



roma nel rinascimento

2013

*bibliografia e note*

1. GIANCARLO ABBAMONTE, *Diligentissimi uocabulorum perscrutatores. Lessicografia ed esegesi dei testi classici nell'Umanesimo romano di XV secolo*, Pisa, Edizioni ETS, 2012 (Testi e studi di cultura classica, 56), pp. 241.

The volume is focused on Roman humanism in the second half of the Quattrocento; its major figures are Lorenzo Valla, Giovanni Tortelli, Niccolò Perotti and Pomponio Leto. It contains five chapters in two parts, each dedicated to a specific philological problem; the first three concern lexicographical topics, the theoretical premises of the study of lexicography in Roman humanism, circling around Valla and Servius (chap. I), humanist lexicography, concerning Tortelli, Perotti and Giuniano Maio (chap. II), and lexicographic terminology and the periodization of the authors quoted in Perotti's *Cornu copiae* (chap. III); the remaining two are case-studies related to the exegesis of Virgil by Leto (chap. IV) and its reception in modern commentaries (chap. V). Thus, while the individual chapters can be read separately, the overarching theme is the development of humanist semantic studies in a relatively short time frame from the late 1440s (Valla's *Elegantiae*) to 1480 (death of Perotti), and to Leto's Virgil-lectures, some of which may even be somewhat later. The volume is extremely rich in detailed observations, to which the following purview of two chapters can hardly do justice. The chapter on Perotti (chap. III) is a painstaking analysis of two terms (pp. 105-121). The first one is *elegantia*, a

“Vallian term *par excellence*” (p. 105). The author collects various esthetic judgements of Perotti in the *Cornu copiae*, and points out the Vallian origins of Perotti's concept of ‘elegance’, which continued to make itself felt also in Perotti's openness towards neologisms and words taken from the *sermo vulgaris*. A certain formulaic repetitiveness in Perotti's phraseology might according to Abbamonte (p. 115) be a sign that they were taken from an earlier collection of elegant Latin expressions put together by the humanist. More work will be needed to confirm this, but as a speculation it is quite plausible. The second term is (*auctores*) *recentiores*; it is central in Perotti's periodization of Latin literature, which is divided into the pre-Ciceronian *veteres* or *antiqui*, a classical period, and the *recentiores* from Apuleius to Augustine (the latter according to Abbamonte probably an innovation of Perotti, p. 121). The *recentiores*-category is somewhat diffuse, since it not only comprises authors which he mentions by name approvingly (Apuleius, Claudian, Fulgentius etc.), but also – with a negative undertone – an undefined and unnamed group of ‘later’ authors whose latinity was not acceptable.

Among Pomponio Leto's widespread philological activities his interest in Virgil occupies a prominent place (chap. IV, pp. 125-170). Pomponio's scholarship is, however, not easily accessible, since it is spread between university lectures (transmitted in more or less reliable student notes), commentaries (esp. the pirated *opera*

*omnia*-volume with commentary, Brescia 1485, which despite its disavowal by Leto contains Pomponian material), and marginal annotations (overview pp. 129-135). Portions were reprinted for a long period in the omnibus-commentaries of the following centuries. The author assembles no less than nine mss. of different scope. These commentaries seem not to be derived from a finished text by Leto himself and can differ considerably from each other, not in the least because they reflect chronologically diverse strata of Leto's philology. The author in a methodically sound decision prints the various versions in parallel, basing his conclusions on what with some certainty may be considered Pomponian. Abbamonte shows that from sheer didactic necessity Leto used Servius as an easily accessible work of reference. Still, he determinedly tries to displace him, by never mentioning his name (unlike other sources) and by criticisms aimed at revealing his inferior worth. Alternative Virgil-commentaries he found in pseudo-Probus and the commentary tradition usually known as *Servius auctus*. Little is known of the Servius auctus-commentary to the Georgics transmitted by the ms. Vat. lat. 3317, before it enters the library of Fulvio Orsini as a gift from Paolo Manuzio late in the sixteenth century, but, as the author's painstaking analysis shows, it was already in Rome a century earlier and used by Leto. Abbamonte can even show different strata in Leto's use, proceeding from direct access to the Vaticanus to a reliance on a copy of the Vaticanus in his own philological work which had integrated the Vaticanus-glosses. The commentary under the name of the first-century grammarian

Probus had been brought into the philological debate by Leto at the very beginning of the 1470s (the *editio princeps* only dates from 1507). The humanist largely uses the new text in his strategy to replace Servian exegesis wherever possible, although, as the author shows, the new source is not used uncritically (p. 161). Abbamonte discusses a case where Leto uses information from Pliny's *Natural History* to correct Probus, and makes probable that Leto as his base text of Pliny used one of the Roman editions by Bussi and Perotti (which incidentally are shown to be much less different from each other than the controversy surrounding Perotti's edition has lead readers – and scholars – to believe: p. 163 sgg.). Characteristics of Leto's use of Pliny as well as the greater accessibility of Perotti's Pliny make it probable that Leto used the text established by his close friend and collaborator Perotti as his base text (p. 169 sg.).

The studies presented in this volume are characterized by abundant attention to detail backed by a profound sensitivity to semantic nuance. The volume does not present a coherent narrative, but case-studies united by chronological as well as geographical coherence (aside from the Neapolitan Giuniano Maio who is used by Abbamonte as a counterfoil to highlight the conceptual characteristics of the Roman humanists discussed, pp. 95-103). Argued with considerable depth, they reward the patient reader with rich insights into the development of the linguistic side of Roman humanism and the inner mechanics of the humanists' *modus operandi* of (re-)constructing Latin.

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*RR roma nel rinascimento*

Registrazione del Tribunale di Roma  
nr. 403 del 23 ottobre 2007

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Finito di stampare nel mese di dicembre 2013 da

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