Ten Years of Neo-Latin Studies in the International Journal of the Classical Tradition


The *De Infelicitate Principum* of Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459) is a dialogue between Carlo Marsuppini, Cosimo de Medici and Niccolo Niccoli. Niccoli, the main speaker, maintains that all princes are unhappy, the good ones because of the burdens and cares of rule, and the evil ones because they lack the requisite of happiness, virtue. Niccoli supports his thesis by quoting ancient authors, primarily Cicero, Isocrates, Lucian and Seneca, and by recalling appropriate examples culled from ancient literature. The dialogue seems to have been inspired by Xenophon’s *Hiero*, though the work is not quoted.


This article considers the translations from Greek to Latin of the Renaissance humanist and philologist Henri Estienne (Stephanus). It argues that Estienne’s philological approach to translation stems from his conviction that ideation occurs beyond the formalized structures of articulation. This understanding of the tension between thought and language, paralleling the tension between philosophy and rhetoric, governs Estienne’s translative priorities. His translations of some Greek historians, philosophers and poets are studied, as well as one of Estienne’s own renderings of Propertius into Greek. Conclusion: we know only through interpretation, and for Estienne, philology is the prerequisite for philosophy.


Sixteenth-century England witnessed a remarkable flowering of neo-Latin poetry. Hundreds of volumes of verse were printed, a sign both of the impact of humanism and the continuing vitality of the classical tradition. One of the most important and interesting Elizabethan Latin poets is John Parkhurst, Bishop of Norwich. His *Ludicra* of 1573 is a substantial volume of several thousand lines, containing epigrams, epitaphs, occasional verses, religious poetry, and, unusually for an Englishman of this period, passionate love poetry. The importance of this corpus of poetry is assessed, and the influence of Martial, Catullus, and Prudentius is examined, as an aspect of the continuing importance of the classical tradition in sixteenth-century England.


In 1633 and again in 1639, Lelio Guidiccioni, a priest and poet of the day, published in Rome poems celebrating the dedication of Bernini’s baldacchino over the Tomb of St. Peter, and generally setting out the claims to pre-eminence as sun-king of Bernini’s patron, Urban VIII. Just a few weeks before the first of these poems was published,
Urban’s inquisitors had condemned Galileo, and the later piece was written in the very
year that the English Puritan poet, John Milton, visited the Palazzo Barberini.

The protests of Galileo and Milton against a dying ideology are familiar.
Guidiccioni’s poems are valuable for the light they throw on the other side of the case, and
for the clash they illustrate between two views of truth.

Barry Baldwin, “On Some Greek and Latin Poems by Thomas Gray,” IJCT 1.1

To enhance the general account of Gray’s Greek and Latin poetry, various pieces are
analysed in detail for their extensive classical borrowings; plain English translations
are juxtaposed. Attention is paid throughout to similarities of content and diction
between these poems and Gray’s English ones. Some special treatment is given to Gray’s
school and college verses, also Latin translations from the Greek Anthology where it
may sometimes be possible to connect his choice of pieces with contemporary issues and
personal feelings. His neglected Greek squib on smoking is examined for its verbal
dexterity and wit within the context of tobacco life and literature. Fanciful modern
interpretations of (e.g.) the De Principiis Cogitandi are scouted, whilst the classical
debts of the O lacrimarum fons are asserted against previous claims of dominant Old
Testament influence. Finally, Gray’s rights to authorship of two doubtfully ascribed
poems are investigated and tentatively confirmed.

Patricia J. Osmond & Robert W. Ulery, Jr., “Constantius Felicius Durantinus and

In the nineteenth century Sallust’s Bellum Catilinae was sharply criticized for its
alleged unfairness towards Cicero and bias in favor of Caesar. This article reveals the
antecedents of such charges in a little-known work of the early sixteenth-century, the
De coniuratione Catilinae liber, composed by the Italian humanist Constanzo Felici of
Castel Durante and dedicated to Leo X. Felici’s new version of Sallust’s monograph was
a product of the Ciceronian movement and, despite his appeals to principles of
historical objectivity, the author was chiefly concerned with enhancing Cicero’s role in
the events of 63 B.C., promoting the cult of Ciceronian rhetoric, and celebrating the
Medici pope. The subsequent diffusion of Felici’s opusculum in northern Europe, as well
as in Counter-Reformation Italy, also reveals the links between anti-Sallustianism and
conservative ideologies.

John N. Grant, “Propertius, Ovid and Two Latin Poems of Pietro Bembo,” IJCT

Pietro Bembo’s Latin poetry is worth studying in its own right and for how it reflects
Bembo’s views on imitatio and aemulatio. Two of Bembo’s more successful poems, the
short love elegies, Ad Melinum and Faunus ad Nymphas, demonstrate two kinds of
imitatio. The former is an elaboration of Propertius 2.18.1-4 and the close verbal
similarities with the model invite comparison with it. Bembo expands the four verses
of Propertius into a poem that contains other Propertian features, but while Bembo
adheres on one level to a singel model the poem has a distinctly Ovidian tone. The
relationship between Faunus ad Nymphas and its model is less obvious. Here Bembo’s
starting point is part of the speech of Polyphemus in *Metamorphoses* 13. Bembo transforms the rustic Polyphemus of his epic poem into a figure that is still rustic and naive but has characteristics of the more sophisticated and learned lover poet of Latin elegy. Bembo remains true to Ovid as his model, but in an interesting way.


This article examines an area of interest (the rhetorical use of *dissimulatio*) shared by two of the most implacable adversaries in the humanist quarrel over the imitation of Ciceronian style, Erasmus and Etienne Dolet. This question is explored in the context of Erasmus’s commitment to the moral dimensions of *imitatio* (given his Christian hermeneutic), and Dolet’s convictions concerning the distinction between artistic endeavor and moral accountability. Some concluding thoughts are offered as to how such views reflect a Renaissance epistemology of language as communication, a perspective that continues to influence important aspects of modern critical and social theory.


Aristotle’s Poetics was virtually unknown in the West before the publication of the *editio princeps* of the Greek text in 1508. After this date its fame grew steadily. In the decades that followed it was repeatedly translated and commented upon; it also began to be used in theoretical treatises on the art of poetry in general. This article focuses on the most comprehensive of these treatises to appear in the sixteenth century, Julius Caesar Scaliger’s *Poetics libri septem* (1561). It analyzes the claim, repeated countless times throughout the centuries, that the *Poetics libri septem* are an ‘Aristotelian’ treatise and tries to show that this claim is borne out neither by such references to the Aristotelian corpus as can be identified in Scaliger’s work, nor by its internal structure and economy, nor indeed by its most important doctrinal tenets such as the definition and purpose of poetry, the relationship of poetry to rhetoric and historiography, or the concept of *mimesis*. Despite Scaliger’s paying lip-service to Aristotle his *Poetices libri septem* cannot thus be adequately interpreted and understood with exclusive reference to an Aristotelian framework.


This article shows, using Michelet and Quinet as examples, how two men of humanistic education, nourished on Latin literature, developed a great distrust of Latin itself. The reasons are predominantly political; the anti-clerical struggle against the Catholic Church and the fear of empires (the second French Empire being compared to the Roman Empire) prevail over the model of the Roman Republic. Thus, contrary to what has sometimes been said, a certain kind of humanistic thinking, developed around the middle of the 19th century, instigated a general tendency, which, during the second half of the century, evolved into systems of higher education without the teaching of Latin.

Jean Dorat (1508-88), the guide and mentor of several poets of the Pléiade, gave a series of lectures on books 10-12 of the *Odyssey* which were partially preserved in lecture notes taken by a student. These notes, now housed in the Ambrosian Library in Milan, provide a useful insight into his teaching methods. His discussion of the text is largely aimed at providing an allegorical interpretation of Homer, strongly grounded on principles of etymology which owe much to Cratylism. A very wide range of classical and medieval authors are adduced by Dorat in support of his interpretation of the Homeric text, and he includes all the traditional types of allegoresis: moral, physical, historical, metaphorical, and religious. A number of passages of the manuscript are discussed in some detail in the article, including sections on the rivers of the Underworld, Elpenor, Circe and Calypso, Scylla and Charybdis, and Odysseus’ shipwrecks.


Alberti’s *De Pictura* (1435)—his seminal treatise on the art of painting—is subtly but unmistakeably riven by a fundamental contradiction. Though he aims to show that painting can move the beholder just as powerfully as speech can, that its silent rhetoric of gesture and expression can signify a whole inner world of thoughts and feelings, Alberti cannot sustain the would-be natural link between painted visible sign and invisible signified. Straining as the argument proceeds, the link breaks altogether when Alberti tries to illustrate the power of invention in art with a pointedly edited version of Lucian’s description of an allegorical painting by Apelles. Here the expressive power of painting gives way to the regulative, determining power of words. In spite of himself, Alberti at last makes the rhetoric of painting depend on the rhetoric of speech.


Thomas Hobbes received a humanist education which gave him an excellent knowledge of Latin and Ancient Greek, as well as of French, Italian and English. Throughout his life he read, wrote and translated between these languages. He was therefore very aware of the fluidity of natural languages. In the Preface to *De Cive* (which the author has recently translated) Hobbes complains that, as a result of this fluidity, moral and political subjects have hitherto been treated more as rhetoric than as science. The fundamental requirement of a science is to fix the definitions of words. A small set of Latin words, carefully defined in *De Cive*, provides the framework of his political thought. The article sets out this framework through the key words: *jus*, *recta ratio* and *leges naturales*; *multitudo* and *civitas*; *imperium*, *potestas*, *lex*, *dominium* and *servus*; *concilium*, *curia*, *senatus*, *coetus* and *ecclesia*. Attention is drawn to Hobbes’ English equivalents for these words and to classical undertones, particularly from the notions of *polis* and *ecclesia*. 

The emergence of a pattern of English Protestant Humanism should be recognized as characteristic of mid-Tudor intellectual culture. The pattern is strikingly illustrated in two volumes of memorial prose and verse in Latin and Greek, printed in 1551 on the deaths of Martin Bucer and of Henry and Charles Brandon. The volumes reflect classical and Neo-Latin influences. They commemorate the dead both as Protestant protagonists endowed with saving faith and as exemplars of Humanistic learning. They deprecate excessive grief as showing want of faith, but as even the saved may experience a degree of human sorrow at death, consolatory texts in the Humanistic tradition are included. The volumes thus embody the Protestant Humanists’ sense of the continuing value of classical learning in the conduct of life under divine grace. An appendix to the article contains eight representative poems from the volumes.


There was a great output of Latin love poetry by the Italian poets of the Quattrocentro who also wrote vernacular love poems. In this production the interplay and even symbiosis of the two poetic languages is of great philological and esthetic interest. To illustrate this form of poetry I have chosen two early Latin lyrics of Poliziano, one more definitely within the Roman tradition and the other with more obvious affinities to vernacular love poetry, as examples of the fusion of styles and vocabulary characteristic of the genre. In so doing, the skillful adaptation of poetic currency from various periods of Latin and Italian literature will become apparent, from the classical love poets to the *dolce stil novo*, Petrarch, and Poliziano’s own Italian poetry. In particular, these two Latin lyrics will be compared to vernacular lyrics of Lorenzo de’ Medici on the same themes.


We have chosen in this paper on the teaching of Latin in France in the 19th century to tackle the Latin essays in verse which students then had to write from the age of fourteen, a practice which was only suppressed in 1880. To help them in this task, the young versifiers could make use of two types of books: poetical dictionaries, the so-called *Gradus ad Parnassum*, and Latin prosodies. The Gradus provided for each word the words they occur with (their collocations), their synonyms, as well as circumlocutions and, in each case, indications of syllable length. The prosodies offered, in addition to the rules of versification, a great variety of graded exercises meant to teach students how to write all sorts of poems. We have focused on three prosodies that were in common use for several decades and had numerous re-edicitions and reprints. The artificiality and the drudgery of such writing tasks in the form of hexameters or distichs, for example, could but put students off, even those who were most successful at it. We have found echoes in the writings of Stendahl and of Jules Vallès, among others, of the hours spent laboriously writing Latin poems on subjects as anecdotal as “the drowning of a fly in a bowl of milk” or “the death of a parrot.”

The attacks upon Homer by Vida and Scaliger in the sixteenth century are well known. Less generally appreciated is the extent to which these attacks simply filled a vaccuum and grew naturally out of the perplexity and difficulty experienced by humanist readers and translators from Petrarch onwards. This article examines the early history of the humanist response to the Homeric poems and to the ancient inheritance that came with them as evidenced in critical judgements and in translation. In a general survey it concludes that the humanist response, though often marked by apparent enthusiasm and good intentions, was actually tentative and half-hearted at best and sometimes downright hostile. Even where ignorance of Greek or difficulty with the language was not a problem, Homer tended to be judged whether consciously or unconsciously by the over-riding standard of Virgil. A taste for and appreciation of the distinctively Homeric were not a part of the rich legacy bequeathed to modern Europe by the early humanists. (This article was published in two parts, with the second half appearing later in the same volume: Part One: 1. Preliminary expectations and difficulty: Petrarch; 2. Homer’s reception among early humanist educators; 3. Humanist translation: i. Tentative beginnings: Loschi, Bruni, Decembrro, ii. Homer in prose: Valla and Griffolini. Part Two: 3. Humanist translation [continued]: iii. The unfulfilled desire for verse, iv. Politian and a better version; 4. Sixteenth-century criticism: Vida and Scaliger; Appendix: Examples from humanist translators.)


This article examines various aspects of Johannes Secundus’ Ellegia Sollemnis 1 within a Classical Latin and neo-Latin context in an attempt to further appreciation of the poem. Generic admixture and innovation are considered first, to provide an overview. Then there is an investigation of the poet’s indebtedness to and variations on his various sources, namely Horace’s spring poems (especially Odes 1.4), Tito Strozzi, Catullus, and Tibullus. Study of the mood of the elegy (a bittersweet combination of reflectiveness and melancholy) is followed by discussion of the impact of the end of the piece and its contrast with the opening.


Among those parts of Neo-Latin literature which have been largely neglected so far are the various forms of panegyric poetry, ranging from epigram to large-scale epic. These poems can, however, offer interesting aspects of imperial propaganda, and at least some of them seem to be of high literary quality. For these reasons the Vienna Institute of Classical Studies has initiated a research project, which aims at cataloging and—as far as possible—analyzing Latin panegyric poetry composed for the House of Habsburg from the 15th to the 19th century.—The following article tries to illustrate the wide scope of this poetry by introducing one of its last representatives, Wilhelm Menis from Brescia (1793 - 1853), who appears to be a late successor of Vergil already by his choice of subjects. After some pastoral poems, e.g., on the occasion of the emperor’s
birthday, he wrote the didactic poem *Hygea* celebrating the Habsburg welfare policy and finally turned to epic poetry: Menis’ *Radetzky* describes the dramatic events of the years 1848-49 by making frequent use of the long tradition of Latin epic and especially of Vergil as his most important model.


This article describes a unique early seventeenth-century project at the monastery of Santa Prassede in Rome to adapt and prove the validity of Ptolemaic astrology by an empirical study of the lives and deaths of both eminent personages and common people in the neighborhood. In contextualizing this effort, it focuses on the life and career of the astrologer Orazio Morandi, abbot of the monastery and one-time general of the Vallombrosa order. On the basis of the activities of Morandi and the other monks, it then draws some conclusions regarding the fortunes and misfortunes of the Ptolemaic astrological tradition in the period.


Travel, it has been argued, confronted the wisdom and truth long ascribed to the texts of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Even before the Age of Discovery, humanists were already employing personal experience and direct observation as a guide to knowledge. Paolo Marsi (1444-84), professor of rhetoric in Rome and member of Pomponio Leto’s Roman Academy, represents the humanist caught between conflicting testimonies of *verba* and *res*. His 1468 versified travelogue of his journey to Spain and his 1482 published commentary on Ovid’s *Fasti* on the one hand betray his belief and trust in the cultural and linguistic hegemony of the classical Roman past. However, they also reveal the renegotiation with *auctoritas* which takes place through firsthand encounters with the physical world. Paolo Marsi merits the distinction of being a truly liminal figure, a humanist open to historical awareness and new methods of learning.


The story of Catiline, the Roman noble who plotted to overthrow the Roman Republic in 63 B.C., occupies a significant place in Florentine historiography and political thought of the later Middle Ages and early Renaissance. Starting with the *Chronica de origine civitatis* (ca. 1228), this article traces the sources of the medieval account back to the ancient epitomes and investigates its relation to Sallust’s *Bellum Catilinae*. It then describes the two branches or traditions of the story that developed in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries: (1) the classical or civic, which centered on the figure of Catiline-the-villain, rebel and enemy of Rome (and of Rome’s daughter-city Florence) and (2) the feudal or chivalric, which recounted the legendary adventures of Catiline-the-knight, protector of Fiesole, the rival of Florence. In the final sections of the article, attention focuses on the success of the classical version of the story, linked to the ambiente guelfa and, in turn, to the growth of a conservative republican ideology. While the celebration of Roman civic virtues, summed up in Cicero’s defense of the *res publica* against the rebel Catiline, legitimated and ennobled
the claims of the rising merchant and banking families, the vilification of Catiline as public enemy provided effective propaganda against new challenges from lower-class movements. Continuously present in the elaboration of Florentine “civic humanism,” Sallust’s story of Catiline supplies, in fact, an important connection between Guelf patriotism and the classicizing republicanism of the Quattrocento.


In sixteenth-century France, the panegyric, considered to be primarily a didactic exercise, was essentially linked to rhetoric, and classical references used in it were largely decorative. Several factors, notably the increased national confidence resulting from the reign of Henri IV, a new view of human nature which stressed the heroic potential in mankind, and an evolving interpretation of the function of historiography, combined to produce a new approach towards the panegyric, apparent in the 1630s and 1640s. Comparisons of major contemporary figures, especially Louis XIII and, during the regency of 1643-1651, the Prince de Condé, with heroes of the ancient world produced a kind of hierarchy with Alexander at its head because of his individualistic ambition and self-reliance but with the modern hero surpassing him and all other ancient heroes. During the personal rule of Louis XIV, comparisons with the ancients became redundant, not only because of the level of adulation accorded to Louis but because of a loss of faith in the heroic potential of the ordinary mortal.


Greek myth and history are peppered with musician heroes, Orpheus, Amphion, and Arion being only the most prominent examples. Their antithesis was music’s anti-hero, the amousos of fame marked by a deficit of culture. To be worthy of note, a person’s amousia had to imply a paradox, as is the case with Zethus, Amphion’s twin brother, and, above all, Themistocles, on one hand held by his contemporaries to be the “wisest of the Hellenes” (Herodotus), on the other notorious for his non-achievement in the field of music. Plutarch preserves a reference by Ion of Chios to Themistocles’ abstention from playing the lyre and resulting disgrace, an episode emblematic of the mores and — seen from the polarized viewpoint of, e.g., Aristotle’s Athenaión politeia — politics of 5th-c.-BC Athens (§1). Cicero redacted the story to exemplify e negativo music’s high status in Greece, and Augustine used it to legitimize disdain for classical learning (§2). Cicero’s redaction figured in the protreptic laus musices of the Early Modern Period (§3) and inspired the beginning of Thomas Morley’s Introduction to Practicall Musicke (§4). The notions that immunity to music’s charm is a sign of innate evil and that statecraft is a kind of music converged with the perennial debate on Themistocles’ character in works by John Case, music’s foremost Elizabethan apologist (§5), and Aelius Aristides, the second-century Greek orator (§6) respectively. Thus ancient and Early Modern authors related Themistocles’ amousia to a variety of issues, emancipating it from its original context and instrumentalizing it according to their own agendas.

In the years after 1500 an epidemic of a hitherto unknown disease raced through Europe. In 1530 Gerolamo Fracastoro, a prominent Veronese physician, published a Latin epic poem about this new disease, and from this poem the disease has since been named syphilis. The poem is marked by the rhetoric and epic machinery typical of humanist conventions. Then in 1546 Fracastoro returned to the subject, but this time in a prose work shaped by the canons of science, not humanism, and dealing with the disease in a very different way. Humanism and Science were already taking different paths.


This paper examines the influence of Virgil on Martin Luther, paying special attention to a short verse composition of Luther’s in Latin, *Adversus Armatum Virum Coeleum*, based on the first lines of the *Aeneid*. The study suggests that an adequate understanding of Luther’s relationship to and use of Virgil needs to take into full account the fact that the Reformer not only knew Virgil’s works and quoted from him frequently, but also himself composed verses based on Virgil’s.


Well-known Renaissance painters and writers who draw from Ovid’s fragmentary calendar poem, the *Fasti*, tend to assimilate it to the more famous masterwork, the *Metamorphoses*. A group of humanist Latin poets, however, took inspiration from the central idea of Ovid’s *Fasti* as a versified religious almanac. The Christian calendar poems vary widely in the degree to which they imitate the Ovidian exemplar. Of particular interest is Lodovico Lazzarelli’s *Fasti christianae religionis*, which exhibits a kind of anxiety of influence by both embracing Ovid’s *Fasti* as model and using it to exemplify the antique pagan festivals now supplanted by the true Christian faith.


Muret’s choice of “iuvenilia” as a title for the first edition of his poetry (1553) is an innovation that deserves closer scrutiny. Other authors, both French and Italian, were already using the terms “juvenile” or “adolescent” to characterize their literary love affairs, and in each case the terms carry an apologetic tone. The classical antecedent for the term as a poetic tag is Ovid. By examining the various contexts in which he employs some form of “iuvenilia,” we can come to a better understanding of its import for Muret. Ultimately, the term “iuvenilia” connotes not so much a mundane temporal condition (i.e., the time of life during which the poems were written) as a poetic disposition (i.e., erotic, playful poetry as opposed to more serious genres).