

Alessandro Daneloni:

Poliziano e il testo dell'Institutio oratoria

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The main goal of Alessandro Daneloni's *Poliziano e il testo dell'Institutio oratoria* is to shed light on the novel approach to the reading and emendation of classical Greek and Latin texts that was developed, at the end of the fifteenth century, by the Italian Renaissance poet and humanist Angelo Poliziano (1454-94). To this end, as he explains in the Preface ("Premessa", pp. 7-8), Daneloni has examined Poliziano's incunabulum copy of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, using the extensive apparatus of inserted marginal notes to document the humanist's systematic study of Quintilian's first-century Latin text. A classical philologist himself, Daneloni focuses on those annotations in the incunabulum that reflect Poliziano's method of textual criticism, especially his use of manuscripts and his conjectures: put together, this material offers a look into Poliziano's philological workshop (p. 8).

Given its philological focus, it may seem an odd decision to review Daneloni's book in a journal whose area of specialization is the history of rhetoric. However, Poliziano was not working on just any classical text, and, as Daneloni stresses in Chapter 1 ("Le nuove scelte didattiche" ['The new didactic choices'], pp. 9-20), Poliziano's work did not serve philological purposes only. In the academic year 1480-81, Poliziano began his career as Professor of Rhetoric and Poetry at the Florentine university, the *Studio fiorentino*, by lecturing on two texts from the so-called Silver Age of Latin literature, namely the *Silvae* of the Roman poet Statius, and the Roman rhetorician Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* (p. 10). As Daneloni shows, by choosing these two first-century texts, Poliziano followed in the footsteps of Lorenzo Valla (1406-57), the renowned philologist and rhetorician who had, in the middle of the fifteenth century when he was based in Rome, challenged the reigning Ciceronianism of his time and decided to lecture on Quintilian's rhetorical work instead. Whereas Valla's decision was directed, first and foremost, against the pedagogical program of his predecessor at the *Studio* in Rome, George of Trebizond (1395-1472/73), Poliziano's similar manifestation was directed, first and foremost, against the classical (mainly Ciceronian and Horatian) syllabus of his senior colleague at the *Studio* in Firenze, Cristoforo Landino (1424-98).

Poliziano used his inaugural lecture¹ to present and defend the choices of his first academic syllabus. As for Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, Poliziano argued that, thanks to its clear structure and systematic discussion of all aspects of eloquence, it was the best guide to the study of classical rhetoric (p. 10). While emphasizing that this did not imply any disparagement of Cicero, Poliziano

¹ *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis*, discussed by Daneloni, pp. 10-11, with bibliographical references.

nevertheless pointed to the unsystematic presentation of rhetoric in Cicero's work, and to the fact that, in *De oratore*, Cicero had distanced himself from his earliest theoretical work, *De inventione*; while in *Orator*, which mainly deals with the question of style, he distanced himself from *De oratore* (p. 13). Further, Poliziano argued for the restoration of the complete heritage from antiquity and against the description of the first-century texts as 'corrupt and depraved'; they are merely different, representing a change in the view of literature and rhetoric (p. 16). Daneloni describes this attitude of Poliziano's as 'relativist' and forming 'an historical view of Latin rhetoric in constant movement and evolution, with positive or negative characteristics that are particular to different phases and epochs' (p. 17).²

Whereas Poliziano's preparatory notes for his lectures on Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* are lost, the notes for his lectures on Statius' poems are still preserved, offering sporadic information as well on Poliziano's didactic use of Quintilian's text in the context of his poetry classes.³ By contrast, as Daneloni writes, Poliziano's annotations in the incunabulum copy only offer material for very general hypotheses as regards the context of his actual lectures on rhetoric in 1480-81 (p. 18).

Chapter 2 ("L'incunabulo magliabechiano" ['The incunabulum from the Magliabechian collection'], pp. 21-37) presents the 1476 edition of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, which was in Poliziano's possession and which he used as a basis for his study and revision of the Latin text. The incunabulum was printed in Milan, at the press of Antonio Zarotto (p. 21). There is no indication in the book of the editor of the text, but Daneloni suggests a number of scholars who might have contributed to the editorial work, including Pietro Giustino Filelfo and Pietro Agostino Filelfo (pp. 23-24). According to Daneloni, the Latin text of the incunabulum is based on the ninth-century manuscript now known as the MS Ambrosiano E 153 sup. (of the Milanese Biblioteca Ambrosiana) (p. 25). However, the incunabulum also contains readings that can be traced back to the younger humanist branch of the manuscript tradition, among other sources to the manuscript now known as MS Par. lat. 7723 (of the Bibliothèque nationale de France), which had belonged to Lorenzo Valla (p. 26).

Poliziano's incunabulum contains handwritten annotations of various kinds: from added page numbers to textual variants as well as comments that illuminate the contents of the text and are clearly related to the humanist's preparation of his 1480-81 academic course (p. 27). Most of these comments are found in the margins to the text of Books 1 and 2, and either refer to or quote Greek and Latin grammarians, rhetoricians, and lexicographers, indicating, as Daneloni notes, Poliziano's specific interest in the relationship between grammar and rhetoric (p. 28). Apart from the many notes inserted by Poliziano, there are a few additions by later hands, one of these belonging to Pier Vettori (1499-1585), the last owner of the book before it became a part of the collections of the Biblioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, and later, in 1783, was incorporated into the Magliabechian Library (the collections of which form the basis of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze) (pp. 31-32). Daneloni explains the surprisingly few later additions to the incunabulum as an expres-

² "Sulle coordinate di tali fonti si muovono, dunque, il relativismo di Poliziano in materia di eloquenza, la sua visione storica di un'eloquenza latina in costante movimento ed evoluzione, con caratteristiche, sia positive sia negative, peculiari e definite nelle diversi fasi ed epoche" (p. 17); the English translations are the reviewer's.

³ The editio princeps of Poliziano's manuscript lecture notes is Lucia Cesarini Martinelli (ed.): Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Selve di Stazio* (Firenze: Sansoni editore), a masterly volume that Daneloni often refers to in the book under review.

sion of the ‘quasi-sacred respect’ (“quel rispetto quasi sacrale”) that surrounded all of Poliziano’s autograph work, both while he was alive (and often sharing his books with scholarly friends) and after his death: already Poliziano’s contemporaries saw his work, including his emendation of Quintilian’s Latin text, as an important historical testimony, to be treated with care in order to be preserved for the future (p. 34).

On the basis of meticulous analysis of the contents of the inserted corrections and comments, documented in Chapters 3 and 4 (see below), Daneloni has been able to discover the various stages of Poliziano’s effort, concluding that the humanist began to work on Quintilian’s text in the middle of 1480 (p. 36), and characterizing his earliest efforts at collating the text with the manuscript sources at his disposal as ‘youthful’ and ‘not without uncertainties, still in a formative phase’ (p. 36).⁴ According to Daneloni’s analysis, the various types of ink used by Poliziano suggest a chronology of the work and of the development of a gradually stricter method of notation (p. 36). Comparing Poliziano’s later studies of classical texts with his emendation of Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*, Daneloni affirms that this early scholarly project of Poliziano’s was carried out ‘without a precise plan, in several spurts, and with a certain discontinuity’ (p. 37).⁵

Chapters 3 and 4, then, contain the bulk of Daneloni’s study: the results of his examination of Poliziano’s corrections and comments in the Quintilian incunabulum. Thus, in Chapter 3 (“Il laboratorio” [‘The laboratory’], pp. 39-136), Daneloni offers an in-depth analysis of a great number of Poliziano’s textual corrections in order to show which Quintilian manuscripts he must have had access to. According to Daneloni, these include ancient ninth- and tenth-century manuscripts as well as contemporary fifteenth-century humanist manuscript copies; both manuscripts belonging to the Medici Library, which Poliziano used freely (e.g. the tenth-century MS Laurenziano plut. 46.7), and manuscripts borrowed from elsewhere (e.g. the ninth-century Ambrosiano F 111 sup., which is a representative of the mutilated manuscript branch that was well known in the medieval period). As part of Daneloni’s documentation, this chapter also contains (on pp. 70-83) a very useful overview of the humanist manuscript tradition, that is, the fifteenth-century manuscript copies that are directly or indirectly dependent on the complete Quintilian manuscript famously rediscovered in 1416 by Poggio Bracciolini.⁶

In Chapter 4 (“Verso il testo critico” [‘Towards the critical edition’], pp. 137-222), Daneloni shows how Poliziano employed the manuscript studies in philological practice, illuminating Poliziano’s effort with examples from the philological studies of such Quintilian scholars as his predecessor Domizio Calderini (c. 1446-78; e.g. pp. 176-77) and his contemporary Raffaele Regio (c. 1450-1520; e.g. pp. 179 and 181). By analyzing and critically evaluating a great number of Poliziano’s textual corrections, Daneloni is able to reconstruct the various phases of Poliziano’s

⁴ “Tipica di questo periodo giovanile è la tecnica di collazione non priva di incertezze, ancora in fase di formazione” (p. 36).

⁵ “Un lavoro, insomma, che già da queste prime indicazioni si configura come svolto dal Poliziano senza un preciso progetto, in più riprese e con una certa discontinuità”, p. 37.

⁶ Chapter 3 includes the following subdivisions: “L’*antiquus* dei Medici” (‘The *antiquus* belonging to the Medici’), pp. 39-52; “Il *codex intercisus*” (‘The mutilated manuscript’), pp. 53-66; “Il *codex poggianus* e la tradizione quattrocentesca” (‘The Poggio manuscript and the fifteenth-century tradition’), pp. 66-124; “Tempi e modi dell’approccio ai manoscritti” (‘Stages and methods of the manuscript studies’), pp. 124-127; “Il restauro delle grafie” (‘Restoring the orthography’), pp. 128-136.

emendation of the incunabulum text and to paint a convincing picture of the progress of Poliziano's work and of his development into a consummate editor.⁷

In his Conclusion ("Conclusione", pp. 223-227), Daneloni points to the impressive range of manuscripts that Poliziano ended up having at his disposal. From the most ancient testimonies to the humanist copies, the manuscripts 'on Poliziano's desk' represented 'all the principal branches of the tradition as mapped out in the most recent reconstruction by [Michael] Winterbottom' (p. 223).⁸ Hampered by the fact that, from the start, in 1480, Poliziano did not have sufficient time to concentrate solely on the *Institutio oratoria*, having also to prepare his first lectures on Statius' *Silvae* and subsequently finding himself occupied by other commitments, his project of emending Quintilian's text remained unfinished (p. 223). Daneloni acknowledges that the results of Poliziano's work-in-constant-progress ("costante travaglio" – "una continua ricerca", p. 224) may not compare to the Quintilian studies by Lorenzo Valla and Raffaele Regio. However, as he argues, the novelty and rigor of Poliziano's philological method represent considerable progress compared to Valla's approach: whereas Valla saw the individual scholar's learning as the most important tool in his philological work, Poliziano privileged a historical perspective requiring the learned editor to discern between manuscripts, according to their age, and to study them in a diachronic manner (p. 226). As Daneloni observes, this philological-critical method would be taken up by Raffaello Regio, in the last part of the fifteenth century, and further developed, in the sixteenth century, by Pier Vettori and, not least, by Joseph Justus Scaliger (p. 227).

The volume closes with 'Editorial notes' ("Note editoriali", pp. 231-232) on the manuscripts used and the editorial principles employed in the book, followed by four indices: 'Index of tables' ("Indice delle tavole", pp. 233-234); 'Index of manuscript sources and Renaissance imprints' ("Indice delle fonti manoscritte e delle stampe antiche", pp. 235-239); 'Index of passages quoted from *Institutio oratoria*' ("Indice dei luoghi dell'*Institutio oratoria*", pp. 241-246); and, finally, 'Index of names' ("Indice dei nomi", pp. 247-253).

With *Poliziano e il testo dell'Institutio oratoria*, Alessandro Daneloni paints a convincing picture of the young Poliziano, eager to set off on his academic path, preparing for his first classes as a professor at the famous *Studio fiorentino*, choosing exciting and untraditional teaching material, and doing as much as he can with it – before having to leave the editorial project unfinished, only to be returned to now and then, in 'spurts, and with a certain discontinuity' (p. 37; cf. note 5 above).

This is a generous book: it offers new insights – documented by extensive source material – into the reception of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* in the late fifteenth century. And the author never fails to refer his readers to the previous scholarship that constitutes the multifaceted background to his own work.

⁷ Chapter 4 includes the following subdivisions: "Tracce di primitivi scrutini" ('Traces of [Poliziano's] earliest investigations'), pp. 137-150; "Tra correzione, congettura ed esegesi" ('Between correction, conjecture, and exegesis'), pp. 150-222.

⁸ "Sul suo tavolo di lavoro l'umanista allineò una ricca collezione di manoscritti quintiliani, nella quale, certo in modo del tutto casuale, finivano per essere rappresentati tutti i principali rami della tradizione così come fissati nella più recente ricostruzione di Winterbottom", p. 223. On pp. 21-23 (note 1), Daneloni offers a list of Michael Winterbottom's authoritative work on Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, including the standard Oxford edition (Oxford University Press, 1970) and the contribution on Quintilian to L. D. Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission* (Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 332-34.

What little criticism I have is limited to quibbles. For example, one might claim that Daneloni's observations on the principles guiding his own scrutiny of the manuscript sources would have been more useful had they been placed in the introduction to the book (and in the main text), and not, as is the case, at the end of the book (as well as in footnotes, e.g. note 1, pp. 42-3, in which Daneloni presents the symbols used in his rendering of Poliziano's annotations). However, this is a minor issue in the context of a book that manages to communicate great amounts of information, and that is, in general, very clearly structured. A focused study, Daneloni's book actually touches upon several large topics: Quintilian's rhetorical text and its manuscript transmission; Poliziano's life and work; the history of Italian humanist scholarship; the techniques of textual criticism. It is not a small accomplishment that these wide-ranging discussions are, in fact, well organized, centered as they are around the detailed examination of influences and developments in Poliziano's methodology.

Daneloni's book is also a valuable supplement to Michael Winterbottom's fundamental studies of the manuscript tradition of Quintilian's work through the Italian Renaissance. Since the appearance of Daneloni's book (which we review 8 years after its publication in 2001), the discussion of the *fortuna* of Quintilian's work in the fifteenth century has continued, most recently with, e.g., Edoardo Fumagalli's "Raffaele Regio e il testo di Quintiliano: osservazioni sull'Ambr. T 22 sup."⁹ For obvious reasons, Daneloni's book is cited in Fumagalli's article, just as it will be cited in other future scholarship dealing with Angelo Poliziano and the development of textual criticism, and with the history of the transmission and reception of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*.

This is not a book that most historians of rhetoric will read from beginning to end. But it deserves to be a standard work for those scholars and students interested in Quintilian: philologically-inclined rhetoricians will be using Daneloni's discussions of Poliziano's annotations to inform their readings of the classical Latin text; historically-inclined rhetoricians will be consulting the book for an outline of the dissemination of the *Institutio oratoria* and the way it was read and studied in the Italian Renaissance.

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⁹ Published in Mirella Ferrari and Marco Navoni (eds.), *Nuove ricerche su codici in scrittura latina dell'Ambrosiana: Atti del Convegno, Milano, 6-7 ottobre 2007* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2007), pp. 384-407.