

Roman Humanism and the Study of the *Silvae* in the Fifteenth Century

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In a famous letter written from Constance and dated between January and May 1418,¹ Poggio informs the Venetian Humanist Francesco Barbaro about his discoveries of Silius Italicus' and Manilius' poems, and of Statius' *Silvae*. Moreover, Poggio announces that the manuscripts containing these works have been copied for Barbaro and adds that—unfortunately—the scribe who transcribed them was not skilled at all. Then Poggio invites Barbaro to take a copy from them and to send the original ones to Niccolò Niccoli in Florence:

... mitto ad te per Presbyterum Brandinum Pisanum, qui est ex familia cardinalis Pisani, Silium Italicum, libros v Statii Silvarum, item M. Manilium Astronomicum (*Astromicon* read Garrod [1909] 58 followed by Courtney [1990] ix). Is qui libros transcripsit ignorantissimus omnium viventium fuit, divinare oportet non legere, ideoque opus est ut transcribantur per hominem doctum. Ego legi usque ad xiii librum Silii, multa emendavi, ita ut recte scribenti facile sit similes errores deprehendere eosque corrigere in reliquis libris, itaque da operam ut transcribantur, postea mittas illos Florentiam ad Nicolaum.

I am sending you by the priest Brandinus Pisanus, who belongs to Cardinal Pisanus' household, Silius Italicus, five books of Statius' *Silvae* and M. Manilius, the astronomer. The man who copied the books was the most ignorant of living men; one needs to use divination, not reading itself, and so it is very important that they be copied by a scholar. I have read as far as the thirteenth book of Silius and I corrected a lot, so that it might be easy for someone writing it correctly to avoid similar mistakes and to correct

1 See Clark (1899) 125–126. The council of Constance was officially closed on 16th May 1418.

those in the later books, so see that they are copied and then send them to Nicolaus in Florence.²

trans. GORDAN [1974]³

Presumably, Poggio sent to Barbaro the manuscript of the *Silvae* which is now at the National Library of Madrid (nr. 3678, hence **M**)⁴ and which also contained the astronomical poem of Manilius. This manuscript was re-discovered in 1879 by G. Loewe.⁵ In fact, **M** contains corrections made by Poggio on a text written by a scribe who made many mistakes, both because he did not know Latin well and he was apparently unskilled in deciphering old scripts. It seems that Barbaro respected the wish of Poggio, for we find in **M** corrections by the hand of Niccoli.⁶

Afterwards, Niccoli kept Poggio's manuscript of the *Silvae* for many years in his library, as we know from a bitter letter sent by Poggio to Niccoli in 1430:

Sed considera an recte hoc facias, in quo mihi uideris errare. Lucretium tenuisti iam per annos XIV, eodem modo Asconium Pedianum, sic et Petronium Arbitrum et Statium Siluarum orationesque illas, quas habes ex meis. Numquid tibi hoc equum uidetur, ut si quid aliquando ex his auctoribus legere cupio, tua incuria non possim?

But consider whether you are doing right in this matter for you seem to me to be making a mistake. You have now kept the Lucretius for fourteen years and the Asconius Pedianus, too. You have also kept the Petronius Arbitrum and the *Silvae* of Statius and the *Orations* which you got from me [Cicero's speeches]. Does it seem just to you that, if I sometimes want to read one of these authors, I cannot on account of your carelessness?

trans. GORDAN [1974]⁷

2 *Nicolaum* is the Florentine erudite Niccolò Niccoli (1365–1437), collector of manuscripts and friend of Poggio. On Niccoli see Bianca (2013).

3 Unless otherwise stated, like here, translations are my own. Latin text in Clark (1899) 125, reprinted by Walser (1914) 59 n. 1.

4 I am here using the *sigla* adopted by Reeve (1977).

5 On this manuscript see, at least, Krohn (1898) 38–43; Clark (1899) 125–129; Reeve (1977) 202; Reeve (1983) 397–399; and the preface of Courtney (1990): the manuscript can be seen at the following website: <http://bdh-rd.bne.es/viewer.vm?id=0000100797&page=1> (last visited on 15.10.2022).

6 See Reeve (1977) 221 and Courtney (1990) x. The discovery of the manuscript is also addressed by Roman (pp. 49–50) in this volume, as well as in the introduction (pp. 2–3).

7 Poggio, *Lettere*, 38 (= Harth [1984–1987], vol. 1, 103, 29–34).

In this letter Poggio lets us know that he did not have the *Silvae* at his disposal from 1418, when he sent them to Barbaro. Therefore, we assume that the bibliophilic (or better, bibliomaniac) Niccoli kept **M** all these years and that only in 1430 did he finally return **M** to his owner. Moreover, it seems that Niccoli in these years did not allow anyone to read the poems, nor do we know if he made a copy of the *Silvae* for himself. In short, since its discovery to around 1430 **M** was neither read by anyone except Niccoli nor copied.⁸

However, the dates of the earlier manuscripts of the *Silvae* which have been copied, directly or not, from **M** show that the circulation of the poems started much later than 1430. In fact, the oldest copies of **M** are apparently posterior not only to the return of Poggio to Florence in 1453, but also to his death in 1459, when **M** seems to be listed in the inventory of the books and goods of Poggio.⁹ As M.D. Reeve rightly pointed out, the oldest manuscripts belonging to the Florentine group, whose scribes had presumably more chances to see **M** directly, were produced around 1470.¹⁰

Almost certainly earlier than the Florentine group, two manuscripts of the *Silvae* were already produced in Rome at the beginning of the 1460's. The purpose of the present essay is to shed light on the decisive role played by the Roman circle of the Humanists in the scholarly study of the *Silvae* and their introduction of it into the scholastic curricula.¹¹

Already in 1463, the MS. Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Vat. Lat.* 3283 (**Q**), was copied seemingly in Rome. It has been dubiously attributed to Bernardo Bembo, who lived in Rome at time.¹² The second testimony of the Roman group is

8 This point is also touched upon in the introduction to this volume (pp. 2–3).

9 The *Item* 59 of the inventory, published by Walser 1914, 421, might refer to **M**: 'Astronomicum cum multis aliis in papiro coopertum corio albo' ('The paper manuscript contains the astronomical poem together with many other poems, the cover is made of white leather.') **M** contains actually first Manilius, and then the *Silvae*. However, Walser (1914) 59 n. 1, does not confirm the identification ('Der Band findet sich nicht im Nachlaß') and Reeve (1977) 221, is doubtful on the correspondence between **M** and the *item*.

10 They are the MSS. Florence, BML, *Conv. Soppr.* 6 (**X**) and Vienna, ÖNB, 140 (**B**): see Reeve (1977) 203–205, and 224. The scribe of **B** is Anastasio Vespucci, the father of Amerigo: see de la Mare (1983) 108 n. 9. The third manuscript of the first Florentine group, Vienna, ÖNB, 76 (**S**), written by Antonio Sinibaldi, is dated by A.C. de la Mare from about 1470 (Reeve [1977] 203 n. 7). Reeve (1977) 205 point out that the dates of **X**, **B**, and **S** let us believe that **M** was seemingly in Florence at that time.

11 Black (2007) 86 observes that in Tuscany the *Silvae* were 'put in the scholarly limelight by Poliziano' and that master Orlando Primerani, who was appointed as teacher at Volterra between 1498 and 1506, quotes Statius' *Silvae* in his poem where he explains his teaching program.

12 On **Q** see Scarcia Piacentini (1984) 506–507, and Gilles-Raynal (2010) 209. On the attri-

the MS. Rome, Biblioteca Vallicelliana, C.95 (G). It is close to M and its script has been attributed to the young hand of the Humanist Pomponio Leto (1428–1498) around the same year as Q.¹³ As the text of G reproduces many errors of the *ignorantissimus* scribe of M, we have to assume that Leto, whose presence in Florence in the early 1460's is not documented, had the opportunity to work on an 'honest' copy of M. Therefore, either this copy should be already in Rome after Poggio left the town or it was brought by someone to the *Urbs* from Florence before 1463.

Silvia Rizzo has rightly noticed that for many Latin authors discovered by Poggio there is an early circulation in Rome thanks to the activity of Leto, who sometimes had the opportunity to make copies of texts belonging to the library of Niccolò Niccoli. It happened probably after the latter's death (1437), when Niccoli's books were arranged in the monastery of San Marco, the first public library in modern Italy (1444).¹⁴ However, for the *Silvae* no relationship between Poggio's or Niccoli's library and Leto's copy can be established. Paola Scarcia Piacentini has cautiously suggested that Leto had his exemplar of the *Silvae* via Venice, where he lived from 1467 to 1468.¹⁵ The hypothesis would imply that Barbaro around 1418 made a copy of M, as Poggio had suggested, before sending it to Niccoli. However, there is no evidence of any early Venetian copy in the manuscript tradition of the *Silvae*, nor can we find certain traces of a circulation of the *Silvae* in the Venetian area or in Northern Italy before the above-mentioned Florentine and the Roman groups of manuscripts.¹⁶ Finally,

bution of this MS. to Bembo's library see Giannetto (1981) 222–223. Delz (1966) 429 is doubtful. Q can be seen at the following website: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.3283 (last visited on 15.10.2022).

- 13 Leto's young hand in G was first suggested by J. Delz (reported by Reeve [1977] 207). The hypothesis has been confirmed by Scarcia Piacentini (1984) 506–507, and Caldelli (2006) 124, who suggests a date around the early 1450's. The identification is accepted in the description of the manuscript made by D'Urso 2008 for *ManusOnLine*. On Leto's life and works see Zabughin (1910–1912), Accame (2008) and (2015) and the website <http://www.repertoriumpomponianum.it/> (last visited on 15.10.2022).
- 14 Rizzo (1995) 393–394 refers, e.g., to a manuscript of Propertius, Rome, Bibl. Casanatense 15, copied by Leto (1470–1471) from the famous manuscript Wolfenbüttel, *Gud. Lat.* 224, brought in Italy by Poggio before 1427, when Niccoli borrowed from Poggio this manuscript: see Tarrant (1983) 524–525 and n. 18. The MS. Casanatense 15 is described in Pade (2008a).
- 15 Scarcia Piacentini (1984) 508.
- 16 For instance, Angelo Camillo Decembrio (ca. 1415–*post* 1467), who lived mostly in Ferrara, mentions many 'new' Latin works discovered by Poggio in his *Politia literaria*, finished in 1463, but he attributes to Statius only the two epic poems, *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*: see *Polit. liter.* 1.3.28. Decembrio quotes only passages taken from these two works: see *Polit. liter.* 3.27.37 and 4.47.11 (*Theb.* 3.661), 6.67.22 (*Ach.* 1.7 and 1.20), 7.81.160 (cf. *Ach.* 2.96–101), and

G seems to have been copied by Leto before he moved to Venice. Nevertheless, Scarcia Piacentini's hypothesis is an attempt to justify the problematic silence about the *Silvae* in the generation of Humanists living in Rome before Leto.

In particular, Pietro Odo da Montopoli (1425/30–1463), professor at the university of Rome from 1450 to his death, a teacher of Leto and a good friend of Valla and Tortelli, showed a sincere interest in the 'new' Latin authors discovered during the Council of Constance and later, as testifies his care for the text of Silius Italicus' *Punica*.¹⁷ In fact, he was seemingly the first to lecture on the *Punica* in his classes, as Pietro Marso confirms in the preface of his commentary on the *Punica*, printed in Venice in 1483.¹⁸ However, although Silius circulated in Rome, as testifies a copy of the *Punica* already existing in the Vatican library at the time of the pope Niccolò V (1447–1455),¹⁹ Pietro Odo seems to have never known the *Silvae*.²⁰

Lorenzo Valla (ca. 1407–1457), one of the most famous Humanists of the fifteenth century, lived first in Naples and then in Rome from 1448 to his death. He started in Naples his famous linguistic works (the *Elegantie*, the *Antidotum in Facium*, etc.), but he accomplished and polished up these works in Rome, where he profited from the rich funds of the Vatican library. For his research

7.99.30 (*Theb.* 1.42). I am taking this information from Witten (2013). Scarcia Piacentini (1984) 504 n. 26 confirms that Decembrio did not know the *Silvae*. Sicco Polenton, instead, seems to know that Statius wrote the *Silvae*, but he never saw the poems. Otherwise, he would have known that Statius was from Naples. Instead, he still depends on the medieval biographies of Statius, which asserted that the poet was born in Gaul on the basis of the confusion between Papinius Statius and Statius Urculus, a Gallic rhetorician who lived in the Neronian age (see Ullman [1928] 119–121). On the Neapolitan origin of Statius see below. The passage where Sicco seems to hint at the *Silvae* is the following: *Epistulae habentur quaedam familiariter ad amicos soluta oratione scriptae* (Ullman [1928] 121). On the presence of Statius in Sicco's work see Stok (2011b) 157–159.

17 Pietro Odo annotated his own copy of Silius' *Punica*, Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Ottob. Lat.* 1258; see Rizzo (1995) 393 and Donati (2000) 23, 103 n. 76. The whole book of Donati is essential for the knowledge of Pietro Odo.

18 *Primus patrum nostrorum memoria huius poetae [Silius] sacros fontes reserare arcana ingredi ac publice in hac florentissima urbis Romae Academia profiteri ausus est Petrus Montopolita ... Petrus Marsus, Praef. in Siliu Italici Punica*, Venice, printer Baptista de Tortis, 1483 (ISTC is00507000). However, Muecke and Dunston (2011) 14 n. 5 believe that Pietro Odo lectured on Silius only once. On the presence of Silius in the Roman Humanism see also Muecke (2008).

19 Niccolò V's manuscript of Silius is in Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, *Lat.* X11.68 (4519); see Delz (1987) xx–xxii.

20 In a poem of Pietro Odo, where he lists the authors explained in his classes, Statius is not mentioned: see Campanelli and Pincelli (2000) 157–158.

about the linguistic uses of Latin, Valla needed to consult the largest possible number of Latin texts. Therefore he was interested in getting access to some authors discovered by Poggio, such as, e.g., Quintilian, whose work was carefully studied and often quoted by Valla.²¹ However, Valla did not have the opportunity to know Statius' *Silvae* in Naples,²² nor in Rome, for they are never quoted by him.²³ Moreover, in the *Raudensiane note*, Valla criticizes Petrarch and Antonius from Rho who did not distinguish between the rhetorician Statius Ursulus and the archaic poet Caecilius Statius. Instead, as we shall see, the medieval tradition made a confusion between the rhetorician Statius Ursulus and our Papinius Statius, whose Neapolitan origin was unknown until the discovery of the *Silvae*.²⁴

Giovanni Tortelli (1406/12–1466) was the first librarian of the Vatican Library under pope Niccolò v and had at his disposal all the Vatican manuscripts and the net of cultural relationships of the Curia. In his lexicographical treatise entitled *De orthographia*, where he quotes from many Greek and Latin writers, he never quotes the *Silvae*.²⁵

All these Humanists were active in Rome during the 1450's, but none of them seems to know the *Silvae*. In the case of Tortelli, who was the head of the Vatican library, we assume also that neither Poggio, nor anybody else took the trouble to leave any copy of the *Silvae* in the library, otherwise the librarian

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- 21 See Cesarini Martinelli and Perosa (1996). Valla was also interested in Plautus, whose twelfth comedies (alphabetically ordered from *Epid.* to *Truc.*) Niccolò Cusano made known in Rome.
- 22 The name of Statius appears together with other Latin poets in a list of authors, whose books the Catalan Claver had to find and buy in Venice in 1453 for the Aragonian king of Naples: see Gargan (2010) 238.
- 23 Statius' *Silvae* are mentioned by Valla neither in the *Antidotum primum* against Poggio (see Wesseling [1978] *ad indicem*), nor in the *Antidotum in Facium* (see Regoliosi [1981] *ad indicem*), nor in Valla's notes on Quintilian (see Cesarini Martinelli and Perosa [1996] lxxiii). In the *Elegantie* Valla mentions only Statius' *Thebaid*: I owe this information to Clementina Marsico, who is about to publish the critical edition of the *Elegantie* together with Mariangela Regoliosi. I thank her for the help.
- 24 *In hunc errorem incidit Petrarcha* [*Fam.* 24.7.8–9], *qualia multa peccat Vincentius Historialis (ut alii multi ex plebe litteratorum), qui alium pro alio vel autorem vel principem virum ponit: velut Statium Tolosanum [Ursulus] pro Statio Caecilio ...* Valla, *Raudensiane note* II.III.37 [= Corrias (2007) 362], quoted by Cesarini Martinelli and Perosa (1996) cxiv–cxv. The same passage with small differences is already in the first version of Valla's, *Raudensiane note* XVII.35 [= Corrias (2007) 526]. Statius' *Silvae* are not mentioned in the *Raudensiane note*: see Corrias (2007) *ad indicem*.
- 25 Although there is no critical edition of Tortelli's *De orthographia*, Donati (2006) is a preliminary work for the edition. There Donati never mentions the *Silvae* among the sources of Tortelli.

would have profited from this new text and surely informed his friends Pietro Odo, Valla, etc. Therefore, as far as we can figure out, the *Silvae* seem to have come out in Rome together with Leto, who is the decisive figure in the early circulation of the *Silvae* in the town, although we cannot say exactly where and when he himself came into contact with a copy of **M** that he used for his **G**.

Leto's keen interest in the *Silvae* is attested again around 1469–1471, when he copied a second manuscript of the *Silvae* from **G** for his pupil Fabio Mazzatosta, namely Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Vat. Lat.* 3875 (I).²⁶ It represents a more advanced step of Leto's studies on the *Silvae*, for here the Humanist corrected many mistakes of **M** which he had left in **G**.²⁷

But Leto's scholarly activity on the *Silvae* can be recognised also in another Roman manuscript, Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Vat. Lat.* 6835 (P), which was written not by Leto, but by the Humanist Niccolò Perotti (1429/30–1480).²⁸ The manuscript, still unpublished, contains the first commentary on the *Silvae*, which is unfortunately incomplete.²⁹ In the preface-letter addressed to his nephew, Pirro, Perotti mentions the previous collaboration with Leto in interpreting and commenting on the difficult text of Martial:³⁰

Hinc post rudimenta grammatices, quae tibi nuper, qum [sic] Thusciae prouintiae praeessem, dedicaui, omnem hanc hyemem et maximam partem autumnii in corrigendo atque exponendo Martiali una cum Pomponio meo Fortunato consumpsi. In qua re, nec dictu facile est, nec credibile auditu quos sustinuerimus labores, tum propter multarum rerum ac reconditarum uarietatem, quarum etiam uocabula uix aut nullo modo

26 On I and the 'codici Mazzatosta' copied by Leto see Maddalo (1991), and Accame (2008) 95–98. A detailed description of I is in Maddalo (1991) 60, who has first recognised the work of Bartolomeo Sanvito in the decoration of the manuscript (62 n. 56). I can be seen at the following website: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.3875 (last visited 15.10.2022).

27 Reeve (1977) 207, and Scarcia Piacentini (1984) 507.

28 For an updated bibliography on Perotti and his works see Charlet (2011) and (2015), and D'Alessandro (2015).

29 Perotti's commentary on the *Silvae* is at ff. 54^r–94^v and ends with the comment on *Silv.* 1.5.33. The manuscript is described by Gilles-Raynal (2010) 630–631. For the part containing Perotti's commentary on the *Silvae* see Reeve (1977) 209–210, Abbamonte (1997), and Abbamonte (2013) 357–360. Only the preface has been published by Mercati (1925) 156–158. P can be seen at the following website: https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.6835 (last visited 15.10.2022).

30 The friendship between Leto and Perotti and the high esteem that both the Humanists had for each other is confirmed by Sabellico in his *Leto's Life*: see *Pomponii uita* 27 in Dell'Oro (2008) 214.

intelligi poterant, tum propter errorum multitudinem, quibus undique totus || liber scatebat, quos emendare pene supra vires hominis fuit.

MERCATI [1925] 156

So, after I dedicated to you the *Rudimenta grammatices*, when I was governor of Tuscia, I spent all this winter and most of the autumn to correct and comment on Martial together with my friend Pomponius Fortunatus.³¹ We cannot say easily, nor is it credible the number of efforts we sustained in this undertaking. They depended both on various, numerous and often hidden problems (among them there are also words which could be recognized barely or in any way) and on the multitude of errors which came out in every moment from the manuscript, whose correction was a task beyond human strength.³²

Few lines later Perotti specifies that also this commentary on the *Silvae* was a collaborative work with Leto:

Caeterum hoc opere non contenti, alium || quoque eiusdem aetatis poetam, etsi minime huic similem, bonum tamen nec minus uel corruptum uel difficilem emendandum exponendumque suscepimus, ne tibi deesset in quo mutare interdum studium posses ... En igitur Siluas P. Papinii Statii ad te mittimus, a nobis proximis feriis emendatas atque expositas.

MERCATI [1925] 157

After all, since we [Leto and Perotti]³³ did not content ourselves with this work [the explanation of Martial], we started to correct and to comment on another poet of that same era [Statius], so that you have the opportunity to vary your studies occasionally. Although Statius' poems are very different from Martial's, they are good ... Thus we are here sending to you the *Silvae* of Papinius Statius, after they have been corrected and commented on by us in the last holidays.³⁴

31 Leto sometimes calls himself either Pomponius the Lucky (*Fortunatus*) or Pomponius the Unlucky. On Leto's names see Accame (2008) 27–31.

32 *Vat. Lat.* 6835 ff. 54^v–55^r.

33 In this preface Perotti refers always to himself with the first singular person (*praeessem, dedicaui, nisi fallor, hortor*), whilst the first person plural is used when he talks of himself and Leto.

34 *Vat. Lat.* 6835 f. 55^{rv}.

Perotti refers here to the collaboration with Leto on the text of Martial, which happened between autumn 1469 and winter 1470, whilst Perotti's commentary on the *Silvae* was finished by the summer holidays of 1470.³⁵ As a result of the cooperation between Leto and Perotti on Martial we have the MS. London, British Library, Kings 32, one of the above mentioned 'codici Mazzatosta'. Here Leto annotated Martial's text and Perotti integrated Leto's annotations with the etymologies and the meanings of the Greek words.³⁶

Although it is a fragmentary work, what remains of Perotti's commentary on the *Silvae* seems not be addressed to a scholastic readership of students and teachers. In this work Perotti aims to explain in detail all the aspects of Statius' verses, as we can see, e.g., on *Silvae* 1.1.8–10 ('Age ...'), where Statius compares the equestrian statue of Domitian to the Trojan horse. Perotti underlines the ironical tone of the poet:

8 NVNC AGE per ironiam loquitur. Age, inquit, miretur iam antiquitas equum Troianum quoi [sic] fabricando Dindymon et Ide, Phrygiae montes, decreuere, hoc est minores ob caesas arbores facti sunt. Dindymon et Dindymus utroque genere dicitur. Sacrum uerticem appellat montis summitatem, quia in eo Cybele deorum matri sacra celebrabantur. Age, inquit, miretur Palladium uetustas, quasi dicat colossi comparatione non esse mirandum.

my transcription

He speaks with irony and says: 'Come on, let the ancients admire the Trojan horse, which caused the mountains of Phrygia to be lowered because of its construction', that is, they became lower because their trees were cut ... He says 'come on, let the ancients admire the Palladium', as if he said that it should not be admired in comparison with the colossus [the horse of Domitian].³⁷

The erudite tone of the commentary is clearly seen in passages where Perotti accumulates rare classical sources, in order to explain an image or a passage of Statius. For instance, in *Silvae* 1.1.38 ('et sectae praetendit colla Medusae') Statius describes the cuirass of a little figure of the goddess Athena placed in the left hand of the emperor's statue. Perotti explains that on the breast plate

35 See Monfasani (1986) 99–100 n. 8, Abbamonte (1997) 11–12, *versus* Mercati (1925) 82 (1472).

36 On the date of this manuscript and the presence of Perotti's hand for the Greek words see Campanelli (1998), in part. 171, 174–175. The manuscript is described by Pade (2008b).

37 *Vat. Lat.* 6835f. 57^v.

there was the head of Medusa and compares these verses with two epigrams of Martial and a passage of Servius' commentary on Virgil:

Non est tibi, inquit, grauis Pallas, sed praetendit, hoc est porrigit tibi aegida, qua uti possis cum fuerit opus. In aegide Palladis Medusae caput erat. Facit de hac pulcherrimum epigramma Martialis libro septimo, cum ad Domicianum scribens inquit: "Accipe belligerae crudum Mineruae thoraca Ipsa Medusae quem timet ira comae Dum uacat hic Caesar poterit lorica uocari Pectore cum sacro sederit aegis erit". Item alibi: "Dic mihi, uirgo ferox, cum sit tibi cassis et hasta Quare non habeas aegida, Caesar habet". Seruius libro VIII: "<A>egis munimentum pectoris aereum habens in medio Gorgonis caput: quod munimentum si in pectore numinis fuerit, <a>egis uocatur, si in pectore hominis, sicut in antiquis statuīs imperatorum uidemus, lorica dicitur".

my transcription

[Stattius says] Pallas is not too heavy [for Domitian], but she holds you out, that is offers you [Domitian] her aegis, so that you can use it whenever you need it. On the aegis of Pallas there was the head of Medusa. On it Martial composes a beautiful epigram in the seventh book, when he writes to Domitian: 'Receive the savage breast-plate of warrior Minerva, thou whom even Medusa's wrathful tresses dread. While 'tis unworn, this, Caesar, may be called a cuirass; when it shall repose on a sacred breast, 'twill be an aegis' (Mart. *Epigr.* 7.1).³⁸ And yet in another poem: 'Tell me, gallant maid, whereas thou hast thy helm and thy spear, why hast thou not thin aegis? 'Caesar has it'' (Mart. *Apophor.* 14.179).³⁹ In the commentary on the eighth book [of Virgil's *Aeneid*], Servius says: 'The aegis is a bronze protection of the chest, which has the head of the Gorgon in the center. If this protection is on the chest of a deity, it is an aegis, if on the chest of a man, as we see in the ancient statues of the emperors, it is called a cuirass'.⁴⁰

Serv. A. 8.435 var. (except MARTIAL'S texts, my trans.)

Perotti here quotes passages of Martial and Servius. The first was not well known during the Middle Ages, probably because of his outspoken language.⁴¹

38 Engl. transl. by Ker (1919–1920) 1, 423.

39 Engl. transl. by Ker (1919–1920) 2, 503.

40 *Vat. Lat.* 6835f. 58^v.

41 See Hausmann (1980).

Only during the fifteenth century did manuscripts of his poems circulate among the Italian Humanists: the Roman circle played a decisive role also in Martial's fortune and Leto was probably one of the first teachers to use the poems of Martial in his classrooms.⁴²

From a philological point of view, the text of Martial was studied by Leto and Perotti, as we have seen, but especially the latter spent many years on the epigrams of Martial.⁴³ His most famous work, a huge Latin lexicon entitled *Cornu copiae*, is structured on the base of Martial's epigrams, which are the starting points of all his lexicographical investigations about the Latin words.⁴⁴

The second author quoted by Perotti is Servius, who was known during the Middle Ages thanks to the success of Virgil's poems in the scholastic curricula. Servius was certainly regarded as an *auctoritas*, in particular for explaining the meaning of the words and the differences between words, as we see also in this passage of Perotti.⁴⁵ An evaluation of the scholastic use of Servius in the Middle Ages is still a *desideratum* in our studies, but it seems that his commentaries were used especially at the higher levels of education.⁴⁶

During the fifteenth century, Sozomeno da Pistoia (1387–1458), a grammarian with a 'Humanist inclination', mentioned Servius for giving examples of grammatical usages.⁴⁷ Servius' commentary was used by Guarino Veronese⁴⁸ and criticised by Lorenzo Valla, whilst the Roman circle tried to outdo Servius' text by increasing the number of the Virgilian interpreters with other ancient sources. Thus, Leto put in circulation the so-called Probus' commentary and studied the commentary on the *Georgics* ascribed to Servius and preserved only in the MS. Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Vat. Lat.* 3317.⁴⁹

We can therefore conclude that, if in 1470 Perotti backs up his comments on a passage of the *Silvae* through quotations taken from Martial and Servius, he does not expect to be read by pupils of a school or of the university, who

42 See Black (2001) 140–141.

43 Perotti's long lasting critical activity on Martial is testified by his autograph manuscript, Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Vat. Lat.* 6848, which collects annotations written by Perotti during many years: see Ramminger (2001) and Pade (2005).

44 See the critical edition in eight volumes: Charlet *et alii* (1989–2001).

45 See Black (2001) 428–433. The use of Servius in marginal glosses is observed by Black (2001) 259 in the MS. Florence, BNCF ii.ix.113.

46 Black (2001) 255 mentions the MS. Florence, BML 38,22, containing Terence's comedies for scholastic use and observes that '... a couple of possibly more learned readers, working at same time, citing Priscian, Servius ...'.

47 Black (2001) 129–131.

48 See Ramires (2008) and (2016).

49 On Servius in Roman Humanism, see Abbamonte (2012) 29–60 (on Servius and Valla), 125–170 (on the Virgilian studies of Leto).

probably did not even know the names of Martial and Servius. Instead, he is confident that his friends at the Roman academy gathered by Bessarion will appreciate these erudite quotations:

Multa quippe reperiae quae cognitu dignissima uidebuntur, non tibi solum sed aliis quoque contubernalibus nostris et diui Bessarionis Academiam sequentibus.

MERCATI [1925] 157

You [Pirro Perotti] will find many themes that are most worthy of being known not only by you, but also by our other comrades who are members of the academy of the divine Bessarion.⁵⁰

That Perotti's commentary was not addressed to students needs not surprise us. Apart from a brief period of teaching in Bologna (1451–1452), he never worked again in the educational world for the rest of his life but was a bishop and above all a high servant of the pontifical administration.⁵¹ If we exclude Perotti, whose interest in the *Silvae* is unquestionable, we have not yet met a Roman Humanist who first brought the text of the *Silvae* into their classrooms. As we have seen, Leto copied for his private student Fabio Mazzatosta a manuscript containing both Statius' *Silvae* and *Achilleid* and one containing the *Thebaid*.⁵² Probably, Leto regarded Statius' poems worthy of being explained to his young pupil. However, Leto's use of Statius in private lessons does not imply a corresponding use in his teaching at the university of Rome. Moreover, neither Leto's works nor other sources provide any evidence that Leto lectured on the *Silvae* at the *Studium Urbis*.⁵³

The situation changed dramatically with the arrival of Domizio Calderini (1446–1478) in Rome. In fact, he explained the *Silvae* and many other 'new' Latin works in his classrooms.⁵⁴ Calderini arrived in Rome around 1466–1467, where

50 *Vat. Lat.* 6835f. 55^v. In the following lines of the preface Perotti lists all the member of this so-called academy of Bessarion: see Mercati (1925) 157–158. On the political meaning of this list made by Perotti see Stok (2011a) 81–84.

51 See Mercati (1925) 22–86 (government of Spoleto and Viterbo), 111–128 (government of Perugia), and D'Alessandro (2015).

52 It is the MS. Città del Vaticano, BAV, *Vat. Lat.* 3279.

53 For instance, in his life of Leto Marco Antonio Sabellico mentions the courses on Varro's *De lingua Latina*, on Sallust and Livy, and hints generically at Leto's lectures on Roman poets, but he does not mention explicitly Statius' *Silvae*: see Dell'Oro (2008) 216 (= Sabellico, *Pomponii uita* 29–32).

54 On the life of Calderini, his works and polemics with other Humanists see Levi (1900), Perosa (1973) and Ramminger (2014).

he was appointed secretary of cardinal Bessarion.⁵⁵ From 1470 until his death Calderini taught at the university of Rome, where his lessons were so successful that many students abandoned the classes of Leto for those of Calderini.⁵⁶ He was also the author of the first complete commentary still extant on the *Silvae*, which was printed in Rome in 1475.⁵⁷ The scholastic use of the *Silvae* by Calderini is testified by his pupil, Angelo Callimaco, who in a letter addressed to his brother from Velletri on July 1478, recalls the figure of Calderini, who had recently passed away, and praises his quality as professor:⁵⁸

Interpretatus est Marcum Valerium Martialem, qui propter antiquitatem et eius subtilitatem ignorabatur ... et Iunium Iuvenalem, opus profecto difficile, multis erroribus et amfractibus plenum, quod commentariis suis tam mite et placidum fecit quam ovem. Taceo Sylvas Papinii et Sylium Italicum, quae cum maxima omnium attentione, ut in ceteribus 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 ... Legit et publice et privatim Suetonium deditque auditoribus nonnulla dictata se digna.

[Calderini] lectured on Martial, who was misunderstood because of his antiquity and subtlety ... and on Juvenal, whose work is certainly difficult and full of errors and intricacies, but he made it mild and placid like a sheep with his commentaries. I omit to talk of Papinius' *Silvae* and Silius Italicus, whose works he taught with a care as great as for other works. I omit to talk of the divine *Aeneid*, on which he lectured together with

55 Perotti left his place as secretary of Bessarion in 1464, when he became governor of Viterbo, where he remained until 1469. We do not know when Calderini substituted Perotti.

56 On the success of Calderini at the university of Rome see the witness of his contemporary F. Floridus Sabinus quoted in Campanelli and Pincelli (2000) 140: 'The young Domitius taught Latin literature at the university of Rome, when Leto was still alive, and he so fascinated the soul of young people that almost everyone wished to listen to him. Therefore, they abandoned the classes of Leto and followed him.'

57 P. Papinius Statius, *Silvae* with the commentary of Domitius Calderinus, Rome, printer A. Pannartz, 13.viii.1475 ISTC is00697000. The incunable contains also Ovid's *Epistle to Sappho* with the commentary of Calderini, Calderini's discussion of some passages of Propertius and a miscellany of philological observations of Calderini. On the peculiar aspect of this book see Dionisotti (1968) and Campanelli (2001).

58 On Angelo Callimaco see Schizzerotto (1973).

the *Declamations* of Quintilian. In commenting on Virgil he explained Homer, the prince of the poets, too. In commenting on Quintilian he fully explained Cicero, too. I shall not mention Cicero's *Orator*, Ovid's *Heroides*, and Propertius, whose poetical technique and power of love he made clear ... He lectured on Suetonius both privately and at the university and distributed many *dictata* worthy of himself among his pupils.⁵⁹

Callimaco here lists the Latin authors whose works Calderini lectured on over the years: among the Greek authors only Homer is mentioned, although Calderini was actually appointed as Greek professor at the university of Rome.⁶⁰

Almost all the listed authors belong to the group of the 'new' authors discovered or rehabilitated during the fifteenth century (Martial, Statius' *Silvae*, Silius, Quintilian, Propertius)—Calderini evidently aimed to appear an up-to-date professor. On many of them Calderini published printed commentaries (Martial, Juvenal, Statius' *Silvae*, Silius, Ovid, Propertius);⁶¹ on others we are informed that he wrote commentaries, which remain in manuscripts (Silius, Suetonius' *Declamationes*, Virgil). Probably he planned to publish them, but he did not accomplish his projects because of his unexpected death.⁶²

However, the information given by Callimaco that Calderini lectured on Statius' *Silvae* at the *Studium Urbis* is confirmed by Calderini in a passage of the preface of his printed commentary on the *Silvae*, where he inserts the *Silvae* in the list of the works explained in the classes and commented on:

Multa enim inerant cum uetustate et temporum ignoratione inuersa, tum poetae ingenio duriusculaque elocutione abstrusa, quae omnia tuo no-

59 The letter is preserved in the MS. Roma, Bibl. Univ. La Sapienza, *Alessandrino* 239, f. 31rv, quoted by Campanelli and Pincelli (2000) 160, whose text I reproduce here.

60 The documents of the public record confirm that Calderini was appointed as professor of rhetoric for the years 1473–1474, and as professor of Greek in 1473: see Dorati da Empoli (1980) 119, 125. Probably, Callimaco did not attend Calderini's Greek classes.

61 Except the *Silvae*, Calderini published printed commentaries on Martial (Rome 1474, ISTC ic00036000), Ovid's *Ibis* (Rome 1474 ic00040000), Juvenal (Venice 1475 ij00642000), Ps. Quintilian's *Declamations* (Rome 1475 iq00021500), Ovid's *Letter of Sappho* (Brescia 1476 ic00042000). Calderini's observations to some passages of Propertius were published together with the commentary on the *Silvae* (see above note 56).

62 On Calderini's commentary on Silius see Muecke and Dunston (2011). Traces of his comments on Suetonius are in the edition printed posthumously in Milan (1480, ISTC is00821000), whilst Calderini's interests in Virgil are testified by a commentary on the poems of the *Appendix Vergiliana*, which was posthumously printed in Milan about 1480 (ISTC ic000039000), and by some manuscripts with fragmentary comments on Virgil's major works: see Farrell (2008).

mine emendare et explicare conati sumus, quanta ingenii doctrinaeque laude, non ausim affirmare, tantis certe laboribus, Augustine, ut maiores non attulerint: nec Martialis argutiae, nec uelatae Iuuenalis repraehensiones nec affectatae tenebrae Ouidii in Ibyn, nec inconstantes Propertii sensus et quaesitae fabulae, nec concisa Tranquilli sensa, nec aenigmata Ciceronis ad Atticum aut eius in Verrem iracundia eloquentiae artibus instructa. Quae omnia partim compositis, partim etiam editis commentariis interpretati sumus.

my transcription

There were many passages [of the *Silvae*] which had been perverted because of the antiquity of the *Silvae* and due to their ignorance produced by time. Others were misunderstood for the characteristics of the poet and his style that is sometimes difficult. We [Domitius] tried to correct them and to give an explanation in your name [Agostino Maffei]. We cannot say how successful our talents and doctrine have been, my dear Agostino, but we know that we worked for this commentary as hard as we did not for the previous [commentaries]: neither for the subtleties of Martial, nor for the veiled criticisms of Juvenal, nor for the striving obscurities of Ovid in the *Ibis*, nor for the inconstant feelings of Propertius or his refined tales, nor for the concise expressions of Tranquillus, neither for Cicero puzzling in the letters to Atticus nor for him staging his anger against Verres through the arts of eloquence. All these difficulties we have interpreted in our commentaries, which are partly accomplished, partly already published.⁶³

Although Calderini seems to address the commentary to the dedicatee, Agostino Maffei, in whose name he states to have written this work, we find here a list of authors explained in the classrooms which is very close to that given by Callimaco. That confirms that Calderini's commentary on the *Silvae* was born in the classrooms and was regarded by the author himself in the same category with his other works written for teaching purposes.⁶⁴

Moreover, after the dedication Calderini adds a poetic epistle in Phalécian hendecasyllables addressed to Francis of Aragon, son of the king of Naples, Ferrante. In the epistle, Calderini imagines himself addressing the poet Statius and inviting him to finally return to his beloved city, Naples. Calderini hints here at

63 Cald. *In Stat. Silv. Praef.* f. 3^v.

64 The scholastic origin of Calderini's commentary on the *Silvae* is underlined also by Coppini (2013) 317–318.

the fact that the *Silvae* have definitively demonstrated that Statius was originally from Naples, and not from Toulouse, as the medieval tradition believed.⁶⁵ Calderini adds that Statius' return to Naples has been made possible by his book containing both the *Silvae* and their commentary. In fact, Calderini's book has cleaned up the poems, here imagined as the body of the poet who is now in the condition to go back to Naples with dignity.⁶⁶ Under the metaphor of the dusty body Calderini is here hinting at the pitiful condition of the *Silvae* before he edited and commented on them. In Naples (Calderini continues) Statius will be again admired and acclaimed by the family of the king Ferrante, by the whole town, and in particular by the youth of Naples, educated by the poetry:⁶⁷

Illic nam tibi cuncta blandientur
 et tellus popularibus sonabit
 certans plausibus. Hos dabit iuventus
 fossos quae bibit ungula liquores,
 proles regia, te fovebit illa ...'

ll. 13–17, edited by COPPINI [2013] 333, and ABBAMONTE [2015] 184–185

There, everything will celebrate you and the earth will strive to make the people's applause resound. Applause that will offer the youth who drinks the beverages dug up by the nails [of Pegasus], and the royal lineage will favour you ...⁶⁸

Although Calderini underlines many times in the commentary his philological endeavour in correcting the text of the *Silvae*, the scholastic readership is implied in these verses, where Calderini presents his work to the Neapolitan youth as the right tool for appreciating the *Silvae*.

The layout of this incunabulum, too, reveals its educational nature and represents a novelty among the Quattrocento commentaries: every poem of the *Silvae* is immediately followed by the comment that refers to it. Every commentary to

65 On the medieval confusion between Statius and the Gallic rhetorician Statius Urculus, see above note 16. On the Humanistic lives of Statius and, in particular, on those written by Perotti and Leto see Pade (2015).

66 The title of the poem is *Domitius hortatur Statium Papinium ut redeat Neapolim in patriam, ubi ei blandietur Franciscus Aragonius regis Ferdinandi filius* ('Domizio invites Papinius Statius to return to his hometown, Naples, where he will be welcomed by Francesco d'Aragona, son of the king Ferrante') (Cald. *In Stat. Silv.* f. 4^v).

67 On the cultural and political meaning of the 'return' of Statius to the Aragonian Naples see Abbamonte (2015).

68 Cald. *In Stat. Silv.* f. 4^v.

each poem is in form of a letter to Agostino Maffei. In this way the reader finds easily and at a short distance the text of Statius and Calderini's interpretation, as it can be seen from the image of f. 8^v, where we note the last verses of *Silvae* 1.1 and the beginning of the comment on *Silvae* 1.1 in the form of letter.

The content of the comment recalls other works by Calderini, where precise explanations of the text, its construction and punctual paraphrases are offered to the readers, as we can see in the following examples taken from *Silvae* 1.1:

Explanation of a word (*idest / scilicet*):

Silv. 1.1.36 ('exploratas ... ministras'): 'the examined servants [of Vesta]'.⁶⁹

Cald. *In Stat. Silv.* f. 10^r: 'EXPLORATAS **idest** recognitas et coercitas a te [Domitian]' (my transcription): 'EXAMINED, i.e., approved and constrained by you'.

Explanation of a sentence (*Nam*):

Silv. 1.1.35 ('an tacita uigilet face Troicus igne'): 'or whether the brand of Trojan fire keep silent watch' (Engl. transl by Mozley 1,1928, 9).

Cald. *In Stat. Silv.* f. 10^r: 'TACITA FACE **Nam** sub cinere seruabat ignis' (my transcription): 'SILENT GRAND In fact the Vestals kept the fire under the ashes'.

Double interpretation of a sentence (*uel ... uel*):

Silv. 1.1.37 ('dextra uetat pugnas'): 'the right hand bids battle cease' (Engl. transl by Mozley 1,1928, 9).

Cald. *In Stat. Silv.* f. 10^r: 'DEXTRA VETAT PUGNAS **Vel** dextra est inermis in statua **uel** ad dextram est templum pacis, quod non placet' (my transcription): 'THE RIGHT HAND BIDS BATTLE CEASE Either the right hand is unarmed or on the right there is the temple of the Peace, but I do not prefer this explanation'.

Paraphrasis (*idest*):

Silv. 1.1.79 ('tu bella Iouis'): 'thou dost win the wars of Jove' (Engl. transl by Mozley 1,1928, 13).

Cald. *In Stat. Silv.* f. 11^r: 'TU BELLA IOVIS **Idest** tu gessisti bella pro Ioue Capitolino. **Nam** Domitianus cum patruo Sabino bellis Vitellianis puer adhuc Capitolium defendit' (my transcription): 'THOU DOST WIN THE WARS OF JOVE, i.e., you fought for defending the Capit-

69 I follow the translation and the comment on this line proposed by Geysen (1996) 90.

oline Jupiter. In fact, when he was still a boy, Domitian together with his uncle Sabinus defended the Capitol during the Vitellian war’.

From such passages it turns out clearly that Calderini’s commentary is addressed to students and teachers. Besides them Calderini accumulates erudite information such as explanations of myths or geographical descriptions. They are accompanied with quotations and paraphrases drawn from an extensive selection of Greek writers (in original or in translation) and Latin ones, as we can see, for instance, in Calderini’s explanation of the constellation named Orion (*Silv.* 1.1.45), where he combines astronomical, mythological, and meteorological information taken by Greek and Latin writers:

Orion, auis Indica canora, ut scribit Clitharchus, eiusdem nominis qui ex deorum urina natus dicitur, ut Ouidius in *Fastis* canit. || Translatus est in caelum cum ense, sydus tempestosum. Hyginus ex Aristomacho, Pindaro, Hesiodo et Istrio fabulosa de hoc persequitur. Strabo loci meminit in agro Thebano, ubi fabula gesta dicitur.

my transcription

Orion is an Indian songbird, as Clitarchus writes, whose name is said to stem from the urine of the gods, as Ovid sings in the *Fasti* (5.533–536). He was transported to heaven together with his sword [and became] a bad weathering star. Based on the testimony of Aristomachus, Pindar, Hesiod and Istrio, Hyginus (*astr.* 2.34.1) presents the tale about Orion. Strabo (9.2.12) mentions the place in the Theban territory where the story is said to have taken place.⁷⁰

After 1475 Calderini’s commentary is often reprinted well into the sixteenth century, and the *Silvae* appear regularly in scholastic curricula. As we have seen, whilst the remaining part of Perotti’s commentary shows that this text was conceived for a scholarly readership, both the notes of Leto and the printed commentary of Calderini aimed to insert the *Silvae* into the scholastic selection of Latin authors. However, all three Humanists were united in their common interest in explaining Statius’ difficult language and the complex allusions he makes both to rare myths and to events of his own day.

Of course, behind this effort to explain the text of the *Silvae* there lay also an ambition to become the ‘official’ interpreter of a text which did not have a

⁷⁰ Cald. *In Stat. Silv.* f. 10rv.

previous tradition of commentaries, like Virgil's poems did. This competition was probably also one of the reasons for the bitter quarrel between Perotti and Calderini.

Later, still in Rome, Aulo Giano Parrasio (1470–1521) held courses on the *Silvae* in two periods (1497–1499 and between 1515 and 1519).⁷¹ During his first stay in Rome Parrasio also went to attend the course on the *Silvae* held by Antonio Amiternino (1455/1460–1522), but he left the class disappointed.⁷² After Rome there were lectures on the *Silvae* in many Italian and then European towns. In the 1480's of Quattrocento Poliziano first lectured on the *Silvae* in Florence (1480) and then composed the first Latin poems of the Early modern age entitled *Silvae*.⁷³

After the long silence of the Middle Ages the *Silvae* became known and read again thanks to the efforts of the Roman Humanists, in particular Leto, Perotti, and especially Domizio Calderini who brought the *Silvae* into his classrooms at the University of Rome. After 1475 Calderini's printed commentary guaranteed a large circulation of the *Silvae* and allowed Poliziano to feel free to entitle *Silvae* a collection of his poems and to take this genre of poems finally back home on the Parnassus.⁷⁴

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71 See Abbamonte (2003).

72 Campanelli and Picelli (2000) 141.

73 Roman's chapter in this volume is dedicated to Poliziano's composition of *Silvae* and exegesis of Statius' *Silvae*.

74 Last, but not least, I want to thank Ermanno Malaspina, Marianne Pade, Giovanni Polara, Fabio Stok, and Felicia Toscano, who read a first draft of this essay. Their suggestions made this work much better than it was originally.

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