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Calderini and Poliziano in Dialogue with Valla

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Rhetorica, Volume 44, Number 1, Winter 2026, pp. 33-63 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/rht.2026.a985667>



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The *Declamationes maiores* and their Humanistic Reception: Calderini and Poliziano in Dialogue with Valla

Abstract: This paper examines the reception of the pseudo-Quintilianic *Declamationes maiores* in the 14th and 15th centuries, highlighting in particular the important role of Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantie linguae Latinae* as a medium for humanistic engagement with these rhetorical texts. Calderini, teaching at the *Studium* of Rome, used the *Declamationes maiores* as a study text, demonstrating a practical application of these declamations in the context of humanist pedagogy. Poliziano, on the other hand, although he did not engage directly with the *Declamationes maiores*, still occasionally cited the *controversiae* in his commentaries. Together, these examples illustrate that, for humanists of the late fifteenth century, access to, understanding of, and engagement with the *Declamationes maiores* were often mediated by Valla's *Elegantie*, which served as a conduit for their interpretative practices and as a source for quotations.

Keywords: *Declamationes maiores*, Lorenzo Valla, Domizio Calderini, Angelo Poliziano, Classical reception

INTRODUCTION

The *Declamationes maiores*, a sylloge of nineteen mock-forensic speeches for fictitious cases, are the only fully elaborated *controversiae* (or *causae*) to have survived from the ancient Latin-speaking world.¹ Despite being spurious and of uncertain date,

¹This paper is a product of the project *La riscoperta della declamazione latina nelle pratiche didattiche tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, developed by the Università degli Studi

they were attributed to Quintilian from the earliest known authorial attestations in late antiquity.² Unlike Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*,³ the pseudo-Quintilianic *Declamationes maiores* were widely known in the Middle Ages as early as the 10th century⁴ and became objects of particular interest to humanists between the 14th and 15th centuries.⁵

di Genova; the funding has been given by the PRIN project 2022 (2022W8FAHM): *Dicendo discitur. Assessing the educational value of declamation, from early imperial age to current times*, whose scientific head is Biagio Santorelli. I used the siglum *ISTC* (*In-cunabula Short Title Catalogue*) = (https://data.cerl.org/istc/_search).

²The earliest attestation of the attribution to Quintilian can be found in St. Jerome, *Epistula de cereo paschali*, 18,1 (PL 30, 183): *Et ut breviter signem, puto te Quintiliani controversiae recordari, in qua pauper causatur, dolens ob interitum apum, flores ab impotentissimo divite venenatos*. On the circulation of the *Declamationes maiores* under the name of Quintilian in Late Antiquity, see Antonio Stramaglia, Michael Winterbottom, and Biagio Santorelli, eds., [Quintilian], *The Major Declamations*, 3 vols., (Harvard University Press, 2021), vol. I, XLI-XLIII. On the dating of these *controversiae*, see Biagio Santorelli, "Datazione e paternità delle *Declamazioni maggiori pseudo-quintiliane*," in *Le Declamazioni maggiori pseudo-quintiliane nella Roma imperiale*, ed. Andrea Lovato, Antonio Stramaglia, and Giusto Traina (Walter De Gruyter, 2021), 361-429 (with further bibliography).

³In the Middle Ages the *Institutio oratoria*, besides being known in mutilated and lacunar forms through manuscripts, was circulated in Europe in *florilegia* and *excerpta*: see, e.g., Patricia Warren Sutherland, *Quintilian in the Medieval Florilegia* (University of North Carolina, 1950, Diss.); Priscilla S. Boskoff, "Quintilian in the Late Middle Ages," *Speculum* 27, no. 1 (1952): 71-78. A complete manuscript of the *Institutio oratoria* was discovered in the monastery of St. Gallen (ms. Zürich, Zentrabibliothek, C 74) by Poggio Bracciolini, as documented in his letter of 15 December 1416 addressed to Guarino Veronese; see the edition of this letter in Poggio Bracciolini, *Lettere, Epistolarum familiarium libri*, ed. Helene Harth, 3 vols. (Olschki, 1984-1987), II: 153-156. On Bracciolini's discoveries, see also Giuseppe Marcellino, "Chi Ne Vol Più Se Ne Peschi, Ché La Rete Mia è Rocta': Poggio Bracciolini e Le Scoperte Dei Codici Latini al Tempo Del Concilio Di Costanza (*Ep. 654** a Francesco Barbaro)," *Lettere Italiane* 69, no. 3 (2017): 433-466.

⁴Gerbert of Aurillac (940/950-1003), later known as pope Silvester II, commissioned and annotated the earliest extant manuscript of the *Declamationes maiores*, Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Class. 44 (M.IV.13); in this respect, see Lennart Håkanson, ed., *Declamationes XIX Maiores Quintiliano falso ascriptae* (B. G. Teubner, 1982): IV-V; Hartmut Hoffmann, *Bamberger Handschriften des 10. und des 11. Jahrhunderts* (Verlagsort, 1995), 26-28; Patrizia Stoppacci, *Clavis Gerbertiana. Gerbertus Aureliacensis* (SISMEL - Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2016), 24, 30-31; Michael Winterbottom, "The Manuscript Tradition of [Quintilian]'s *Major Declamations*: A New Approach," in *Id. Papers on Quintilian and Ancient Declamation*, ed. Antonio Stramaglia, Francesca Romana Nocchi, Giuseppe Russo (Oxford University Press, 2019). For an overview of the reception of the *Maiores* in the Middle Age, see Riccardo Macchioro, "La ricezione medievale delle *Declamationes maiores* tra florilegia e riscritture," in *Le Declamazioni*, ed. Lovato, Stramaglia, Traina.

⁵On the reception of the *Maiores* in Humanism and Renaissance, see Stramaglia, Winterbottom, Santorelli, [Quintilian] *The Major Declamations*, LV-LVIII. More broadly, see Antonio Stramaglia, "Le *Declamationes maiores* pseudo-quintiliane:

Interest in the *declamatio* as a genre spread among humanists, starting with Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406).⁶ Furthermore, rhetorical exercises, before their inclusion in the humanist curricular reform of 1523 by Philip Melanchthon (1497–1560) at the University of Wittenberg,⁷ were conducted during the 15th century in some private Italian schools, such as those of Guarino Guarini (1374–1460, known as Guarino Veronese) and Vittorino da Feltre (1373/74–1446).⁸ As for the *Declamationes maiores*, although in the humanistic period they were considered “an integral part of the Latin that any learned man was supposed to be familiar with,”⁹ the opinion of humanists on the quality of these works was not uniform.¹⁰

A critical assessment on the *Declamationes maiores* in the 14th century comes from Francesco Petrarca (1304–1374) in epistle XXIV 7 of his *Familiares*,¹¹ dated December 7, 1350, from Florence.¹² After

genesi di una raccolta declamatoria e fisionomia della sua trasmissione testuale,” in *Approches de la Troisième Sophistique. Hommages à J. Schamp*, ed. Eugenio Amato (Latomus, 2006), 565–567; Neil W. Bernstein, *Ethics, Identity, and Community in Later Roman Declamation* (Oxford University Press, 2013), 149–164.

⁶ Emilio Giazzi, “Coluccio Salutati e il rilancio del genere della declamazione,” in *Coluccio Salutati e l’invenzione dell’umanesimo*. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, ed. Concetta Bianca (Firenze, 29–31 ottobre 2008) (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2010). See also Giuliano Tanturli, “Coluccio Salutati e i letterati del suo tempo,” in *Coluccio Salutati e l’invenzione dell’Umanesimo*. Catalogo della mostra, ed. Teresa De Robertis, Giuliano Tanturli, and Stefano Zamponi (Firenze Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 2 novembre 2008 – 30 gennaio 2009) (Mandragora, 2008), 41–47.

⁷ Gustav Bauch, *Die Einführung der Melanchthonischen Declamationen und andere gleichzeitige Reformen an der Universität zu Wittenberg* (M. & H. Marcus, 1900).

⁸ On the diffusion of the *declamatio* in Humanism, see Marc van der Poel, “The Latin Declamatio in Renaissance Humanism,” *Sixteenth Century Journal* 3 (1989): 471–478, especially 474–478, for its function within the tradition of school education (with further bibliography); on the teaching of Guarino and Vittorino, see, e.g., Ronald G. Witt, “In the Footsteps of the Ancients”: *The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Brill, 2001), 341–342. Furthermore, on rhetorical skills in the Renaissance literature, see Peter Mack, “Rhetorical Skills and Renaissance Literature,” *Rhetorica* 41, no. 4 (2023): 412–445.

⁹ Stramaglia, Winterbottom, Santorelli, [Quintilian] *The Major Declamations*, LVI.

¹⁰ The first known vernacular translation of the *Declamationes maiores* was produced in the first half of the 14th century. For details, see Cristiano Lorenzi Biondi, “Tra Loschi e Lancia. Nota sull’attribuzione delle *Declamationes maiores volgari*,” *Studi di filologia italiana* 71 (2013): 323–339.

¹¹ On this epistle to Quintilian (*Fam.* XXIV, 7), see Francesco Petrarca, *Le Familiari*. Libri XXI–XXIV e indici, vol. V, ed. Ugo Dotti, Felicità Audisio (Nino Aragno Editore, 2009), 3538–3547.

¹² On the dating of this letter, see Giuseppe Billanovich, *Petrarca letterato. Lo scrittoio del Petrarca* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1947), 38; Arnaldo Foresti,

receiving a manuscript transmitting the *Institutio oratoria*, a gift from Lapo da Castiglionchio (1381†),¹³ Petrarca expressed his admiration for Quintilian's work by writing a letter to the ancient Roman teacher of orators.¹⁴

This letter includes the following criticism of the *Maiores* (1; 6):

[1] Franciscus Quintiliano salutem. Olim tuum nomen audieram et de tuo aliquid legeram [scil. *Declamationes maiores*], et mirabar unde tibi nomen acuminis; sero ingenium tuum novi: Oratoriarum Institutionum liber, heu, discerptus et lacer, venit ad manus meas. [. . .] [6] Equidem quantum hoc tuo magnifico opere [*i.e. Institutio oratoria*] colato cum eo libro quem de causis edidisti [*i.e. Declamationes maiores*] – qui idcirco non perii ut constaret etatem nostram optimarum rerum precipue negligentem, mediocrium non ita –, satis intelligentibus patet multo te melius cotis officio functum esse quam gladii et oratorem formare potentius quam prestare!

[1] Francesco sends his greetings to Quintilian. I had long heard your name and had read something of yours [*i.e. Declamationes maiores*], and I wondered how you had gained a reputation for sharpness; I came to know your genius late: the book of the *Institutio oratoria*, alas, torn and mutilated, came into my hands. [. . .] [6] Indeed, when one compares this magnificent work of yours [*i.e. Institutio oratoria*] with that book of causae you published [*i.e. Declamationes maiores*]—which survives, it seems, only to prove that our age neglects the best things most of all,

Aneddoti sulla vita di Francesco Petrarca, nuova edizione corretta e ampliata dall'autore (Antenore, 1977), 243–244.

¹³ While it is not known which manuscript Petrarca used to read the *Declamationes maiores*, the manuscript of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, owned and annotated by the humanist, is now the ms. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Lat. 7720; the Quintilian text from this manuscript is incomplete and incorrect. Petrarca's annotations were edited by Maria Accame Lanzillotta, "Le postille del Petrarca a Quintiliano (Cod. parigino lat. 7720)," *Quaderni Petrarqueschi*, no. 5 (1988): 1–201. On Petrarca's reading of classical texts more generally, see Maurizio Fiorilla, *Il Canzoniere e le postille di Petrarca ai classici* (Antenore, 2012); Andrea Torre, "Nota tibi": Il dialogo con gli antichi, con sé e con i posteri nelle postille petrarquesche," in "Parlando cose che 'l tacer è bello." *Messinscena del Dialogo nella Letteratura italiana. Dal "Dialogo coi morti" al "Colloquio" coi fantasmi della mente*. Atti dell'omonima Sezione del XXXII Deutscher Romanistentag, ed. Roberto Ubbidente and Massimiliano Tortora, (Berlino, 25–28 settembre 2011) (Cesati, 2013).

¹⁴ On the rediscovery of the *Institutio oratoria*, see Carla Maria Monti, "Opto te incolumem videre. Petrarca e la scoperta del Quintiliano integro," *Studi petrarcheschi* n. s. 20 (2007): 105–123. More broadly, on the reception of the *Institutio oratoria* in the Renaissance, see Carl Joachim Classen, "Quintilian and the Revival of Learning in Italy," *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 43 (1994): 77–98; Virginia Cox, "Quintilian in the Italian Renaissance," in *Oxford Handbook of Quintilian*, ed. Marc van der Poel, Michael Edwards, James J. Murphy (Oxford University Press, 2021).

and lesser things not so much—it is clear to anyone with understanding that you were much better at sharpening the blade than wielding it, and that you were far superior at forming an orator than at being one yourself!

Petrarca states that the *Institutio oratoria* finally allowed him to understand why Quintilian was so admired in antiquity, an understanding that had eluded him during his prior reading of his work *de causis*, which he found to be below the author's reputation.¹⁵

A noteworthy attestation of the study of these texts in the second half of the 14th century is provided by the work of Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375). While studying the autograph manuscript of the *Decameron* (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Hamilton 90), dated around 1370,¹⁶ Simone Marchesi suggested that Boccaccio possessed direct knowledge of the *Declamationes maiores*.¹⁷ That proposition stems from the observation that the structure of the rubrics in the *Decameron* finds an antecedent in the *argumenta* of the Pseudo-Quintilian's *controversiae*, and in particular in the *forma* in which they have been transmitted by the manuscript Città del

¹⁵ Petrarca's mention of *eo libro quem de causis edidisti* refers to the *Declamationes maiores*, as underlined by Dotti-Audisio, Francesco Petrarca, *Le Familiari*, 3538. The *Declamationes minores* were rediscovered in the 15th century; see Sabbadini, *Le scoperte*, I: 138, 142–143; II: 23, 138, 248; Lucia Pasetti, "Le *Declamationes minores*. Funzione e tradizione di un libro di scuola," in *Le declamazioni minori attribuite a Quintiliano*, ed. Lucia Pasetti, Alfredo Casamento, Giuseppe Dimatteo, Gernot Krapinger, and Biagio Santorelli (Pàtron 2019), XI–XLII: XXXV–XXXVIII, 244–292; Bart Huelsenbeck, "The Earliest Fragments of a Latin Declamatory Corpus: The Quintilianic *Minor Declamations* and the *Excerpta* of the Elder Seneca," in *Between the Text and the Page. Studies on the Transmission of Medieval Ideas in Honour of Frank T. Coulson*, ed. Harald Anderson and David T. Gura (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2020), 40–65, 47–52; see also Remigio Sabbadini, "Sui codici delle *Declamationes* di Quintiliano," *Studi Italiani di Filologia Classica*, 5 (1897): 390–393; as for the critical edition, see M. Fabii Quintiliani, *Declamationes minores*, ed. David Roy Shackleton Bailey (B. G. Teubner, 1989). On the other hand, the mention of Quintilian's *De causis corruptae eloquentiae* is only found in the *Institutio oratoria*, e.g., Charles Oscar Brink, "Quintilian's *De Causis Corruptae Eloquentiae* and Tacitus' *Dialogus de Oratoribus*," *The Classical Quarterly*, 39, no. 2 (1989): 472–503, 473: "All that survives of the *De causis* comes from references to it in the *Institutio*; there are no outside sources."

¹⁶ On this manuscript, see Alberto Chiari, "Un autografo del *Decameron*?" *La Fiera letteraria* III, 27 (1948), 4; Vittore Branca, Pier Giogio Ricci, *Un autografo del Decameron (Codice Hamiltoniano 90)* (C.E.D.A.M., 1962). On the *forma codicis* of the manuscript Hamilton 90, see Marco Corsi, "L'autografo berlinese del *Decameron*," in *Boccaccio autore e copista*, Catalogo della mostra, ed. Teresa De Robertis, Carla Maria Monti, Marco Petoletti, Giuliano Tanturli, and Stefano Zamponi (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 11 ottobre 2013–11 gennaio 2014) (Mandragora, 2014), 137–138.

¹⁷ Simone Marchesi, *Stratigrafie decameroniane* (Firenze: Olschki, 2004), 27–30.

Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Lat. 1773,¹⁸ a manuscript once owned by Gasparino Barzizza (1360–1431).¹⁹ In this respect, Marchesi observes that:

è un'altra opera tradizionalmente attribuita a Quintiliano, le *Declamationes maiores*, che offre il miglior antecedente strutturale delle rubriche, in particolare dello statuto di intermediari tra la voce del narratore e quella della cornice che il *Decameron* attribuisce loro. [. . .] nel panorama della letteratura latina nessuna opera se non le *Declamationes* presenta lo stesso sistema di anticipazione del contenuto narrativo del testo che troviamo nelle rubriche decameroniane.²⁰

Boccaccio may have had at his disposal a manuscript of the *Declamationes maiores* that can be compared to the Vaticanus in terms of *forma codicis* and may have taken his cue from it in the elaboration of his own rubrics.²¹

In the 15th century, the debate between the Roman humanist Lorenzo Valla (1405/7–1457)²² and the Florentine humanist Poggio

¹⁸ Marchesi, *Stratigrafie*, 28–30, points out that the graphic appearance of the rubrics in the Hamilton 90 bears resemblance to those of the *Maiores* as handed down by the manuscript Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Lat. 1773.

¹⁹ On Gasparino Barzizza as a teacher, see R. G. G. Mercer, *The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza, With Special Reference to His Place in Paduan Humanism* (MHRA, 1979); Lucia Gualdo Rosa, “Padova 1420: un commento universitario di Gasparino Barzizza a quindici orazioni di Cicerone,” in “Ut granum sinapis.” *Essays on Neo-Latin Literature in Honour of Josef Ijsewijn*, ed. Gilbert Tournoy and Dirk Sacré (Leuven University Press, 1997); Carla Frova, “Una delle dinastie maestre del Quattrocento: Barzizza,” in *Maestri e traduttori bergamaschi fra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, ed. Claudia Villa and Francesco Lo Monaco (Civica Biblioteca Angelo Mai, 1998); Roberto Norbedo, “Considerazioni intorno a Battista Alberti e Gasparino Barzizza a Padova (con un documento su Leonardo Salutati),” in *La vita e il mondo di Leon Battista Alberti*. Atti dei Convegni internazionali del Comitato Nazionale VI centenario della nascita di Leon Battista Alberti (Genova, 19–21 febbraio 2004), 2 vols. (Olschki, 2008), vol. II, 345–376.

²⁰ Marchesi, *Stratigrafie*, 27, 29.

²¹ Boccaccio owned a manuscript of the *Declamationes maiores*, as attested by the inventory of the *parva libraria* of the Convento di Santo Spirito in Florence, *i.e.*, the room that housed the manuscripts donated by will by Boccaccio to the friars of the convent, where the *controversiae* are found in pew VIII, position 6; in this regard, see Serena Mauriello, *Rhetorica, evidentialia, amplificatio nella biblioteca materiale e nella prosa narrativa di Giovanni Boccaccio* (Università La Sapienza, 2022, Diss.), 221. On Boccaccio’s library more generally, see Marco Cursi and Maurizio Fiorilla, “Boccaccio,” in *Autografi dei letterati italiani. Le origini e il Trecento*, ed. Giuseppina Brunetti, Maurizio Fiorilla, and Marco Petoletti (Salerno Editrice, 2013), 43–103. See also Virginia Machera, “Un nuovo codice della *parva libraria* di Santo Spirito in Firenze,” *Studi sul Boccaccio* 49 (2021): 315–325.

²² On the biography of Lorenzo Valla, see now Clementina Marsico, “Valla, Lorenzo,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 98 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2020), 73–79.

Bracciolini (1380–1459)²³ also included the *Declamationes maiores*.²⁴ Valla was the first to assert that Quintilian was superior to Cicero²⁵ and held the pseudo-Quintilianic *controversiae* in high esteem, having studied them in depth using the manuscript housed in the Oxford Bodleian Library, Selden supra 22.²⁶

Around 1428, Valla had even intended to compose a *comparatio* between Cicero and Quintilian to demonstrate the superiority of the latter.²⁷ Although the *Quintiliani Tulliique examen* has been lost—

²³ On the biography of Poggio Bracciolini, see Ernst Walsler, *Poggius Florentinus Leben und Werke* (Leipzig-Berlin: Teubner, 1914); Emilio Bigi, “Bracciolini, Poggio,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 13 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1971), 640–646.

²⁴ Bracciolini’s first ill-feeling towards Valla is evidenced by a letter dated 17 October 1433 from Bracciolini to Guarino Veronese, see *Poggio Bracciolini, Lettere, Epistolarum familiarium libri*, 3 vols., ed. Helene Harth (Olschki, 1984–1987), II: 178–180. In this letter Bracciolini, with the expression *Non est mirandum eum, qui Ciceronem arguit in arte dicendi et oratoria facultate* (cit. Harth, Poggio, 178), makes reference to Valla’s *comparatio* between Cicero and Quintilian; see the commentary on this passage in Remigio Sabbadini, ed., *Epistolario di Guarino Veronese*, 3 vols. (Bottega d’Erasmus, 1916–1919), III: 302: “Ciceronem arguit. Nella *Comparatio Ciceronis et Quintiliani*, composta a Roma nel 1428. Andò perduta.” As for the *querelle* between Bracciolini and Valla, see Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, “Note sulla polemica Poggio-Valla e sulla fortuna delle *Elegantiae*,” *Interpres* 3 (1980), 29–79; Salvatore I. Camporeale, “Poggio Bracciolini contro Lorenzo Valla. Le ‘Orationes in L. Vallam,’” in *Poggio Bracciolini. 1380–1980. Nel VI centenario della nascita*, ed. Riccardo Fubini (Firenze: Sansoni, 1982), 137–161; Ludovica Sasso, “Poggio Bracciolini – Lorenzo Valla – Nicolò Perotti. Un esempio di dinamica invettiva nella comunità umanista italiana (1451–54),” in *Agonale Invektivität. Konstellationen und Dynamiken der Herabsetzung im italienischen und deutschen Humanismus*, ed. Uwe Israel, Marius Kraus, and Ludovica Sasso (Das Mittelalter Perspektiven mediävistischer Forschung, 2021).

²⁵ An example of anti-Quintilianism in the Renaissance is George of Trebizond’s criticism of Quintilian found in the *Rhetoricorum libri V* (1433–1434), for which, see the following edition: Georgius Trapezuntius, *Rhetoricorum libri quinque*. Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Luc Deitz (Georg Olms, 2006). In this respect, see John Monfasani, *George of Trebizond: A Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic* (Brill, 1976), 262, 267, 289; John Monfasani, “Episodes of Anti-Quintilianism in the Italian Renaissance: Quarrels on the *Orator* as a *Vir Bonus* and Rhetoric as the *Scientia Bene Dicendi*,” *Rhetorica* 10, no. 2 (1992): 119–138, 120.

²⁶ Valla’s hand was recognised on this manuscript by Mariarosa Cortesi, “Una pagina di umanesimo in Eichstätt,” *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 64 (1984): 227–260, 251–252; Mariarosa Cortesi, “Scritti di Lorenzo Valla tra Veneto e Germania,” in *Lorenzo Valla e l’Umanesimo italiano*, ed. Ottavio Besomi and Mariangela Regoliosi (Antenore, 1986), 373–374.

²⁷ See Stefano Pagliaroli, “Una proposta per il giovane Valla: *Quintiliani Tulliique examen*,” *Studi medievali e umanistici* 4 (2006): 9–67. The *comparatio* is also mentioned in a letter sent from Rome by Antonio Beccadelli to the humanist Carlo Marsuppini in Florence and dated at the beginning of 1428, as suggested by Remigio Sabbadini, “Come il Panormita diventò poeta aulico,” *Archivio storico lombardo*, s. V, 43, no. 1

assuming it was ever written—the *preludium* to this work has been identified by Stefano Pagliaroli in the anonymous epistolary treatise handed down by the ms. El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo, a IV 25, ff. 207r-220v.²⁸ In this treatise, probably finished before the beginning of 1429,²⁹ Valla addresses another humanist called Antonio, identified by Pagliaroli as the Palermitan humanist Antonio Beccadelli (1394–1471, also known as the Panormita).³⁰ In this letter, Valla recalls having entrusted Antonio with the task of choosing a Ciceronian oration to compare with a *declamatio* from among the *Maiores*, chosen by Valla himself. The choice of the two works to be compared falls on Cicero's *Pro Ligario* and the pseudo-Quintilianic *Gladiator* (*Maior*. 9), and Valla is certain the latter will win:

De qua victoria [*scil.* Quintilian's victory over Cicero], ut mea quidem fert opinio, nemo dubitaverit – non loquor de te ipso, nunc de aliis loquor, qui hoc opus, ubi tu emitti iusseris, iudicaturi sunt –, si quidem ex hoc loco planum manifestumque fecerimus M. Fabium precellere.³¹

Regarding this victory, at least in my opinion, no one will doubt it—I am not speaking of you yourself; I am now speaking of others, who will judge this work once you have ordered it to be published—if indeed we have made it clear and evident from this passage that Marcus Fabius excels.

The epistolary treatise breaks off before an actual confrontation between the *Pro Ligario* and the *Gladiator*.

(1916): 5–28, 24; the autograph letter, handed down by the ms. Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 3371, 15r-15v, was edited by Gianvito Resta, *Lepistolario del Panormita. Studi per una edizione critica* (Università degli Studi, 1954), 210, n° 377. As underlined by Pagliaroli, *Una proposta*, 34–35, Lorenzo Valla wanted to extensively compare the *Declamationes maiores* with Cicero's orations; see also *Laurentii Vallensis De linguae latinae elegantia ad Ioannem Tortellium Aretinum per me M. Nicolaum Ienson Venetiis opus feliciter impressum est*. M. CCCC. LXXI, introducción, edición crítica, traducción y notas, 2 vols., ed. Santiago López Moreda (Universidad de Extremadura, 1999), I: 274 (I have accepted the corrections made by Pagliaroli, *Una proposta*: 35): *De qua differentia in commentariis a me in huius orationes et illius declamationes componendis disseretur*

²⁸ The treatise is partly edited in Pagliaroli, *Una proposta*.

²⁹ Pagliaroli, *Una proposta*, 32–33.

³⁰ On the biography of Antonio Beccadelli, see Gianvito Resta, "Beccadelli, Antonio, detto il Panormita," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 7 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1965), 400–406.

³¹ I cite the text from Pagliaroli, *Una proposta*: 16 (ms. El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo, a IV 25, 208bis r).

Valla's positive judgment of the *Declamationes maiores* is not universally shared by the humanists of his time,³² as evidenced by a letter dated July 10, 1440, written in Milan by Francesco Filelfo, and addressed to Giovanni Toscanella:

De Quintiliani Declamationibus quid ipse sentiam, paucis accipe. Equidem Quintiliani inventionem vaehementer probo. Est ea enim et acuta et prudens. Sed orationis eius filum mihi sane non placet; sapit enim Hispanitatem nescio quam, hoc est, barbariam plane quandam. Nullam habet elegantiam, nullum nitorem, nullam suavitatem. Et quae non praecipua modo, sed necessaria sunt in oratore: neque movet dicendo Quintilianus neque satis docet nec delectat. Sed videtur sonniculosus quispiam et incompositus. Tenet fortasse Quintilianus (quantum ex eius scriptis animadvertere possumus) non nulla comoda praecepta artis rhetoricae. Multa commemorat, multa colligit. Sed ita sui dissimilis est, ut quae alios docet, ipse ignorare videatur. Verum concedamus illi doctrinam, si ita libet omnino. Movendi tamen delectandique vim nullam habet. Quae quidem duo qui oratori subtraxerit, non oratorem illum, sed aratorem demonstrabit.³³

Regarding Quintilian's *Declamations*, let me tell you briefly what I think. I greatly admire Quintilian's inventiveness; it is both sharp and judicious. However, I must admit I am not pleased at all with the character of his speech; it has, in my opinion, something Spanish about it, something barbaric, I would say. It lacks elegance, brilliance, and charm. And those qualities that are not only essential but indispensable for an orator, Quintilian possesses none of them: he neither stirs emotions through his speech, nor instructs adequately, nor delights.

³²In general, on the reaction of the first humanists to the *Declamationes maiores*, see Cortesi, *Una pagina*, 248–251. Pier Candido Decembrio (1399–1477) revised the text of these *controversiae* in the manuscript Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, R 91 sup., a manuscript that he later transmitted to Francesco Pizolpasso, Archbishop of Milan from 1435 to 1443, possibly at the latter's request. Furthermore, in a letter dated December 17, 1432, Pizolpasso wrote from Basel to Nicolò Cusano, recommending, among other things, the reading of the pseudo-Quintilianic *controversiae*. For more on Decembrio and Pizolpasso as readers of the *Declamationes maiores*, see Mirella Ferrari, "Fra i Latini scriptores di Pier Candido Decembrio e biblioteche umanistiche milanesi: codici di Vitruvio e Quintiliano," in *Vestigia: Studi in onore di Giuseppe Billanovich*, ed. Rino Avesani, Mirella Ferrari, Tino Foffano, Giuseppe Frasso, and Agostino Sottili (Storia e letteratura, 1984), vol. I, 253–256. According to Bé M. C. Breij, "Agricola and pseudo-Quintilian," *Studi Umanistici Picensi* 25 (2005): 245–259, 249. Roelofhuusman (*i.e.*, Rodolphus Agricola Phrisius, 1443–1485), viewed the *Declamationes maiores* as representative of Quintilian's genius.

³³I cite the text from Francesco Filelfo, *Collected Letters Epistolarum Libri XLVIII*, 4 vols., ed. Jeroen De Keyser (Dell'Orso, 2015), vol. I, 229.

Instead, he seems drowsy and disorganized. Quintilian may perhaps possess (as far as we can judge from his writings) some useful principles of rhetorical art. He recalls much, compiles much. Yet he is so inconsistent with himself that it seems as if he forgets what he teaches others. But let us grant him learning, if we must. Even so, he has no power to move or to delight. And whoever deprives an orator of these two abilities does not present an orator, but rather a plowman.

Perhaps precisely because, at the time, there were humanists who regarded the *Declamationes maiores* as a work of limited literary merit, and more generally because the question of whether Quintilian or Cicero should be considered superior was a divisive issue, Valla may have decided not to compose the *Quintiliani Tulliique examen* at all, of which only the epistolary treatise has survived.

The knowledge of the *Declamationes maiores* among humanists was preceded in the late 15th century by another work by Valla, printed for the first time after his death: the *Elegantie Lingue Latine*, in which the pseudo-Quintilianic *controversiae* are frequently cited. This work, which underwent a lengthy gestation period and was developed starting in 1433 when Valla was in Pavia, was first printed only in 1471, when three editions were published: in Rome (*apud* Giovanni de Lignamine; ISTC iv00050000), Venice (*apud* Nicolas Jenson; ISTC iv00051000), and Paris (*apud* Ulrich Gering, Martin Crantz and Michel Friburger; ISTC iv00052000).³⁴ From the moment of its publication, the *Elegantie* became an essential cornerstone of humanistic philology, emerging—as will be seen below—as a battleground for debate and exchange among the most prominent humanists of the late 15th century.

The debate on the superiority of Quintilian over Cicero ignited by Valla also spread into the university sphere, and the first printed edition of the *Declamationes maiores* in the second half of the 15th century fits into that background.³⁵ The Roman *editio princeps* of [Quint.] *Maior.* 8, 9, 10 was published in 1475 (ISTC iq00021500) by Domizio Calderini (1446–1478).³⁶ The *princeps* of the remaining *controversiae* is due to the care of Jacopo Grasolari (after 1450–1534), with the help of

³⁴ On the process of developing the *Elegantie* by Lorenzo Valla, cfr. Mariangela Regoliosi, *Nel cantiere del Valla: elaborazione e montaggio delle Elegantie* (Bulzoni, 1993). On the editions published in 1471, cfr. Maria Gioia Tavoni, “La *princeps* delle *Elegantie* e i paratesti delle edizioni del 1471,” in *Valla e l’Umanesimo bolognese*, ed. Gian Mario Anselmi and Marta Guerra (BUP, 2009); see also Clementina Marsico, *Per l’edizione delle Elegantie di Lorenzo Valla. Studio sul V libro* (Firenze University Press 2013).

³⁵ See Daneloni, *Poliziano*, 9–20.

³⁶ (Pseudo-)Marcus Fabius Quintilianus, *Declamationes maiores tres* [IX, X, VIII], ed. Domizio Calderini (Johannes Schurener, de Bopardia, 1475).

Giorgio Merula (1430–1494), who published in Venice in 1481 (ISTC iq00019000) a complete edition of the nineteen *controversiae*.³⁷

As evidence of the reception of the *Declamationes maiores* in humanistic teaching within the *Studia* and of the importance of Valla's *Elegantie* in shaping the use of this text, I present two examples: the first focuses on Calderini's role as the first editor of the *controversiae*, while the second examines Angelo Poliziano's teaching at the *Studium* of Florence. Starting with the only known reference to the *Declamationes maiores* in Calderini's published commentaries, which is linked to his reading of the *Elegantie*, I analyze Angelo Poliziano's detailed criticism of Calderini's insights. I also demonstrate that the medium through which Poliziano engaged with the *Declamationes maiores* in his academic commentaries was Valla's *Elegantie*.

DOMIZIO CALDERINI AND VALLA'S *ELEGANTIE*

Calderini as a reader of the Declamationes maiores in the Studium Urbis

Having arrived in Rome in 1466, Domizio Calderini³⁸ gained considerable prestige by frequenting the circle of Cardinal Bessarion.³⁹ After Bessarion's death in November 1472, the humanist first became a protégé of Cardinal Pietro Riario⁴⁰ and, after Riario's death

³⁷ In the prefatory letter to Cristoforo De Prioli, Grasolari writes about Merula: *Georgio alexandrino viro doctissimo praeceptoris optimo et fidelissimo corrigendum remisimus: qui (ut omnia accurate inspexit) solita diligentia recognovit*. On Giorgio Merula, see Alessandro Daneloni, "Merlani, Giorgio (Giorgio Merula)," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 73 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2009), 679–685. For Merula's interest in the *Declamationes maiores* in his commentary on Juvenal's *Satires*, published in Venice in 1478, see Lorenzo Vespoli, "Le *Declamationes maiores* nel commento a Giovenale di Giorgio Merula e il confronto con l'esegesi umanistica delle *Satire*," *Museum Helveticum* 82, no. 2 (2025): 278–296.

³⁸ On Domizio Calderini, see Gino Levi, *Cenni intorno alla vita ed agli scritti di Domizio Calderini* (Padova: R. Stab. Prosperini, 1900), 42; John Dunston, "Studies in Domizio Calderini," *Italia Medievale e Umanistica* 11 (1968): 71–150, 72–74 and 86–106; Alessandro Perosa, "Calderini, Domizio," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 16 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1973), 597–605. See also Harald Anderson, "Publius Papinius Statius," in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum. Medieval and Renaissance Latin Translations, Annotated Lists and Guides*, vol. 13, ed. Greti Dinkova-Bruun (Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies Press, 2020), 302–338, 305–310.

³⁹ Lotte Labowski, "Bessarione," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 9 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1967), 687–696.

⁴⁰ Massimo Giansante, "Riario, Pietro," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 87 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2016), 98–100.

in January 1474, of Giuliano della Rovere (later Pope Giulio II),⁴¹ the nephew of Pope Sisto IV (Francesco della Rovere).⁴²

Calderini held the professorships of Rhetoric and Greek at the *Studium* of Rome⁴³ from around 1470 to 1478, the year of his untimely death.⁴⁴ A record of the courses taught by Calderini at the *Studium Urbis* can be found in a letter dated July 20, 1478, written by Angelo Callimaco,⁴⁵ a student of Calderini in Rome.⁴⁶ The well-known text of the letter reads as follows:

⁴¹ Alessandro Pastore, "Giulio II, papa," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 57 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2001), 17-26.

⁴² Giuseppe Lombardi, "Sisto IV, papa," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 92 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 2018), 850-862.

⁴³ On the *Studium Urbis* in the 15th century, see Rino Avesani, "Appunti per la storia dello *Studium Urbis* nel Quattrocento," in *Roma e lo Studium urbis. Spazio urbano e cultura dal quattro al seicento*. Atti del convegno, ed. Paolo Cherubini (Roma, 7-10 giugno 1989) (Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali-Ufficio centrale per i beni archivistici, 1992), 69-87; Wouter Bracke, "Contentiosa disputatio magnopere ingenium exacuit," in *Roma e lo Studium urbis*, ed. Cherubini, 156-168. The academic year lasted from 18 October to 29 June; see Campanelli-Pincelli, *La lettura*, 124.

⁴⁴ For the years in which Calderini taught in the *Studium Urbis*, payment records are preserved only for the years 1473 (in which he taught Greek) and 1474 (in which he taught rhetoric); on this point, see Maria Cristina Dorati da Empoli, "I lettori dello Studio e i maestri di grammatica a Roma da Sisto IV ad Alessandro VI," *Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato* 40 (1980): 98-147, 119, 125. On Calderini's role in the *Studium* of Rome, see: Levi, *Cenni intorno*, 42; Maria Grazia Blasio, "Lo *Studium Urbis* e la produzione romana a stampa: i corsi di retorica, latino e greco," in *Un Pontificato e una città. Sisto IV (1471-1484)*. Atti del Convegno, ed. Massimo Miglio, Francesco Niutta, Diego Quagliani, and Concetta Ranieri (Roma, 3-7 dicembre 1984) (Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo, 1986), 481-501, 489-494; Maurizio Campanelli and Maria Agata Pincelli, "La lettura dei classici nello *Studium Urbis* tra Umanesimo e Rinascimento," in *Storia della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia de "La Sapienza"*, prefazione di Emanuele Paratore, ed. Lidia Capo and Maria Rosa Di Simone (Viella, 2000), 158-160, 171.

⁴⁵ On Angelo Callimaco, see Giancarlo Schizzerotto, "Callimaco, Angelo," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 16 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1973), 754-757.

⁴⁶ Callimaco's letter, handed down by the ms. Roma, Biblioteca Universitaria La Sapienza, *Alessandrino*, 239, ff. 28r-33v, contains a detailed review of university courses taught in the *Studium* by Domizio Calderini on the texts of Greek and Latin authors. As pointed out by Campanelli-Pincelli, *La lettura*, 143, note 141: "Che la lettera sia autografa è oltremodo probabile, ma non sembra trattarsi di una bozza [. . .]; escluso che sia la lettera effettivamente spedita, per la mancanza delle caratteristiche esterne delle missive, ha piuttosto l'aspetto di una copia in pulito, con qualche banale errore di trascrizione." The text has been published in Malaboti, *Domizio*: 59-63 (see esp. pp. 61-62). See also Campanelli-Pincelli, *La lettura*, 143 (with note 141) and 160 (with note 177). On the course on the *Declamationes maiores*, see Maurizio Campanelli, *Polemiche e Filologia ai primordi della stampa. Le Observationes di Domizio Calderini* (Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2001), 78: "Da come si esprime Callimaco,

Interpretatus est Marcum Valerium Martialem, qui propter antiquitatem et eius subtilitatem ignorabatur [. . .] et Iunium Iuuenalem, 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 ceteris 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 amoris vim ostendit. [. . .] Legit et publice et privatim Suetonium deditque auditoribus nonnulla dictata se digna.⁴⁷

[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 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.⁴⁸

Relating to the lectures mentioned by Callimaco, some of Calderini's commentaries survive both in printed and manuscript form. Domizio Calderini personally took care of the printed publication of a number of classical texts: Martial's *Epigrammata*,⁴⁹ Juvenal's *Sa-*

semberebbe che Calderini non si sia limitato ad esporre soltanto le tre *Declamationes* edite nell'ottobre del '75, sebbene la genericità del suo dettato (si tratta di una lettera privata) lasci adito al dubbio."

⁴⁷ This passage of the letter is found in ms. Roma, Biblioteca Universitaria La Sapienza, *Alessandrino*, 239, ff. 31r-31v. I cite the text of the letter from Malaboti, *Domizio*, 62; see also Campanelli-Pincelli, *La lettura*, 160; Giancarlo Abbamonte, "The Transformation of Attitudes towards Ancient Latin Authors and the Legacy of Lorenzo Valla," in *Beyond Reception: Renaissance Humanism and the Transformation of Classical Antiquity*, ed. Patrick Baker, Johannes Helmuth, and Craig Kallendorf (De Gruyter, 2019), 29–30.

⁴⁸ As quoted in and translated by Giancarlo Abbamonte, "Roman Humanism and the Study of the *Silvae* in the Fifteenth Century," in *Editing and Commenting on Statius' Silvae*, ed. Ana Lóio (Brill, 2023), 37–38.

⁴⁹ D. Calderini, *Domitii Calderini Veronensis Commentarii in M. Valerium Martialem* (Johannes Gensberg, 1474). A first version of this commentary, dated March 22, 1473, is found in the ms. Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 53,33. On this

tyrae,⁵⁰ Ovid's *Ibys*,⁵¹ an incunabulum comprising the edition with commentary of Statius' *Silvae* and the Ovidian *Epistle from Sappho to Phaon*, along with the *Elucubratio in quaedam Propertii loca*.⁵² Then, in 1480, the *commentarium perpetuum* to some of the poems of the so-called *Appendix Vergiliana* was posthumously printed in Calderini's name; namely, *Culex*, *Copa*, *Dirae*, *Est et non*, *Vir bonus*, *De rosis nascentibus*, *Elegiae in Maecenatem*, *Ciris*.⁵³ In addition to these printed commentaries, there are surviving manuscript transmitting Calderini's exegesis of other works,⁵⁴ such as the students' hand notes on Silius

commentary see Dunston, *Studies*: 78–81, 116–123; Anastasia Viti, "Per la storia del testo di Marziale nel secolo XV: i *Commentarii in M. Valerium Martialem* di Domizio Calderini," *Eikasmos* 15 (2004): 401–434; Paolo Viti, "Il Latino tra Medioevo e Umanesimo," *Rudiae*, n.s. 6–7 (2020–2021): 281–335, 304–307.

⁵⁰D. Calderini, *Commentarii in Satyras Iuvenalis* (Jacobus Rubeus, 1475) (ISTC ij00642000). On this edition and its dating, see Giancarlo Abbamonte, "Materiali biografici antichi su Giovenale recuperati da Domizio Calderini," *Renassanceforum* 9 (2015): 177–216, 178–186. According to Levi, *Cenni intorno*, 42, Calderini devoted a course to Juvenal's *Satires* at the *Studium Urbis* during the academic year 1474–1475. During the same period, he also conducted courses on Cicero's *De Oratore* and on one of Demosthenes's *Philippics*; see Campanelli-Pincelli, *La lettura*: 158, 171. The *praelectio* to the course on *De oratore*, i.e. the *Oratio habita Romae initio studii*, edited in Remo Malaboti, *Domizio Calderini (Secolo XV). Contributo alla storia dell'Umanesimo*, con un'appendice di documenti e due fotografie (Ist. Marchiondi, 1919), is transmitted by the ms. Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, CCLVII (229), 17r–21r, which hands down some unpublished works by Calderini; on this manuscript, see Silvia Marchi, ed., *I Manoscritti della Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona*. Catalogo descrittivo redatto da don Antonio Spagnolo (Mazziana, 1996): 290–292; Roberto Weiss, "In memoriam Domitii Calderini," *IMU* 3 (1960): 309–321, 309–310.

⁵¹D. Calderini, *Domitii Calderini Veronensis Commentarioli in Ibyn Ovidii* (Georgius Sachsels et Bartholomaeus Golsch, 1474). See the edition by Luca Carlo Rossi, ed., *Domizio Calderini, Commentarioli in Ibyn Ovidii* (SISMEL – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2011).

⁵²D. Calderini, *Ex emendatione et interpretatione Domitii Calderini Calderini Veronensis Statii Papinii Neapolitani Sylvarum liber primus* [. . .] (Arnoldus Pannartz, 1475) (ISTC is00697000). On Calderini's reading of Statius' *Silvae*, see Abbamonte, *Roman Humanism*: 36–43. On Calderini's commentary on Propertius, see Donatella Coppini, "Il commento a Properzio di Domizio Calderini," *ASNP*, s. 3, 9, no. 3 (1979): 1119–1173.

⁵³The *editio princeps* of this commentary is D. Calderini, *Commentarii in quaedam opuscula Vergiliana*, s.l. [sed fort. Mediolani], s.T. [sed Simon Magniagus], s.d. [sed 1480 ca.] (ISTC ic00039000). Calderini's commentary has been also handed down by the mss. Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Lat. 2740, ff. 74r–83v and Roma, Biblioteca Corsiniana, Nic. Rossi 174 (43 E 18), ff. 1r–29v. On this commentary, see Federica Rossetti, "Il commento di Domizio Calderini all'Appendix Vergiliana," *Umanistica* 8, no. 1 (2013): 131–147.

⁵⁴It was usual that once a humanist published a commentary on an author he had lectured on in the *Studium*, the *recollectae* of the students in that course would

Italicus' *Punica*, to which he dedicated a course in the academic year 1473–1474,⁵⁵ and his commentaries on Suetonius⁵⁶ and the *Aeneid* of Virgil.⁵⁷ The commentaries on Cicero's *Epistulae ad Atticum* and *Verrinae* are now lost.⁵⁸ As can be deduced from Callimaco's letter, Calderini gave lectures in the same academic year on Virgil's *Aeneid* and the *Declamationes maiores*, explaining the former's poem by using Homer as a comparison and reading the pseudo-Quintilianic text while comparing it with Cicero's texts.

Regarding the dating of Calderini's course on the *Declamationes maiores*, an indication is provided in the dedication letter attached to his edition of pseudo-Quintilian, addressed to Aniello Arcamone,⁵⁹ the Neapolitan ambassador in the Rome of Pope Sixtus IV.⁶⁰ Since Calderini himself claimed to have seen to the publishing the text

disappear; in this regard, see Francesco Lo Monaco, "Alcune osservazioni sui commenti umanistici ai classici nel secondo Quattrocento," in *Il commento ai testi*, ed. Ottavio Besomi and Carlo Caruso (Birkhauser, 1992), 117–119. The main reason is that the printed commentaries of the humanists usually contained exegetical material used for lectures at the *Studia*; in this respect, see Campanelli-Pincelli, *La lettura*, 129.

⁵⁵ Calderini gave lessons on the *Punica* between 1470 and 1473 and devoted an entire course on this poem in the academic year 1472–1473 as witnessed by the *subscriptio* of the manuscript Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottob. lat. 1258; in this regard, see Dunston, *Studies*, 74, 86–90. Calderini's exegetical material on Silius Italicus has been published in Frances Muecke, John Dunston †, ed., Domizio Calderini, *Commentary on Silius Italicus* (Droz, 2011), 13–65.

⁵⁶ Calderini's commentary on Suetonius are handed down by the following manuscripts: (i) Verona, Biblioteca Capitolare, CCLVII (229); (ii) Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, 153; (iii) Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, 833; (iv) Firenze, Biblioteca Riccardiana, 2127.

⁵⁷ On Calderini's commentary on the *Aeneid*, see Joseph Farrell, "Il commento virgiliano di Domizio Calderini," in *Esegesi dimenticate di autori classici*. Atti del Convegno (Perugia, 25–26 ottobre 2007), ed. Carlo Santini and Fabio Stock (Edizioni ETS, 2008).

⁵⁸ Perosa, *Calderini*, 601.

⁵⁹ On Aniello Arcamone, see Roberto Abbondanza, "Arcamone, Aniello," in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 3 (Istituto della Enciclopedia italiana, 1961), 738–739. See also Luigi Volpicella, *Regis Ferdinandi primi Instructionum Liber* (L. Pierro 1916), 265–266; Elisabetta Scarton, "La congiura dei baroni del 1485–87 e la sorte dei ribelli," in *Poteri, relazioni, guerra nel regno di Ferrante d'Aragona. Studi sulle corrispondenze diplomatiche*, ed. Francesco Senatore and Francesco Storti (ClioPress, 2011), *passim*.

⁶⁰ See the text of the letter in Beriah Botfield, *Prefaces to the First Editions of the Greek and Roman Classics and of the Sacred Scriptures* (Henry George Bohn, 1861), 155–156. The letter reads as follows: *Ex toto volumine Declamationum Fabii Quintiliani quas, tua voluntate et auctoritate permotus proxima aestate recognovi, hae tres tumultuariis operis editae fuerunt, ne, quom eas hoc anno profitebor, ab auditoribus desyderentur nostris* (Botfield, *Prefaces*, 155–156).

of the *Declamationes maiores* 8, 9, 10 in 1475 so that his students at the *Studium Urbis* would have a printed text to be able to follow his lectures more easily, it is likely that the course on both Virgil's *Aeneid* and the texts from pseudo-Quintilian should be dated in the academic year 1475–1476.⁶¹ Noteworthy is that Calderini claims to have carried out a *recognitio* on all of the pseudo-Quintilianic *Declamationes maiores* during the summer before the edition went to press, and then to have chosen only three for publication.⁶² Unfortunately, Domizio Calderini's exegesis on the texts of pseudo-Quintilian and Cicero is now considered lost. Some of his other commentaries on the works of Latin authors have been preserved, however, either in manuscript form or in printed editions. In these commentaries by Calderini, it is possible to search for traces of the presence of the *Declamationes maiores*.

Calderini as a critical reader of Valla

In August 1475, the summer of the publication of the *editio princeps* of the *Declamationes maiores* (8, 9, 10), Domizio Calderini also published his commentary on the Ovidian *Epistle from Sappho to Phaon*.⁶³ As we learn from Callimachus' letter, Calderini taught a course on Ovid's *Heroides* at the *Studium Urbis* (*Praetereo ipsius Ciceronis Oratorem, Heroides Ovidii, Propertium, in quibus artificium et amoris vim ostendit*). Of the exegetical material on the *Heroides* provided by Calderini during the course mentioned by Callimachus, the printed edition of the commentary on Ovid's *Epistle from Sappho to Phaon* is the only

⁶¹ See Campanelli, *Polemiche*, 78; Campanelli-Pincelli, *La lettura*, 122; Wolfgang Strobl, "Das Zwölftafelgesetz und die Bestattung des Misenus in Vergils *Aeneis* (6, 176–231). Zu einem Deutungsversuch des Domizio Calderini," *Philologus* 157, no. 1 (2013): 154–175, 156–157. See also Lorenzo Vespoli, "Domizio Calderini as a critical reader of Macrobius: a note on Aeneas' journey into the Underworld (Verg. *Aen.* VI 308)," *Itineraria* 23 (2024): 87–93.

⁶² On the meaning of *recognitio*, see Silvia Rizzo, *Il lessico filologico degli umanisti* (Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1973), 279–280.

⁶³ The *Epistle from Sappho to Phaon* was rediscovered in the Renaissance; see Sabbadini, *Le scoperte*, I: 99; Angela Fritsen, "The Renaissance Afterlife of *Heroides* 15: Two Humanist Responses to Sappho (*Commendatio Marci Siculae poetae and Epistula Phaonis ad Sappho*)," *Manuscripta* 49, no. 1 (2005): 41–58. This poem was studied by: Domizio Calderini; Angelo Poliziano, who lectured on it in the academic year 1480–1481; and Giorgio Merula, *In Sapphus epistolam interpretatio* (Venetiis: apud Johannes de Colonia and Johannes Manthen, 1474) (ISTC im00504000). See Elisabetta Lazzeri, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito all'epistola ovidiana di Saffo a Faone* (Sansoni, 1971), xv.

known evidence. It is precisely in this commentary that a quotation from the pseudo-Quintilianic *Gladiator* can be identified.⁶⁴

The commentary by Calderini concerns a term found at the beginning of Ovid's epistle, in which Sappho addresses Phaon (*Her.* 15, 1-4):

*Ecquid, ut adspecta est studiosae littera dextrae,
protinus est oculis cognita nostra tuis –
an, nisi legisses auctoris nomina Sapphus,
hoc breve nescires unde movetur opus?*

Perhaps, as soon as you saw the letter written by a passionate hand,
you immediately recognized it with your eyes as mine—
or, if you had not read the name of the author, Sappho,
you would not know where this brief work comes from?

Commenting on the term *auctoris* in line 3, which refers to Sappho's role as the author of the fictional letter, Calderini first focuses on the meanings of the term *auctor* and then on the terms derived from it that are used in a military context:⁶⁵

Et ad militiam translatum 'au<c>torare' format, quod est eligere in militiam, ex eo tractum quod, nisi imperatores senatu au<c>tores bellum gerent, triumphum non merebantur; cum autem illis au<c>toribus bellum gerebant, quasi au<c>torati ab illis navabant operam; et miles au<c>toratus ab imperatore ei operam praestabat, receptus scilicet in iura militaria et imperatoris fidem. Inde 'exau<c>torare' dimittere est et 'au<c>toramentum' significat illam ascriptionem simpliciter. Dabunt veniam manes Laurentii; non enim video quare ille 'au<c>toramentum' pro stipendio accipiat, et ne avide hoc agere videar, non refellam omnia illius testimonia. Unum illud satis non modo infirmum est pro illo, sed pro nobis firmissimum, quod ex Quintiliani declamatione affert: "Nec difficilem sane, sub illo praesertim au<c>toramento, missionem habuisset, sed noluit gladiator vivere" <[Quint.], *Mai.* 9, 9>. Dicit, obsecro, an 'au<c>toramentum' illic pro stipendio accipiat. Non enim gladiator illic faciebat stipendium, sed praestans operam vicariam obiciebatur harenae. "Habuisset – inquit – missionem sub illo praesertim au<c>toramento", id est cum ita esset ascriptus in gladiaturam; nam pro altero eum acceperat munerarius, ut parva ei videretur futura iactura, si iuveni missionem dedisset. Au<c>torat ergo imperator militem, cum eum ascribit; nam quicquid deinceps agit

⁶⁴For a detailed analysis of this citation from the *Gladiator*, see Campanelli, *Polemiche*, 257-260.

⁶⁵The text is found in Calderini, *Ex emendatione*, 142r-142v. I cite Calderini from Campanelli, *Polemiche*, 257.

miles au<c>toratus, ad imperatorem refertur, cui victoriam parat. Ita quicquid ex Livio ille affert, ex Seneca, ad hanc sententiam nostram deducitur, ut in libris nostrarum Observationum ostendimus.

Transferred to the military context, the term *auctorare* is formed, meaning to enlist in the army, derived from the fact that if commanders waged war without the Senate's approval, they would not be entitled to a triumph. However, when they waged war with authorization, they rendered service as if they had been *auctorati* by it; and a soldier *auctoratus* by the commander rendered service to him, being admitted into military rights and into loyalty to the commander. From this comes the term *exauctorare*, meaning 'to discharge', and *auctoramentum*, which simply denotes the act of enlistment. May Lorenzo's *Manes* forgive me: for I cannot see why he takes *auctoramentum* to mean salary. And, to avoid appearing overly insistent, I will not refute all his evidence. One piece of evidence will suffice, which not only is weak in his favor but exceedingly strong for us: the one he cites from Quintilian's declamation: "Yet he would not have had much difficulty obtaining release, especially under those terms of engagement, but he refused to live as a gladiator". Please tell me whether *auctoramentum* in this case is understood as 'salary.' The gladiator, in fact, did not receive any salary but, offering his service as a substitute, was sent into the arena. "He would have obtained," it says, "discharge, especially under that *auctoramentum*," meaning that he had been enlisted among the gladiators; indeed, the organizer of the games had accepted him as a replacement for another, so that granting the young man a discharge would have seemed a minor loss to him. Thus, a commander *auctorat* a soldier when he engages him; in fact, everything a soldier *auctoratus* subsequently does reflects on the commander, for whom he secures victory. Therefore, everything Valla cites from Livy or Seneca aligns with our interpretation, as we have demonstrated in the books of our *Observationes*.

According to Maurizio Campanelli,⁶⁶ Calderini's polemical target is the exegesis that Lorenzo Valla provides in chapter 32 of the fourth book of the *Elegantie*.⁶⁷ After starting from the discussion on the etymology of the term *auctor*, Valla goes on to examine the use of the term in the military context and the verb *auctorare*. Then, he explains the meaning of the term *auctoramentum*:

Ex quo fit auctoramentum, vel quasi obligatio nexusque, vel quasi stipendium quoddam, vel pretium cuiusdam militiae ac pugnae actionisque; ut Quintilianus: Nec difficilem sane, sub illo praesertim

⁶⁶ Campanelli, *Polemiche*, 258.

⁶⁷ I follow the edition of the chapter in López Moreda, *Laurentii Vallensis*, I: 450, 15–454, 7.

auctoramento, habuisset missionem, sed noluit gladiator vivere <[Quint.], *Mai.* 9, 9>. Suetonius: Munus gladiatorium dedit, rudiariisque quibusdam revocatis auctoramento centenum millium <cf. Suet. *Tib.* 7, 1>. Cicero: Quorum ipsa merces auctoramentum servitutis est <Cic. *Off.* 1, 150>. Seneca libro septimo epistolarum: Nullum sine auctoramento malum. Avaritia pecuniam promittit; luxuria varias voluptates, ambitio purpuram et plausum, et ex hoc potentiam, et quicquid potentia potest; mercede te vitia sollicitant <Sen. *Ep.* 69, 4>.⁶⁸

From this derives the term *auctoramentum*, which refers to a form of obligation and bond, or as a kind of salary or the price of some act of combat or military service. As Quintilian says: "Yet he would not have had much difficulty obtaining release, especially under those terms of engagement; but he refused to live as a gladiator." Suetonius: "He organized a gladiatorial show and recalled some retired gladiators to service, offering them a reward of one hundred thousand sesterces." Cicero: "Whose very reward is a bond of slavery." Seneca, in the seventh book of his letters: "There is no vice that does not bring a reward: avarice promises money, lust various pleasures, ambition honour and praise, and thus power and what power can obtain. Vices entice you with reward."

To the term *auctoramentum* Valla assigns different meanings supported by some passages from Latin sources. For the meaning of *obligatio/nexus* Valla cites [Quint.] *Decl. maior.* 9, 9, while for the meaning of *stipendium/premium* he cites *Tib.* 7, 1, *Cic. Off.* 1, 150, *Sen. Ep.* 7, 69, 4–5.

Calderini criticises Valla's exegesis relying on the passage from pseudo-Quintilian (*Decl. maior.* 9, 9), which reads as follows:

nec difficilem tamen sub illo praesertim auctoramento habuisset missionem, sed noluit gladiator vivere.

Yet he would not have had much difficulty obtaining release, especially under those terms of engagement; but he refused to live as a gladiator.

Calderini therefore strongly argues for the meaning of *auctoramentum* as "terms of engagement" in the passage from the *Gladiator*, claiming that he does not understand how Valla could have considered this term to also mean *stipendium*. However, Calderini presents a biased interpretation of Valla's passage, since he neglects to mention that Valla had divided his exegesis into two distinct parts by providing examples supporting both possible meanings.

⁶⁸I quote from López Moreda, *Laurentii Vallensis*, I: 452, 25–34.

This approach of Calderini, however, did not go unnoticed by Angelo Poliziano, who, at the beginning of his own course on Statius' *Silvae*, took the opportunity to rebuke his opponent.⁶⁹

Poliziano as a critical reader of Calderini on Valla

Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494),⁷⁰ trusted friend of Lorenzo de' Medici, was Professor of Eloquence at the *Studium* in Florence from 1480 to 1494.⁷¹ The courses he taught at the *Studium*, introduced by the *praelectiones*,⁷² focused on the exegesis of works by various Greek and Latin authors.⁷³ The first evidence of Poliziano's contact with pseudo-Quintilian's *Declamationes maiores* at the *Studium* is found in the *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis*,⁷⁴ composed to intro-

⁶⁹The contentious relationship between Calderini and Poliziano is analyzed in Gianmario Cattaneo, "Polemiche sui banchi di scuola: Domizio Calderini nei commenti di Angelo Poliziano," in *La pedagogia italiana nel secolo dell'Umanesimo*, ed. John Butcher (Edizioni Nuova Prhomos, 2025), 133–157.

⁷⁰For the biography of Poliziano, see Paolo Orvieto, *Poliziano e l'ambiente mediceo* (Salerno, 2009).

⁷¹On the *Studium* of Florence, see the papers collected in Lorenzo Fabbri, *Studium florentinum: l'istruzione superiore a Firenze fra XIV e XVI secolo* (Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2021); Armando F. Verde, *Lo Studio Fiorentino 1473–1503: Ricerche e documenti*, 6 vols. (Olschki, 1973–2010). On the activity of Angelo Poliziano in the *Studium* see: Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, "Poliziano professore allo Studio fiorentino," in *La Toscana al tempo di Lorenzo il Magnifico. Politica, Economia, Cultura, Arte*. Atti del Convegno di Studi promosso dalle Università di Firenze, Pisa e Siena (5–8 novembre 1992), ed. Riccardo Fubini (Pacini, 1996), II: 463–481 (now edited in Sebastiano Gentile, ed., Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, *Umanesimo e filologia* [Edizioni della Normale, 2016]); Lorenzo Vespoli, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Bucoliche di Virgilio* (Olschki, 2024), v–xxiv (with further bibliography).

⁷²On the nature of Poliziano's *praelectiones*, see Attilio Bettinzoli, *Daedaleum iter. Studi sulla poesia e la poetica di Angelo Poliziano* (Olschki, 1995), 67–374; Francesco Bausi, "Le prolusioni accademiche di Angelo Poliziano," in *Umanesimo e Università in Toscana (1300–1600)*. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi (Fiesole-Firenze, 25–26 maggio 2011), ed. Stefano U. Baldassarri, Fabrizio Ricciardelli, and Enrico Spagnesi (Le Lettere, 2012). Giorgia Zollino, ed., A. Poliziano, *Praelectiones* (Olschki, 2016) recently published the following *praelectiones*: *Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii "Sylvis"*; *Praelectio in Persium*; *Oratio in expositione Homeri* (con in appendice la *Praelectio in enarratione "Odysseae"*); *Praefatio in Suetonii expositione*. On Poliziano's *Panepistemon*, see Daniela Marrone, ed., A. Poliziano, *Panepistemon* (Olschki, 2024).

⁷³For the known incunabula and the manuscripts on which Poliziano worked, see Alessandro Daneloni, *Angelo Poliziano (Angelo Ambrogini)*, in *Autografi dei letterati italiani. Il Quattrocento*, vol. I, Consulenza paleografica di Teresa De Robertis, ed. Francesco Bausi, Maurizio Campanelli, Sebastiano Gentile, and James Hankins (Salerno, 2013).

⁷⁴The text is published in Zollino, Angelo Poliziano, *Praelectiones*, 19–31.

duce the course on the *Institutio oratoria* and the *Silvae* of Statius in 1480–81.⁷⁵

In the *Oratio*, Poliziano claims the right to dedicate his first academic course in the *Studium* of Florence to *inferioris quasique secundae notae auctores*,⁷⁶ such as Quintilian and Statius, since they are, according to his judgment, essential for teaching purposes. Poliziano affirms that he does not want to put Quintilian's works before those of Cicero but believes that the former's works are more suitable for training young people to be good citizens.⁷⁷ At the end of the *Oratio*, recalling Quintilian's works, Poliziano mentions the *Declamationes maiores*.⁷⁸

Praeter hos autem, et unum librum De causis corruptae eloquentiae et alterum item, qui nunc quoque extat, Declamationum composuit: miro autem candore veterum ingenia virtutesque omnium iudicavit.

Besides these, he also wrote a book on the causes of the corruption of eloquence and another, which still exists, of declamations. Moreover, with remarkable clarity, he judged the talents and virtues of all the ancient authors.

It is noteworthy that, like Domizio and other humanists, Poliziano considers the pseudo-Quintilianic *controversiae* to be authentic. During the first course he taught at the *Studium* on the *Silvae* of Statius, Poliziano refers to the *Gladiator*, while commenting on the *proemium* to the first book of Statius' *Silvae* (1. proem.):

Quid enim <opus eo tempore hos> quoque auctoritate editionis onerari, quo adhuc pro Thebaide mea, quamvis me reliquerit, timeo?

What need was there to burden even these poems [*i.e.* the *Silvae*] with the dignity of an edition, when I am still anxious about my *Thebaid*, even though it has already been published?

In commenting on the term *auctoritate*, Poliziano considers the meaning of the term *auctoramentum* and defends Lorenzo Valla against

⁷⁵ Angelo Poliziano's hand notes on Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* are found in the incunabulum Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Rari 379; On Poliziano's exegetical work on Quintilian, see Alessandro Daneloni, *Poliziano e il testo dell'Institutio oratoria* (Centro interdipartimentale di studi umanistici, 2001). See also Attilio Bettinzoli, "Poliziano e l'*Institutio oratoria*," *Lettere Italiane* 71, no. 1 (2019): 82–101; Lorenzo Vespoli, "Reading Quintilian with Poliziano: Pedagogical Perspectives," *Papers on Rhetoric* 18 (2025): 195–215.

⁷⁶ Zollino, Angelo Poliziano, *Praelectiones*, 20, 3–4.

⁷⁷ See Zollino, Angelo Poliziano, *Praelectiones*, 23, 8–12; 23, 19–23; 26, 3–6; 27, 7–17.

⁷⁸ Zollino, Angelo Poliziano, *Praelectiones*, 31, 1–3.

the criticism of Calderini, who had died while Poliziano was composing his commentary (1478):

Hic mihi iam cum Domitio conserendae proprius manus, qui aperta calumnia Laurentium Vallam insectatur, unaque opera et suam impietatem in hominem bene de literis Latinis meritum et inscitiam profiteatur. Nam cum Laurentius “au<c>toramentum” exponens dicat esse vel obligationem nexumque, vel quasi stipendium quoddam, vel pretium cuiusdam militiae ac pugnae actionis, alterum quod probat, Domitius pro suo habet, alterum quod improbat, male refellit. Vult enim Domitius “au<c>toramentum” significare ascriptionem illam simpliciter, qua milites in iura militaria admitterentur. At hoc ipsum Valla intelligit, cum obligationem nexumque illum militum significare ostendit: iurabant enim in verba ducis seque ad eius au<c>toritatem astringebant. Tum importune exclamat Domitius: “Dabunt enim veniam manes Laurentii: non enim video quare ille au<c>toramentum pro stipendio accipiat.” At viderat hoc Valla, qui cum Ciceronis in libro De officiis <1, 42, 150> [auctori] verba adducit: “quorum ipsa merces au<c>toramentum servitutis est;” cum Senecae in VII Epistolarum libro <69, 4–5>: “Nullum sine au<c>toramento malum: avaritia pecuniam promittit, luxuria varias voluptates, ambitio purpuram et plausum et ex hoc potentiam et quicquid potentia potest. Mercede te vitia sollicitant;” cum horum, inquam, verba adducit Valla, aperte ostendit au<c>toramentum mercedem, stipendium, pretium significare. “Nullum,” inquit Seneca, “sine au<c>toramento malum: avaritia pecuniam promittit.” Ergo au<c>toramentum avaritiae pecunia est, hoc est merces, pretium et stipendium; nam et subicit: “Mercede te vitia sollicitant.” Sed videte quam agat astute Domitius: Quintiliani au<c>toritatem <cfr. [Quint.] Decl. Maior. 9, 9>, in qua pro nexu illo au<c>toramentum positum est, ita refellit, ut ostendat non significare stipendium; at hoc ipsum Valla verba Senecae adducit et Ciceronis, quibus pro praemio stipendioque sumitur, ita connivens subterfugit Domitius, ut haec verba scribat: “Ita quicquid ex Livio ille affert, ex Seneca ad hanc sententiam nostram deducitur.” Ita ergo et virum, cui se maxime Latinae literae debent, et veritatem ipsam hac luce clariorem astute simul impieque oppugnat; atque id Domitius in commentariis suis in Saphron scribit.

Here I must now engage in direct combat with Domizio [*i.e.* Calderini], who, through blatant slander, attacks Lorenzo Valla and simultaneously exposes both his irreverence and his ignorance toward a man who has greatly contributed to Latin studies. For when Lorenzo explains *auctoramentum* as either an obligation and bond, or a kind of salary, or the price of some act of military service or combat, Domizio accepts the one interpretation he approves as his own and clumsily refutes the other, which he disapproves. Domizio wants *auctoramentum* to mean simply the registration by which soldiers were admitted into the military ranks. But Valla understands this very point, as he shows that it refers to the obligation and bond of soldiers: for they swore loyalty

to their commander and committed themselves to his authority. Then Domizio inappropriately exclaims: “May Lorenzo’s *Manes* forgive me: for I cannot see why he takes *auctoramentum* to mean salary.” But this is precisely what Valla meant when he quoted Cicero’s words in *De officiis*: “Whose very reward is a bond of slavery” or Seneca’s words in the seventh book of the *Epistulae*: “There is no vice that does not bring a reward: avarice promises money, lust various pleasures, ambition honour and praise, and thus power and what power can obtain. Vices entice you with reward”. I believe that when Valla quotes the words of these authors, he demonstrates that *auctoramentum* means retribution, salary, reward. Seneca affirms: *Nullum sine auctoramento malum: avaritia pecuniam promittit*. Therefore, *auctoramentum* is the reward of avarice, namely retribution, salary, reward. Indeed, Seneca also adds: *Mercede te vitia sollicitant*. But see how cunningly Domizio acts: he refutes Quintilian’s authority (i.e. [Quint.] *Mai.* 9.9 cited by Valla), where *auctoramentum* is used to signify that bond, in such a way as to show that it would not mean salary. Yet on this very point, Valla cites the words of Seneca and Cicero, in which the term is used to indicate a reward or salary. Domizio, feigning ignorance, evades the issue in this way, going so far as to write these words: “Therefore, everything Valla cites from Livy or Seneca aligns with our interpretation”. Thus, he attacks both the man to whom Latin studies owe so much and the truth itself, clearer than the light of day, with both cunning and impiety; this Domizio writes in his commentaries on Sappho.⁷⁹

In his commentary, Poliziano critiques what Calderini wrote in his commentary on Ovid’s *Epistle from Sappho to Phaon*, published five years earlier in August 1475. Poliziano asserts that when Valla states that *auctoramentum* has the value of *nexum* (i.e., bond), he means precisely what Domizio considers the correct interpretation. Poliziano argues that Domizio ignored the parallels Valla provided in support of the translation of *auctoramentum* as *stipendium* (i.e., salary), citing the passage from the *Declamationes maiores* (9, 9), which, on the other hand, Valla also considered, as evidence that this term had the meaning of “terms of engagement.”

VALLA’S *ELEGANTIE* AS A TEXTBOOK FOR PSEUDO-QUINTILIAN

As pointed out above, the *Elegantie* served as a conduit for humanists in their engagement with the *Declamationes maiores*. In this context,

⁷⁹ Cesarini Martinelli, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Selve di Stazio* (Olschki, 1978), 38, 13–39, 23.

my research aligns with the findings of Jean-Louis Charlet regarding the presence of the these *controversiae* in Niccolò Perotti's *Cornu copiae*,⁸⁰ where the *Elegantie* are the text from which the pseudo-Quintilianic works were cited:

[. . .] malgré l'orientation encyclopédique du *Cornu copiae*, Perotti n'y manifeste pas d'intérêt spécifique pour leur contenu religieux, juridique, culturel ou historique des *Grandes déclamations*. Elles sont pour lui, surtout par l'intermédiaire de Valla [. . .], un réservoir de citations pour attester un emploi, une acception, une construction. Perotti n'a pas dépouillé systématiquement les *Grandes déclamations* [. . .].⁸¹

Perotti's commentary on Martial, published in Venice in 1489, nearly a decade after the humanist's death (1480), serves as a significant witness to the reception of the *Declamationes maiores* in the last quarter of the 15th century. It also provides a witness of the importance of Valla's *Elegantie* as a key intermediary for the transmission of the text of these *controversiae*.

In the wake of Charlet's study, I conducted a survey of the citations from the *Declamationes maiores* in Poliziano's commentaries to assess the contribution of the text of Valla's *Elegantie* to their reception. For this survey, I considered the academic material published by Poliziano, as well as the unpublished writings I was able to examine.⁸² By "academic material," I refer to both the formal commentaries written by Poliziano to analyze classical texts at the *Studium*, the marginal notes found in *incunabula* owned by the humanist, and the *recollectae* taken by his students.

This survey shows that there are only very slight traces of the *Declamationes maiores* in Poliziano's commentaries, which are limited to the first two years of his teaching at the *Studium*. As I demonstrate,

⁸⁰ Jean-Louis Charlet, "Les déclamations du Pseudo-Quintilien dans le *Cornu copiae* de Niccolò Perotti," in *Présence de la déclamation antique* (controverses et suaves), ed. Rémy Poignault and Catherine Schneider (Centre de Recherches A. Piganiol - Présence de l'Antiquité, 2015).

⁸¹ Charlet, *Les déclamations*, 404.

⁸² I have taken into account the following commentaries by Poliziano: Lazzeri, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito all'epistola*; Gianna Gardenal, *Il Poliziano e Svetonio: contributo alla storia della filologia umanistica* (Olschki, 1975); Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Selve*; Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, Roberto Ricciardi, eds., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Satire di Persio* (Olschki, 1985); Livia Castano Musicò, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Georgiche di Virgilio* (Olschki, 1990); Francesco Lo Monaco, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti di Ovidio* (Olschki, 1991); Luigi Silvano, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Appunti per un corso sull'Odissea*. Editio princeps dal Par gr. 3069 (Edizioni dell'Orso, 2010, 20192); Vespoli, Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Bucoliche*.

all the quotations from the *Declamationes maiores* that I have identified derive from an indirect reading of Valla's *Elegantie*. In conjunction with this research, I also provide examples of teaching practices involving the use of the *Declamationes maiores* by Angelo Poliziano.

Poliziano's commentary on Ovid's Fasti

[Quint.] *Decl. maior. 9, 4 ad Stat. Silv. 4 praef. secundum*

Continuing the analysis of Poliziano's commentary on Statius' *Silvae*, a citation from the *Declamationes maiores* is found in Poliziano's commentary on the prose letter in which Statius dedicates the fourth book of the *Silvae* to his friend, Vitorius Marcellus.⁸³ In this letter, Statius refers to his *ekphrasis* (*Silv. 4, 6*) of the statuette of Hercules in the house of his friend Novius Vindex⁸⁴ and writes as follows:

Nam Vindicis nostri Herculem Epitrapezion secundum honorem, quem de me et de ipsis studiis meretur, imputare etiam tibi possum.

Since I can also put on your account the work *Hercules Epitrapezios* of our friend Vindex, for the titles of honour he has acquired towards me and towards literature in general.

Commenting on the term *secundum*, Poliziano writes as follows:⁸⁵

Secundum: id est 'iuxta', ut 'secundum flumen', in eadem significatione in qua est 'secus' vel 'propter'. Virgilius:

dulcibus illa quidem illecebris < Georg. 3, 217>

*et plena secundum
flumina. <Georg. 3, 143-144>*

Servius Sulpitius in epistola ad Ciceronem de occiso M. Marcello *<ad fam. 4, 12, 2>*: "duo," inquit, "vulnera accepisse, unum in stomacho, alterum in capite secundum aurem." Aliquando significat 'post', ut hoc loco, item apud Quintilianum in Gladiatore <Decl. mai. 9, 4>: "Nam quod unum mihi secundum patrem fortuna videbatur parasse praesidium, id ego sperare in illa sorte non poteram." Cicero *<De off. 2, 11>*: «Proxime autem et secundum deos homines <hominibus> maxime utile esse. Aliquando 'pro', ut "secundum te litem do"; aliquando

⁸³ On Marcellus, see Kathleen M. Coleman, ed., Statius, *Silvae* IV, edited with an English Translation and Commentary (Oxford University Press, 1988), XIX.

⁸⁴ On this poem, see Alessia Bonadeo, *L'Hercules Epitrapezios Novi Vindicis. Introduzione e commento a Stat. silv. 4, 6* (Loffredo, 2010).

⁸⁵ Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Selve*, 644, 25-645, 9.

“in”: Cicero <cf. *De div.* 2, 135>: “secundum quietem visus est repente adesse.”

Secundum: Namely *iuxtam*, as in the expression *secundum flumen* with the same meaning of *secus* or *propter*. Virgil wrote:

She, with sweet flattery . . .

And:

. . . by plentiful streams of water.

Servius Sulpicius in his letter to Cicero about the murder of M. Marcellus wrote: “He received two wounds: one in the stomach and the other on the head behind the ear.” Sometimes it has the same meaning as *post* as in this passage and similarly in Quintilian’s *Gladiator*: “I could not, indeed, in that crisis rely on the single support that fortune seemed to have provided for me next after my father.” Cicero has written: “And right after the gods it is men who can be very useful to mankind.” Sometimes it has the same meaning as *pro*, as in the expression “I argue in your favour”; sometimes it has the same meaning as *in*: Cicero has written: “Suddenly appeared to him in a dream.”

The text cited by Poliziano to support the reading of *secundum* with the meaning as *post* is again a passage from the *Gladiator*; namely, [Quint.] *Decl. mai.* 9, 4. As with the previous citation from the pseudo-Quintilianic *Gladiator*, on the term *auctoramentum* (9, 9), Poliziano aims to provide his students with a parallel passage that offers evidence of a particular meaning of a term. In this case, Poliziano’s interest in the *Declamationes maiores* is therefore purely linguistic, without any concern for content or declamatory genre.

It is noteworthy that Poliziano did not compose his own commentary on the meanings of the adverb *secundum*, and, for this reason: the pseudo-Quintilianic passage transcribed by the humanist is not the result of a direct study of the texts on the *Declamationes maiores*. For his note, Poliziano drew upon chapter 47 of the second book of Valla’s *Elegantie*, which I quote in full below:⁸⁶

Secundum nonnumquam pro ‘iuxta’ et ‘post’. Vergilius:

Saltibus in vacuis pascant et plena secundum

flumina. <*Georg.* 3, 143-144>

Quintilianus in pariete palmato: Tu iaces secundum occasionem, et expeditum tibi in proximo facinus est <[Quint.] *Decl. mai.* 1, 13>. Sulpitius: M. Marcellum post coenae tempus a Magio Cillone familiari eius pugione percussus esse, et duo vulnera accepisse, unum in stomacho,

⁸⁶ López Moreda, *Laurentii Vallensis*, I: 268, 32-270, 13.

alterum in capite secundum aurem <*ad fam.* 4, 12, 2>. Hic 'iuxta' significat. Item quod ab altero secundum est, id 'iuxta' est atque 'post'. Ideoque 'secundum' pro 'post' accipitur, quasi secundo loco. Idem Quintilianus in Gladiatore: Nam quod unum mihi secundum patrem fortuna videbatur parasse praesidium, id ego sperare in illa sorte non poteram <[Quint.] *Decl. mai.* 9, 4>. Cicero: proxime autem et, secundum deos, homines hominibus maxime utiles esse possunt <*De off.* 2, 11> [. . .]. 'Secundum' etiam accipitur pro eo, quod est 'pro'; ut, secundum te litem do; secundum me iudica; secundum se iudicium des vult; id est, pro me, pro te, pro se. Et pro 'in'; ut, secundum quietem, id est, in quiete somni; secundum autem Platonem, secundum Pythagoram sensus hic notissimus est.

A comparison between Valla's exegesis found in the *Elegantie* and Poliziano's note reveals striking similarities. The adverb *secundum* is explained with meanings such as *iuxta*, *post*, *pro*, and *in*. Furthermore, not only are the classical *loci* used by Poliziano as parallels the same as those found in Valla's *Elegantie*, but even the phrasing adopted is similar. The *loci paralleli* found both in Valla's work and in Poliziano's note are the following ones: *Georg.* 3, 143–144; [Quint.] *Decl. mai.* 9, 4; Cic. *ad fam.* 4, 12, 2; *De off.* 2, 11. An example of the disinterest in the *Declamationes maiores* itself is provided by the fact that Poliziano omits Valla's citation of [Quint.] *Decl. mai.* 1, 13, where *secundum* is found with the meaning of 'according to'. Poliziano does not cite this passage, which could have been useful for his exegetical purposes, likely considering the material he draws from the *Elegantie* sufficient for his students.

Poliziano's commentary on Ovid's Fasti

[Quint.] *Decl. mai.* 12, 10 and 15, 1 *ad Ov. Fast.* 1, 147

To support the hypothesis that Poliziano drew passages from the *Declamationes maiores* not by direct reading of pseudo-Quintilian, but indirectly through reading Valla's *Elegantie*, I present two passages from the commentary on Ovid's *Fasti*, which Poliziano taught during the academic year 1481–1482. In the first book of the *Fasti*, Ovid describes an imaginary dialogue between himself and the god Janus. Before asking Janus the question of why the year begins in winter and not in spring, the poet thanks the god for his willingness to answer him:

*Sumpsi animum, gratesque deo non territus egi.*⁸⁷

I took courage and, without fear, thanked the god [*i.e.* Janus].

⁸⁷ Ovid, *Fasti*, 1, 147.

Commenting on the expression *grates . . . egi*, Poliziano clarifies the meaning of the verb *gratulari* by openly reworking a passage from Valla's *Elegantie*, in which, while explaining the expression *agere gratias*, he cites two distinct passages taken from the *Declamationes maiores* (12, 10 and 15, 1).⁸⁸

Laurentius Valla ca. 339 ostendit "agere gratias" esse verbo, "referre" sive "rendere" facto [. . .] "Gratulari" est apud aliquem verbo testari gaudium ex ipsius felicitate. Quintilianus: "Non efficiet tamen infandum praesentis reatus indignumque discrimen, ut misera puella non gratuletur sibi quod illam pater accusare iam potest" <[Quint.], *Decl. mai.* 15, 1> [. . .]. Quintilianus in Pastu cadaverum: "Gratulemus iam, quod nulla civitas fame laborat" <[Quint.], *Decl. mai.* 12, 10>.

Lorenzo Valla explains that in *agere gratias* the verb has the same meaning of *referre* or *rendere*. [. . .] The verb "*gratulari*" indicates the action of expressing to someone contentment with their happiness. Quintilian has written: "yet the unspeakable and unmerited peril of the present accusation will not stop a wretched girl from congratulating herself on the fact that the poor man is now capable of accusing her". [. . .] Quintilian in the oration *Cadaveribus pasti* has written: "let's be glad that now no city is suffering famine."

When referring to Valla's explanation of *agere gratias*, Poliziano provides his students with two examples from the *Declamationes maiores* where the verb *gratulari* is employed. The first passage is taken from the opening of the declamation *Odii potio*, where it is stated that the woman accused by the poor man of poisoning with a draught of hatred will be pleased with the accusation because it demonstrates that the potion she prepared worked (15, 1). The second passage comes from the declamation entitled *Cadaveribus pasti* (12, 10), in which it is stated that everyone should be thankful that the population of neither city suffers more from hunger, even though one of them was forced to resort to cannibalism to survive the famine.

In commenting on the passage from Ovid's *Fasti*, Poliziano cites the *Declamationes maiores* to explain to his students the meaning of the verb *gratulari* and openly uses Valla's *De elegantia* (5, 42).⁸⁹ The fact that Poliziano cites those passages attests to a didactic use of the *Declamationes maiores* in the *Studium*; however, the citations do not attest to a direct interest on Poliziano's part in the content of these *controversiae* or in the declamatory genre, since his interest is purely philological.

⁸⁸ Lo Monaco, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti*, 69, 65–72, 35.

⁸⁹ See López Moreda, *Laurentii Vallensis*, II: 608, 7–610, 11. On Valla's passage, see also Clementina Marsico, *Per l'edizione delle Elegantie di Lorenzo Valla. Studio sul V libro* (Firenze University Press 2013), 292–293.

[Quint.] *Decl. mai.* 9, 5 *ad Ov. Fast.* 1, 359

The third and last passage from the *Declamationes maiores* referenced in Poliziano's commentary on Ovid's *Fasti* is found in the note on the term *noxae*(e) in 1, 359. In this passage, Ovid describes the goat as a sacrificial animal sacred to Bacchus (1, 359–360):

*noxae tibi deditus hostis
spargitur adfuso cornua, Bacche, mero.*

Your enemy, Bacchus, is given to you for punishment, and the poured wine is dropped on his horns.

Clarifying the meaning of the term *noxae* as *poena*, Poliziano cited a passage from Valla's *Elegantie*:

Habes de hoc apud Vallam 469), sive 451):⁹⁰ [. . .] Quintilianus in Gladiatore: "Alebat devotum corpus gravior omni fame sagina, et inter debita noxae muncipia contentissimus tyro gladiator, ut novissime perderem calamitatis meae innocentiam, discebam quotidie scelus" <[Quint.], *Decl. mai.* 9, 5>. Est autem poena, sed et pro damno accipitur noxa.⁹¹

What follows can be found in Valla's work at 469 or 451: [. . .] Quintilian in the oration *Gladiator*: "My doomed body was being crammed with food worse than any hunger, for I was now the most contemptible among the slaves suffering for their misdeeds: a trainee gladiator, learning to be a criminal every day—to make sure that I should last of all lose even the innocence of my calamity". The term *noxae*, however, refers to punishment, but it is also understood as harm.

Poliziano's cited passage matches chapter 35 of the sixth book of Valla's *Elegantie*, where Valla explores the meaning of *noxae*. In this case, Poliziano explicitly acknowledges having relied on Valla's text to extract the quotation from the pseudo-Quintilian.

CONCLUDING INSIGHTS

The lectures of Calderini at the *Studium Urbis* represent perhaps one of the most significant lost pieces in the reception of the *Declamationes maiores* in the 15th century. In the wake of Valla's studies on the text of the pseudo-Quintilianic *controversiae*, the reading of these

⁹⁰Poliziano is likely referring to the *chartae* of his printed edition of Valla's *Elegantie*.

⁹¹Lo Monaco, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito ai Fasti*, 86, 5–87, 25, esp. 86, 11–15.

texts was paired with that of Cicero, as attested by Angelo Callimaco's letter (see *supra*).

Significant as a witness to this humanistic reception of the *Declamationes maiores*, however, is the series of critiques sparked by the exegesis of the term *auctoramentum* in the pseudo-Quintilianic *Gladiator* (9, 9), found in the *Elegantie*. In this regard, it should be noted that likely the positions of both humanists—Calderini's critique of Valla and Poliziano's defense of the *Elegantie* against Domizio—were presented to students during their lectures in the *Studia*.

It should also be noted that Poliziano critiques Domizio's interpretation of the term *auctoramentum* by commenting on a different term, *auctoritas*, which has nothing to do with the explanation of Statius' text examined by the Florentine humanist. In this case, it is clear Poliziano used a pretext to attack Calderini, just as the latter, at the beginning of his commentary, used the term *auctor* as a pretext to critique Valla. Therefore, the passage of the *Gladiator* under examination, at least in this context, served as a basis for a *querelle* rather than for textual analysis.

Regarding Poliziano specifically, although interest in the *Declamationes maiores* was revived with the studies of Lorenzo Valla and Domizio Calderini, as well as the latter's *editio princeps* of three declamations in 1475, a review of Poliziano's surviving academic material—as far as I was able to verify—reveals that the pseudo-Quintilianic *controversiae* were used only during his first two years of teaching at the *Studium* of Florence (1480–1481 and 1481–1482). No trace of the *Declamationes maiores* is found in Poliziano's academic commentaries on the following works: (i) Ovid's *Epistle from Sappho to Phaon* (1480–81),⁹² (ii) Persius' *Satires* (1482–1483 or 1483–1484),⁹³ (iii) Virgil's *Bucolics* (1482–1483), *Georgics* (1483–1484), and *Aeneid* (1486–1487 [?]),⁹⁴ (iv) Homer's *Odyssey*.⁹⁵

An examination of Poliziano's citations of the *Declamationes maiores* shows that the humanist references these *controversiae* exclusively through Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantie*. Since I have not identified any direct quotations from the *Declamationes maiores*, it remains

⁹² Lazzeri, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito all'epistola*.

⁹³ Cesarini Martinelli-Ricciardi, eds., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Satire*.

⁹⁴ Vespoli, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Bucoliche*; Castano Musicò, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Commento inedito alle Georgiche*; Poliziano's hand notes to Virgil's *Aeneid*, still unpublished to this day, can be found in the incunabulum Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Rés. G. Yc. 236.

⁹⁵ Silvano, ed., Angelo Poliziano, *Appunti*.

uncertain whether Poliziano had access to a manuscript of the text during this period. Furthermore, regarding the purpose of these citations, Poliziano never treats the *Declamationes maiores* as a subject of interest in itself, but cites these *controversiae* as *loci paralleli* to clarify the meaning of specific terms.

Based on my examination of the passages, it is clear that the text of the *Elegantie* served as an important point of comparison for the use of the *Declamationes maiores* by both Calderini and Poliziano. According to Callimaco, Calderini taught at the *Studium* of Rome and explained Cicero using the *Declamationes maiores*, a practice recalling Valla's intention to compose a treatise on the subject. While the *dictata* from these lectures have been lost, making it impossible to determine the extent of Valla's influence on their exegesis, the reference to the *Gladiator* in Calderini's commentary on the Ovidian *Epistle from Sappho to Phaon* reveals how the reading of this *controversia* was closely tied to Valla's text. On the other hand, Poliziano never directly engaged with the text of the *Declamationes maiores*—as Calderini did—but his citing of the text of the *controversiae* is still closely linked to his reading of the *Elegantie*, in a way very similar to the type of engagement Perotti had with these texts in his *Cornu copiae*.