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ARCHITECTURE & POETRY.
THE LETTER OF RAPHAËL TO POPE LEO X
AND THE INTRODUCTIONS TO A FEW HUMANIST EDITIONS
OF CONSTANTINIAN POETRY.

« *Such is poetry's answer to the Arch of Constantine.* »
A. MacGregor¹

This paper will no doubt be disappointing in some aspects, since it will not set forth any newly gained insights in Renaissance art theory. It originated by accident, in the course of the research on Latin poetry of the Constantinian era conducted at the University of Ghent. It is the result of some detour that should not really have been taken, but nevertheless was – out of curiosity.

In the following, we would like to take the reader along on this detour, for it leads past some interesting humanist text editions and their prefaces, along with Raphael's letter and the ideas on fourth-century poetry and art expressed there. In the end, one might be left wondering whether this route has actually led somewhere. Merely taking the route, however, imbibing the scenery and having some interesting spots off the beaten track pointed out can be a reward on its own. And fortunately, there is the advantage that a number of these introductory letters offer an entertaining insight into the everyday world of Renaissance scholars and publishers, which can be quite amusing.

But first things first: we must set forth the nature of this research and how it led to this detour through Renaissance text editions and Raphael's letters.

THE MODERN APPROACH TO CONSTANTINIAN POETRY

Even though Late Antique poetry is not that popular to begin with, it seems that the poetry of the Constantinian era in particular – which roughly comprises the first half of the fourth century AD, from about 313 to 361 – is even lesser studied and read. A number of poets can be dated to this era with certainty. The most notable are Juvencus, who wrote the biblical epic *Evangeliorum Libri IV*, Avienus, who has left us three didactic poems (the *Arati Phaenomena*, the *Descriptio Orbis Terrae* and the *Ora Maritima*), Optatianus, a court poet who wrote a number of eulogies in the shape of figurative poems (the so-called *Panegyricus Constantini*), and Lactantius, if the poem *De ave Phoenice* can be attributed to him. A number of other poets and poems are of uncertain date and can be placed anywhere, from right before to right after this period, and everywhere in between. Very little research has been done for these texts². Why is unclear. Perhaps because of the uncertain authorship, the

¹ A. MacGregor, « Beast-lore : catuli and lioness at Tiberianus 2.14 », *The American Journal of Philology*, 111, 1990, p. 395-397.

² Juvencus might be the most popular among the unpopular. Recently a number of partial commentaries were devoted to him, while most scholarly attention is focused on his technique of biblical rewriting, its (generic)

fragmentary state and the occasional lack of the most elementary data of some of these texts? Consequently, most scholars concentrate on the poetry of the second half and end of the fourth century, when more prominent and prolific writers were active, among whom Ausonius of Bordeaux, Claudianus, Prudentius, etc.

It used to be that scholars saw this late antique poetry as degenerated, as « la fin de la poésie profane latine », characterised by « dilettantisme et jeux formels³ ». Nowadays, they are usually satisfied with the label « different ». It does not really matter which judgement is right – perhaps both are. But in any case, scholars have been confronted by the nature of these texts, which display an aesthetic that is very different from previous ones in Latin poetry, and have tried to grasp the nature of this Late Antique aesthetic, or at least to delineate some of its characteristics⁴. A recurrent strategy has been to look at the contemporary visual arts, which provide an interesting perspective on fourth century poetry. One notable example is M. Roberts, who developed the idea that fourth century poetry was characterised by a strong penchant for the episodic and visuality, resulting in what he called « a jeweled style », a metaphor for the poetic technique and taste of the era : a technique resembling the goldsmith's, in which the larger text is but the frame onto which precious jewels are carefully welded, thus emphasising and isolating the delicate and sparkling textual showpieces from the larger context ; the more craftsmanship an intricate jewel requires, the more it is appreciated ; this imagery of sparkling jewels, colouring and flowery passages he finds mirrored in meta-poetic language ; moreover, the same principles are active, according to Roberts, in such visual arts as mosaic and relief art, or even in contemporary dress, for which he provides some very interesting illustrations⁵.

This line of research has proven very stimulating and other parallels with Late Antique art have cropped up, such as the spolia-technique, the technique of reusing existing material or art in new architectural or sculptural creations, and which came into frequent use during the reign of Constantine – the most famous example doubtlessly being the Arch of Constantine (image 1).

implications and his own reflection on it. He features in a number of major studies devoted to biblical epic, among which R. Herzog, *Die Biblepik der lateinischen Spätantike*, München, 1975, M. Roberts, *Biblical epic and rhetorical paraphrase in late antiquity*, Liverpool, 1985, and R. P. H. Green, *Latin epics of the New Testament : Juvenius, Sedulius, Arator*, Oxford, 2006.

³ J. D. Berger & J. Billen, *Dictionnaire des auteurs grecs et latins de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Âge*, Turnhout, 1991, p. 90, s.v. Ausonius.

⁴ See, for example, E. Sánchez Salor, « La última poesía latino-profana. Su ambiente », *Estudios clásicos*, 25, 1981, p. 111-62. ; J.-L. Charlet, « Aesthetic Trends in Late Latin Poetry (325-410) », *Philologus*, 132, 1988, p. 74-85 ; or A. Alvar Ezquerro, « Realidad e ilusión en la poesía latina tardoantigua : notas a propósito de estética literaria », *Emerita*, 40, 1992, p. 1-20.

⁵ M. Roberts, *The jeweled style. Poetry and poetics in late antiquity*, Ithaca (NY), 1989, chapter 3: Poetry and the Visual Arts.



Image 1: South front of the Arch of Constantine, with colours indicating the sources of the spolia (Red – Trajan | Yellow – Marcus Aurelius | Blue – Hadrian | Green – Constantine)

Both Beat Brenk and Dale Kinney, among others, have written extensively on the subject of *spolia* in Late Antiquity⁶. When transferred to the world of Late Antique poetry, one immediately recognizes the Latin *centones* as a direct parallel to these architectural spolia⁷. For what is a *cento*, other than the reuse of existing material? The most complete definition is to be found in Ausonius' prefatory letter to his *Cento Nuptialis*, but suffice it to define the cento as a piece of poetry that is entirely composed of verses and demi-verses borrowed from existing poems, usually epic. For the Latin world, Vergil provides the most popular stock of verse; for the Greeks this would be Homer. Notorious examples from the fourth century are Ausonius' *Cento Nuptialis*, a poem that describes a wedding night in Vergilian verse – one is amazed at the erotic innuendo that can be gained from resampling Vergil – and the so-called *Cento Probae*, an epic reworking of the biblical story, from Genesis to the New Testament, in vergilian verse. In the preface to her work, Proba points out the rationale behind her cento:

Vergilium cecinisse loquar pia munera Christi

⁶ See D. Kinney, « Roman Architectural Spolia », *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 145, 2001, p. 138-50, and B. Brenk, *Architettura e immagini del sacro nella tarda antichità*, Spoleto, 2005, chapter 6: Spolia.

⁷ The *cento* is linked to various forms of reuse, ranging from architecture – F. J. González Ponce, « Sobre el valor histórico atribuible al contenido de Ora Maritima: las citas de los Iberos y de otros pueblos, como paradigma », *Faventia*, 15, 1993, p. 45-60 – to the lay-out of the Tabula Peutingeriana – R. Talbert, « Cartography and Taste in Peutinger's Roman Map », *Space in the Roman World*, ed. R. Talbert & K. Brodersen, Münster, 2004, p. 113-41. A key study is S. McGill, *Vergil recomposed: the mythological and secular centos in antiquity*, Oxford, 2005.

Vergil, I say, has sung the pious gifts of Christ
(*Cento Probae*, 22)

And, elsewhere, one reads:

Maronem | *mutatum in melius*

Vergil, rearranged for the better
(*Cento Probae*, *Praefatio* 3-4)

Whereas for Ausonius the cento was devoid of seriousness – he mentions a playful contest between him and the father of his pupil, emperor Valentinian, as the origin of his *Cento Nuptialis* – Proba uses Vergil as a sort of moral authority, in order to underpin the value of the Christian content of her poem⁸. And this is exactly how both Brenk and Kinney interpret the architectural spolia of the Arch of Constantine, not as a sign of economic or creative draught, but as a programmatic move: by incorporating sculpture of Trajan, Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius into the Arch, alongside Constantinian sculpture, Constantine places himself in the tradition of these « good » emperors, implying that his rule was already announced in theirs. These Antonine emperors had already sung the pious gifts of Constantine. Brenk speaks of some sort of cannibalism: by eating their enemies, cannibalist tribes hope to acquire some of the powers of their enemies⁹. This is but one example of how parallels can be drawn between poetry and the visual arts.

Juvenius, one of the two authors on whom this paper will focus, serves equally well as a guinea pig. There has been an extensive debate on the dating of Juvenius' *magnum opus* – sole opus, as far as we know – the *Evangeliorum Libri IV*, but most recently Roger Green seems to have returned to the roots, claiming that « the chronological question, then, is not one to be solved in conventional historical terms, and there are no grounds for doubting Jerome's date of 329¹⁰ ». This dating, along with the dedication to Constantine in the epilogue to the epic, places Juvenius, the Spanish priest, in the midst of the Constantinian era. Let us, now, take a look at what art historians have said about the art of this time and compare this to the poetry of this era – and vice versa. One of the characteristics that Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli posits for the Constantinian art is a certain penchant towards symbolism¹¹. An indication of this is the rigorous division between the different groups of people on the fourth-century friezes of the Arch of Constantine (image 2) – the emperor, for example, is the only one in frontal display – and sometimes their disproportionate portrayal.

⁸ On the failure of this enterprise, see M. Hose, « Konstantin und die Literatur – oder : Gibt es eine Konstantinische Literatur ? », *Gymnasium*, 114, 2007, p. 552-554, who refers to R. Herzog, *Die Biblepik der lateinischen Spätantike*, München, 1975, or K. Pollmann, « Sex and Salvation in the Vergilian *Cento* of the Fourth Century », *Romane memento: Vergil in the Fourth Century*, éd. R. Rees, London, 2004, p. 79-96.

⁹ B. Brenk, *Architettura e immagini*, p. 197.

¹⁰ R. P. H. Green, *Latin epics of the New Testament*, p. 7.

¹¹ R. Bianchi Bandinelli, *Rome: la fin de l'art antique*, Paris, 1970.



Image 2 – *Oratio* Frieze on the Arch of Constantine (315 AD).



Image 3 – *Liberalitas* Frieze on the Arch of Constantine (315 AD).

The same can be said for the people inhabiting Juvenecus' epic. There is a rather strict division between different groups of people, symbolically grouped together by certain verbal patterns to incarnate an idea¹². There are the Pharisees, consequently called *Pharisaei scribaeque dolosi* (3.133), *caeca Pharisaeae factio gentis* (2.606) or otherwise accompanied by notions of cunning, guile and trick (*verbis cum fraude malignis* [4.2], *fallaces* [4.9], *fallacia* [4.70], etc.), who bark at (*latratibus* [4.14], *tantis circumlatrantibus* [4.535]) and plot against (*captantes Christum* [3.134]) Christ. The Jewish authorities, such as king Herod or the high-priest of the Sanhedrin Caiaphas, are all fierce and violent and likewise designated in terms of *furor*, *feritas*, *pestis saevissima*, *frendens*, etc. This *feritas* symbolizes *nescitia recti*, ignorance of the real law, whereas John the Baptist is emphatically called *iustus* and *doctus*, epitheta referring to his real knowledge of the real law¹³. Nowhere is this contrast more evident than at the beginning of book III, where the death of John the Baptist is narrated in a flashback: Herod, who is ignorant of the law, does nothing but break it (*subiecit leges pedibus* [3.46]), whereas John, who possesses true knowledge of the law, suffers innocently (*imperat aegre | insontis caput inferri* [3.66]; *insonti pollutam sanguine terram* [3.71])¹⁴. In the final book of the epic the similarities with the frieze on the Arch of Constantine surface even more conspicuously: there is clear-cut division between the contestants and enemies of Christ.

¹² For line references, the *index verborum* in M. Wacht, *Concordantia in Iuveni evangeliorum libros*, Hildesheim / New York, 1990, is an indispensable tool.

¹³ The combination *iustus Iohannes* features four times (2.510, 3.39, 3.263, 3.708), *doctus Iohannes* at 3.45.

¹⁴ On the penchant in Constantinian literature towards symbolism, see M. Hose, «Konstantin und die Literatur». Specifically for Juvenecus and the episode of John the Baptist's death, see R. Herzog, *Die Biblepik*, p. 86-99.

The members of each group appear in separate episodes, but are likened by the verbal and structural patterns of these episodes. Thus we find grouped Saint Peter, Simon of Cyrene, Joseph of Arimatea and even the sisters of Lazarus. The « bad guys » are portrayed in a sort of triptych: Judas, Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate. Though each of these characters preserves, to a certain degree, his individuality, this individuality is for the greatest part sacrificed to the symbolic function of the character in question. In the center, between both groups of supporters and adversaries, is Christ, who is *lux*. He is called *dominus lucis* (4.812), *doctor lucis* (3.109), etc. This light of Christ is also what brings about the distortion of perspective, the disproportionate portrayal: Christ is the frontal, radiating character, which renders all others surrounding him flat, obscured and alike. We can picture this epic as the friezes of Constantine, with Christ as the large, central and frontally displayed figure, gathering on his right side the group of the just and on his left side the group of the erroneous:

*Ut pastor pecoris discernit pascua mixti,
lanigeris dextri permittens mollia prati
at laevos birtis dumos tondere capellis.*

Just as the herdsman assigns the pastures of his mixed flock,
granting the wool-bearers the softness of the meadow on his right,
yet letting the hairy goats gnaw the thistles on his left.

(Juvencus, IV.265-267)

This is a little camouflaged in Juvencus' epic because of the alteration between the characters: the good and the bad appear interlaced – but this is of course due to the nature of the source text and Juvencus' adherence to it. Nevertheless, we find a striking visual parallel between the art of the Constantinian Arch and the final panel of Christ's life in Juvencus' epic. And perhaps this is a bit venturing, but the parallel between Christ and Constantine now seems not that far-fetched, especially given the fact that this is exactly what Juvencus does in his epilogue: Constantine and Christ are clung together in a long, chain-like sentence:

*Haec mihi pax Christi tribuit, pax haec mihi saeculi,
quam fovet indulgens terrae regnator apertae
Constantinus, adest cui gratia digna merenti,
qui solus regnum sacri sibi nominis horret
inponi ponus, quo iustis dignior actis
aeternam capiat divina in saecula vitam
per dominum lucis Christum, qui in saecula regnat.*

It is the peace of Christ that grants me this, it is the peace of our times,
which the indulgent ruler of our wide-open world cherishes,
Constantine, whom worthy grace befalls justly,
who solely shivers at the thought that the power of a sacred name might be
imposed on him as a weight, so that by his just actions all the more worthy
he might gain the eternal life when the divine era comes
through Christ, the lord of light, who will rule throughout eternity.

(Juvencus, IV.806-812)

« Such », to use the words of MacGregor, which I used as a motto for this paper, « was poetry's answer to the Arch of Constantine ».

Roberts mentions the tendency in Late Antique aesthetics to emphasize the part, as object of ornamentation, rather than the whole. For example, « framing elements (...) are used on the Arch of Constantine (...) as devices to mark off units of composition and to emphasize further the play of similarity and opposition between and within the compositional units – again a procedure that has ample parallels in the poetry of late antiquity¹⁵ ». We notice, first, how crowded the imagery of the Arch is and, then, how the different units are carefully framed and separated from each other. The same evolution can be discerned in Juvenecus' epic, where care is taken to delineate the different episodes that make up the narrative. The techniques used to achieve this effect include the use of verbal echoes. These echoes are used to highlight the central theme of an episode, to tie the episode together by scattering them throughout the episode or to construe a tiny ring composition. A remarkable example is the episode of the burial of Christ and the performance of Joseph or Arimatea. The whole episode is focused through the eyes of a number of mourning women, who watch the scene from a distance:

*E speculis matres miracula tanta tuentur
Omnes, obsequium Christo quae ferre solebant.
Iam decedenti vesper succedere soli
coeperat, et procerum solus tum iustior audet
corpus ad extremum munus deponere Christi.
Hic ab Arimathea nomen gestabat Ioseph,
qui quondam verbis aures praebebat Iesu.
Pilatum tunc iste rogat, sibi cedere membra,
quis nuper tulerat vitam vis horrida poenae.
Concessit praeses et corpus fulgida lino
texta tegunt saxique novo componitur antro.
Limen concludunt immensa volumina petrae.
E speculis servant matres et cuncta tuentur.*

From upon a hill the women watched such great wonders,
all the women, who used to follow Christ.
Already the evening had begun to close in on the sinking
sun, and then one of the notable men, one sole man, but just,
had the courage to claim Christ's body, to pay the last honours.
This man from Arimathea bore the name Joseph,
and had once lent his ear to the teachings of Jesus.
He, then, asked Pilate, to grant him the body,
of which the horrible violence of punishment had just took the life.
The governor agreed. Bright linen cloths
covered the body and it was placed in a new tomb of rock.
The entrance was barred by an immense boulder of stone.
On their hills the women stayed and watched this whole scene.

(Juvenecus, IV.714-726)

The boulder that is rolled to block the entrance of Christ's tomb features as a kind of theatre curtain: it secludes the scene from the audience of women and behind the curtain a world of mysterious intimacy is imagined. But the curtain also marks the end of a scene and as such Juvenecus' almost *verbatim* return to the audience of onlookers also wraps up the episode in a very filmic, visual style. This technique of marking of episodes is very frequent in Juvenecus. However, it does not disturb the development and continuity of the larger

¹⁵ M. Roberts, *The jeweled style*, p. 94.

narrative, which remains predominant. The story of Christ is what Juvencus' epic is about. For the same technique of echoes is also used to shape the larger story. There are, for example, numerous predictions of Christ's resurrection to be read in some of the miracles he performs. Juvencus highlights the ominous nature of these episodes by using a recurring phrasing in each of them: *remeare*, in conjunction with *ad luminis oras* or *salus*. It is used on at least three different occasions, when sick, dying and dead people are healed and raised by Jesus (the little son of the centurio [1.741-766, i.c. 1.748], the boy in Capharnaum [2.328-346, i.c. 343] and the raising of Lazarus [4.306-402, i.c. 4.324]). Then, at the grand finale of the epic, it is used twice in a row, about the resurrection of Christ: first when the Pharisees demand the guarding of the grave, for fear that the people might believe Jesus' prophecy of resurrection when his grave would be emptied (4.735); secondly when the angel appears to the mourning women to announce that Christ has risen from the grave (4.761). Thus, at the end of the epic Juvencus reminds the reader of earlier premonitions, bringing the composition to a close. It would seem, then, that the attention for the episodic is of secondary importance. We must not forget that it is in part the consequence of the nature of the original biblical narrative. It is, however, definitely an indication of an aesthetic preference of Juvencus, one that was perhaps developing at that time and could be seen in other art forms as well.

This aesthetic approach ultimately seems like a powerful tool to approach this hard-to-handle poetry with. One notices that the results of the comparison with the visual arts are at the very least interesting and perhaps even fruitful. It provides an interesting way of looking at this poetry and allows us to see elements that we did not notice earlier, or at least were not able to pinpoint as clearly¹⁶. At the same time, this approach is also an indication of our uncomfotableness with this poetry: its unfamiliar nature compels us to devise ways of taming it, or forces us to make a serious detour to approach it¹⁷. Especially the liaison of the fairly recent aesthetic approach with earlier – yet occasionally still uttered – judgements of taste, in a discourse of decline and fall, is intriguing, for the changed aesthetic to such an extent dominates reception, that our own estrangement from it and 'solutions' for this are major topics in scholarly research. It invites one to look into pre-Gibbon documents expressing opinions about this poetry, and to see whether similar problems and ideas surface there.

THE RENAISSANCE JUDGEMENTS OF CONSTANTINIAN ART AND POETRY

The selected number of Renaissance texts featured in this paper seems to suit this goal very well. All of them date back to the same era, the first quarter of the 16th century, and were produced by people with a similar background in humanist culture. Whereas modern scholars, however, seem to agree in stressing the similarities between different art forms and are inclined to judge them by the same standards, their Renaissance counterparts do

¹⁶ Implied in this strategy is some general aesthetic active on various fields of cultural production. It reminds us of the way Erich Auerbach approached the universes behind textual production (most famously his self-proclaimed indebtedness to Giambattista Vico's view of human cultural history, in *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, Princeton (NJ), 1965, p. 7-17), as well as the way that in the new historicist tradition of Greenblatt «outlandish» documents serve as «the algorithm for the new understanding of great works of literature», as put in L. Edmunds, «Critical Divergences: New Directions in the Study and Teaching of Roman Literature», *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 135, 2005, p. 3.

¹⁷ M. Roberts, *The jeweled style*, p. 67, quoting Peter Brown, mentions «a willingness (...) to look with more tolerant eyes».

not exhibit the same agreement: with them, one encounters very diverging judgements of taste on both Constantinian art and poetry.

The first text is a famous letter from Raffaello Sanzio to pope Leo X, written in 1519, a year before the death of Raphael in April 1520¹⁸. The letter was meant either as a dedicatory letter or as a preface to a monumental architectural treatise on the buildings of ancient Rome, conceived, but, due to his death the next spring, never executed by the artist. The goal was to construct a blueprint of Ancient Rome, illustrated with drawings of the antique buildings, not in ruins, but in their original state. Francesco Di Teodoro has summarized the enterprise as follows:

... après avoir procédé à un relevé de Rome du haut de ses collines et avoir partagé la ville en quatorze regiones (comme on l'avait fait à l'époque d'Auguste), Raphaël aurait relevé le plan de tous les édifices ; les plus remarquables devaient ensuite être présentés séparément selon les trois modes : plan, élévation et coupe. Ainsi, outre les dessins des édifices exemplaires, le traité devait être aussi accompagné d'un plan ichnométrique de l'ensemble de la ville. Ce dernier aurait en outre mis en évidence les liens de la Rome antique avec la Rome moderne, grâce à un système de relations et de connexions permettant d'en suivre l'histoire. Seule leur interaction avec l'organisme urbain qui les accueille permet en effet aux édifices, pris séparément, d'être soustraits à une lecture anhistorique. Un traité ainsi conçu aurait constitué une innovation décisive ; personne après Raphaël ne réussit à en concevoir et, encore moins, à en réaliser un semblable¹⁹.

Such, then, was the nature of Raphael's grand enterprise. Serving as a preface, dedication, introduction or motivation, a letter was composed by Raphael, revised by Castiglione – who was long thought of as the sole author of the letter – and addressed to pope Leo X. The work as well as the letter stand in a long tradition of protection of antiquities, but it would seem that at this time all the stars were aligned for the success of this enterprise: the technical expertise of the architect, Raphael, teamed with the literary genius of the poet, Castiglione – a harmonious combination between the mechanical and the liberal arts – were to win the approval of Rome's most powerful maecenas, pope Leo X, son of Lorenzo de Medici and renowned as a beneficiary of arts and a frivolous mind²⁰. Alas, the death of Raphael, the sole star not aligned, also meant the death of his project and the letter, whose function had become obliterate, was soon forgotten. It was not published until 1733 in Italy, attributed at first to Castiglione, later to Raphael.

At the outset of the letter, Raphael, draws a dramatic image of the ravaged and ruined remnants of antiquity in the city of Rome and names the three culprits: time, the barbarians and the popes. This is followed by a plead for conservation and the importance of the proposed project: to start by charting the buildings and monuments dating back to antiquity. At this point, Raphael reveals how to recognise the buildings that need to be mapped and protected, which is the beginning of a short history of architecture. This history is a very biased one and, therefore, interesting, for in it Raphael's judgement of the art and architecture of the different era's is very outspoken. According to him, there are

¹⁸ The text, after years of gathering dust in obscurity, was recently edited in F. Di Teodoro, *La lettre à Léon X*, Paris, 2005.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

²⁰ He was, after all, the pope who had a funerary poem written for his white pet elephant, Hanno. Alexandre Dumas, in his essay *Les Cenci*, writes of him: « Léon X continua Jules II, et le christianisme prit sous son pontificat un caractère païen qui, passant de l'art dans les moeurs, donne à cette époque un caractère étrange. Les crimes ont momentanément disparu pour faire place aux vices: mais à des vices charmants, à des vices de bon goût, comme ceux que pratiquait Alcibiade et que chantait Catulle. »

only three categories to be distinguished: the buildings of antiquity, built in Rome up until the barbarian invasions; the buildings of the Middle Ages, from the time when « Rome was under the domination of the Goths »; and contemporary buildings, dating from the end of the previous period up until Raphael's time. In the treatment of the first category, we find the following opinion expressed – I quote from the French translation by Choay & Paoli:

Même si, bien des fois, nombre d'édifices ont été remplacés par les Anciens eux-mêmes (...), toutes ces constructions n'en obéissaient pas moins à la même règle que les édifices datant d'une époque encore antérieure à celle de Néron et contemporains de la Domus aurea. Et bien que les lettres, la sculpture, la peinture et presque tous les autres arts eussent depuis longtemps entamé leur déclin et n'eussent cessé de se dégrader jusqu'à l'époque des derniers empereurs, on continuait à pratiquer l'architecture selon la même règle que les premiers: parmi tous les arts, l'architecture fut ainsi la dernière à se perdre. On peut s'en convaincre par de nombreux exemples, comme celui de l'arc de Constantin: dans sa composition, tout ce qui relève de l'architecture est beau et bien exécuté, mais les sculptures dudit arc sont très gauches et dépourvues de tout art et de toute qualité. En revanche, celles que l'on y trouve et qui sont de l'époque de Trajan et d'Antonin le Pieux (spoglie di Traiano e d'Antonino Pio) sont excellentes et d'une manière parfaite²¹.

Raphael's vision of antique art is a degenerative one: all art forms, except architecture, show a continuous retardation, culminating in the largely inferior art of Late Antiquity. There are a number of things that strike us as odd about this extract, but the most remarkable is without a doubt the separate aesthetics posited for architecture and all other art forms. It is unclear whether literature, painting, sculpture, etc. are all under the umbrella of one shared aesthetic, but in any case the aesthetic of architecture is a different one: Late Antique architecture follows different rules, resulting in beautiful and well executed works, whereas the same cannot be said for Late Antique sculpture. This bifurcation is exemplified in the Arch of Constantine – conceived of as a kind of *Gesamtkunstwerk*²² – which possesses both architectural and sculptural elements. The first are excellent in manner, whereas the latter are only valuable insofar as they date to the second-century reign of Trajan or Antoninus Pius²³, rendering Constantinian sculpture vile and bereft of any artistic value. One is left to wonder if Raphael would have made a similar judgement about Constantinian poetry.

Having thus considered the negative judgement of Constantinian art expressed by Raphael and the at least dual (architecture vs. other arts), and perhaps even multiple (architecture vs. literature vs. sculpture vs. ...) aesthetics discerned by him for Late Antiquity, let us now turn to some of the introductions that accompanied the earliest editions of two fourth century poets: Avienus and Juvencus²⁴. These text are contemporary, or nearly so, to Raphael's letter, dating to the year 1519. The very first edition of Avienus's works, commissioned by Giorgio Valla, was edited by the Italian humanist scholar Vittore Pisani, who was a student of Valla. It was printed in Venice in 1488, by Antonio de Strata, and contained Avienus' complete oeuvre, along with the Aratus translations from Cicero

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 37-39.

²² Though its sole presence means that Raphael actually saw it as a work of architecture, candidate to conservation.

²³ The term *spoglie* is used, a term coined « around the turn of the sixteenth century in the antiquarian circle that included Raphael » (D. Kinney, « Roman Architectural Spolia », p. 138).

²⁴ The introductions to Avienus are conveniently gathered in P. Van de Woestijne, *De vroegste uitgaven van Avienus' Descriptio Orbis Terrae (1488-1515)*, Brussel, 1959. For Juvencus, the prefaces can be easily found in B. Botfield, *Prefaces to the first editions of the Greek and Roman classics and of the sacred Scriptures*, London, 1861. All citations stem from these editions.

and Germanicus, and the didactic poem on medicine by Serenus Sammonicus. This makes it slightly anterior to the other texts in our corpus, but not irrelevant. The prefatory letter from Vittore Pisani to Paolo Pisani, serving as an introduction, is quite an entertaining tale that offers a revealing look at the genesis of the edition at hand and its preface. Pisani is recounting how he was staying with his teacher, Giorgio Valla, when a printer came by his master's house to ask for some work to print, something that would be of interest to a large public and of special (economic) interest to himself. To this Valla immediately replied, according to Pisani, that he would recommend Avienus, who once translated Aratus' *Phaenomena*. He would even add the translations of Cicero and Germanicus, which were heavily mutilated, and a tiny work by Sammonicus on the curing of various diseases, composed in splendid verse. Pisani, who was witness to this conversation and realised the usefulness and joy to be had from these works, joined in and pleaded the printer to accept. He, however, asked Pisani to return the favour by writing a preface to the edition. At this point, Pisani has finished his amusing approach to the actual introduction and begins introducing the ancient authors. When he comes to the Latin translators of Aratus, Pisani appeals to Saint Jerome to authorise his preference for Avienus:

Nunc qui Aratum Latinum fecerint nobis commemorandum est. Qui plane eminentissimi tres fuerunt Cicero, Germanicus et Avienus. Idque vel Hieronymi in Pauli apostoli ad Titum epistolam verbis nobis licet intueri, dum inquit : « In Actibus quippe Apostolorum, cum contionaretur ad populum et in Areopago, quae est curia Atheniensium, disputaret, inter cetera ait : 'Sicut et quidam de vestris poetis dixerunt 'ipsius enim et genus sumus', quod hemistichium in Phaenomenis Arati legitur, quem Cicero in Latinum sermonem transtulit et Germanicus Caesar et nuper sane compta Avienus et multi alii, quos enumerare perlongum est. » Ex his sane colligi verbis Hieronymi potest multos quidem exstetisse, qui Arati Phaenomena in Latinum converterint, sed auctores fuisse praecipuos Ciceronem, Germanicum et Avienum, quorum quis in dicendo cultissimus esse videatur. Tametsi duo illi mutili truncique sint, et Avienus integer. Tu cum aliis, qui de hac re ferre potestis sententiam, iudicaveritis. Mibi certe in Avieno nihil videtur posse desiderari. At de traductoribus nihil addam amplius.

Now we need to bring to mind those who translated Aratus to Latin. The three noblest of them were Cicero, Germanicus and Avienus. We can even notice this in Jerome's commentary on Paul's letter to Titus, when he says: « In the Acts of Apostles, when Paul addresses the people and discusses in the Areopagus, which is the curia of the Athenians, he says among other things: 'As some of your poets have said: 'for his offspring are we' ', which half verse can be read in Aratus' *Phaenomena*, which Cicero translated to Latin, and Germanicus Caesar, and recently even neatly Avienus, and many other, whom it would take too long to ennumerate. » From these words of Jerome can be gathered that there have been many who translated Aratus' *Phaenomena* to Latin, but that the most important writers were Cicero, Germanicus and Avienus, the latter of whom seems to be the most cultivated in language. Moreover, the first two are mutilated and cut short, while Avienus is complete. You, and others who can judge this matter, need but judge. As for me, I don't think that anything is left to desire in Avienus. But that is enough about the translators.

The validity of Pisani's explanation needs not matter here. What matters is that he expresses a personal preference for and a distinct appreciation of Avienus. Furthermore, by his reference of Valla's enthusiasm, he seems to be authorising his taste: for Valla's taste represents the taste of the cultivated milieu, of all learned men and men of taste.

Some time later, in 1499, Avienus' *Aratea* were included in a collection of astronomical texts, published and printed by Aldo Manuzio in Venice. Due to the voluminous nature of the collection, no mention or appreciation of individual authors was expressed. Next in line were three different editions of Avienus' *Descriptio Orbis Terrae*, published in 1508, 1513 and

1515. The prefaces of two of these editions are known to us: one of Johannes Cuspinianus (1508) and one of Antonius Modestus (1513). For the edition of 1515, by the famous Swiss humanist Joachim Vadianus (Joachim von Watt, 1484-1551), we possess no preface. Johannes Cuspinianus, or Johann Spießhaymer (1473-1529), was an Austrian humanist, diplomat, historian and a good friend of the Swiss Vadianus. His edition of Avienus was prefaced by two letters: one addressed to a relatively unknown bishop, and one directed to Aldus Manutius. Both are quite short, but in the latter, written in 1502 – before his own edition of Avienus –, Cuspinianus replies to an ongoing correspondence with Manutius: we witness Cuspinianus, having heard rumours about the qualities of Avienus' work and demanding a copy from Manutius:

At ego a te postulabam Avieni in Dionysium translationem elegantem quidem et concinnam. (...) Et si umquam exemplar Rufi Festi Avieni in Cosmographiam Dionysii inveneris, te quaeso per tuum candidissimum genium : fac me participem. Nam meus aestuat animus in Cosmographiam (...) Et si Mirandula noster viveret, sine illis vivere nesciret. Circumfertur insuper impressus Aratus in parva forma, ubi elegantissimum carmen Festi adnexum est iambicum De Ora Maritima, sed mutilum et corrosum. Si ad te perveniret integrum, fac, quaeso, integritati restituas et immortalitate tuo beneficio donatur.

But I had asked you for Avienus' elegant and well versified translation of Dionysius. (...) And if you ever find a copy of Rufius Festus Avienus rendering of Dionysius' *Cosmographia*, then I ask you, please, by your most splendid genius: let me share in it. For my heart yearns for that *Cosmographia* (...) And if our friend Mirandula were still alive, he would not have been able to live without it. There is even a printed Aratus in circulation, a small booklet, to which is appended that most elegant iambic poem of Festus *De ora maritima*, alas damaged and lacunose.

Cuspinianus clearly likes the writing of Avienus. Of course, the scientific content might have to do with this, but he also emphasizes stylistic qualities, such as elegance and *concininitas* (being well versified). Something similar can be read in Modestus' preface. His letter, addressed to the bishop of Pola (in Croatia) and Bologna, serves to keep the bishop patient: while he is further polishing his commentary on Avienus (he boasts an elaborate simile of bear cubs being licked to shape²⁵ and lumps of soil being ploughed for a second time), Modestus is sending him the text of the *Descriptio*:

Sed dum ipsi commentarii in officina adhuc versantur, Avienum tibi recognoscendum transmisi, cuius ingenio dicendique lepore scio plurimum delectaberis.

But while the commentary itself is still laying on my desk, I have sent you a copy of Avienus to have a look at. I'm sure you'll absolutely love his wit and elegance of speech.

Again, Avienus' artistry, style and technique are appreciated, whereas Raphael had nothing but disdain for said virtues in fourth century artistic production.

As for Juvenecus, we find a similar positive appreciation in 16th-century evidence. Some of the earliest editions in print, belonging to the first half of the 16th century, are preceded by prefatory letters that provide the reader with information on the published author in question, i.c. Juvenecus. One of the earliest editions, edited and printed in Venice in 1501 by the city's most famous printer, Aldus Manutius, whom we already encountered earlier in this paper, is actually a collection of early Christian poetry, bearing the title *Poetae Christiani Veteres*. The prefatory letter by Manutius, addressed to Danielus Clarius, is, as always, a carefully crafted and delicate piece, but unfortunately does not say anything about

²⁵ The ursine simile itself stood in a long tradition climbing up to Pliny the Elder (*Natural History* 8.45), Ovidius (*Metamorphoses* 15.379-81) and Virgil (*Georgics* 3.247, cf. Servius commentary *ad locum*).

Juvenicus, except for the mention of his name when enumerating the authors featured in the collection. By far the most charming letter is to be found in the Leipzig edition of Juvenicus that was edited by the German priest Wolfgang Gulden from Zwickau, and printed in 1511 by Melchior Lotter in Leipzig. In a letter to the scholar and cleric, Caspar Güttel (1471-1542), Gulden describes how he, a humble priest – of course this is but a *topos* of modesty –, had visited the academy of Leipzig where, as in the *palaestra literaria*, he was intimidated by the intellectual *tours de force* the scholars were displaying in various disciplines. Fearing that he would give the impression of being a slacker, his mind weakened by the inactivity of a cleric's life, he nervously started to rummage his mind for some intelligent and fresh subject to impress his wrestling opponents with. Finding himself in this paralysing situation, he produced Juvenicus as his secret weapon, the qualities of whom he describes as follows:

Casu quodam oblatus mihi fuit libellus Iuveni presbyteri, viri vitae sanctimonia ac scientia clarissimi, immensam Evangelicae legis maiestatem complectens. Quem cum legere coepissem, ac in eo admodum pregnantes, nihil quam evangelicam veritatem explicantes sententias eleganter heroicis versibus scriptas invenissem, mirum in modum mirabar in quibus abditis ille egregius ac Christianus scriptor, per longum temporis tractum (quem ante ducentos supra mille annos ab hinc in humanis fuisse annales tradunt), delituisse et cur tantus poeta ceteris, etiam ethnicis hactenus ignotior fuisset. Quare ego communi utilitati consulere volens, rem perutile me facturum existimavi, si ut auctor praefatus in lucem rediret, ac plures eius copiam haberent, quoquo modo efficere possem.

By coincidence I was handed a booklet of the priest Juvenicus, a man most renowned for both his righteous way of life and his learning – one small booklet comprising all the vast majesty of the evangelical law. When I had started reading it and found in it the most meaningful sentences, containing nothing but the evangelical truth and elegantly written in heroic verse, I wondered in which hiding places this excellent Christian author had been concealed for such a long time (the chronicles state that he lived more than 1200 years from now) and why such a great poet had thus far been less renowned than others, even pagan ones. And that is why I, thinking of the benefit of the public, thought it very useful if I were somehow to achieve that said author would return to the light and that many more would be able to enjoy his richness.

As you have already noticed, the charming intro of the letter has again been bent sideways in order to get to the real introduction and the *topos* of bringing a forgotten author back *in luminis oras* – though Juvenicus hardly fits in that category. But along the way, Juvenicus has been praised for both content (« pregnant sentences, containing nothing but the evangelical truth ») and form (« elegantly written in heroic verses »). The entire concept of the letter is, of course, to find a clever twist on the theme of defending the tremendous usefulness of one's publication.

Another variation of this can be found in the letter prefacing the Juvenicus edition of the German humanist and professor at the Marburg University, Reinhard Lorich (ca.1500-1564). This edition was printed in 1537 in Cologne in the office of Eucharius Hirtzhorn, or Cervicornus. The prefatory letter is directed to Johannes IV, count of Wied, a small County, locked in an armpit of the Rhine, in between Cologne and Marburg. Lorich uses the entrance gate of complaint: too much is published nowadays and most of it is rubbish. What should one read and what can be safely dismissed? These are questions to which he, as a man of learning, knows the answer. Yet not everyone has the time or capability of reading and judging all, and therefore Lorich proposes a publication regime: less, but

better. The best would be to stick to authors who have had success for centuries, received well by men of learning and never went out of possession. One of them is Juvencus²⁶:

In quorum numero si non primas ferunt, Iuencus hic noster ac Sedulius certe (mea sententia) non tamen in postremis erunt. Quorum alterum divus Hieronymus non in uno loco praedicavit, quasi dignum Argivo (ut aiunt) clypeo, alterum adorantia Patrum sanctissimorum decreta laudibus tulerunt in caelum. Qui si non undique pomposo verborum apparatu intonantes, delicatis nimium, quae magis elegantia sermonis, quam studio pictatis, sibi blandiuntur ac perplacent, ingeniis satisfacere videbuntur, omnia compensabunt uberrimo conspicuae veritatis et sanctimoniae fructu. Certe si Quintillianus perniciosam rebuspublicis dicendi peritiam, nisi bonitas accesserit, affirmat et Cicero eloquentiam sine sapientia, nimium incommodaturam afferit, quanto magis Christiani homines pietatis non fucatae rationem, quam splendoris artificii habere debent? Quamquam nihil occurrit quod, ab authoribus hisce desumptum et purgatis auribus infertum, offendiculo possit esse. Nihil enim a pura latinitate, nihil a legibus poeticis alienum, nihil barbarum, nihil quod quasi scopulum fugiendum ille dicebat insolens. Dilucida phrasis emicat et ab omni vitio remotus sermo. Non deest verborum ac rerum, quibus etiam critici morosiores acquiscerent, ornata dignitas. Haec omnia commendationa faciunt et veluti solem inferentes illuminant Evangelicae veritatis historiae, plenis veneranda maiestate versibus expressae.

Though they may not take first prize among these, our Juvencus and certainly Sedulius (in my opinion) are definitely not among the last. The first one is praised by Jerome on more than one occasion, worthy (as they say) of the Argive shield, the other was praised to heaven by the admiring decrees of the saint fathers. And though they may not thunder all the time with a pompous vocabulary and may give the impression of appealing not very much to delicate minds, who revel and indulge in the elegance of the speech, rather than in the devotion of the depicted, they will compensate for this with the rich fruit of evident truth and sanctimony. For if Quintillian affirms that skilled speech is harmful to the republic if there is no righteousness in it, and if Cicero claims that eloquence without wisdom will be troublesome, how much more do Christian men need to be concerned not with the splendour of artifice, but with pure piety? Still, there is nothing that could offend, when lifted from these very authors and offered to refined ears. He never rudely spoke a word that was foreign to pure *latinitas* or to poetic laws, nor a barbarous word, or anything that ought to be avoided like a cliff. His clear phrasing shines and his speech is far from any vice. The elegant dignity does not lack words or ideas that even the most morose critic would assent to. The story of scriptural truth, expressed in verses full of venerable majesty, makes all of this more distinguished and lights it up as if carrying sunlight.

Lorich gives us a moderate appraisal: he admits that Juvencus might not be the very best of poets. He is however a good one and the Christian truth contained in his poem helps elevate him to the degree of excellence, worthy of publication. In addition, Lorich added an epigram to his edition, which boasts similar praise of Juvencus, and of Sedulius. A number of editions also included an epigram by the famous German humanist Hermann von dem Busche (1468-1534), written in appraisal of Juvencus²⁷.

It may be clear by now that the selection of pre-Gibbon testimonies is quite a fascinating hodgepodge, storing diverse opinions underneath the amusing anecdotes. In any case, we will not find a key here to unlock the modern problematic attitude towards the Late Antique aesthetic, for with the exception of Raphaels letter – displaying a very Gibbonian idea of decline – none of the texts really address the issue at hand, nor do they

²⁶ Note the difference with Gulden, who claimed to have brought Juvencus back from oblivion.

²⁷ Among the editions including von dem Busches epigram are those of Faustus Andrelinus Foroliviensis (Paris, ca.1500, printed by Jean Petit) and Richard Pafraet (Deventer, ca. 1503, printed by himself). Unfortunately, I was not able to see this epigram, due to the difficulty of consulting the early editions and my unfamiliarity with any modern printed editions of it.

show any signs of confusion in face of Constantinian culture. What is interesting, however, is how the Raphaelite idea of deterioration contrasts with the praise uttered in the various prefaces to Avienus and Juvencus. This apparent irreconcilability can be explained by exploring the contexts of both kinds of testimonies – the social embedding, the authorial intent, generic implications, etc. It appears that none of the expressed judgements of taste are « honest » ones²⁸, but all of them share external motivations and various other interests in making their judgements.

THE NATURE OF THE TESTIMONIES AND THEIR INTERESTS

First, there are the introductory letters, serving as prefaces to the text editions. Numerous things can be said about this type of texts. We could, for one, claim a certain economic motivation underlying the texts, in the sense that they fulfil, to a certain extent—and I am aware that the comparison does not reach all the way and should be used carefully—the role of modern blurbs, the promotional texts on the back cover of books. Their function is to attract the potential reader's interest and win him over into buying the book, by convincing him of the value of its contents, often using stereotypical phrasing²⁹. Very similar mechanics can be discerned at work in the Renaissance prefaces. Pisani's letter, for example, which we encountered earlier on, recounts how the author was at the house of his mentor, Giorgio Valla, when *impressor quidam*—this would be Antonio de Strata, then—came by to ask for something to publish, with the specification: « *multis commodum nec minus sibi lucrosus* ». After Pisani had obtained his wish, i.e. that the printer would procure an edition of Avienus, the printer asked for a favour in return:

Is impressor demum a me postulavit efflagitavitque ut his opusculis praefationem aliquam apponerem, unde unusquisque, quantum commodum afferat inspiciens, emat libentius.

Finally, this printer requested – demanded! – that I would add to these works a preface, from which anyone would gather what profit the work would bring him and buy it all the more eagerly.

Apart from Pisani's implied self-assertion, this is quite an eye-opening look at the economics governing the world of introductions. The printer wants the preface to convince the potential customer, who takes a brief glance at the introduction while leafing through the book. Another technique seen in modern literature is to have quotes from famous people or respectable colleagues on the cover as authorities to lend the work credibility. A similar method in the world of Renaissance introductions is the practice of dedication. It is Aldus Manutius who offers us evidence of this rationale:

Operae pretium mihi videtur, Guide Pheretri, dux illustris, ut quaecumque volumina formis excudenda curamus praefatione aliqua, veluti clypeo quodam, munita exeat in manus hominum et, quo sit illis plus auctoritatis, visus vel doctrina vel dignitate vel utroque perinsignibus deditentur.

²⁸ For a discussion of the Kantian idea of disinterestedness by a classicist, see R. Martindale, *Latin poetry and the judgement of taste*, Oxford, 2005, chapter 1: Immanuel Kant and Aesthetic Judgement.

²⁹ A swift look around what is lying on my desk at the moment of writing this paper, yields the following, very recognisable praise: « this exciting new collection of essays (...) will be of interest to literary critics and cultural historians of late Antiquity », « not just a mine of information on Roman *Realien*, but an intelligent and sympathetic evaluation of the poems », « pioneering study », etc. *ad libitum*.

The work seems to me, Guido Pheretrius, noble *duce* (of Urbino), to deserve that the volumes we trust to fine print reach the reader secured by a preface, like some sort of shield, and that they are dedicated to men famous by their learning, their position, or both, so that they gain more authority.

Economic interests tend to steer things along fixed routes. Thus, it should not surprise us that these introductory letters are to a large extent made up of fixed generic *topoi*. The goal is to make people buy the edition by convincing them of its value and the ways to do that – which are not limitless – have soon become *topoi*, characteristic of the prefatory genre. Once these rules have more or less been fixed – by no one in specific, at no precise point in time – the challenge is to make a twist on the standard piece, while not forsaking the initial goal and while staying within the parameters of the game. This allows the more gifted authors, such as Aldus, to commence their letter by explicitly revealing the mechanisms that they themselves are following. One of these *topoi* is the appeal to an authority, resulting in the dedication of the letter to a *maecenas* and the extensive praise of this *maecenas*. Another *topos* is to prove the value of the content by arguing « what a pity/what a loss/what an outrage/etc. it is that a brilliant author like X has been forgotten for so long ».

This brilliance is sometimes induced to give more extensive praise of the author at hand. This is exactly what we saw in the letter of Wolfgang Gulden earlier: after « spontaneously » praising all the merits of Juvencus, he wondered how it was possible that an author of such splendour had gone unnoticed for all those years. As for this brilliance, nowhere really do we meet misleading praise. What does happen, is that virtues are enhanced and vices are carefully hidden away. As such stylistic highfliers are praised for their style, while moderate poets can be praised for the message they convey. In addition and related to this, we may note a phenomenon that is used in particular for Christian authors: emphasizing the edifying nature of the poem. We find this in all introductory letters to editions of Juvencus. The pious message contained in the text will be beneficiary for the reader and may even help shape him for further lecture of the pagan canon³⁰. In the letter prefacing his *Poetae Christiani Veteres*, Aldus Manutius gives the following simile to express this idea:

Nam cum ad gentiles iam bene instituti legendos se conferent, bona quaecumque invenerint legendis illis, ut e spinis rosas et id genus flores, accipient; mala vero et quae moribus obsunt prudentes, tamquam scopulum, evitabunt.

For when they turn to the pagan authors once they are well learned, they will collect whatever good things they find there, like roses from between thorns and flowers of the kind; yet prudently they will avoid the bad elements and those incompatible with good morals, like a cliff.

Thus, most praise that is to be found in the introductory letters should be considered in light of the economic and generic nature of these texts.

Sometimes, other interests can be at stake, too. One of the reasons that I am curious about the epigram of Hermann von dem Busche is because of his possible motivation for doing so. For Buschius, as he was also known, was deeply involved in the defence of the *studia humanitatis* at the more conservative university of Cologne. His *Vallum Humanitatis*,

³⁰ Quite the reverse of the opinion held by a fourth-century Christian like Saint Jerome held, who saw traffic going in the opposite direction: the classics could be read « to serve Christian ends » (A. Mohr, « Jerome, Virgil, and the captive maiden: the attitude of Jerome to classical literature », *Texts and Culture in Late Antiquity*, Swansea, 2007, p. 312).

which was published by the Cologne printer Nikolaus Kaiser in 1518, was « on the one hand, an apologia for humanistic study and, on the other, a polemic against the opponents of such study³¹ ». The arguments proposed in it « form a *vallum*, a strong fortress in defense of the Renaissance *studia humanitatis*³² ». Mehl's study suggests a similar approach between Busche's German defense and its Italian counterpart. One of such similarities that comes to mind immediately is Busche's appeal to count Hermann of Wied – the uncle of Count Johann IV of Wied to whom Lorich addresses his introductory letter – who was the freshly appointed Archbishop of Cologne at the time. Busche's appeal to him as an enlightened maecenas of letters in the conservative world surrounding him in Cologne, bears a strong resemblance to the appeal that the artist Raphael would make the following year, in 1519, to pope Leo X, known as a maecenas throughout Europe. The comparison to Leo X will perhaps have charmed Archbishop Hermann in particular, since it was the same pope Leo who appointed him as Archbishop of Cologne in 1515, three years earlier. Perhaps we can also interpret Lorich's letter in this light, given the fact that Lorich had studied in Cologne in 1520, doubtlessly attending the colleges of prof. Buschius. But this is becoming a bit sketchy.

If the prefaces are « dishonest », then, does the same apply to Raphael's letter? We can certainly see similar external motivations to be at work, at least to some degree. Perhaps the key is enclosed in what could be called the nationalism underlying some of the Italian humanist theories. Raphael's conception of the history of architecture has a certain flavour of Italian patriotism to it and a distinct scent of local Roman pride³³. The desire to conserve antiquities is tied to his conception of them as Roman heritage. His view of Roman (architectural or other) history seems like one of continuity from antiquity to Renaissance, only interrupted by the momentary lapse that were the Middle Ages, which were the result of barbarian intrusion. Hence his designation of everything medieval as « gothic ». Italian history, for Raphael, would run straight from Antiquity to Renaissance, if it were not for « the Goths ». In his sketch of Antiquity, he anticipates this by giving a degenerative view of it, positing a decline for every form of culture as it dates closer to those barbarian Middle Ages. This can explain the strange forking of paths in his sketch of architectural history. He really saw one (degenerative) aesthetic – or at least closely related ones – behind the various art forms of Antiquity, but there was one practical problem: due to the nature of his enterprise, i.e. to convince his patron of the importance of the conservation of antique monuments, he could not claim that late antique architecture was really not worth saving at all. As Di Teodore admits: « Le véritable objectif est de justifier le choix des édifices 'exemplaires' qui serviraient de référence au programme de relevé de la Rome impériale élaboré par Raphaël.³⁴ » Thus, he made architecture the exception that did not follow the route of decline. It might be of further interest to point out a similar, yet at some points very different, conception of Roman history by the Swiss humanist, scholar and mayor of Sankt-Gallen, Joachim von Watt (1484-1551), or Vadianus as he latinized his name. As Perrine Galand-Hallyn has outlined³⁵ – and I interpret roughly – Vadianus saw

³¹ J. V. Mehl, « Hermann von dem Busche's *Vallum Humanitatis* (1518): A German defense of the Renaissance *studia humanitatis* », *Renaissance Quarterly*, 42, 1989, p. 487.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 501.

³³ My thanks to Sarah Charbonnier and Mélanie Bost-Fievet who pointed out that this nationalism is actually a distinct and very local jingoism, with various Italian cities boasting pride in their antique heritage—Naples and Status being a notorious case.

³⁴ F. P. Di Teodoro, *La lettre à Léon X*, p. 15.

³⁵ P. Galand-Hallyn, « *Posteriores sed non deteriores* »: The humanist perspective on Latin literature at the end of the Quattrocento and its repercussions in the French Renaissance, *Latinitas Perennis I: The Continuity of Latin Literature*, ed. W. Verbaal, Y. Maes & J. Papy, Leiden / New York, 2007, p. 185-214.

the history of Latin literature, in the tradition of Poliziano and Crinito, as one large and more or less timeless continuum reaching from Antiquity to the Renaissance³⁶. He used the metaphor of the stages of life to stress the qualities of each period. This long-stretched period of time was permanently battling the threats of barbarism, but never succumbed. Incidentally – or not – Vadianus is one of the scholars who procured an edition of Avienus in 1515. Alas, no prefatory letter or any such testimonial has been preserved. Perhaps we might find here the missing link between Raphael's letter and the introductory genre?

It is clear that these texts can be better understood when situated in their generic and social contexts. Whether the Renaissance scholar felt the modern uncomfortableness when faced with fourth-century poetry is, however, not clear from these texts. Neither is it clear that he did not. Perhaps Raphael's view of a Late Antique cultural decline bears most importance as a sign of a certain aversion to Late Antiquity developing at the time, a view distorted by the pragmatic plea for his architectural enterprise. A view perhaps shared by the other authors, too, but curtailed off by the demands of the prefatory genre. In order to draw such strong conclusions, however, these texts are too few, too tangential and not honest enough. There are often different interests at stake and as such these introductions and other documents are not entirely innocent material. They are treasure chests of worlds, words, and people, but though the lure of the gold may be tempting one needs to handle the contained treasures diligently when using them in stories from a different world.

³⁶ One is reminded of Petrarch's tenth eclogue *Laurea Occidens*, in which the whole of antique literature has found its place in one contemporary scenery – including Juvencus.

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