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The *Transformation* of Attitudes towards Ancient Latin Authors and the Legacy of Lorenzo Valla¹

During the fifteenth century many ancient Latin authors were brought back into circulation and revalued, especially in the schools, where they were used to teach the Latin language. This paper will focus on the influence of the newly discovered Latin texts in the teaching of Latin in fifteenth-century Italian schools and universities: in particular, my purpose is to underline the decisive role played by Lorenzo Valla's linguistic theories in promoting this *transformation* of Latin teaching. Valla's linguistic works, namely the *Elegantie*, the *Antidotum in Facium*, and the *Raudensiane note*,² were published by the author himself in the middle of the century (around 1448) and represent a turning point in the approach to classical texts and their use in the schools by grammarians, teachers, and professors.³

As is well known, medieval grammarians based their Latin learning on two pillars. The first one is represented by the grammatical schoolbooks inherited from late antiquity, such as Donatus' *Ars minor* and *Ars maior*, which were recast in an easier schoolbook known as *Ianua* and used to study the morphology of Latin, along with Priscian's *Institutiones grammatices* for syntax.⁴

1 I wish to thank the organizers of the conference "Beyond Reception" for inviting me to participate in this stimulating initiative, where I have had the opportunity to benefit very much from the papers, questions, suggestions, and simple conversations that I took part in. Thanks to all the speakers and listeners, the present paper has been very much improved from the version I read then. Of course, I am the only one responsible for what I have written. In order to facilitate the reading of the Latin texts, I have normalized the orthography of the medieval and humanist sources I have quoted.

2 The *Antidotum in Facium* was edited by M. Regoliosi (Padua: Antenore, 1981) and the *Raudensiane note* by G. M. Corrias, Edizione nazionale delle opere di Lorenzo Valla, Opere linguistiche (Florence: Polistampa, 2007), whereas the *Elegantie* are still awaiting a critical edition, although one has been announced as imminent by M. Regoliosi and C. Marsico: see M. Regoliosi, "Per l'edizione delle *Elegantie*. Proposte metodologiche," in *Pubblicare il Valla*, ed. M. Regoliosi, Edizione nazionale delle opere di Lorenzo Valla, Strumenti (Florence: Polistampa, 2008), 297–304.

3 Although the two *Antidota in Poggium* also deal with linguistic subjects, Valla himself did not include them in the series of his 'grammatical' works. On the *Antidota in Poggium* and the polemics between Valla and Poggio, see Lorenzo Valla, *La prima apologia contro Poggio Bracciolini*, ed. Ari Wesseling, Respublica literaria Neerlandica, 4 (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1978), 25–39.

4 In the extensive bibliography on the subject, see at least L. Holtz, *Donat et la tradition de l'enseignement grammatical. Étude sur l'Ars Donati et sa diffusion (IV^e–IX^e siècle) et édition critique* (Paris: CNRS, 1981), which is still useful; and *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300–1475*, ed. R. Copeland and I. Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 82–103.

The second pillar was a selection of a few Latin authors that had to be read, explained, and commented on during classes. Sometimes the only texts that were used were the four that constituted the well-known *quadriga*: Cicero and Sallust for prose, and Virgil and Terence for poetry, with the study of Virgil's and Terence's poems often being accompanied by the late-antique commentaries of Servius and Donatus. Teachers also read the satires of Persius and Juvenal, the *Thebais* of Statius (and sometimes Lucan's epic poem), the *Consolatio* of Boethius, and the anonymous *Disticha Catonis*.⁵

At the highest educational level among the humanists, this canon began to be questioned during the fourteenth century in Italy, where a new interest in Latin authors outside the curriculum manifested itself. Thus Petrarch (1304–1374) was proud of the manuscript of Livy that he possessed, and he also studied Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia* with great care. In Florence, Boccaccio (1313–1375) was one of the first who had the opportunity to read Ovid's *Ibis* and the pseudo-Virgilian *Priapeia*. His copies of Varro's *De lingua Latina* and the rare works of Tacitus and Apuleius came from the library of Monte Cassino. Finally, Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406) collected manuscripts of rare Latin poets, such as the most ancient witness containing the works of Tibullus, one of the three manuscripts that preserve Catullus, and Cicero's letter collection, *Ad familiares*.⁶

In the first decades of the Quattrocento, Poggio Bracciolini, a pupil of Salutati, brought back into circulation many Latin works that had been neglected during the Middle Ages (i.e., Lucretius, some plays of Plautus, the whole *Institutio* of Quintilian, many speeches of Cicero, Silius Italicus's *Punica*, Statius's *Silvae*, Columella's agricultural treatise, Petronius's novel, etc.). He discovered these works in the churches and monasteries of modern-day Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, and Great Britain, where they were often preserved in only one manuscript.⁷

Nevertheless, the curiosity, the discoveries, and the efforts of these wise and cultivated men were unable to broaden the school curriculum. As Robert Black has masterfully shown in his works on the history of fifteenth-century education, Boethius's *Consolatio* was still one of the most important schoolbooks for learning Latin in Tuscany during the first part of the fifteenth century, and for the most part Latin continued to be taught with the help of the very same school books and anthologies that

5 Of course during the Middle Ages, there were also some particularly cultivated people who showed curiosity for other Latin writers, but these cases were isolated and they had no impact on the curriculum in the schools, which remained stable for centuries.

6 See B. L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padua: Antenore, 1963), 129–209, and the third chapter, entitled “La biblioteca e l'officina di Salutati,” in *Coluccio Salutati e l'invenzione dell'Umanesimo*, ed. T. De Robertis, G. Tanturli, and S. Zamponi, Catalogue of the exhibition held in Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 2 November 2008 – 30 January 2009 (Florence: Mandragora, 2008), 219–363.

7 About the discoveries of Poggio, the bibliography is endless, but a good summary can be found in L. D. Reynolds and N. G. Wilson, *Scribes and Scholars: A Guide to the Transmission of Greek and Latin Literature*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 136–40.

had been used in the Middle Ages. Thus, despite the fact that the Italian humanists around the year 1440 had access to more or less the same *corpus* of Latin texts that we have today, the medieval curriculum continued to dictate the way Latin was taught.⁸

If this is the situation we encounter until the middle of the fifteenth century, when did the school teachers at the highest level of Latin education or the university professors start to use a wider selection of Latin authors in their classes?

Fast-forwarding to the humanist production of school texts at the end of the Quattrocento, we note that the inclusion of many, if not all, Latin writers into the school curriculum has, at this point, been accomplished. This can be seen from the list of authors that a humanist who taught in the 1470s at the University of Rome (the so-called *Studium Urbis*), Domizio Calderini (1446–1478), treated in his classes. The information comes from a letter written on 20 July 1478 by Angelo Calimaco, a pupil of Calderini, and sent to his brother Orlando on the occasion of the death of Calderini:

Interpretatus est Marcum Valerium Martialem, qui propter antiquitatem et eius subtilitatem ignorabatur, in cuius libros ita erudite atque acute scripsit ut eo eruditior atque acutior videatur. Interpretatus est Iuvenalem, opus profecto difficile, multis erroribus et amfractibus plenum, quod commentariis suis tam mite et placidum fecit quam ovem. Taceo Sylvas Papinii et Sylvium Italicum, quae cum maxima omnium attentione, ut in ceteris operibus, professus est. Omitto divinam Aeneida, quam una cum Quintiliani Declamationibus legit, in quorum altero Homerum, poetarum principem, in altero Ciceronem magna ex parte declaravit. Praetereo ipsius Ciceronis Oratorem, Heroides Ovidii, Propertium, in quibus artificium et magnam amoris vim ostendit. Sileo divinum illud Ciceronis opus De officiis, quod tanta arte et doctrina monstravit, ut eius ingenium et in philosophia non mediocris eruditio tandem eluxerit. Legit et publice et privatim Suetonium deditque auditoribus nonnulla dictata se digna.⁹

(Calderini commented on Martial, who was unknown because of his antiquity and subtlety. His comments are written in such a learned and sharp way that he seems to be more learned and sharper than Martial himself. He commented on Juvenal, whose work is certainly difficult and

⁸ See R. Black and G. Pomaro, *Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy in Italian Medieval and Renaissance Education. Schoolbooks and Their Glosses in Florentine Manuscripts* (Florence: SISMEL, 2001) (data confirmed for the Abruzzo area by G. Abbamonte, "Su alcuni codici boeziani della Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli 'Vittorio Emanuele III'," *Boezio e Gregorio Magno tra Antichità e Medioevo*, ed. M. Špelič, OFM and P. Limoncini, Proceedings of the First International Symposium, 31 March – 2 April 2005 (Ljubljana: Brat Frančišek, and Rapallo: Studium Rapallense, 2007), 99–140); R. Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and R. Black, *Education and Society in Florentine Tuscany: Teachers, Pupils and Schools, c. 1250–1500*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

⁹ Preserved in Rome, Biblioteca Alessandrina, MS. 239, f. 31^{r-v}, the letter was edited by R. Malaboti, *Domizio Calderini (Secolo XV). Contributo alla storia dell'Umanesimo* (Milan: Tip. dell'Istituto Marchiondi, 1919), 59–63, and cited by M. Campanelli and A. Pincelli, "La lettura dei classici nello *Studium Urbis* tra Umanesimo e Rinascimento," in *Storia della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia de "La Sapienza"*, ed. L. Capo and M. R. Di Simone (Rome: Viella, 2000), 160.

full of errors and dangers, but his commentaries made him as mute and peaceful as a sheep. I shall not speak about Statius's *Silvae* and Silius Italicus, whose works he commented on in his classes with all the listeners paying the greatest attention, as always. I omit his discussion of the divine *Aeneid*, which he explained together with Quintilian's *Declamationes*. In the former he made evident the substantial presence of Homer, the prince of poets; in the latter, that of Cicero. I pass over the *Orator* of Cicero himself, Ovid's *Heroides*, and Propertius, where he made clear the skill of the poet and the great strength of his love. I shall not mention that famous work entitled *On Duties*, where Cicero showed such skill and knowledge that his philosophical attitude and unusual erudition shone out. Calderini commented on Suetonius both at the university and privately, and offered to his listeners some handouts, which were worthy of him.

From the list of authors mentioned by Callimaco, we can draw the conclusion that Calderini focused on poets and rhetoricians, and that he almost exclusively commented on authors who were *not* included in the medieval curriculum (Martial, Statius's *Silvae*, Silius Italicus, Quintilian's speeches, Ovid's *Heroides*, Propertius, and Suetonius).

The enlargement of the canon of the Latin authors studied in these classes is confirmed by the contemporary printed commentaries, which were often written by humanists for their students. Thus in 1482, Paolo Marsi (1440–1484) published in Venice a printed commentary on Ovid's *Fasti*, a didactic poem rarely studied during the Middle Ages.¹⁰ Marsi's teacher was the Roman humanist Pomponio Leto (1428–1498), a pupil of Valla's, who had reevaluated the *Fasti* because of his interests in the Roman calendar and commented on it in his classes.¹¹ In the preface to his commentary on the second book, Marsi admits that his printed commentary on Ovid's *Fasti* makes use of the notes taken by his pupils ("ab illis") during his class and confirms the strong link between teaching and printed commentaries:

At nullum pene profertur verbum quin ab illis omne protinus excipiat, excepta donum referent, relata in suum ordinem digeruntur. Ab illis deinde, siquid edituri sumus, labores nostros mutuamur et quo ordine a nobis omnia prolata sunt, eo quoque edenda esse ducimus.¹²

(Almost all the words that are expressed here come from my students, for they return these words to me as a gift, and once returned, they were put in order. Therefore, if we are ever

¹⁰ Except in the French school of Orléans, especially with Arnulf (late twelfth century), the Middle Ages did not pay too much attention to the *Fasti*: see A. Fritsen, *Antiquarian Voices. The Roman Academy and the Commentary Tradition on Ovid's Fasti* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2015), 1–28. On Marsi, see P. Pontari, "Marsi, Paolo," in *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 70 (Rome: Treccani, 2008), 741–44; and Fritsen, *Antiquarian Voices*, *passim*.

¹¹ See the manuscripts of the *Fasti* written and glossed by Leto, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 3264; and Fritsen, *Antiquarian Voices*, esp. 29–50.

¹² P. Marsus, *Comm. in Ovid. Fast. II* (Venice: B. de' Torti, 24.xii.1482), f. e6^v (ISTC io00170000). In the preface, Marsi adds, "At last I took up this teaching [scil. in Rome], and in the first year [scil. in 1474] I very assiduously interpreted the poems of Horace and Ovid's *Tristia*. The next year I taught before a crowd of listeners with great care and prudence that sublime work, the *Fasti*" (text translated by Fritsen, *Antiquarian Voices*, 34).

going to publish anything, we are borrowing our works from my students, and we believe that these works must be published in the same order in which they were explained by us.¹³

Marsi's didactic interest in Ovid's *Fasti* was not unique: in the same years the humanist Antonio Costanzi (1436–1490) at Fano (today in the Marche) wrote another commentary on the *Fasti*, printed in Rome in 1489, that was originally intended for use by his local pupils.¹⁴ Eventually, Merula published an edition of the *Fasti* in Venice in 1497, in which he united the two earlier commentaries. This edition was reprinted more than twenty times during the sixteenth century in many European countries.¹⁵

Another testimony of the pedagogical interest in 'new' Latin works is the *Punica* of Silius Italicus, one of the texts discovered by Poggio during the Council of Constance (1413–1418). Silius Italicus represents an important case study for both the manuscript and printed traditions that I will discuss again later.¹⁶

If we move from the realm of printing to that of manuscripts, where it is easier to find school documents produced by both teachers and students, we confirm that from the 1470s onwards, a vast range of Latin authors was regularly read and commented on in the highest level of Latin classes. Thus, for example, in the 1480s Politian lectured at the University of Florence and commented on Statius' *Silvae*, Persius, Virgil's *Georgics*, Ovid's *Letter of Sappho to Phaon*, the *Fasti*, etc. Although Politian had intended these commentaries for his classes and never published them, they are still extant¹⁷ and prove that the curriculum of Latin grammar and rhet-

¹³ The same link between teaching and printing is confirmed by another Roman humanist, Antonio Mancinelli (1452–1505), in the preface to his printed commentary on Virgil's *Bucolics* and *Georgics* (Rome: E. Silber, 20.x.1490) (ISTC iv00219500). The texts of Marsi and Mancinelli are discussed by Campanelli and Pincelli, "La lettura," 129 and 162. On Mancinelli, see *Antonio Mancinelli (1452–1505), pedagogo, grammatico e umanista*, ed. F. Lazzari, Quaderni della Biblioteca Comunale di Velletri, 10 (Velletri: Comune di Velletri, 2005).

¹⁴ (Rome: E. Silber, 24.x.1489) (ISTC io00175000). In the poem *Ad posteros*, Costanzi writes, "Nanque meus tantum potuit crevisse libellus / ut fieret cuius sarcina discipulo" (f. 1^v, vv. 9–10). On Costanzi's commentary on the *Fasti*, see F. Toscano, "Le redazioni manoscritte e stampate del commento di Antonio Costanzi ai Fasti di Ovidio," *Studi Umanistici Piceni* 31 (2011): 269–91; F. Toscano, *Il commento di Antonio Costanzi da Fano ai Fasti di Ovidio. Edizione critica del commento a Fast. I–III*, Ph.D. dissertation, Salerno, Università di Salerno, 2017; and Fritsen, *Antiquarian Voices*, *passim*.

¹⁵ (Venice: Johannes Tacuinus, 12.vi.1497) (ISTC io00176000). The sixteenth-century Italian reprints are listed in EDIT16.

¹⁶ Campanelli and Pincelli, "La lettura," 167, regarded Ovid's *Fasti* and Silius Italicus' *Punica* as "... le due epopee in versi della storia e della leggenda di Roma, autentiche miniere di notizie antiquarie ...".

¹⁷ Several commentaries of Politian have been published in the last forty years. See A. Poliziano, *Commento inedito all'epistola ovidiana di Saffo a Faone*, ed. E. Lazzeri, 2 vols., Studi e testi, 2 (Florence: Sansoni, 1971); A. Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Silvae di Stazio*, ed. L. Cesarini Martinelli, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Studi e testi, 5 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1978); A. Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Satire di Persio*, ed. L. Cesarini Martinelli, Istituto Nazionale di Studi

oric at the University of Florence included many Latin authors whose works had never been part of the medieval curricula.

Now if we have seen that until the middle of the fifteenth century, the canon of Latin authors remained the same one that had been used in the medieval schools, while the situation has dramatically changed at the end of the century, I shall try to narrow down the moment in time when this canon of Latin texts was actually broadened, and also to single out a person responsible for it. Although I am well aware of the fact that humanism was a large movement and that many people participated in renewing the medieval standards of Latin teaching, nevertheless I cannot help but point out how important Lorenzo Valla's grammatical works were for establishing a new and more liberal attitude towards Latin learning.¹⁸ In particular, in Valla's most important linguistic work, the *Elegantie*, we find not only practical suggestions, but also the theoretical justification that facilitated the learning of Latin grammar based on the study of all the possible Latin authors.

As is well known, the *Elegantie* is a work in six books, in which Valla focuses on many aspects of the Latin language (the meaning of simple words or of single sentences, the use and meaning of prepositions, syntactical problems, etc.). For every problem, Valla based his analyses and conclusions exclusively on passages taken from a very wide selection of Latin works written in the period between Plautus (second century BCE) and Boethius (sixth century CE), and he compared the results of these analyses with the rules and theories of the famous grammarians Donatus, Priscian, Servius, etc., whose works were commonly used as grammatical handbooks in the schools.

Through this method Valla often underlines polemically the differences he notes between a usage as it appears in the occurrences of actual Latin works and the rules stated in the grammar books. From this point of view, Valla can be regarded as the first to insist that the actual Latin *usus*, as demonstrated by the authors, must prevail over the rules formulated by the grammarians, which were often based on [ana]logical arguments rather than on the Latin works.¹⁹

sul Rinascimento, Studi e testi, 11 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1985); A. Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Georgiche di Virgilio*, ed. L. Castano Musicò, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Studi e testi, 18 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1990); and A. Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio*, ed. F. Lo Monaco, Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento, Studi e testi, 23 (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1991).

¹⁸ Of course I do not intend to undervalue the active role of Guarino da Verona's school at Ferrara or that of Vittorino da Feltre at Mantua, where the *humanae litterae* were taught with new methods that included the study of the Greek language, physical activities, and the performance of music and dance. However, my present paper focuses on Latin teaching, where the role of Valla's theories was essential.

¹⁹ On Valla's linguistic theories, see S. Gavinelli, "Le *Elegantie* di Lorenzo Valla: fonti grammaticali latine e stratificazione compositiva," *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 31 (1988): 205–57; M. Regoliosi, "Usus e ratio in Valla," in *Lorenzo Valla. La riforma della lingua e della logica*, ed. M. Regoliosi, Proceedings of the Congress of the Comitato nazionale 6^o centenario della nascita di Lorenzo Valla,

One of Valla's letters, sent in 1441 to Giovanni Tortelli, the future dedicatee of his *Elegantie*, presents a clear testimony to the authority that Valla grants to the "living voice" of the ancient sources. In this letter Valla explains to his friend that he will not publish the *Elegantie* until he has studied the texts of several Latin authors that so far he has not had a chance to read yet:

Nam forsitan alia quaedam aut adicerentur, aut mutarentur, aut tollerentur si libros quosdam qui restant mihi legendi legissem; quorum sunt duodecim comediae Plauti recenter inventae, Donatum in Terentium, cuius tantum Eunuchum vidi, Victorinus, Cornelius Tacitus, et siqui sunt alii, quos cum hic [scil. at Gaeta] non reperiam, ad vos venire decreveram, ut istic [scil. in Roma] illos percurrerem. Eis non lectis non existimo mihi opus publicandum: si non publicandum, ergo ne transcribendum quidem.²⁰

(Perhaps some parts could be implemented, some others changed or removed, if only I had the opportunity to read the works that I have still to read. Those are the twelve comedies of Plautus recently discovered, Donatus's commentary on Terence (of this I have seen only the part on the Eunuchus), Victorinus, Tacitus, and other works. If I cannot find those here [namely at Gaeta], I have to take the decision to come to you [i.e., to Rome] in order to see them. Until I have read them, I believe that my work cannot be published, and if it is not to be published, it cannot be copied either.)

Valla is here conscious that the *Elegantie*'s analysis of the phenomena of the Latin language was incomplete unless he studied a number of additional authors whose works were not available to him at Gaeta, where he was in the service of the Aragonian king, Alphonse the Magnanimous.²¹ This passage is also an extraordinary example of Valla's scientific method. Just like a modern researcher, he realizes that the solidity of his linguistic work will grow with the number of Latin authors he manages to consult. In particular, Valla confirmed that he had to read Plautus's twelve comedies, brought by Nicholas of Cusa to Italy, for he considered them a primary source for his research because of their archaic and colloquial language. The case of Plautus's comedies is significant, for Nicholas of Cusa had brought these comedies back into circulation, but he himself had been unable to grasp the potential innovation contained in their language.²²

Because of his new empirical approach to linguistics, Valla urged his colleagues not to feel satisfied with the usual grammar textbooks or the limited anthologies of classical authors. He insisted that they acquaint themselves with as many ancient

Prato, 4–7 June 2008, Edizione nazionale delle opere di Lorenzo Valla, Strumenti, 3, 2 vols. (Florence: Polistampa, 2010), 1:111–30; and G. Abbamonte, *Diligentissimi uocabulorum perscrutatores. Lessicografia ed esegesi dei testi classici nell'Umanesimo romano di XV secolo*, Testi e studi di cultura classica, 56 (Pisa: ETS, 2012), 29–60.

²⁰ L. Valla, *Epistole*, ed. O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi (Padua: Antenore, 1984), 210 (nr. 14).

²¹ On Valla's life, see G. Mancini, *Vita di Lorenzo Valla* (Florence: G. C. Sansoni, 1891).

²² After Valla, Niccolò Perotti (1430–1480) took many passages from Plautus's plays as examples in his *Cornu copiae*, the first modern Latin lexicon based on the occurrences of words in classical Latin authors. On Perotti's *Cornu copiae*, see below.

Latin works as possible, in order to introduce these works into their classrooms, but also in order to have at their disposal a sample collection of Latin grammatical phenomena that was as complete as possible. Valla's new approach emerges clearly in a passage where he criticizes the late-antique grammarian Priscian, one of the most respected medieval authorities:

'Ludicra' (inquit Priscianus) et non 'ludicria.' Ab hoc 'ludicri' dicimus. Vergilius in XII: 'Neque enim levia aut ludicra petuntur Praemia' (*Aen.* XII.764–65). Per quod vult 'ludicra' tertiae declinationis, cum contra notum sit secundae esse, ut in lege illa frequenter repetita: 'Qui autem ludicra exercuerit, in quatuordecim ordinibus primis ne sedeat' (Paul. *Sent.* 5.26.2 var.).²³

(Priscian says that we have to use 'ludicra' ('sportive'), and not 'ludicria.' Hence, we say 'ludicri', as Virgil does in the twelfth book: 'For no trivial or sporting prizes are at stake'. Because of this passage, Priscian believes that 'ludicra' belongs to the third declension despite the fact that it is well known that it belongs to the second, as we can see in that often-mentioned law: 'Who was an actor, cannot take a place [i.e., in the theatre or in the amphitheatre] in the first fourteen rows of seats'.)

Priscian considered "ludicra" a substantive belonging to the third declension due to a passage in Virgil. Valla contests this opinion and refers instead to one of the *Sententiae* written by the jurist Paulus, in which "ludicra" seems to be a noun of the second declension. Here it is noteworthy that Valla gives his preference to the usage in the passage of the juriconsult Paulus over another found in Virgil, one of the four authors of the medieval *quadruga*. Thus we realize that in his quest for the real usage (*usus*) of the Latin language, Valla considered all Latin sources to be equally valid, as long as they were ancient, although we shall see that this attitude was refined in the decades after Valla, especially in Rome, where the humanists often confirmed a usage on the base of Latin epigraphs.²⁴

In the following passage, Valla's target is not only another authoritative textbook, Servius's commentary on Virgil, but also an analogical method applied in linguistics by the medieval lexicographers, the so-called *differentiae verborum*:

'Barba' idem [scil. Servius] inquit hominis est. 'Barbae' vero quadrupedum. Sed non est 'barba' tantum hominum, neque 'barbae' tantum quadrupedum, quin et 'barba' quadrupedum et 'barbae' hominum utique multorum dicuntur. (Valla, *Eleg.* 6,14, p. 205).

(Servius claims that the singular 'beard' refers to a man, while 'beards' refers to the quadrupeds. But neither the singular refers only to men, nor the plural only to the quadrupeds, for there are cases where 'beard' refers to quadrupeds and 'beards' to many men.)

²³ Valla, *Elegantie*, 1,3 (*De hoc nomine ludicrum*) (Basel: Henricus Petrus, 1540), 6.

²⁴ See below, pp. 41–42.

In order to confirm his analysis of the word “barba/barbae,” Valla reports passages taken from Horace, Pliny the Elder, and Virgil²⁵ which contradicted Servius’s peremptory distinction between the usage of the singular “barba,” as referring only to human beards, and its plural “barbae,” used for that of quadrupeds. The ancient commentator based his distinction on three passages of Virgil (*Georg.* III,311, III,366, and *Aen.* II, 277):

... ‘Barbam’ singulari numero hominum, plurali quadrupedum dicitur: unde dubitatur de quibus dixerit: ‘Stirique inpexis induruit horrida barbis’ (*Georg.* III,366) (Serv. *Aen.* II,277, pp. 266,2–4 Thilo).²⁶

(The singular ‘barba’ is used for men, the plural for quadrupeds. Hence there are doubts about to whom he is referring, when he says: ‘the rough icicle hardens on the unkempt beard.’)

On the contrary, Valla easily proves that both Horace and Pliny the Elder make use of the singular “barba” when referring to animal beards, and that Virgil himself (and Pliny the Elder again) use the plural form also for men.²⁷

However, Servius is not the only target of Valla’s polemics here. The criticism is aimed equally at another important component of the medieval system of Latin teaching, namely at the so-called *differentiae verborum* as applied in lexicography. The *differentiae* (i.e., the distinctions) consisted in the careful differentiation between words that have similar meanings (i.e., synonyms) and those that have similar forms (i.e., homonyms). As Valla shows in the case of “barba,” this medieval practice of establishing the *differentiae* was often based on theoretical reasoning alone that had no support in the actual usages of the words.

Valla’s passage on “barba /barbae” illustrates clearly both his method and his polemical targets. His starting point is the accepted (and generally taught) knowledge of his day, based on the grammarians (in the case of “barba,” the strictly different usage between the singular and the plural). Then he goes on to prove that the distinction in question does not find any support in the occurrences of “barba” in the ancient Latin authors, but that it was Servius who established a distinction based on nothing more than the comparison of three passages in Virgil and elevated it to the status of a law. Moreover, Valla uses his criticism of Servius to attack another common practice of medieval Latin teaching, namely the creation of endless lists of distinctions between words (*differentiae verborum*) that were not based on the actual occurrences of the words but that the poor students had to learn by heart anyway.

²⁵ They are, respectively, Horace, *Serm.* I,8,42–43; Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* XXVIII, 198; Virgil, *Georg.* III,366 and III,311–12; and finally Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* XXX, 96–97.

²⁶ See also Servius, *Georg.* III,311, p. 300,28–29 Thilo, and *Georg.* III,366, p. 305,22–26 Thilo.

²⁷ On this passage of Valla, see Abbamonte, *Diligentissimi*, 48–51.

Hence it is clear that Valla's new approach undermined the roots of medieval Latin learning, namely the authorities of Servius and Priscian, and the [ana]logical rules such as the *differentiae verborum*.

* * *

After the *Elegantie* had been published, Valla's revolutionary message was immediately heeded by his colleagues, as we can see both from the huge number of manuscripts of the *Elegantie* that circulated in Italy and in Europe just a few years after its publication and from the twenty-six printed editions that appeared between 1471 and 1504.²⁸ Of course, there were people who criticised Valla's conclusions and defended the old grammatical system, but such people are never lacking whenever there is a development in any field of human knowledge.

Nevertheless, changes in the educational field take some time, and the *Elegantie*'s immediate success does not mean *per se* that the Latin curricula at the highest level in the schools were modified overnight according to Valla's new approach. Instead Valla's theory had to be introduced into the school system, if it was to renew and rejuvenate the medieval approach to grammar effectively. This, however, could only take place under two conditions:

- New school grammars and new lexicographical works had to be published, to take into account Valla's results and correct the late-antique grammatical works of authors like Priscian, Donatus, and Servius, as well as the works of medieval lexicographers like Papias, Ugutio of Pisa, and John Balbi of Genoa, which relied on [ana]logical reasoning rather than on actual Latin usage.
- Teachers and scholars had to familiarize themselves with the largest possible number of Latin authors, instead of limiting their Latin learning to the few authors who had been generally studied in the Middle Ages.

Unfortunately, the *Elegantie* was not a text meant to accomplish these two goals, for it is not a didactic handbook, nor are its refined discussions addressed to students, but rather to fellow humanists and colleagues. Therefore, if Valla's theories were to have an impact on Latin learning, they had to be adapted to certain teaching requirements. This led to numerous revisions of the *Elegantie* by other authors in the last thirty years of the fifteenth century, and these revisions were very popular during the sixteenth century as well:

- 1) Bonus Accursius, *Compendium Elegantiarum Laurentii Vallae*, dedicated to Cicco Simonetta, *editio princeps*: Milan: Ph. de Lavagnia, 27.vi.1475 (ISTC ia00026000).
- 2) Aurelius Bienatus, *Laurentii Vallae Elegantiarum epitoma, editio princeps*: Naples: F. di Dino, ca. 1478–1480 (ISTC b00664000).

²⁸ On the manuscripts of the *Elegantie*, see M. Regoliosi, *Nel cantiere del Valla. Elaborazione e montaggio delle 'Elegantiae'* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1993); and M. Regoliosi, "Per l'edizione delle *Elegantie*." The printed editions are listed in the ISTC s.v. "Valla, Laurentius."

- 3) Anonymous, *Elegantiae terminorum ex Laurentio Valla et aliis collectae, editio princeps*: Deventer: [R. Pafraet], 1490 (ISTC ie00028800).
- 4) Anonymous, *Elegantiarum viginti praecepta, editio princeps*: [Cologne: J. Koelhoff the Elder, 1477–1483] (ISTC ie00029900).
- 5) Juan Esteve, *Liber elegantiarum, editio princeps*: Venice: P. de Paganinis, 3.x.1489 (ISTC ie00111200).
- 6) Nicolaus Ferettus, *De elegantia linguae Latinae, editio princeps*: Forlì: P. Guarinus and J. J. de Benedictis, 16.iv.1495 (ISTC if00098000).
- 7) Guido Juvenalis, *Interpretatio in Laurentii Vallae Elegantias Latinae linguae, editio princeps*: Paris: W. Hopyl, 26.v.1490 (ISTC ij00667800).
- 8) Antonio Mancinelli, *Lima in Vallam, editio princeps*: Venice: J. Tacuinus, de Tridino, 8.viii.1497 (ISTC im00119500).²⁹

Unfortunately, we lack studies on this massive body of texts³⁰ that flourished beside Valla's *Elegantie* and met with an extraordinary success in the schools, to which their numerous reprints all over Europe for more than a century testify.³¹ It is safe to say that there is still much research to be done if we want to understand more fully how each of these texts reworks Valla's *Elegantie* and how exactly they go about adapting it for an audience of students or for use by teachers.

However, we know much more about the development of lexicographic studies after the *Elegantie*. The work that best put Valla's lessons into practice was the *Cornu copiae*, written by Valla's pupil and friend Niccolò Perotti (1429–1480). The *Cornu copiae* is a huge, but incomplete, lexicon that reached 671 folio pages in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 301, a partial autograph manuscript of Perotti, and more than a thousand pages in the printed edition published by Aldus Manutius in Venice in 1526–1527.³²

Although Perotti died before he was able to complete his *Cornu copiae*, the work nonetheless represents an innovation in the field of lexicography, which was domi-

²⁹ Mancinelli consciously used the power of the press to dominate the school book market with his works: see P. F. Gehl, "Off the Press into the Classroom: Using the Textbooks of Antonio Mancinelli," *History of Education and Children's Literature* 3.2 (2008): 19–32, and chapter three, entitled "Antonio Mancinelli and the Humanist Classroom," in P. F. Gehl, *Humanism for Sale* (website: <http://www.humanismforsale.org/text/>, visited on 10 October 2015).

³⁰ For instance, the *Elegantiolae* of Agostino Dati (1420–1478) was often listed among the works born beside the *Elegantie*, while in fact it only has a title that recalls Valla's.

³¹ Accursius's work appeared in twenty-four editions up through 1504 throughout Europe, while Bienenatus's *Epitoma* had three editions in the fifteenth century after the *princeps*. The anonymous *Elegantiae terminorum ex Laurentio Valla et aliis collectae* was printed nine times in less than ten years, from 1490 to 1497. The anonymous *Elegantiarum viginti praecepta* was reprinted dozens of times throughout Europe, Juvenal's work had another fifteen editions after the *princeps*, and Mancinelli's *Lima* was reprinted dozens of times throughout Europe. The data are taken from the ISTC.

³² The critical edition of Perotti's *Cornu copiae* has been edited by J.-L. Charlet et al., 8 vols. (Sassoferrato: Istituto Internazionale Studi Picensi, 1989–2001).

nated at that time by the medieval works of Papias (eleventh century), Ugucio of Pisa (twelfth century), and John Balbi of Genua (ca. 1286).³³ In fact, while medieval lexicographers took most of their examples from the Bible or from a select list of classical and Christian authors to explain single lemmas, Perotti makes use of almost all the Latin works written between Plautus and Boethius (namely, the chronological period used by Valla). Moreover, just as Valla preferred Quintilian, Perotti's *Cornu copiae* relies heavily on the writers of the first two centuries CE (i.e., Martial, Statius, Pliny the Elder, and Gellius) and the juriconsults, rather than the usual Cicero, Sallust, Virgil, Horace, and Ovid – very few quotations are taken from the Bible or the Church Fathers.³⁴

Another new aspect of Perotti's *Cornu copiae* lies in the attempt to limit the distinctions between words (*differentiae*), or better to ground them exclusively in passages of the ancient Latin works.

If the ideal of the modern researcher consists of a person who relies only on his or her own analyses and who feels free to challenge authorities when they are not supported by the data, then Perotti embodied this new intellectual standard perfectly. After all, he even started to criticize Valla himself, as we can see in the following passage on the meaning of *obiter*:

Et 'obiter,' quod non est, ut Valla et alii quidam existimarunt, 'spetialiter' [v. *Eleg.* 2,49], sed quod vulgo dicitur 'incidenter,' hoc est praeter propositum, quasi 'in itinere occurrens.' Iuvenalis: 'Atque obiter leget' (3,241 apud Tortelli, *De orthographia, De Syllabis desinentibus in B*). Plinius: 'Ego plane meis adiici posse multa confiteor, nec his solis, sed et omnibus quae aedidi, ut obiter caveam istos Homeromasticas' (*Nat. praef.* 28 var.) (Perot. *Corn.c.* II 2,48 p. 23 Charlet).

(*Obiter* does not mean 'especially,' as Valla and other grammarians believed, but it means what is commonly called 'incidentally,' i.e., beyond intention, or 'what occurs almost in an accidental way.' Juvenal: 'And he will read in passing.' Pliny the Elder: 'I plainly admit that many things could be added to what I have said, and not only to what I have said now, but to whatever I have published, in order to pay attention in passing to those who would have censured even Homer.')

Perotti's work in turn had great success until the middle of the sixteenth century: the lexicon of Ambrogio Calepino (ca. 1440–1510), for example, depends heavily on it. Calepino's lexicon was published for the first time in 1502 and is regarded as the

³³ See Abbamonte, *Diligentissimi*, 61–63.

³⁴ In the *Index* of the critical edition of the *Cornu copiae* (vol. 8 (2001)), Cicero's passages cover 314–18, with Pliny the Elder on 364–73, Ovid on 349–50, Horace on 328, and Martial on 338–43.

first step in the production of scientific Latin lexica and a forerunner of the current *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*, published in Munich since 1899.³⁵

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The second recommendation that a teacher could take from Valla's *Elegantie* was to read and comment on the largest possible number of Latin works in their classes. During the last three decades of the fifteenth century, this recommendation was taken up widely in the highest level of the schools and in the universities.³⁶ As we have seen, Angelo Callimaco praises his teacher Calderini in the letter mentioned above for commenting in his classes on numerous Latin works that were not part of the medieval *curriculum*.³⁷ Among the poets, the case of Silius Italicus deserves special attention. In the 1460s, only a few years after Valla's death, Pietro Odo of Montopoli, a friend of Valla who succeeded him at the University of Rome, was the first to comment on the *Punica* of Silius Italicus in his classes.³⁸

Pietro Odo's lessons on Silius Italicus survive in two manuscripts. The first, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottob. lat. 1258, contains notes written by Pietro Odo himself, while the second, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 2779, preserves notes taken by a student during Odo's lessons.³⁹ After Pietro Odo, other Roman humanists continued to expound on Silius Italicus in class. In 1469, Pomponio Leto, a pupil of Lorenzo Valla who also attended the lessons of Pietro Odo, produced a copy of the *Punica* and added his own notes for the use of his private pupil Fabio Mazzatosta of Viterbo (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 3302). Already in 1468, Leto had taught a class on Silius's poem during his stay in Venice.⁴⁰ Some years later, Leto read Silius once more during a class at the University of Rome, as we know from the notes taken by one of his pupils, which have been preserved in Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. 52,8.⁴¹

³⁵ On the history of the reprints of the *Cornu copiae*, see W. Milde, "Zur Druckhäufigkeit von N. Perottis *Cornucopiae* und *Rudimenta grammatices* im 15 und 16. Jahrhundert," *Studi Umanistici Piceni* 2 (1982): 29–42.

³⁶ Nevertheless, the classical texts traditionally studied in the schools, like Juvenal's satires, Terence's comedies, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Cicero's *De officiis* and rhetorical works, were never completely replaced. See Campanelli and Pincelli, "La lettura," 167.

³⁷ See above, pp. 29–30.

³⁸ See G. Donati, *Pietro Odo da Montopoli e la biblioteca di Niccolò V – con osservazioni sul De orthographia di Tortelli* (Rome: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2000), 25, where a passage of Pietro Marsi is quoted: "The first who had the courage to reveal the sacred sources of this poet [scil. Silius] to our father, to penetrate into his sanctuary and to explain his poem in the classes at the flourishing University of Rome was Peter of Montopoli, the most cultivated man of his age," *Praef. in Syllius Italicus cum commentariis ... Petri Marsi* (Venice: J. Tacuinus, 20.ix.1493), f. II^r (ISTC is00509000).

³⁹ Donati, *Pietro Odo*, 60.

⁴⁰ Campanelli and Pincelli, "La lettura," 122–23.

⁴¹ Campanelli and Pincelli, "La lettura," 144.

Finally, in 1471, Leto published what is considered the *editio princeps* of the *Punica*.⁴² However an incunabula edited in the same year by G. A. Bussi challenges the idea that Leto was truly the first to publish the *Punica*.⁴³ In Italy, the *Punica* was printed seven times between 1471 and 1493: twice in Rome, once each in Milan and Parma, and three times in Venice.⁴⁴

As we have seen from his pupil's letter, another professor at the *Studium Urbis*, Calderini, commented on the *Punica* in his classes during the 1470s. His commentary is preserved in the manuscript written by Pietro Odo and in four copies of Leto's edition of Silius, containing notes taken by Calderini's students during his class.⁴⁵ Finally, in 1483, Pietro Marsi, a pupil of both Leto and Calderini, published the first printed commentary on Silius Italicus.⁴⁶

* * *

Although Pietro Odo, Calderini, Leto, Paolo and Pietro Marsi, Costanzi, and Mancinelli often commented on authors who did not belong to the circle of texts studied in the Middle Ages, they nevertheless made use, both in their classes and in their printed works, of the commentary genre that was also popular in the medieval school system. Therefore we have to consider whether there is a difference between the medieval commentaries and those produced in the late fifteenth century, and whether the humanist way of interpreting the ancient works was really new and influenced by Valla's approach.⁴⁷

One of the most striking differences between the two kinds of commentaries is their structure. The humanistic commentary rarely opens with the so-called *accessus ad auctorem*, i.e., the list of questions about the life of the author, the title of the work, and its purpose, content, usefulness, and position in the philosophical system that usually occupies the first pages of medieval commentaries.⁴⁸

⁴² (Rome: 'Printer of Silius Italicus,' between 26.iv. and 26.viii.1471) (ISTC is00504000).

⁴³ Apart from the *Punica*, the incunabula contains the *Bucolica* of Calpurnius and Nemesianus, and Hesiod's *Works and Days* (Latin translation by Nicolaus de Valle) (Rome: C. Sweynheym and A. Pannartz, [not before 5.iv.1471]) (ISTC is00503000).

⁴⁴ The list is taken from the ISTC. It is noteworthy that the *Punica* is available today in Italy in only one edition with an Italian translation published in the series of the Biblioteca Universale Rizzoli (Silio Italico, *Le guerre puniche*, ed. M. A. Vinchiesi, 2 vols. (Milan: Rizzoli, 2001)), while there is no commentary on the poem.

⁴⁵ Domizio Calderini, *Commentary on Silius Italicus*, ed. F. Muecke and J. Dunston, *Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 477 (Geneva: Droz, 2011).

⁴⁶ (Venice: B. de Tortis, 6.v.1483) (ISTC is00507000).

⁴⁷ On commentaries in the early modern period, see *Les commentaires et la naissance de la critique littéraire*, ed. G. Mathieu-Castellani and M. Plaisance (Paris: Aux Amateurs de livre, 1990); and *Neo-Latin Commentaries and the Management of Knowledge in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period (1400–1700)*, ed. K. Enenkel and H. Nellen, *Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ Campanelli and Pincelli, "La lettura," 174–77.

A good example is the tradition of the humanist commentary on Juvenal. The first example here, Angelo Sabino's *Paradoxa in Iuvenali*, was printed in 1474.⁴⁹ Here Sabino did not give any room to the life of the satirist (the first part of the *accessus*), whereas some biographical data are scattered throughout the work. However, in Calderini's commentary on Juvenal (1475),⁵⁰ there is a different approach, as well as some fierce polemics against Sabino. Although Calderini decided to publish a *Life of Juvenal* at the beginning of his work, this choice does not represent a return to the traditional *accessus*, since Calderini did not compose a new *Vita* of the poet, nor did he rely on the medieval tradition or on the *Vitae* of Juvenal written by previous humanists. In a section with the significant title *Vita Iuvenalis ex antiquorum monumentis* (f. aiii = 2^v), Calderini published the most ancient *Life of Juvenal*, taken from some unknown old manuscripts he had found.

Calderini's choice was at the same time innovative and very close to Valla's point of view. Just as Valla gave more importance to an occurrence in Plautus than to Priscian's or Servius's rules, Calderini preferred the most ancient biographical material to the centuries-long tradition of the medieval *Lives of Juvenal*, which had accumulated false information about the satirist.⁵¹ We find a similar principle operating in Leto's *editio princeps* of Lucan,⁵² where the humanist published the most ancient life of Lucan we know, which has been transmitted under the name of the grammarian Vacca (ca. sixth century), the author of a lost commentary on Lucan.⁵³

Turning the pages of humanistic commentaries even further, we also discern a completely different way of interpreting classical works, and in this Valla certainly played an important role. In the passage of the *Elegantie* mentioned above concerning the word *ludicra*, Valla justified a linguistic usage with the help of a non-literary text, namely a law taken from Paulus's *Sententiae*, which Valla considered even more authoritative than Virgil.

A generation after Valla, the tendency to include non-literary sources in one's study of the ancient world became dominant. Especially Pomponio Leto, Valla's pupil, systematically collected Roman epigraphs in his house on the Quirinal and stressed the importance of studying such documentary evidence, if one wanted to get acquainted with the customs and traditions of Ancient Rome.⁵⁴ Leto's message

⁴⁹ Angelo Sabino, *Paradoxa in Iuvenali* (Rome: G. Sachsels and B. Golsch, 9.viii.1474) (ISTC is00013000).

⁵⁰ Domizio Calderini, *Commentarius in Iuvenalem* (Venice: J. Rubeus, 24.iv.1475) (ISTC ij00642000).

⁵¹ On the tradition of Juvenal's *Lives* in Roman humanism, see G. Abbamonte, "Materiali biografici antichi su Giovenale recuperati da Domizio Calderini," *Renæssanceforum* 9 (2015): 173–212.

⁵² (Rome: C. Sweynheym and A. Pannartz, 1469) (ISTC il00292000).

⁵³ The new attitude of the Roman humanists towards the *Vitae* of ancient authors has been analysed in "Vitae Pomponianae": *Lives of Classical Writers in Fifteenth-Century Roman Humanism* [= *Renæssanceforum* 9 (2015)], ed. M. Pade.

⁵⁴ See S. Magister, "Pomponio Leto collezionista di antichità. Note sulla tradizione manoscritta di una raccolta epigrafica nella Roma del tardo Quattrocento," *Xenia Antiqua* 7 (1998): 167–96; and

was immediately heeded by other Roman humanists, who also used epigraphic texts for explanations in their commentaries.

One of the earlier cases where epigraphs were employed in a commentary is the aforementioned *Paradoxa in Iuvenali*, where Sabino comments on Juvenal's verses "Vivant Artorius istic / et Catulus, ..." (3.29–30) and tries to identify *Artorius* with a person of the same name who has come down to us in an epigraph that is still extant on the wall of the church of St. Bartholomew at Ameria. The text is entirely transcribed by Sabino⁵⁵:

'ARTORIVS' ET 'CATVLVS' id est similes 'Artorio,' qui et 'Persicus' etiam dictus est. Erat autem dives et orbus ideoque dilectus. Hunc ego puto eum Sexti filium cuius inscriptio in aede Sancti Iuvenalis apud Ameriam habetur talis: 'Sex(to) Artorio Sex(ti) f(ilio) patri, Praeconiae C(ai) f(iliae) Possillae matri, Sex(to) Artorio Sex(ti) f(ilio) fratri, L(ucio) Artorio Sex(ti) f(ilio) fratri, Artor<i>a Sex(ti) f(ilia) Secunda fecit' (*Parad. in Iuv. f. 38*^v).

('Artorius' and 'Catulus' are in fact similar to 'Artorius,' who is also called 'Persicus.' He was rich and blind, and therefore loved. I believe that he was the son of Sextus, whose name is inscribed in the epigraph that is in the church of Saint Juvenal at Ameria: 'Artoria Secunda, daughter of Sextus has built this in memory of her father Sextus Artorius, son of Sextus, in memory of her mother Praeconia Possilla, daughter of Caius, and of her brothers Artorius and Lucius Artorius, sons of Sextus.')

Sabino's identification of Juvenal's Artorius with the one in the epigraph is incorrect. Nevertheless the episode is worth mentioning, since it shows a deep change in the attitude toward the ancient world among teachers and students / readers during the late Quattrocento. Both are now ready to accept epigraphs as authoritative testimony when they need to prove a point or support an argument.

The use of an epigraph in the passage on Artorius is by no means an isolated instance in Sabino's commentary. In his comment on Iuvenal 3.133 ("accipiunt Calvinae vel Catienae"), Sabino identifies "Catiena" with a woman mentioned in another epigraph, which is unfortunately lost today.⁵⁶

The fact that Sabino's argument relies on an ancient, non-literary source does not seem to cause any agitation on the part of his audience / readership. If Sabino's attitude towards epigraphic documents depends on Leto, for whom epigraphs have attained a new status as historic sources of the highest level, then this epigraphic interest of the Roman humanists may be regarded as yet another consequence of Val-la's new approach, which preferred ancient documents to the abstract rules of the medieval tradition.

S. Magister, "Pomponio Leto collezionista di antichità. Addenda," in *Antiquaria a Roma. Intorno a Pomponio Leto e Paolo II*, RR inedita, 31, Saggi (Rome: Roma nel Rinascimento, 2003), 51–121.

⁵⁵ See *CIL* 11.4438.

⁵⁶ "CATIENA autem liberta fuit. Q. L. ut in quodam epitaphio legi" ("*Catiena* was a free woman, as I read in an epigraph"). See Sabino, *Parad. in Iuv. f. 42*^v.

However the humanists did not just use ancient lives and epigraphs as sources for their commentaries on ancient Latin works. Many times, they also appealed to the authority of ancient manuscripts when they had to restore a corrupt reading found in their texts. Thus in his commentary on Virgil's works, Pomponio Leto often corrects the text on the base of one of the oldest Virgil manuscripts, today known as the *Vergilius Mediceus*.⁵⁷ This manuscript arrived in Rome from the monastery of Bobbio around 1467, and it seems that Leto owned it for some time.⁵⁸

In his commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid*, Leto treats some of the text's disputed passages and frequently mentions the readings of the *Vergilius Mediceus*, which he considers trustworthy, as in the following example:

AVERNO ad Avernum, sic legit Apronianus (Leto in *Verg. Aen.* VI,126, in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canonicianus Classicus Latinus 54, f. 258').

(*Averno* to the *Averno*, it is the reading of Apronianus.)

The Virgilian tradition was divided on the expression "facilis descensus Averno" (dative) or "Averni" (genitive) (*Aen.* VI, 126). The *Vergilius Mediceus*, which Leto calls "Apronianus" after the name of its subscriber, the consul Flavius Turcius Rufus Apronianus Asterius, had the reading with the dative "Averno," which Leto preferred on the basis of the old document's superior authority.

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In conclusion, I have tried to show how deep the impact of Valla's linguistic theories was. He was the one who first preferred the authority of ancient texts and documents over those of the medieval tradition, and who criticized the abstract rules and the presumed authority of the late-antique and medieval grammarians.

In Rome during the 1460s and 1470s, there lived and worked a generation of humanists who had had the opportunity to know Valla personally and to attend his lessons, among them Pietro Odo da Montopoli, Pomponio Leto, Niccolò Perotti, and probably Angelo Sabino. Out of this circle of humanists grew a younger generation of scholars who were already educated with Valla's theories in mind. Paolo and Pietro Marsi, Domizio Calderini, and Antonio Mancinelli are only a few of them. They took every possible effort to apply and develop Valla's method in their works, but they also extended his method and applied it to areas that Valla had not touched.

⁵⁷ Today the *Mediceus* is preserved as Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS 39,1.

⁵⁸ See G. Mercati, "Il soggiorno del Virgilio Mediceo a Roma nei secoli XV e XVI," in G. Mercati, *Opere minori* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1937), 4:525–45 [= *Rend. Pont. Accad. Rom. di Archeologia* 12 (1936): 105–24]. On the readings of the *Vergilius Mediceus* used by Leto, see G. Abbamonte and F. Stok, "Intuizioni esegetiche di Pomponio Leto nel suo commento alle *Georgiche* e all'*Eneide* di Virgilio," in *Esegesi dimenticate di autori classici*, ed. C. Santini e F. Stok (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2008), 135–210.

Thus Perotti wrote a new Latin lexicon that used the largest sample collection of occurrences ever, drawn from Latin works.⁵⁹ Calderini adopted an ancient *Life of Juvenal* in his commentary to substitute for the large number of medieval and humanistic lives of Juvenal, which were full of false anecdotes and inaccurate information. Leto did the same with the life of Lucan. Moreover, he and his pupils, along with Sabino, were the first to back their interpretations of ancient texts with the help of epigraphs (a method unknown to Valla, as far as I know). And last, but not least, they often emended corrupt texts with the help of ancient manuscripts like the *Vergilius Mediceus* that they had had the opportunity to study and considered authoritative.

All these changes in the interpretation of classical works would probably have happened anyway in the new and vibrant atmosphere of humanism. However Valla's studies certainly facilitated the new and liberal attitude towards all kinds of ancient sources that is so evident in the generation of Roman humanists educated at Valla's school. This constitutes a true *transformation* of the teaching of Latin in the Renaissance, one in which the expansion of the canon and a change in how the language was understood to work led to a different vision of what it was that humanism was attempting to revive.

59 Valla's method is transferred by Perotti also in his metrical treatises (ca. 1453), where he discarded the medieval authorities and took into account examples drawn from the ancient poets and the ancient metrical theories, transmitted by an unknown work of Servius entitled *De centum metris* and the Greek treatise of Hephaestio that was preserved in a manuscript belonging to his patron, Cardinal Bessarion. See G. Abbamonte, "Un allievo e un maestro nel Quattrocento: i trattati metrici di Perotti e l'insegnamento di Lorenzo Valla," in *Il miglior fabbro. Studi offerti a G. Polara*, ed. A. De Vivo and R. Perrelli (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 2014), 339–52.