noted Venetian philologist, Aristotelian scholar, and statesman. Roughly the same age and active during the same years as Poliziano (Barbaro was born in 1453 or 1454 and died in Rome in 1493, a year before Poliziano's death), Barbaro gained fame for his commentaries and translations of Themistius, Aristotle, and Dioscorides, as well as his *Castigationes pliniae* (1490). A frequent correspondent with Poliziano and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Barbaro's letters, collected and published by the philologist himself, are perhaps the most popular of his extant works. See Garin, Eugenio, *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento* (Milano: Riccardo Ricciardi Editore, 1952), 837.

[16] Branca, 56.

philological tendencies came to the fore, Poliziano began in the *Orfeo* what would become a lifelong interest: articulating his unique philosophy of poetic creation through textual variety.

Perhaps inspired by his friendship with Barbaro and their shared attention to philology, Poliziano composed the *Orfeo* with an eye more attuned to meticulous literary study than his prior works demonstrated. This is not to say that he abandoned the practice of *contaminatio* completely, but rather that various points within the text of the *Orfeo* demonstrate an emergence of literary unity or a homogeneity of genre in the assemblage of the fragments. Poliziano bases the exchange between the shepherds with which the play opens, for example, on the conventions of the pastoral genre, pulling primarily from authors in that tradition.[17] Similarly the episode presenting Orfeo's death exhibits an increased focus on the elements of Greek tragedy. Indeed, the play itself reads as a series of cycles, each highlighting a different genre, its conventions and most celebrated authors. In lieu of clear scene changes or breaks, the text itself changes its nature, with each new cycle representing a new location, new ethos, or new overarching mood that direct the actions and words of the charcters.

Given the influence of rigorous philologists such as Barbaro, it is unsurprising that the poetry grounded in classical literary criticism of the *Orfeo* has a precursor in the treatise of another author for whom philology was a necessary tool in writing, namely Lorenzo Valla. Valla's dialogue, the *De professione religiosorum*, in particular offers a useful model for Poliziano's play. Like the *Orfeo*, the *De professione* figures as a transitional work for Valla, both in terms of the style in which it was written but also when viewed as part of his entire literary oeuvre. Though Valla labored over his texts for much of his life, rewriting and in some cases

[17] These portions of the play highlighting pastoral demonstrate the influence of its "founding" authors, Theocritus and Vergil, as well as later authors inspired by these models: Calpurnius Siculus, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and even Poliziano himself. See pages 39-47 of this study.

renaming them, the dialogues are typically associated with the early half of his career, between 1431 and 1435, while Valla served as a professor of rhetoric at the University of Pavia.[18] This dialogue, by contrast, composed between 1439 and 1442, corresponds to a later period: no longer in Pavia, the humanist scholar was now in the employ of the King of Naples, Alfonso V of Aragon and engaged more in studies of dialectics and Latin or in composing declamations against long-held Church doctrine.[19] Notwithstanding its dialogic structure, at its heart the *De professione* is a condemnation of members of religious orders, and as such holds more in common, thematically and structurally, with the *declamatio* for which he became famous, *The Oration on the False Donation of Constantine.*[20]

More to the point, the structure of Valla's dialogue debating the merits of leading a religious or lay life is analogous to that of Poliziano's *Fabula d'Orfeo*. The *De professione religiosorum* begins with a preface that focuses more on protecting the author from potential criticism than situating the text. Valla then presents his subject through a series of philologically-motived narrative cycles within the text that each display different and distinct

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[18] The earliest version of his dialogue *De vero falsoque bono* appeared in 1431 during his tenure as professor of Rhetoric at the University of Pavia. The composition of his dialogue *De libero arbitrio* likewise dates from that period, 1435, likely just before his employment in the court of Alfonso V of Aragon in Naples (see Pugliese, Olga Zorza, "Introduction," in Valla, Lorenzo, *The Profession of the Religious and the principal arguments from The Falsely-Believed and Forged Donation of Constantine*. ed and trans. Olga Zorza Pugliese, [Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1985] 1-2).

[19] These texts are, respectively, the *Dialectical Disputations* (1439), the *Elegance of the Latin Language* (1441), and the *De falso credita et Ementita Constantini Donatione* (1440) (see Pugliese, 1-4).

[20] This oration, written by Valla in the spring of 1440 while still residing under the patronage of Alfonso V of Aragon, is considered the fundamental refutation of the validity of the Donation of Constantine. While there was certainly a political angle in creating this work (Alfonso was at the time an enemy of Pope Eugenius IV), Valla's oration *On the Donation of Constantine* is not at all contrary to his own personal and literary beliefs. Not only are the ethics espoused by Valla in keeping with the message of his other works on theological themes (such as the *De professione religiosorum*), but also the methods utilized by Valla in discrediting the document include same tenets of rhetoric and philological study that characterized his earlier dialogues. See Pugliese (2-3) and Bowersock, G.W., Introduction to Valla, Lorenzo, *On the Donation of Constantine*, (Cambridge, MA: The I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University Press, 2007) vi-vii.

generic conventions, all while showcasing a blending of various literary authorities. Additionally, by constructing a complete, polished work from an assemblage of interconnected narrative cycles, Valla and Poliziano emphasize the beauty of literary variety to underscore the value of creating unity from fragments. The narrative cycles of the *De professione religiosorum* and the *Fabula d'Orfeo* when viewed individually do not convey the meaning of the whole text; it is only when one reaches the conclusion of the work that the author reveals his overarching literary design.

As with poets, so, too, with theologians

But what bearing does Valla's theological dialogue have on Poliziano's secular drama? A dialogue, the medium in which Valla presents his examination and refutation of the merits of monastic life, is certainly the most theatrical of the genres available to him. Indeed, this dialogue, much like any theatrical piece, comes with a setting, characters, and spectators, both the fictive witnesses to the debate and the potential reader. Moreover, as evidenced by the previous chapter, in the *Quattrocento* different genres did not necessarily indicate differing creative approaches. Valla, for one, in the preface to the *De professione religiosorum*, sees little distinction between poetry and theological prose when critiquing the eloquence of the authors. Comparing current poets to the ancient masters, Valla bemoans that "poetas quosdam recentes…qui regum populorumque bella cantanda sibi sumpserunt, ita loquuntur, ut melius facturi fuerint si bella ranarum et murium, ut Homerus adolscens, aut apium, sicut Virgilius fecit, cantavissent…Adeo

interest quo ingenio materiam aut qua facundia tractes."[21] In their youths, Homer and Vergil sang of low subjects ("materia…humillima"), yet elevated them through their eloquence. Valla demonstrates that eloquence in particular separates the masters from the amateurs, not the choice of subject matter. In the right hands, trivial matters can be made lofty, while the unlearned poet can render heavy topics even more ponderous.

As with poets, so, too, with theologians. Just as one can find ample variety among poets, ranging from the mundane to the sublime, so too do those concerned with theological matters demonstrate that "inter quos tantum interest, ut earundem rerum scriptores, cum invicem confero, non de eadem videantur materia loqui, immo adeo hic de maxima ille de minima."[22] Indeed, Valla critiques the authors of theological prose and those of poetry equally, citing Horace's declaration from the *Epistles* that "scribimus indocti doctique poemata passim" and declaring that "quod ille de poetis, ego de theologis dico."[23] Valla sees a similar range of eloquence among the writers of theology: "ille repere, languere, dormire, stertere, somniare, hic felici volatu se ferre, nunc quasi spaciari, nunc in orbem ludere, nunc deorsum precipiti lapsu demitti eademque sese in altum celeritate recipere."[24] In prose as in verse, eloquence adds a certain lightness or

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[21] Valla, Lorenzo, *Laurentii Valle De Professione Religiosorum*, ed. Mariarosa Cortesi (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1986), 5-7. "Certain modern poets…express themselves in such a spiritless manner that it would have been better if…they had sung of the battles of frogs and mice…So important is the measure of ability and eloquence with which you treat your subject" (All translations of Valla's *Profession of the Religious* come from Valla, Lorenzo, *The Profession of the Religious and the principal arguments from The Falsely-Believed and Forged Donation of Constantine*. ed and trans. Olga Zorza Pugliese [Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 1985], 17-18).

[22] Valla (Cortesi), 8-9. "There is such difference among writers of theology that, when I compare those who treat a common theme, they do not appear to be speaking on the same subject even; rather, one deals with most weighty matters, another with the most insignificant" (Valla [Pugliese] 18).

[23] Valla (Cortesi), 8. Valla directly references the first letter from the second book of *Epistles*, a letter addressed to Caesar Augustus in which Horaces discusses at length the merits of poetry and writing in general.

[24] Valla (Cortesi), 9. Cortesi notes that Valla's use of the verb "stertere" recalls Bruni's same use of that word to refer to the Aristotelian scholars of the period. The translation reads: "One appears to creep listlessly, to sleep, snore, and dream, the other moves in a felicitous flight, now, as it were, ranging the

spirit to the work, one that lifts the debilitating weight from difficult subjects yet gives depth to comparatively trivial matters. Though seemingly unrelated to the topic of the dialogue, the method of argumentation utilized by Valla in this passage – establishing a premise and then refuting it through reasoning and literary exempla – will be the cornerstone for the disputation that constitutes the *De professione religiosorum*.

The musings on how to measure an author's skill in writing prose or poetry serve a larger purpose in the preface to the dialogue, namely as a means for Valla to preempt his critics' censure. The criticisms which Valla asserts dog him in each of his literary ventures – that he reaches too far in selecting subject matter and reprimands someone or some group in the process – become the focal point of the *incipit*. Addressing his text's dedicatee, Baptista Platamone[25], Valla begins the dialogue not with a further indication of its subject, but rather with a summary of these accusations, namely that many tend to marvel, "and some even reproach me personally, partly because I tackle subjects that are too lofty and difficult and, partly, because I never fail to select someone to chastise."[26] Immediately Valla establishes his defensive stance and emphasizes the difficulties facing him as a result of such accusations from his contemporaries. Valla concludes his opening remarks to his patron by asserting that even the idea for composing and disseminating the present work was not his own, but rather "aliorumquoque consiliis ad hec

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sky, then frolicking in a circle, at one time plunging in a headlong descent and, at another, returning on high with the same speed" (Valla, Pugliese, 18).

[25] Baptista Platamone was a statesman in the court of Alfonso V of Aragon. Serving as a diplomat, counselor, and judge of the grand court in Naples, he ultimately used his political influence and stature to rise to the position of vice-chancellor to Alfonso. Valla likely addressed this work to Platamone in his juridical capacity as he considered the statesman to be a "doctissimus sapientissimusque" man and a "vir hac tempestate singularis et omnis doctrince maximarumque rerum peritissimus." See Cortesi (xix-xxii).

[26] Valla (Pugliese), 17.

scribenda et ad te, Baptista, mittenda inductus sum, ut ex hoc ipso libello cognosces."[27] Valla is thus placed in a disadvantageous position from the outset of the text. This disadvantage will only be compounded once the narration of the dialogue begins, in which Valla, ever the champion of unpopular theological views, will challenge the relevance of religious institutions, such as monastic orders.

Valla's emphasis on his unfavorable position both inside and outside of the dialogue is by design, conforming to the commonplace among Renaissance humanists to engage in false modesty as well as establishing Valla as a great crusader within the narrative of the text. His lengthy defense against these charges in the introduction to the dialogue also hints at the overall structure of the text and Valla's philological motivations. In the disputation between Laurentius (Valla) and an unnamed Friar, the argument presented by Valla to counter his adversary's claims will be a meticulous and logical dismantling of a preconceived notion, much in the same way that Valla argues against the criticism that he reaches beyond his abilities by choosing theology as a subject. Furthermore, though the focus of the text may be a theological dispute, Valla will arrive at its resolution through rhetoric and examples culled from ancient authorities much as he does in exculpating himself from the accusations lobbied against him. Briefly responding to the second accusation, Valla makes plain this general methodology: "Qui autem hic responsum a me spectant, sic habeant, et consuesse me et consueturum posthac magis ut stimulum ita opiniones veterum sequi tam Grecorum quam Latinorum et more illorum libere loqui."[28] These Greek and

[27] Valla (Cortesi), 10; Pugliese translates this passage as "I am led to compose this work and send it to you, Baptista, not only on my own initiative but also on the advice of others, as you will learn from the brief tract itself" (Valla [Pugliese], 19).

[28] Valla (Cortesi), 10. "Nevertheless, those who expect a response from me here should know that it has been my custom up to now, and it will be even more so in the future, to follow the style and the opinions of both the Greek and Latin ancients, and to speak freely, according to their practice," (Valla, trans. Pugliese, 19).

Latin ancients are thus called as literary witnesses in refuting the claim that Valla transgresses when he writes on theological subjects.

The authorities that Valla enlists to counter these claims demonstrate the same blend of genre already seen at work in the *De vero falsoque bono*: the words of poets join those of orators, and authors of pagan ethics abut the teachings of Christian Fathers. The basis for this first criticism stems from a similar pronouncement found in Horace's *Ars poetica*, in which the poet exhorts all would-be writers to "sumite materiam vestris, qui scribitis, aequam / viribus et versate diu, quid ferre recusent / quid valeant umeri."[29] Valla does not disagree with the sentiment; rather he responds that it *is* in his nature to discuss difficult topics for he cannot possibly "tenuiores sumere ad scribendum materias," further echoing both the language of Horace's charge in the *Ars poetica* and other Horatian texts regarding writing, such as the first lines of an ode on poetic immortality ("Non usitata nec *tenui* ferar / penna biformis per liquidum aethera / vates").[30] In addition to the use of a variant form of the Horatian *tenui*, Valla continues this allusion by invoking bird imagery. As a means of explaining why he or any good orator must follow his own nature regarding the selection of subject matter, Valla reminds that all living creatures must follow their natural inclinations, for just as some birds "altum iter et nubibus proximum tenentes," other types "brevi volitatu inter arbusta fruticesque contentas." Similarly, some types of fish love the shore while others cleave to the rocks, and others still prefer the depths ("piscium genera litora ament, illa latebras etiam ac saxa, multa vasto mari profundoque gaudeant").[31]

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[29] From Horace's "De arte poetica," lines 38-40 (my emphasis) in Horace, *The Epistles of Horace*, edited by Augustus S. Wilkins (London: MacMillan & Co., 1965), 62; Cortesi, 3n.
[30] From Horace's "Odes," II.20, lines 1-3 in Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, translated by C.E. Bennett (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 164; Cortesi, 3n.
[31] Valla (Cortesi), 4.

Horace is not the only ancient authority present in this defense: Quintilian's teachings on locating the best argument suited to an orator's desires and abilities inform this parallel. The ancient rhetoric master instructs the orator-in-training to seek out arguments beyond the most common circumstances for they will not all be present in one location, just as "piscium quoque genera alia planis gaudent alia saxosis, regionibus etiam litoribusque discreta sunt."[32] Valla counters, however, that it is not the choice of subject matter that determines the quality of the writer, but rather how that writer treats said subject with eloquence: "Neque enim tam eas metimur suapte natura quam scribentium facultate, ut pro modo ingeniorum vel grandes vel pusille plerunque iudicentur."[33] This statement not only prompts Valla's lengthy digression on range of style exhibited by poets and theologians, but also shows shades of Ciceronian rhetoric. The use of the term "facultas" appears with some frequency in the works of Cicero, often referring to a skill set or the tools needed to realize a goal. Such is the case in the description of Demosthenes in the first book of *De oratore*. This orator was known for using all the oratorical devices at his disposal in order to reach the desired conclusion of his cause ("quibus in rebus omnis oratorum versaretur facultas").[34] The use of Cicero and Quintilian in Valla's defense of

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[32] From book 5, X.21 of the *Institutes*, which Butler translates as "even the various kinds of fish flouris in different surroundings, some preferring a smooth and others a rocky bottom." In Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 2, edited and translated Harold Edgeworth Butler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 212-213.

[33] Valla (Cortesi), 3-4. "For we do not measure a topic so much by its intrinsic nature as by the skill of the writer, with the result that subjects are generally judged to be either sublime or insignificant according to the degree of the author's ability, (Valla, trans. Pugliese, 17). Of further interest in this introduction is the uneven focus of Valla's refutation of these claims. He writes at length to counter the charge that he or his writing style are not elevated enough to address theological subjects, yet offers only a few words to the second accusation that he seeks to insult a person or institution. This lopsided defense not only speaks to Valla's interests in writing his treatises, namely that ingratiating himself with others is not nearly as important as investigating or refuting spurious claims through logic, literary references, and philology, but also looks forward to the slipshod peroration of the treatise.

[34] The exact translation, provided by Watson, is the "particulars in which the whole faculties of the orator are employed." See Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De oratore libri tres*, ed. Augustus S. Wilkins, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 122 and Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *Cicero On Oratory and Orators,* trans. and ed.

his writing style is noteworthy as Valla will incorporate both authorities into the body of his dialogue as guides for the structure of his argument and for particular points as well.

The narrative cycles of the *De professione religiosorum*

When Valla finally turns to the *narratio* of his dialogue, establishing the date, setting, and impetus for the reported discussion, he concludes the first of a number of narrative cycles within the text. These cycles are sections of the text which each feature a particular type of genre or style of argumentation. The first cycle consists of Valla's letter to Baptista Plantamone, defending his writing style, discoursing on oratorical eloquence in general, and concluding with the brief description of how the discussion that he will soon report came to pass. This *incipit* is indebted to Ciceronian dialogues such as *De oratore*, which, as evidenced by the *De vero bono*, was already an important model for Valla's dialogues. Cicero's lengthy examination of oratory and ideal orators begins with a similar structure and language. With Valla's complaint to Plantamone, that "solent in me…plerique mirari, nonnulli etiam apud mequoque ipsum incessere, partim quod numquam non aliquem mihi deligam ad reprehendendum," the humanist references and responds to the opening lines of *De oratore*.[35] In the *incipit* of this dialogue, Cicero, addressing the recipient of the text, his brother Quintus, offers a wistful description of a time when public officials could pursue their studies in private without fear of censure:

J.S. Watson, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 28. Cortesi's notes also identify the use of "facultas" in *De inventione* II, 24 as a source of Valla's use of the word. In this text, Cicero defines "facultas" as the opportunity that arises and allows a person (in this case a criminal) to carry out an act: "Facultas, si ratio, adiutores, adiumenta ceteraque quae ad rem pertinebunt defuisse alcui demonstrabuntur" (Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De inventione; De Optimo Genere Oratorum; Topica*, trans. H.M. Hubbell, [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949], 186). See Cortesi, 3n.

[35] Valla (Cortesi), 3.

"Cogitanti mihi saepe numero et memoria vetera repetenti perbeati fuisse, Quinte frater, illi videri solent, qui in optima re publica, cum et honoribus et rerum gestarum gloria florerent, eum vitae cursum tenere potuerunt, ut vel in negotio sine periculo vel in otio cum dignitate esse possent."[36]

Cicero invokes this period as a counterpoint to his own experience, which has seen all his hopes of living in an environment that grants the freedom to comfortably pursue one's writing quashed by unexpected forces (his exile, civil wars). Furthermore, even in times of peace, Cicero could only take up these literary endeavors "quantum mihi vel fraus inimicorum vel causae amicorum vel res publica tribuet oti."[37] Valla's own *incipit* continues this same theme, yet, beyond the Ciceronian echo, there is no nostalgia for a lost time when intellectuals could write with impunity, because such a situation has never been known to Valla. Instead public officials, like himself, regardless of their literary prowess, remain vulnerable to the vindictiveness of enemies and must submit to the urgings of friends (hence the composition of this very text which, Valla reminds Plantamone in the preface, came about chiefly due to the advice of others).[38]

Valla's digression into eloquence and oratory is in keeping with and informed by the Ciceronian model established in *De Oratore*, particularly the comparison offered by Cicero between poets and orators. As the most celebrated writers of any era, these two types of artists were, according to Cicero, the most learned and, as such, the scarcest: "Vere mihi hoc videor esse dicturus, ex omnibus eis, qui in harum artium liberalissimis studiis sint doctrinisque versati,

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[36] Cicero (Wilkins), 75-76. Watson provides the following translation: "As I frequently contemplate and call to mind the times of old, those in general seem to me, brother Quintus, to have been supremely happy, who, while they were distinguished with honors and the glory of their actions in the best days of the republic, were enabled to pursue such a course of life that they could continue either in employment without danger, or in retirement with dignity" (Cicero [Watson], 6).

[37] Cicero (Wilkins), 78. "Whatever leisure the malice of enemies, the causes of friends…will allow me." Translated by J.S. Watson (Cicero, Watson, 7).

[38] In the introduction to her critical edition of the *De professione religiosorum*, Cortesi underscores the precarious nature of the intellectual environment in which Valla found himself when writing this dialogue: "La composizione di questo dialogo si colloca dunque in un periodo particolarmente critico delle vicende letterarie e private del Valla, che si inaspriranno in seguito alla circolazione sempre più ampia delle opere e agli atteggiamenti assunti dall'umanista" (Cortesi, xix).

minimam copiam poetarum et oratorum egregiorum exstitisse…atque in hoc ipso numero…multo tamen pauciores oratores quam poetae boni reperientur."[39] Valla continues this parallel in his own discussion of eloquence. Prior to making the comparison between poetry and theology, Valla notes that just as in poetry "nulla enim earum tam locuples est, que non inops, si a tenui vena, nulla rursus tam inops que non locuples esse videatur, si ab uberi tractetur ingenio," so too does one find a similar range of eloquence in orators: "Iam vero in eisdem causis non vides, ut apud hunc oratorem omnia ardeant, apud illum vero frigida sint?"[40] What links orators and poets, reason both Cicero and Valla, is that unlike other authors, these two categories of thinkers chiefly require eloquence in order to best present their subject matter and rouse their audience.

With the presentation of the events that led to Valla's debate, the author moves his readers away from a typically Ciceronian dialogue to another authority, and narrative cycle, namely the early Socratic dialogues of Plato. Valla recounts how a few days ago, "in basilica foro iuncta," he stood in a circle among other learned men ("complures docti circulo facto staremus"), and to this group joined another individual, an unnamed Friar, who was known to them all ("pro familiaritate, que illi nobiscum omnibus erat…in orbem nostrum receptus est").[41] Plato's dialogues *Lysis* and *Charmides* begin in a similar manner: in the *Lysis*, Socrates comes upon a gathering of acquaintances "at the little gate by the spring of Panops…standing in a group," while in the *Charmides*, Socrates finds a large crowd gathered by "Taureas' wrestling-

[39] Cicero (Wilkins), 82-83. Watson gives the following English translation: "Of all those who have engaged in the most liberal pursuits and departments of such sciences, I think I may truly say that a smaller number of eminent poets have arisen than of men distinguished in any other branch of literature; and in the whole multitude…there will be found…far fewer good orators than good poets" (Watson, 8-9).
[40] Valla (Cortesi), 7; "Now, in truth, do you not see how even in judicial cases one orator's speech is passionate, while another's is cold" (Valla [Pugliese], 18).
[41] Valla (Cortesi), 11.

school opposite the temple of Basile."[42] Still in keeping with the *incipit* of *Charmides*, wherein the men assembled discussed the outcome of a recent battle in which Socrates was involved, Valla's group were in the midst of discussing current events that would have some bearing on the topic of the dialogue:

> "Loquebamur autem de coniuratione, que patefecta eodem die fuerat, qui fuit pridie nonas Ianuarias, eratque nonnula inter nos de hac re controversia, quod duobus antea diebus lupi duo intra menia deprehensi fuissent tandemque cum diu per urbem diffugissent a populo confecti, querebamusque nunquid hoc coniurationem factam eamque patefactum iri portenderet."[43]

One member of the group, Paulus Corbius, an instigator, suggests that members of the clergy were involved in the conspiracy, thus accounting for the portentous nature of the arrival of the wolves. This, in turn, prompts the Friar to defend his profession and set forth the premise for the debate: "An non magna est quod, cum ego atque tu parem degamus vitam, plus tamen ego remunerationis a Deo quam tu sum assecuturus?"[44] The men then look to Valla, the Socrates figure in this dialogue, to debate the question ("hic ceteri ridere, sed etiam hesitare et inter se querere ac plerique ad me rescipere et meam sciscitari sententiam")[45]. The dialogue that follows is equally Platonic in nature, presenting the debate in a realistic matter, that is, without authorial intervention.

Cicero, however, is not wholly absent from this second narrative cycle. Valla's pronouncement that he will omit phrases indicating the speaker ("Que disputatio…sine 'inquam' et 'inquit' exposita est") in order to create the sense that the reader is witnessing the debate as it

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[42] Plato, "Lysis," trans. Donald Watt, 131; Plato "Charmides," trans. Donald Watt, 177 all from Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, ed. Trevor J. Saunders (London: Penguin, 1987).
[43] Valla (Cortesi), 11-12. "We were discussing the conspiracy that had been uncovered that same day, January 4th, and some disagreement had arisen among us concerning an unusual event. Two days before, a pair of wolves had been found inside the city walls and, after a long chase through the city, they had finally been killed by the people. We were wondering whether this event foretold the occurrence of the conspiracy and its discovery" (Valla [Pugliese], 19-20).
[44] Valla (Cortesi), 13. "Is it not an advantage that, although both you and I conduct our lives in a similar manner, I, nevertheless shall receive a greater reward from God than you?" (Valla [Pugliese], 20).
[45] Valla (Cortesi), 14.

unfolded ("Itaque qui legunt hec, non legere auctorem, sed duos disputantes audire se et videre existiment"), recalls a similar statement made by Cicero in the *Tusculan Disputations*: "Sed quo commodius disputationes nostrae explicentur, sic eas exponam, quasi agitur res, non quasi narretur."[46] Indeed, notwithstanding the shades of Platonic dialogues, the heart of Valla's argument within the *De Professione* owes more to Roman rhetoricians than to Greek philosophers.[47] It is Quintilian, in particular, who provides the structure for Valla's argument against the Friar's premise.

Valla begins his refutation of the Friar's assertion that "parem degatis vitam, plus te a Deo remunerationis assecuturum, eam vim habeat" [although you…may lead similar lives, you will receive a greater reward from God] by reframing the topic as a dispute based on linguistics and logic, not necessarily as one based on theology.[48] Valla first accomplishes this by replacing the Friar's term, "religionem" *(religious order)*, with "sectam" *(sect)*. This naturally prompts objections from the Friar, but Valla explains that his word choice is based on both legal precedent and logical argument:

> "Non soleo, cum in cetu doctorum disputo, quales hi sunt, verbis, que magis vulgus quam periti probant, sine prefatione aut aliqua testificatione uti, ne forte illa usurpans approbare videar et ad legem mee orationis posse convinci (id quod factitari in iudiciis cernimus)…Itaque cum vos religiosos tantum modo facitis qui professi estis, ceteros vero religiosos negates, quid aliud quam vos solos christianos, vos solos bonos, vos solos mundos immaculatosque fatemini…Que cum ita sint, non feci illiberaliter in vos, quod religiosos appellare dubitarim, cum et multi aliorum, qui istam sive sectam sive regulam professi non sunt,

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[46] Valla (Cortesi), 14; the English translation of Cicero's words reads, "but in order that the course of our discussion may be more conveniently followed I shall put them before you in the form of a debate and not in narrative form" (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, ed. and trans J.E. King, (London: William Heinemann, 1945), 10.

[47] This text, read in tandem with the *Dialectical Disputations*, demonstrates Valla's interests in correcting Aristotelian dialectic, which he considered overly abused by the Medieval scholastic philosophers and divorced from linguistic reality. Peter Mack (*Renaissance Argument: Valla and Agricola in the Traditions of Rhetoric and Dialectic*, [Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993]) and Lodi Nauta (*In Defense of Common Sense: Lorenzo Valla's Humanist Critique of Scholastic Philosophy*, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009]) discuss Valla's reevaluation of dialectics at length in their respective monographs.

[48] Valla (Cortesi), 14; Valla (Pugliese), 21.

religiosi vocari debeant, quia sanctissime vivunt, et multi vestrorum vocari non debeant, quia coinquinatissime."[49]

Valla does not arrive at this conclusion regarding the choice of "sect" instead of "religious" based solely on logic and the stereotype of irreligious friars. Rather, he turns to the tool of philology to explicate these two words, their historical significance, and their respective appropriateness for this context. Sect, asserts Valla, was a term appropriate for describing different philosophical groups or schools: "Sunt autem secte, quas αιρεσεις, Greci vocant, diversa genera sapientie tum tradende, tum capessende atque exercende."[50] Thus, such a term is applicable to the various orders of friars in that they all are Christians yet they adhere to different rules. The term "religious," by contrast, is too strong in Valla's estimation, for "quid est aliud esse religiosum quam esse christianum, et quidem vere christianum?"[51]

Valla takes recourse to this manner of argumentation, namely establishing a premise and then examining it through a detailed study of language, throughout the text. After discussing the differences between professing a particular religious sect versus being religious (an attribute of both clergy and laymen), Valla leads the Friar in a discussion of related topics that form their own narrative (or argumentative) cycles: first, if a friar deserves a greater reward by pronouncing vows than a layperson, then what does it mean to pronounce a vow, and finally, what,

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[49] Valla (Cortesi), 15-21. "When I engage in disputations in the company of learned men like those here present, I am not in the habit of using terms that are approved by the masses rather than by experts, unless a preliminary explanation or some evidence is given. Otherwise it would seem that, in adopting them, I accept them, and thus I could be refuted on the grounds of the terminology I use, as we see happening in judicial trials…Therefore when you judge yourselves to be religious, because you have made a religious profession, whereas you deny that others are religious, are you not in essence indicating that you alone are Christians, you alone are good, pure and untainted…This being so, I did not act ungenerously toward you when I hesitated to call you 'religious', seeing that many others, who have not professed your 'sect' or 'Rule', must be called religious since they live the purest of lives, whereas many of you can not b called religious, since you live most sinfully" (Valla [Pugliese], 21-24).

[50] Valla (Cortesi), 17-18; "Sects, which in Greek are called *hairéseis* are different ways of teaching, acquiring, and practicing wisdom" (Valla [Pugliese], 22).

[51] Valla (Cortesi), 19. "For what does it mean to be religious, if not to be a Christian, and indeed a true Christian?" (Valla [Pugliese], 23).

specifically, is the nature of those vows. By constructing his argument in such a way that moves from general ideas to the specific words that define those ideas, Valla effectively strips away the subjective, theological interpretations and looks solely at the indisputable evidence of philology. In this way, the *De professione religiosorum*, though a dialogue, reads as a companion text of the work for which Valla was most famous, the oration on the false Donation of Constantine (*De Falso Credita Et Ementita Constantini Donatione)*.[52]

Indeed, much like the *Oration on the Donation of Constantine* in which Valla examined the individual words of the document to determine if such terms were used contrary to historical evidence, the *De professione religiosorum* equally limits the philologist's exercise to a close examination of the words in question, their historical meanings, and an a carefully chosen selection of quotations from ancient authorities which bolster his interpretation of those words. Such authorities, with one or two exceptions, were largely culled from books of the Old and New Testament. Noteworthy as well is the dominance of Valla's own voice within this dialogue. The Friar's contributions are often limited to setting a new premise to discuss, to confirming an interpretation offered by his interlocutor, or to refuting some of the more bold statements that Laurentius makes. Laurentius, the textual counterpart of Valla, is the only one to engage in lengthy speeches, make linguistic digressions, and offer quotations from various authors. This stands in marked contrast to a dialogue such as the *De vero bono*, in which Valla accorded all the speakers, even those who did not share his position, equal space to present their opinions and literary interpretations. The result of this limited blending of viewpoints and authorities is that

[52] Valla in fact composed both works contemporaneously. The *De professione religiosorum*, according to a critical consensus, dates between 1439 and 1442, while the oration on the Donation of Constantine was composed by Valla between April 2 and May 25 of 1440 (Pugliese, 1; Bowersock, 2007).

instead of a plurality of voices, by the close of the *De professione religiosorum* only one voice emerges, namely that of Valla.

Another aspect of the *De professione religiosorum* which further connects it to orations like the *De falso credita* is the clear influence of Quintilian in the construction of Valla's refutation. Valla derives his cycles of argumentation, epitomized by the investigation into what it means to pronounce a vow and the nature of those individual vows, from the legal rhetoric outlined in the *Institutio oratoria*, specifically Quintilian's teachings on status theory.[53] In the third book of Quintilian's text, the author expounds on the best methods to argue a case. Beginning with a discussion of alternative theories and methods, Quintilian arrives at the three kinds of status that will best help an orator formulate his argument and win his case: conjecture, definition, and quality. Quintilian cites Cicero as the source of these questions which form the basis of every case,

> "nam primum oportet subesse aliquid, de quo ambigitur; quod, quid sit et quale sit, certe non potest aestimari, nisi prius esse constiterit, ideoque ea prima quaestio. sed non statim, quod esse manifestum est, etiam quid sit, apparet, hoc quoque constituto novissima qualitas superest, neque his exploratis aliud est ultra. his infinitae quaestiones, his finitae continentur; horum aliqua in demonstrativa, deliberativa, iudiciali materia utique tractatur. haec rursus iudiciales causas et rationali parte et legali continent; neque enim ulla iuris disceptatio nisi finitione, qualitate, coniectura potest explicari."[54]

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[53] Status theory refers to the discussion in the third book of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* of the Greek term στασις, translated as either "basis" or "status." Quintilian utilizes this term to indicate the "main point or general question (arisen from the first conflict) of the cause" (Belén Saiz Noeda, "Proofs, Arguments, Places," in *Quintilian and the Law: The Art of Persuasion in Law and* Politics, ed. Olga Eveline Tellegen-Couperus, [Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2003], 107n).

[54] "For first of all there must be some subject for the question, since we cannot possibly determine *what a thing is*, or *of what kind it is*, until we have first ascertained *whether it is*, and therefore the first question raised is *whether it is*. But even when it is clear that a thing *is*, it is not immediately obvious *what it is*. And when we have decided what it is, there remains the question of its *quality*. These three points once ascertained, there is no further question to ask. These heads cover both *definite* and *indefinite questions*. One or more of them is discussed in every demonstrative, deliberative or forensic theme. These heads again cover all cases in the courts, whether we regard them from the point of view of *rational* or *legal questions*. For no legal problem can be settled save by the aid of *definition, quality,* and *conjecture*" (III, 6.80-82). In Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian,* vol. 1, ed. and trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler, (London: W. Heinemann, 1921), 451-452.

Quintilian's statuses – conjecture, definition, and quality – are indeed the very questions that Valla poses and explores in each cycle of his argument in the *De professione religiosorum*. In the discussion of the vows taken by the Friar and others of his profession, for example, Valla first asks if it is the Friar's position that the vow itself has any merit in securing a greater recompense for those who profess it ("Et hoc quod nunc affers secunda questio est: nunquid votum professionis aliquid in se meriti habeat necne").[55] When the Friar affirms that they do (or, more to the point, that Laurentius could not possibly have anything to say "contra me, hoc est contra omnes homines"), Laurentius moves beyond conjecture to definition and quality, arguing against monastic vows based on a detailed discussion of the language used by friars.[56]

Conforming to Quintilian's status of *definition*, Valla examines the words utilized in pronouncing vows, which, he contends, the friars use spuriously. The term for vow, "votum," for example, based on its historical usage cannot signify what the Friar wants it to mean, that is a promise given freely without conditions. Valla not only offers a definition for the term, but he illustrates its meanings by taking recourse to a mixture of ancient authorities, in particular the *Georgics* of Vergil and passages from the *Old Testament*:

> "hoc nomen 'votum' inscienter usurpare, cuius duplex significatio est: una cum pro cupiditate ac desiderio accipitur, ut Virgilius:
>
> Illa seges demum votis respondet avari
> agricole, bis que solem, bis frigora sentit.
>
> Altera cum est sponsio facta Deo, nos gratum illi aliquid prestituros si ille invicem, quod a se poscimus, dumtaxat non iniquum, ante prestiterit, ut apud eundem
>
> Votaque servati solvent in litore nautae.
>
> Quodsi causam posterioris huius significationis inquirimus, reperiemus eam quodammodo a superiore discendere…Nam quod votum sive apud falsas religions sive apud veram inveniemus sine illa quam dixi

[55] Valla (Cortesi), 32.
[56] *Ibid*.

condicione susceptum? An Iacob cum in Mesopotamiam se conferret sine condicione promisit dicens: «Si fuerit Deus mecum et custodierit me in via…erit mihi Dominus in Deum…»"[57]

As indicated by Quintilian, Valla's argument does not require further elaboration beyond these questions: the Friar quickly concedes that he cannot think of a vow that is made unconditionally. Similar to Valla's earlier substitution of "sect" for "religion" based on philological reasoning, after denying the value of "votum," he recommends the use of the term "oath," for "quid autem erit iuramentum? Certe promissio cum iureiurando."[58] With both interlocutors having agreed upon the definitions of vow and oaths, Valla can proceed to the final status required to build his argument: the quality of an oath.[59] It is in this portion of the tripartite argument that Laurentius and the Friar investigate the nature or extent of the oath, what it encompasses and what are its limits. The conclusion that Laurentius arrives at, through a combination of textual authorities and a series of syllogisms, is that swearing an oath to God does not make this promise more binding, rather it is superfluous: "Non video quid attineat aut quomodo liceat illam reddere validiorem. Quod sanum est, quis curet aut quis possit reddere sanius? quod plenum plenius? quod perfectum

[57] Valla (Cortesi), 33. "You employ ignorantly the term *votum* ("vow") which has two significations: according to the first, it is taken to stand for "greed" and "desire", as in Virgil: "That crop, which twice has felt the sun's heat and the frost twice, will answer at last the *prayers* (*votis*) of the never-satisfied farmer." The second meaning is that of a promise made to God, that we shall do something to please Him, if, in return, He will first grant the favour we beg of Him, provided it is not something unjust, of course. In Virgil again we read: "and sailors ashore shall pay their *vows* (*vota*) for a safe return." If we examine the origin of the latter meaning, we find that it derives from the preceding one…For what vow can we find, either in false religions or in the true one, that can be taken without the condition I mentioned? Did Jacob perhaps make an unconditional promise when, as he travelled towards Mesopotamia, he said: If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go…then shall the Lord be my God…" (Valla [Pugliese], 32-33).

[58] Valla (Cortesi), 37. "For what can an oath be? Undoubtedly, it is a promise accompanied by a swearing" (Valla [Pugliese], 35).

[59] Mack emphasizes this progression, noting that in Quintilian's status theory "quality only comes into play when the facts of a particular case and the definition of the facts are agreed by both sides. Quality in status theory is concerned with how you view the thing (usually a particular action) whose definition you are agreed on" (Mack, 51).

perfectius? Votum ut perfectum sit aut perfectius, iuramento non fit."[60] Laurentius eventually stymies the Friar in this point, and will continue to refute all subsequent points in a similar vein. Valla's argument in the *De professione religiosorum* thus proceeds in a chain of disputed points, with each cycle establishing a premise, defining the terms of that premise, investigating the essence of those terms, and then concluding with a refutation or correction of the premise.

The rhetoric of Quintilian inspired more than the method of argumentation that Valla exhibits in this dialogue: in these same narrative cycles one can see the oratorical structure for which Quintilian advocates in the fourth through sixth books of the *Institutio oratoria*. It is only when we reach the dialogue's conclusion that Valla confirms this macrostructure for his text: after his lengthy concluding speech, one of the spectators of the dialogue refers to Laurentius' final words as his peroration, the final necessary part of a Quintilian-inspired oration. This thus recasts the previous, seemingly incongruous cycles in a new light. The prefatory letter acknowledging the common complaints against Valla's writing and character followed by his defense of eloquence functions as the standard *exordium* which, according to Quintilian, serves more to win over the audience than introduce the facts of the case ("causa principii nulla alia est, quam ut auditorem, quo sit nobis in ceteris partibus accommodatior, praeparemus").[61] Quintilian emphasizes the importance of the character and person of the orator pleading the case, asserting that the orator should be thought to be a good man ("vir bonus creditur"), that he appear free of any suspicion of ulterior motives, and even outmatched by stronger forces: "Sed ut praecipua in hoc dicentis auctoritas, si omnis in subeundo negotio suspicio sordium aut odiorum aut

[60] Valla (Cortesi), 38; Pugliese offers this translation: "I do not see what oaths have to do with it or how they can make a promise more binding. Who can cure and make healthier that which is healthy, or fuller what is full, or more perfect what is perfect? An oath does not make a vow perfect or more perfect" (Valla [Pugliese], 36).

[61] From the fourth book of the *Institutes* (1.5) in Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 2, 8.

ambitionis afuerit, ita quaedam in his quoque commendatione tacita, si nos infirmos, imparatos, impares agentium contra ingeniis dixerimus, qualia sunt pleraque Messalae prooemia."[62] Valla's preface, emphasizing the challenging position in which he finds himself, demonstrates that he has read and followed Quintilian's teachings.

The orator should then follow the *exordium* with the *narratio*, that is the facts or premise of the case. Valla does so with his brief description of the circumstances that led to the debate, and the text bears this out with the word "*narratio"* written in the margin.[63] Quintilian considers this portion of the oration a necessary, though typically brief, step that falls between the *exordium* and the *proof* which will follow: "nam cum prooemium idcirco comparatum sit, ut index ad rem accipiendam fiat conciliatior, docilior, intentior, et probatio nisi causa prius cognita non possit adhiberi, protinus iudex notitia rerum instruendus videtur."[64] While Valla's proof or argument in the *De professione religiosorum* diverges slightly from the standard oratorical format to focus instead on Socratic dialectic (though the influence of Quintilian is still present in the argumentation), the teachings of Quintilian on ideal oratory clearly return in the final cycle of the argument, the peroration.[65] After ably confuting all the assertions of the Friar on the benefits

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[62] The English translation of Quintilian's text, given by Butler, reads, "but just as the authority of the speaker carries greatest weight, if his undertaking of the case is free from all suspicion of meanness, personal spite or ambition, so also we shall derive some silent support from representing that we are weak, unprepared, and no match for the powerful talents arrayed against us, a frequent trick in the *exordia* of Messala" (From Quintilian *Institutes* IV, 1, 8, in Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 2, 10-11).

[63] This was likely written not by Valla, but by his friend Giovanni Tortelli whose handwriting Cortesi was able to confirm using textual evidence. Another hand, likely that of a librarian, inserted the word "*narracio*" in the margin of this same manuscript (Cortesi, 11n).

[64] Butler's translation: "For since the purpose of the *exordium* is to make the judge more favourably disposed and more attentive to our case and more amenable to instruction, and since the *proof* cannot be brought forward until the facts of the case are known, it seems right that the judge should be instructed in the facts without delay" (*Institutes* IV, 2, 24, from Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol 2, 62-63).

[65] This structure is not lost on the critics, such as Cortesi, who recognizes the growing oratorical progression in Valla's text which begins "dall'esordio destinato a impressionare favorevolemente

or worth on taking up religious vows, Laurentius concludes with a lengthy speech that draws together all the individual points to demonstrate the overwhelming power of his argument: "Verum postquam singula confutavi et tu nunc non de singulis agis, tempus est in universum respondere et quid boni professio habeat ostendere."[66] This is in keeping with Quintilian's instruction to repeat the facts ("rerum repetitio et congregatio") for the cumulative effect will show the weight of the argument ("et memoriam iudicis reficit et totam simul causam ponit ante oculos et, etiamsi per singula minus moverat, turba valet").[67] Furthermore, that this portion of the speech is a peroration is not lost on the listeners internal to the text: Paulus Corbius at the conclusion refers to this final speech as "perorationem…tuam."[68]

At first, Laurentius' closing speech demonstrates the standard aspects of a peroration: the orator repeats the salient points of the case and, following Quintlian's teachings, utilizes all his powers of eloquence in order to stir the listeners and sway the judge to his side ("cum in aliis tum maxime ir hac parte debet crescere oratio")[69]. As Laurentius moves to what should be the rousing conclusion, the reader expects, given the tenor of the argument up to this point and a knowledge of other works in Valla's repertoire, a sound thrashing of modern religious orders. This was the expectation of those listening to the debate. Paulus Corbius remarked that he

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l'uditorio, alla *narratio* per lo più breve, al corpo del discorso in cui acquista notevole importanza l'uso dialettico dell'interrogazione, alla *peroratio* finale marcata da una netta amplificazione del tono" (Cortesi, lxxvi).

[66] Valla (Cortesi), 60. "Since I have indeed refuted every individual point you made and you are no longer dealing with specific reasons, it is time to respond in general terms and to show what good there is in professing religion" (Valla [Pugliese], 50).

[67] From Quintilian's *Institutes* (VI, 1, 1) in Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol 2, 382. The English translation, provided by Butler, reminds that "repetition and grouping of the facts…serves both to refresh the memory of the judge and to place the whole of the case before his eyes, and, even although the facts may have made little impression on him in detail, their cumulative effect is considerable" (383).

[68] Valla (Cortesi), 67.

[69] From the fourth book of Quintilian *Institutes* (VI, 1, 29) which Butler translates as follows: "our eloquence ought to be pitched higher in this portion of our speech than in any other" (from Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol 2, 400-401).

anticipated the oration would conclude "in vituperatione fratrum," as this would be not only the most logical ending that Laurentius could make, but also one that he could do "copiosissime" [most eloquently].[70] Valla instead shocks Corbius (and the reader) by changing course completely and concluding with a few words of praise for friars: "de fratrum laudibus dicam. Fratres sunt, qui vere labans templum Dei…fulciunt."[71] Valla thus subverts the ending of the text, nearly denying the entire argument that had sought to construct.

As such, this ending rings false with the reader and some of the listeners, chiefly Corbius, who declares that he is unsatisfied with such a weak conclusion to the strong argument: "Cetera…tibi, Laurenti, assentior: peroratio tamen tuam non probo, que non tam laudum fraternarum quam timoris tui testimonium fuit."[72] Corbius' complaint that Laurentius praises friars only to quell any animosity that might arise against him is indeed valid. Yet this is not Valla's only goal: rather, in concluding in such a manner, he demonstrates his skill in creating textual unity. Laurentius' haphazard attempt to seek favor with members of religious orders ("eoque ne tecum inimice me agere existimes et ut in gratiam redeam tuam"), recalls the criticisms mentioned by Valla in the proem, namely that his works constantly seek to reprove others and create enemies.[73] Though a curious finale to the text, this sense of dissatisfaction voiced by Corbius with the hollow resolution to what was previously such a sound argument again connects Valla's *De profession religiosorum* with a similar ending in Poliziano's *Fabula d'Orfeo*.

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[70] Valla (Cortesi), 67; Valla (Pugliese), 55).
[71] Valla (Cortesi), 65. "I shall now sing the praises of friars. Friars are those who truly support the tottering temple of God" (Valla [Pugliese], 54).
[72] Valla (Cortesi), 66-67. "I agree with you, Laurentius, on the rest of your speech; yet I am not satisfied with the…peroration, which was not so much a praise of friars as proof of your timidity" (Valla [Pugliese], 55).
[73] Valla (Cortesi), 65.

The dedicatory letter to the *Fabula d'Orfeo*: an exordium

In the *Orfeo*, the prefatory letter to Carlo Canale marks the first cycle of Poliziano's play. This letter, like Valla's letter to Platamone, constitutes an *exordium* to the text, demonstrating the standard aspects of the oratorical introduction, namely in that it describes the circumstances surrounding the composition of the text and offers an account of the hardships that faced the poet in writing his work. Poliziano underscores his lack of agency in the creation of the text, noting that he wrote this play "a requisizione del nostro reverendissimo Cardinale Mantuano." Furthermore, Poliziano composed the play in less than ideal circumstances: "in tempo di dua giorni, intra continui tumulti, in stilo vulgare perché dagli spettatori meglio fusse intesa." This contextual information regarding the play's creation also serves as an *apologia* for the state of the text. Poliziano compares his play to the deformed babes of Sparta, who, according to the tradition, were to be cast out of the city and not permitted to live because they represented a "stirpa indegna." The poet judges his play to be of the same quality, namely of a "qualità da far più tosto al suo padre vergogna che onore," and he equally wishes for it to be "lacerata."

At first glance, Poliziano appears to deviate from the Vallian model laid out in the *De professione religiosorum*, assuming in this preface a level of humility and guilelessness that certainly one like Valla would never feign in his own texts. Rather than highlighting his literary ability, Poliziano seems to accept the lacking quality of the play and immediately calls attention to this feature of the work. He also underscores his innocence in the dissemination of such a lackluster literary endeavor, thus preempting potential charges of vanity and pride from his contemporaries. The poet reminds Canale (and, by extension, informs the reader) that given that "voi e alcuni altri troppo di me amanti, contro la mia volontà in vita la ritenete, conviene ancora

a me avere più rispetto allo amor paterno e alla volontà vostra che al mio ragionevole instituto." A closer reading of the letter, however, reveals Poliziano's artistic skill at work, for elements of this preface look forward to specific plot points and themes.

The action of the *Orfeo* is, much like the language, an amalgamation of different sources. The god Mercury opens the play, appearing as the prologus to set the scene and recount the sequence of events to the spectators. Poliziano follows this with a conversation between two shepherds set in an idyllic, pastoral world. The young Aristeo laments his unrequited love for Euridice, the wife of Orfeo, while Mopso, the older, wiser shepherd, offers him words of comfort and good sense. Aristeo spies Euridice in the distance and pursues her. In attempting to flee him, Euridice dies from the bite of a venomous snake lying hidden in the grass. At this point the hero, Orfeo, enters the scene, receiving word from a messanger of his wife's death. Stricken with grief, he travels to the Underworld and charms its inhabitants with his song – Proserpina in particular – prompting the striking of a deal with Plutone: Euridice can return with Orfeo to the world above, provided that the singer does not look at her shade as she follows him out. Orfeo's excessive love proves his undoing, however, for he does look back, losing Euridice forever. Returning above to the pastoral world, Orfeo's overabundance of love for Euridice quickly transforms into complete disdain for all other women. Such a stance angers a group of maenads, who then kill the singer, enthusiastically tearing him limb from limb in their frenzy. The play concludes with their song.

Returning to the *exordium*, Poliziano's protestations, in light of the play's action, are a literary device that, in addition to shielding the poet from censure, serves the greater purpose of encouraging the reader to marvel at the genius of the author in light of the circumstances of the play's composition. In fact, the prefatory letter, while declaring the lack of quality and cohesion within the text, actually emphasizes narrative unity within the work and the careful precision

with which the poet selected and utilized each word. Poliziano's objections to the *Orfeo* are replete with hints that foreshadow the major developments of the play, creating a sort of ring structure within the text. The most obvious of these allusions is the comparison between the fate of Orfeo and Poliziano's own desired fate for his literary creation, namely that it too be torn to pieces. Poliziano's use of "lacerata" in reference to the play looks forward to the cry of the *Baccanti* in lines 301 to 308, in which the frenzied women boast that they have ripped the ancient poet apart piece by piece:

O, o! O, o! Mort'è lo scelerato!
Euoè! Bacco, Bacco, i' ti ringrazio!
Per tutto 'l bosco l'abbiamo stracciato,
tal ch'ogni sterpo è del suo sangue sazio.
L'abbiamo a membro a membro lacerato
in molti pezzi con crudele strazio.
Or vadi e biasimi la teda legittima!
Euoè! Bacco, accetta questa vittima!

Similarly, Poliziano's reference to his friends keeping the play alive against his will and reason anticipates the fate of Euridice, returned to life (albeit briefly) contrary to the laws of nature. Poliziano underscores his doubts in following the requests born out of their affection for him by calling these friends "troppo di me amanti," a phrase which echoes Euridice's lament in lines 245 to 250 that Orfeo's intemperate love has undone them both:

Oimé, che 'l troppo amore
n'ha disfatti ambendua!
Ecco ch'i' ti son tolta a gran furore,
né sono ormai più tua.
Ben tendo a te le braccia, ma non vale,
ché 'ndrieto son tirata. Orfeo mie, vale!

In essence, Poliziano establishes here what will become the overarching conflict of this play – love versus reason – in letting himself be moved by the fatherly love he owes his text rather than his own "ragionevole instituto." Moreover, by emphasizing the fervor in which the play was written, Poliziano connects himself directly to both the "gran furore" of Orfeo in Euridice's

lament as well as to the poetic fury that accompanies all the great poets of old, further bolstering his poetic reputation.

Poliziano's protestations in this dedicatory letter also serve as evidence of his philological study. Certain particulars of the letter recall the works of ancient authors that tend to populate his later *Silvae* rather than the earlier *Stanze*. One such author is Statius, whose own *Silvae* were not only an inspiration for Poliziano's occasional poems of the same name, but also the subject of his first university course as chair of rhetoric at the University of Florence during the academic year of 1480 to 1481. In the preface to the first book of Statius's collected *Silvae*, the Roman poet salutes his friend and dedicatee, Stella, and addresses his concerns in collecting these poems together and circulating them: "Diu multumque dubitavi, Stella…an hoc libellos, qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate fluxerunt, cum singuli de sinu meo prodierint, congregatos ipse dimitterem."[74] The "subito calore" is the same poetic fervor that Poliziano alludes to in admitting that the *Orfeo* was written within two days and during continuous tumult. Statius likewise confesses to having written the bulk of his *Silvae* quickly, noting that "nullum…ex illis biduo longius tractum" and some were even "in singulis diebus effusa."[75] Of note in the defense offered by Statius for his collected poems is the distinction that he makes between high and low literature. He contrasts the *Silvae* with his *Thebaid*, suggesting a fear that the nature of the *Silvae* would detract from the gravity and importance of his epic poem. As a means of warding off such fears, Statius refers to the lesser works attributed to Vergil, reminding that "et Culincem legimus et Batrachomachiam etiam agnoscimus, nec quisquam est illustrium poetarum qui non aliquid

[74] Statius, *Silvae*, edited and translated by D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 26.
[75] *Ibid.*

operibus suis stilo remissiore praeluserit."[76] Poliziano's insistence on the quality of the *Orfeo*, a quality that grants its author greater pain than honor, suggests that he, too, has concerns about the triviality of this work when compared with his other texts which were written with greater care and in the elevated language of Latin.[77]

The narrative and generic cycles of the *Fabula d'Orfeo*

The prologue, in which Mercurio announces the plot, introduces the second narrative or generic cycle of the *Orfeo*. When Mercurio appears, he offers what is in essence an oratorical *narratio*: he establishes the particulars of the story and prepares the spectators or readers for what they will witness within the play. The language that Poliziano utilizes to present Mercurio, however, is a forceful reminder of the *sacre rappresentazioni* that were in vogue in Florence in the late 1400s.[78] Such a reference is evident from the stage direction in which Poliziano identifies Mercurio as the "annunziatore della festa," for many *sacre rappresentazioni* for which there is

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[76] Statius, 26. From Bailey's translation: "but we read *The Gnat* and even recognize *The Battle of the Frogs*; and none of our illustrious poets but has preluded his works with something in lighter vein." Interestingly, this creates a indirect link to Lorenzo Valla preface to the *De professione religiosorum* in that he, too, cited these minor works of Vergil in his discussion of high and low eloquence.

[77] Even if Poliziano wrote the *Orfeo* at an earlier stage in his career, the letter itself shows elements of the poet's later work. The sentiments found in the letter to Carlo Canale appear almost verbatim in the dedicatory letter to Poliziano's first poem of the *Silvae*, "Manto." Poliziano presents the poem to his patron, here Lorenzo de' Medici, and expresses his displeasure with the work and his hesitation to circulate it: "Cogis tu quidem me, Laurenti, carmen edere inconditum, inemendatum, et quod in publico semel pronuntiatum, nimis fuisse impudens visum sit. Satis profecto fuerat vixisse unum diem quod tam foret imperfectum animal, ac posse etiam inter insecta illa quae vocentur ephemera connumerari" [You compel me, Lorenzo, to publish an unpolished, uncorrected poem; even to have recited it once in public would have seemed too shameless. Surely it would have been enough that such an imperfect creature, which might have been numbered among those insects called ephemera, should have lived but for a day] (Poliziano, Angelo, *Silvae*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi, [Cambridge, MA: The I Tatti Renaissance Library Harvard University Press, 2004] 2-3).

[78] Martelli, 94.

written testimony begin with the appearance of an angel who "annunzia la festa."[79] The angel would then offer a benediction followed by a request for silence, such as in *La rappresentazione della festa de' Magi*, in which the angel announces "O divote persone, / per carità tutti vi vo' pregare / che sanza far tenzione / con grande silenzio dobbiate stare…Però attendere con divozïone."[80] Of the many *sacre rappresentazioni* that date from the late *Quattrocento*, perhaps the closest relative of Poliziano's *Orfeo* is, not surprisingly, Lorenzo de'Medici's *Rappresentazione di San Giovanni e Paulo*. Unlike other examples of this theatrical genre, the angel announcer who begins the play does not commence with a lengthy benediction, but rather with a call for silence: "Silenzio, o voi che ragunati siete; / voi vedrete una istoria nuova e santa," followed by a general account of what the spectators will witness.[81] Poliziano begins his prologue (lines 1 through 16) in the same manner:

Silenzio. Udite. È fu già un pastore
figliuol d'Apollo, chiamato Aristeo.
Costui amò con sì sfrenato ardore
Euridice, che moglie fu d'Orfeo,
che sequendola un giorno per amore
fu cagion del suo caso acerbo e reo:
perché, fuggendo lei vicina alle acque,
una biscia la punse; e morta giacque.
Orfeo cantando all'inferno la tolse,
ma non poté server la legge data,
ché 'l poverel tra via drieto si volse,
sì che di nuovo ella gli fu rubata:
però ma' più amar donna non volse,
e dalle donne gli fu morte data.

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[79] Newbigin, Nerida, *Nuovo Corpus di Sacre Rappresentazioni fiorentine del Quattrocento: edite e inedite tratte da manoscritti coevi o ricontrollate su di essi*, (Bologna: Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1983). Some variations among the recorded plays include "uno Angelo ch'annun{n}zia la rappresentazione," "incomincia l'annu{n}ziazione della festa e comincia per uno Angelo," "ed in prima viene uno angelo ed annunzia la festa al popolo," "uno angelo annunzia la festa" (Newbigin, 9, 37, 65, 297).

[80] Newbigin, 191.

[81] De' Medici, Lorenzo, *Rime spirituali; La rappresentazione di San Giovanni e Paulo*, (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2000), 40. Lorenzo de' Medici is far more vague in is opening octave, for his angel does not offer any details of the plot beyond "diverse cose e devote vedrete, / esempli di fortuna varia tanta." Though the order has been inverted, the benediction of the play does appear in the second octave. (De' Medici, 40).

Séguita un pastore schiavone
State tenta, brigata! Bono argurio,
ché di cievol in terra vien Marcurio.

The rhyme scheme, two octaves, the second of which is completed by the words of the Slavonian shepherd, with the meter of ABABABXX, is in keeping with the tradition of the *sacre rappresentazioni*. Lorenzo de' Medici's *Rappresentazione di San Giovanni e Paulo*, for example, utilizes the same octave structure and meter, and a cursory examination of other extant texts of *sacre rappresentazioni* indicate that this was common in plays of the genre.[82] Poliziano does deviate from the tradition, however, in that it is the pagan deity, Mercurio, who announces the spectacle, and the character he presents to the spectators is not a saint, but rather a distinctly profane figure ("un pastore / figliuol d'Apollo, chiamato Aristeo"). The poet does, however, retain other aspects of the sacred tradition. The choice of Mercurio as the *prologus* seems an obvious profane substitution for the angel of the *sacre rappresentazioni*, as both were bearers of good tidings and messages from the gods or God.[83] Though he does not offer any words of prayer or benediction at the start of the play, Poliziano's Mercurio does convey a modicum of that blessed, angelic nature, for the pastors who witnessed his appearance consider the sight of the god to be a "bono argurio" (lines 15 to 16) in the first scene.

Mercurio's presence in this scene, however, also taps into the tradition of ancient Roman comedies. In these opening verses, the god's call of "Silenzio. Udite" references in particular the comedies of Plautus. The Roman playwright uses similar language in the prologue to the *Poenulus*, in which Plautus imitates the tragedy *Achilles* by Aristarchus by making the speaker of the prologue announce, "sileteque et tacete atque animum advortite, / audire iubet vos imperator

[82] Of the thirteen *sacre rappresentazioni* collected in Newbigin's study, only the *Rappresentazione della festa de' Magi* exhibits a different rhyme structure and meter.
[83] Bigi, Emilio, *Poesia latina e volgare nel Rinascimento italiano*, (Naples: Morano, 1989), 130.

– histricus."[84] The opening words of Plautus' *Asinaria* similarly command attention: "Hoc ágite sultis, spéctatores, núncïam."[85] Plautus also employed the god Mercury as his *prologus*, introducing and participating in the action of the *Amphitruo*. This last comedy is perhaps the perhaps the closest relative to the *Orfeo* in terms of themes and plot, for it, too, concerns the lustful intervention of a third party, in this case Jupiter, disrupting a happy marriage.[86]

Latin comedies and liturgical drama are, however, not the only assimilated forms present in the prologue, and in these other allusive combinations Poliziano returns to the blending already seen at play in the *Stanze*. Here the purpose is different: while the *prologus* explicitly details the plot of the play, Poliziano the poet implicitly, through a series of literary references, presents the ancient authorities and genres that inform the *Orfeo*. The thread that ties these disparate authors together is the theme of the play that Poliziano had outlined in the preface: the perils of loving beyond the bounds of reason. The first of these authorities is Vergil's pastoral poetry of the *Georgics*. Poliziano indicates this setting and genre within the first few lines of the prologue, in particular with the presentation of the young shepherd, Aristeo, and not Orfeo, as the focal point upon which the action of the play begins. In essence, by introducing Aristeo into the larger story of Orfeo, and then quickly removing him from the action, Poliziano is inverting the Vergilian model found in the *Georgics*.[87] In the fourth book of this work, Vergil inserts the Orpheus myth within the larger story of Aristeus, son of Apollo and the nymph Cyrene, and his

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[84] Plautus, Titus Maccius, *T. Macci Plauti Comoediae*, Fasciculus V, ed. Georg Goetz and Friderich Schoell, (Leipzig: B. G., Teubner, 1892), 130.
[85] Plautus, Titus Maccius, *T. Macci Plauti Comoediae,* vol. 2, ed. Alfred Flekeisen and Friedrich Ritschl, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1881), 5.
[86] For a complete summary of the action of the *Amphitruo*, see the play's prologue in *The Comedies of Plautus*, translated by Henry Thomas Riley (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1912), 2.
[87] The account of the Orpheus myth found in the *Georgics*, in particular the inclusion of Aristeus as a contributing factor to her death, is original to Vergil. See commentary in Kenney, 225.

bees (the overall focus of this poem): "pastor Aristeus fugiens Peneia Tempe / amissis, ut fama, apibus morboque fameque…pater est Thymbraeus Apollo."[88]

Orpheus and Eurydice's tragic tale fades into irrelevance within the larger context of Aristeus' story, other than that it serves as the motivation for why he is without his bees[89]: "tibi has miserabilis Orpheus…suscitat, et rapta grauiter pro coniuge saeuit. / illa quidem, dum te fugeret per flumina praeceps, / immanem ante pedes hydrum moritura puella / servantem ripas alta non vidit in herba."[90] Poliziano borrows this same structure in presenting his subject. Mercurio, echoing the language and sequence of information put forth in the *Georgics*, indicates first Aristeo, his profession and parentage ("È fu già un pastore / figliuol d'Apollo, chiamato Aristeo"), followed by his culpability in death of Euridice: "Costui amò con sì sfrenato ardore / Euridice, che moglie fu d'Orfeo, / che sequendola un giorno per amore / fu cagion del suo caso acerbo e reo." The recounting of Euridice's actual death by snakebite shows little deviation from the Vergilian model ("fuggendo lei vicina alle acque, / una biscia la punse; e morta giacque").

The choice of Vergil's interpretation of the Orpheus myth over other similar accounts, such as the version offered by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, is appropriate considering the aspects of the tale that Poliziano chooses to emphasize. The lesson of the tragedy of Orpheus and Eurydice in both Vergil's and Poliziano's renderings is to control one's passions, keeping them neither wholly unchecked, nor completely suppressed, nor aimed at the wrong target. While both the

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[88] From *Georgics* IV, lines 315-558, in Vergil, *The Bucolics, Aeneid, and Georgics of Virgil*, ed. J.B. Greenough, (Boston: Ginn, 1881), 221-228. Translated by Wilkinson as follows: "The shepherd Aristaeus, abandoning / Peneïan Tempê, so the story goes, / After the loss through famine and disease / Of all his bees…[his] father is…Apollo Lord of Thymbra" (Virgil, *The Georgics*, trans. L.P. Wilkinson, [London: Penguin Books, 1982], 135).

[89] From *Georgics* IV, lines 317-323 in Vergil, 221.

[90] From *Georgics* IV, lines 454-459 in Vergil, 225; "Piteous Orpheus / It is that seeks to invoke this penalty / Against you…At the sundering of his wife. You were the cause: / To escape from your embrace across a stream / Headlong she fled, nor did the poor doomed girl / Notice before her feet, deep in the grass, / The watcher on the bank, a monstruous serpent" (Virgil, *The Georgics*, trans. L.P. Wilkinson, 139-140).

Ovidian and the Vergilian accounts highlight the connection between the grieving Orpheus' refusal of heterosexual love and his own death at the hands of the sexually jealous Thracian women, only in the *Georgics* does Aristeus represent the tragic effects of unbridled passions. In allowing his lust to overtake him, he unwittingly caused not only the deaths of Eurydice and Orpheus, but also that of his bees, the restitution of which requires divine expiation.[91]

Echoes of Petrarch, another poet who dabbled in pastoral settings and loved immeasurably, appear in these same verses. The description of Aristeo's passion as a "si sfrenato ardore" links this lover directly to the young, misguided Petrarch and the mythical, often pastoral world inhabited by his muse, Laura. Almost identical wording, "il mio sfrenato ardire," appeared in component XXIII of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, "Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade," a *canzone* already seen as a source in the *Stanze per la giostra*, namely in the introduction of the forlorn lover, Iulio.[92]

Amplifying the aesthetics of pastoral further, Poliziano incorporates more echoes of the unhappy Petrarchan lover in his description of Euridice's death as a "caso acerbo e reo." Petrarch used similar language in two different components from the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, in the sonnet CLXXII, "O Invidia nimica di vertute," and the *canzone* CCCXXV, "Tacer non posso, et temo non adopre."[93] In the *canzone*, Petrarch utilizes these adjectives in a manner similar to

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[91] In his commentary to the *Georgics*, L.P. Wilkinson interprets Vergil's attitude towards sex based on the fourth book, an attitude which "reveals a nature more conscious of its dangers than its joys." From the stories put forth in this book, Vergil "seems to see [sex] as something that tends to degrade, debilitate and destroy, as we may sense in…the stories in *Georgics* 4 of Aristeus' offence and of the rending of Orpheus by sexually jealous women…The sexlessness ascribed to the bees in Book 4 is presented as a matter for admiration" (Virgil, *Georgics,* ed. L.P. Wilkinson, 96).

[92] Bausi, Francesco. Notes and commentary to Poliziano, Angelo, *Poesie volgari*, vol. II, ed. Francesco Bausi, (Rome: Vecchiarelli Editore, 1997), 148n.

[93] Bausi, 148n.

Poliziano's use in the prologue, that is, to describe death: "Morte acerba et rea."[94] The earlier sonnet, by contrast, examines a negative effect of love: envy. Laura, suffering from envy, bemoans with "atti acerbi et rei" the poet's good fortune. Petrarch counterbalances Laura's volatility with his constancy at the poem's end: "non perché mille volte il dì mi ancida, / fia ch'io non l'ami et ch' i' non speri in lei."[95] In addition to the poem's reminiscent language, this juxtaposition between erratic emotions and constant love finds a parallel in the figures of Aristeo and Orfeo (prior to the second death of his wife).

Petrarch's poetry equally serves as the basis for the brief description of Euridice's death ("una biscia la punse") in the eighth line. Petrarch's verse from component CCCXXIII (v. 69), "punta poi nel tallon d'un picciol angue," appears as a clear authority for Poliziano's work.[96] Beyond the similar language, this component of the *RVF*, in which the poet has six metaphorical visions of Laura's death, looks forward to the shepherd's account of Euridice's death in line 146 of the *Orfeo*. Petrarch's final vision in CCCXXIII shows a lady walking "entro i fiori et l'erba" who dies suddenly when bitten by the snake, just as Euridice "ch'era fra l'erb'e' fior', nel piè fu punta."[97] Likewise, the reference to the *canzone*, "Nel dolce tempo de la prima etade," goes beyond linguistic similarities. The entire poem adds to the theme Poliziano intends to evoke in the prologue of the *Orfeo*, for in this *canzone* Petrarch recounts the "fera voglia" (XXIII.3) of love which overtook him as a youth and its "duro scempio" (XXIII.10) which he had to endure as a result.[98] Poliziano thus utilizes his literary references to underscore the detrimental nature of

[94] Petrarca, Francesco, *Rime e Trionfi*, ed. Mario Apollonio and Lina Ferro, (Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 1972), 602.
[95] Petrarca, 371-372.
[96] Petrarca, 594.
[97] Petrarca, 593.
[98] Petrarca, 92.

uncontrolled passion, the theme which will dominate all the episodes of the *Orfeo*.[99] The verse in which Mercurio indicates Aristeo's pursuit of Euridice, "che sequendola un giorno per amore," also reveals the influence a literary tradition that warned against immoderate passion. This line, in both structure and sentiment, echoes Dante's account of the damned lovers, Paolo and Francesca, whose shared interest in reading for pleasure ("noi leggiavamo un giorno per diletto", *Inferno* V.127) ultimately led to their demise.[100]

The other famous authority of the Orpheus myth, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, is present in these verses. Indeed, Poliziano's identification of "sfrenato ardore" as the cause of so much tribulation within the play is reminiscent of a similar phrase that appears within the story of Procne and Philomela (book VI. 412-674), sisters who fell victim to the irrepressible and brutal lust of the Thracian king, Tereus. Though happily married to Procne, Tereus is so struck by the innocence and beauty of her sister that he is "non effreno captus amore" (VI. 465).[101] Much like Vergil's Aristeus and Poliziano's Aristeo, the unchecked love of Tereus leads only to suffering: it impels him to kidnap, rape, and remove the tongue of the hapless Philomela. Again, as seen with the Petrarchan model, this particular reference was not chosen simply for the superficially similar language: the story of Procne and Philomela contains many elements which later appear in the *Orfeo*. When Tereus' treachery is revealed to Procne, for example, she devises a plan to

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[99] In his article on the *Fabula d'Orfeo*, Bigi argues that Poliziano underscores in this play the "violenza irrazionale e distruggiatrice dell'amore," citing in particular the irrational love of Orfeo and Aristeo, whose "troppo amore" and "sfrenato ardire" lead to the death and second death of Eurydice (125-127). Francesco Bausi concurs with this viewpoint, noting in his commentary to the *Fabula d'Orfeo*, that this verse, "Costui amò con sì sfrenato ardore," is the "motivo-chiave della *Fabula*, quello dell'amore non guidato dal «freno» della ragione," a theme that reappears in the conversation between Mopso and Aristeo at line 114 and later with Orfeo himself when his overwhelming love causes him to lose Eurydice a second time (Bausi, 148n).

[100] Alighieri, Dante, *Inferno*, ed. and trans. Jean and Robert Hollander, 1st Anchor Books edition, (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 98. Bausi also notes Poliziano's clear substitution of the Dantesque "biscia" in line 8 in place of the Latinism "angue" that appears in a similar verse from Petrarch's poetry RVF CCCXXIII (Bausi, 149n).

[101] Bausi, 148n; Tissoni Benvenuti, 138n.

free her sister by assuming the dress and demeanor of the frenzied Thracian women honoring Bacchus ("nocte sua est egressa domo regina deique / ritibus instruitur furialiaque accipit arma…terribilis Procne furiisque agitata doloris, / Bacche, tuas simulat" *Metamorphoses* VI. 590-1, 595-6), thus linking her with the *Baccanti* who at the close of the *Orfeo* tear the titular poet limb from limb in their fury.[102] Further strengthening this association is the fact that at the end of the Ovidian episode, Procne, overcome by blood lust, seeks revenge on Tereus, and with Philomela's help kills and rips apart the limbs of their son, Itys, whom they then feed to the tyrant.

The final verses of Poliziano's prologue reinforce the Ovidian associations between the texts and the links between immoderate love or negated love, its opposite, and death. In Ovid's account of Orpheus and Eurydice, the Thracian singer, bereft of his wife once more, "omnemque refugerat…femineam venerem."[103] In the *Metamorphoses*, this refusal does not immediately signify death, as Ovid allows the forlorn Orpheus to sing many songs of other unhappy love affairs. Ultimately, however, Orpheus' rejection of love does lead to his demise. Poliziano's account in the prologue emphasizes the causality between Orfeo's refusal of love, "ma' più amar donna non volse," and his death in the next verse at the hands of the very people he refused ("e dalle donne gli fu morte data").

In keeping with the ethos of epic poetry, Poliziano includes in these same verses the imagery of Dante and the *contrappasso* that corrected irregular passions and hubris, Orfeo's two

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[102] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 328-330.

[103] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 70**.** Bigi contends that Poliziano oscillates between the Vergilian model and the Ovidian version within the narrative of the *Orfeo*, for while the episode with Aristeo and the scene depicting Orfeo's loss of Eurydice on their return from Hell stem from Vergil's *Georgics*, "su Ovidio sono prevalentemente modellati il colloquio infernale e l'episodio delle Baccanti" (Bigi, 130).

crimes. Tissoni Benvenuti connects the reference in the prologue to divine law ("servar la legge data") to similar phraseology in canto 26 of *Purgatorio*: "non servammo umana legge."[104] Said by sinners in the terrace of the lustful, the reference is indeed fitting for the *Orfeo* and its themes of love that goes beyond human reason, especially if the listeners and readers recall the subsequent line in Dante's poem: "seguendo come bestie l'appetito."[105] Likewise, Mercurio's report that Orfeo turned from the "via drieto" in line 11 recalls Dante's account in of finding himself in a dark wood because "la diritta via" was lost.[106] The sources that Poliziano selects to construct his prologue, though varied, are all linked by the themes established in the prefatory letter: remaining within the bounds of reason.

Notwithstanding the numerous allusions to epic poetry and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* at the prologue's conclusion, the initial action of the play pulls the spectator quickly back into the pastoral world already signaled by the borrowing of Aristeo from Vergil's *Georgics*.[107] Just as Valla signaled a shift from one portion of his dialogue's inherent *oratio* stucture to the next by means of his style of argumentation, so too does Poliziano indicate a change of scene with the abrupt shift in lyrical style. In this third narrative cycle, Poliziano again subverts expectations by beginning not with a dramatic rendering of Aristeo's unsuccessful attempt to woo Eurydice, but rather an opening scene consisting of a seemingly unrelated dialogue between the shepherds Aristeo, Mopso, and later Tirsi (lines 17 to 25). Eventually Aristeo's unrequited love for Euridice

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[104] From canto XXVI.83 in Alighieri, Dante, *Purgatorio*, ed. and trans. Jean and Robert Hollander, (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 538.
[105] From canto XXVI.84 in Dante, *Purgatorio*, 538; Bausi contends that Poliziano's repeated use of "volse" in lines 11 ("to turn") and line 13 ("to want") stems from a similar rhyme in *Inferno* II.116-118.
[106] From canto I.3 in Dante, *Inferno*, 2.
[107] In the notes to her critical edition of the text, Tissoni Benvenuti states that the "ambientazione pastorale del mito è invenzione del Poliziano" (139n). While there is no doubt that Poliziano expanded upon the pastoral elements inherently present within the myth (the location of Thrace, the presence of nymphs and satyrs), certainly the example offered by Vergil invented the association between Orpheus and the pastoral world.

will become the focus of this exchange; the initial subject of the episode, however, is not lost love but a lost calf:

Mopso *pastor vecchio*
Hai tu veduto un mio vitelin bianco,
c'ha una macchia nera in sulla fronte
e duo piè rossi e un ginocchio e 'l fianco?

Aristeo *pastor giovane*
Caro mio Mopso, a piè di questo fonte
non son venuti questa mane armenti,
ma senti' ben mugghiar là drieto al monte.
Va', Tirsi, e guarda un poco se tu 'l senti.
Tu, Mopso, intanto ti starai qui meco,
ch'i' vo' ch' ascolti alquanto i mie lamenti.

The shepherd's missing animal may recall Vergil's Aristeus and his dead bees.[108] The clear referent for this exchange, however, comes not from Vergil's *Georgics*, but from the *Eclogues* of the minor poet, Calpurnius Siculus.[109] Little is known of this poet beyond that he was active during the age of Nero and a close follower of Vergilian pastoral poetry.[110] Notwithstanding Calpurnius's relative obscurity, Poliziano, as noted by Tissoni Benvenuti, Bigi, Sapegno, and Bausi, patterns the opening dialogue of the *Orfeo* on the exchange between two shepherds in the Roman poet's third eclogue.[111]

The poetic dialogue of Siculus' eclogue begins with Iollas asking his neighbor, Lycidas, if he has seen a missing heifer ("Numquid in hac, Lycida, vidisti forte iuvencam / valle meam?"). Lycidas responds that he has been derelict in his duties watching the flock, due to the fact that he

[108] Tissoni Benvenuti reasons that Mopso's advice to Aristeo in lines 41-43 reaffirms the link between lost animals and the Vergilian story of Aristeus from the *Georgics*, citing in particular the "prima posizione" of the word "sciami" ("bee colony") in the list of agrarian duties that Aristeo will forget if he surrenders himself to passion (Tissoni Benvenuti, 141n). Bausi, by contrasts, sees an Ovidian antecedent, positing that the physical description of the calf likely stems from similar language in Ovid's *Ars amatoria* (Bausi, 150n).
[109] Bausi, 149-150n; Tissoni Benvenuti, 139n.
[110] Greg, 16-17.
[111] Tissoni Benvenuti, 139-146n; Bigi, 130-131; Bausi, 149-155n.

burns for Phyllis: "Non satis attendi nec enim vacat. Uror, Iolla; / uror, et immodice."[112] This unrestrained burning, it is important to note, is not with the pangs of love but with the rage of jealousy. Phyllis, his lover, has lately changed her affection to another shepherd, Mopsus. Iollas, pitying his friend, agrees to stay and listen to Lycidas' laments, sending his servant, Tityrus, to find the calf that Lycidas has spied close by ("Tityre, quas dixit, salices pete laevaus, et illinc, / si tamen invenies…huc age…Nunc age dic, Lycida: quae vos tam magna tulere / iurgia?").[113] Lycidas then describes his spurned love, lapsing into a lengthy song which he hopes will soften the heart of his beloved ("Iamdudum meditor, quo Phyllida carmine placem. / Forsitan audito poterit mitescere cantu").[114] The episode concludes when Iollas spies Tityrus returning with the lost calf ("Qui venit inventa non irritus ecce iuvenca").[115] Phyllis, the lady who is at the heart of this exchange, never appears; furthermore, the eclogue concludes on a hopeful note: Iollas believes that the return of his heifer is a good omen presaging Phyllis' return to Lycidas.

Poliziano's appropriation of this eclogue in the *Orfeo* extends beyond the initial exchange between the two shepherds excerpted above, for, as lines 29 through 54 demonstrate, it follows a structure that is loosely based on Calpurnius' model. After their talk of the missing calf, Aristeo describes how the sight of a beautiful nymph has left him ill from love ("subito mi si scosse il cor nel petto, / e mie mente d'amore divenne insana"). Mopso, in a slight deviation from Calpurnius' Iollas, reminds Aristeo that to focus only on the effects of love will have a negative impact on his shepherding, much like the young shepherd's Vergilian anctecedent ("Se tu pigli, Aristeo, suo dure legge, / e' t'uscirà del capo e sciami e orti / e vite e biade e paschi e mandre e

[112] Calpurnius Siculus, Titus, *The Eclogues of Calpurnius*, ed. and trans. Edward J.L. Scott (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), 40.
[113] Calpurnius, 44.
[114] Calpurnius, 45.
[115] Calpurnius, 56.

gregge").[116] Aristeo then lapses into a *canzone* about his love, hoping his music will win Eurydice's favor ("ch'i' so che la mia ninfa el canto agogna").[117] The beauty of his song is such that it elicits a kind response from Mopso who, like Calpurnius' Iollas, offers some hopeful words to the young lover ("s'ella l'ode, verrà com'una cucciola"). Their talk is interrupted by the return of Tirsi and the newly found calf. At this point in the play, Poliziano deviates completely from Calpurnius' eclogue, as the episode does not conclude with the happy restoration of the calf, but continues on to include Tirsi's announcement that he has spied the beautiful Euridice not far from where the shepherds speak, thus triggering the true narrative of the play.

Although he did not follow Calpurnius Siculus' eclogue to the letter, the correspondences between Poliziano's first scene of the *Orfeo* and this ancient authority are unmistakable. That Poliziano would highlight this latter poet rather than others known for their pastoral, such as Vergil and Theocritus, is not in the least surprising as the poetry of Calpurnius represented a new and fitting authority for the *Orfeo*. Only recently resurfacing in an *editio princeps* likely dating from 1471, Calpurnius' *Eclogues* represented a marked shift from the standard Vergilian sources that had served as poetic authorities from Calpurnius himself to more contemporary authors like

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[116] Critical editions of the *Fabula d'Orfeo* have unintentionally downplayed the extent of Calpurnius' influence in this exchange between Aristeo and Mopso, due to philological developments after the play's composition. When Poliziano describes the physical effects of Aristeo's love in lines 32-34, he alludes to the lines, "Omnes ecce cibos et nostri pocula Bacchi / horreo nec placido memini concedere somno," which the critics such as Tissoni Benvenuti and Bausi attribute to the second eclogue of Nemesianus, a third century Roman poet (Tissoni Benvenuti, 140; Bausi, 150). In the late 1400s, however, this eclogue was likely considered as one of Calpurnius'. Later scholarship would reveal that a number of eclogues attributed to Calpurnius Siculus were actually written by Nemesianus (Greg, 17).

[117] Bausi notes that owing to the pastoral context Poliziano transforms Eurydice into a nymph, much in the same way he called Simonetta Cattaneo a nymph in the *Stanze per la giostra* (152n). There is, however, some classical precedent for this designation of "nymph" in the *Orfeo*. In the *Georgics*, Vergil (through the voice of Proteus) recounts that Eurydice was accustomed to dancing with nymphs and it was they who brought about the death of Aristeus' bees in retribution for his role in the death of their friend: "haec omnis morbi causa, hinc miserabile Nymphae, / cum quibus illa choros lucis agitabat in altis, / exitum misere apibus" (see *Georgics* IV, lines 532-534 in Vergil, 227).

the *tre corone* of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio.[118] Thus, the pastoral poetry of Calpurnius was likely very attractive to Poliziano as he crafted his play, for it represented a fresh literary source that had not yet been rendered stale by centuries of use or misuse. Moreover, as such a late entry to the classical pastoral genre, Calpurnius' poetry seems infused with a sense of strife and decadence that goes beyond similar occurrences in the poetry of Theocritus and Vergil.[119]

Romantic frustration was already a staple of the poems that focused on love in Theocritus' *Idylls*; Vergil used the rustic settings and simple shepherds to mask real world events and hardships.[120] Calpurnius, contends Eleanor Winsor Leach, intensified these elements in his own pastoral, suffusing the bucolic poems with an overwhelming sense of futility, dissatisfaction, and violence.[121] Certainly the violence at the heart of Lycidas and Phyllis' argument represents a departure from the traditional innocence of the rustic world.[122] Burning with a jealous rage ("sic intimus arsi"), Lycidas turned on Phyllis and "protinus ambas / diduxi tunicas, et pectora nuda cecidi."[123] The conclusion of this episode suggests further brutality in the resolution of their

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[118] Greg, 16-17.

[119] Mazzotta also recognizes the sense of strife that marks Poliziano's pastoral world, which, in turn, calls into question the notion of man's (and later, Orpheus's) ability to conquer nature and the natural order: "In Poliziano's pastoral landscape there is no harmony. There are discordant voices and viewpoints. The old shepherd Mopsus, who stands for the pastoral ethics of containment of desire, has lost his calf and asks Aristeus if he has seen it. Aristeus replies as if he were Iulio in the *Stanze*: He has seen a nymph more beautiful than Diana and is possessed by a love mania. Poliziano, in effect, asks what the pastoral always (if implicitly) asks: What is man's place in nature?" (Mazzotta, 16).

[120] Coleman, Robert, "Vergil's Pastoral Modes," in *Ancient Pastoral:* Ramus *Essays on Greek and Roman Pastoral Poetry*, ed. A.J. Boyle, (Berwick, Victoria, AU: Aureal Publications, 1975), 63; Leach, Eleanor Winsor, "Neronian Pastoral and the World of Power," in *Ancient Pastoral: Ramus Essays on Greek and Roman Pastoral Poetry*, ed. A.J. Boyle, (Berwick, AU: Aureal Publications, 1975), 123.

[121] A particularly striking aspect of this sense of decline or futility in Calpurnius' rustic poems is the seeming randomness of it. According to Leach, "there is no overt cause within the poems' own world. Their countryside is not overrun with soldiers to drive the farmers from their lands. Rather, the decline of bucolic self-confidence effected in the poems has its source within the minds of the rustic characters."

[122] Leach, 130. This ability to amplify the imagery and themes already present within the bucolic genre is a feature of the *Orfeo*, too, argues Tissoni Benvenuti: "La *Fabula di Orpheo* è una *variatio* del mito antico, ma è anche, rispetto a Virgilio e Ovidio, una *amplificatio*, condotta secondo i precetti retorici degli antichi, sullo stesso piano culturale" (Tissoni Benvenuti, 110).

[123] Calpurnius, 44.

quarrel. In the narrative of the eclogue, Calpurnius implicitly links Phyllis, lost to Mopsus, with whom she was seen cavorting beneath the ilex tree, with the lost heifer, who, according to Lycidas will undoubtedly be found cavorting in neighboring fields with "noster taurus."[124] In order to bring the heifer back to its rightful owner, Iollas advises Tityrus to force her to submit with such a sound beating that it breaks his staff ("deprensam verbere multo / huc age…sed fractum referas hastile memento").[125] When Iollas spies Tityrus returning with the heifer at the poem's end, a good omen that Phyllis will do the same, the reader is left to assume that Lycidas will employ the same tactics to force Phyllis to submit to him.[126] In the rustic world created by Calpurnius' poems, sexual frustration naturally leads to violent anger, all tinged with an overwhelming sense of ambivalence. Poliziano perpetuates this vision of the pastoral world in the *Orfeo*, as the interwoven stories of Aristeo, Euridice, and Orfeo all convey the same message of frustration, hopelessness and brutality notwithstanding the idyllic setting. Indeed, Poliziano concludes the two clear episodes of sexual frustration which bookend the *Orfeo* – Aristeo's thwarted attempt to win Euridice and Orfeo's rejection of female love – with violent death.

Beyond the novelty represented by Calpurnius' text and the appeal of its themes, Poliziano may have been drawn to the Roman poet because of his methods in creating pastoral poetry. One of the features of Calpurnius' *Eclogues* is the author's incorporation of the language of past poets into his own verse. Using a methodology similar to that for which Poliziano would become renowned in the *Quattrocento*, Calpurnius created an original pastoral complete with novel dramatic situations by blending together the words and imagery of past authorities, particularly Vergil and Ovid. More to the point, the lexical choices and allusions were

[124] Calpurnius, 42-44.
[125] Calpurnius, 44.
[126] Leach, 131.

deliberately chosen to accentuate the bucolic world and genre even when the situations represented a departure from traditional pastoral.[127] It is therefore unsurprising that within this highly Calpurnian dialogue, Poliziano interweaves references to many other authors whose works bear some thematic connection to the rustic world and the bucolic genre.

Mopso's response to Aristeo's *canzona*, for example, is replete with such allusions.[128] In this passage, Poliziano evokes both the elements of classical pastoral and also more contemporary, vernacular examples. After hearing Aristeo's moving words, the hard-hearted older shepherd abandons his earlier critique of allowing love to rule one's actions and praises his younger friend's song (lines 88-96):

El non è tanto el mormorio piacevole
delle fresche acque che d'un sasso piombano,
né quando soffia un ventolino agevole
fra le cime de' pini e quelle trombano,
quanto le rime tue son sollazzevole,
le rime tue che per tutto rimbombano:
s'ella l'ode, verrà come una cucciola.
Ma ecco Tirsi che del monte sdrucciola.

Ch'è del vitello? ha'lo tu ritrovato?

Mopso's words serve to amplify the rustic setting of this mythical world, invoking images of soft winds, freshwater streams, and gently swaying trees. In essence, his simile depicts the standard *locus amoenus* that had become a common place in the poetry and prose of Italian vernacular authors, including Poliziano's own verse. Tissoni Benvenuti notes that "sollazzevole" and its

[127] The fifth eclogue, for example, according to Leach, has no narrative "ties with the *Idylls* or Vergil's *Eclogues*," but still demonstrates an attention to the rustic world through heavy "borrowings from the third book of Vergil's *Georgics*" (Leach, 124).

[128] The "canzona" itself is a mainstay of the classical bucolic genre, replete with references to the authors of that poetic tradition. Of note are the *Eclogues* of Vergil and the *Idylls* of Theocritus whose respective amorous prayers (Corydon to Alexis in *Eclogues* II and Polyphemus to Galatea in the eleventh idyll) provide the theme and structure to Aristeo's song (Tissoni Benvenuti, 142n). As this song has been dutifully examined by Tissoni Benvenuti and Bausi, it will not be part of the present study.

variants made frequent appearances within the *Decameron* of Boccaccio.[129] The author typically used this adjective to describe people whose looks or words were pleasing. Furthermore, in the conclusion to the *Decameron*, Boccaccio declares that the stories told therein, stories that chiefly bring pleasure, should be restricted to "giardini, in luogo di sollazzo."[130] Likewise, it is impossible to separate the mention of "fresche acque" in line 89 from Petrarch's famous *canzone*, "Chiare fresche et dolci acque" (*RVF* CXXVI), which also includes a description of an impossibly beautiful landscape. Finally, there appear many correspondences between this octave and the language and imagery of Poliziano's own *Stanze*. The wind that rustles "le cime de' pini" recalls similar descriptions of the realm of Venus, an extreme *locus amoenus*, in the *Stanze*, where "el pino alletta con suoi fischi il vento" (I.83).[131] The use of "rimbombano" in line 93 equally calls to mind Poliziano's frequent use of this verb within the *Stanze*, in particular the seventeenth stanza which describes the joys of the idyllic world of Iulio including "udir li augei svernar, rimbombar l'onde / e dolce al vento mormorar le fronde!"[132]

Notwithstanding the notable influence of vernacular authors, this octave demonstrates one of the *topoi* of classical pastoral. The comparison of the beauty of Aristeo's song to the natural beauties of the rustic world is a convention of bucolic poetry – the *gratulatio* – that finds expression in the two masters of the genre, Theocritus and Vergil.[133] In Theocritus' first poem of the *Idylls*, the shepherd Thyrsis and an unnamed goatherd praise each other's song using

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[129] Tissoni Benvenuti, 145n. The adjective "sollazzevole" is, in Tissoni Benvenuti's estimation, a "parola prosastica o della tradizione giocoso-rusticale. Del resto, il lessico di tutta l'ottava è vicino al parlato, con sfumatura rusticale."
[130] Boccaccio, Giovanni, *Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca, (Torino: Einaudi, 1980), 1256.
[131] Poliziano, Angelo, *Stanze per la giostra* in *Poesie volgari*, vol. 1, ed. Francesco Bausi (Rome: Vecchiarelli Editore, 1997) 21; Bausi, 155n.
[132] Poliziano, *Stanze per la giostra*, 6; Tissoni Benvenuti, 145n.
[133] Tissoni Benvenuti, 145n.

language later placed into the mouth of Poliziano's Mopso.[134] The goatherd contends that Thyrsis' song "as sweetly falls…as the resounding water that gushes down from the top o' yonder rock" (" ῎Αδιον ὦ ποιμὴν τὸ τεὸν μέλος ἢ τὸ καταχὲς / τᾶν᾽ ἀπὸ τᾶς πέτρας καταλείβεται ὑψόθεν ὕδωρ"). Such flattery comes in response to Thyrsis' declaration that the goatherd's piping is as sweet as "the whisper of the pine" ("῾Αδύ τι τὸ ψιθύρισμα καὶ ἁ πίτυς αἰπόλε τήνα, / ἃ ποτὶ ταῖς παγαῖσι μελίσδεται, ἁδὺ δὲ καὶ τὺ / συρίσδες").[135] Vergil repeats this trope in the fifth of his *Eclogues*.[136] The context and structure of Vergil's rendition is closer to the one found in Poliziano's *Orfeo*: Vergil's Mopsus is so moved after hearing the song of Menalcas that he feels at a loss as to how to best repay his friend for such a gift. In Mopsus' estimation, "neque me tantum venientis sibilus austri, / nec percussa iuvant fluctu tam litora, nec quae / saxosas inter decurrunt flumina valles."[137] These authorities have at best a tenuous connection to the themes of the *Orfeo*. After exchanging words of praise, the unnamed goatherd in Theocritus' *Idyll* asks Thyrsis to sing of Daphnis, a shepherd whose illicit love only brought him prolonged death. Vergil's shepherds, too, sing of Daphnis, focusing more on how the rustic world mourned the loss of such a figure. Absent in Vergil's account is any causality between love and death, or the rustic world and violence.

Indeed, most of these literary sources within the octave serve little narrative purpose beyond demonstrating Poliziano's philological interest in pastoral. Certain metric choices

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[134] Not only does he move this praise to follow the song rather than introduce it, Poliziano also inverts the two similes that Theocritus uses to describe the beauty of the shepherds' song, suggesting that though the imagery stems from the Greek poet, the structure comes from Vergil's eclogue.

[135] Lines 7-8 and 1-3 in Theocritus, *The Idylls of Theocritus*, ed. Roger James Cholmeley, (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1901), 61. Translation from Theocritus, *The Idylls of Theocritus*, trans. J. H. Hallard, (London: Longmans, Green, 1894), 1.

[136] Indeed, such appropriation is unsurprising in that Vergil took the premise of his fifth eclogue from Theocritus' first *Idyll*. Like Thyrsis of Theocritus' poem, Mopsus and Menalcas recount in alternating songs the sad tale of Daphnis. See Vergil, 13-15.

[137] From the fifth eclogue, lines 81-84 in Vergil, 15.

reinforce Poliziano's privileging of bucolic poetry in this passage. After the *canzona*, in which the poetic form and metric structure of the *Orfeo* switched from hendecasyllable to a *ballata* in hendecasyllables with the rhyme scheme of XX ABAB BX, the original octave and metrical structure with which the play began returns in Mopso's *gratulatio*.[138] Bausi identifies this octave as exhibiting "rime sdrucciole," with the emphasis on the antepenultimate syllable. This, contends Bausi, is perhaps meant to underscore the pastoral nature of the episode in that the sdrucciola rhyme scheme was typical of vernacular bucolic poetry.[139] Poliziano's use of the term "sdrucciola" in line 95 likely confirms this reading of the slight change in meter.

The shepherd's pronouncement of Euridice's death to Orfeo in lines 141 to 148 represents the transition from the pastoral cycle to the next narrative cycle, epic poetry. Poliziano signals this passage from bucolic to epic both through the interaction between the shepherd and the titular hero, finally making his first appearance within the play. The allusions also underscore this scene change between narrative cycles: interspersed within a final reference to the same Aristeus story from Vergil's *Georgics* that opened the play are references to classical epic.[140] The shepherd recounts to Orfeo the circumstances of Euridice's death, that she "fuggiva l'amante Aristeo,

> ma quando fu sovra la riva giunta
> da un serpente venenoso e reo
> ch'era fra l'herb'e 'fior, nel piè fu punta:

[138] Bausi, 152n.
[139] Bausi, 154n.
[140] Tissoni Benvenuti in particular does not consider the Sapphic ode sung by Orfeo part of the *Fabula d'Orfeo*, notwithstanding its inclusion in some editions of the text. Though the ode is clearly the work of Poliziano, "la sua presenza nell'*Orfeo* (52 versi latini inseriti in un'opera di 342 volgari) ha più di una volta suscitato obiezioni da parte dagli studiosi." Not only does its presence contradict Poliziano's own words to Canale in the preface that he wrote the whole text in the vernacular, but performance history of the *Orfeo* suggests that the actor portraying Orfeo would have recited only the first two strophes. For these reasons she does not include it in her critical edition of the text (Tissoni Benvenuti, 43-44). Bausi indicates that Baccio Ugolini, a friend of Poliziano's and the best known interpreter of the role of Orfeo, likely inserted this ode into the text (Bausi, XXXVIII).

e fu tanto possente e crudo el morso
ch'ad un tratto finí la vita e 'l corso."

Poliziano patterns the story of Euridice's death after the words spoken by Proteus to Aristeus in the *Georgics*. Proteus informs Aristeus of the cause of his misfortune (the lost bees) citing in particular his culpability for the death of Eurydice, as it was while "dum te fugeret per flumina praeceps, / immanem ante pedes hydrum moritura puella / servantem ripas alta non vidit in herba."[141] Present within these same verses are references to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, that is, the epic rendition of the Orpheus myth.

Ovid's description of Eurydice's death seems to be the chance result of an ill-fated marriage. Confirming the sad omens that accompanied their wedding, Orpheus' bride, while walking through the grass ("nam nupta per herbas…vagatur"), died quite unexpectedly "in talum serpentis dente recepto."[142] Though the Vergilian Aristeus is absent as the catalyst for the tragedy in this account of the myth, Poliziano manages to incorporate an Ovidian source from the *Metamorphoses* that involves a similar death with a lustful man as its author. Bausi, supporting points made by Davide Puccini in his edition of the *Orfeo*, contends that Poliziano's account of Euridice's death fuses Ovid's Orpheus tale with the story of Aesacus and Hesperia from the eleventh book of the *Metamorphoses*.[143] Aesacus spied this nymph reposing on the banks of a river, and she, terrified, fled from him. Ovid recounts how Aesacus, like Aristeo, spurred on by his love, pursued Hesperia ("insequitur celeremque metu celer urget amore"). Hesperia, as a

[141] From the *Georgics*, IV lines 457-459 in Vergil, 225; Bausi, 158n.
[142] From book 10 of the *Metamorphoses*, lines 9-10 ("for while the bride was strolling through the grass…she fell dead, smitten in the ankle by a serpent's tooth") in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, 64-65; Bausi, 158n.
[143] Bausi, 158n; Poliziano, Angelo, *Stanze, Orfeo, Rime*, ed. Davide Puccini (Milan: Garzanti, 1992).

result, suffers the same fate as Eurydice, for on the riverbank "latens herba coluber fugientis adunco / dente pedem strinxit virusque in corpore liquit," and she died almost instantly.[144]

Traces of other authors known for their epics are present in these verses, reinforcing the genre, its language and conventions, which Poliziano highlights in this cycle. The image of a snake moving its way "fra l'herb' e' fior" in the shepherd's account recalls the image of Dante's "biscia, / forse qual diede ad Eva il cibo amaro," that appeared "tra l'erba e' fior" in the Valley of the Princes in canto VIII of the *Purgatorio*.[145] An echo of the *Stanze*, Poliziano's own foray into vernacular epic, comes through in the final verse of the octave. The phrase "ad un tratto," conveying the sense of multiple actions occurring suddenly and simultaneously, originally appeared in stanza 113: "Quasi in un tratto vista, amata e tolta."[146] The poet incorporates his own words into the *Orfeo* with a knowing wink, for the subsequent line in the *Stanze*, "del fero Pluto Proserpina pare," anticipates the actors and scene that will follow in the *Orfeo*. Moreover, this reference brings with it implicit allusions to the epic poetry of Claudian – another authority who will inform this cycle of the *Orfeo*. The designation of "fero" for Pluto derives from the Claudian use of "ferox" in describing this same figure.[147] More than a shift in allusions, Poliziano signals the change in generic cycle through a slight change to the meter. Just as he highlighted the metrical conventions of pastoral poetry in the *gratulatio* of lines 88 to 96, so too does Poliziano mark the transition to epic by utilizing dactylic hendecasyllables within this octave, most notably

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[144] From book 11, lines 774-776 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, 174.
[145] Tissoni Benvenuti, 149. Poliziano had already utilized the Dantean "biscia" in his brief description of this account in Mercurio's prologue. In Dante, *Purgatorio*, 158.
[146] Poliziano, *Le stanze per la giostra*, ed. Bausi, 28.
[147] From book 2, line 273 in *De raptu Proserpinae* in Claudianus, Claudius, *Claudian*, ed. and trans. Maurice Plantnauer, (London: W. Heinemann, 1922), 338; Bausi, 98n. Tissoni Benvenuti also sees some correspondence between Poliziano's use of "ad un tratto" in both the *Stanze* and the *Orfeo* and Claudian's use of similar language in lines 262 to 263 of the second book of *De raptu proserpinae*: "Sed mihi verginitas pariter coelum negatur, / eripitur cum luce pudor" (Tissoni Benvenuti, 149n).

in line 143.[148] Dactylic hexameter was commonly the meter of classical epic poetry and hendecasyllables was the preferred line structure of Dante's *Divina Commedia*.

One of the scenes that is truly emblematic of the epic genre is that of Orfeo's descent into the Underworld, lines 157 to 180. The metrical choices attest to the epic emphasis in this passage as once again Poliziano switches to dactylic hendecasyllable in line 162.[149] Given that most of the great epic poets, Vergil, Claudian, and Dante in particular, had inserted such a potent theme into their respective works, Poliziano pays them homage through the language and imagery in his rendering of the topic. The hero's pronouncement of the journey that he must make to recover Euridice in line 157, "andar convienmi alle tartaree porte," is reminiscent of Virgilio's words to Dante regarding the necessary path he must take to leave the dark wood by traveling through Hell: "A te convien tenere altro vïaggio."[150] It is Ovid's account of Orpheus in the *Metamorphoses*, however, that dominates this scene, providing a model for the structure and the language of the story which Poliziano happily adopts in his play. Indeed, critics have argued that this episode in particular is almost a rendering of the Ovidian authority into the contemporary vernacular. [151] One example of this direct translation can be found in Orfeo's pronouncement that "qua giú m'ha scorto solamente Amore" (line 167), which Tissoni Benvenuti and Bausi agree is the *volgare* equivalent of "causa viae coniunx."[152]

In a similar vein, Poliziano refashions the Ovidian source by transforming authorial narration into Orfeo's spoken words. The hero's declaration that he must go to the gates of

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[148] Bausi, 158n.
[149] Bausi, 160n.
[150] From *Inferno*, I.91 in Alighieri, Dante, *Inferno*, 8.
[151] Not only are the *Metamorphoses* the model for this portion of Poliziano's text, but the language is so suggestive of the Ovidian poem, argues Tissoni Benvenuti, that one could accurately describe Poliziano's use of it "se non di traduzione, certo di rifacimento in gara con la fonte ovidiana, con l'aiuto di molto altro materiale classic utilizzato mediante la consueta tecnica del ricupero da altri contesti" (Tissoni Benvenuti, 151n).
[152] Tissoni Benvenuti, 151-152n; Bausi, 160n; from book 10 line 23 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, 66.

Tartarus is a reworking of the narration within the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses*, which recounted that Orpheus "ad Styga Taenaria est ausus descendere porta."[153] The quotations and revampings of Ovidian verse continue, for instance, when Orfeo conveys his hopes that his tearful songs and sweet music will be enough to change his fate, and that "forse ne diverrà pietosa Morte

> ché già cantando habbiam mosso una pietra,
> la cervia e 'l tigre insieme havemo accolti
> e tirate le selve, e' fiumi svolti."

Orfeo's acknowledgment of his musical prowess brings to mind the opening verses of book XI of the *Metamorphoses*, as the narrator recounts how Orpheus "carmine dum tali silvas animosque ferarum…et saxa sequentia ducit."[154] Poliziano's added details, the "cervia e 'l tigre" in particular, invoke the epic of Claudian as well. The preface to the second book of *De raptu Proserpinae* commences with an account of Orpheus' skill when he took up the lyre, emphasizing the harmony that it created amongst all manner of rustic beasts: "concordes varia ludunt cum tigride dammae; / Massylam cervi non timuere iubam."[155] This passage thus suggests the greater influence of Poliziano's philological interests over the poetic, in that the authorities invoked through linguistic allusion all have some clear links to the Orpheus myth. Such a practice of literary blending appears to move Poliziano away from the chaotic *contaminatio* that characterized the *Stanze* and towards the more discerning selection of sources found in the *Silvae*.

That Poliziano imbues this very same octave with numerous references to the lyric poetry of Petrarch should not detract from reading this passage as philologically motivated. Indeed, the very essence of Poliziano's *docta varietas* is the judicious selection of heterogeneous ancient sources in order to create a unified whole, one in which the presence of other authorities ground

[153] Book 10, line 13 of Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, 64; Tissoni Benvenuti, 151n.
[154] Book 11 lines 1-2 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, 120.
[155] From book 2, lines 27-28 of *De raptu Proserpinae* in Claudianus, 316.

the poetry in a well-researched literary tradition.[156] Orfeo's reference to his "lacrimose rime" (line 160) has a direct antecedent in the double sestina "Mia benigna fortuna e 'l viver lieto" (*RVF* CCCXXXII). Petrarch bemoans both the death of his lady and the fact that his poetry no longer offers consolation. Moreover, within this component the poet wishes that he possessed "un sì pietoso stile / che Laura mia potesse torre a Morte / come Euridice Orfeo sua senza rime."[157] Similarly, the combination of "tartaree porte" appears verbatim in component CCCLVIII of the *RVF*, and, as with the example cited above, this sonnet is a particularly apt reference point in terms of the themes Poliziano wishes to convey. Again, the poet laments the passing of his lady, declaring by the poem's end that he wishes for death because "seco fui in via, et seco al fin son giunto, / et mia giornata ò co' suoi piè fornita." Petrarch, the forlorn lover, has no recourse but to follow his beloved lady into the afterlife. Furthermore, the inclusion of this poem anticipates the folly of Orfeo's journey to the Underworld. Petrarch holds as his guide in life (and death) the one who, in addition to breaking down the doors of Tartarus with his foot, "del suo sangue non fu avaro" – Jesus Christ. It is only Christ who can restore life to the dead, and this evocation reminds the listeners and readers that Orfeo's attempt to do so is a show of hubris.

Poliziano returns to his implicit accentuation of epic poetry in the following two octaves. As Orfeo reaches his destination at the heart of Dis, he encounters figures with a longstanding association with the Underworld in epic poetry: Cerberus and the Furies. Orfeo calls to quiet the three-headed dog ("posa, Cerbero, posa il tuo furore"), assuring the beast that "quando intenderai

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[156] Guest, Claire L., "*Varietas*, *poikilia* and the *silva* in Poliziano," *Hermathena* (Winter 2007): 183, 16. See chapter four of the present study and Claire L. Guest's study of the similarities between *varietas* and the Greek concept of variety (*poikilia*) at work in the poems of the *Sylvae* for further elaboration on this concept.

[157] Petrarca, 616.

tutti e' mie' mali, / non solamente tu piangerai meco, ma qualunque è qua giú nel mondo cieco" (169-172). Orfeo virtually repeats this entreaty as he addresses the Furies in the following octave: "Non bisogna per me, Furie, mugghiare, non bisogna arriciar tanti serpenti" (173-174). The near identical use of anaphora ("posa…posa" and "non bisogna…non bisogna") further links these figures together from a rhetorical standpoint as well as thematic.[158]

By passing from an encounter with Cerberus to one with the Furies, Poliziano adheres to the itinerary through the Underworld established by Vergil's Aeneas. Poliziano does not include much of the Vergilian model in his description of Cerberus or the Furies, though the depiction of the dog's neck bristling with snakes ("horrere…colla colubris") does reappear in Poliziano's image of the Furies' snake-hair curling in anger.[159] A conflation of the elements ascribed to the Vergilian Cerberus and the Furies is understandable, considering the sibyl's designation of the Furies as infernal dogs, whose howling heard in the distance scattered the unhappy shades as Aeneus entered the Underworld ("et iuga coepta moveri / silvarum, visaeque canes ululare per umbram").[160] Such a conflation is not unique to Poliziano: both Claudian and Dante portray the Furies as having serpents for hair in their accounts of the Underworld. The Furies in *De raptu Proserpinae* appear "crinitaque sontibus hydris," an image that Dante utilizes and amplifies, describing his hellish women as dressed "con idre verdissime…cinte; / serpentelli e ceraste avien per crine."[161] Poliziano thus lyrically depicts for the reader the scenery and characters that would

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[158] Bausi, 160n.
[159] From *Aeneid* VI.419 in Vergil, 167. In the *Aeneid*, the Furies, represented by Tisiphone, carries snakes to torment the shades; they are not a part of her physiology (*Aeneid* VI.571-2; Grimal, 151). Ovid's account of Orpheus' descent into Dis omits the Furies completely (cfr. *Metamorphoses* book 10, lines 21-22 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol 2, 64).
[160] *Aeneid* VI.257 in Vergil, 163); Bausi, 160n.
[161] Book 1, line 39 in Claudianus, 296; from canto 9, lines 39-40 in Alighieri, Dante, *Inferno*, 168; Tissoni Benvenuti, 152n.

appear in performances of the *Orfeo*, utilizing in particular the vivid imagery previously related by Dante in his *Divina Commedia*.

Owing to his detailed attention to the landscape of Hell and the mythical figures who traditionally populated the Underworld, Dante emerges as one of the chief authorities of epic in these two octaves.[162] Bausi sees in the repetition of Orfeo's words "posa…posa," said to calm Cerberus (line 169), a reminder of Malacoda's words to calm his demon throng ("Posa, posa, Scarmiglione!") in the twenty-first canto of the *Inferno*.[163] The designation of Dis as "il mondo cieco" (line 172) twice appears in Dante's *Inferno*. The first occurrence is found in the fourth canto as Dante the pilgrim and his poet guide have crossed the threshold from Limbo and begin their true descent into Hell, thus mirroring the trajectory of Orfeo's journey: "Or discendiam qua giù nel cieco mondo."[164] This same combination appears again the twenty-seventh canto, spoken by Guido da Montefeltro to Dante, who asks the pilgrim "se tu pur mo in questo mondo cieco / caduto se' di quella dolce terra" to give him news of Romagna.[165] The words of this soul stress that Dante, like Orfeo, is a temporary visitor to the infernal lands. Also noteworthy is Poliziano's repetition of the rhyme found in Dante's *terzine* of "cieco" with "meco."[166] Though the description of the Furies' serpentine hair curling from anger is unique to Poliziano, the verb "arricciar" is another borrowing from the *Inferno*. Dante described the effects of his fear in encountering the Malebranche in the twenty-third canto, remembering that "già mi sentia tutti

[162] Paul Colilli agrees, maintaining that "one of the major subtexts to the *Orfeo* is precisely the *Divine Comedy*…the mythic Orphic descent to hell is the point of contact for interlocking the *Orfeo* with its medieval subtext, the *Divine Comedy*" (Colilli, Paul, *Poliziano's Science of Tropes* [New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1989), 101-103).
[163] Bausi, 160n; From canto 21 line 105 in Dante, *Inferno*, 388.
[164] Canto 4, line13 in Aligheri, Dante, *Inferno*, 66.
[165] Canto 27, lines 25-26 in Aligheri, Dante, *Inferno*, 496; Tissoni Benvenuti, 152n; Bausi, 160n.
[166] Canto 27, lines 23-25 in Aligheri, Dante, *Inferno*, 496; Bausi, 160n.

arriciar li peli."[167] Even the words of Pluto, stunned that a living being would dare to cross into Dis, derive from the *Divina Commedia*. Pluto's demand to know "chi è costui che con suo dolce nota / muove l'abisso, e con l'ornata cetra?" evokes similar astonished questions pronounced by the fallen angels in the eighth canto of the *Inferno* ("Chi è costui che sanza morte / va per lo regno de la morta gente?") and Guido del Duca at the opening of the fourteenth canto of the *Purgatorio*: "Chi è costui che 'l nostro monte cerchia / prima che morte li abbia dato il volo."[168] Such fitting references in these two octaves are further evidence of Poliziano's philologist's eye exercising control over the selection of literary authorities. The sources may be diverse, spanning different genres, languages, and traditions, but they all evoke the same imagery and strengthen the overarching themes. The allusions to Dante's epic in particular serve to stress the play's theme of avoiding going beyond the bounds of what is right, according either to God or to one's own reason. Poliziano's portrayal of second death of Euridice, for example, likely reminded the spectators of the damned lovers, Paolo and Francesca. In her only lines within the play, Euridice laments Orfeo's actions, declaring that " 'l troppo amore / n'ha disfatti ambendua!" A mutual undoing brought on by too much love was equally the cause of Paolo and Francesca's demise, as the lady herself states within the fifth canto of the *Inferno*: "Amor condusse noi ad una morte."[169]

Indeed, Dante's *Divina Commedia*, vernacular epic poetry known for its theatrical elements, becomes a useful parallel for Poliziano's play as it begins a slow transition from epic to the final generic cycle: Euripidean tragedy.[170] The arrival of the *Baccanti* in line 293 and their

[167] Canto 23, line 19 in Alighieri, Dante, *Inferno*, 418; Bausi, 160n.
[168] Canto 8, lines 84-85 in Alighieri, Dante, *Inferno*, 152; from canto 14, lines1-2 in Alighieri, Dante, *Purgatorio*, 278; Bausi, 161n. Tissoni Benvenuti and Bausi further note that the description of Orfeo's singing as "suo dolce nota" references like phrasing ("tin tin sonando con sì dolce nota," line 143) in the tenth canto of *Paradiso* (Tissoni Benvenuti, 153n; Bausi, 161n).
[169] Canto 5, line 106 in Alighieri, Dante, *Inferno*, 96; Bausi, 166n.
[170] The dramatic nature of Dante's three canticles has long been noted by commentators and theater scholars alike. Early commentators Guido da Pisa (1327-28) and Giovanni Boccaccio (1373-75) in their

killing of Orfeo in the subsequent two octaves (lines 294 to 308), firmly signal the dominance of this genre and this author in particular. The *Baccanti* appear following the Ovidian tradition, and their words are a vernacular transliteration of those spoken by Ovid's Ciconian women in book XI of the *Metamorphoses*. The narrator in that book recounts how the "nurus Ciconum" spied Orpheus and "quibus una…'e,' ait 'en hic est nostri contemptor" before attacking the singer with a spear.[171] Poliziano recapitulates much of this scenario in the dialogue of his play:

Una Baccante:
Ecco quel che l'amor nostro disprezza!
O, o, sorelle! O, o, diamoli morte!
Tu scaglia il tirso; tu quel ramo spezza;
tu piglia o saxo o fuoco e gitta forte"

Just as giving into one's base passions will eventually result in death, so, too, does denying love (in this case heterosexual love) lead only to violent retribution. The women's anger at Orfeo's rejection of their sex leads immediately to a desire to kill him, mirroring the causal link between Aristeo's unchecked passion and Euridice's death by snakebite or Orfeo's overwhelming love and her second death. Ovidian narration again becomes first person speech in lines 295 to 296. The *Baccante*'s call to her sisters to take up the thyrsus or a sharp rock with which to murder Orfeo pulls from Ovid's third person account in the *Metamorphoses*: "vatemque petunt et fronde

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introductory notes to *Inferno* declare Dante's poem to be as much a tragedy, as understood by the Greeks, as it is an epic, lyric, or elegy. C.H. Grandgent and Francis Fergusson both contend that though never intended as theater by its author, the *Commedia* nonetheless exhibits all the drama and pathos of great tragedies, creating a bridge between the ancient dramas of Euripides, the early modern works of Shakespeare, and even the modern masterpieces of Wagner. Each of the poem's cantos sets a stage upon which the drama of the various souls, and of the pilgrim himself, unfolds. The narrator presents the reader not only with a description of events, but with a series of implied gestures and movements, changes of scenery and costumes, and dramatic entrances and exits. See Guido da Pisa, *Guido da Pisa's Expositiones et Glose super Comediam Dantis, or, Commentary on Dante's Inferno*, ed. Vincenzo Cioffari (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974); Giovanni Boccaccio, *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca (Milan: Mondadori, 1965); *La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri*, ed. C.H. Grandgent (Boston: Heath, 1909-1913), xxi; Francis Fergusson, *Idea of a Theater: a Study of Ten Plays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), 15. All commentaries have been consulted electronically through the Dante Dartmouth Project at http://dante.dartmouth.edu/.

[171] *Metamorphoses* book 11, lines 6-7 in Ovid*, Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, 120; Tissoni Benvenuti, 163n.

virentes / coniciunt thyrsos non haec in munera factos. / Hae glaebas, illae direptos arbore ramos, pars torquent silices."[172] The overt Ovidian references are rare after these first few lines, as Poliziano pulls almost exclusively from the tragedies of Euripides in the concluding chorus of the bacchants.

Poliziano also patterns the bacchant's call to take up weapons against Orfeo after the messenger's report of Pentheus' death in the *Bacchae*. The messenger ("Ἄγγελος") describes how Pentheus was killed at the hands of frenzied maenads, led by his own mother, Agave ("μήτηρ Ἀγαύη σύγγονοί θ' ὁμόσποροι / πᾶσαί τε βάκχαι") who bade her sisters to "come, stand about in a circle and take hold of the trunk. We must capture the treed beast" ("Φέρε, περιστᾶσαι κύκλῳ / πτόρθου λάβεσθε, μαινάδες, τὸν ἀμβάτην / θῆρ' ὡς ἕλωμεν").[173] The messenger continues to describe the murder of Pentheus, sparing none of the gory details, such as how after Pentheus's body lay "in pieces, part under the jagged rocks, part in the green depths of the forest…His mother has his poor head. She seized it in her hands and fixed it on the top of a thyrsus" ("κεῖται δὲ χωρὶς σῶμα, τὸ μὲν ὑπὸ στύφλοις / πέτραις, τὸ δ' ὕλης ἐν βαθυξύλῳ φόβῃ…κρᾶτα δ' ἄθλιον, / ὅπερ λαβοῦσα τυγχάνει μήτηρ χεροῖν, / πήξασ' ἐπ' ἄκρον θύρσον… φέρει).[174] This passage serves also as the authority for the *Baccante*'s frenzied words in lines 303 to 305, who, holding aloft the severed head of Orfeo, declares that "per tutto il 'l bosco l'habbiamo stracciato, tal ch'ogni sterpo è del suo sangue sazio." Euripides' Agave, too, appeared on stage holding the head of her son.

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[172] *Metamorphoses*, book 11, lines 27-30 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 2, 122; Tissoni Benvenuti, 163-164n.

[173] Euripides, *Ten Plays*, ed. and translated by Moses Hadas (New York: Bantam Books, 1960), 305; lines 1106-1107 of the *Bacchae* in Euripides, *Bacchae; Iphigenia At Aulis; Rhesus*, ed. and trans. David Kovacs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 120; Tissoni Benvenuti, 163-164n. Tissoni Benvenuti also considers the *Baccante*'s use of "sorelle" to call the other maenads an influence of the Euripidean tragedy (Tissoni Benvenuti, 163n).

[174] Euripides, *Ten Plays*, ed. and translated by Moses Hadas, 306; lines 1137-1142 of the *Bacchae* in Euripides, *Bacchae; Iphigenia At Aulis; Rhesus*, 122.

The extent to which Poliziano draws on Euripides' tragedies for this final portion of the play has been well documented by Tissoni Benvenuti, Bausi, Orvieto, and others.[175] Of interest to this study is the demonstrable shift in the play's tone and textual authorities that takes place when the *Baccanti* arrive on stage. It is important to note that in the previous cycles – the prefatory letter, the prologue, the pastoral episode, and the epic journey to Hell – Poliziano did not limit himself to the authors of the dominant genre, but rather he suffused his lyric with echoes both covert and overt to authors of disparate styles, genres, and traditions. In the final fifty lines of the play, however, Poliziano seems to limit himself almost exclusively to Euripidean tragedies.

The "true" genre revealed: the *Fabula d'Orfeo* as a *satyr* play

The tragedy of the *Bacchae* provides a model for the maenads and their murder of Orfeo, yet its ending conflicts with Poliziano's vision for the *Orfeo*. The *Bacchae* does not conclude with the death of Pentheus, but rather with the restoration of Agave's reason and the devastating realization that she has slain her own son.[176] Poliziano's *Baccanti* are not restored to reason, rather the maenads continue their frenzied festivities by getting drunk: "I' mi moro già di sonno: / son io ebria, o sì o no?…voi siate ebrie, ch'io lo so!" Instead of utilizing other authors, however,

[175] See Tissoni Benvenuti's extensive notes to the text of the *Orfeo* (Tissoni Benvenuti, 163-167n) as well as the introduction to her critical edition of the text (Tissoni Benvenuti, 92-103). Bausi repeats most of Tissoni Benvenuti's notes in his own critical edition of Poliziano's *volgare* poetry, yet offers some new perspectives on designating the *Orfeo* as a satyr play in his introduction (Bausi, xxiii-xxvi). See also Orvieto, 316-323 and Colilli, 84.

[176] Unlike the Baccanti of the Orfeo who were aware of Orfeo's identity, Agave truly was out of her senses, for she believed the head of Pentheus to be that of a lion. As she regained her wits, she realized what it was she held and cried, "What do I see? What is this I bring home in my hands?...No, it is Pentheus' head I hold! O misery!" (Euripides, *Ten Plays*, ed. and translated by Moses Hadas, 309-10).

Poliziano blends the *Bacchae* with Euripides only extant satyr play, the *Cyclops*. It is this play that provides the right structure and tone for the *Orfeo*'s conclusion.[177]

The *Cyclops*, too, ends with a mixture of drunken revelry and violence: Cyclops, having been blinded by Odysseus, stumbles on to the stage, drunk, bleeding and raging, the members of the chorus mocking him in his pain.[178] Similar to Poliziano's *Orfeo*, the tragic moment of the *Cyclops* comes in the middle of the play when the giant, contrary to the law requiring protection and hospitality for shipwrecked sailors, kills and eats Odysseus' companions.[179] This tragic tone is supplanted by comedy when the Cyclops first becomes inebriated and then blinded by Odysseus. As the blind Cyclops rages around the stage trying to find Odysseus, the members of the chorus mock him in his blindness and stupidity. The play thus transforms from a tragedy to a farce: Cyclops is duly punished for his transgression (bringing harm upon invited guests), and Odysseus is hailed as the victor in his trickery.[180] In borrowing the themes and language from the *Cyclops*, Poliziano equally alters the tone of his own play, swiftly moving the *Orfeo* away from pure tragedy towards something resembling comedy. This conclusion of the *Orfeo* therefore finally explains the philological motivation for the entire text: with the *Orfeo* Poliziano created a vernacular satyr play.

Just as Paulus Corbius' reference to the *peroratio* revealed the oration structure that guided the creation of Valla's *De professione religiosorum*, so too does the chorus of the *Baccanti* explain the overarching structure of Poliziano's play. Such a revelation likewise negates the sense of a hollow ending that spectators or readers might experience in Orfeo's

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[177] Tissoni Benvenuti, 165n; Orvieto, 318.
[178] See lines 519 to 707 of the *Cyclops* in Euripides, *Cyclops; Alcestis; Medea*, ed. and trans. by David Kovacs (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 116-144.
[179] See lines 299 to 408 of the *Cyclops* in Euripides, *Cyclops; Alcestis; Medea*, 96-106.
[180] Orvieto, 318.

demise at the hands of the bacchantes. The message that Poliziano underscored in each episode of the play, both through the explicit words and implicit allusions, is to balance one's passions, to adhere to one's "ragionevole instituto." Though Orfeo's death is sanctioned by his transgression of this rule, that he should be murdered by creatures so decidedly unchecked in their frenzy seems wrong, much like Valla's unexpected praise of friars after discrediting them at length. Thus, the great reveal that the *Orfeo* was a satyr play all along is the key to understanding not only this ending but also the series of episodes that preceded it.[181]

Traditionally, a satyr play was the fourth play in a tetralogy that followed after three tragedies, and its purpose was to lighten the mood after such weighty material. Echoing Poliziano's distinction in the preface between works of poetic import and the relatively trivial poetry present in the *Orfeo* (a distinction that recalled similar pronouncements in Statius), satyr plays had often been ignored or dismissed owing to their farcical elements and lighter tone.[182] Many of the authors who wrote satyr plays, however, also wrote tragedy. As a result, the satyr plays typically utilized some of the same language and structures found in tragedy, veering off towards comedy by the conclusion.[183] The common elements of a satyr play included rustic settings, trickery, and disguises.[184] The aspect that clearly marked a satyr play, however, was the

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[181] Orvieto contends that the "*fabula* di Orfeo è del tutto incomprensibile se non si conosce il genere da cui deriva," that is Euripides' satyr play, the *Cyclops* (Orvieto, 319).
[182] Harrison, George W.M., "Introduction" in *Satyr Drama: Tragedy at Play*, ed. George W.M. Harrison (Swansea: The Classical Press of Wales, 2005), xi.
[183] Niall Slater notes that though "views of the relation between satyr play and the foregoing tragedies have varied…all models emphasize a significant turn, a shift in tone, and a shift in relation to the audience. Schlegel argued for a psychological 'relaxation' of tragic tension, and many approaches have seen it as much closer to comedy" (Slater, Niall, "Nothing to do with satyrs? *Alcestis* and the concept of prosatyric drama," in *Satyr Drama: Tragedy at Play*, ed. George W.M. Harrison, 86).
[184] Burnett, Anne Pippin, *Catastrophe Survived: Euripides' plays of mixed reversal* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 45.

presence of one or more satyrs as either characters within the play or the chorus.[185] Poliziano himself was aware of these aspects of the satyr play, for he examined the nature of the genre in three of his philological texts, including his commentary on Statius' *Silvae*.[186] His understanding of the satyr play in this commentary is based on Horace's words:

> "Ac de his Horatius scribit in Arte Poetica, cum dicit:
>
> mox etiam agrestes satyros nudavit et asper
> incolumi gravitate iocum tentavit, eo quod
> spectator functusque sacris et potus et exlex.
>
> Huius generis adhuc extat exemplum apud Graecos: nam Cyclops ille Euripideus nihil profecto est aliud quam satyrice poesis, in qua Satyri etiam Sileniusque introducuntur."[187]

In the second unfinished volume of his *Miscellanea*, Poliziano examined this topic further, offering a philological account of the satyr genre that becomes fundamental to our understanding of the *Orfeo*: "Veteres igitur Graeci *fabulas* fecerunt quae mediae ferme inter tragoediam comoediamque fuerunt (nam personae inerant deorum sed rusticorum)."[188]

Poliziano declares in his commentary on Statius, that the *Cyclops* is a perfect example of a satyr play, featuring both the character of Silenus and the satyr chorus. Yet the literary authorities included by the poet in earlier cycles of the *Orfeo* each exhibit some of the aspects common to the satyr play. The *sacre rappresentazioni* of the fifteenth century alluded to in the prologue, though wildly different in terms of characters and themes, show some resemblance to the satyr drama in tone and structure. Much like a satyr drama, these mystery plays present what could be deemed a tragicomic story. The tragedy consists of the initial action: characters such as

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[185] Slenders, Willeon, "ΛΕΞΙΣ ΕΡΩΤΙΚΗ in Euripides' *Cyclops,*" in *Satyr Drama: Tragedy at Play*, ed. George W.M. Harrison, 39.
[186] Orvieto, 316.
[187] Poliziano, Angelo, *Commento inedito alle Selve di Stazio*, ed. Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1978), 56-57; Orvieto, 316.
[188] Poliziano, Angelo, *Miscellaneorum Centuria Secunda*, ed. Vittore Branca, (Florence: Leo Olschki, 1978), 42-43 (emphasis mine); Orvieto, 316.

Adam and Eve give into the temptation of the snake; Christian martyrs are murdered at the hands of tyrannical kings. Yet the conclusion of these plays is a happy one, in that ultimately the coming of Christ will correct the sins of humanity and give purpose to the sacrifice of the martyrs. Among the Latin comedies referenced in the prologue, it is Plautus' *Amphitruo* that exhibits elements of satyr drama: in addition to its intermingling between gods and mortals, themes of trickery and disguise, the comedy retains the pivot characteristic of satyr plays that moves the drama away from tragedy towards a happy conclusion.[189] As Mercury states in the prologue to this comedy, "from a Tragedy I'll make to be a Comedy."[190]

Poliziano's theatrical eclogue, the scene between Aristeo and Mopso, likewise shares ties with satyr drama. Like satyr drama, eclogues plunged readers into a rustic and mythical world whose tone existed in a space between pure comedy and tragedy, displaying aspects of both.[191] Even epic authors flirted with satyr in the creation of their verse. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is, in essence, an epic compendium of myth. The stories presented therein examine many of the themes already present in satyr plays (betrayal and deception) and include the standard satyr characters, such as a drunken Silenus, who, along with Bacchus, appears in the tale immediately following Ovid's account of the death of Orpheus.[192] Greek tragedy, too, represented by Euripides' *Bacchae*, bears much resemblance to the satyr genre. In fact, critics such as David Sansone would argue that this Euripidean text is a satyr play, containing many thematic elements

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[189] See Segal, Erich, *Roman Laughter: The Comedies of Plautus*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 171-172.
[190] Plautus, *The Comedies of Plautus*, 5.
[191] Tissoni Benvenuti, based on Poliziano's own philological studies of satyr and those of Renaissance authors, argues that "l'egloga è il genere letterario piú vicino alla 'satira' sia per il livello stilistico sia per la tematica e i caratteri dei personaggi" (Tissoni Benvenuti, 99).
[192] Ambrose, Z. Phillip, "Family Loyalty and Betrayal in Euripides' *Cyclops* and *Alcestis*," in *Satyr Drama: Tragedy at Play*, ed. George W.M. Harrison, 32-33.

particular to the latter drama: a preoccupation with food and wine, disguises and cross-dressing, and the dancing or frenzy typical of the bacchanalia.[193]

Thus, beyond giving order and structure to what had appeared an arbitrary collection of scenes, the reveal of satyr drama at the conclusion of the *Orfeo* reorients the reader's understanding of Poliziano's use of *contaminatio*. What had previously seemed a hodgepodge of allusions, at times bearing at most a tenuous thematic connection to the play, suddenly becomes a thoughtful selection of references that work together to build a philolgically motivated, and, more importantly, unified text. Furthermore, as seen in the conclusion to Valla's dialogue, this ending responds to the preocupations raised by Poliziano in his prefatory letter. The generation of a unified poetic text from fragments, represented on the stage as the pieces of Orfeo that the *Baccanti* have dispersed and his blood which they have smeared on "ogni sterpo," becomes the inverse of Poliziano's initial wish that his "stirpa indegna" be torn to pieces. Fragments, when precisely located in the correct tradition or theme, no longer detract from the pleasing sense of wholeness. Instead, as Poliziano's play argues, the poetry based on a learned variety of sources can be regenerative.

[193] See Sansone, David, "The *Bacchae* as Satyr Play?," *Illinois Classical Studies* 3 (1978): 40-46.

Chapter 3

Philology in verse: Angelo Poliziano's *Silvae* and Lorenzo Valla's *Ars grammatica*.

Following a separation of two years, Lorenzo de' Medici received a lengthy letter of apology from his favored protégé, and so the Florentine duke welcomed back Angelo Poliziano into his employ in the spring of 1480. At the behest of Lorenzo, Poliziano assumed the position of the chair of rhetoric at the University of Florence. To commemorate this new role, the philologist-cum-poet drew together his two greatest talents and offered a series of occasional poems that became the *Silvae*. Inspired by Statius's *Silvae*, which was the subject of his first university lecture at Florence, Poliziano created a series of poems that mirrored his personal understanding of the term "silvae", namely that which the philosophers call "unarranged material." Though hardly disordered or improvisational, Poliziano's *Silvae* appear effortless in their creation and loose in their structure. The four poems of the *Silvae*, each written to commemorate a new course or subject that Professor Poliziano offered at the university, range in style and substance: they transition seamlessly from the epic to the bucolic, from discourses on the great classical authors to allusions to minor poets and philosophers.[1]

These Latin components to Poliziano's poetic oeuvre have stimulated and stymied the critics over the years, and thus far no consensus has been reached as to whether they represent a break with his earlier work or a continuation of the *volgare* poetry of the 1470s. Although Vittore Branca considers Poliziano's later Latin poetry to be more thorough and sophisticated

[1] "Inscribitur 'Sylvarum liber', quoniam sylva indigesta materia a philosophis appellatur," from Poliziano's explication of Statius's text in Poliziano, Angelo, *Commento inedito alle Selve di Stazio*, ed. Luisa Cesarini Martinelli, (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1978), 8; Fantazzi, Charles, Introduction and notes to Poliziano, Angelo, *Silvae*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), xi.

than his earlier ventures, the critic does caution against fully embracing the tradition that separates the *volgare* poetry from Poliziano's work following 1480.[2] Branca does, however, assert that the later poetry demonstrates a refinement of Poliziano's poetic voice, a disdain for the poetry that is born out of hybridism and not learned imitation, and also a marked shift from his philosophical leanings of the previous decade. Almost completely absent are the traces of Ficinian Neoplatonism, and of the playful *volgare* poetry of Luigi Pulci or Lorenzo de' Medici.[3]

The *praelectiones* that Poliziano published as the *Silvae* were poems written in honor of the poet or the subject of an upcoming course offered by the rhetoric professor at the University. Poliziano composed the first, *Manto*, in 1482, delivered it on the 9th of November of that year, and published it not long thereafter. Called a *praelectio*, in reality the poem functions as a panegyric to Vergil, a summary of his great works, and finally an exhortation to his students to embrace this author and his vast eloquence. The poem *Rusticus* follows, which Poliziano delivered and published in October of 1483.[4] Rather than focus on one author, Poliziano chose as his subject the bucolic poetry of Hesiod and Vergil's *Georgics*. The poets themselves are not

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[2] Branca, Vittore, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola*, (Turin: Einaudi, 1983), 12. Branca appears overwhelmed in trying to pinpoint critics who have historically propagated this distinction. He declares that "queste prospettive contrastanti si aprono anche nelle più autorevoli e ampie e recenti storie letterarie o trattazioni del Quattrocento e del Rinascimento fiorentino." So pervasive is that myth that even Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, a great critic of Poliziano, "ha scritto recentemente della «svolta maturata nel 1480 quando di ritorno da Mantova, il Poliziano…abbandonò quasi del tutto la produzione poetica» e «ostentò sempre un certo disprezzo per la sua poesia»" (Branca. 26-27n). In the introduction to his annotated text of the *Silvae*, Francesco Bausi also mentions this tradition of separating the first and second phases of Poliziano's work around the date of 1480. While he agrees with Branca that such a rigid separation is misleading, he does intimate that "un attento esame della produzione polizianea…rivela che quella tesi, almeno in parte e almeno sotto certi aspetti, trova conferma nei fatti, ossia nel reale svolgimento dell'attività culturale del Poliziano" (Bausi, Francesco, Introduction and notes in Poliziano, Angelo, *Silvae*, ed. F. Bausi, [Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1996], xxix).

[3] Branca, 19-23. Branca attributes this shift in language preferences, namely moving away from the hybridism and the celebration of the *vulgare* and moving towards an adoption of pure Latin, to the influence of the Venetian culture and its citizens. During the latter half of the Quattrocento, Venice still retained Latin as its primary language, the only universal means of communication (20).

[4] Fantazzi, xii.

frequently named nor are their works; Poliziano focuses on the subject of the pastoral poems, filling his verses with images of farmlands, shepherds, nymphs and woodland gods. The poet concludes his ode with the entreaty to the heavens to allow him to live the pastoral life which he tasted while composing these verses in his "Faesuleo…antro" [Fiesolan cave].[5] Notwithstanding the absence of explicit references to classical poets, the voices of those authorities are present in the structure of the ode, the myths that respond to the topic, and the lexical choices, all of which bear witness to the erudition of Poliziano.

The final two poems of the collection, *Ambra* and *Nutricia*, continue this confluence of philology and poetry. *Ambra* was published shortly after the date of its dedication to Lorenzo Tornabuoni on the fourth of November, 1485, and *Nutricia* is believed to have been completed by Poliziano on the eighth of October, 1486, in Fiesole. Considering that Poliziano wrote both poems within the space of a year and ruminated on the general topic of poetry in both the odes, it is hardly surprising that the poet should include some common elements within the texts.[6] *Ambra*, written in the guise of an ode to Homer, emerges as a paean to ancient epics as the source of all human knowledge. Poliziano presents a discussion of the poet's life and works within a broader historical, and mythical context, emphasizing that the many scholastic achievements of man were divinely sanctioned and largely culled from Homeric epic. *Nutricia* continues this theme, broadening Poliziano's argument of the previous poem to include all poetry as transporter of the divine to man. It is in these two particular poems of the *Silvae* that Poliziano establishes the preeminence of poetry among the arts and sciences. Thus, the poems of the *Silvae* may appear highly different in style, tone, and execution, yet they still continue the project set forth by

[5] Unless otherwise noted, all quotations of the *Silvae* and their English translations come from Poliziano, Angelo, *Silvae*, ed. and trans. by Charles Fantazzi, (Cambridge, MA: The I Tatti Renaissance Library Harvard University Press, 2004).
[6] Fantazzi, xii.

Poliziano in the *volgare* poetry of his youth. What Poliziano offers couched within his odes to ancient authors is an extended defense of poetry that aims to elevate this art to the same levels as the great sciences: philosophy and ethics.

Through the poems of *Ambra* and *Nutricia*, the author of the *Silvae* presents also a modified and modern view of the poet, epitomized by Poliziano himself. The poet assumes the tripartite role of inspired singer who follows his muse, seasoned philologist who collects and who restores the words of the classic authors, and literary critic who expounds on the poetic art, its place and, more importantly, its worth among the other sciences. In discussing the multifaceted nature of these two *selve*, and the poet they present, Jean-Marc Mandosio concludes that they were written during a transitional period in the poet's life. As the rhetoric professor at the University of Florence, Poliziano was expected to produce philological studies with greater frequency than his poetic output, and such texts were primarily meant to educate. He had not yet, however, moved on to comment specifically on philosophical texts.[7] Nonetheless, the poetry of this period does reveal this exhaustive philological study, creating a poetry that is encyclopedic, including multiple sciences therein.[8]

Indeed, the poetry of the *Silvae* emerges as the fruit born of rigorous study. What becomes apparent in Poliziano's philological and poetic works of the early 1480s is a reverence for words in their original text, paying close attention to the historical context and to the cultural

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[7] Mandosio, Jean-Marc, "Filosofia, arti e scienze: l'enciclopedismo di Angelo Poliziano," in *Poliziano nel suo tempo: Atti del VI convengo inernazionale (Chianciano-Montepulciano 18-21 luglio 1994)*, ed. Luisa Secchi Tarugi, (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 1996), 139. It was not until the late 1480s/early 1490s that Poliziano began his study on purely philosophical texts, such as Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.
[8] Mandosio, 139. Mandosio identifies the poems *Ambra* and *Nutricia* specifically as two poetic texts that exemplify Poliziano's encyclopedic tendencies.

significance.[9] Poliziano may not have been ashamed of his earlier work or eager to halt publication of those *volgare* texts, but owing to this changed perspective, the poet actively avoided the *contaminatio* associated with the works produced by Lorenzo's group of poet followers, and by the Magnifico himself. This particular type of literature championed by the young Poliziano was too aristocratic and stylized. It lacked a universal quality that would make it accessible to readers outside of the Laurentian circle. Poliziano's *Silvae*, by contrast, spoke to a broader audience of not just poets but philosophers and philologists across Italy, and, with time, across Europe.[10] Poliziano's poetry, though still built upon the words of the classical poets in clear allusions to these authors and their specific works, now included references to philologists and philosophers. As Paolo Orvieto notes, Poliziano may have continued to align himself with the great poets, but the subject matter of these texts suggests that he was also striving with acclaimed philogists such as Lorenzo Valla, Ermolao Barbaro, Domizio Calderini, Giorgio Merula, and the other commentators of classical authors active in the *Quattrocento*.[11] Though Lorenzo Valla was the only one of the aforementioned philologists that Poliziano did not know personally, it was this scholar who provided the best template for the poetry of the *Silvae*: poetry in which the philology was as essential as the verse.

Lorenzo Valla's *Ars grammatica*, composed most likely during his time in the court of Alfonso V of Aragon (1435-1447), demonstrates the same attention to philosophy, philology and

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[9] Branca, 19. Again the period spent in Venice emerges as the primary source for these changing perspectives. Poliziano likely would not have adopted an Aristotelian stance were it not for his association with Ermolao Barbaro during this time (13-14).

[10] Branca, 24. The universal quality of Poliziano's Latin poetry is apparent from its content as well as its language and style. Branca notes that in the *Ambra* Poliziano pointedly places poetry as the comprehensive source of all the sciences and philosophies, a theme which I develop further in this chapter.

[11] Orvieto, Paolo, *Poliziano e l'ambiente mediceo*, (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2009), 327. Highlighting further Poliziano's disinterest with poetry, Orvieto notes that in these years Poliziano became increasingly interested in the writings of those authors far removed from his own area of expertise: technical and scientific writers, such as jurists and doctors.

the poetic medium as the tool to bring these threads together. As such, Valla's *Ars grammatica* represents an interesting prototype for the work that Poliziano would complete during those university years in Florence. In the *Ars grammatica* and the *Silvae*, Valla and Poliziano composed their poetry by transforming elements from taken from philological studies into verse. Moreover, both authors utilized the poetic medium to develop a certain philosophy: Valla championed Latin eloquence as the great civilizer of mankind while Poliziano championed poetry as the mother of all knowledge and civilization.

Valla's *Ars grammtica*: a song of linguistic disputes

Like the *Silvae*, the *Ars grammatica* is a curious text whose scope ranges from the rudiments of Latin grammar, to citations of classical poets, to philosophical asides on the nature of language and society. Unfinished and with questionable authorship, Valla's grammatical poem is the clearest example of the convergence of poetry and philology in the *Quattrocento* before Poliziano.[12] In order to build this poetic text, Valla borrowed largely from his *Elegantiae,* the philological treatise in six books which Valla composed during the same period as the *Ars grammatica* and circulated in its completed form in 1448.[13] Within the *Elegantiae*, Valla explores and explicates the details of Latin grammar for the purpose of restoring proper use of

[12] Paola Casciano is the chief champion of this text and its inclusion among the works of Valla. Though poetry was not the standard medium for the early Quattrocento philsopher and philologist, "l'impianto fortemente polemico e satirico del carme, che irride le codificazioni degli artigrafi contradette nella pratica dagli scrittori, e in particolare la tradizione grammaticale medievale" are in keeping with Valla's other work (Casciano. xv). Equally important to Casciano's attribution of this poem to Valla is the existence of "un operetta grammaticale mista di versi e prosa sulle declinazioni dei nomi intitolata *Emendationes quorumdam locorum ex Alexandro ad Alphonsum primum Aragonum regem*" that Valla wrote during his stay in Napoli (Casciano, Paola, Introduction and notes to Valla, Lorenzo, *L'arte della grammatica*, [Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla / Mondadori, 1990], xvi).

[13] For more information regarding the composition, circulation, and content of this text, see chapter 4 of the present study.

the language among new and future students. Such an undertaking is paramount, for today, he laments, "non modo Latine nemo locutus est, sed ne Latina quidem legens intellexit."[14] This subject matter is thus crucial for the future of humanist studies; yet, it is often addressed in dry, pedantic tones. Valla, therefore, does not carry out his investigations into the most basic elements of Latin without taking recourse to those Roman authors whose work embodied Latin eloquence.

He begins the fourth book of the *Elegantiae* by acknowledging the criticism that his work is "indignum Christiano homine, ubi adhorter caeteros ad librorum secularium lectionem."[15] Valla responds with the affirmation that regardless of the example of Saint Jerome, who famously dreamt of being accused by God as being more Ciceronian that Christian, Valla will not turn away from the writings of the ancients, for "veteres illi theologi videntur mihi velut apes quaedam in longinqua etiam pascua volitantes, dulcissima mella, cerasque miro artificio condidisse…At ego (quod me attinet) non modo malim apes…sed etiam sub rege apium militare. Quae probatum iri bonae mentus iuvenibus…confidimus."[16] It is this point of view – that eloquence, like honey, improves learning and "regina rerum est, et perfecta sapientia" – that guides the creation of his poem.[17]

Not only does Valla adopt the same subject from the *Elegantiae* as the focus of his *Ars grammatica* ("mihi grammatice placuit precepta referre / carmine"), he chooses to present it in "song" form for the same reason that prompted him to incorporate secular works in crafting the

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[14] Valla, Lorenzo, *Laurentii Vallensis De Linguae Latinae Elegantia*, ed. and trans. Santiago López Moreda (Cáceres, ES: Universidad de Extremadura, 1999), 60.
[15] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 402
[16] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 410. Valla recounts how Jerome (Hieronymus) was "studiosior" of secular authors with the result that "caesum se flagellis ad tribunal Dei fuisse confitetur, accusatumque quod Ciceronianus foret, non Christianus; quasi non posset fidelis esse, et idem Tullianus" (Valla, *Elegantiae*, 402).
[17] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 410.

Elegantiae, namely that to do so would make the subject more attractive to his young pupils. Beginning with the simile of the doctor who, in order to entice a child to drink his prescribed medicine ("absinthia" or wormwood), will "tingunt cecropio summum cratera liquore

"quominus offendat dulcedine tectus amaror
…
utque lacertosis pelagi dum cerula verrunt
remigibus levat ille canor quicunque laborem
et se solatur cantando incurvus arator,
sic mihi grammatice placuit precepta referre
carmine, mollicule demulcerentur ut aures
pectoraque haurirent sensus sub melle salubres
nec nihil iccirco simul admiscere nitoris,
nam nullum fuerit, fuerit nisi carmen amenum."[18]

As in the *Elegantiae*, Valla again equates the image of sweet honey to that of eloquence, in this case a poem or song. Just as medicine becomes less bitter with honey, so too do labors, such as the rowing of the oars ("lacertosis…remigibus"), the ploughing of the field ("incurvus arator"), or, as intimated by Valla, the study of proper Latin, become less strenuous through song. Indeed, Valla further establishes the connection between poetic eloquence, Latin, and ancient texts already seen in the *Elegantiae* in the verses that follow this *incipit*. He contends that a good teacher of Latin must also be "exemplum…ipse loquendi," unlike the Latin masters of previous centuries who were derelict in their duties "quod libros veterum non evolvere disertos."[19] This is not the only instance in which Valla reworks information from the prefaces of the *Elegantiae* into poetic exhortations.

Even the minutiae of Valla's life as a bold scholar publishing new philological studies appear in both works. In the preface to the second book of the *Elegantiae*, Valla encourages his students to share work with "summis viris," but to beware those lesser scholars that might copy

[18]Valla, Lorenzo, *L'arte della grammatica* ed. Paola Casciano, (Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla / Mondadori, 1990), 4.
[19] Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 4.

them. He states that some who have heard him have "in opera sua retulerint, festinantque edere, ut ipsi priores invenisse videantur. Sed res ipsa deprehendet cuius domini vere sit haec possessio."[20] So clear is the plagiarism that Valla recounts how he confronted the thief, declaring to him "hanc ego elegantiam cognosco et mancipium meum affero, teque plagiaria lege convenire possum."[21] Similar sentiments – the threat of plagiarism and the adroitness at recognizing it in lesser scholars – appear in the *Ars grammatica*.

Valla alerts his students that "legetis adhuc in nullis scripta libellis / multa nisi in nostris quamvis ea Bostar et Aspar / in chartas transferre suas, o dedecus, audent!" The plagiarism is so obvious that just as in the *Elegantiae* the thief has "negligenter ille quidem et inscite tractatus," so too in the *Ars grammatica* is he "velut cornicula pavi / si geste caudam vel se ferat anser olorem."[22] For this reason, Valla exhorts his students to "quos mecum ridete."[23] The admonition to his readers and pupils on this minor point, however, is in keeping with Valla's overall objective in his poetic and philological texts: just as inferior authors should avoid the improper use of finer compositions, so too should students of Latin avoid the improper use of this fine and lofty language.

Indeed, all sorts of correspondences emerge between the *Ars grammatica* and the *Elegantiae*, as Valla briefly highlights in the lines of his poem Latin terms he had also explicated in the various books of his philological text, though with a more narrow focus.[24] In this first part of the unfinished poem, Valla centers on an examination of nouns according to their gender ("sic duplex genus est quod mas et femina formant…ex his ipsis constat commune duobus… Quin in

[20] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 186.
[21] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 188.
[22] *Ibid*; Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 6.
[23] Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 6.
[24] Casciano proudly declares that she has discovered not just thematic correspondences between the two texts, but also the same Latin terms utilized in similar manners and contexts (Casciano, xxi-xxii).

res anima traduximus ista carentes, / seu male seu quadam rationis imagine blanda," lines 43-62), and, consequently, his references to the words that he treats in the *Elegantiae* revolve around the connection between the gender and the forms of the noun.[25] Such is the case in his inquiry into *dux, comes* and other similar titles in lines 181 to 185: "De celo quoniam non lapsa est norma loquendi / iccirco mulieris opus non omne vierque / constat voce sua, ne[c] idest discernere promptum: / *dux*, *comes* et *princeps*…imperii quoniam sunt nomina, mascula fiunt."[26] These verses recall a similar argument in chapter 38 of *Elegantiae* IV. In discussing how these terms apply to people, Valla confirms these gender-based distinctions, noting that "in personas vero magis convenit *dux*, aut in his rebus, quae personis sunt similes, qualis est *fortuna*, quae dea fingitur." Just as *dux* remains a masculine epithet, so too does *comes* which, declares Valla at the close of this chapter, "est benignus homo et facilis, que aliis non gravate inservit."[27] While the entire chapter of the *Elegantiae* is both longer and discusses other uses and occurrences of these terms within various ancient exempla, the parallels between the two texts are unmistakable notwithstanding the limited focus.

Valla's short discourse on the words *auctor* and *actor* in lines 287 to 290 in the *Ars grammatica*, bear much in common with a chapter dedicated to the same topic in book IV of the *Elegantiae*. Valla begins his discussion of *auctor* based on the rules determined by its gender. He asserts that "*Auctorem*

commune volunt dum signat id ipsum
quod grece αὐθέντης et vix aliunde veniret!
Certe quicquid agat faciat ve quis illius *auctor*
ut sceleris samni gladii non dicitur *actor*.[28]

[25] Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 8.
[26] Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 20.
[27] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 462.
[28] Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 30.

This same distinction between *auctor*, that is the Greek-derived designation for one who is a murderer or one carries something out with his or her own hand, and the other meanings appears in greater detail in *Elegantiae* IV.32. Valla notes that "*auctor* autem est…*factor*, nam *factor* in usus non est, nisi in quibusdam e Graeco translatis."[29] Valla also repeats the idea that the *auctor* in general is one who has done something ("quicquid agat faciat"), whereas *actor* would never denote the creator of something, repeating some of the pugnacious language from the *Ars* ("scerlis…gladii") : "et illum qui fecit aliquod opus, qui egit bellum, qui egit pacem, auctorem operis, auctor est belli, auctor est pacis; nunquam *actor* est."[30] It is likely that, had he finished the poem, Valla would have moved beyond the gender of nouns to include a wider selction of grammatical elements thus further reproducing in verse his philological investigations within the *Elegantiae*.

The aspect of the *Ars grammatica* that is perhaps of greatest significance to Poliziano's *Silvae* is Valla's incorporation of numerous ancient authorities as the basis for his poetic and philological digressions. Valla's pronouncments on Latin grammar within this ode to the language contain references, both explicit and implicit, to many classical authors, from *grammatici*, to orators, to poets. One such example of Valla's use of literary allusions is to quote these authors within the text of the poem, much as he does in the text of his *Elegantiae*. Valla cannot elucidate the changes that occur to nouns in terms of significance and gender without utilizing various literary exempla that demonstrate the proper usage of the word. In order to underscore the importance of gender in determining the meaning of a term ("quedam comperies transferri cum genere ipso"), Valla cites Terence's combination of "«suam Eunuchum»" to refer to the comedy and not the actual person ("pro libro Comicus inquit"). Similarly, Vergil ("et

[29] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 450.
[30] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 450.

Maro"), Valla reminds his reader, does not indicate a literal centaur with the words "« Centauro magna »" but "de nave loquutus."[31] Ancient authorities also appear obliquely in this text through Valla's use of clear literary references.

The astute student of Latin, who has himself engaged in reading the texts of the ancients, should recognize the sources behind Valla's comparison between sweetening medicine with honey and alleviating toil with song in the poem's *incipit*. Valla's intimation that he must write in a pleasing manner in order to keep the attention of his reader and the comparison with doctors who tinge their bitter medicine with honey shows little deviation from its source, the first book of Lucretius's *De rerum natura*. This author equally hoped to counter waning attention by addressing difficult matters in song ("quod obscura de re tam lucida pango / carmina"), just as "pueris absinthia taetra medentes / cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum / contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore."[32] Lucretius is not the only authority present in these verses: the references to the singing oarsman and ploughman derive from different examples of Vergilian poetry, and Valla's assertion that he has added some style to his writing in order to keep the reader delighted repeats an almost identical pronouncement by Quintilian: "In ceteris enim admiscere temptavimus aliquid nitoris."[33] Valla thus ushers in a class of poetry whose overall concern is the proper historical, linguistic, and cultural context of each word that it incorporates. Notwithstanding this declared interest, Valla does not limit himself to one authority in creating such a text; rather his poetry demonstrates a varied and recondite reading that will characterize

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[31] Lines 135-139 in Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 14.

[32] Lucretius Carus, Titus, *De rerum natura*, 3rd. ed., ed. and tras. W. H. D. Rouse, (London: William Heinemann, 1937), 68. Rouse offers the following translation: "next because the subject is so dark and the lines I write so clear…as with children, when physicians try to administer rank wormwood, they first touch the rims about the cups with the sweet yellow fluid of honey" (69).

[33] From chapter 1 of the third book of Quintilian, *The Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 1 ed. Harold Edgworth Butler (London: William Heinemann, 1921), 370; Casciano, 5n. The Vergilian antecedents are line 330 in the first book of the *Aeneid* and both the *Georgics* (I.293) and *Eclogues* (III.42), respectively.

Poliziano's verse. In this sense, Valla's *Ars grammatica*, its methodology and, in some instances, its themes, serves as a good guide for Poliziano in developing his own philologically-charged poetic voice that comes to the fore in the *Silvae*.

Poliziano's *Ambra*: transforming philology into poetry and myth into history

Like Valla, Poliziano created his poems of the *Silvae* by converting philological treatises into poetic texts. These philogical texts, however, often went beyond pedantic inquiries into word etymologies and usage, including as well discourses that were historical or even philosophical in nature. One such philosophical preoccupation that emerged in both Poliziano's philological investigations and poetry of the time was the placement of poetry among the liberal arts. *Ambra*, Professor Poliziano's *praelectio* to his course on Homer, emphasizes Poliziano's endeavor to redefine poetry not only as one of the higher sciences, but as the science from which all others spring, much in the same way that Homer was the poetic genius from whom all others sprung. That Homer is the source of all poetic inspiration is not in question. Poliziano makes this plain in lines 14 to 17 of the poem when he identifies Homer as its subject: "Utque laboriferi ferrum lapis Herculis alte / erigit et longos Chalybum procul implicat orbes / vimque suam aspirat cunctis, ita prorsus ab uno / impetus ille sacer vatum dependet Homero" [As the stone of the laboring Hercules draws the iron upwards and intertwines at a distance the long rings of metal and breathes its power into them all, so the sacred impulse of poets depends entirely on Homer alone].[34] The relationship between Homer, the father of the poetic art, and the other

[34] The analogy that Poliziano draws in these verses between a literal stone chain that rises towards the fiery heavens and the chain of inspiration that begins with Homer looks forward to the central idea of *Nutricia*: all poets are linked together in a chain of divine inspiration.

disciplines, however, is less clear. As Poliziano proceeds to recount the legend of Homer – his parentage, the circumstances of his birth and childhood, how he lost his sight, and his poetic genius – followed by a recapitulation in Latin of the plot of his epics, Poliziano will demonstrate poetry's superior position to the other academic disciplines and sciences.

This attempt at repositioning poetry as the source of all knowledge is evident even in the standard invocation. Following a preamble in which Poliziano speaks of tributes to the ancient gods, the poet offers his own tribute to the Muses. In line 31 he prays to the Muse Clio begging her to "incunabula vatis / divinosque ortus…dictate canenti" [dictate to me as I sing of the birth and divine origins of so great a poet]. These two verses are laden with the themes that Poliziano will develop further in his ode to Homer. The poet nominates Clio and not a muse of poetry to hear his song. The contemporary commentator Petrerio, in his study of *Ambra*, offers two explanations. The first is that Poliziano is emulating Vergil, and in nominating one Muse he in essence calls upon them all to guide his song. Petrerio's second more nuanced reason is that the choice of Clio is not accidental: he proclaims that Poliziano singles out this Muse in particular "quod Clio prima dicitur historiam adinvenisse: ipse autem historiam quaerit."[35] Poliziano desires not just to recapitulate the poetic glories of Homer, but seeks to understand the secret and divine origins of this poet.[36]

As a historical figure, the poet Homer in Poliziano's rendering is more than a normal human with a prodigious talent for poetry. Instead, Poliziano's Homer carries certain divine and redemptive qualities with Christ-like undertones. Even the word that Poliziano chooses for "poet," *vates*, denotes this divine connection: the word *vates* carries the double meaning of both "poet"

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[35] Perosa, Alessandro, *Un commento inedito all «Ambra» del Poliziano*, (Rome: Bulzoni, 1994), 15; Bausi, 105n.
[36] Bausi,106n.

and also "prophet" or "seer".[37] In the narrative of *Ambra*, Homer is the answer to the prayers of miserable Thetis, mother of Achilles, whose demigod son perished in the Trojan War. Arriving to a council of the gods blind with grief and rage (84-112), she "vix passa toro primos accumbere divum, / procurrit turbata comas et pectore nudo" [hardly waiting for the first gods to recline on their couches, she bursts forth, her hair disheveled and her breast bared], and begs Jupiter tell her why she, who had caused no harm to the gods, is made to suffer the death of a child.[38] This passage has its own Homeric precursor: the first book of the *Iliad* features a similar supplication on the part of Thetis, only in that earlier encounter she entreated Zeus to spare her child.[39] The father of the gods assuages Thetis' pain with the prophecy in lines 164 to 171 of a poet born of "deum sancta…origine" who will "lucem aeternam factis immanibus addat,

> qui regum fera bella tonet grandique tremendas
> obruat ore tubas, cuius vocalia Siren
> pectora et Aonidum miretur prima sororum.
> Ille tuum, Theti, Peliden venientibus annis
> dedet honoratum serisque nepotibus unum
> Thessalus exemplum virtutis habebitur heros."[40]

Homer is the answer to the prayers of gods and men, offering solace to a grieving Thetis and a paradigm of virtue to the generations of men to follow. To describe how Homer's poetry will

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[37] Such a connection is not individual to Poliziano, nor did the two words become synonymous. In the *Ars grammatica*, Valla ignores the use of *vates* as an epithet for poets, focusing instead on the historical designation of this word for prophets. He reminds his readers that the *vates* was called such for "datur humane menti divinitus hec vis." Casciano translates this passage of the poem as follows: "perché è questo un potere concesso dal cielo alla mente umana" (Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 20-21).

[38] "Quodnam ob meritum, pater optime? Certe / non ego vincla tibi…parabam, / magne sator; non Corycio tua tela sub antro / servabat Thetis anguipedi iurata Typhoeo" (lines 96-99).

[39] Bausi, 112-113n. In addition to Thetis' speech among the assembly of the gods in book 1 of the *Iliad*, this speech to Zeus recalls other similar laments, particularly the lament of Thetis to Hephaestus in *Iliad* 18.429-461. Bausi points out that this particular lament includes remarks on her fate and that of her son, Achilles.

[40] Translated by Fantazzi as follows: "For a poet, drawing his sacred origin from the gods, will be born, who will add eternal luster to his tremendous tones of the cruel wars of kings and with his magniloquent voice will drown out the terrifying trumpets, whose sonorous tones will elicit the wonder of the Siren and the most illustrious of the Aonian sisters. He will deliver to the future ages, Thetis, your beloved Pelides laden with honors, and to later descendants the Thessalian hero will be held as a unique example of courage."

spread the fame of Achilles, Poliziano utilizes "lucem," an ironic word choice given the poet's blindness. This term, however, looks forward to the poet's use of "lumen" when describing the very cause of that blindness and the loss of light from Homer's eyes in lines 279-292. Already, too, Poliziano suggests the wondrous attributes of Homer's poetic abilities that he later underscores in his depiction of the ancient bard's youth. His song will stupefy the Muses, referenced here as the "Aonidum…sororum," an epithet that prepares the reader for the presentation of the identity of Homer's father. Moreover, the poet's song will bewitch even the Sirens, recalling the famous scene from the *Odyssey*. The Christ-like qualities are also present in this passage, for not only does Jupiter announce the miraculous birth of this poet, but he also suggests that Homer's song will bring calming peace to the clash of war ("obruat ore tubas").

Homer's birth, as related in *Ambra*, is no less divine, a fact that Jupiter alludes to in his words to Thetis. Poliziano declares in lines 215 to 217 that Homer is the son of an "Aonii deus incola luci, ductare assuetus thiasos sacrisque sororum / responsare choris et par contendere Phoebo" [a god who inhabited the Aonian grove, who used to to lead the sacred processions of Bacchus and echo the sacred choruses of the Muses and rival Phoebus as equal]. In addition to underscoring his more than human origins, this reference to Homer's parentage marks a clear example of a convergence between Poliziano's poetry and his philological investigations.

The *Oratio in expositione Homeri*, a philological study composed by Poliziano in 1485, shares almost the same structure and argument as *Ambra*. In fact, Fantazzi declares it to be the prose version of the *Ambra*, and it, like the poem, begins with an extended treatment of the family and birth of Homer.[41] Poliziano bases the information that he presents as fact in the poem

[41] Fantazzi, xv. Fantazzi notes that both texts share the same source material for the details of Homer's life, particularly the writings of the pseudo-Herodotus and the pseudo-Plutarchus. These two texts were part of Lorenzo de' Medici's library.

on his studies of Aristotle and the many differing accounts of Homer's birth. He notes that among the various theories regarding Homer's parents (such as those posited by Herodotus and Ephorus),

> "Aristoteles autem etiam unum e geniis illis, quos Graeci δαίμονας vocent, ex eorum scilicet numero qui versari inter Musas putarentur, patrem Homero tribuere non dubitaverit: quod etsi minus credibile videri potest, non sine admiratione tamen divini caelestisque ingenii vel creditum ab antiquitate vel confictum philosophus gravissimus transmittit in posteros." [42]

An epigram of Antipater, too, which Poliziano reproduces in his *Oratio*, offers credence to the heavenly nature of Homer's birth: his father is "caelum ipsum et mater…Calliope."[43] Antipater's epigram also underscores the presence of a prophetic knowledge ("πινυτάν …μαντοσύναν") transmitted to the poet by his heavenly lineage.[44] Poliziano thus concludes in this section of the *Oratio* that, regardless of his exact parentage, "adeo videlicet sese supra hominis conditionem vates hic eminentissimus adque incomparabilis attollit adeoque nihil mortale sonat" [To that point it is clear the most eminent and incomparable poet elevated himself above the human condition so far that he sounds like nothing mortal].[45] Poliziano develops this notion of the poet's divinity further in the poem, too, declaring in lines 219-220 and 255 that Homer, through his godly father, received at his birth a "capax nato ingenium largusque verendae / scilicet haustus aquae" and by his first adolescence demonstrated "maxima numina vatum."[46] The descriptions of the wondrous talents of the child poet create parallels with another mythical

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[42] "However, even Aristotle did not doubt to attribute as Homer's father one man from those guardian spirits, whom the Greeks called 'daemons', evidently from the group of those ones who were thought to take part among the Muses: because even though this can seem less credible, the most important philosopher not without admiration, however, of the divine and heavenly ingenuity transmitted this, having been believed or fashioned by antiquity, to posterity" (Poliziano, Angelo, *Oratio in expositione Homeri*, ed. Paola Megna, (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letterature, 2007), 9. Translation my own).
[43] Poliziano, *Oratio…Homeri*, 9. This is Poliziano's translation and comment on the epigram.
[44] From an epigram by Antipater of Thessalonica reproduced in Poliziano, *Orato…Homeri*, 9.
[45] Poliziano, *Oratio…Homeri*, 9-10. Translation my own.
[46] From Fantazzi's translation: "Thence came capacious genius to her son and a generous draught of the sacred stream, to be sure…Oh great supernatural powers of the poet!"

poet in neighboring Thrace: Orpheus. Homer's powers may indeed surpass those of the Thracian singer, for it was not as a man but as an infant that Homer "primo…vagitu horrisoni sternebat murmura ponti, / pacabat ventos, mollibat corda ferarum, / ipsa etiam Sipyleia fundere cautes / destitit audito" [with his first wails…he stilled the dreadful rumbling of the sea, he calmed the winds, he softened the hearts of wild beasts; the very Siplyean rock ceased to shed tears, merely on hearing of him].[47] Nevertheless, subsequent developments in Poliziano's legend of Homer indicate that this version of the bard bears more than a passing resemblance to Poliziano's earlier tragic hero.

The Homer presented in *Ambra*, similar to many mythical demigods, suffers from hubris at an early age, which costs him dearly. Poliziano attributes Homer's blindness to his early quest for illicit sights and poetic genius that went beyond the allowable limits for men. In lines 255 to 285, Poliziano describes how it was Homer's unchecked love for song that brought about his tragedy: "carmen amat, carmen…carmen Apollineo tantum modulabile plectro / carmen Caucaseas silices…scire avet (ah nimius voti!), violentaque fundens / murmura, terribilem tumulo ciet improbus umbrum...

> Ergo his defixus vates, dum singula visu
> explorat miser incauto, dum lumina figit,
> lumina nox pepulit; tum vero exterritus haesit
> voxque repressa metu et gelidos tremor impulit artus.[48]

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[47] In addition to his charming powers, the wondrous infant Homer, in lines 224 to 232, "reptabat …/ fluminis in ripa; reptantem mollibus ulnis / nais harenivagum rapiebat saepe sub amnem…Vosque, Eteocleae (ni mendax fama) sorores, / misistis lectas Horarum a fonte corollas / flavaque virgineam puero immulisisse papillam / dicitur, Actaeo ceu quondam Pallas Erechtheo" [crawled along the riverbank; as he crawled the naiad often took him in her soft arms beneath the stream…And you, Eteoclean sisters, if fame does not lie, sent garlands picked from the springs of the Hours; and it is said that blond Pallas Athena nourished him at her virginal breast, as she once did Athenian Erechtheus].

[48] From Fantazzi's translation: "He loved song, song…song that can be played only on Apollo's lyre, song that can attract itself to the Caucasian boulders…he longs to know (ah! inordinate desire!)…and giving vent to primitive mumblings, presumptuously he summons the fearsome shade from the tomb…So while the poet, his eyes fixed upon this vision, scans each detail, unhappy man, as he fixes eyes upon it

The repetition of "carmen" in these lines suggests that Homer is not necessarily the source of his own poetic voice, but rather he is dominated by a lust for poetry. Poliziano in these verses plants the seeds for the main discourse of not only this poem, but also *Nutricia*. Both the image of an inordinate desire of poetry so strong that it attracts other objects like a magnetic force and the reference to Prometheus ("Caucaseas silices") look forward to the discussion of poetry in *Nutirica* as a force that attracts and propels inspiration from one poet to the next.

Poliziano also underscores the repercussions of illicit gaze. He juxtaposes Homer affixing the light of his eyes upon a shade and then immediately losing that light in the next clause ("dum lumina figit, lumina nox pepulit"). So terrified is the young poet, that his whole body goes rigid ("metu et gelidos tremor impulit artus"), evoking the petrification that occurs during the encounters between mortals and Medusa. Indeed, Homer's thirst for unlawful knowledge places him squarely among those mythical figures known for their wisdom, prophecy, and divinity. Poliziano's own Orpheus suffers from this same overabundance of fervor in the *Fabula d'Orfeo*, which, as Euridice laments, results in destruction: "Oimè, che 'l troppo amore / n'ha disfatti ambedua."[49] The figure of Ulysses, too, is echoed in this passage, for this hero is, in Dante's interpretation, a man who spurned his duties as a husband and father due to "l'ardore / ch'i' ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto."[50] Paola Megna indicates yet another mythical connection: Tiresias. Callimachus recounts in his fifth hymn how the young Tiresias unwillingly sees the unlawful vision of Athena bathing and "night seized the eyes of the youth. And he stood there speechless;

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with incautious gaze, night took away his sight; then, terrified, he became motionless and his voice was choked with fear, and trembling took hold of his icy limbs."

[49] Lines 245 to 246 of the *Fabula d'Orfeo* in Poliziano, Angelo, *Poesie volgari*, vol. 1, ed. Francesco Bausi, (Rome: Vecchiarelli Editore, 1997), 53.

[50] Alighieri, Dante. *Inferno*. ed. and trans. Jean and Robert Hollander, 1st Anchor Books edition, (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 482. These particular lines come from *Inferno* 26 (lines 97-98).

for pain glued his knees and helplessness stayed his voice."[51] By emphasizing these divine origins and thirst for knowledge, Poliziano intends the attributes of Homer's birth and adolescence to filter into his epic verse as well. Homer's poetry is not mere song, but verse that is imbued with the same blend of divinity and wisdom that colored his youth.

Poliziano also includes in his *Oratio* an account of Homer's blindness. While the exact particulars of Homer's desire are not presented in the *Oratio*, Poliziano no less attributes the poet's blindness to an insatiable desire for knowledge ("inexplebili discendi cupiditate flagraverit qui, ab ineunte adolescentia etiam luminibus captus rerumque omnium egenus"). The figure of Tiresias is invoked in this portion of the *Oratio* as well, for Poliziano contends that Homer, too, wandered in search of knowledge following his blindness: "etiam peregrinationis incommoda subiit, ut mores hominum multorum multarumque civitatum consuetudinis perscrutaretur eaque multiplici rerum peritia doctior longe in dies longeque sapientior evaderet."[52] Though lacking the divine aspects ascribed to the Homer of *Ambra*, the poet's blindness is integral to his position as the source of all knowledge. The Homer of the *Oratio*, due to his many blind wanderings, is able to create poetry in which one can find "virtutum omnium vitiorumque exempla, omnium semina disciplinarum, omnium rerum humanarum simulacra effigiesque" [examples of all virtues and vices, the seeds of all disciplines, portraits and images of all human matters].[53] For Poliziano the

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[51] Poliziano, Angelo, *Oratio in expositione Homeri*, ed. Paola Megna, (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letterature, 2007), 12n; Callimachus, *Hymns of Callimachus*, trans. A. W. Mair. This passage from the myth of Tiresias is mentioned explicitly by Poliziano in the *Ambra*, for Achilles, along with the gift of prophecy, gives the poet "Baculum…potentem / Tiresiae magni, qui quondam Pallada nudam / vidit et hoc raptam pensavit munere lucem, / suetus inoffesos baculo duce tendere gressus" ("the powerful staff of the great Tiresias, who once saw Pallas naked, and with this gift he compensated for the loss of his sight, by becoming used to directing his unobstructed steps with the staff as his guide" *Ambra*, lines 289-292).
[52] Poliziano, *Oratio…Homeri*, 11-12.
[53] Poliziano, *Oratio…Homeri*, 12. Translation my own.

philologist, too, to reach the levels of Homer is the ultimate goal, as this poet represents the pinnacle of encyclopedic knowledge as well as poetic prowess.[54]

In *Ambra*, Homer's poetic ability goes beyond beautiful lyric. With particular reference to Orpheus, Homer's genius can raise the dead, stirring the shade of Achilles from his grave. Echoing once more the Callimachan myth of Tiresias, the lust for knowledge that cost Homer his sight ultimately leads to prophetic wisdom. Achilles takes pity on the youth and "clypeo excipit oraque iungens / inspuit augurium" [scoops him up with his shield and kissing him, spat into him the gift of prophecy, 287-289]. All that pours forth from this newly-minted *vates* is thus inspired by a "sacro…furore" (293), that is, a sacred frenzy typically reserved for sibyls and the gods themselves.[55] The life of Homer presented in these first three hundred lines of the *Ambra* and the artful summary of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* that follows serve primarily as a preamble to Poliziano's main argument. Poliziano reframes Homer's epics as the wellspring from which all forms of knowledge derive, owing both to the divine origins of Homer's person and his verse as well as to his encyclopedic knowledge.

Comparing the poet to the Ocean – the parent of all things and the water from which spring all the rivers and rivulets of the earth – it is from Homer's poetry that "docta per ora virum decurrit gratia" [every grace flowed down through the learned mouths of men, 478]. Naturally, Poliziano begins this portion of his poem and argument by stipulating that eloquence

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[54] The Homer that Poliziano presents in both the *Oratio in expositione Homeri* and *Ambra* is a thinker, a poet whose work transcends pretty verse. Homer is a philosopher and a poet imbued with encyclopedic knowledge, much like the figure Poliziano himself aspired to become in those years. According to Mandosio (and as evidenced in the two texts), the encyclopedism of Poliziano constitutes the building blocks of his poetic texts: all areas of study are necessary to properly explicate and compose poetry. In his article, Mandosio endeavors to counter the tradition that held that the encyclopedism of Poliziano was a late development, beginning only in the last years of his life when he turned specifically to philosophical writings. Within his poetry of the *Silvae*, argues Mandosio, Poliziano engages in the same level of encyclopedic activity (Mandosio, 135).

[55] This concept will be the central premise to *Nutricia*.

and rhetoric are the primary arts attained through Homer's poetry, underscoring in lines 496 to 508 the rhetorical aspects found in Homer that Quintillian later taught to future orators:

> Sermo potens meminit se maiestate loquentem.
> Quod si facta virum victuris condere chartis,
> flectere si mavis orando et fingere mentes,
> hunc optato ducem…
> Dulcius eloquium nulli nec apertior umquam
> vis fandi fuit aut quae mentibus acrior instet.
> Indole quemquem sua pingit, sua cuique decenter
> attribuit verba et mores unumque tenorem
> semper amat meminitque sui;[56]

The great poet's influence, however, is not limited to this particular art.[57] Instead, Poliziano states explicitly that "quidquid honorato sapiens canit ore vetustas / doctaque multiiugae post hunc divorita sectae, / hinc haustum" [Whatever wise antiquity sang with honored voice, whatever distinctions among the multiform philosophical sects were taught after him, was all derived from him, 515-517]. The use of "haustum" in this passage recalls the language of the earlier description of the origins of Homer and his genius in *Ambra*: "Inde capax nato ingenium largusque verendae / scilicet haustus aquae" (219-220). Poliziano thus linguistically reinforces this progression that is central to the *Ambra*, in which Homer is the intermediary between the divine and all forms of human understanding.

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[56] The translation in Fantazzi's edition reads as follows: "Eloquence never remembers speaking with greater majesty. But if you prefer to record the mighty feats of heroes in immortal pages or to direct and mould men's minds by your oratory, choose him as your guide…No one possessed a sweeter eloquence; to none was ever given a more lucid power of expression; none could touch the spirit more poignantly; he depicts each one according to his true character, he attributes words and conduct proper to each, he loves to maintain an even tenor, true to himself."

[57] Though in the *Ambra* Poliziano dedicates some attention to the importance of Homer's style and rhetoric, Megna notes the "soprendente silenzio sullo stile e sulla testura retorica dei due poemi *[the Iliad and the Odyssey]*" in the *Oratio in expositione Homeri*. Menga attributes this silence to Poliziano's desire to present the figure of Homer as a philosopher, "che lascia in subordine gli aspetti più squisitamente stilistici e poetici" (Megna, Paola, Introduction and notes to Poliziano, Angelo, *Oratio in expositione Homeri*, [Rome: Edizioni di storia e letterature, 2007], lxv-lxvi).

The passage in *Ambra* that extends from lines 481 to 590, represents Poliziano's overarching project within this poem which will also return in *Nutricia*: a defense of poetry.[58] Even before examining how poetry serves as the wellspring for all knowledge, Poliziano has already conveyed this theme through the legend of Homer. The ancient poet represents this supreme art, one that both rivals philosophy and in many ways surpasses it. As a person born of mythical parents, the art of Homer is thus pre-historic. A second quality of Homer's poetry is its ability to revive lost times and heroes. Notably, both qualities inherent in Homer's poetry are intimated in his origin story in *Ambra*. The revivification of Homer's dramatis personae, for example, first occurs with his resurrection of Achilles' ghost. Homer's song did not call forth an image of Achilles but the actual shade of the hero himself.[59] Philosophy, of course, lacks both these attributes.[60] In essence, Poliziano asserts through the *Ambra* that all philosophy is eclipsed by Homeric poetry.

Indeed, it is important to note that giving poetry precedence over philosophy – and what is clearly Neoplatonic philosophy in lines 538 to 539 – is not indicative of Poliziano's further rejection of his early, Ficinian ties.[61] The philosophers whom Poliziano's Homer usurps include Aristotle as well, for, in addition to his lessons on virtue and the highest good, in lines 552 to 555 Poliziano declares that Homer has treated topics later found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*: "ut

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[58] Mandosio, 141. Mandosio's designation of this exposition of poetry as an "apologia" is understood more as the Platonic "defense" of poetry rather than a literal apology.

[59] Poliziano recounts this moment of necromancy in lines 271 to 277: "Ecce tuens torvum nec vati impune videndus, / Phthius honoratis heros adstabat in armis…Flammeus ignescit thorax auroque minatur / terrifico radiatus apex, in nubila surgit / fraxinus et longa rursum Hectora vulnerat umbra" [Behold, with fierce glance, a vision the poet would not look upon with impunity, the Thessalian hero stood there in his glorious armor…His flaming cuirass glistens, the crest of his helmet, radient with terrifying gold, menaces; his ashen spear rises towards the clouds and casting a long shadow it wounds Hector again].

[60] Mandosio, 141-142. The prehistoric nature of poetry is another theme that Poliziano develops further in the *Nutricia*. In the final *selva*, notes Mandosio, Poliziano demonstrates that poetry instills in man the idea of civic life and the need for philosophy.

[61] Poliziano proclaims that Homer has expounded on how "esse animos leti exsortes, sed corpore claudi / ceu tumulo" (souls are exempt from death but enclosed in a body as in a tomb). See Fantazzi, 180n.

humanos toleret mens cruda tumultus; / quae cives mensura premat, quo robore leges / firmentur, plus consilio res crescat an armis / publica, quas belli tenet dux callidus artes."[62] In her discussion of the *Oratio in expositione Homeri*, Megna agrees that Poliziano does not intend to wholly refute the preeminence of Neoplatonic philosophy but rather to establish Homer as the first and highest philosopher.[63]

Indeed, whether a philosopher studies the grand questions of the origin of the world ("infantis cunabula saeculi…genitalia semina rerum," 517), or observes the natural workings of the earth ("Ventorum nunc…vices, nunc fulminis ortus…curque ruunt imbres, subitus cur lumina fulgor / sic ferit ut medium credas discindere caelum," 530-533), or even expounds upon the deep theological disputes ("Esse deum mentem immensam rerumque potentem / cunctaque complexum, stabili qui lege gubernet / naturam mundique vices, qui fata solutis / subiuget arbitriis, qui temperet omnia solus," 534-537), all such topics are not just referenced by Homer but *taught* by him. Homer is the *philosophus philosophi*, usurping the primary position of great thinkers such as Plato, for not only does Homer teach "quae summi sit meta boni" [what is the goal of the Highest Good, 548] but "omnis ab hoc doctas sapientia fonte papyros / irrigat" [all philosophy waters its learned pages from this font, 580-581]. Mandosio concurs, stating that Poliziano for the remainder of the poem does not just give a classification of the sciences, but rather, he pointedly situates Homer at the origins of these sciences.

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[62] "How a vigorous mind can tolerate human turmoil; what rules should be used to govern the citizen body, what force can strengthen laws, whether a state prospers more by counsel than by arms, what arts of war a shrewd leader should attempt."

[63] Megna, lxix-lxxi. Interestingly, as Megna underscores, positioning Homer as the first philosopher in the *Oratio*, unlike in *Ambra*, is not meant to "dimostrare che la poesia è, pre-vichianamente, la prima sorgiva espressione della *mens* filosofica che si esprime nelle forme del mito e dell'arte, anteriori…alle forme della logica e della dialettica, ma, con verso opposto, finisce con l'esaltare la natura di una poesia che si sostanzia di pensiero" (Megna, lxxi-lxxii).

Much as in *Ambra*, Poliziano's *Oratio* dedicates little attention to the eloquence of Homer's poetry, focusing instead on its key position as the source from which flows all knowledge: "Neque vero non et illud in poeta hoc caelestis plane immortalisque naturae lumen effulget, quod pulcherrima illa carmina, quae iure aetas omnis mirata est, illaborata ipsi adque extemporanea fluebant vivoque, ut ita dixerim, gurgite exundabant."[64] From this point, following the same trajectory as *Ambra*, Poliziano demonstrates with multiple examples how philosophy, natural sciences, mathematics, rhetoric, government, military arts, medicine, prophecy, and all other imaginable branches of study originate in Homer's verse.[65] Thus, whether composing a poetic *laudatio* to Homer or giving an in-depth philological lecture on his poetry and the figure that has been passed to posterity, the goal and, in a sense, the philosophical viewpoint, of the two works is the same: Poliziano intends to reevaluate poetry through the figure of Homer.

Notwithstanding this shared intention, the *Oratio in expositione Homeri* and *Ambra* diverge considerably in their respective perorations. Poliziano, perhaps not surprisingly, concludes the philological *Oratio* with an exultation of philology. Like Valla's exhortation to his charges to recite Latin with him in line 18 of the *Ars grammatica* ("Quare agite, o pueri, mecum cantate latine") – a line that recalls similar entreaties in the *Elegantiae*– Poliziano calls upon the Florentine youths under his tutelage to engage in the same philological practices that have made him famous. [66] He urges them to free the great ancient poets such as Homer from the injuries of time ("agite mecum…regemque disciplinarum omnium…communi fortunae inuria perculsum

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[64] Poliziano, *Oratio…Homeri*, 13.
[65] Megna, lxviii. Poliziano, maintains Megna, thus has the same goal as the author of his source material. The *De Homero*, attributed to the pseudo-Plutarch, equally identifies Homer as the source of all schools of philosophy.
[66] Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 4. Though the language is different, the general sense is the same in the first preface to the *Elegantiae* when Valla calls upon his contemporaries and future students of Latin to take arms against those who would do harm to Latin: "Certemus, quaeso, honestissimum hoc pulcherrimumque certamen" (Valla, *Elegantiae*, 62).

adque prostratum"), restore to them the proper meanings, and preserve their glory ("tam magno quasi duce recepto et conservato"), so that among the Italians at least their works can live again ("reviviscat").[67] Such a peroration does not appear in verse in *Ambra*. Instead, the lengthy presentation of the multiple sciences found in Homer's poems and the honors that the ancients heaped upon him culminates in Poliziano's exhortation in lines 591 to 596 to "illi grata pietae dicamus

hanc de Pierio contextam flore coronam,
quam mihi Caianas inter pulcherrima nymphas
Ambra dedit, patriae lectam de gramine ripae,
Ambra, mei Laurentis amor, quam corniger Umbro,
Umbro senex genuit, domino gratissimus Arno,
Umbro suo tandem non erupturus ab alveo."[68]

In *Ambra*, Poliziano does not ask the scholars of his day to revive the style and glory of Homer, but to give devotion, *pietas*, to the great poet. The term *pietas* constitutes the overarching theme of the *Silvae*, one that is clearly pronounced in the opening ode, *Manto*, and continues through the final *Nutricia*.[69]

The sign of devotion for Poliziano and his listeners, apart from the very poem that he is composing, is a crown, following the classical tradition of crowning great poets with the laurel wreath. Perhaps in keeping with the same themes of his *Oratio in expositione Homeri*, the crown that Poliziano would dedicate to Homer is pointedly a crown of flowers plucked on *Italian* lands, at Caiano, and not at the traditional mythical dwellings of nymphs and the Muses, such as Mount

[67] Poliziano, *Oratio…Homeri*, 89. Though written many years after Ficino's letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, Poliziano nevertheless pulls upon the same themes present in that letter, namely that it is among the Italian poets (specficially the poets under Lorenzo's patronage) that will revive and promote the poetic art which began with Homer.

[68] From Fantazzi's translation: "Let us, therefore, dedicate to him with grateful piety this garland woven with the flowers of the Muses, which Ambra, most beautiful among the nymphs of Caiano, gave me, picked from the grassy banks of the paternal river; Ambra, delight of my dear Lorenzo, which the horned Ombrone, old Ombrone begot, most pleasing of streams, to his lord Arno, the Ombrone, which at last will no longer burst forth from its bed."

[69] Bausi, 157n.

Ida or Mount Helicon. Poliziano therefore establishes himself as the agent who can occasion this crowning of Homer, for it was he, thanks to his extraordinary poetic abilities, who received the flowers from the hand of Ambra herself. Francesco Bausi reads this as a poetic interpretation of the mundane fact that this *selva* was composed at the villa of Poggio a Caiano – the devotional flowers offered to Poliziano at this inspiring locale were none other than the flowers of beautiful verse.[70] While such a reading is undeniable, the image of Ambra awarding Poliziano with flowers for a crown also establishes the poet as the intermediary between Homer's poetic genius and the people of Italy. Such a reward could not come about, however, without Lorenzo de'Medici, whose patronage represented for Poliziano, as well as many others, the source of inspiration.

Thus this transitional passage in lines 590 to 596 of *Ambra* richly yet succinctly links the two diverse subjects of Poliziano's praise, Homer and Lorenzo de' Medici, together, and it recalls the imagery with which his *selva* opened.[71] The call to crown Homer with flowers evokes the opening image of the farmer's crown fashioned from ears of wheat ("Spicea…suspensa corona," 1).[72] This crown of the Muses' own flowers also ushers in the long anticipated Ambra, the nymph to whom Poliziano dedicates this ode, for it was she who picked the flowers from the banks of the Ombrone ("patriae lectam de gramine ripae," 593). Ambra is not a nymph from classical mythology, but rather the creation of Lorenzo de'Medici brought forth to personify his villa, Poggio at Caiano. It is to this place, made famous by the Magnifico himself in his *poemetto*

[70] Bausi, 158n.
[71] Oriveto, 356. The imagery links together not only the two diverse subjects, but also the very different scenes that make up the *Ambra*: the ancient setting of the life and works of Homer and the contemporary, albeit, bucolic life at Poggio a Caiano.
[72] Bausi, 157n.

later entitled "Ambra", that Poliziano directs his ode.[73] The anaphora of "Ambra" in lines 593 to 596, in addition to signaling this shift from Homer to Lorenzo, also reinforces the continued theme of poetry existing in an atemporal, pastoral space. Poliziano first associates Ambra with the mythical realm that he had articulated in the *Stanze per la giostra* and *Fabula d'Orfeo* ("pulcherrima nymphas… patriae lectam de gramine ripae"), but, simultaneously, the description of her as the daughter of the Ombrone "genuit, domino gratissimus Arno" establishes Ambra within the real geography of contemporary Florence. In the bucolic haven of Poggio a Caiano, therefore, time is collapsed and residents of the villa can co-exist not only with figures of myth but also with poets of previous ages.

The result of these verses is a seamless transition from devotion of Homer to devotion of Lorenzo, for as Poliziano extends his gaze along the riverbanks of the Ombrone he reaches "quem super aeternum staturae culmina villae / erigis haudquaquam muris cessura Cyclopum…mea gloria Laurens, / gloria Musarum Laurens" (597-600), again blurring the distinction between the world of myth and contemporary Italian topography. Poliziano then lingers on the various rustic aspects of this villa in lines 605 to 611, portraying it as a refuge for poets seeking inspiration, and also a working farm:

per quae multo servante Molosso
plena Tarentinis succrescunt ubera vaccis;
atque aliud nigris missum (quis credat?) ab Indis
ruminat ignotas armentum discolor herbas;
at vituli tepidis clausi faenilibus intus
expectant tota sugendas nocte parentes.
Interea magnis lac densum bullit aenis[74]

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[73] *Ibid*.

[74] Translated by Fantazzi as follows: "Through these meadows, guarded by Molossian hounds, the udders of the Tarantine cows swell and another herd, of various colors, sent by the dark-skinned Indians, (who would believe it?) ruminates on strange grasses; but the calves, enclosed within their warm stalls, await their mothers to suckle all through the night. In the meantime the dense milk bubbles in the great bronze vats."

The rustic imagery employed in this passage, like the crown of flowers in line 590, connects this seemingly disconnected pastoral denouement to the initial images of the ode. The "plena…ubera vaccis" which produces "lac densum bullit aenis" at Poggio is the tangible, contemporary version of the ancient story in the poem's preamble, that "lacte recenti / pastores sparsere Palem, spumantia postquam / complerant olidam supra caput ubera mulctram" [shepherds sprinkled peaceful Pales with fresh milk after the foamy udders had filled the sweet-smelling milk-pails to overflowing, 4-5]. By recalling the trope of shepherds offering the tribute of milk in the description of Poggio, Poliziano suggests that Lorenzo, as a poet and patron, offers tribute to the Muses and ancient singers.

In this detailed description of Poggio, Poliziano draws interesting connections between the owner of this villa and the primary subject of the poem, Homer. In his creation of Poggio, Lorenzo employs great technological marvels: he redirects rivers and creates aqueducts ("montesque propinquos / perfodis et longo suspensos excipis arcu, / praegelidas ducturus aquas," 600-602). Like the supreme poet who is at the center of *Ambra*, Lorenzo bends Nature to his will.[75] Yet Poliziano equally underscores the great patronage of the Magnifico in these verses. Poliziano describes old farmers and young men who work together with the bubbling vats of milk to press out the cheese and allow it to mature in the shade ("bracchiaque exsertus senior tunicataque pubes comprimit et longa siccandum ponit in umbra," 612-613). Poggio, and Lorenzo's patronage by extension, does more than pay tribute to the ancients, it offers young scholars and poets a place of *otium* where they, either alone or in the company of other great

[75] Murphy, Stephen, *The Gift of Immortality: Myths of Power and Humanist Poetics*, (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1997), 158. Murphy notes the parallel between the figure of Lorenzo de' Medici that emerges in this text and the description of his villa. Both Lorenzo as the ideal patron and his villa grant *otium* to others, yet, simultaneously, both Lorenzo and his villa are productive and dominating, Lorenzo as a poet and political leader, the villa as a working farm.

thinkers, produce their work. Poliziano further adds to this characterization of Poggio as a proto-institute that gathers together the best and brightest minds of Europe, by emphasizing the origins of the various animals found at this farm, all of them representing the premier species of the animal.

In the closing passage of *Ambra*, Poliziano notes that in addition to the Molossian hounds, the Tarentine cows and those sent by the "nigris…Indis," Poggio boasts a huge Calabrian pig ("vastus…Caliber"), Spanish rabbits ("Celtiber…cuniculus"), various species of captive birds ("et genus omne avium captivis…alis"), and Padovan fowl (615-621).[76] Though Bausi declares this section to be purely decorative, it does not seem unreasonable to equate the selection of international and privileged animals to the circle of international and elite scholars under Lorenzo's patronage.[77] Regardless, this decoration offered by Poliziano at the close of *Ambra* cannot be disregarded as mere ornamentation. Certainly Poliziano offers nuanced words of praise to his patron, who, like the figure of Achilles in the narrative of *Ambra*, equips his modern Homer with the gifts necessary to achieve poetic mastery.[78]

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[76] The ancient hounds of Molossus were renowned for their size and vicious nature, as noted by Vergil, who referred to a Molossus hound as "acremque Molossum" in *Georgics* 3.405 (Vergil, *The Bucolics, Aeneid, and Georgics of Virgil*, ed. J.B. Greenough, [Boston: Ginn, 1881], 207). The *Georgics* too offers an explanation for Poliziano's reference to Taranto, for as Bausi notes "la tarantina è propriamente una razza di pecore…qui Poliziano allude però, genericamente, alla richezza di bestiame e alla fecondità della campagna di Taranto, sulla scorta di Verg. *Georg*. 2.195-197." The Calabrian pig, too, is noted for certain prized features: "I suini di razza calabrese si distinguono per la testa grossa, le orecchie pendenti, le gambe corte e le setole nere della pelle" (Bausi, 75n; 159-160n). Murphy notes that the list of animals that appears in these final verses is still in keeping with the ode to Homer, as "the catalogue of agriculture, craft, and livestock begins, oddly, to resemble the lists of riches in Homer's poems" (Murphy, 158).

[77] Bausi concludes his discussion of Poliziano's use of "Tarentinis" with the declaration that "gli epiteti che qualificano gli animali in questa sezione conclusiva della selva hanno un carattere puramente esornativo, e alludono o alla loro terra d'origine (il coniglio spagnolo) o a varietà particolarmente pregiate (maiale calabrese, gallina padovana). Analogicamente, in altri casi, gli animali sono designati con perifrasi storiche (l'oca «custode del Campidoglio») o mitologiche (le colombe «care a Venere»)" (Bausi, 159n).

[78] Murphy, 158. In his study of Poliziano's *Ambra*, Murphy exposes a complex relationship of the gifst and tributes between patrons and protégés that exists between Achilles and Homer and Lorenzo and Poliziano.

Poliziano's *Nutricia:* mythologizing the history of poetry

The double praise that constitutes the conclusion of *Ambra*, with its repeated use of the image of milk from foamy udders, returns to the forefront in the following *selva*, *Nutricia*. Poliziano, however, subtly redirects the focus of this praise, and he prepares the reader for this shift through the image of maternal milk. Rather than paying tribute to the gods with the gift of milk harvested from cows, sheep, and goats, Poliziano in lines 6 to 8 of *Nutricia* pays a tribute to the milk itself (both literal and figurative) and the source from which it is derived. That is, through the lens of the ancient law which "gratos blandae officio nutricis alumnos / esse iubet longumque pia mercede laborem / pensat et emeritis cumulat compendia curis" [commands nurslings to be grateful for the friendly office of their gentle nurse and repay her long labor with a dutiful compensation and load her with gifts for her years of faithful service, 6-8], Poliziano offers a tribute not to a specific poet but to the ancient source of poetry. One noteworthy result of this shift from individual poet to the art of poetry (and all the poets that it encompasses) is that the relationship between poetry and philology shifts as well in *Nutricia*. Poliziano does not recapitulate in verse one particular philological text as he did in *Ambra*, but for his final *selva*, the poet-philologist touches upon several of his philological treatises, all the result of the "multa et remota lectio" which, as he tells Antoniotto Gentili in the dedicatory letter, forms the basis of this poem. Much of the philological information comes from his commentaries on Ovid's *Fasti*, on Statius' own *Silvae*, and on Ovid's *Heroides* 15, the Sappho letter (*Ennaratio in Sapphus Epistolam*), all composed between 1481 and 1483 during his first two academic years as

professor of rhetoric at the University of Florence.[79] From these texts Poliziano plucked various explications of myth, verse, vocabulary, and history – a mixture that mirrors the plurality of voices that comprise the text of *Nutricia*.

Notwithstanding these changes, much of what underlies *Ambra* recurs in this final poem: the offering of a panegyric to a poetic inspiration, the nature of poetry as the root of all knowledge, and the extensive encyclopedic knowledge coupled with the obscure reading which forms the philological basis for the poetic text. Poliziano in the *Nutricia* takes these themes and explores them further, demonstrating that the passage of knowledge from thinker to thinker, and, in fact, the very basis of ontological study, can be attributed to the poetic medium. Poliziano announces this connection between ontology, the essence of being, and poetry – a connection at the very heart of the poem – in the opening dedication of *Nutricia*. In the dedicatory letter, the poet asks Gentili to accept his "libellum" because it is "mei fetus." Much as he has nurtured this work and given it life, Poliziano owes his (poetic) being to a "nutrix," a nurse that suckled him and gave him purpose, if not life itself. Unlike the delayed introduction of the titular figure of *Ambra*, the poet presents the nurses owed their *nutricia* or recompense within the opening lines. Indeed, Poliziano pays his dues twice in the incipit of this *selva*, both to his poetic nurse-muse and to Statius, the poet who was the inspiration of the *Silvae* as a unified project. Poliziano recalls in the dedicatory letter that he owes the choice of his title, *Nutricia* instead of *nutrix*, to the fourth poem of book one of the *Silvae*, "Soteria Rutili Gallici."[80] Further explanation of this concept lies in his philological study of the *Silvae* of Statius, *In Statii Sylvas Tumultuaria*

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[79] The treatise *In Statii Sylvas Tumultaria Commentatio* dates from 1480-1481; the *Ennaratio in Sapphus Epistolam* dates from 1481, and the *Ennarationes in Fastos Ovidii* were completed during the academic year of 1481-1482 (Cesarini Martinelli, Lucia, Introduction and notes to Poliziano, Angelo, *Commento inedito alle Selve di Stazio*, [Florence: Sansoni, 1978], xi; Lo Monaco, Francesco, Introduction and notes to Poliziano, Angelo, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, [Florence: L. Olschki, 1991], xii).
[80] Bausi, 164n.

Commentatio, in which Poliziano notes that, similar to *nutricia*, the term "soterion," deriving from the Greek σῶστρα, signfies a "munera scilicet pro salute."[81]

Returning to the poem, Poliziano contends in the first verse that the payment offered to nurses dates from a "vetus et nullo lex interitura sub aevo." Then, in a poetic aside in lines 2 to 5, he indicates the primordial origins of such a law, that it derives neither from ancient Roman nor Greek law, nor from the mythological laws of the pagan gods, but from that which predated even the gods: Nature herself. She, the parent "divorum ateque hominum…incidit" this law "in auro" and it is thanks only to those figures gifted with the arts of divination that it passed to mortals. Both the "fatorum consulta" Themis and the "sollersque futurum" Prometheus, before receiving his punishment for bringing fire to mortals ("nondum Caucasea penens de rupe"), dictated the law for future generations.

Within these opening verses, Poliziano establishes the two overarching themes that he will explore throughout *Nutricia*: the origins of human civilization and the chain of gifts or knowledge from one person to the next. Poetry is that which links these two themes, and the reference to Prometheus in the first five verses of the poem implicitly emphasizes this concept. Not dissimilar from the characterization of Homer in *Ambra*, and often referenced in that poem, Prometheus is remembered from myth as an inordinately clever man with prophetic gifts (an attribute that is evident from his name, Prometheus, from the Greek προμήθεια, meaning "foresight"), who transgressed against the will of the gods.[82] Bausi notes that in the traditional allegorical interpretations of the ancient myths – interpretations that were well known to Poliziano – Prometheus appears as the wise and eloquent man, part philosopher, part founder of

[81] Poliziano, Angelo, *Commento inedito alle selve di Stazio*, ed. Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, (Florence: Sansoni, 1978), 312.
[82] Bausi, 165n. Poliziano employs the same adjective "Caucasea" twice in *Ambra* in either direct or indirect references to Prometheus. See lines 56 to 57 and lines 256 to 257.

modern civilization.[83] Within the first thirty lines of *Nutricia*, Poliziano thus associates this gift of knowledge from the gods to man via Prometheus with the gift of sustenance from the *nutrix* to her *alumnus* through her milk. The *nutrix*'s milk is not only literal, as the list of famous nurses and babes will show, but also a metaphor representing the gift of humanity to early man by means of poetic inspiration – Poliziano's own *nutrix*.

That poetry and human life are analogous becomes clear in the juxtaposition of famous nurses and the honors bestowed upon them listed by Poliziano in lines 9 through 16, and with the reference to his own nurse in line 17. In order to elucidate the law that this poem springs from, Poliziano enumerates four famous figures of myth, both gods and men, who paid their debt to a nurse:

> Hinc Italos Phrygio signavit nomine portus,
> Caietae memor, Aeneas; hinc urbe Quirini
> annua cinctutos nudabant festa Lupercos;
> hinc pater astrigero Dodonidas intulit axi
> Bacchus, Agenoreo facturus cornua tauro;
> hinc iubar Olenium ratibus pelagoque pavendum
> exoritur, siquidem Cretaea fertur in Ida
> capra Iovem puerum fidis aluisse papillis.[84]

The anaphora of *hinc* that appears in the introduction of each mythological character links them together in a sequence that moves from most humble of great men (Aeneas) to the most powerful of the gods (Jupiter), thus prefiguring the chain of poetic being that becomes the focus of *Nutricia* beginning in line 146, a chain which begins with the gods and early philosophers and culminates in the *tre corone* of the Italian poets and Lorenzo de' Medici. The first of these ancient luminaries to honor their nurses is Aeneas, who, as Vergil recounted in the opening lines

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[83] Bausi, 165n.

[84] Fantazzi offers the following translation: "For this reason Aeneas, in memory of Caieta gave a Phrygian name to an Italian port; for this reason in the city of Quirinus the annual festival made the Luperci strip bare, girded in their loin-cloths; for this reason the father Bacchus raised the nymphs of Dodona to the starry heavens, destined to become the horns of Taurus, who bore Agenor's daughter on his back; for this reason the Olenian star, feared by ships on the high seas, arises, since it is said that a she-goat on Cretan Mt. Ida nursed Jupiter with her faithful teats."

of *Aeneid* VII, upon arriving in Latium, named the beach after his nurse, Caieta: "Tu quoque litoribus nostris, Aeneia nutrix / aeternam moriens famam, Caieta, dedisti / et nunc servat honos sedem tuus ossaque nomen / Hesperia in magna, siqua est ea gloria, signat."[85] The choice of language in his reference to Caieta indicates that Poliziano is citing that particular Vergilian passage of homage: "signavit" recalls Vergil's "signat," and Poliziano replaces, but no less confirms, the "aeternam famam" of Caieta with the word "memor." The second mythical founder of Rome, Romulus, appears next in the list, as it was he who established the Lupercalian festivities in honor of the she-wolf who saved him and his twin, Remus.[86]

With the subsequent two figures, Poliziano passes to the realm of the gods. The first allusion is to Bacchus, who repaid his nurses, the Hyades, by transforming them into the constellation bearing the same name. In the commentary on Ovid's *Fasti*, Poliziano quotes a passage from Hyginus' *De Astronomia* which further expounded upon this myth: "Hyades appellantur. Has autem Pherecydes Atheniensis Liberi nutrices esse demonstrat, numero septem, quas etiam antea nymphas Dodonidas appellatas."[87] Though Hyginus mentions the rustic Latin god, Liber, this figure was associated with Bacchus and the name soon became an Italian epithet for the Greek wine god.[88] The mention of the tale of the Hyades and Bacchus is doubly interesting, for not only does it look forward to the frenzy that will overwhelm Poliziano in the

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[85] Vergil, 1.

[86] Bausi, 165n. Romulus is not the only pre-Roman leader associated with this rite. As Bausi notes, Evander of Arcadia is also associated with this celebration, a fact which Poliziano mentions in his *Collectanea in Enarrationem Fastorum*. Poliziano quotes Servius' commentary of Vergil's *Aeneid*. VIII, which reminds the reader that "Alli dicunt eo quod illic lupa Remum et Romulum nutrierit; alli, quod est verisimilius, locum hunc esse sacratum Pani, deo Arcadiae, cui etiam mons Lycaeus in Arcadia est consacratus…Ergo ideo et Evander deo gentis suae sacravit locum et nominavit Lupercal, quod praesidio ipsius numinis lupi a pecudibus arcerentur" (Poliziano, Angelo, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, ed. Francesco Lo Monaco, [Florence: L. Olschki, 1991], 148).

[87] Bausi, 166n and Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, 441.

[88] Grimal, Pierre, *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, trans. A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1986), 259. According to the tradition, Liber has a female counterpart, "Libera," who is often associated with Ceres.

next section of the poem, but this reference to Bacchus paying tribute also links the *incipit* of *Nutricia* to that of the previous poem. In doing so, the poet emphasizes the shift that occurs in the passage from *Ambra* to *Nutricia*. Bacchus, here noted as an authoritative figure, *pater*, and a god to whom the ancient wine maker set aside the gift of grapes in *Ambra*, must himself pay honor to a more primal power. Though the connection to poetry has not yet been emphasized, Poliziano has in this list firmly established the setting of this poem in a primordial space, one that transcends history and customs.

Finally the poet turns to the father of the gods himself, whose story appears as a template for the later tale of Romulus and Remus. Like the future founders of Rome, the young Jupiter escaped death at the hands (or, in this instance, mouth) of his father thanks to the foresight of his mother, who placed him under the care of Amalthea who appears in different traditions as a goat or nymph. Jupiter honored this nurse by transforming her into the constellation, Capricorn. The epithet *Olenium* that Poliziano gives to the star refers to provenance of the nymph Amalthea. As in the previous verses, Poliziano offers further elucidation of this title in a philological text, the commentary on Statius' *Silvae*. The same epithet for the she-goat appears in the third poem of book I, "Villa Tiburtina Manili Vopisci," in which Statius identifies this figure with the phrase "Oleniis…astris."[89] Again basing his reading on Hyginus' *De Astronomia*, Poliziano notes that this name is attributed to several personages from myth, for it was the name of the son of Vulcan, but also included his two daughters, Aega and Helycen (the nymphs that nursed Jupiter), and various Greek cities. Poliziano concludes that regardless of the changeable attribution, the

[89] Statius, *Silvae*, ed. and trans. D.R. Shackelton Bailey, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 70. The epithet in question appears in line 96 of that poem.

phraseology in Statius, as in his own *selva*, "quidam referunt ad Amaltheam Melissei capram."[90] Not only noteworthy for demonstrating his extensive learning, this correspondence between Poliziano's lyric in the *Silvae* and his philological study demonstrates a greater attention to locating the words and references that inform his poetry within their proper historical and cultural context.

In comparison to the great honors heaped upon Caieta, the she-wolf, the Hyades, and Amalthea by kings and gods, Poliziano appears at a loss in lines 17 to 25 as how to offer his nurse a proper tribute. She is not the traditional nurse, but the very source of poetic inspiration:

> Ast ego, cui sacram pleno dedit ubere nectar,
> non olidi coniunx hirci, non rava sub antris
> belua, non petulans nymphe, non barbara mater,
> sed dea Pieridum consors et conscia magnae
> Pallados, humanas augusta Poetica mentes
> siderei rapiens secum in penetralia caeli.
> Quas rogo, quas referam gratis, quae praemia tantae
> altrici soluisse queam, nec fulminis auctor
> nec thyrsi sceptrique potens?[91]

In describing his own predicament, Poliziano, as Bausi rightly indicates, repeats in an inverse order the very same list of famous nurses introduced in lines 9 through 16: the "olidi coniunx hirci" (18) is another description of the goat Amalthea, the "rava sub antris belua" (19-20) is a reiteration of the she-wolf. The Hyades return as "petulans nymphe" and Aeneas' famed nurse

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[90] Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Selve di Stazio*, 309. Regarding the various attributions of Amalthea, Poliziano writes that "Hyginius scribit Capram in humero sinistro Oeniochi | stare et in sinistra manu Aedos, « de quibus nonnulli » inquit, «ita dicunt: Olenum quondam fuisse nomine, Vulcani filium; ex hoc duas nymphas Aega et Helycen natas, quae Iois fuerunt nutrices. Alli autem ab his etiam urbes quasdam appellari dixerunt, et Olenon in Aulide, Helycen autem in Peloponneso, et Aegam in Aemonia nominari.»"

[91] From Fantazzi's translation: "As for me, it was not the spouse of a foul-smelling goat that gave me sacred nectar with her full udders, nor a tawny beast in its cave, nor a wanton nymph, nor a barbarian mother, but a goddess, sister of the Pierian Muses, who shares her secret knowledge of Pallas Athena, the august Art of Poetry, that carries off human minds with her to the secret recesses of the starry heavens. What thanks, I ask, can I render, with what recompense can I repay such a nurse, I, who am neither the master of the thunderbolt nor have the power of the thyrsus or the scepter?"

reappears as the "barbara mater" (19).[92] Similarly, Poliziano moves down the chain of famous figures a second time in listing the honors bestowed upon these nurses. The upward movement from Romulus, to Bacchus, to Jupiter occurs in the opposite direction as Poliziano bemoans that he lacks the "fulminis" of Jove, the "thyrsi" attributed to Bacchus, and then the "sceptri" of kings such as Romulus and Aeneas.[93] Though Orvieto includes Aeneas among the kings with their scepters, Bausi does not, and this is due to the character of the early king himself who, through most of his tale, is not a king but an exiled leader fated to become a king.[94] That Poliziano does not more explicitly denote Aeneas is curious, and it suggests that perhaps Poliziano *does* possess the ability to honor his nurse as the pious Vergilian hero honored his: through a vocal tribute, that is, through the act of composing an ode.

Though he distances himself from the ancients and gods who were nursed and paid their tribute, Poliziano nevertheless forcefully establishes the connection between this law and poetry. Intended not just to be included among these life-giving nurses, some who actually saved the lives of their charges (the she-wolf and Amalthea), but even to surpass these famous *nutrices*, is the nurse who gave figurative life to Poliziano: "augusta Poetica." In these verses referring to himself and his own nurse, Poliziano cites poetry directly rather than relying on myth. The abrupt shift of "Ast ego" in line 17 is a direct quotation of Statius' poem "Eucharisticon ad Imp. Aug. Germ. Domitianum" in book four of the *Silvae* (IV. 2. 1 -7).[95] In this poem, Statius finds himself in a position similar to that of Poliziano's, namely he feels cowed by the daunting task of lauding the emperor's banquet in a manner equal to what Vergil once wrote ("Regia Sidoniae convivia laudat Elissae / qui magnum Aenean Laurentibus intulit arvis") or Homer's memorable

[92] Bausi, 167n.
[93] *Ibid*.
[94] Orvieto, 369; Bausi, 167n.
[95] Bausi, 166-167n.

praise of a feast ("Alcinoique dapes mansuro carmine monstrat / aequore qui multo reducem consumpsit Ulixem,").[96] Statius is thus the ideal model for Poliziano in this passage of *Nutricia*, for the Roman poet likewise senses that he is unable to offer a worthy recompense and connects this gift to the search for poetic inspiration: "ast ego, cui sacrae Caesar nova gaudia cenae / nunc primum dominamque dedit contingere mensam / qua celebrem mea vota lyra, quas solvere grates sufficiam?" [But I, now that for the first time Caesar has granted to me novel joy of his sacred banquet, granted me to attain to his imperial board, with what lyre am I to celebrate my answered prayers, what thanks shall I avail to render].[97] Poliziano from "Ast ego" onward begins the comparable process of linking poetry and poetic inspiration to the law of *nutricia*.

When referring to his nurse's gift, Poliziano linguistically emphasizes the correspondence between the intertwined concepts of nourishment, tribute, and poetry by repeating the language and imagery already seen in the opening verses of this poem. The "sacrum pleno…ubere nectar" of majestic Poetry recalls the mythical "fidis…papillis" of Amalthea in list of nurses. This same verse also has counterparts in *Ambra*: the literal "plena…ubera vaccis" found in the description of Poggio's farm at the close of *Ambra* (606) as part of Poliziano's tribute to Lorenzo de' Medici and the "spumantia…ubera" that served as a tribute to Pales at *Ambra*'s incipit (5-6) both evoked similar themes of offering a tribute to gods, poets, and patrons for their continued succor.

Poliziano is, however, like Statius, daunted by the task of honoring such a lofty figure, and a series of rhetorical questions emphasizes his distress at finding an appropriate gift for his nurse. The repetition of "quas…quas…quae" in line 23 plays on the similar anaphora of "qua…quas" in Statius' poem, anticipating, if not stating explicitly as Statius does, that the thanks he must render should take the form of poetry. It is important to note, however, that

[96] Statius, 248-250.
[97] Statius, 250.

Poliziano's relationship to poetry in *Nutricia* varies from that of Statius. Rather than a creation of the poet himself, the poetic inspiration that Poliziano seeks is its own agent, that is, a power beyond the mental capabilities of the poet: a primal force that seizes select people. Much in the same way that Poliziano repeats various themes and builds upon them in *Ambra*, when passing on to the nature of poetry, Poliziano recalls earlier concepts introduced in the poem and amplifies them. Thus the idea of Nature's laws dictated to man through the prophecy of Prometheus and Themis returns in the guise of poetic inspiration.

In the same passage identifying his nurse, Poliziano offers a description of her that connects poetry back to these initial images of the poem. Poetry does not simply inspire, she transports the mind of the poet, "siderei rapiens secum in penetralia caeli" (22). Poetry, like Prometheus, brings the mind of man into contact with the hidden knowledge and secret laws of Nature and the gods. The chain of knowledge established in the opening lines of *Nutricia* (Nature to gods, the gods to Prometheus, then Prometheus to mankind) finds its inverse here, as the poet through inspiration is carried up to the gods and to Nature. As a result, Poliziano the poet describes himself as "avidum" and his mind as "improba" when he becomes privy to such knowledge. The choice of "improba" is particularly significant, for it connects Poliziano's poetic mind to that of Homer in *Ambra*, at the moment in which the ancient bard made his greatest transgression due to his love of song. As Homer called forth the shade of Achilles, Poliziano labels him "improbus" (*Ambra*, 266), for he had allowed his lust for knowledge to override his reason.

Poliziano similarly gets carried away in lines 25 to 33 of *Nutricia*, for as he feels the seeds of the poetic inspiration that will serve as his nurse's tribute, a type of frenzy overtakes him:

Quoniam improba ducis
mens avidum? quo me, pietas temeraria, cogis
attonitum? quinam hic animo trepidante tumultus?
Fallor, an ipsa aptum dominae praecordia munus
parturiunt ultro vocemque et verba canoro
concipiunt sensim numero inlibataque fundunt
carmina numquam ullis Parcarum obnoxia pensis?
Sic eat. En agendum, qua se furor incitat ardens,
qua mens, qua pietas, qua ducunt vota, sequamur.[98]

Here the successive questions introduced by "quoniam…quo…quinam" build upon the pleas for help inspired by Statius's poem. The result is an intensifying of the tone, which Bausi suggests adds metrically to the theme of frenzy that seizes the inspired poet.[99] That agitation is evident from the selection of words that Poliziano uses to describe himself. Each word emphasizes the sense of frenzy – "avidum" (desiring), "temeraria" (rash), "attonitum" (stunned, frantic), "trepidante" (anxious, hurried), and "tumultus" (confusion, uproar) – which then culminates in the use of "furor" in line 32.[100] The inspired madness of the poet when combined with the initial images of a chain of knowledge, images which Poliziano will develop further, immediately recalls the theories of Plato in the dialogue *Ion*. These were the theories that were later co-opted by Ficino and the Neoplatonists. In this dialogue, Socrates informs the rhapsode Ion that poetry is not a skill but the result of divine intervention:

> "What moves you is a divine power…For all good epic poets recite all that splendid poetry not by virtue of a skill, but in a state of inspiration and possession. The same is true of good lyric poets as well…once launched into their rhythm and musical mode, they catch a Bacchic frenzy: they are possessed, just like

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[98] From the translation provided by Fantazzi: "Am I in error, or do my innermost feelings bring forth of their own a work appropriate for my mistress, and gradually conceive sounds and words in harmonious rhythm and pour forth flawless songs that shall never be at the mercy of the Fates' spindles. Thus may it go. Come, wherever ardent frenzy impels me, wherever my mind, my piety, my prayers lead me, let us follow."

[99] Bausi, 167n.

[100] By describing himself as *attonitum* in line 27, Poliziano expects the learned reader to anticipate a mention of poetic frenzy, for the two were interlinked both in Classical literature and in earlier *selve* as well. Horace makes this association clear in poem 19 in the third book of the *Carmina*: "qui Musas amat impares, / ternos ter cyathos attonitus petet / vates" (Horace, *The Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. Charles E. Bennett, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968], 240. Poliziano uses the same word in line 205 of *Manto* to describe the poet's inspired lyre: "attonitoque…pectine." See also Bausi, 167n.

> Bacchic women, who when possessed and out of their senses draw milk and honey from rivers – exactly what the souls of the lyric poets do, as they say themselves."[101]

This same conceit appears in the *Phaedrus* as well. In the course of explaining the different forms of possession, Socrates declares that one sort is the madness that comes from the Muses:

> "It takes hold of a delicate, virgin soul and stirs it into a frenzy for composing lyric and other kinds of poetry, and so educates future generations by glorifying the countless deeds of the past. But anyone who approaches the doors of poetic composition without the Muses' madness, in the conviction that skill alone will make him a competent poet, is cheated of his goal. In his sanity both he and his poetry are eclipsed by poetry composed by men who are mad."[102]

Though it repeats the theory presented in *Ion*, the added ideas derived from the *Phaedrus* are invaluable to a reading of *Nutricia*. The notion of the divine frenzy of poets leading to the education of future generations forms the basis of Poliziano's poem, which will explore that very idea as he summarizes the passage of knowledge from the generations of great poets in history (lines 146 to 790).

The use of Platonic philosophy to explain the nature of poetry is as surprising as it is revealing. Such a bold identification of the source of poetic inspiration places Poliziano's *Nutricia* directly within the realm of Ficinian Neoplatonism. Though not alone in proposing the correspondence between the poetic art and divine frenzy in the *Quattrocento*, Ficino was instrumental in promoting this correspondence and elevating it to the level of philosophical gospel.[103] Donatella Coppini, in her study of the links between the concepts of *furor* and the

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[101] Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, ed. Trevor J. Saunders, (London: Penguin, 1987), 54-55.
[102] Plato, *Phaedrus*, ed. and trans. Robin Waterfield, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 27.
[103] Other humanists to expound upon the connection between *ars* and *furor* include Leonardo Bruni. Also translator of Plato, Bruni's letter *De divino furor* of 1429 discusses this concept, though, as Coppini indicates, Bruni's "concettualizzazione del *furor* nella lettera appare magmatica, non ancora decantata né collegata a una precisa funzionalità, ma piutttosto sintomo di reazione immediate alla messa in circolo di certe opere platoniche" (Coppini, Donatella, "L'ispirazione per contagio: "furor" e "remota lectio" nella poesia Latina del Poliziano," in *Angelo Poliziano: Poeta, Scrittore, Filologo (Atti del Convengo Internazionale di Studi, Montepulciano 3-6 novembre 1994)*, ed. Vicenzo Fera and Mario Martelli, [Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1998], 134-135). Cristoforo Landino is yet another Quattrocento humanist to make regular use of the Platonic conceit of poetic furor. Of particular note is the *Praefatio in*

remota lectio championed by Poliziano, declares that Ficino in various works (including his *De divino furore* and his commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*) imbued the concept of divine inspiration with a philosophical dimension, indicating that poetic *furor* is the highest of the four Platonic *furores* and that which activates them: "Quamobrem furor quilibet, sive fatidicus sive mysterialis seu amatorius, dum in cantus procedit et carmina, merito in furorem poeticum videtur absolvi."[104] The superiority of poetic fury suggested by Ficino finds its way into Poliziano's understanding of poetry as put forth in *Nutricia*. This of course is problematic, given the well-noted break between Poliziano and his early mentor's philosophical teachings at the end of the 1470s as well as Poliziano's subsequent adoption of Aristotelian philosophy in the late 1480s and early 1490s.[105]

Certain nuances in Poliziano's poem, however, keep his philosophy of poetry from appearing as an exact imitation of those theories expressed by the troublesome Ficino. It bears noting that Plato's designation of poetry as divine inspiration was widely accepted, and even Aristotle did not challenge this commonplace in his *Poetics*.[106] Aristotle contrasts the same types of poets that Plato introduced in the *Phaedrus*, namely the poet who is "εὐφυής" (translated by George Whalley as "well-endowed" or naturally suited, that is, skilled) and the "μανικός" or

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Virgilio written in 1462, in which Landino combines together both the concept of divine poetic frenzy and the art of imitating previous poets – two concepts which appear repeatedly in *Nutricia* (Coppini, 139-140).

[104] From Ficino's commentary of Plato's *Phaedrus*. Reprinted in Coppini, 141.

[105] Vittore Branca for one delineates how the philological and philosophical developments of Poliziano during his time among Venetian thinkers such as Ermolao Barbaro left a lasting impression on the young poet, to the extent that when he returned to Florence he was estranged from the Laurentian brigade and particularly from Ficino who, by that point, was himself already marginalized within the Laurentian culture (Branca, 23-24). See also Celenza, Christopher, "Preface" in Poliziano, Angelo, *Angelo Poliziano's* Lamia, ed. and trans. Christopher Celenza, (Leiden: Brill, 2010), ix.

[106] Coppini, 132. Notwithstanding the language of Aristotle's *Poetics* that contests this, Coppini notes that the presumed incompatibility between the Platonic concept of mania and the Aristotelian mimesis occasionally resurfaced even in texts from the 16th century.

"ἐκστατικός" (the "manic" and "frenzied" poet).[107] Aristotle, however, offers a contradictory assessment: the most convincing poetic artists are the mimetic ones, that is "those [who speak] in a state of feeling, because [they speak then] out of [human] nature itself…That's why the poetic art is more a business for a 'well-endowed' man than for a 'manic' man: the one – [the 'well-endowed' man] – is [highly] adaptable, the other is carried outside himself.[108]" Poliziano was well aware of these conflicting assessments of poetry. In the commentary on Ovid's *Fasti*, Poliziano cites and fuses precisely these two passages from *Phaedrus* and *Poetics* in order to explicate the Ovidian verses "Est deus in nobis; agitante calescimus illo: / impetus hic sacrae semina mentis habet."[109] Inspired by this Ovidian passage, Poliziano blends these two disparate views – the Aristotelian and the Platonic – in the description of his poetic inspiration in lines 28 to 33 of *Nutricia*.

Rather than simply undergoing divine mania, Poliziano references the presence of his own feelings in accordance with the Aristotelian judgment that the best poets have an abundance of feeling ("the man who feels distress represents distress most truly and the angry man is [really] angry").[110] It is not a god that plants these initial seeds of inspiration in lines 28 to 30, but the poet's his own passions ("ipsa…praecordia") give birth ("parturiunt") to song ("vocemque et verba canoro / concipiunt"). Thus, though the frenzy that follows and transports the poet's mind is linked to the divine, a fact which Poliziano reiterates by pointedly including religious terms such as "pietas" and "vota," it is because he is naturally "well-endowed" with poetic feeling and skill that he can sense and follow the inspiration where it leads.

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[107] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics*, trans. and with commentary by George Whalley, (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 112n.
[108] Aristotle, 113.
[109] From book VI lines 5-6 of Ovid, *Ovid's Fasti*, ed. and trans. James George Frazer, (London: William Heinemann, 1951), 318; Coppini, 132; Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, 448.
[110] Aristotle, 113.

This brief reconciliation of two disharmonious philosophies reveals the influence of another philologist and philosopher associated with the Laurentian circle: Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, author of the *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (composed in 1486, contemporaneous with *Nutricia*), and longtime friend (and possibly lover) of Poliziano.[111] Not dissimilar from Poliziano's universal embracing of poetic models, Pico declares himself a student of "all teachers of philosophy, examine[s] all writings, recognize[s] every school."[112] Though the young scholar's main intention for writing his *Oration* was to introduce the bold statements of his nine hundred *Conclusions*, within the text Pico states explicitly his ambition to harmonize the discordant philosophies of Plato and Aristotle: "What good was it to treat of natural things with the Peripatetics, unless the academy of the Platonists was also summoned, whose doctrine on divine things has always been very sacred among all philosophies…I have proposed the concord of Plato and Aristotle, believed by many before now, but adequately proved by no one."[113] Indeed, Pico's *Oration* in many respects serves as an excellent philosophical counterpart for Poliziano's poem.

In the next section of *Nutricia*, Poliziano follows his muse to a description of the origins of mankind and the force that led him to become a wise and civilized being. Recalling the primordial origin story of the *nutricia* in the first verses of the poem, Poliziano reminds the reader in lines 34 to 50 that

> Intulerat terris nuper mundoque recenti
> cura dei sanctum hoc animal, quod in aethera ferret
> sublimes oculos, quod mentis acumine totum
> naturae lustraret opus causasque latentes
> eliceret rerum et summum deprenderet aevi

[111] On the sexuality of Poliziano and his relationships with Pico, see Orvieto, 149 and 153-155.
[112] Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni, *On the dignity of man; On being and the one; Heptaplus;* with an introd. by Paul J. W. Miller, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1965), 21.
[113] Copenhaver, Brian P. and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 165-166; Pico, *Oration*, 24.

artificem nutu terras, maria, astra regentem; …
Sed longum tamen obscuris immersa tenebris
gens rudis atque inculta virum, sine more, sine ulla
lege propagabant aevum passimque ferino
degebant hominess ritu, visque insita cordi
mole obsessa gravi nondum ullos prompserat usus;
nil animo, duris agitabant cuncta lacertis.[114]

Poliziano bases this account of man's condition, existing as uncivilized brutes in a pre-historic earth, from a variety of classical sources such as the fifth book of Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, the first book of Cicero's *De inventione*, and Horace's *Odes*. Cicero is of particular relevance to Poliziano's tale of man's civilization through poetry, for his own *De inventione* similarly identifies eloquence ("propter rationem atque orationem") as the force which "ex feris et immanibus mites reddiditi et mansuetos."[115] Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, too, serves as a model for these verses. [116] Much like Valla's references to ancient authorities in his *Ars grammatica*, Poliziano does not deviate considerably from his source material, utilizing in some cases similar language, and, in others, direction quotations. The reference to the newness of the earth in line 34 ("terris nuper mundoque recenti") clearly derives from Lucretius's description of the newly created earth and heavens in *De rerum natura* V. 907: "tellure nova caeloque recenti."[117] Poliziano's use of the phrase "sanctum hoc animal" to describe the transitional position of mankind in this period – higher than the animals, though not yet reaching his full potential as

[114] The translation offered by Fantazzi is as follows: "Not long ago on the earth and the new-born world the divine solicitude introduced this sacred creature which could raise its eyes towards the sky; which with its acute intelligence could survey the whole work of nature and could call forth the hidden causes of things and discover the supreme maker of life, who directs the land, the seas and the stars with a nod of his head…But for a long time the primitive and crude race of men, sunken in obscure darkness, leading a life without customs or laws and though human, passed their haphazard existence in the manner of wild beasts; and the power implanted in their hearts, oppressed by a crushing weight, had not yet been put to use; they did nothing with their minds, but everything by brute strength."
[115] Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De inventione; De optimo genere oratorum; Topica*, ed. and trans. H. M. Hubbell, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1949), 6 "Through reason and eloquence…he transformed them from wild savages into a kind and gentle folk" (translated by Hubbell, 7).
[116] Bausi, 168n; Murphy, 161, 169; Bettinzoli, Attillio, *Daedaleum iter: studi sulla poesia e la poetica di Angelo Poliziano*, (Florence: Olschki, 1995), 144.
[117] Lucretius, 404.

divine creature – quotes almost verbatim Ovidian language in the first book of the *Metamorphoses*: "Sanctius his animal."[118] Indeed, Poliziano paints a primeval man whom God imbued with the power to gaze up to heaven ("in aethera ferret / sublimes occulos"), refashioning Ovid's early man who distinguished himself from other brutes that regarded the earth ("Pronaque cum spectent animalia cetera terram") because "os homini sublime dedit, caelumque videre / iussit et erectos ad sidera tollere vultus."[119] As already seen in his vernacular poetry, however, Poliziano does not limit himself to the wisdom of the ancients in assembling the references that underlie his poetry, for the words of contemporary authors appear in these same verses.

The image of a primitive man invested with the divinely sanctioned power to rise above other animals is present in Pico's *Oration*. The young philosopher proclaims that what distinguishes man from the larger class of brutes is his reason with which he can form his own nature: "tui ipsius quasi arbitrarius honorariusque plastes et fictor, in quam malueris tute formam effingas. Poteris in inferiora quae sunt bruta degenerare poteris in superiora quae sunt divina ex tui animi sentential regenerari."[120] Here, as in Poliziano and Ovid, the author establishes a dichotomy between two types of men. The first are those that remain at the level of animals, degenerating into "inferiora…bruta" in Pico and a "gens rudis atque inculta virum" that passed their time in "ferino…ritu" in *Nutricia*. The humanists contrast these creatures with men who have loftier aspirations: the philosophers of Pico who fashion themselves ("fictor"), regenerating

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[118] Lines 76 to 77 in book 1 of Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Frank Justus Miller, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951), 6.

[119] Lines 84 to 86 in book 1 of Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 1, 8. Miller provides the English translation: "And, though all other animals are prone, and fix their gaze upon the earth, he gave to man an uplifted face and bade him stand erect and turn his eyes to heaven" (9).

[120] Pico della Mirandola, Giovanni, *De hominis dignitate; Lettera a Ermolao Barbaro*, (Rome: Editrice Atanòr, 1986), 12. The English translation of this passage is as follows: "Thou, like a judge appointed for being honorable, art the molder and maker of thyself; thou mayest sculpt thyself into whatever shape thou dost prefer. Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes. Thou canst again grow upward from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine" (Pico della Mirandola, *Oration*, 5).

"in superiora" on account of their "divina…sententia", and those men of *Nutricia* who realized their full potential using their divine sentiments, such as examining ("lustraret") nature and discovering the highest creator ("summum…artificem").

But whereas Pico champions a more Aristotelian view, namely that man in his own judgment can lift himself to the divine, Poliziano locates the power to tame this beast not through primeval man's self-fashioning but through the divine gift of poetry or eloquence.[121] Not only in keeping with the models offered by Lucretius and Cicero, Poliziano's emphasis on the role that poetry plays in quelling ancient man's brutish nature and raising him to a superior life shows that this poem factors in to a larger literary tradition, one that Stephen Murphy has termed "poetic paleology." For Murphy this title denotes "a representation of the primordial role of poetic language in forming individual and social humanity."[122] Murphy identifies this championing of poetry as civilizer in both ancient sources, particularly Cicero's *De inventione* and *De oratore*, and also Suetonius's *De poetis*, and among scholars that were more contemporary to Poliziano, including Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantiae*.[123] It is Valla's interpretation of "poetic paleology" in particular, contends Murphy, that appears as a direct inspiration for Poliziano's concept of poetry in *Nutricia*.[124]

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[121] For Pico, man needs no other help from God following this great divine gift of self-determination: "O great liberality of God the Father! O great and wonderful happiness of man! It is given him to have that which he chooses and to be that which he wills…At man's birth the Father placed in him every sort of seed and sprouts of every kind of life. The seeds that each man cultivates will grow and bear their fruit in him" (Pico della Mirandola, *Oration*, 5).

[122] Murphy, 159. In the chapter of *The Gift of Immortality* dedicated to the Quattrocento, Murphy presents a brief literary history of this trope. Springing from the ancient tradition of creating origin stories for man and myths, poetic paleology rises from the tradition that views the development of modern civilization in ascendancy rather than as degeneration (as seen in the works of Hesiod and in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* among others). The view that human civilization has evolved from its primitive state is also referred to as antiprimitivism (Murphy, 160).

[123] Murphy, 160-164.

[124] From Petrarch the tradition of poetic paleology develops a few essential characteristics, such as "accentuating the aesthetic hedonism of poetry's beginnings" and portraying poetry in "oppostition to the

After bemoaning the sorry state of the barbaric men prior to the appearance of divine poetry, Poliziano triumphantly announces her arrival and the instantaneous effect it had on civilization in lines 70 to 82. Though couched within pagan myth, poetry, much like Homer in *Ambra*, demonstrates clear Christological undertones, for it was from "aetherio Olympo" that the "genitor pertaesus" sent to man "divina Poetica" (67-69). Poetry, like Christ, was the only one to tame and civilize man, for she had the divine power to "flectere habenis colla reluctantum,

tu lentis addere calcar,
tu formare rudes, tu prima extundere duro
abstrusam cordi scintillam, prima fovere
ausa Prometheae caelestia semina flammae.
Nam simul ac pulchro moderatrix unica rerum
suffulta eloquio dulcem sapientia cantum
protulit et refugas tantum sonus attigit aures
concurrere ferum vulgus, numeros modosque
vocis et arcanas mirati in carmine leges,
densi humeris, arrecti animis, immota tentebant
ora catervatim; donec didicere quid usus
discrepet a recto, qui fons aut limes honesti[125]

Worth highlighting in this passage is the return of Prometheus, which confirms Poliziano's implicit association between this figure and the divine gift of poetry present in the opening verses of the poem. Indeed, many themes already introduced by Poliziano in the collected *Silvae* and in the *incipit* of *Nutricia* reappear in this passage. Once again tying together the disparate views of Aristotle and Plato regarding inspiration, Poliziano connects the feelings that gave birth to poet's mimetic voice in lines 27 and 28 ("parturiunt", "concipiunt") to this same divine (and

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vulgus." Boccaccio builds on this idea further in his *Genealogie* and the *Tratello in laude di Dante*, characterizing poetic language by "both its removal from mundane communication and by its use as an instrument of power" (Murphy, 162-163).

[125] Translated by Fantazzi as, "You were the first to dare bend the necks of the recalcitrant under your bridle, spur on the sluggish, instruct the untaught, extract the spark hidden in our stony hearts and keep alive the heavenly seeds of Prometheus' flame. For as soon as Wisdom, sole ruler of the universe, with the support of beautiful Eloquence, put forth sweet song, and the sound barely touched their timorous ears, the savage crowd rushed together; and marveling at the rhythms and measures of the voice and the mysterious laws of poetry, crowding together in bands, their minds alert, they stood in silence until they learned how custom differs from what is morally right; what is origin and limit of the honorable."

thus Platonic) gift through similar lexical choices. The god that sent Poetica to man is the "genitor," and Poetica herself, like the nurses to whom this poem is dedicated, fosters ("fovere") the "semina caelestia." Pico's *Oration* also returns in this passage as the philosopher noted that the man who has chosen to use reason will be seen upright, discerning as a philosopher ("Si *recta* philosophum ratione omnia *discernentem*, hunc venereris; caeleste est animal, non terrenum").[126] Poliziano reproduces this conceit with the juxtaposition of "arrecti animis" and "discrepet a recto" in lines 80 and 82.

Interestingly, Poliziano employs words that often appear in the description of the patron in his discussion of Poetica. She is the "aurigam dominamque" of man's soul (70), who bends nature to her will by bridling the human beast ("flectere habenis colla reluctantum") and putting spurs to the slow ("lentis addere calcar"). One is reminded of the description of Lorenzo's Poggio at the close of *Ambra*, in which Poliziano lists the achievements of his patron in dominating Nature.[127] Poetic inspiration, like the glory of the patron, drives civilized man to achieve greatness and overcome his indolent nature. The repetition of *tu* at the start of each clause praising Poetica's ability to cure man of his barbarism recalls a similar praise to the poetic Muse found in Ovid's *Tristia*. In the tenth poem of the fourth book, a poem in which Ovid gives an account of his life through the lens of poetry, he praises his muse, for "tu solacia praebes / tu curae requies, tu medicina venis. / tu dux et comes es."[128] Ovid's words in this passage from the

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[126] Pico della Mirandola, *De hominis dignitate; Lettera a Ermolao Barbaro*, (Rome: Editrice Atanòr, 1986), 12. My emphasis.

[127] Murphy, 158, 170. These same verses, notes Murphy, demonstrate a further Platonic reference that Poliziano has reinterpreted: "the first image evidently alludes to Plato's myth of the soul in the *Phaedrus*. Its direction, however, is different. Whereas Plato's dark horse must be reined in to control its impetus, Poliziano's primitive man must be spurred out of his indolence" (Murphy. 170).

[128] From book IV, poem 10 (lines 117-119) in Ovid, *Tristia; Ex Ponto*, ed. and trans. Arthur Leslie Wheeler, (London: William Heinemann, 1939), 204. Wheeler translates this passage as "thou dost led me comfort, thou dost / come as rest, as balm, to my sorrow. Thou art / both guide and comrade" (205). Worth noting is that Ovid's final praise of his Muse in these lines is that "in medioque mihi das Helicone

Tristia not only bolster the themes Poliziano develops in this section of *Nutricia*, but they also offer another source for the assocation between poetry, the nurse, and that power which compells man to create.

Valla's influence can be felt here, too, as the interconnected notions of eloquence as a divine gift and civilizer of man are all present within the preface to his first book of the *Elegantiae*. Valla offers Christ-like attributes to the Latin tongue, by declaring that it was thought to be "quasi deum quemdam e coelo dimissum" and a "magnum…sacrementum." Eloquence has a "magnum…numen," and as a result all people ("apud peregrinos, apud barbaros, apud hostes") guarded it as "sancte ac religiose." [129] In this first preface Valla gives equal weight to the power of Latin (or eloquence in speaking Latin) as great educator. Murphy notes that in this regard Valla, like Poliziano, follows Cicero's model that identifies eloquence as the force which brings humanity together and instills the desire to form laws and a civil state.[130] While Murphy designates this as a "secular" model, it is clear from the above citations that Valla does include a spiritual angle that will appear in Poliziano's texts.[131]

In the preface to the *Elegantiae*, Valla opines that what has allowed the Romans to conquer, and the human condition to improve ("beneficia aliqua in hominess contulerunt"), has been the spreading of Latin to other peoples ("linguae propagatione ceteris"). Using language

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locum" [You give to me a place in the middle/community of Helicon] (204-205). Poliziano himself invokes Helicon in *Nutricia* when describing the chain of poetic inspiration in line 197 and then later in line 433, just before introducing Ovid.

[129] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 58.

[130] Murphy, 161. Cicero relates this view in both *De inventione* and *De oratore*. In the latter he asks "quae vis alia potuit aut disperses homines unum in locum congregare aut a fera agrestisque vita ad hunc humanum cultum civilemque deducere aut iam constitutis civitatibus leges iudicia iura describere" (Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De oratore libri tres*, ed. Augustus S. Wilkins [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888], 95).

[131] Murphy, 164.

and imagery that Poliziano echoes in both *Nutricia* and *Ambra*, Valla extols the divine glory and power of Latin eloquence:

> "An vero, Ceres quod frumenti, Liber quod vini, Minerva quod oleae inventrix putatur, multique alii ob aliquam huiusmodi beneficentiam in deos repositi sunt, linguam Latinam nationibus distribuisse minus erit optimam frugem, et vere divinam, nec corporis, sed animi cibum? Haec enim gentes illas, populosque omnes omnibus artibus, quae liberales vocantur, instituit; haec optimas leges edocuit; haec viam eisdem ad omnem sapientiam munivit; haec denique praestitit ne barbari amplius dici possent."[132]

Valla, as Poliziano will later do in his *Silvae*, equates the benefits of Latin eloquence with those gifts offered by the gods Ceres, Bacchus and Minerva. The ideal student of this language therefore must offer eloquence a comparable tribute. Moreover, Valla reformulates these same sentiments in poetry in the *Ars grammatica*. The prelude to Valla's grammar lesson in verse includes the description of eloquence's power to spread to others and draw them together by its great beauty. The speaker and teacher of Latin "linguam redolens omnino latinam" and teachers who do not radiate Latin excellence ("in quo sua non radiat lex") must be shunned, such as the barbarians of the previous centuries ("quales iam seclis aliquot plerique fuere") who were ignorant of eloquence ("quod libros veterum non evolvere disertos"). Furthermore, as in the preface to the *Elegantiae*, Valla compares Latin to a heavenly food or sacrament ("assimilem pani doctrinam hanc esse").[133] In fact, when Valla offers the obligatory invocation to Christ before turning to the subject of his poem, he states that it is through the study of Latin that one might better know the divine will: "Christe…mundi lex et sapientia solus, / da magis hanc ut te valeamus nosse per artem."[134] Thus though Valla's exhortation to his students to study further ("Quare agite, o pueri, mecum cantate latine") did not correspond with Poliziano's conclusion to *Ambra*, it does reflect Poliziano's point of view in *Nutricia*.[135] This is a trope that Poliziano

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[132] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 56.
[133] Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 6.
[134] Lines 38 to 40 in Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 6.
[135] Valla, *L'arte della grammatica*, 4.

adopts in order to introduce the next, and longest, section of *Nutricia*, namely the explicit description of poetic frenzy and the chain of poets that it has created throughout human history.

Having fully established the potency of poetic inspiration, Poliziano abruptly urges himself and his readers on to see in explicit detail how that frenzy manifests itself: "Nunc age, qui tanto sacer hic furor incitet oestro / corda virum, quam multiplices ferat enthea partus / mens alto cognata polo" (139-141).[136] The vocabulary pertaining to offspring returns in this passage, as Poliziano considers the inspired poets to be the "multiplices…partus" of the original frenzied mind which were begot through a chain of inspiration. Clearly borrowing from both Plato's *Ion* and the *Phaedrus*, in lines 191 to 198 Poliziano constructs an image of poetic inspiration, originating from divine frenzy, that passes from poet to poet like a "sancta…contagia":

> deque aliis alios idem proseminat ardor
> pectoris instinctu vates, ceu ferreus olim
> anulus, arcana quem vi Magnesia cautes
> sustulerit, longam nexu pendente catenam
> implicat et caecis inter se conserit hamis.
> Inde sacros Musarum amnes, Heliconia tempe
> multisoni celebrant numeroso gutture cycni.[137]

At long last, Poliziano gives the concrete image of the chain of knowledge, one that he has only hinted at in the opening description of the ancient law that passed from Nature to man via Prometheus. The references to a divine frenzy linking poets like a Magnesian chain reveal Poliziano's Neoplatonic inspiration. In the *Ion*, Socrates speaks of a stone, dubbed by Euripides as "Magnesian…This stone, you see, not only attracts iron rings on their own, but also confers

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[136] "Come, listen now and I shall expound how this sacred frenzy stirs the hearts of men with sublime inspiration and sing of the countless offspring of the mind possessed by god, akin to the high heavens" (Fantazzi).

[137] Fantazzi translates these lines as, "indeed a sacred contagion excites the throng of readers with a like enthusiasm and the same ardor passes from one poet to engender inspiration in the heart of others, like the iron ring lifted up by the hidden force of a Magnesian stone that attaches itself to a long chain in a pendant bond and fastens them together with invisible hooks. Thus the polyphonous swans celebrate with rhythmical voice the sacred streams of the Muses and Heliconian Tempe."

on them a power by which they can in turn reproduce exactly that effect which the stone has, so as to attract other rings."[138] He then compares this force of attraction to the chain that links the poet, rhapsode, and spectator together:

> "do you realize that your spectator is the last of those rings which I said received their power from one another, under the influence of the Herculean stone? The intermediate one is you, the rhapsode and actor; the first is the poet himself…An immense chain of dancers and teachers and assistant teachers dangles down, as if from that stone – all dangling sideways from the rings in the series suspended from the Muse. One poet depends on the Muse, another on another…Starting from these first rings, the poets, one man dangles from another and catches the inspiration."[139]

Poliziano of course alters the concept that Plato presents in the *Ion*. Only poets belong to this Magnesian chain; rhapsodes, dancers, teachers and spectators do not take part. The language of prophets and procreation that has permeated *Ambra* and *Nutricia* return mixed together in this potent image. The ardor of the poet, that is, the "vates," does not just pass inspiration, it sows inspiration ("proseminat"). While the history of poetry that Poliziano will summarize in subsequent verses suggests a temporal quality to the chain (that is, the chain links all poets together in a linear fashion, beginning with the creation of poetry until arriving at contemporary practitioners of the art), the reference to the melodious voice of polyphonous swans ("multisoni…numeroso gutture cycni") who celebrate among the Muses and Heliconian Tempe in line 198 further underscores the atemporality of poetic inspiration. Though separated by centuries, all poets when in the act of creating poetry seem to coexist in this primordial, pastoral space. This same verse alo recalls Jupiter's mention in *Ambra* of the "centeno gutture" (155) with which Fame will sing the praises of Achilles and Thetis for all time by virtue of the songs of Homer.[140]

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[138] Bausi indicates that though this passage from *Ion* served as the basis for Poliziano's discussion of poetic frenzy, "la veste è ancora lucreziana: cfr. 6.910-915" (Bausi, 180n).
[139] Plato, *Early Socratic Dialogues*, 54-57.
[140] Bausi, 181n.

This many-voiced celebration offered by the swans also ushers in the section that becomes the focus of *Nutricia*, that is, Poliziano's presentation of the many links in this Magnesian chain through countless literary *exempla*. Poliziano, no different from those swans, celebrates the poets of old with many voices. Through his extensive philological study and gift at imitating classical authors, he himself creates a polyphonous ode to poetry, with either direct quotations or subtle echoes of the poets who preceded him on the chain. It is in this portion of *Nutricia* that Poliziano demonstrates the fruits of his *remota lectio* that he alluded to in the dedicatory letter. Critics such as Bausi, Coppini, and Giuseppina Boccuto have diligently documented the various literary references, both poetic and philosophical, that find their way in these verses.[141] While the words of expected poets appear in the panegyric, Poliziano is ecumenical in his choice of models.[142] As in *Ambra*, what is of interest to me in this study is the intersection between Poliziano's philological studies and his poetic output. Though one could argue that the entirety of *Nutricia* is the result of philological practices, there are certain sections in which the poetry clearly mirrors the texts that Poliziano the philologist wrote during or immediately following university courses.

One such example occurs in Poliziano's praise of Ovid in lines 434 to 453. Based largely on his previous study of Statius' *Silvae* and Ovid's *Fasti*, this passage is notable both for the clear correspondence between philological texts and the language *Nutricia* in the portrayal of the Roman poet whose legacy reflects some of Poliziano's own attributes and preoccupations. One cannot help but perceive Poliziano himself when he writes in line 449 that Ovid "consutum

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[141] See Giuseppina Boccuto's commentary in Poliziano, Angelo, *Nutricia*, (Rome: Bulzoni, 1994).
[142] In addition to the expected Statius and Ovid, allusions and quotations of Vergil, Hesiod, Pliny, Callimachus, Macrobius, Martial, Plato, and countless others. Perhaps the truly novel aspect of this list of poets and references to their works is the level of scholarship that was needed to compose them. For example, Poliziano did not simply read Lucan to extract information for his poem, but he also read the *Vita Lucani* by the sixth century commentator Vacca in order to attain a more precise vision of the Roman poet (Bausi, xxiii).

quoque syrma trahit; suspendit et unca" [he also composes a tragedy sewed together with borrowed material]. Introduced as the "riginue tener Sulmonis alumnus", Poliziano calls into question the legacy of the Roman elegiac poet, noting that "Tiberim…ambigitur…nobilitet magnis an vero tibi, Roma, pudori / sit potius" [It is uncertain whether the dear scion of well-watered Sulmona lends more nobility to the Tiber…or whether he is rather a source of shame to you, Rome]. Given Poliziano's attitude towards his juvenile poetry, such an introduction of a beloved model suggests that Poliziano is dubious of his own legacy.

In Ovid's case, the source of his problematic relationship with Rome and of his exile, appears to be, as Poliziano suggests in lines 438 to 439, the result of "forsan amico / lumine Caesareae spectaverit ora puellae" [perhaps because he cast too fond a glance at Caesar's young daughter]. In his commentary on Statius' *Silvae*, Poliziano discusses at length the literary sources for such a declaration, and the language of these references finds its way into his own poetic text.[143] In explicating the appearance of "Naso Tomis" in Statius' *Silvae* (I.2.255), Poliziano utilizes the poety of Sidonius "de cuius exilii causa ita scribit":

> et te carmina per libidinosa
> notum, *Naso tener*, Tomosque missum
> quondam *Caesareae* nimis *puellae*
> ficto nomine subditum Corinnae?[144]

Poliziano notably, however, includes the word "forsan" into his own poetic account, thus casting doubt on this long-standing rumor. This, too, is in keeping with his study, for, as Bausi indicates, Poliziano was himself aware of the difficulties that arose from such an interpretation of Ovid's own ambiguous words.[145]

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[143] Bausi, 209n.
[144] Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Selve di Stazio*, 266-267.
[145] Bausi, 209n.

Returning to *Nutricia*, Poliziano proceeds to list the works for which Ovid is famous in lines 440 to 444:

> Ille novas primo facies transformat ab aevo;
> ille cupidineas versu canit impare flammas
> involvitque novum dubiis ambagibus Ibin,
> vel dat amatricum dictatas ore tabellas,
> vel miser exilium cycnaeo gutture deflet;[146]

The assertive introduction of Ovid's written works with "Ille" in lines 440 and 441 recalls Ovid's own introduction of himself as a poet in the fourth book of his *Tristia*: "Ille ego qui fuerim, tenerorum lusor amorum."[147] While Ovid identifies himself as the "lusor," that is both "writer" and "mocker", of tender loves, Poliziano begins his praise of Ovid's many works with his greatest contribution, the *Metamorphoses* ("novas primo facies transformat ab aevo").

The many Ovidian works pertaining to love, the *Amores*, *Ars amatoria*, and the *Remedia amoris*, are indistinguishable from one another in Poliziano's description: "cupidineas versu canit impare flammas." Poliziano also makes allusions to the *Ibis* and the *Heroides*. This latter text carries some importance for *Nutricia*, given that some of Poliziano's philological inquiries into it form the basis both for the discussion of Sappho and for the poem in its entirety. The last of the best-known Ovidian poems is the *Tristia*, and in presenting this text, Poliziano repeats the conceit of the swan's song ("cycnaeo gutture"). When Poliziano previously presented this image it had a positive connotation, namely the songs of praise offered to great poets. In this context, however, the meaning is more somber, for it refers to the song that accompanies exile or death. The source is again Ovidian, and Poliziano explores this in his commentary on Statius: "Nota est

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[146] "He it is who transforms the appearance of things from the beginning of time; he sings of the flames of desire in elegiac verses and involves a new Ibis in enigmatic toils, or publishes a book of letters dictated by amorous heroines, or miserably mourns his exile in a swan song" (Fantazzi). Particularly striking in this list is the use of anaphora ("Ille…ille…vel…vel") and the mixture of the alliteration of "i" and the consonance of "v" in line 442, the one line that does not include anaphora, thus still keeping it melodically in tune with the other verses.

[147] Ovid, *Tristia; Ex Ponto*, 196.

fabula apud Ovidium de Cycno rege in avem sui nominis converso."[148] The fable in question comes from the second book of the *Metamorphoses* in which Ovid recounts the tale of Cycnus who exiled himself to the wood where his sisters in their lament had been transformed into trees. As he complained of their sorry ends, he himself transformed into a swan.[149]

Poliziano's commentary on Ovid's *Fasti* manifests itself in the list of Ovid's lesser-known works, such as the *Fasti* themselves. Poliziano describes this unfinished poem as the one in which "temporaque et causas Romani digerit anni" [he classifies the periods of the Roman year and their origins], thus playing on the opening verse of the *Fasti*: "Tempora cum causis Latium digesta per annum."[150] Poliziano engages in an exhaustive investigation into the words of Ovid's *incipit*, and a cursory glance at the study would show that Poliziano changed little from the Ovidian model. The one lexical choice that distinguishes the two, "Latium," shares the same meaning as the word chosen by Poliziano: "Romanum."[151] Poliziano also focuses on "digesta," the past participle of the same verb appearing in *Nutricia*, "digerit," noting that it indirectly announces the title and focus of the poem: "DIGESTA: Distribuita in fastis…Sunt enim fasti dies de quibus mox dicetur."[152] Yet two more Ovidian works that Poliziano references and explicates in the commentary on the *Fasti* appear with similar language in this passage from *Nutricia*.

Poliziano mentions in line 447 a revolutionary text by Ovid that "memorat pisces et adhuc ingara Latinis / nomina" [he writes of fish and rehearses their names previously unknown to the Latins]. Poliziano bases this declaration on a passage from Pliny's *Natural History*, recounting that "Plinius libro XXXII° cap. XIII: «His adiiciemus apud Ovidium posita nomina,

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[148] Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Selve di Stazio*, 471; Bausi, 210n.
[149] See book 2, lines 367 to 377 in Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, vol. 1, 86.
[150] Ovid, *Ovid's Fasti*, 3; Bausi, 210n.
[151] Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, 15.
[152] Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, 16.

quae apud neminem alium reperiuntur, sed fortassis in Ponto nascentia, ubi id volumen supremis suis temporibus inchoavit».”[153] As with his vernacular poetry, Poliziano’s copious reading and knowledge of the themes and history summoned by particular lexical choices informs his choice of words in composing his Latin verse. The great difference, however, as evidenced by this correlation between Poliziano’s philological study and poetic creation in the *Silvae*, is that history, namely the textual history of Latin and Greek words, is paramount.

Perhaps the closest correspondence between philology and poetry appears in Poliziano’s introduction of Sappho in lines 619 to 639. The account Poliziano offers of Sappho’s life and poetic works is based primarily on the fifteenth letter from Ovid’s *Heroides*, a work that Poliziano studied in 1481.[154] The various attributes and epithets given to Sappho in *Nutricia* all stem from this philological study. Poliziano presents the poetess as the one “quae flumina propter / Pierias legit ungue rosas” [who gathers roses of Pieria along the rivers with her own hand]. In the *Heroide*, Ovid uses a variation of “Pierias” to describe the local girls of Lesbos (“Pyrrhiades…puellae”) that no longer pleased the lovelorn poet.[155] Poliziano does not accept the standard explanation that these are simply the local girls who delighted Sappho, but rather considers this an allusion to a place, namely the land of the Muses. He declares that when Ovid employs the term “Pierides” in line 15 of the letter from Sappho, “Musae dictae sunt, ut scribit Strabo in libro decimo, a Piera monte in Thracia. Nam cum disputat omnem musicam a barbaris

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[153] Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, 3; Bausi, 209n. The version of this quotation that Bausi includes in the notes to *Nutricia* replaces “nomina” with “animalia”.

[154] Though the letter from Sappho to Phaon is typically included with the collection, its authorship has long been held as dubious. Poliziano chose to study this text at the University of Florence and subsequently publish his treatise due to this question of authorship. The text, as a result of its recent discovery, was of particular interest to many contemporary humanists, including both Giorgio Merula and Domizio Calderini (Lazzeri, Elisabetta, Introduction and notes in Poliziano, Angelo, *Commento inedito all’epistola ovidiana di Saffo a Faone*, ed. Elisabetta Lazzeri, [Florence: Sansoni, 1971], xi-xii).

[155] Ovid, *Heroides*, ed. Peter E. Knox, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 78.

emanasse, in hanc sententiam loquitur: manifestum id ex locis, in quibus cultae sunt Musae."[156] Poliziano reinterpreted the original epithet to reflect an allegorical representation of the poetess as companion to the Muses, and it is this interpretation that appears in *Nutricia* and shapes the portrait of Sappho.

Not only does Poliziano place her in Pieria, but he states that she is the "nona poetis" (line 619), nine being both the number of the Muses and the number of the Pierides, young women who according to myth wished to surpass the Muses themselves. Moreover, the term "Pierides" appears again at the conclusion of this passage: Poliziano declares in lines 637 to 638 that Sappho "decimo cunctae accepere sedili / Pierides" [It was she whom the Muses welcomed unanimously to dwell among them as the tenth Muse]. By relocating Sappho to Pieria instead of Pyrrha, Poliziano has extracted the poetess from the mundane aspects of her biography and placed her in the realm of myth. Poliziano, in essence, creates a Sappho that was beyond human, who was an inspired poet touched by the divine and in turn passed this germ of inspiration on to others.

The chain of poets continues from antiquity on, finally arriving to contemporary Italian artists with the presentation of the *tre corone* in lines 720 to 725. As with the ancient poets, Poliziano identifies these figures not through their biographies but through allusions to their written works. He describes Dante Alighieri by means of a succinct recapitulation of the plot of the *Divina Commedia*, that is, as the one who "per Styga, per stellas mediique per ardua montis, / pulchra Beatricis sub virginis ora volantem" [flies across the Styx, through the stars and under

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[156] Poliziano, Angelo. *Commento inedito all'epistola ovidiana di Saffo a Faone*, ed. Elisabetta Lazzeri, (Florence: Sansoni, 1971), 24. The change from Pyrrhiades to Pierides could be the result of a transcription error in the text that Poliziano consulted or it could be due to the fact that the former adjective is "otherwise unattested in Latin," and thus rejected by Poliziano in favor of the more common term (Ovid, *Heroides*, 283n).

the beautiful gaze of the virgin Beatrice through the steep places of the mountain]. As previously seen in his description of Ovid, Poliziano deliberately chooses which works to reference through the lens of the literary critic. As a result, he does not mention all the extant works of the identified authors, just those canonical ones that should be studied. This leads to some interesting choices in his descriptions of Petrarch and Boccaccio, whom he identifies respectively as "quiqui cupidineum repetit…triumphum et qui bisquinis centum argumenta diebus / pingit" [Petrarch, who sings of the triumph of love and him who relates a hundred tales in ten days]. Poliziano does not simply nominate these poets as links in the Magnesian chain, but rather identifies them and their poetic contributions as deserving of tribute. In line 720 he expresses his ardent wish to not "Aligerum frauderim hoc munere Dantem," nor the others that follow.

The culmination of this long line of poets is, of course, Lorenzo de' Medici. Poliziano devotes the last fifty lines of his ode to his patron, this time in the guise of poet and civic leader. He first makes reference to the prestige of the Medici family in lines 728 to 729, describing Lorenzo as the man who continues the civic glories instigated by his grandfather and father ("aeternam per avi vestigia Cosmi / perque patris…ad famam eluctans"). Poliziano then alludes to Lorenzo's great leadership of Florence in lines 730 to 732: "securus ad umbram / fulmina bellorum ridens procul aspicit Arnus, / Maeoniae caput, o Laurens." The use of terms such as "umbra" and the reference to the position of the Arno recall the language that marked the shift from Homer to Lorenzo in lines 594 to 595 of *Ambra* ("Ambra, mei Laurentis amor, quam corniger Umbro, / Umbro senex genuit, domino gratissimus Arno"). This, however, is not the only allusion to Poliziano's own poetry in these verses. The description of the city lying peacefully under the shade of the Lorenzo's patronage, safe from the thunderbolts of war, appears almost as a Latin transcription of the words which Poliziano utilized to praise his patron

in the *Stanze per la giostra*. In the fourth octave of his Italian epic, Poliziano refered to Lorenzo as the "ben nato Laur, sotto il cui velo / Fiorenza lieta in pace si riposa, / né teme i venti o 'l minacciar del cielo / o Giove irato."[157] Most importantly for Poliziano, however, is that Lorenzo is a lyric poet that "importunas mulcentem pectine curas" [soothing your oppressive cares with the lyre, 734] and alleviates civic duties by retreating to the country to "emeritas acuens ad carmina vires" [to sharpen your proven poetic powers, 772]. These poetic powers refer of course to Lorenzo's *Ambra*, *Apollo and Pan*, and *De sommo bono*, each examples of that very poetry from which Poliziano seemingly intented to distance himself in the creation of the *Silvae*.

The culmination of the Magnesian chain with Lorenzo de' Medici, coupled with the obvious references to Poliziano's own Latin and vernacular poetry, forces the reader to infer that next in line is not the young Piero de' Medici, son of Lorenzo and Poliziano's former pupil, but Poliziano himself.[158] More to the point, that Poliziano would include references to his poetry, the learned Latin verse that interested him in the 1480s as well as the Italian efforts of the 1470s, refutes the contention that Poliziano had completely distanced himself from that previous stage of his career. The *Nutricia* may be a poem celebrating the ancient authorities, *remota lectio*, and learned imitation, but Poliziano still implicitly celebrates his own early *volgare* poetry. This suggests that the poet did not wish to completely disassociate himself from a poetry of echoes, of *contaminatio*. As a product of the chain of inspiration, this poetry remains of divine origin. The

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[157] Bausi, 248n; Poliziano, *Poesie volgari*, 3.

[158] Poliziano does, in fact, reference Piero at the poem's end in lines 780 to 790, assuring Lorenzo that his son, "mea maxime cura; / ibit in acta patris, sese tanta indole dignum / praestabit" [my greatest care, will follow your example; he will follow the achievements of his father, he will show himself worthy of such great talent]. Even here, however, Poliziano is not absent from the chain of poets; rather, he is the intermediary between Lorenzo's greatness and that of Piero: "iam tamen in Latium Graiae monimenta senectae / evocat et dulci detornat carmina plectro; / meque per Aoniae sequitur compendia silvae / ereptans avide montem iamque instat anhelo / it iam paene prior" [he summons the masterpieces of Greek antiquity into Latium and moulds poems on his sweet lyre and follows me through the bypaths of the Aonian wood, clambering eagerly up the slope, and already at my heels].

Ambra and *Nutricia*, therefore, are not poems concerned solely with poetry, but with the place of poetry in history and the legacy of poets. Poliziano historicizes the output of great and minor singers alike, and places them and their songs in a continuum that moves from divine knowledge to the natural sciences of philosophers. All the while, as a poet, Poliziano is concerned with is own placement in this continuum. Like Ovid, only history will be able to determine whether Poliziano's poetry will lend greater nobility to Italian glories or become a source of shame.

Chapter 4

Champions of the word: purifying Latin and restoring ancient texts in Poliziano's *Miscellanea* and Valla's *Elegantiae.*

"I saved Latin. What did you ever do?"
Rushmore

Among the missives either written by, written to, or written about Angelo Poliziano in the first four books of his collected letters, a significant number revolve around the publication and circulation of the *Miscellanea*. Originally published in 1489, with a second volume left unfinished at the time of the author's death in 1494[1], this text of Poliziano's differed from the author's other philological studies written during the same period. Rather than focusing and expounding on a single text in its entirety, the first *centuria* of the *Miscellanea* was, as the title promised, an assortment of musings on one hundred literary topics culled from Latin and Greek texts. The topics under examination ranged from the etymology of particular words to the elucidation of obscure sentences in ancient texts – all which Poliziano intended to explicate with the purpose of restoring proper usage and meaning. Spurred on by Ermolao Barbaro (1454-1493), who hoped that his Tuscan friend would live a long time "literis primum et bonis artibus, quibus hercule succurrendum est, ruinosis et nutantibus brevique casuris, nisi per solertissimos homines ope summa prospiciatur," Poliziano, as stated in his response to Barbaro, endeavored to ensure that "literas, cum Graecas tum Latinas, e barbaria media receptum iri."[2]

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[1] See Orvieto, Paolo, *Poliziano e l'ambiente mediceo*, (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2009), 118. For the conditions of the composition of the unfinished second volume of the *Miscellanea*, see the Vittore Branca and Manlio Pastore Stocchi critical edition of the text in Poliziano, Angelo, *Miscellaneorum centuria secunda*, ed. Vittore Branca and Manlio Pastore Stocchi (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1978), 3-58.

[2] From the letters "Hermolaus Barbarus Angelo Poliziano suo s. d." (I.IX) and "Angelus Politianus Hermoalo Barbaro suo s.d. (I.X)" in Poliziano, Angelo, *Letters*, vol. 1 (Books I-IV), ed. and trans. Shane Butler, (Cambridge, MA: The I Tatti Renaissance Library Harvard University Press, 2006) 30-35. Butler translates this passage from Barbaro's letter as "primarily for the sake of literature and the liberal arts, which, for heaven's sake, need help, for they are crumbling and tottering and any moment now will

The ambitious nature of this text provoked both praise and scorn among Poliziano's contemporaries. Of the criticisms, Poliziano makes some mention, albeit obliquely at times, within his *Letters*: his detractors charged the author with pronouncing "portenta…verborum" ("linguistic monstrosities") and claimed that the text lacked eloquence.[3] His friends and frequent correspondents naturally came to his defense, praising not only the erudition of Poliziano's *Miscellanea*, but also the great importance of this literary endeavor. Eager to read the latest work of Poliziano, Jacopo Antiquari raved that he delighted in the "ingeniis aetatis nostrae, quae non solum manca non sit, sed iam plane in Romanae antiquitatis vesitigia abeat…Ubique summa eruditio, ubique fastidii expultrix blanditur varietas."[4] Niccolò Leoniceno, professor of mathematics and philosophy at Ferrara, emphasized the broad reach and import of Poliziano's *Miscellanea*:

> "Inveni in eo non modo quae ad literaturam ac poetarum et oratorum cognitionem plurimum conferunt, sed et medicorum et philosophorum sententias docte atque eleganter abs te explicatas et in veriorem lucem eductas quam in aliorum libris perlegantur. Quae res non mediocrem mihi spem affert fore ut aliquando philosophia universa, quae iam pridem apud barbarous barbara facta est, Angeli Politiani opera Latine loqui incipiat."[5]

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collapse unless measures are taken by experts using all means at their disposal" (31-33). Poliziano states in his response to Barbaro that, "just as Agamemnon does not doubt that Troy would soon be captured if he were given ten advisors like Nestor, I too, if I were given ten Ermolaos under whose command I might serve, might readily hope that both Greek and Latin letters will be recovered from the heart of barbarism" (35).

[3] This criticism appears in "Lucius Phosphorus Pontifex Signinus Angelo Politiano suo s.d." (III. XIV) and the response from Poliziano (III. XV) in Poliziano, *Letters*, 180-182.

[4] Poliziano, *Letters*, 194. Antiquarius recounts first reading of the *Miscellanea* in the letter "Iacobus Antiquarius Angelo Politiano s.d." (III. XVIII), which Butler translates thusly: "I delight, of course, in the talented intellects of our era, since not only is it not crippled, but already it sets out unmistakably in the footsteps of Roman antiquity…Everywhere maximum erudition, everywhere variation, banisher of boredom" (195).

[5] Poliziano, *Letters*, 82-84. Butler offers the following translation for this passage from Leoniceno's letter ("Nicolaus Leonicenus Angelo Politiano suo s. d.," II. III): "In it I found not only things which contribute a great deal to literature and to the understanding of the poets and orators, but also opinions of physicians and philosophers, interpreted by you with learning and elegance, and exposed to a more accurate light than that of their cursory reading in books by others. This offers me no small hope that, one day, by the efforts of Angelo Poliziano, all of philosophy, which living among barbarians, long ago became barbarous too, will begin to speak Latin" (83-85).

Poliziano himself reiterated such sentiments emphasizing the urgent need to improve and restore Latin in a letter to Marco Lucido Fazini (known in the letters as "Lucius Phosphorus"), in which he inveighs against "qui cessare Latinam linguam magna ex parte patiuntur,

> dum quisque illa reformidat quae vulgo hactemus ignorata sunt, siquidem eo res rediit ut ne magnorum quidem auctorum lingua tuto loquamur, quoniam vulgo minus innotuerit, itaque barbaris uti malumus quam Romanis vocibus, et cum siligineus domi sit panis, emendicato furfure magis vescimur."[6]

Rescuing ancient Latin and Greek manuscripts from the "barbarians" and restoring them to their previous glory was, thus, the very purpose of Poliziano's *Miscellanea*. In doing so, Poliziano would be at the forefront of the campaign to revive and demystify classical letters.

Indeed, Leoniceno's response to the *Miscellanea* is more than mere praise: it illustrates the changing position of Poliziano in humanist circles during the final two decades of his life and of the *Quattrocento*. Following his return from the Veneto to Florence in 1480, Poliziano, through his new friendships and new philological endeavors, had moved beyond the insular Laurentian circle of vernacular poets and Neoplatonic theorists, to the upper echelons of the European humanist elite.[7] Even when explicating poetic texts, to limit himself to solely poetic sources would have been detrimental to his work as a philologist. As Luigi Ruberto indicates, the philological interventions of the *Miscellanea* demonstrate that to best understand the classical texts under review required an encyclopedic approach, as the barriers between the genres of ancient literature were far more fluid.[8] Poetry, Poliziano hoped to make clear, was still dear to

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[6] Poliziano, *Letters*, 184. Butler translates Poliziano's words from the letter "Angelus Politianus Lucio Phosophoro Pontifici Signino s. d." (III. XV) as "those who allow Latin language to come largely to a standstill while each of them trembles before things which, until now, have been the object of general ignorance. Indeed, the situation has become so bad that we cannot safely speak even the language of major authors, because less familiar to the general public. We thus prefer to use foreign words in the place of Roman ones, and although we have the best white bread at home, we feed primarily on hand-outs of bran" (185).

[7] Orvieto, 325-329.

[8] See Ruberto, Luigi, "Studi sul Poliziano," *Rivista di filologia e d'istruzione classica* XII, (1884), 222-223. Ruberto contends that the variety of citations found in the *Miscellanea* bear out "il carattere

his heart but was not the sole creative force that drove him. Instead it was his duty as a philologist to take up the mantle of champion of ancient letters and defender of erudition against the indolent nature of men.

For this reason, the noted humanists of the day and also those who came to prominence in the next century –Erasmus and Guillaume Budé, among others – all looked to Poliziano as the premier thinker and source for philology, citing in particular his *Miscellanea* as an important achievement of literary and textual criticism.[9] Overall, however, such sentiments, which were no doubt sincere responses to Poliziano's massive philological study, indicate a curious degree of short-term memory loss among late-*quattrocento* and early sixteenth-century humanists. They seem to have forgetten that roughly forty years prior to the initial publication of Poliziano's *Miscellanea*, Lorenzo Valla had been actively engaged in the task of refuting spurious texts, correcting inaccurate Latin grammar, and restoring Latin to its proper, classical usage in a series of groundbreaking philological works.

Of the many textual disputations and overtly philological texts over which Valla labored in the last fifteen years of his life, the works that bear most in common with Poliziano's *Miscellanea*, in terms of subject matter, are the *Emendationes*, the *Oration on the False*

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enciclopedico della filologia umanistica…per la retta interpretazione d'un classico è necessario aver cognizioni d'ogni genere, specie per chi voglia ricercarne le fonti (cosa che non si lasciò intentata nella Rinascenza). Perché, per antico, la coltura fu generale e involuta, e spesso un poeta imitava un filosofo, un filosofo copiava un poeta."

[9] Grafton, Anthony, *Joseph Scaliger: A Study in the History of Classical Scholarship*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) 9-10. As an example of Poliziano's grand legacy, Grafton relays Erasmus' words of praise to Budé, namely that Budé "had surpassed Barbaro and Poliziano; and when he wished to priase the young Ulrich Zasius and, later still, the young Boniface Amerbach, it was to Poliziano that he compared them." Grafton also references the reverence for Poliziano felt by humanists of the generation following that of Erasmus, noting that when Justus Lipsius recommened models for imitation in writing letters, Poliziano was the only modern whom he mentioned. And Julius Caesar Scaliger said of Poliziano that he had been the first 'who dared raise his nose in the air on behalf of good letters" (10).

Donation of Constantine, and the *Elegantiae*.[10] These texts feature what can be termed purely philological work on the part of Valla: examining and correcting the specious portions of a manuscript or, in the case of the *Elegantiae*, textual corruptions and misuses of Latin. Valla based these studies on available textual evidence, a historical knowledge of Latin, and reasonable conjecture. Anthony Grafton contends that the *Emendationes* in particular was an important step between the nascent attempts at philology in the first half of the 1400s and the later expert collations of texts for which philologists like Barbaro, Poliziano, and Erasmus would subsequently become famous. Historical factors, however, suggest that it is unlikely that Poliziano ever saw the *Emendationes*: this text, Grafton notes, was neither published nor widely circulated until well into the sixteenth century.[11]

Valla's oration *On the False Donation of Constantine* (1440) was certainly available in Poliziano's day and circulated widely throughout the *Quattrocento* due to its notoriety.[12] Yet, in

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[10] Valla likely worked on all three texts during his period in Naples under the employ of King Alfonso of Aragon, which spanned from 1435 to 1448. This is borne out by the full title of the *Emendationes* which is *Emendationes quorundam locorum ex Alexandro ad Alfonsum primum Aragonum regem* (not to be confused with Valla's emendations of Livy). The former text, notes John Monfasani, was "first printed in 1503 and reprinted in Lorenzo Valla, *Opera omnia. Con una premessa di Eugenio Garin* (Turin, 1962), II" (Monfasani, John, "Was Lorenzo Valla an Ordinary Language Philosopher?," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 50:2 [April-June 1989], 312). Valla composed and circulated the oration *On the Donation of Constantine* in 1440, and, though he wrote and revised earlier versions of the *Elegantiae* starting from 1432 up until the beginning of his employment as apostalic secretary for Pope Nicholas V in 1448, he did not circulate the definitive version until 1448. See Bowersock, G.W., "Introduction," in Valla, Lorenzo, *On The Donation of Constantine*, ed. and trans. G.W. Bowersock, (Cambridge, MA: The I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University, 2007), iv-ix and Moreda, Santiago López, "Introduction," in Valla, Lorenzo, *Laurentii Vallensis De Linguae Latinae Elegantia*, ed. and trans. Santiago López Moreda (Cáceres, ES: Universidad de Extremadura, 1999), 13-16.

[11] Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger,* 14. Though understood now as a master in philology, Valla's reputation in the high Renaissance was as a "forerunner" of the philological method. Grafton notes that this is due in large part to Valla's life's work beginning and ending before the midpoint of the century, when developments such as public libraries and the printing press allowed philology to distinguish itself from rhetoric (13-14).

[12] During Valla's lifetime, there is some textual evidence of interest in the oration *On the Donation of Constantine* that went beyond the court of Alfonso of Aragon. Bowersock references Valla's responses to correspondence with two cardinals, "Trevisan and Landriani [who] appear to have made some effort to persuade Valla to retract or revise his work, possibly with a view to satisfying his longstanding desire to

this instance, the nature of Valla's text itself precludes it from serving as a useful model for Poliziano's *Miscellanea*. Valla's philological interventions within the oration focus solely on one spurious text, systematically refuting the validity of that document alone. It therefore stands at odds with Poliziano's *Miscellanea*, a text which by its very title privileged variety. Moreover, in the oration the practice of philology appears not as an important art in its own right but as "the handmaiden of rhetoric," as Grafton terms it.[13] Instead, the closest antecedent to Poliziano's collection of miscellaneous philological disputations, explications, and quandaries, is Valla's text on Latin grammar, the *Elegantiae*.

Unlike the *Emendationes*, this text enjoyed a far more successful literary run. Although textual evidence only references Valla working on the *Elegantiae* between 1440 and 1444, Santiago López Moreda conjectures, based on the influence of figures such as Maffeo Vegio and Catone Saco in Valla's philological interventions, that he likely began work on the *Elegantiae* while still employed as a professor of rhetoric in Pavia in the early 1430s. Valla circulated the final version of the six-book treatise, beginning with its dedicatee, Giovanni Tortelli d'Arezzo, chamberlain to Pope Nicholas V, in 1448. A printed edition appeared in 1471.[14] There is no doubt, however, that the completed manuscript of the *Elegantiae* was circulated beyond Rome during Valla's lifetime: his longtime rival, Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459), read a copy and objectively remarked in his *Invectives* that "illud infantissimum opus non solum nulla elegantia, sed summa absurditate, summa impudentia, summa barbarie est refertum."[15] There is equally no doubt that Poliziano was familiar with Valla's lengthy studies of the Latin language, as he cited

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return to Rome…Curiously, after Valla's correspondence with the two cardinals in late 1443 and early 1444, there is no trace of any interest in his work on the Donation until copies dating from the 1480s…Notoriety lay in the future. Copies of Valla's *oratio* from the late fifteenth century provided the basis for a little noticed and now very rare printed edition, the first ever, in 1506" (Bowersock, ix).

[13] Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, 12.

[14] Moreda, 23-24.

[15] Moreda, 33.

Valla's *Elegantiae* in many of his own philological studies, such as his commentaries on Ovid's *Fasti* and Terence's *Andria*.[16]

Comprised of six books, Valla intended his *Elegantiae* primarily as a grammatical text, one that would correct centuries of faulty Latin brought about by the work of inferior copyists. The most straightforward purpose for such a text was to serve as a Latin manual for students of rhetoric, so that their forays into Latin writing and oratory would be less corrupted and closer to that of the ancients, such as Cicero, Quintilian, and other masters. [17] Like Poliziano, Valla underscores the sorry state of Latin in contemporary times, such as in the first preface when he laments "me plura dicere volentem impedit dolor, et exulcerat lachrymarique cogit intuentem quo ex statu et in quem facultas ista reciderit."[18] Valla likewise emphasizes the need to improve the understanding of the ancient tongue in order to properly study the various disciplines of the liberal arts ("qui enim summi philosophi fuerunt, summi oratores, summi iureconsulti, summi denqiue scriptores? Nempe ii, qui bene loquendi studiosissimi").[19] Correcting the grammar of his predecessors, peers, and successors, however, was not Valla's ultimate goal in writing the *Elegantiae*, nor does he limit himself to simple explications of language. Many of the linguistic examinations within the *Elegantiae* offer Valla the opportunity to enter into debates on theology,

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[16] Some examples can be found in Poliziano, Angelo, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, ed. Francesco Lo Monaco, (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1991), 70-71 and Poliziano, Angelo, *La commedia antica e l'Andria di Terenzio*, ed. Rosetta Lattanzi Roselli (Florence: Sansoni Editore, 1973), 38-40.

[17] Valla's methodology in the *Elegantiae*, namely teaching "good Latin" rather than good grammar by means of examples rather than a set of codified rules, argue Brian Copenhaver and Charles Schmitt, sets his text within the same pedagogical field as Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, that is, Valla's primary model in the composition of the *Elegantiae* (see Copenhaver, Brian and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 214.

[18] All citations of Valla's *Elegantiae* come from Valla, Lorenzo, *Laurentii Vallensis De Linguae Latinae Elegantia*, ed. and trans. Santiago López Moreda, (Cáceres, ES: Universidad de Extremadura, 1999), 60. Given the accepted shorthand title of *Elegantiae*, I will use this naming convention throughout this study.

[19] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 60. Moreda's edition of Valla's text reports the spelling as "lachrymarique." Other transcriptions, such as the one that appears in Eugenio Garin's *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento* do not include the "h" (see Garin, 598).

philosophy, and civil law.[20] Indeed, the sentiments pronounced by Valla in the first preface to the *Elegantiae*, specifically his indictment of the current state of Latin, his hopes to restore it to its proper usage, his belief in the resulting improvement of the various areas of learning, and, most of all, his fervent desire for the liberation of the great thinkers of his day from the barbarism of inferior language, all recall the words of praise offered by Leoniceno to Poliziano. Moreover, as Moreda reminds in the introduction to this text, on account of the *Elegantiae* Valla, like Poliziano after him, had to defend himself from those humanists horrified that a *grammaticus* would dare to treat matters such as philosophy and theology.[21] Thus, in the *Elegantiae* as in the *Miscellanea* the intent appears the same: restoring ancient languages and texts almost lost to centuries of misuse.

More than a shared intent, the *Elegantiae* and *Miscellanea* show similar structures and methodological approaches. In each book of Valla's text, the author assembles the various linguistic questions or problems into chapters that are loosely connected by a certain theme or topic, with the sixth book devoted to the pedagogical practice of emendation, revising portions of ancient grammatical texts that Valla considers inaccurate.[22] Throughout the *Elegantiae*, Valla takes frequent recourse to the words of classical authorities as well as to basic logic or common sense to substantiate his claims. Among the classical authors that Valla uses to bolster his opinions and refute grammatical misconceptions are, of course, the usual suspects of orators,

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[20] Moreda considers the publication of the *Elegantiae* to be "fruto último de un planteamiento filológico y un método de investigación sistematizado válido para otras disciplinas, incluido el derecho y la teología, como bien deja claro en los prefacios de cada libro" (Moreda, 24). Copenhaver and Schmitt go further, viewing in these linguistic precepts a subtle polemic: this was not simply a method of study that could be applied to various, unrelated disciplines, but rather Valla's sneaky attempt to raise "linguistic questions of great weight philosophically and theologically. It might seem that such topics as the proper use of possessive pronouns and adjectives (*meus/mei, tuus/tui,* etc.) could delight only a schoolmaster, but Valla's treatment of these issues threatened the logic and metaphysics taught in the universities of his day" (Copenhaver and Schmitt, 214).

[21] Moreda, 23.

[22] Moreda, 32-33.

rhetoricians, and grammarians. He does not, however, limit his reading only to prose: Valla also submits as evidence to his claims the works of great Roman poets.

These same authorities form the basis of many of Poliziano's chapters in the *Miscellanea*. Though Poliziano explicitly models his *Miscellanea* after the *Attic Nights* (*Noctes Atticae*) of Aulus Gellius, a text with a very loose, almost "patchwork," structure that suggests a seemingly random assembly of topics, there is little doubt that this work, like Valla's, was thoroughly and thoughtfully structured as well as meticulously prepared.[23] For each topic, Poliziano, much as Gellius and Valla before him, employs textual evidence, ancient and contemporary historical knowledge, and logic to resolve long-standing linguistic debates, emend textual corruptions, and put forth new interpretations of texts or particular words within a text. Unlike Poliziano's other literary creations, therefore, whose methodology seemed inspired by the earlier works of Valla, in the *Miscellanea* Poliziano, even without naming the previous philologist outright, purposefully emulates Valla's *Elegantiae*. These two texts are not identical, however: unlike Valla, Poliziano had access to a copious supply of texts that he was able to consult, allowing him both a wider breadth of sources to support his interpretations and to correct the mistakes of his peers and predecessors, Valla included. Poliziano thus makes clear in his *Miscellanea* that he intends not only to rival Valla, but to surpass him.

[23] Ruberto considers the loose, hodgepodge structure of the *Miscellanea* to be complete artifice: "Le *Miscellanee*…alla prima paiono tirate giù come Dio vuole, sono un'opera pensatamente ordinata, fatta con industria" (Ruberto, 216).

Following in Valla's footsteps: Poliziano as philologist and orator

To be included among the ranks of Valla and other renowned thinkers of the day – a "bella scola" of philologists – was certainly one of Poliziano's literary aspirations. That others would confirm his standing and even suggest that he had surpassed such a group was an equally fervent desire. In the third book of his *Letters*, Poliziano includes a correspondence between two humanists, Lucius Phosphorus and Bishop Alessandro Cortesi, which clearly articulates this wish. Lucius Phosphorus writes that of the humanists who came to prominence in the early *Quattrocento*, the only two worthy of praise were Lorenzo Valla and Domizio Calderini ("quos quidem non laudare ac admirari nefas et plane impium duco"). Notwithstanding their literary interventions, it is only recently, states Phosphorus, that "emersit tandem aliquando ingenium," and this is due largely to the erudition of Poliziano. Phosphorus could not make plainer the importance of Poliziano's literary work and his relationship to these past great thinkers, affirming that Poliziano will carry on their work and even transcend them. Phosphorous provocatively declares in his letter that "Laurentio Vallae, Domitio Calderino, Angelum Politianum adiicio, et quasi triumviratum creo."[24] Even without this emphasis within the letters, Poliziano's interest in measuring up to Valla becomes apparent when comparing the language of the prefaces to their respective philological works.

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[24] Poliziano, *Letters*, 164. All three citations come from the letter "Lucius Phosphorus Pontifex Signinus Alexandro Cortesio s. d." (III. X). Butler translates Phosphorus's words as "I regard it as sacrilege and unambiguous impiety not to praise and marvel at these two…But at long last, intelligence re-emerged…to Lorenzo Valla and Domizio Calderini, I add Angelo Poliziano and create what you might call a triumvirate" (Butler, 165). Phosphorus' inclusion of Domizio Calderini in the triumvirate of philologists also speaks to Poliziano's hopes of emerging as the premier *grammaticus* and textual expert of his time. Poliziano's relationship with Calderini, which deteriorated over the years, at best was always marked with a high level of envy and competition. See Orvieto, 55-56 and 128-130, and Grafton, Anthony, "On the Scholarship of Politian and its Context," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 40 (1977): 158.

In the preface to the first *centuria* of the *Miscellanea*, Poliziano naturally begins by addressing his benefactor, Lorenzo de' Medici, noting that in addition to the prince's continual sponsorship of Poliziano's literary endeavors, it was Lorenzo himself who prompted the creation of this text: "Cum tibi superioribus diebus, Laurenti Medices, nostra haec Miscellanea inter equitandum recitaremus…hortari coepisti nos, ut unam saltem ex eis Centuriam … publicaremus."[25] Adding to the lighthearted tone already suggested by the pleasant memory of frequent rides with Lorenzo, Poliziano, in this opening line, further underscores not the necessity or import of his work, as did his friends and correspondents in the *Letters*, but the novelty and delight that they afforded his learned patron ("delectatus abitror novitate ipsa rerum, et varietate non illepida lectionis"). This jovial *incipit* makes for a striking contrast with Poliziano's subsequent description of his *Miscellanea* and the precarious state in which he finds himself in publishing it.

Notwithstanding the protection afforded by Lorenzo's patronage, Poliziano anticipates the backlash that will inevitably accompany the publication of his *Miscellanea* ("quamquam scimus invidia magna fore hos libros, et multum sermonis subituros") solely because he dares to study and revise the extant texts of the greatest names in Classical literature ("ut qui de magni nominis autoribus libere pronuncient"). Within the preface, Poliziano hopes to preempt some of these criticisms, reminding his patron (and the implied outside reader) that his work is intended as something pleasurable to be enjoyed in the home and not in more public spheres ("nos ista certe non foro, et curiae sed cubiculo, et scholae paravimus, eoque studuimus"). Moreover, Poliziano did not carry out these studies within the *Miscellanea* in order to besmirch the great

[25] All quotations of Poliziano's *Miscellanea* come from a reproduction of the first volume of the Basle edition of the *Opera omnia* originally published in Basilea in 1553. Poliziano, Angelo, *Opera omnia*, vol. 1, ed. Ida Maïer, (Turin: Bottega d'Erasmo, 1971), 213.

authors, but to protect them against further literary attacks ("Ac non id quaesivimus, ut aliquam doctis hominibus veluti labeculam aspergeremus, sed id cavimus potius, ne sub illorum autoritate studiosorum fides periclitaretur").[26] Still, if some reader might find mistakes within, Poliziano stresses that the fault lies in human error and not some form of literary deception ("fateor equidem, possum falli, ut humanus, sed neminem profecto sciens fallo, et ut mendacium fortasse dico, sic certe non mentior").[27] Throughout the preface, Poliziano insists upon his honesty and forthrightness in the creation and dissemination of this work.

Still responding to potential criticisms based primarily on jealous rumor rather than an informed opinion, Poliziano asserts that he has carried out all his philological work openly and without undue artifice: "omnino faciles essent, et simplices munditiae, non operose et pimentata lenocinia: color, nitorque verus, et ingenuus, non ascitus et ex arcula, congruens habitus et expeditus, non onerosus, et laciniosus."[28] He continually stresses his innocent intentions in creating this work, for example emphasizing that he has compiled the literary interventions in the *Miscellanea* not out of hatred nor a desire to trumpet his own ingenuity, but rather in hopes of restoring these texts to their original splendor and defending the truth:

> "Scit illa prorsus nihil hic odio datum, nihil stomacho, candide omnia, et simpliciter, nihil aut insectanter aut malevole, nihil oblatrandi studio, nihil ostentandi voto protulimus, animo que semper ad probandum (siliceret) quam ad improbandum propensiore fuimus. Neque videlicet strophis, aut cuniculis, sed libero examine, libera veritatis fronte rem gessimus."[29]

In explaining himself in such a way, that is, in underscoring both the complete absence of malevolence and his own overwhelming interest in openness in creating the *Miscellanea*,

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[26] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 213.
[27] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 215.
[28] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 214-215.
[29] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 213

Poliziano adopts the stance of the ancient orator who, in order to shield his client from ruin, must establish himself within his *exordium* as a good and virtuous man.[30]

Though he declares that the *Miscellanea* are not intended for consumption and discussion in official, public assemblies ("ista certe non foro, et curiae"), the figure of the philologist as put forth by Poliziano in this preface shares many traits in common with the classical Roman orator who descended alone into the forum, ready to defend his client. Poliziano, like both Quintilian and Cicero in their various discourses on the ideal orator, stresses the importance of establishing his honest character and desire for bettering the public good. Quintilian, for example, contends in his *Institutio oratoria* that "plurimum tamen ad omnia momenti est in hoc positum, si vir bonus creditur…

> Quare in primis existimetur venisse ad agendum ductus officio vel cognationis vel amicitiae maximeque, si fieri poterit, reipublicae aut alicuius certe non mediocris exempli. Quod sine dubio multo magis ipsis litigatoribus faciendum est, ut ad agendum magna atque honesta ratione aut etiam necessitate accessisse videantur."[31]

Indeed, in keeping with the ideal orator who takes on his cause out of some sense of improving the common good, Poliziano's philology shows far greater social commitment than the title of *grammaticus* would suggest.[32] No longer a mere linguistic pedant or literary critic, he becomes a

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[30] Poliziano's language in the passage cited above, for example, recalls a similar pronouncement by Cicero at the conclusion of his oration in defense of Sulla (Sull. 86). Just as Poliziano carried out his literary studies "libera veritatis fronte", so too did Cicero take up Sulla's defense "integro me animo ac libero" (Cicero, M. Tullius, *M. Tulli Ciceronis Orationes*, volume 6, edited by Albert Clark, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978]).

[31] "Yet if he is believed to be a good man, this consideration will exercise the strongest influence at every point of the case…It is therefore pre-eminently desirable that he should be believed to have undertaken the case out of a sense of duty to a friend or relative, or even better, if the point can be made, by a sense of patriotism or at any rate some serious moral consideration. No doubt it is even more necessary for the parties themselves to create the impression that they have been forced to take legal action by some weighty and honourable reason or even by necessity." From Quintilian's *Institutes* IV. 1.7 in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler, (Cambridge, MA: London, William Heinemann, Ltd. 1921), 9-11.

[32] Scaglione, Aldo, "The Humanist as Scholar and Politian's Conception of the Grammaticus," *Studies in the Renaissance* 8 (1961): 51-52.

champion for the restoration of ancient texts and authors, ready to shield the words of the great writers against the *barbari* and correct the centuries of wrongdoing enacted upon them.[33]

Unlike unnamed contemporaries who have either carried out these literary offenses or at the least are complicit in them by their silence ("conniveant igitur alii licet, et dicere verum mussent"), Poliziano will not cower from pronouncing the crimes he has witnessed:

> "ego unus profecto (quidquid erit) non dissimulabo iudicium, non supprimam quae sensero, non indulgebo iam talibus patientiam, sed vel huic libello meo, saltem semilibere, sic insusurrabo: Vidi, vidi ipse libelle, cottidieque video multa in literis fieri capitalia, compilari subdole aliena, confingi ad libidnem, quae cui commodum, ascribi etiam idoneis, quae nec agnoscant, allegari qui non extent autores, citari quinetiam pro vetustis, nullibi comparentes codices, compleri libros omneis operosissimis vanitatibus, falsa pro veris, ascita pro nativis, novitia pro vernaculis supponi, pollui, adulterari, oblini, incrustari, distorqueri, confundi, praecipitari, interuerti omnia, nulla fide, nullo nec pudore, nec iudicio, quodque his omnibus pestilentius, occasione quoque recentis artificii quamlibet stolidissimas opiniones in mille voluminum traduces momento propagari: postremo (ut semel dicam) etiam nunc multos auriculas habere asini.[34]

Noteworthy in this passage is the brief transition from the use of the royal we, which Poliziano uses frequently when describing his actions and intentions in the preface to the *Miscellanea*, to the use of verbs in the first person singular. This grammatical shift further highlights the precarious isolation in which Poliziano finds himself in making such a forceful accusation. Indeed, here the philologist emerges as the sole force willing to defend this literary cause, rejecting all forms of textual corruption when they threaten the truth. Moreover, the necessity to redress these wrongs is critical, as the emergence of new technologies ("recentis artificii") has allowed for the persistent propagation of these errors in printed editions of the corrupt codices.[35] Such a readiness for Poliziano to open himself up to censure for the public good is still in keeping with the figure of the orator, for, as Quintilian reminds his student of rhetoric, it is

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[33] Scaglione, 54.
[34] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 215; Poliziano in this passage twice quotes the *Satires* of Persius (1, 121): "vidi, vidi ipse, libelle: / auriculas asini quis non habet?" See *Juvenal and Persius with An English Translation*, ed. G. G. Ramsay (London: William Heinemann, 1918), 318.
[35] Passannante, Gerard, *The Lucretian Renaissance: Philology and the Afterlife of Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 126.

beneficial to emphasize the stakes not if the orator should lose but rather if the opposing side should win ("ut autem nostrum miserabilem, si vincamur, exitum, ita adversariorum superbum, si vincerit, utile est credi").[36] While it is unlikely that the perpetrators of textual corruption will vaunt their triumph should Poliziano not bring to light their errors, there is no doubt in his mind that the need to combat these scholars and correct their mistakes is paramount.

This is indeed a battle for Poliziano. In other passages in the prefatory letter in which he declares his intentions, Poliziano imbues the language already reminiscent of classical oratory with militaristic imagery. In stating his goal for the text, not to further denigrate the works of great men but to staunchly defend them against the inept scribes of centuries past, there appear many words reminiscent of battle strategy:

> Denique in eos potissimum cuneus hic ex professo directus, in eos hic aries ex destinato temperatus, qui contra veri faciem, pro vernaculo quidem sibi, sed imaginario tamen sensu frontem durant: eos acie styli maxime compungimus, qui stylum vertere[37], hoc est, qui sua errata dispungere non didicerunt.[38]

Such language is in keeping with the figure of the orator invoked in the earlier passages, who, though alone before the court, must, like the general, mobilize his arguments and arrange them in the best manner to confront the enemy. Quintilian teaches this very lesson in the second book of his *Institutio oratoria*, comparing the adaptability of the orator to the general who in the midst of battle must modify his plan of attack according to many variables ("mutabit hostium genus, mutabit praesentis condicio discriminis; nunc acie directa, nunc cuneis").[39] Thus, though "cuneus"

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[36] From the fourth book of Quintilian's *Institutes* (IV, 1.29) in Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 2: "It is advantageous to create the impression not merely that our fate will be deserving of pity, if we lose, but that our adversary will be swollen with outrageous insolence if he prove successful" (translated by H. E. Butler, 21-22).

[37] Cf. the satires of Horace I. 10, 72-74, "Saepe stilum vertas, iterum quae digna legi sint / scripturus, neque te ut miretur turba labores, / contentus paucis lectoribus" in Horace, *Horace: Satires and Epistles*, edited by Edward P. Morris [Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1968) 140-141.

[38] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 213.

[39] "Or again it may be modified by the character of the enemy or the nature of the crisis by which he is faced. On one occasion he will fight in line, on another in column" (*Institutio oratoria* II. 13.4) in

and "aries" could likely imply architectural imagery with the sense of constructing a strong literary edifice based on sound philology and logic, the use of "compungimus" in the conclusion of the sentence suggests the more bellicose meanings of the former terms typically found in the writings of Livy, Tacitus, and Caesar.

More than a garrison commander, Poliziano asserts himself as a single warrior armed only with his *Miscellanea* to combat these heinous crimes against learning ("qui fraudes in literarum negocio concipiunt capitales"). Towards the conclusion of this prefatory letter, he declares:

> "Quos enim molli nunc articulo tractamus, quos levi et lento brachio tangimus, fortius dein puto prememus atque urgebimus, et contenti paulisper interim praelusoria, velitarique pugna, mox viribus collectis, toto exercitus robore depraeliabimur."[40]

The literary exegesis that Poliziano will carry out within the pages of his *Miscellanea* becomes tantamount to fighting erroneous texts in single combat, and the first few verbs in this passage bear out that double meaning. The use of "tractamus", for instance, conveys the scholarly sense of examining or treating a subject while simultaneously suggesting a more violent act of taking apart, or drawing into pieces some body. Poliziano underscores this secondary meaning with the use of "molli…articulo" – "by its weakest joint." Similarly, while "tangimus" in the context of speech or writing presents the straightforward meaning of mentioning or undertaking a topic, it nevertheless retains its other more physical sense of touching or even violent striking. Poliziano once again moves beyond double entendre to bold, militaristic language in the second half of the passage. His writing represents the first attempt made in the battle ("velitarique pugna"), by which Poliziano hopes to assemble his men, be they his humanist friends or any other defender

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Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 1, edited and translated by Harold Edgeworth Butler, 290-291.

[40] Poliziano, *Opera omnia,* 217.

of learning, and with all the force of their army they will fight violently for their cause ("toto exercitus robore depraeliabimur").

Poliziano's act of linking himself as the author of textual criticism to a warrior for eloquence was not lost on his readers. In the same letter in which he praised the erudition and learning of his friend within the *Miscellanea*, Jacopo Antiquari urged Poliziano to continue the fight by penning further chapters: "ut cum in his Miscellaneis quae edisti centurionem te esse volueris, iam in reliquo opere…tribunum, aut plane positis castris legatum te facias et imperatorem."[41] Playing on the correlation between *centuria* and *centurion*, Antiquari compares Poliziano, the author of one hundred chapters, to the ancient commanders of one hundred troops in the Roman army. Writing further additions to this first century of chapters would thus elevate Poliziano's literary ranking, bringing him to levels of brigadier or colonel.[42]

Poliziano's recourse to the tenets of rhetoric and the figure of the orator-warrior in this preface to his philological work place the poet-philologist in the same literary realm as earlier humanists such as Valla. In examining the dedicatory letter and the six prefaces to Valla's books of the *Elegantiae*, it becomes clear that Poliziano has, in effect, taken his cues regarding the scope of his work and the importance of his profession from language found in Valla's earlier text. Though spread out over these six prefaces, Valla touches upon the same points and follows the same itinerary in his collected *exordium* that Poliziano crystalizes in his prefatory letter. Valla begins his *Elegantiae* with a dedicatory letter to his friend who both shares the same literary interests as the author and also was integral in the publication of this work:

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[41] Poliziano, *Letters*, 196. Butler offers the following translation for this passage from the letter "Iacobus Antiquarius Angelo Politiano s. d. (III. XVIII): "whereas in the *Miscellanea* that you have published you wanted to be a centurion, now in the remaining work which is in your hands…you make yourself a colonel, or having pitched your camp definitively, a brigadier and a major general" (197).
[42] Butler, 347n.

"Laurentius Vallensis Ioanni Tortellio Aretino, cubiculario apostolico, theologorum facundissimo, salutem plurimam dicit. Libros de linguae latinae elegantiae, mi Ioannes, unicum amicitiae specimen et omnis scientiae decus, olim iam tibi debitos totiensque abs te efflagitatos et tanquam creditore repetitos, tandem exhibeo nominque tuo dedico ac velut aes alienum persolvo."[43]

While honoring a friend might already seem a deviation from the standard *incipit* in which the author praises his benefactor (as Poliziano later did), Valla's choice of addressee is in fact a stand-in for his actual dedicatee: Pope Nicholas V, his employer and patron.[44] Giovanni Tortelli (Ioannes Tortelli Aretino), a noted humanist in his own right, was the chamberlain to Pope Nicholas V and collaborated with the pope in the founding of the Vatican library.[45] As Valla reaches the end of his dedicatory letter, he makes plain that the pope is the true ideal recipient of this work, praising this most laudable pope for his wisdom and integrity ("si a tam integro, tam sancto, tam sapienti viro, quam si a summo Pontifice"), and requesting that Tortelli not show the pope this letter of praise ("neque velim te hance ei episotlam ostendere. In qua etsi laudatur, id tamen non adeo fit, ut has laudes ipse, sed ut caeteri legant"), likely in the hopes that his friend will do just that.[46]

Within the six prefaces, Valla establishes himself, like Poliziano after him, as more than a pedant of proper Latin usage and grammar. He, too, adopts the stance of the orator tasked with defending a great cause, indicating both the vital need for this defense and the honest nature of his intentions. This is not a surprising position for Valla, who, as already evidenced within this

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[43] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 50.
[44] Born in Sarzana in 1397, Tommaso di Bartolomeo Parentucelli, the future Pope Nicholas V, studied theology at the University of Bologna and took part in two Councils (Basel in 1433 and Ferrara-Firenze, 1438-1443), before being elected pope in 1447. As Pope, Nicholas V was known for his generous patronage of the humanist culture and for founding the Vatican library, a project which he, like Valla, would never see fully realized before his death in 1455. See Boyle, Leonard E., "La Biblioteca di Niccolò V," *Niccolo V nel sesto centenario della nascita. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi. Sarzana. 8-10 ottobre 1998*, edited by Franco Bonatti and Antonio Manfredi, (Vatican City: Biblioteca apostolica Vaticana, 2000), 3-8.
[45] Moreda, 51n.
[46] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 54.

study, privileges the practices of classical rhetoric as the best means of arriving at the truth. Returning to the *Elegantiae*, Valla bemoans in the preface to the second book that in the course of circulating earlier drafts of his incomplete studies, he has faced a backlash from envious detractors who question his motives and methods without even reading the work that he has carefully prepared:

> "non puto mihi dissimulandum non defore, qui meos hos commentarios antequam legant sumantve in manus putent respuendos, tanquam aut ea, quae haudquaquam vetustas statuisset, digna memoratu, continentes, aut vetustatem ipsam partim negligentiae, partim imperitiae condemnantes, quod praeterisset quae essent in primis, ut ego sentio, digna litteris mandarentur; aut potius utrumque facientes, quod et inepta quaedam minimeque memoratu digna praecipiam, et veteres illos perfectos sane et consumatos, existimem minus commode praecepisse."[47]

Valla is equally susceptible to the charges that Poliziano would later ascribe to his own critics, namely that he focuses solely on on absurd things ("inepta quaedam") within his *Elegantiae* or, worse still, that he conducts these studies in order to reprimand the ancient authorities who, everyone knows, were already perfect ("veteres illos perfectos sane et consumatos, existimem minus"). Such accusations are not a far cry from those that dogged Poliziano, namely that he studies "portenta...verborum" and treats these literary topics for the purpose of casting aspersions on the works of the great authors in hopes of elevating his own stature.[48] Thus, like Poliziano, Valla must demonstrate that he has taken up this cause not for personal glory but because the stakes of ignoring the injustices heaped upon the Latin language represent a serious threat not only to men of letters but to the public good.

Valla does not shy away from adopting the figure of the orator; in fact, he concludes the preface to the sixth book proclaiming himself (and perhaps the implied reader, too) to be "simul et accusatores et iudices," ultimately turning his attention to the topic with the metaphor of descending into the forum ("sed iam in forum descendamus"). Thus, following the precepts put

[47] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 184.
[48] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 213.

forth by Quintilian for the ideal orator, Valla establishes the importance of his cause and stresses that his intentions in taking up this defense stem from a strong sense of patriotism. To do so, Valla contrasts in the first preface the past glory and preeminence of the Latin language with the lamentable state in which it exists today. Valla's estimation of Latin goes beyond praising it as a noble language. In his opinion (one which he believes has been confirmed by history), Latin is intrinsically linked with all disciplines of learning and the foundation of civilization: "haec enim gentes illas populosque omnes omnibus artibus, quae liberales vocantur, instituit; haec optimas leges edocuit; haec viam eisdem ad omnem sapientiam munivit; haec denique praestitit, ne barbari amplius dici possent."[49] This decline in the quality of Latin, therefore, jeopardizes current and future students of different disciplines, particularly students of philosophy, letters, and jurisprudence – in essence, the bases of the modern, learned society in which the humanist finds himself.

Indeed, Valla, as a lover of letters and advocate for the public good, is thoroughly dismayed by what is considered Latin today. Modern usage of Latin has degraded the language so considerably, declares Valla, that it barely resembles that great tongue, to the extent that new students (and, in Valla's estimation, many who have come before) are incapable of deciphering the words of the great authors and thinkers:

> "Nam quis litterarum, quis publici boni amator a lachrymis temperet, quum videat hanc in eo statu esse...Siquidem multis iam saeculis non modo Latinae nemo locutus est, sed ne Latina quidem legens intellexit; non philosophiae studiosi philosophos, non causidici oratores, non legulei iurisconsultos, non caeteri lectores veterum libros perceptos habuerunt, aut habent...fulgorem illum Latinitatis situ ac rubigine passi obsolescere."[50]

The decline of Latin is a hindrance to all future studies of the ancient texts and a possible threat to this new age of learning. To ignore these problems further and allow them to fester is simply

[49] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 56.
[50] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 60.

an unconscionable choice. Valla, corresponding with similar pronouncements in Poliziano's later prefatory letter, indicates how the practice of emending texts can only be a positive act: "Errores maximorum virorum deprehendere, id vero quum doctissimi hominis est, tum opus utillissimum, et quo nullum dici possit utilius. Quis enim dubitet, non minus agere, qui arum, argentum caeteraque metalla expurgat, quam qui illa effodit?"[51] Emending texts is not an aggressive act, but one meant to enhance the beauty of a text, similar to the act of purifying precious metals of their flaws in order to increase their beauty and value.

This endeavor, asserts Valla, requires not only the defense of an orator, but that of a warrior as well. In these prefaces, Valla utilizes the same militaristic language which Poliziano would later adopt in the prefatory letter to his work. Valla, too, will champion these texts just as one wages battle to protect a city from the *barbari* ("tantum igitur deberi puto huius facultatis libris, quantum illis olim qui Capitolium ab armis Gallorum atque insidiis defenderunt"), because to do so offers the hope that Latin, like the city of Rome, can be restored ("per quos factum est ut non modo tota urbs non amitteretur, verum etiam ut tota restitui possent").[52] He concludes the first preface with a rallying cry calling the other great scholars of his day to arms in defense of Latin ("adeo in omnes homines et pro rei magnitudine cunctos facundiae studiosos…ut aiunt, bellicum canere").[53] Given his prolonged interest in this campaign, Valla will not be a mere foot soldier, but a general leading the charge like Camillus:

> "Camillus nobis, Camillus imitandus est…Equidem, quod ad me attinet, hunc imitabor; hoc mihi proponam exemplum; comparabo, quantulaecumque vires meae fuerint, exercitum, quem in hostes quam primum educam; ibo in aciem, ibo primus, ut vobis animum faciam."[54]

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[51] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 680.
[52] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 294.
[53] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 62.
[54] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 62.

The philologist is at the forefront in the battle against barbarism, which, as Valla's words indicate, is both a privileged and precarious position: until his contemporaries join him in this most beautiful battle ("hoc pulcherrimumque certamen"), he will stand alone in the fight.

A shared arsenal of authorities

Notwithstanding these suggestions from both Poliziano and Valla that they have taken on the herculean task of emending corrupt texts (and facing the consequences) alone, both philologists found support from the authorities who had addressed some of these same issues centuries before them, and whom they cited in their various interventions within the *Miscellanea* and the *Elegantiae*. Naturally, both humanists would turn towards the scholars of rhetoric and the ancient *grammatici*, or what we would today consider either philologists or literary critics, who had themselves perhaps expounded on the same word or concept which was under review in Poliziano and Valla's own works. Valla often takes recourse to Cicero, Quintilian, Servius, and Gellius throughout the six books of the *Elegantiae*. Later commentators such as Priscian and Varro also appear as witnesses to certain Latin usages, but Valla's view of their interventions is often less than generous.[55] In addition to citing these authors as sources for correct, or in some cases incorrect, Latin, Valla calls upon the esteemed memory of these figures as a defense for his linguistic inquiries. In the start of the second preface, Valla attempts to deflect attacks from

[55] Copenhaver and Schmitt note that Quintilian in particular is the main model and exemplum that Valla privileges in his *Elegantiae*. This fact was not lost on Valla's contemporaries, such as Poggio Bracciolini, who "mocked Valla for wasting his time on so juvenile a topic and rebuked him for rejecting so many worthy masters – Boethius, Priscian, Augustine, Jerome – in favore of a sole authority, Quintilian" (Copenhaver and Schmitt, 214).

critics who question his thinking and motives in writing such a text, affirming that "non video cur hanc, de qua loquor, materiam se indignam existimasset aut C. Caesar

> …aut Varro…aut Aulus Gellius publicus pene litterarum censor, qui ut magnam quiddam annotasse se praeter caeteros apud Ciceronem existimat, *explicaverunt* pro *explicerunt*, et *esse in hostium potestatem*, pro *potestate*; quae ipse indigna ducerem opere meo; aut Macrobius Gellii aemulus…"[56]

Though Valla nominates a few illustrious authors of grammatical texts, he defers to Gellius in particular as the thinker whose emendations within the *Attic Nights* most closely mirror what Valla himself hopes to accomplish in the *Elegantiae*.

Poliziano, too, identifies these same authors, in particular Cicero, Varro, Quintilian, and Gellius, as authorities worthy of emulation in his *Miscellanea*.[57] He privileges those authors who had produced works that were miscellaneous in nature, that is, assemblages of varied thoughts or topics all linked together by means of a certain theme or time of composition. Poliziano looks primarily to Helianus (Claudius Aelianus) as a model for a literary anthology in Greek, and to Aulus Gellius for one in Latin ("in queis Graecum tamen Helianum, Latinum sequimur Gellium, quorum utriusque libri varietate sunt, quam ordine blandiores").[58] Of these authors, Gellius emerges as the most important model for the *Miscellanea*, for his *Attic Nights* offered Poliziano both an exemplar for the structure of his text as well as the language and intent.[59] A cursory

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[56] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 184.
[57] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 213.
[58] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 213. Though perhaps not his main models, Poliziano does recall other authors in various disciplines who also created texts made of an assortment of topics rather than a unified narrative, such as Clement of Alexandria ("Quanquam me Clementis quidem Alexandrini pontificis, apostolicique viri commentaria, quae στρωματεῖς, quasi stragula picta dixeris, inscribebantur, alium profecto nobis titulum, nisi varietatis istius insinuabant"), Aristoxenus, and Porphyry ("Et enim de Aristoxeni taceo commentariis, quos pari ferme titulo citat eo volumine Porphyrius, quod in Harmonica Ptolemaei composuit").
[59] In addition to Poliziano's own pronouncement that utilized Gellius as a model, clear parallels between the structure of the *Attic Nights* and the *Miscellanea* emerge (See Fubini, 235-238). One notable structural element that Poliziano borrowed from Gellius was the use of chapter headings. Gellius notes the utility of including this feature: "Capita rerum quae cuique commentario insunt, exposuimus hic universa, ut iam statim declaretur quid quo in libro quaeri invenirique possit" [Summaries of the material to be found in each book of my Commentaries I have here placed all together, in order that it may be at once be clear

reading of the preface to Gellius' *Attic Nights* and that of Poliziano's own *Miscellanea* reveals the debt Poliziano owed to the former *grammaticus*. Poliziano's designation of his literary interventions as "στρωματεῖς" and "disparilitate," which he wrote not at length but by leaps and pinches ("non tractim et continenter, sed saltuatim scribimus, et vellicatim"), typically late at night ("hoc nostrarum lucubrationum") recalls comparable language in Gellius' preface.[60] The author of the *Attic Nights* similarly downplays the stucture and weight of his own studies, stating that "in his quoque commentariis eadem rerum disparilitas quae fuit in illis annotationibus pristinis, quas breviter et indigeste et incondite ex eruditionibus lectionibusque variis feceramus" which he "longinquis per hiemem noctibus in agro…ludere ac facere exorsi sumus."[61] Neither Poliziano nor Valla, however, limit themselves to the ancient grammarians: both authors appear to move far beyond their respective "comfort zones" by engaging in a philological dialogue with authors and thinkers in highly divergent fields.

Valla, in addition to the aforementioned grammarians and other esteemed authors of Latin prose to which he would be most accustomed (Pliny the Elder, Caesar, and Macrobius), often turns to the Roman poets, such as Vergil, Ovid, Horace, Lucan, Terence, and many others, in order to offer examples that explicate the correct Latin word usage that he upholds in the various chapters of the *Elegantiae*. In his discussion of the phrase *Noxae dedere* (VI, 35), for example, Valla examines the problematic definition of *noxae*, "personae dare, sive tradere ob noxam, qua significatur culpa," that emerges from what he considers the unreliable legal writings of Justinian ("nam Iustinianus nec iura, nec forsitan Latinas litteras novit"), Trebonianus, "et

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what is to be sought and found in every book]. Gellius, Aulus, *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. John C. Rolfe (London: William Heinemann, 1927), xxxvi-xxxvii.

[60] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 213-217.

[61] Gellius, xxvi. Referring to the title of a similar text by yet another author, Gellius also references the Greek work "στρωματεῖς" in this same preface (xxviii).

sociorum".[62] Such a meaning does not make sense when Justinian uses it in the following context: "*Corpus deditur noxae*. Si *noxa* corpus est, quomodo corpus deditur noxae? Nunquid corpus deditur corpori, aut corporis sibi? Quamquam quid haec oratio ad significandum poenam faceret?"[63] While literary examples from St. Paul, Quintilian and the Roman jurist Ulpianus further expand on the first definition of *noxae*, Valla, in order to properly elucidate this phrase and restore to it its original meaning, must turn to the poetry of Vergil and Ovid.

These two poets offer Valla the secondary definition of "noxae" to mean "damage" or "harm" ("nam noxa etiam damnum significat"). Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and *Fasti* each present Valla with variations on this meaning. In the fifteenth book of the former, Ovid writes "*Nocte nocent potae, sine noxa luce bibuntur,*" while in the *Fasti* there appears an example of the commonplace in which "de brutis autem improprie dicitur *ea dedi noxae*; ut de capra apud eundem Ovidium libro primo Fastorum: *Verba fides sequitur, noxae tibi deditus hostis / spargitur effuso cornua, Bacche, mero.*"[64] These two examples further strengthen the meaning of *noxae* as harm, even though the second Ovidian example represents an "improper" usage. Finally, it is an example from Vergil, explicated by Servius, that provides Valla with the resolution.[65]

Valla cites Servius' commentary on the line in book one of the *Aeneid*, "*Unius ob noxam et furias Aiacis Oilei*" in which the grammarian declares that Vergil used "*noxam* pro *noxia*, id est, *culpa*; quasi per se *noxa* non significet *culpam*; quam familiaris eius, ut opinor, Macrobius levem culpam accipi vult." Based primarily on readings of these two poets and subsequent

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[62] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 746.
[63] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 746.
[64] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 746.
[65] Maurus Servius Honoratus (late-antiquity) was the author of line-by-line commentaries on the works of Vergil which became the cornerstone for the texts of many early-Renaissance humanists. As noted by Grafton, Servius was a particular useful authority in that he "used the medium of commentary on Virgil to impart quantities of information on almost every conceivable subject" (Grafton, "On the Scholarship of Politian and its Context," 153).

interpretations, Valla is able to conclude that "ut sibi crederemus *noxam* non *culpam* esse, sed *poenam*, ait *culpam noxiam* dici; quasi *noxiam* saepius quam *noxam* in hac significatione reperiamus, quam dictionem nusquam reperimus."[66] Not only do poets and their words come to Valla's aid in fully understanding and correcting this misuse of *noxae*, but his studies on this particular term and interpretations of the poetic texts under review later influenced Poliziano's philological studies. In his *Enarrationes in Fastos Ovidii*, Poliziano yields almost entirely to the information provided by Valla in this chapter of the *Elegantiae* ("Habes de hoc apud Vallam") in order to analyze the phrase "noxae tibi" in line 359 in the first book of the *Fasti*, adding only a few supplementary sources to bolster Valla's original claims.[67]

Just as Valla, known more for his prowess in theological and linguistic debates, delves into the realm of poetry in the *Elegantiae*, so too does Poliziano stray beyond what is considered his specialty, poetry, by taking recourse to the authors of rhetoric, philosophy, and theology. In his very first chapter of the *Miscellanea*, "Defensus a calumnia Cicero super enarrata vi novi apud Aristotelem vocabuli, quod est Endelechia," Poliziano names some unexpected sources who form the cornerstone for this textual exegesis: Boethius, Macrobius, and St. Augustine. Furthermore, rather than simply reproducing the words of these authorities to support his points, he calls on these figures, like character witnesses at a trial, to elicit support for his own claims and to rebut the spurious claims of others (in this case, his old philosophy master in Florence, Argyropoulos[68]). Poliziano's begins this chapter by emphasizing the respect he holds for his

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[66] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 746.
[67] Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, 86-87.
[68] John Argyropoulos (1415-1487) was a Greek lecturer and scholar from Byzantium who settled in Florence after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, assuming the position of lecturer of philosophy for the next fifteen years, focusing primarily on Aristotelian philosophy. In addition to lecturing on Aristotle, Argyropoulos translated many of the ancient philosopher's extant works into Latin, becoming "Aristotle's most influential translator in the fifteenth century…Argyropoulos presented the full Greek Aristotle to intellectually ambitious Florentines at the same time as Ficino revealed all of Plato to them in Latin" (see

former teacher: "Argyropylus ille Byzantius, olim praeceptor in philosophia noster, cum literarum Latinarum minime incuriosus, tum sapientiae Decretorum, disciplinarium que adeo cunctarum, quae cyclicae a Martiano dicuntur, eruditissimus est habitus."[69] Yet, notwithstanding this, he must refute the stance of Argyropoulos that Cicero erred in his use of "endelechia" in reporting Aristotle's designation of the fifth kind of element as ἐνδελέχεια, meaning "continuatam motionem, et perennem" – perpetual and continual motion.[70]

To refute Argyropoulos's argument, namely that the correct word is not *endelechia* but *entelechia* ("Endelechôs enim continuatim mobiliter, continuatam que mobilitas Endelechismos, unde hanc Aristotelis entelechiam deduci putavit ille: quae non *d* literam tamen, sed *t* potius habeat in syllaba secunda"), Poliziano does not immediately make use of the the normal methods of textual exegesis (comparing appearances of this word in other texts, tracking down commentaries written at a time closer to the original, and so on). Rather, he uses the aforementioned support of Boethius, Macrobius, St. Augustine and others to create the argument that Cicero was a scholar of unassailable knowledge and, as such, his reading of Aristotle's text should be defended:

> "Iam primum igitur Argyropyli huius apud me quoque non exigui ponderis autoritas, aliis autoritatibus, multo que (arbitror) valentioribus refellenda est, tum ostendendum, ex eo quo obiicitur, augeri Ciceronis praeconium ne dum decrescat. Et prodibunt in medium satis (arbitror) quod ad philosophiam modo pertinet, idonei Ciceronis laudatores (ut simus interims quam paucissimis contenti) Boetius, Macrobius, et Augustinus. Nam quis Boetio vel in Dialecticis acutior? vel subtilior in Mathematicis? vel in Philosophia locupletior? vel in Theologia sublimior? … Porro de Macrobio, cui, rogo, magis credendum, quam laudanti praecipue Boetio? Denique ipsius Augustini tam alte nisa in omnibus ferme disciplinis est autoritas, ut extra omnem sit aleam posita, sic ut ab ea iam ne transversum quidem (quod dicitur) unguem recedi, fas habeatur…Consideremus igitur, quid hi singuli saltem de Cicerone senserit, quantum que ei tribuerint in philosophia, tum credamus audacter, non cuisuis esse calumniam constare homini, qui fuerit

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Copenhaver and Schmidt, 138-140). Among his students in Florence was the very young Poliziano, who admired his former teacher "non tanto per il rigore delle sue lezioni…quanto per la vastità dei suoi interessi, esponente di quella poliglottia e di quell'enciclopedismo che saranno le vere mire dei forsennati studi di Poliziano" (see Orvieto, 56-57).

[69] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 224.

[70] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 224.

a laudatissimis hominibus tam singulariter laudatus. Boetius itaque non modo sic utitur identidem Marci Tullii testimoniis, ut ea pro fortissimis et inviolabilibus obiiciat argumentis, sed et ipsius Topicorum (qui maximus est honor) suscipere interpretationem non erubescit. Macrobius autem sic in unius eiusdem libri vel exigua particula versatur, ut nec Platoni comparem facere, nec omnibus insignire eum disciplinarum omnium titulis dubitaverit. Denique Augustinius cum in Academicis, quanquam sub alterius persona, nunc suum Ciceronem, nunc sapientem appellans, tandem ab ispo, inquit, Latina lingua philosophiam et inchoatam esse, et perfectam: tum in Confessionibus, ubi neutiquam personatus, eos ex professo damnat, qui linguam Ciceronis mirantur, pectus non ita."[71]

Cicero's reputation as a great politician, philosopher, and scholar is what is truly at the heart of this "literary" question: is Cicero's understanding of Greek (and, by extension, the tenets of Aristotelian philosophy) creditable? To counter Argyropoulus, Poliziano calls upon Boethius, Macrobius, and St. Augustine, not because they treated this very question of *endelechia* versus *entelechia*, but because their history of privileging the Roman orator holds more weight that the considerable knowledge of the Byzantine philosophy teacher, a fact which Poliziano notes at the start of his argument ("Argyropyli huius apud me quoque non exigui ponderis autoritas, aliis autoritatibus, multo que [arbitror] valentioribus refellenda est"). Indeed, Poliziano follows with a series of rhetorical questions that demonstrate the power of these authorities and, by extension, the unimpeachable character of Cicero.

For while Argyropoulos may be known for his great encyclopedic study and knowledge, how can Poliziano ignore that Boethius did not blush from shame when interpreting Cicero in his own *Topics* ("sed et ipsius Topicorum (qui maximus est honor) suscipere interpretationem non erubescit"), given that no one was more intelligent, more subtle, more credible, or more sublime ("Nam quis Boetio vel in Dialecticis acutior? vel subtilior in Mathematicis? vel in Philosophia locupletior? vel in Theologia sublimior?")? Does the modern scholar dare to discount that Macrobius, whose word should be believed as much as Boethius's, never faltered in his estimation of Cicero as renowned in all disciplines and an equal to Plato ("Macrobius autem sic

[71] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 225.

in unius eiusdem libri vel exigua particula versatur, ut nec Platoni comparem facere, nec omnibus insignire eum disciplinarum omnium titulis dubitaverit")? Poliziano follows a similar pattern in appealing to the authority of St. Augustine. The resulting argument that emerges is tantamount to asking that if these most acclaimed thinkers were not ashamed to esteem Cicero, then how can modern scholars do otherwise? Poliziano adds more anecdotal evidence to this initial premise, such as the one stemming from Plutarch's account of the life of Cicero, which recounted that

> "iam vero nonne Apollonius quoque ille Molo, rhetorum omnium sui temporis celeberrimus, audita semel Graeca M. Tullii, sed et extemporali oratione, defixus diu stetisse, ac denique ita mirabundus pronunciasse dicitur?…Enimvero hoc illius iudicum non Latinus, non ineptus aliquis, sed Plutarchus ipse graeco vir ingenio, Romana gavitate in literis retulit."[72]

Plutarch becomes Poliziano's most credible witness in his attempt to exonerate Cicero from Argyropoulos' accusation of incorrect Greek. The author, who Poliziano notes was himself of Greek origin, affirms that Cicero was not only a very learned man, but, more to the point, one whose knowledge of Greek was impeccable and whose eloquence rivaled that of native born speakers.

Yet this discussion on Cicero's Greek has further, more important implications that go beyond Cicero's linguistic abilities. Christopher Celenza maintains that this first chapter of the

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[72] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 226. The account in Plutarch's *Lives* reads as follows: "in Rhodes [he studied] with Apollonius the son of Molon…Apollonius, we are told, not understanding the Roman language, requested Cicero to declaim in Greek, with which request Cicero readily complied, thinking that in this way his faults could be better corrected. After he had declaimed, his other hearers were astounded and vied with one another in their praises, but Apollonius was not greatly moved while listening to him, and when he had ceased sat for a long time lost in thought; then, since Cicero was distressed at this, he said: 'Thee, indeed, O Cicero, I admire and commend; but Greece I pity for her sad fortune, since I see that even the only glories which were left to us, culture, and eloquence, are through thee to belong also to the Romans'" (Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, vol 7, translated Bernadotte Perrin, [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919], 90-93). Christopher Celenza agrees that Poliziano introduces this minor dispute between *endelechia* and *entelechia* in the first chapter of the *Miscellanea* in order to open up a broader discourse. This defense of Cicero at first appears "more broadly as a defense of the Latins against he Greeks" (see Celenza, Christopher, "Late Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance" in *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, ed. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012] 1183-1184).

Miscellanea provided Poliziano with the opportunity to engage in the exercise characteristic of Pico della Mirandola, namely bringing two contrasting philosophies into harmony.[73] Having successfully championed Cicero's reputation, Poliziano resolves the inconsistency between *endelechia* and *entelechia* not through an investigation into textual corruption, but rather through a learned discussion on the philosophical concepts that they represent. To begin, Poliziano asks why he, or Cicero for that matter, should privilege *entelechia* over *endelechia* ("quonam maxime argumento Entelechiam potius quam Endelechiam scriptum collegerint ab Aristotele?) when one word is as new as the other ("tam enim verbum, quam illud"), and both regard the soul ("nec minus altero significari animus, quam altero potest"). Moreover, Aristotle did not decidedly separate these two meanings in his use of the word ("nec Aristoteles ipse perfectionem potius, quam motionem illam indicari continuam nova voce pronunciat"), a fact which Poliziano attributes to the influence of Platonic philosophy:

> "eam novo huic Aristotelis vocabulo interpretationem, iure accommodare sit ausus, quae cum Platonis in Phaedro sententia, super animae motu sempiterno…quod Picus hi Mirandula meus in quadam suarum disputationum praefatione tractavit…quod de Platonis hac ipsa, quam dicimus, et Aristotelis concordia, noctes atque dies molitur ac cudit."[74]

In this first chapter of his *Miscellanea*, Poliziano thus launches a new form of philology, different from his various *enarrationes* (detailed expositions) of ancient texts carried out during his rhetoric courses at the University of Florence. This new philology, encompassing multiple

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[73] According to Celenza, the debate over an incorrect transmission of texts resulting in *endelechia* instead of *entelechia* leads to the greater question of "a fundamental concord between Plato and Aristotle…For Poliziano, the difference in terminology reflects that the fact that different terms, even different fundamental conceptions, do not have to reflect foundational differences between philosophers…If the soul could be seen as the body's final actuality (*entelecheia*), there was also room to concede that it could be seen as an 'animating force" or principle of motion (*endelecheia*). Philosophy was large enough to have room for different though ultimately compatible views on important subjects" (see Celenza, "Late Antiquity in the Italian Renaissance," 1184).

[74] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 226-228.

disciplines with far-reaching consequences, is not only more sophisticated than the original conception of the term would convey, but it also derives directly from Valla.[75]

Indeed, Valla's presence is palpable in Poliziano's first chapter to the *Miscellanea*. Poliziano, as becomes apparent in the opening passages of the chapter, mirrors the bombastic rhetoric more typically associated with the earlier humanist. The characterization of the chapter as a "defense," for example, is in keeping with Valla's tendency to link philology with rhetoric. As demonstrated in many of Valla's works, in particular the oration *On the False Donation of Constantine*, the minute examination of a text can serve a greater purpose than just simple emendation: it can change, restore, or devastate the reputation of a text or author. Such is the case in *Elegantiae* VI.34, which is an illustration of Valla's talent at transforming a minor linguistic question into a disputation and, in some cases, demolition of the reputation of a "great thinker." Valla makes plain in this chapter devoted to Boethius' definition of *personae* that he does not share the same esteem for the early-Medieval philosopher already evidenced by Poliziano in the first chapter of the *Miscellanea*.[76] Valla declares that Boethius' definition of *persona* as "*incommutabilis naturae individua substantia*; extimans se argumentatione collegisse, quare non sit qualitas nec aliud praedicamentum ullum, sed substantia" confirms for Valla that "Romanae loqui nescire."[77] To Valla, however, this question of Boethius's understanding of classical Latin opens up broader theological questions: is *persona* to be taken as a substance or a

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[75] Celenza, Christopher, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006),103.

[76] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 742; Valla's disregard for Boethius is a theme that appears in many of his written works, particularly in his dialogue *On Free Will*, leading Celenza to declare that "Valla was no friend of Boethius…Valla believed that Western thought had taken a turn for the worse with Boethius, who introduced Aristotelian logic into the West and added to the mix neologisms that would become staples of institutional philosophy. For Valla, Boethius was the fount and origin that had unleashed the rancid river of scholastic logic, chopping into the pristine rhetorical forest represented by the mentality and style of thought of the Church Fathers (see Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*, 96).

[77] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 742.

quality? Valla argues, based on general examples of correct Latin usage of *personae*, that it is a quality – even when applied to God.[78] Valla thus contends that in offering such a faulty definition of *personae*, Boethius has, in essence, developed an incorrect theological doctrine. Thus, just as Poliziano's chapter on Cicero's use of *endelechia* opens up to larger philosophical questions, so too does Valla's discussion of *persona* in *Elegantiae* VI.34 demonstrate how a question of proper language can have philosophical or theological implications.

Despite Valla's disdain for Boethius, he, too, displays the same attitude of deference towards the ancient authors that Poliziano later exhibited in the first chapter of the *Miscellanea*. In the second preface to the *Elegantiae*, for instance, Valla declares his intention to model his own studies and readings on the interpretations of confirmed scholars like Macrobius. Valla describes the thinker by way of an encomium reminiscent of the one Poliziano would later offer this thinker in the *Miscellanea*, namely as one "omnes libros videtur exussisse, ut aliquid in lingua Latina quod auribus hominum dignum esset, pro sua virili parte conferret in medium."[79] Beyond honoring individual preeminent scholars like Macrobius, Valla makes plain his opinion of authorities in III.17, a sentiment which critics such as Ruberto have designated as Valla's maxim within the *Elegantiae*: "Quamquam (quod ad elegantiam pertinet) ego pro lege accipio quicquid magnis autoribus placuit."[80] This statement is, essentially, the crystallization of Poliziano's initial argument in the first chapter of the *Miscellanea*: that is, if it was pleasing and

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[78] In discussing the concept of *persona* when applied to God, Valla maintains that "in Deo autem *personam* ponimus, vel quod nullum aliud vocabulum quadrat; non natura, quo veteres utebantur; non substantia, quo Graeci utuntur; vel quo vere in Deo triplex est qualitas. Atqui hic mihi os comprimet Boethius, neque vocem prodire permittet, dicens *qualitem eam esse, quae possit etiam abesse praeter subiecti corruptionem*. Hanc ego definitionem (ut Graeculam et ineptam) derideo" (Valla, *Elegantiae*, 744). Moreda notes that not only this declaration on the part of Valla created a controversy with theological and dogmatic repercussions, it was also one of the charges against him when he was brought before the Inquisition in 1444 (Moreda, 745n).

[79] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 184.

[80] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 326.

allowed for these great thinkers to agree with certain interpretations or revere certain authors, then it would be ill-advised for humanists like Valla and Poliziano to do otherwise.

Poliziano's next phase in philology: surpassing Valla

To establish himself as continuing the sophisticated philological study begun by Valla was, naturally, not enough of a feat for Poliziano. Valla's *Elegantiae* would remain a model for Poliziano to emulate and, ultimately, surpass. For this reason, there are instances within the *Miscellanea* in which Poliziano, even without mentioning the earlier humanist by name, responds to interpretations put forth by Valla and to his overall philological methodology in the hopes of further developing or debunking them. One such example is Poliziano's exposition of the words *libertinus* and *dedititius* in chapter 84 of the *Miscellanea*. Not only does the focus on these two words build upon both the chapter dedicated to *libertinus* in *Elegantiae* IV.1 and Valla's brief explication of *dedititius* in *Elegantiae* I.13, but Poliziano also subtly amends Valla's previous discussion of the words and the authors with whom they are associated.

Valla's study of *libertinus* finds that the term differs only slightly from the Latin word *libertus*. More to the point, this difference lies in morphology rather than in meaning. Valla declares as much at the onset of IV.1, stating that "*Libertinus* et *libertus* sola elegantiae gratia habent differentium, quam nec grammatici, nec iurisperiti (quod maxime pudendum est) sciunt…Igitur *Libertinus* relativum est ingenui, *Libertus* relativum est patroni; licet unum idemque sit et *libertinus* et *libertus*."[81] Though their meaning is roughly the same, Valla notes that, based on their correct usage, *libertinus* is an adjective, differentiating it from the noun

[81] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 412.

libertus: "Per *Libertinum* significamus conditionem hominis, sicut per *ingenuum*; per *Libertum* significamus privatum quemdam respectum, sicut per patronum. Ideoque *libertinus* adiectivum est, sicut *Ingenuus*…*Libertus* substantivum, sicut patronus."[82] However, the tradition, particularly within the realm of civil law, is to ascribe an extra meaning to *libertinus* and not to *libertus*: "illudque solemus definire, hoc non solemus; ut in iure civili, *Libertini* sunt, qui iusta servitute manumissi sunt."[83] The practice has become so ingrained in this area of study, that Valla provocatively asks what point is there to include examples of these two words from the writings of civil law ("quid attinet plura ex iure civili exempla repetere"), "quum etiam sint distincti tituli *de libertis et libertinis*?"[84] Notwithstanding the almost identical meaning, if not identical usage, between *libertus* and *libertinus*, the medieval (and, sadly, contemporary) legal experts have continually used and perpetuated the usage of these two terms as separate categories, thus confusing their meanings and complicating what should be a simple legal distinction between a freeborn and a freed slave or a master and freed slave.

To distinguish between these two terms and create, based on a faulty lexical understanding, superfluous meanings are not minor linguistic quibbles for Valla. Rather those who promote this distinction, mainly the inferior legal practitioners, "plurima et capitalia in ipso iure civili peccata committit."[85] Thus, beyond promoting a better understanding of Latin, there is an ethical imperative motivating Valla to restore the proper meaning of these terms. As evidenced by the chapter on *noxae dedere* in the sixth book of the *Elegantiae*, seemingly minor disputes of language have far broader repercussions. In both the example from the sixth book and the discussion of *libertinus*, Valla is at times implicitly (and more often explicitly) discrediting

[82] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 412.
[83] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 412.
[84] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 414.
[85] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 416.

the medieval jurists who base their understanding of civil law on spurious texts, such as in the case of those who develop legal tenets from the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* of Justinian.[86]

Valla appears to dedicate far less attention to other terms for enslaved peoples – terms which are also linked to the writings of Justinian – within the *Elegantiae*. When he turns to *dedititius* in I.13, for example, he again couches his definition of this word within the broader topic of nouns and adjectives that end in *–ceus, -eus,* and *–tius*. Valla lumps *dedititius* in with *adscriptitius*, defining these as "qui ad aliquam rem adscriptus est et qui ex numero eorum est qui se in alterius imperium dediderunt."[87] Both titles refer to a person who finds himself entrusted to a new condition or state, only in the case of the *dedititius* that state is inferior to the authority of an unspecified other. Though he does not name the source of these terms within the field of civil law, the classification of different groups of freedmen or slaves put forth in *Elegantiae* IV.1 and I.13 correspond to a similar systemization in the *Corpus Iuris Civilis* of Justinian.

Poliziano takes up this very topic within the *Miscellanea*, devoting chapter 84 to the specific category of slaves who are called *dedititius* ("De Libertinis, qui vocentur Dedititii"), for which he provides further historical information regarding that category of person within ancient Roman society. In a departure from the Vallian model, Poliziano focuses specifically on these questions in relation to the writings of Justinian, whose *Institutes* he names as the source for the quandary:

> "Institutiones haec, quae vocantur in iure civili, Iustiniani principis nomine editae, sed a Triboniano tamen, doctisque aliis viris compositae, etiam graecae scriptae sub eodem prorsus intellectu reperiuntur. Nisi quia ritus quidam, consuetudinesque Romanorum veteres, uberius aliquanto, et laxius in graeco ipso, quam in latino codice referuntur, ut peregrinis hominibus, atque a Romanorum more, consuetudineque

[86] Justinian, the sixth century emperor, was one of the original authors of the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, later edited and compiled by Tribonianus. This text was a codification of Roman laws in three parts: the *Codex*, the *Digest* (or *Pandects*), and the *Institutes* (intended as a manual for students of civil law).
[87] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 96.

> alienis, res tota penitus innotesceret. Sed quod de libertinis iis, qui dedititii vocabantur, strictius breviusque in nostris institutionibus, non alienum visum est ex Graeci voluminis sententia prolixius hic, atque ob id etiam dilucidius explicare."[88]

Notwithstanding the ubiquity of these rules and how much they seem to be fully known by all ("res tota pentius innotesceret"), the very brief treatment of the *dedititius* class within the *Institutes* has engendered enough doubts to warrant further explanation ("sed quod de libertinis iis, qui dedititii vocabantur, strictius breviusque in nostris institutionibus, non alienum visum est ex Graeci voluminis sententia prolixius hic, atque ob id etiam dilucidius explicare"). In order to resolve the questions surrounding this term, Poliziano must go beyond the basic Latin definitions, such as those offered by Valla in the *Elegantiae*, and look to the even older Greek legal precepts that underpin these laws ("etiam graecae scriptae sub eodem prorsus intellectu reperiuntur"). Though he does not treat *libertinus* specifically in this study of the *libertinus dedititius*, it would appear that Poliziano implicitly rejects Valla's reading of *libertinus* as equal to *libertus*. Instead, Poliziano takes the position that these two words did communicate different meanings, correct Latin or not, and an investigation into the history of Roman civil law, even that predating Justinian, will bear this out.

Poliziano begins by quoting the *Institutes* directly in order to delineate the three types of freed slaves and the levels of rights afforded to them:

> "Qui igitur apud antiquos manumittebantur, modo maiorem et iustam libertatem consequebantur, et fiebant cives Romani, modo minorem, et Latini Juniani ex lege Iunii Norbani fiebant, qui illorum quasi sectae fuerit inventor, atque autor. Modo etiam inferiorem, et fiebant ex lege Aelia Sentia dedititii."[89]

There is little difference between this description in Poliziano's text and the source material from Justinian's writings, which Poliziano repeats almost verbatim.[90] Of interest to Poliziano, however,

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[88] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 297.
[89] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 297.
[90] The passage in Justinian's *Institutes* (I.5.3) that Poliziano repeats in his *Miscellanea* reads as follows: "qui manumittebantur, modo majorem et justam libertatem consequebantur, et fiebant cives Romani;

is not a question of linguistics, that substantiated the focus for Valla regarding these terms and their proper usage, but, rather, a historical and almost anthropological investigation into what was meant by the "inferior liberties" ("modo etiam inferiorem") and status afforded to the *dedititii*. Clearly, Poliziano's interest was piqued by the words that followed this passage in the *Institutes*, in which Justinian (and the other collaborators on the *Institutes*) notes that "sed quoniam Dedititiorum quidem pessima conditio, jam ex multis temporibus in desuetudinem abierat."[91] The "pessima conditio" of the *dedititii* thus becomes the focal point of Poliziano's study, as he expands on the specifics of this class of people, how they attained their freedom, and the treatment they received as a result.

The scenario that characterizes the *Libertinus dedititius* as indicated by Poliziano is when "quisquam diu servitutem servierat, supplicium ex delicto dedisset,

> ut aut inscriptus fuisset, hoc est, ut notas et stigmata inusta fronti accepisset, aut in publicum carcerem coniectus, aut ex delicto verberatus, et se deliquisse confessus fuisset, dein gratia inita a domino manumitteretur, Libertinus dedititius vocabatur."

The standard *dedititius*, in Poliziano's interpretation, is thus a person who has committed some offense, offered himself up in servitude, suffered some outward form of punishment (an unspecified marking, a branding on his forehead, time spent in a public jail, or a beating) on account of the offense, and who ultimately confesses and is freed by the good graces of his master. According to the law of Aelia Sentia, these freed slaves were designated as *dedititius* rather than the other categories of *Romani* or the lesser *Latini* because it recalled the status of

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modo minorem, et Latini ex lege Junia Norbana fiebant; modo inferiorem et fiebant ex lege Aelia Sentia Dedititii." Thomas Cooper offers this translation: "Those, who were manumitted, sometimes obtained the greater liberty, and became *Roman* citizens; sometimes only the lesser, and became *Latins*, under the law *Junia Norbana*; and, sometimes only the inferior liberty, and became *Dedititii*, by the law *Aelia Sentia*" (*The Institutes of Justinian*, 3rd edition, ed. and trans. Thomas Cooper, [New York: John S. Voorhies, 1852), 15.

[91] The translation of this passage provided by Cooper reads, "but the condition of the *Dedititii* differing but little from slavery, has been long disused" (*The Institutes of Justinian*, 15).

"peregrinorum dedititiorum," that is, the foreign slaves or prisoners of war who had the lowest level of personal freedoms within ancient Rome. Indeed, this was the worst lot to assign to any "free" person: not only conquered in battle, the *peregrini dedititii*, having set down their arms ("abiectis armis"), would give themselves over to victors ("se victoribus dedissent") and accept whatever amount of humane treatment the Romans cared to offer them ("hactenus humane tractati sunt a Romanis"). Ultimately, should the *peregrini dedititii* succeed in creating a life for themselves ("vitam quidem impetrarent"), they will nevertheless be forever marked by this title and its accompanying ignominy ("sed hac velut ignominia notarentur, ut dedititii deinceps vocati sint"). Poliziano concludes that it is precisely due to the condition of living a shameful half-life that the Aelia Sentia law named this particular class of freedmen *dedititii*.[92]

Thus, in addition to advancing a historically-based interpretation of an unclear legal term, the ancillary information provided by Poliziano on the meaning of the *libertinus dedititius* appears a example of the later humanist's attempts to correct Valla's interventions within the *Elegantiae*. From this lengthy digression into the term, Poliziano makes clear that Valla's scanty and vague definition of *dedititius* was inadequate, ignoring not only the specific conditions that characterize the term, but also the legal and historical precedent that shaped it. Furthermore, he ignores Valla's stance on the difference between *libertinus* and *libertus*, demonstrating that even if the rules of proper Latin were flouted by jurists influenced by Justinian, that does not deny the fact that the additional definition of *libertinus* was in existence and in widespread use prior to the creation of the *Institutes*. This latter point also bolsters what is perhaps Poliziano's greatest

[92] Poliziano's exact words of conclusion are "quare etiam libertinorum hoc genus dedititii sunt ab Aelio Sentio nuncupati, ut qui in admittendo crimine velut iidem fuissent, eodem quoque nomine appellarentur." This and all previous quotations within the previous paragraph come from Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 297.

correction of Valla's *Elegantiae*, namely a re-assessment of the authorities discredited by the earlier philologist.

Valla had made clear his disdain for Justinian in *Elegantiae* VI.35, proclaiming at the start of the chapter that the 6th century emperor "nec iura, nec forsitan Latinas literas novit."[93] He repeats this sentiment towards the conclusion, stating further that no one should be surprised at this appraisal of Justinian on account of the emperor's early life and predilections: "quod dixi Iustinianum forsitan nec iura nec litteras Latinas scisse, nemo miretur; tum quia semper in Graecia vixit, tum quia se dominum Iustinianum…quod a viro Romano est alienissimum."[94] This was not the first time in the *Elegantiae* that Valla belittles the Greek Justinian's understanding of Roman legal norms.[95] Thus when Poliziano begins his chapter on *libertinus dedititius* with the grouping Justinian and Tribonian with "doctisque aliis viris" as the authors of the *Institutes*, he subtly absolves the emperor of any linguistic transgressions and rehabilitates his legacy. Indeed, this reappraisal of Justinian's contributions to Roman jurisprudence via an in-depth study of the language and history of his *Corpus Iuris Civilis* is, for Poliziano, a deliberate choice. Mario Ascheri compares the approaches of Valla and Poliziano towards the writings of Justinian in these two texts, arguing that while Justinian represented to Valla the downfall of classical civil law, whose paradigm was Cicero, Poliziano, by contrast, hoped to restore Justinian's *Corpus* to its original state, thereby promoting the importance of this legal text.[96]

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[93] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 746.

[94] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 746. Moreda notes that Valla considered the title of "*Dominus*" exclusive to the Eastern emperors and not common among the Romans (Moreda, 747n).

[95] See for example the 67th chapter of book IV, in which Valla examines the terms *condictio* and *conditio*. For the former term he provides the Justinian's definition, "si credimus hominem Graecum Romanis iura potuisse praescribere" (Valla, *Elegantiae*, 492).

[96] Ascheri maintains that while both Poliziano and Valla have contempt for those medieval jurists that erroneously emended Justinian's *Corpus*, Valla's attacks against these figures, such as Bartolo Sassoferrato, "le aveva quasi fatte passare in second'ordine, come prodotto del lavoro nefandissimo – che più lo irritava – di Giustiniano, reo della distruzione dei tesori della giurisprudenza classica. Ora, in

This interest in re-evaluating authorities that previous philologists, particularly Valla, had disparaged is a common theme within the *Miscellanea*. In fact, this is a trend that we have already seen confirmed in Poliziano's expressed admiration for Boethius in the first chapter of the *Miscellanea*, an opinion which completely reverses the disdain for this thinker that Valla took no pains to mask within the *Elegantiae*.[97] Another earlier scholar that Poliziano must exonerate from the slander present in Valla's literary interventions is Aulus Gellius. Notwithstanding the use of this ancient critic's *Attic Nights* as a model for his own text, Valla maintains a strained relationship with the earlier thinker, one that tends to run from begrudging approval to outright contempt.

This range of attitudes appears in the first chapter of the second book, mere pages after his appeal to Gellius's memory in the preface to this book as a source of support for correcting the Latin found in manuscripts and creating the *Elegantiae*. Valla does not necessarily approve of Gellius's interventions into *mei, tui, sui*, etc., but he, at best, states that he will not refute them ("neque vero repugno A. Gellio dicenti mutatam scripturam esse a *nostrum* in *nostri*").[98] In another passage from this same chapter, however, Valla accuses Gellius of repeating the grammatical errors which he (and other contemporary *grammatici* like him) have strived to

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Poliziano non solo non c'è l'attacco a Giustiniano, ma c'è piuttosto il proposito di riportare il dettato giustiniano alla sua purezza originaria, depurato dagli errori introdotti dalla tradizione manoscritta medievale. Come si vede, la prospettiva è molto diversa. Nel primo c'è una svalutazione netta del *corpus* giustinianeo, nel Poliziano una sua valorizzazione" (Ascheri, Mario, "Poliziano filologo del diritto tra rinnovamento della giurisprudenza e della politica," *Angolo Poliziano: Poeta, scrittore, filologo. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi. Montepuliciano 3-6 novembre 1994*. ed. Vincenzo Fera and Mario Martelli, (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1998), 325-326.

[97] Valla's contempt for what he perceived as a flawed study of Latin texts carried out by Boethius appears in the already cited 34th chapter of Book VI and in a number of other instances in the *Elegantiae*. See *Elegantiae* I. 18 ("Et Boethius in dialecticis dixit: *Paulo aequales.* Hic pro paulum dicens paulo," 118), I.19 ("Quare in hac re non verebor reprehendere Boethium, Priscianum et elegantiorem utroque Lactantium," 124), and II. 34 ("Quare Boethius videtur male voluisse imitari unum locum M. Tullii in rhetoricis dicentis," 252).

[98] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 196.

correct: "Quare nos, ne barbare loquemur, mutavimus in pronomia derivata. Ex quo apparet non modo illud Auli Gellii *maiores nostri*, per genitivum contra grammaticum, verum etiam illud, *maiores nostrum*, contra usum esse."[99] Given that Valla had previously in this chapter exonerated Gellius from actively corrupting texts and polluting classical Latin with barbarisms ("quod ego mutatum esse nolo dicere ab ipso Aulo Gellio sed a grammaticae professoribus"), he nevertheless insinuates that in failing to recognize the fallacious textual emendations of earlier grammar professors, Gellius has still perpetuated the very barbarisms he hoped to expunge.

Valla amplifies his challenge of Gellius's philology in the 23rd chapter of the sixth book of the *Elegantiae*, moving from an ambivalent attitude to a focused attack on Gellius's philology, specifically his interpretation of *resciscere*. Valla marvels at Gellius's interpretation of *resciscere*, which the earlier philologist inexplicably "vult esse occultam et inopinatam insperatamque cognoscere. Miror de hoc solertissimo verborum investigatore, atque censore, qui vocabulum hoc de facili difficile, de claro obscurum, de trito novum, de exposito abstrusum fecerit, ne dicam falso exposuerit."[100] Valla's condemnation of the exposition found in this chapter of the *Attic Nights* parallels similar attacks in his discussion of *libertinus* and *libertus*, namely that an earlier scholar has unnecessarily and erroneously complicated a Latin word.

Poliziano's relationship with Gellius is far less fraught. If anything, as evidenced by the frequent references to Gellius's studies within *Miscellanea*, the Florentine humanist's interactions with Gellius and his *Attic Nights* mirror those of a student and a beloved former teacher: responding to his academic challenges, citing him as a reliable source, and coming to his defense when others question his scholarship. In the first *centuria* of the *Miscellanea*, Poliziano is prompted by Gellius, his literary master and model, to solve a riddle within the *Attic Nights*. In

[99] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 200.
[100] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 724.

the 35th chapter he repeats the *aenigma* or *scirpi* posed by Gellius in XII.6 of the *Attic Nights*: "Aenigma illud ex Varrone, quod Gellius proponit, et inenarretum relinquit, ut legentium coniecturas acuat, equidem soluturum me meo quoque periculo profiteor."[101] Gellius presents this riddle in a playful manner, hoping to pique the interest of the reader and encourage him to find the answer without taking recourse to its source: "hoc qui nolit diutius aput sese quaerere, inveniet quid sit in M. Varronis *De Sermone Latino ad Marcellum* libro secundo."[102] Poliziano, naturally, could not resist the opportunity to demonstrate his brilliance in solving it, which he is able to do in this chapter of the *Miscellanea*. Poliziano's triumph in correctly solving the riddle ("Terminus") is doubly impressive as Varro's text, which Gellius cites as holding the answer, was lost. Apart from this one example of a lighthearted intellectual exchange between Poliziano and Gellius, most of the references to this earlier scholar within the *Miscellanea* serve to bolster Poliziano's literary research.

Though Poliziano does not respond to Valla's challenge of *resciscere* and Gellius's interpretation of it directly, within the *Miscellanea* there is both a frequent recourse to Gellius as a reliable authority and an attempt to exonerate him from the charges of inaccurate scholarship made by Valla.[103] In the unfinished second *centuria*, Poliziano cites Gellius favorably on multiple occasions. In the chapter on *Decussare et Decussatim*, for example, Poliziano paraphrases Gellius's explication of the "ventorum vocabulis regionibusque" from the *Attic Nights*, proclaiming that the early philologist "etiam pulcherrime Agellius [A Gellius] et

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[101] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 256.
[102] Gellius, Aulus, *The Attic Nights of Aulus Gellius*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. John C. Rolfe (London: William Heinemann, 1927), 382. Solving the riddle, holds Gellius, should not be a source of agony for his contemporary readers as the answer is readily available: "He who does not wish to puzzle himself too long will find the answer in the second book of Varro's *Latin Language, addressed to Marcellus*" (383).
[103] See Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 242, 254, and 260-261.

apertissime declavarit."[104] Furthermore, in two separate chapters within the second *centuria*, Poliziano appears to respond to Valla's charges against Gellius of perpetuating incorrect Latin usage, by stating that this was not the work of Gellius but of later, inept copyists. Such is the case in chapter 43, "Symbola et asymbolus," in which Poliziano reproduces Gellius's study into *symbola*, emphasizing that this portion of his text had been corrupted: "Apud Agellium [A Gellium] quoque, libro sexto, capite .xiii., sic in vetusto codice reperio:

> Tales apud Taurum symbolae et taliaque / et aliaque erat
> et cetera, pro quo mendose novi habent codices:
> Talia apud Taurum symbola et alia quae erant.
> Ego, ne litteram quidem ullam immutans ex vetusto, lego sic:
> Tales apud Taurum taliaque erant
> et cetera."[105]

Poliziano similarly confirms the adulteration of Gellius's works in the 47th chapter, "Cresphontes." Poliziano discovered, by examining older manuscripts, that a quotation of Euripides which appeared in *Attic Nights* VI.3 had been incorrectly copied ("Verisculos autem hos Euripidi mendosos habemus in vulgatis agellianis [A Gellianis] codicibus, quos ipsi nunc ex vestustis emendatos adiecimus").[106] In both instances, Poliziano demonstrates not only his interest in rehabilitating Gellius's works, and, by extension, his legacy as a scholar, but also the philological method that set him apart from Valla and many of his contemporaries: locating and establishing the oldest version of a manuscript and, based on its age and proximity to the original,

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[104] Gellius, *Attic Nights*, vol 1, 184; Poliziano, *Miscellaneorum centuria secunda*, 67. In their transcription of the unfinished codex, Branca and Stochi does not separate "Agellius" into the initial and capitalized surname, perhaps in an effort to faithfully reproduce the text as it appeared in its handwritten form. The corresponding notes and textual references, however, point clearly to Aulus Gellius and his *Notctes Atticae*.
[105] Poliziano, *Miscellaneorum centuria secunda*, 74.
[106] Poliziano, *Miscellaneorum centuria secunda*, 85.

affirming that version as the most correct.[107] This method, as Anthony Grafton notes, is one that Poliziano developed from Aulus Gellius.[108]

Though ultimately their methodologies in establishing authorities differed, the aspirations of Valla and Poliziano in these collections of philological studies is the same. Valla relied on a selection of examples from classical Roman texts, his own impeccable knowledge of Latin, and common sense, in order to purge the written Latin used by his contemporaries (and future students) and the manuscript tradition of clear errors that were not only contrary to proper usage, but also degraded the works of the great authors. Poliziano's goal was the same, as his treatment of Gellius in the second *centuria* of the *Miscellanea* demonstrates: to restore texts and authors to their proper glory by privileging the oldest and, thus, most authoritative manuscripts as the bases of his emendations. One cannot overlook, then, the opportunities open to Poliziano thanks to the time and culture in which he found himself. While Valla's access to a variety of reliable manuscripts was limited, waiting, in vain, for the official establishment of the Vatican Library, Poliziano's philology benefitted exponentially from the patronage and scholarship of Lorenzo de' Medici, granting Poliziano access to a wealth of materials which he was able to read, handle, and verify, as he declares in the prefatory letter[109]:

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[107] Grafton, "On the Scholarship of Politian and its Context,"162. Grafton contends that such a use of sources, that is "to compare and evaluate sources in a historical way" and to "follow the most authoritative source, which in most cases simply meant the oldest one," was what particularly differentiated Poliziano from his predecessors. Poliziano's method of collating texts, deciding which manuscripts derived from an earlier, incorrect version, and, as a result, eliminating them from consideration as an authority, is essentially the philological method employed today (Grafton, 162-163).

[108] Grafton, "On the Scholarship of Politian and its Context,"170. This method of accepting the oldest versions of texts as the most accurate and, thus, the authority upon which to rely, was not without its flaws for both Poliziano and Gellius. Grafton cites the example of how Gellius "defended a reading in Cicero's fifth oration *In Verrem* in part because he had found it so written in 'a copy of unimpeachable fidelity, because it was the result of Tiro's careful scholarship.'" Unfortunately, notes Grafton, "Gellius's Tironian manuscript—like the other manuscripts by authors or members of their households which Gellius and his contemporaries lavished money upon—was almost certainly a forgery" (170n).

[109] See Grafton, *Joseph Scaliger*, 13-15.

"nec autem, quos alii tantum citaverint, ipsorum opera temporibus interciderint, sed quorum nosmetipsi thesauros tractavimus, quorum sumus per literas peregrinati, quanquam et vetustas codicum et nomismatum fides, et in aes aut in marmore incisae antiquitates quae tu nobis Laurenti suppeditasti, plurimum etiam praeter librorum varietatem, nostris commentationibus suffragantur."[110]

The sources available for Poliziano to consult thanks to Lorenzo de' Medici's liberality, including a copious selection of old manuscripts, ancient coins, and examples of texts inscribed in bronze and marble, appear almost an embarassment of riches. It seems therefore that in addition to his philological practice, that which truly distinguishes Poliziano from his literary forebear was the overwhelmingly favorable circumstances of textual scholarship in the second half of the *Quattrocento*, which afforded his interventions within the *Miscellanea* a higher level of authenticity and sophistication.[111] Thus, Valla's literary examinations which had suffered from limitations beyond the scholar's control, were, like the corrupted manuscripts of Gellius's *Attic Nights*, in dire need of a champion. Poliziano assumed that role, namely that of the *grammaticus* who would continue the work begun by Valla in the *Elegantiae*, correcing the works of past authors and purging them of their faults, all with that same eye towards purification and perfection.

[110] Poliziano, *Opera omnia*, 216.

[111] Such is Grafton's position in his article on the scholarship of Poliziano: "It was Politian's passionate need for rigour and completeness that enabled him to surpass his predecessors. For it led him to study many textual traditions; hence he found that there were many instances where later manuscripts were derived from extant earlier ones. And the genealogical criticism of sources which he had established for the myth of Cadmus enabled him to see the descent of manuscripts as a particular case of a general rule about sources-that they should be weighed rather than counted up and that derivative ones should be ignored. No previous scholar had even come close to formulating the set of critical principles which Politian considered to be generally valid… When he found what seemed to him to be corrupt passages in recent manuscripts or printed texts of classical writings, he did not try to emend them by conjecture. He went back to the oldest sources - that is, to the oldest manuscripts" (Grafton, "On the Scholarship of Politian and its Context," 164-165).

Conclusion

Master in Greek and Latin languages, commentator on philosophy, legal scholar, historian, and textual archaeologist – were these roles, indicated by the literary analyses of the *Miscellanea*, truly within the purview of the philologist as conceived by Angelo Poliziano? The conception of the *grammaticus*, which Poliziano delineates in what Paul Colilli declares to be his "manifesto of philology," the *Lamia*, appears to indicate that these were precisely the areas of expertise expected of the philologist, and, thus, of Poliziano himself.[1] In this *praelectio* to a course on Aristotle's *Prior Analytics* for the academic year of 1492, Poliziano offers the first cohesive definition of who the *grammaticus*, or philologist, was in the *Quattrocento*:

> Grammaticorum enim sunt hae partes, ut omne scriptorum genus, poetas, historicos, oratores, philosophos, medicos, iureconsultos excutiant atque enarrent. Nostra aetas, parum perita rerum verterum, nimis brevi gyro grammaticum sepsit. At apud antiquos olim tantum auctoritatis hic ordo habuit ut censores essent et iudices scriptorum omnium soli grammatici, quos ob id etiam criticos vocabant, sic ut non versus modo (ita enim Quintilianus ait) 'censoria quadam virgula notare, sed libros etiam qui falso viderentur inscripti tanquam subditicios submovere familia permiserint sibi, quin auctores etiam quos vellent aut in ordinem redigerent aut omnino eximerent numero…nec aliud inde mihi nomen postulo quam grammatici. Hanc mihi, rogo, appellationem nemo invideat, quam semidocti quoque aspernantur ceu vilem nimis et sordidam."[2]

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[1] Colilli, Paul, *Poliziano's Science of Tropes*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1989), 134. Christopher Celenza defends the translation of "grammaticus" as "philologist," contending that though "it may seem a leap to translate" this term in such a manner, "the translation seems justified, given the modern resonances of the words 'grammarian' and 'philologist.'" Moreover, within the *Lamia*, Poliziano "distinguishes the word *grammaticus* from *grammatista*, leaning on Quintilian and Suetonius's *De grammaticis et rhetoribus*…The latter word, *grammatista*, is the word properly used to denote either an elementary grammar teacher or someone who has not yet attained the level of the *grammaticus*. Second, and more important, is Poliziano's description of the *grammaticus*: philologists do it all" (Celenza, Christopher, "Poliziano's *Lamia* in Context," in Poliziano, Angelo, *Angelo Poliziano's Lamia*, ed. Christopher Celenza, [Leiden, NL: Brill, 2010], 40).

[2] Poliziano, Angelo, *Angelo Poliziano's Lamia*, ed. and trans. Christopher Celenza, (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2010), 244-246. "Indeed, the functions of philologists are such that they examine and explain in detail every category of writes – poets, historians, orators, philosophers, medical doctors, and jurisconsults. Our age, knowing little about antiquity, has fenced the philologist in, within an exceedingly small circle. But among the ancients, once, this class of men had so much authority that philologists alone were the censors and critics of all writers. It was on this account that philologists were called 'critics,' so that (and this is what Quintilian says), 'they allowed themselves the liberty not only of annotating verses with a censorious mark in the text, but also of removing as non-canonical members of the family. Indeed they

Such a definition of the *grammaticus* or philologist is striking on account of the authority this figure once held within society and his similarities to the characterization of the ancient orator. Though in Poliziano's day this figure has been relegated to the classroom, tasked solely with considerations on seemingly inconsequential questions of grammar, Poliziano stresses that the philologist was once one of the leading intellectuals, and even citizens, of the ancient world.

In quoting the passage from Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, Poliziano further emphasizes that the influence of the *grammaticus* was felt well beyond the halls of academia. It was precisely this figure who was integral in establishing the intellectual culture of his society, in part by promoting a canon of authors to read and emulate.[3] Poliziano does not claim for himself the same level of authority once held by the *grammaticus* ("Hanc mihi, rogo, appellationem nemo invideat, quam semidocti quoque aspernantur ceu vilem nimis et sordidam"), yet, as evidenced by his own literary output, it is clear that he, too, was interested in promoting certain authors and literary trends in favor of others and instrumental in developing the intellectual culture of late 15th century Florence.

The analysis in this study of his earlier Italian poetry bears this out. Though written long before Poliziano had begun to articulate the responsibilities of the *grammaticus*, he nonetheless carried out some of these duties of cultural promotion in composing the *Stanze per la giostra* and *Fabula d'Orfeo*. The attention in both texts to the pastoral genre, its authors and themes, for

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even allowed themselves to categorize those authors that they deemed worthy or even to remove some all together.' …On this account I lay claim to no other name than that of the philologist. I ask that no one envy me this name, which the half-educated scorn, as if it were something base and dirty" (Celenza's translation, 245-247).

[3] Poliziano quotes Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* I.IV.3-4 in which the ancient rhetoric master writes of the *grammatici* that "quo quidem ita severe sunt usi veteres grammatici, ut non versus modo censoria quadam virgula notare et libros, qui falsi viderentur inscripti, tanquam subditos summovere familia permiserint sibi, sed auctores alios in ordinem redegerint, alios omnino exemerint numero" (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria of Quintilian*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler, [London: William Heinemann, 1921], 62); Celenza, "Poliziano's *Lamia* in Context," 40).

example, no doubt contributed to the prominence of this genre in the poetry and especially the Italian epic poetry of the sixteenth century. Poliziano, too, benefitted from such a method of poetic creation and interpretation: by consistently linking his own lyric with the words of ancient authorities, he placed himself and his poetry in a continuum that stretched from the ancient world to modern day Florence. The Latin poetry of the *Silvae* continued this enterprise. The connections established between Homer, patronage, and Lorenzo de' Medici as both poet and patron in *Ambra* as well as the lengthy survey of poets, extending from the mythical Orpheus to the *tre corone* and Lorenzo de' Medici, in *Nutricia* underscore Poliziano's endeavor to create an ideal literary canon that is inclusive of Italian authors and promotes both his patron and himself as worthy additions to that list.

Equally noteworthy in Poliziano's defense of the *grammaticus* is the contention that this figure is equipped to investigate and explain in detail ("excutiant atque enarrent") every class of literature. By emphasizing the philologist's encyclopedic knowledge and ability to approach topics from all viewpoints, Poliziano calls to mind the description of that talent particular to accomplished ancient orators, that is, as noted in Cicero's *De oratore,* "de omni re proposita in utramque partem…copiosissime dicere."[4] Invoking the figure of the orator in conjunction with that of the philologist in turn recalls the memory of Lorenzo Valla. Though never as explicit as Poliziano in providing a job description for himself and those like him, Valla nonetheless offered a rough sketch of who he was and the roles he assumed as a *grammaticus* and interpreter of philosophical or theological texts in his published works.

As already seen in the *Elegantiae*, Valla privileged the same skills of textual exegesis that characterize Poliziano's *grammaticus*, namely the examination and explication of textual

[4] Cicero, Marcus Tullius, *De oratore libri tres*, ed. Augustus S. Wilkins (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1888), 223. This talent, notes the interlocutors within the *De oratore* had been co-opted by philosophers.

inaccuracies, errors, and enigmas. In the preface to the second book of the *Elegantiae*, he rebuffs the accusation that his commentaries on questions of correct Latin in all categories of literature focus on topics that even the ancients did not consider to be "digna memoratu." Valla declares instead that he does not see "cur aliquis de grammatica ac lingua Latina componens, haec suo officio minora existimet, quibus nihil sane est in grammatica et Latinitate praestantius."[5] Through the example of his own works, in particular his oration *On the Donation of Constantine*, Valla further elaborates on his role as an intellectual in society, again utilizing language that Poliziano would later recall in articulating his formal definition of the *grammaticus*.

Valla opens his seminal oration disputing the veracity of the Donation of Constantine with the assertion that he, too, has not limited himself to one area of study or author in his previous works: "Plures a me libri compluresque emissi sunt in omni fere doctrinarum genere, in quibus quod a nonnullis magnisque et longo iam evo probatis auctoribus dissentio."[6] Moreover, Valla approaches these areas of learning, texts, and authors, with the attitude of the literary critic, in that he writes "ut errorem a mentibus hominum convellam, ut eos a vitiis sceleribusque vel admonendo vel increpando summoveam."[7] This same declaration demonstrates as well Valla's civic engagement. Censoring texts for their historical or linguistic inaccuracies also censors the mistaken philosophical or theological doctrines that they support. As a result, by purging the minds of men of these errors, Valla deters his fellow citizens from falling into vice. Valla thus epitomized the philologist that Poliziano describes in the *Lamia*, for he was, in essence, one who

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[5] Valla, Lorenzo, *Laurentii Vallensis De Linguae Latinae Elegantia*, ed. and trans. Santiago López Moreda, (Cáceres, ES: Universidad de Extremadura, 1999), 184.
[6] Valla, Lorenzo, *On The Donation of Constantine*, ed. and trans. G.W. Bowersock, (Cambridge, MA: The I Tatti Renaissance Library, Harvard University, 2007), 2. Bowersock provides the translation of this passage as, "Many, many books have issued from my pen in almost every area of learning, and in these I have disagreed with some great authorities of long established reputation" (3).
[7] "But to eradicate error from people's minds, to remove persons from vices and crimes by admonition and reproof" (Valla, *On the Donation of Constantine*, 6-7).

was omnivorous in his studies, who studied extant manuscripts of ancient texts with an eye towards a detailed analysis and explanation of the language, and who viewed emending these errors as the actions of a prominent figure in society concerned with promoting particular viewpoints that would benefit the culture and the public good.

Another trait shared by the ideal philologist, which both Poliziano and Valla strove to reach during their respective literary careers, was the effort to calibrate the balance between the encyclopedic knowledge of the philologist and the rhetorical skills of the orator. Chronologically tracing the literary output of Poliziano and Valla shows how these two skills became more evenly balanced in later works. Valla in his early treatises tended more towards rhetoric with minor tangents into philology, as was the case in his *De vero bono* and *De professione religiosorum*. In these dialogues, the focus was on the methods of argumentation which, at times, were bolstered by taking recourse to the tools of the *grammaticus*, such as citing classical authorities who expressed similar viewpoints or unearthing the etymologies and historical developments of certain Latin terms. Valla's later texts, however, demonstrate a more even weight between Quintilian-inspired rhetoric and textual emendation. The *Elegantiae*, for example, are indicative of this shift from oratorical argumentation to philological exegesis. In the first preface to the *Elegantiae*, Valla establishes the premise or argument of the whole work, namely the primacy of the Latin language in antiquity and its decline in recent years. His philological investigations and corrections of current Latin usage serve to confirm this viewpoint. Valla also builds on this premise in the subsequent prefaces of the text, and again bolsters his polemical pronouncements by means of his philological investigations. In the fourth book, Valla provocatively declares that he who is ignorant of Latin eloquence is not capable of discussing theological matters ("at qui ignarus eloquentiae est, hunc indignum prorsus qui de theologia

loquatur, existimo").[8] He later affirms the validity of this assertion with investigations into the language of theology, such as Boethius' linguistically incorrect and theologically dishonest use of *personae* in VI.34.

Poliziano demonstrates a similar development in calibrating the balance between philology and rhetoric, though his is the inverse of Valla's. The early vernacular poetry of the 1470s, marked by its *contaminatio* or blending of authorities, reflects Poliziano's primary interest in philology. Poliziano's evocations of past authors' words and works in the *Stanze per la giostra* and the *Fabula d'Orfeo*, for example, served a double purpose: these literary references added to the aesthetic value of his verse and augmented the tone, characterizations, and generic conventions of his vernacular poetry. Indeed, Poliziano expected his audience to be astute enough to identify the many references and locate them within their correct literary and historical context. In doing so, this ideal reader of his poetry was able to draw greater meaning from the subtexts contained in Poliziano's verse.

Later poetry expanded upon this interest in philology, though it adhered more to the principles of the discipline, and also signaled a greater interest in rhetoric. In the components of the *Silvae*, Poliziano deployed particular words or phrases that were not just evocative of ancient and contemporary authorities, but were clear citations that the reader (or listener) was expected to recognize and link to the poet's verse. The influence of rhetoric appears in that he utilized these references in hopes of convincing the audience of his *praelectio* of a specific point, such as the genius of a particular ancient author (Homer in the *Ambra*) or the nature of poetic inspiration and a canon of authors to be studied (*Nutricia*). The *Miscellanea* is evidence of a stronger oratorical sensibility that works in concert with the encyclopedic knowledge of the philologist.

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[8] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 408.

No doubt the ability to form persuasive arguments that are substantiated by philological proof or to create philologically motivated verse that sets the cultural trends would be considered highly desirable skills to those in power. Indeed, the princes who employed Poliziano and Valla benefitted considerably from their literary talents and often utilized them to further their own political agendas. Valla's oration *On the Donation of Constantine* certainly dovetailed nicely with the political interests of his then patron, Alfonso V of Aragon. Holding court in Sicily, the king wished to expand his claim to Naples, thus putting him at odds with the papacy, as this city was held at the time by Pope Eugenius IV. To disprove the Donation of Constantine, that is, the very document that granted the papacy the authority to hold land, was in essence to disprove Eugenius's claim on Naples. Valla and his oration became the best political tools wielded by Alfonso to achieve his goal.[9]

Poliziano was also embroiled in the political struggles of his patron, Lorenzo de' Medici, though he was often relegated to promoting the Medici agenda within the cultural domain, and not the political.[10] The *Stanze per la giostra* not only praised Lorenzo as an ideal prince and patron of Florence, but also elevated him and his younger brother, Giuliano, to the status of mythical heroes. As already indicated, the *contaminatio* of Poliziano's vernacular poetry and the learned imitation of his later Latin poetry regularly included allusions to Lorenzo's own verse, reminding his readers of his patron's poetic skill and of his rightful place among the ancient

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[9] See Camporeale, Salvatore, "Lorenzo Valla's 'Oratio' on the Pseudo-Donation of Constantine: Dissent and Innovation in Early Renaissance Humanism," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57:1 [Jan., 1996] 9, Bowersock, vi-vii, and Copenhaver, Brian and Charles B. Schmitt, *Renaissance Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 210.

[10] Francesco Caruso contends, however, that some of Poliziano's literary works were basically pro-Medici political propaganda. The text commemorating the death of Giuliano de' Medici, the *Pactianae coniurationis commentarium* (1478) was "arguably the key work in the propaganda campaign that Lorenzo was orchestrating against pope Sixtus IV, who was directly involved in the conspiracy that led to the assassination of Giuliano" (Caruso, Francesco, "On the Shoulders of *Grammatica*: John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon* and Poliziano's *Lamia*," in *Angelo Poliziano's Lamia*, 49).

authorities and great contemporary poets. Those instances in the preface and certain chapters of the *Miscellanea* in which Poliziano underscored his ability to consult ancient codices in his patron's library further emphasized Lorenzo's intellectual acumen and his liberality as a patron of the arts. Even the transition to the study of Aristotelian texts indicated in the *Miscellanea* (and later the *Lamia*) in the years leading up to Lorenzo's death had political motivations. Christopher Celenza maintains that by this point in the early 1490s, Ficinian Neo-platonism, with which the Laurentian circle had long been associated, was too esoteric for the intellectual elite of Florence, resulting in parodies or outright suspicion.[11] Poliziano's focus on Aristotle thus had the added benefit of distancing himself and, by extension, his patron, from Ficino's increasingly problematic philosophy.

Though these examples show how Poliziano and Valla's writings advanced the agendas of their patrons, this does not detract from the fact that these very texts were equally an expression of the philologists' own ideological viewpoints. Valla throughout all the works under review in this study, regardless of genre or topic, was engaged in a battle to demystify interpretations of Latin perpetrated by inept scholars (or even scheming theologians) and the theological teachings engendered by these unnecessary muddles of the language. The demystification, or the purification, of Latin was certainly the doctrine that guided the *Ars grammatica* and its companion text, the *Elegantiae*, in whose chapters Valla advocated particular grammatical structures and definitions that were typically contrary to the more convoluted meanings in use during his day. Valla's refutation of Boethius's conception of "personae," and its resulting theological ramifications, is indicative of his preference for an understanding of

[11] Celenza, "Poliziano's *Lamia* in Context," 25-26.

Latin that is rooted in a concrete textual and historical tradition.[12] Even the *De professione religiosorum* proceeds from this conviction: Valla's extensive knowledge of Latin etymologies negates the notion that members of monastic orders deserved greater heavenly rewards than laymen due solely to their choice of vocation, as the straightforward meaning of the vows professed by monastic orders did not guarantee such recompense.

In reviewing his poetic texts, it appears that Poliziano, too, was in the process of developing a personal philosophy of poetry throughout his career. His use of the pastoral genre and setting in the *Stanze per la giostra* and the *Fabula d'Orfeo* was both revolutionary and particular to this poet. Not simply a beautiful landscape in which both love and danger reign, the pastoral genre as conceived by Poliziano becomes an atemporal space from which all poetry springs and which, due to its location outside of history, can contain allusions to different authorities – ancient and modern – without the fear of anachronism. Thus, in the *Stanze*, the countryside surrounding 15th-century Florence becomes a new Arcadia or Mount Ida, while in the *Orfeo*, the ancient genre of the *satyr* play can coexist and interact with the modern, Christian mystery play. A second and related poetic philosophy, articulated in both Poliziano's poetry and philological interventions, posits that poetry is the source of all knowledge. Such is the case in the components of the *Silvae*. Again locating his poetry in a pastoral and, in this instance, pre-historic realm, *Ambra* establishes Homer as more than a gifted poet: he, much like Prometheus, is the figure who brings the wisdom of the gods to men. Within Homer's epics, the origins of all disciplines can be found, including the most sophisticated area of learning, philosophy. Poliziano further stresses the primacy of poetry in *Nutricia*, suggesting that poetry is the divine gift which civilizes and ennobles men – attributes that philosophy lacks.

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[12] Valla, *Elegantiae*, 742.

Thus, in establishing poetry's preeminence over other disciplines, particularly philosophy, Poliziano further underscores the association between the poet and the philologist. Like his description of the ideal *grammaticus*, the poet, as evidenced by Poliziano's own poetry, is one of those select few who demonstrates an encyclopedic knowledge. In addition to sharing the positive attributes of the *grammaticus*, however, the poet, too, has a tendency to suffer from the same prejudice of inadequacy that plagued the Renaissance philologist. This devaluation of the self as a poet comes across in both Poliziano's Italian and Latin poetry. In the dedicatory letter to the *Orfeo*, Poliziano begs pardon of Carlo Canale, his dedicatee, for the play which, due to its hasty composition, he has deemed unworthy of his particular poetic gifts. Similarly, Poliziano stresses his inadequacy in the dedicatory letter to *Nutricia* ("Deinceps autem plura melioraque forsitan accipies…cui quidem et ipsi cottidie a me, si non par gratia, certe aliqua tamen, pro virili parte, scribendo saltem beneque et sentiendo et eloquendo refertur") and within the poem itself in the context of paying tribute to his nurse, poetry: "Quas, rogo, quas referam grates, quae praemia tantae / altrici soluisse queam, nec fulminis auctor / nec thyrsi sceptrique potens?"[13] As a philologist, however, the charge of inadequacy comes from outside sources, namely from the cultural elite of Florence who at best did not consider Poliziano capable of treating the topics contained in his *Miscellanea* and at worst viewed the scholar with outright contempt for daring to accuse the ancient (and more recent) scholars of textual corruption. Poliziano's words in the prefatory letter to the *Miscellanea*, as well as correspondences included in his letters, underscored this precarious position: in being the sole voice willing to admit to textual corruptions in the works of some of the greatest ancient minds, Poliziano opened himself to the wrath of his contemporaries who were, by insinuation, implicit in perpetuating these corruptions.

[13] From the dedicatory letter to Antoniotto Gentili and lines 23 to 25 of *Nutricia* in Poliziano, Angelo, *Silvae*, ed. and trans. Charles Fantazzi, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 110-112.

It was only due to the patronage of Lorenzo de' Medici that Poliziano was able to largely ignore the enmity directed at him by the reigning scholastic figures in Florence. The death of his patron in April of 1492, however, created an uncomfortable and dangerous environment for Poliziano.[14]

Such a precarious position in society, due to an unpopular ideology, appears to be common to the philologist. Valla, too, suffered attacks of a more serious nature than backbiting gossip for his views. His polemics with other humanists of the day, as well as his attacks on commonly accepted Church doctrine in various literary works, like early versions of the *De vero bono* and the *Elegantiae*, all contributed to sending him before the Inquisition in 1444. It was only thanks to the intervention of his patron, Alfonso V, that he was able to avoid greater misfortune.[15] Poliziano's fate was far worse, precisely due to the bad luck of finding himself in opposition to the leading intellectual figures of Florence in the early 1490s without the protection of his patron. The historian Piero di Marco Parenti declared that Poliziano "passò di questa vita" at the end of September 1494, "con tanta infamia e publica vituperazione quanta homo sostenere potessi."[16] Though Parenti relates that the cause of Poliziano's death was "malattia di febbre," recent scholarship suggests more nefarious causes: he, like his close friend Pico della Mirandola two months later, was poisoned by arsenic.[17] Whether this was by his own hand or the work of an unknown enemy will remain a mystery, but it certainly demonstrates that in the late-*Quattrocento* the practice of ideological philology had its price.

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[14] See Caruso, 47-51.
[15] See Moreda, Santiago López, "Introduction," in Valla, Lorenzo, *Laurentii Vallensis De Linguae Latinae Elegantia*, ed. and trans. Santiago López Moreda, (Cáceres, ES: Universidad de Extremadura, 1999), 15 and Copenhaver and Schmitt, 212-213.
[16] Parenti, Piero di Marco, *Storia fiorentina*, vol. 1, edited by Andrea Matucci, (Florence: Leo S. Olschki Editore, 1994), 100.
[17] Orvieto, Paolo, *Poliziano e l'ambiente mediceo*, (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2009), 142.

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