

I. MEDITATIO AND REFASHIONING THE SELF IN  
LITERATURE, 1300-1600



## MEDITATIVE FRAMES AS READER'S GUIDANCE IN NEO-LATIN TEXTS\*

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In the late medieval and early modern period, the reception of texts was far from a simple and obvious business. Rather it was a complex and demanding process that required not only great concentration, a profound knowledge of pre-texts and co-texts, and advanced skills in the techniques of mnemonics (*memoria*), *meditatio*, and *interpretatio* (especially intertextual interpretation). The importance of this complex process for the intellectual life appears also from the special attention given to it: its goal was a deep and intense appropriation of the text, which was achieved through slow and attentive reading, both forward and backward, with a view to the careful internalization of the text; the text could also be connected to visual images, personal experiences, emotions, thoughts, pre-texts and con-texts. In this sense, the reception of texts always included *meditatio* and various combinations of *meditatio* and *interpretatio*. As one might expect, these processes of textual appropriation derive from a long medieval tradition and were developed first with respect to religious texts, above all the Bible – “the” text par excellence – and the Church Fathers. In the late medieval and early modern periods, the number of relevant texts substantially increased, and the well known methods of textual appropriation were more widely applied. It is abundantly clear that meditation was not limited to religious texts only.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it was practised in a

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<sup>1</sup> Klara Erdei, however, in her monography *Auf dem Wege zu sich selbst: Die Meditation im 16. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: 1990), regards meditation as a literary genre and limits it to religious writings. In my contribution, I conceive meditation as a complex of techniques and methods applied in the careful appropriation of texts, which may be religious but may also belong to other spheres of interest. These methods refer to the intellectual and to the emotional sides of the mind as well. In medieval theory and practice, *meditatio* is frequently distinguished from *lectio*, reading, which is conceived as the more “material” process of the reception of texts. Cf., among others, Esser R., “*Cogitatio*” und “*meditatio*”. *Ein Beitrag zur Metaphysik des Gebetes nach Anselm von Canterbury* (Würzburg: 1985), *passim*.

great variety of textual genres – philosophical, literary, and scholarly, amongst others.

It is just this aspect that renders this process even more demanding. It is an important feature of the period 1300–1600, that new groups began to participate in intellectual life, amongst others, humanists,<sup>2</sup> laymen,<sup>3</sup> various specialists. This development went hand in hand with the rise of spiritual movements such as the *devotio moderna*,<sup>4</sup> the founding of new religious confessions (Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism, etc.)<sup>5</sup> and new religious orders such as the Jesuits,<sup>6</sup> the rise to prominence of new mystics such as Luis de Granada and Teresa of Avila, and the establishment of new fields of science and scholarship, such as empirical anatomy or archaeology.<sup>7</sup> This led in turn to a great deal of differentiation in intellectual life. This is the reason why authors, as well as editors and publishers, considered it increasingly important to guide the process of reception, thus ensuring that the appropriation of their texts would take place in a proper manner, or at the very least in a way they might envisage.

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<sup>2</sup> In this volume, cf. the contribution by Jan Papy. Already Petrarch, the “Father of Humanism”, used various methods of meditation on a daily basis. A striking literary result of this practice is Petrarch’s treatise *De otio religiosorum*, a long meditation on *Psalm* 45. For a critical edition of this work see G. Rotondi (Città del Vaticano: 1958).

<sup>3</sup> In this volume, cf. the contributions by Geert Warnar and Wolfgang Neuber.

<sup>4</sup> In this volume, cf. the contribution by Nikolaus Staubach. The special emphasis the members of the *devotio moderna* attached to meditation was already pointed out by the seminal studies by Watrigant H., “La méditation méthodique et l’école des Frères de la Vie commune”, *Revue d’ascétique et de mystique* 3 (1922) 134–155; idem, “La méditation méthodique et Jean Mauburnus”, *Revue d’ascétique et de mystique* 4 (1923) 13–29, and Goossens L.M.A., *De meditatie in de eerste tijd van de Moderne Devotie* (Haarlem-Antwerp: 1952).

<sup>5</sup> In this volume, cf. the contribution by Jan Frans van Dijkhuizen. For the importance of meditation for Lutheranism cf. Sträter U., *Meditation und Kirchenreform in der lutherischen Kirche des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: 1995); Erdei, *Auf dem Wege zu sich selbst*, esp. Chapter 3.3. “Die lutheranischen Meditationen” (214–252); for Calvinism and meditation eadem, chapter 3.1 “Die kalvinistischen Meditationen” (119–158). For meditation in Anglicanism cf. Livingstone Huntley F., *Bishop Joseph Hall and Protestant Meditation in Seventeenth-Century England: A Study with the Texts of ‘The Art of divine meditation’ (1606) and ‘Occasional Meditations’ (1633)* (Binghamton N.Y.: 1981).

<sup>6</sup> In this volume, cf. the contributions by Wietse de Boer, Hilmar Pabel and Walter Melion.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Enenkel K.A.E., “*Ars antiquitatis*: Erkenntnissteuerung und Wissensverwaltung in Werken zur Römischen Kulturgeschichte (ca. 1500–1750)”, in idem – Neuber W. (eds.), *Cognition and the Book. Typologies of Formal Organisation of Knowledge in the Printed Book of the Early Modern Period*, *Intersections* 4 (2004) 51–123.

It is a telling feature that in texts written between 1300 and 1600, especially in Latin literature, authorial and editorial paratexts such as prefaces, letters of dedication, dedicatory poems and letters "To the Reader" became extremely important. Compared to the preceding centuries, they spectacularly increased in frequency, number, size, variety of contents, etc. Many of these texts are puzzling, and they deserve far more attention than they have received thus far. With regard to Neo-Latin literature, hardly any larger studies on prefaces exist. We have several substantial studies dealing with other literatures, e.g. English, French and German.<sup>8</sup> They are mostly focused on topological, philological or historical questions, and tend to regard prefaces and dedications as extremely topical, by which they mean 'stereotypical'. This view suffers from an overly narrow definition of 'topos'. Mostly, prefaces and dedications are just used as data-banks for all kinds of historical information. If one wants to understand the function of these texts, a more profound, open and critical analysis is badly necessary. I believe that they represent a forum of communication between the author (or the editor) and his readership, and that they play an important role in the transmission of knowledge.<sup>9</sup>

In this necessarily limited contribution, it is of course impossible to deal with the full spectrum of features relevant to understanding the prefaces and dedications. I cannot deal, for example, with the various processes and discourses of authorisation, constructions of authorship, discourses of knowledge management and symbolical communication, to name but a few of the elements I hope to address in my forthcoming monograph.<sup>10</sup> In this paper I focus on a specific phenomenon, the

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<sup>8</sup> Knapp M.E., *Prologues and Epilogues of the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: 1961) (Yale Studies in English 149); Leiner W., *Der Widmungsbrief in der französischen Literatur (1580–1715)* (Heidelberg: 1965); Dunn K., *Pretexts of Authority. The Rhetoric of Authorship in the Renaissance Preface* (Stanford: 1994); Schramm G., *Widmung, Leser, Drama. Untersuchungen zu Form- und Funktionswandel der Buchwidmung im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Hamburg: 2003). In an interesting case study on Theodorus Janssonius van Almelooven, Saskia Stegeman rightly regrets the lack of scholarly attention to dedications: "De moralitate ac utilitate dedicationum: Dedications to and by Theodorus Janssonius van Almelooven (1657–1712)", *Lias* 22 (1995) 177.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed discussion, cf. the chapter I. 2 "Der paratextuelle Präsentationsschub" in my forthcoming book *Die Stiftung von Autorschaft in der neulateinischen Literatur (1350–1650)*.

<sup>10</sup> Enenkel, *Die Stiftung von Autorschaft*.

guidance of the reader by means of the meditative frames construed in authorial paratexts.<sup>11</sup>

From my analysis it appears that the two most important means of framing were first, the evocation of the living presence of certain persons, and second, the creation of visual images in three-dimensional space. To start with the first: In the period between 1300 to 1600, the successful transmission of knowledge depended on communication between partners conceived as persons. Neo-Latin prefaces and dedications excel in creating living images. The author appears in *propria persona* before the eyes of the reader and he engages in a vivid process of communication. A specific means of strengthening this communication is the dedication. It is a puzzling fact that the large majority of all published texts between 1300 and 1600 are dedicated to certain persons. Prefaces and dedications do not only imply the living presence of the author, but also of the dedicatee. In this way, from the very start, the reader gets involved in an intense process of communication. The reader is supposed to imagine the author and the dedicatee as personally present, and he is invited to participate in the ongoing dialogue between them.

### *Petrarch's Relationship with the Dedicatee As Meditative Frame*

How this works can best be demonstrated through the example of the dedicatory preface in Petrarch's *De vita solitaria* (1346), one of the earliest in Neo-Latin literature, which was addressed to Philippe de Cabassoles, bishop of Cavaillon.<sup>12</sup> Here the author presents a kind of blueprint of the humanistic life style. In this preface, both the author and the dedicatee are conceived as being personally present. Petrarch achieves this in the first place by supplying an intriguing description of their inner relationship. He characterises the attitude of the dedicatee towards the author as sincere, unconditional and intimate love. In his

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<sup>11</sup> For a more extended and detailed discussion, cf. the chapter IV. 2 "Wissensvermittlung durch Verbildlichung" in my forthcoming monograph *Die Stiftung von Autorschaft*.

<sup>12</sup> Enenkel K.A.E., *Francesco Petrarca, De vita solitaria, Buch 1. Kritische Textausgabe und ideengeschichtlicher Kommentar* (Leiden – New York – Cologne – Copenhagen: 1990) 56–60.

relationship with the author, Philippe radiates 'a bright light of his soul as white as snow' ('sincerus et niveus candor tui pectoris').<sup>13</sup> This radiating, translucent light offers a strong, ongoing invitation to the author to address the dedicatee: it excludes any form of misunderstanding, irritation or disapproval. The author presents the dedicatee as a soul mate. The author will speak freely to him, without taking into account rhetorical, social or other conventions. Petrarch emphasizes that he shares with the addressee the same opinions on the topic at hand, which means that they both favour contemplative life.

Petrarch's description of the relationship between the dedicatee and the author should not simply be read as rendering historical facts. To be sure, Philippe de Cabassoles, in comparison with Petrarch, was a totally different personality. He was an eager and ambitious church diplomat, always engaged in all kinds of missions and only very rarely present in his small bishopric.<sup>14</sup> He was neither a contemplative man nor a scholar.

This discrepancy suggests that Petrarch's description of their relationship must have had a distinctive function. I think it is meant to establish a relationship between the author and the reader that would optimally contribute to an interpretation of the work as envisaged by Petrarch. The preface invites the reader to put aside social conventions, regard the author as a soul mate, and engage in an emotional relation with the author, to open up his heart and let him in, so to say. In doing so, the reader should contemplate with his inner eye the face of the author. In a sense, this foreshadows the later habit of the humanists of exchanging portraits, as for example Erasmus, Thomas More and Pieter Gillis did.<sup>15</sup> Amongst others, these portraits functioned as stimuli for meditation, reading and writing. The pictorial portrait was envisaged as a means to contemplation of the friend's inner portrait, of his mind, soul, thoughts, and, of course, of his intellectual interests.

<sup>13</sup> *De vita solitaria*, Proh. 1, line 3 (ed. Enenkel).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Enenkel, *Petrarca, De vita solitaria* 145–146. An extremely romantic, but rather misleading picture of the relationship between Philippe de Cabassoles and Petrarch was drawn by Wilkins E.H., "Philippe de Cabassoles on Petrarch", *Speculum* 35 (1960) 69–78.

<sup>15</sup> For Metsys's portraits of Gillis and Erasmus cf., among others, Campbell L. – Mann Phillips M. – Schulte Herbrüggen H., "Quentin Metsys, Desiderius Erasmus, Pieter Gillis and Thomas More", *Burlington Magazine* 120 (1978) 716–725; Bodar A., "Amicitiae nostrae monumentum". Ein Geschenk von Erasmus und Pieter Gillis an Thomas More", *Castrum Peregrini* 194–195 (1990) 83–103.

Interestingly enough, this contemplation of the “inner portraits” of humanists has strong roots in the tradition of religious meditation and reflexion. In this tradition, the contemplation of the “inner self” never means a kind of search for psychological peculiarities or character traits, but a search for God and spiritual truth within the soul. Thus, when Petrarch proposes that his dedicatee – and of course also the reader – will discern ‘the entire face and body of my inner self’ by reading *De vita solitaria*,<sup>16</sup> he asks him to undertake a spiritual act very similar to religious meditation.

Thus, the dedicatory preface creates a meditative frame that guides the reading, understanding and interpretation of the text. When reading the work, the reader should constantly have before his eyes the (inner) portrait of the author. He should understand the treatise as an essentially autobiographical work. Readers, who are unwilling to get acquainted with Petrarch’s intellectual pursuit and life style, are excluded from the very start. Petrarch’s mental portrait envisages an intellectual dedicated to the contemplative life, and, in a pictorial sense, portrays him as a lonely dweller in the mountainous region of Vaucluse in the Provence. Guided by Petrarch’s portrait the reader should locate the thoughts offered by *De vita solitaria* in the landscape of the Vaucluse, especially in the beautiful valley where the poet owned a small house close to the fountain that gushed forth from a steep rocky wall. Petrarch wanted his reader to imagine this landscape, and, in a sense, to be personally present there. He urges the dedicatee to interrupt his busy activities in church diplomacy for a while – by as many days as the reading of *De vita solitaria* requires – and to be with him. ‘Thus come to me, stay with me’, ‘adesto igitur’, he says.<sup>17</sup> In this invitation, the author closely connects mental with bodily presence. This is proven by the fact that he refers to a visit of Philippe who, as he claims, had stayed for a fortnight in his house in Vaucluse.

Why a fortnight, one may ask? This detail seems odd somehow. I wonder whether one should understand it as an historical fact. I think that it functions, in the first place, as a meditative frame. It mirrors the reader’s presence, as envisaged by the author. A fortnight – this is approximately the time a careful, meditative reading of Petrarch’s treatise, some 200 pages with a large collection of exempla, would

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<sup>16</sup> *De vita solitaria*, I Proh. 12 (ed. Enenkel): ‘totam frontem serene tranquilleque mentis aspicias’.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



require. Thus, 'adesto igitur' is in fact an invitation to the reader, to forget for a while his normal earthly existence and to engage in a meditative reading of *De vita solitaria*.

This meditative frame has an important effect on the reception of the work. The content of *De vita solitaria* was rather unconventional, as was Petrarch's main intellectual invention, later labelled Humanism. *De vita solitaria* is a very early blueprint of the humanistic life style.<sup>18</sup> There was a myriad of possible misunderstandings and causes of offence involving various groups of potential readers. In the first place, the frame has the function of making the reader receptive to Petrarch's new enterprise, by establishing a close, emotional relationship with the author. If the new conceptions were closely connected with, and, in a sense, tied to Petrarch's personal life, they would become more easily digestible than general ethical instructions. Furthermore, the author's personal presence would function as an *exemplum* of the life style offered by the work. In this way, Petrarch authorizes his unconventional content and, in terms of didactics, ensures that the reader will internalize it. In other words, in the meditative frame of his preface, the author has set out the lines along which he envisaged the reception of the whole treatise.

### *Visual Images in Three-Dimensional Space As Meditative Frames*

The second important device guiding the reader in Neo-Latin prefaces and dedications is the creation of visual images in three-dimensional space. In his preface, Petrarch refers to this method only in a rather implicit way. Via the invitation to the dedicatee to visit Petrarch, the reader is himself invited to locate the thoughts developed in *De vita solitaria* in the landscape of Vaucluse. However, in this case Petrarch does not give a description of the landscape, perhaps because he planned to do so in more detail in the second chapter of the first book. In fact, many humanists were aware of the impact a description of place exerted on their readers, and in their prefaces they frequently used this device. I will demonstrate by reference to three examples how this device functioned.

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<sup>18</sup> For a detailed discussion of its features, see Enenkel, *De vita solitaria*.

*Poggio's Meditation on the Changeability of Fortune,  
and Roman Archeology*

The first is the dedicatory preface to Poggio's treatise *De varietate fortune* which was written about a century later than Petrarch's, in 1447.<sup>19</sup> In this work, which he dedicated to pope Nicolaus V,<sup>20</sup> Poggio advises the reader not to trust fortune, and equips him with a manual of philosophical meditations which teach him how to struggle against the attacks and tricks of fortune, and how to avoid emotional and mental damage in the process. In the preface, the author creates a meditative frame in order to guarantee that the reader understands and internalizes the text properly. With this goal in mind, Poggio construes an intriguing three-dimensional space in which the reader should locate certain visual images. He invites the dedicatee and the reader to look into a kind of theatre, the 'Theatre of Fortune', 'Theatrum Fortune'.<sup>21</sup> On the stage he presents living images, the images of wealthy and powerful persons who have become the victims of fortune. These are the actors who perform the tragedy of Fortune. Poggio instructs the reader to look carefully and attentively at the images, to 'inspect' them. This close inspection is meant to initiate the meditative process. The next important step is *comparatio*, comparison. The reader should compare the outlook of the living images before and after they succumb to misfortune. Then the reader should draw his conclusions: primarily, that the effects of fortune are disastrous. One should do one's very best to avoid these effects. What are the mental means and devices to achieve this goal? – These are, indeed, offered in great quantity in Poggio's treatise. Thus, it becomes clear that the construction of the three-dimensional space of the 'Theatrum fortune' is crucial for the envisaged process of meditation. The construction of the theatre is a blueprint for the reading and understanding of the text. The reader is invited to locate all the exempla he will come across in Poggio's four books, in the theatre erected in the dedicatory preface.

<sup>19</sup> Edizione critica con introduzione e commento a cura di O. Merisalo (Helsinki: 1993).

<sup>20</sup> The Letter of dedication *Ad Nicolaum Papam V* in the edition by Merisalo on pp. 89–90.

<sup>21</sup> *De varietate fortune* (ed. Merisalo) 89.

Poggio's construction of a three-dimensional space is doubled by an even more impressive imagery developed in the preface of the work.<sup>22</sup> The author Poggio puts himself before the eyes of the reader, while he rides on horseback through the ruins of ancient Rome, accompanied by his friend, the papal secretary Antonio Loschi. Seated on horseback they climb up the Capitoline hill. There they sit down in the doorway of a large temple and enjoy the impressive view over the ruins of Rome.

This view opens up a most effective meditative space. By imagining the author sitting in this three-dimensional space the reader is invited to meditate on the changeability of fortune and the vanity of all earthly things. The image of the ruins of Rome is a most striking example of this, a *leçon par l'exemple*, so to say. Poggio involves the reader in the vivid dialogue he had with his friend Loschi. He shall participate in the author's and Loschi's thoughts, he shall *re-think* them, and shape his own thoughts after the example of their living images. As Poggio and Loschi, for example, the reader shall meditate on a line in Virgil, which refers to the spectacular building activity of Emperor Augustus: 'Aurea nunc, olim silvestribus horrida dumis'.<sup>23</sup> 'Now there [i.e. on the Capitoline hill] are golden palaces, where once there was only thorny brushwood'. Here again, the reader is expected to engage in the meditative process of comparison: he should compare the golden palaces of Augustan Rome with the present ruins overgrown by brushwood. This living image demonstrates, if anything, the changeability of fortune. The reader is invited to build his thoughts around an inversion of Virgil's line: 'Aurea quondam, nunc squalida spinetis vepribusque referta' ('Long ago [i.e. in Antiquity] there were [i.e. on the Capitoline hill] golden palaces, where now there are only places fallen in despair, overgrown by thorny brushwood').<sup>24</sup>

Interestingly enough, Poggio links the ruins with the theatre he adduced at the beginning of the preface. The ruins represent the theatre in which the reader henceforth should locate the living images, the princes and rulers who became victims of Fortune. The stage is most effective for the process of meditation, and for the proper

<sup>22</sup> *De varietate fortune* (ed. Merisalo) 91–92.

<sup>23</sup> *Aeneis* VIII, 348. *De varietate fortune* (ed. Merisalo) 91, line 15.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, line 16–17.

understanding of the text, since it is not only a living, but even an emblematic image, a *Sinnbild* for the changeability of fortune.

In a telling detail, Poggio dedicates the whole first book of his treatise to the description of the ruins of Rome. One should be aware that this early archaeological description is not a *Selbstzweck*, but predominantly serves as a tool for meditation. To give an example of how this works: A most important focus of Poggio's archaeology is the identification of buildings. If anything, the problems of identification show the degree of loss and decay. More than once, the identification turns out to be difficult and questionable. Even if there are clear indications, Poggio tries to underline the decay by other arguments. For example, when Poggio identifies the old storehouse for salt, the *Salarium*, in the *Tabularium* on the Capitoline hill, by quoting the building inscription, he emphasizes the corroded state of the letters. This is, of course, keen archaeological guesswork; at the same time, however, the corroded inscription itself serves as a meditative image, an image of decay, an image of the changeability of Fortune.

### *Pontano's Landscapes and Neo-Latin Poetic Reflexion*

A very different, but not less fascinating construction of space occurs in the dedicatory poem of the *Hendecasyllabi*,<sup>25</sup> a collection of lyric poetry composed by Giovanni Pontano, the estimable secretary of the Aragon kingdom, in 1502, and dedicated to his friend Marino Tomacelli (1429–1515), the former ambassador of the King of Naples in Florence.<sup>26</sup> As a meditative frame for his poetry, Pontano construes spas, bathing resorts, *Badelandschaften*. Interestingly, like Poggio, Pontano presents two landscapes or constructions of space. The first is situated at the shore of Lake Garda in Northern Italy, on the peninsula of Sirmio. In this landscape Pontano locates the image of a beautiful black-eyed woman who washes her long hair in the lake.<sup>27</sup> She turns

<sup>25</sup> *Hendecasyllaborum libri*, ed. L. Monti Sabia (Naples: 1978). For a recent edition of the Latin text with English translation see Giovanni Pontano, *Baiae* (Cambridge MA.: 2006) (The I Tatti Renaissance Library 22). For Pontano's biography cf. Kidwell C., *Pontano. Poet and Prime Minister* (London: 1991). For a concise survey of the collection cf. Lefevre E., "Pontanos *Hendecasyllabi* an Marino Tomacelli", in Baier Th. (ed.), *Pontano und Catull* (Tübingen: 2003) 187–201.

<sup>26</sup> On Tomacelli cf. Kidwell, *Pontano* 37.

<sup>27</sup> *Hendecasyllaborum libri* (ed. Monti Sabia) I, 69, lines 1–6.

out to be a goddess, a Muse. As the reader is supposed to surmise, the location is no coincidence. The young lady represents the poetry of the Roman lyric poet Catullus, which is characterised by the preference of a metrum of eleven syllables per line, called hendecasyllabus. In his collection of poems, Pontano himself characterised the hendecasyllabi as 'numeri Catulliani' ('the metrum of Catullus').<sup>28</sup> Sirmio was the place where the villa of Catullus once stood, as praised by him in *Carmen* 31.

Thus, via this landscape construction Pontano instructs the reader to perceive, understand and appropriate his poems in the first place by a process of *intertextual meditation*. This process requires that the reader recognizes and retrieves the Catullan subtexts; that he reproduces the contexts of the lines alluded to; that he carefully compares Pontano's poems with Catullus's with respect to content, argument and style. The result of this meditative process will be that the reader not only comes appropriately to understand the poems, but also secures deeper insights into the underlying poetical theory, the implicit *poetica*.<sup>29</sup>

Interestingly, the construction of the second landscape mirrors this process of intertextual meditation. The second frame is constituted by a famous bathing resort in Southern Italy, close to Pontano's home town of Naples – the hot volcanic bathes of Baiae. Pontano literally asks Catullus's Muse to join him in the bath. This is a compelling invitation to the reader to appropriate Pontano's poetry via a comparison with Catullus's. Moreover, by a careful comparison of the landscapes the reader will attain a deeper understanding of Pontano's poetics. The author locates himself in this landscape, and he enters it in a

<sup>28</sup> *Hendecasyllaborum libri* (ed. Monti Sabia) II, 37, line 6. Cf. Stärk E., "Theatrum amantum: Pontanos Baiae und Catull", in Baier (ed.), *Pontano und Catull* (295–305) 298.

<sup>29</sup> For the intertextual relationship between Pontano and Catullus cf. Stärk "Theatrum amantum"; Schmidt E.A., "Catullisch, catullischer als Catull, uncatullisch – Zu Giovanni Pontanos Elfsilbergedichten", in Baier (ed.), *Pontano und Catull* 203–218; Ludwig W., "Catullus renatus – Anfänge und frühe Entwicklung des catullischen Stils in der neulateinischen Dichtung", in idem, *Litterae Neolatinae. Schriften zur Neulateinischen Literatur* (Munich: 1989) 162–194. For a comparison of Catullus's and Pontano's poetica cf. Liebermann W.-L., "Poëtische Reflexion bei Catull und Pontano", in Baier (ed.), *Pontano und Catull* 93–106, and Schmidt, "Catullisch, catullischer als Catull"; for Pontano's poetica in general Tateo F., "La Poetica di Giovanni Pontano", *Filologia Romanza* 6 (1959) 277–303; 337–370.

spectacular way. He describes in a vivid image how, dancing and jumping energetically, singing and playing the lyra, he enters the volcanic bath, accompanied by Catullus's girl.<sup>30</sup> In the volcanic bath, the reader discerns not only Pontano and Catullus's girl, but also other persons, such as Pietro Golino (Petrus Compater), a friend of both the dedicatee and the author, a number of bathers, young men and women, and not least, tiny beings, the *Hendecasyllabi*. Pontano, having written his poems in this metre, indeed personified them: they are cute little creatures that hang around among the bathing people, observe them from short distance, make fun of them and tickle them a bit. The tiny *Hendecasyllabi* very much resemble Cupido's or Erotae. Since the scenes in the bath are described as if seen through the eyes of the *Hendecasyllabi*, the little creatures also serve to provide the reader with eyes through which he views these scenes. In this sense, the reader is invited to join Pontano and his company in the bath, and to observe what takes place there.

As it turns out, there is quite a lot to be seen in Pontano's bath, first of all, a couple of beautiful young people who are naked and engage in lovemaking. The reader is caught up by the striking and explicitly sensual physicality of the image. Rather than persons, he discerns intertwined naked bodies. Pontano evokes and heightens these sensual visual impressions by describing the colour of the bodies (milk-white) and their movements. Young men caress the nipples of tender young girls, who reciprocate by touching with their sensitive fingers the penises of their lovers, and so on. The reciprocal character of the action is expressed by the chiasitic word order of the lines. With great curiosity, the tiny *Hendecasyllabi* observe the erotic games and, occasionally, take part in them. For example, they tickle the lovers a bit in order to excite them even more.

One might wonder what all this has to do with meditation. How do these foolish scenes go together with the highly respectable mental act of meditation? Is it at all appropriate to consider them as a meditative frame? My answer would be yes. I believe that Pontano's dedicatory spas should be understood as *Leseanleitung*, guidance to the reader of his whole collection of poems. The reader is supposed to discover Pontano's *poetica* through the intellectual process of comparison, and, more specifically, of intertextual meditation, as described

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<sup>30</sup> *Hendecasyllaborum libri* (ed. Monti Sabia), lines 7–9.

above. Crucial for this intertextual meditation is careful comparison with Catullus's poetry. Its poetic structure is mainly dictated by elegiac love. Important is the poet's lovelorn condition: he is overwhelmed and tortured by his love of a cruel and truly inaccessible *domina*. Catullus's love poetry is not characterised by naked bodies or sensual erotic. Unlike Martial, Catullus was regarded by many Renaissance readers as chaste.<sup>31</sup> The other aspect is the place of humour. Catullus's poetry, unlike Martial's, is not characterised by a high degree of wittiness. If it displays irony, it is more aggressive than witty. For Renaissance epigrammatic poetry, from the middle of the 15th century on, the choice of models for *imitatio* and *aemulatio* was fundamental. In many cases, this choice was conceived as a choice between Catullus and Martial.<sup>32</sup>

In his meditative frame, Pontano takes a somewhat different stand. Although one might expect him to side with Martial, he does not. Instead, he presents Catullus (whom he invites into his bath) as his source of inspiration. He does not invite Martial. This may be explained partly by Martial's homosexuality and rudeness, partly by the choice of metre, Pontano's preference for the hendecasyllables characteristic for Catullus, the 'numeri Catulliani'.<sup>33</sup>

In the Volcanic bath, however, Catullus's poetica is turned upside down.<sup>34</sup> Elegiac love is turned into sensual and explicit erotics; the suffering of unfulfilled love into physical pleasure.<sup>35</sup> Pontano's successful emulation is brought into visual images: he gets what was denied to Catullus. He even seduces Catullus's girl in the bath. Likewise, Pontano tries to seduce the reader; he suggests that the reader may take his booklet with him into the bath, and there allow himself to be inspired by its verses. The Hendecasyllabi themselves have undergone a

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Gaisser J.H., *Catullus and his Renaissance Readers* (Oxford: 1993).

<sup>32</sup> For the Neo-Latin epigram cf. Beer S. – Enenkel K.A.E. – Rijser D. (eds.), *The Neo-Latin Epigram. A Learned and Witty Genre* (Louvain: 2009) (Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia XXV).

<sup>33</sup> *Hendecasyllaborum libri* (ed. Monti Sabia) II, 37.

<sup>34</sup> Especially with this respect I consider it hard to accept the view that Pontano's poetica is just 'more Catullian than Catull'; cf. Schmidt, "Catullisch, catullischer als Catull".

<sup>35</sup> Sometimes, scholars seem to underestimate the physicality and sensuality of Pontano's *Hendecasyllabi*. Cf. for example, Lefevre's survey of the poems "Pontano's *Hendecasyllabi*".

metamorphosis into funny and joyous little beings. In Pontano's view, hendecasyllabic poetry should be a witty and playful genre.<sup>36</sup>

This is demonstrated in the meditative frame of the dedication as a kind of *leçon par l'exemple*: At the end of the dedication, the author, to the surprise of the reader, excludes the dedicatee Marino Tomacelli from the bath. He says, you are too old for this, and besides, I take care for your good reputation. Please, let Pietro Golino go to the bath, he is a really horny man. Now, when the dedicatee received the collection of poems, he was indeed seventy three years old. Not a nice joke, as it seems. Pontano's wittiness, however, was a bit more demanding. His contemporary readers would have understood the joke more fully: they probably knew that the horny bath freak Pontano who entered the bath dancing and jumping, was by then some 80 years old, and that horny Golino was dead by then (ca. 1430–1502). This sheds a totally different light on Pontano's poetry: it is full of self-irony, humour and doubleness. Thus, the meditative frame invites the reader to meditate on the poems by discovering multi-layered doubling.

*Giovio's Treatise De viris et foeminis aetate  
nostra florentibus (1527)*

I conclude with a brief look at the meditative frame of yet another genre, historiography. The 16th century historiographer and physician Paolo Giovio introduces his work on famous men and women of his day, *De viris et foeminis aetate nostra florentibus* (1527), with a striking dedicatory preface to the papal advisor Gian Matteo Giberti,<sup>37</sup> in which he construes, in a lengthy description of several pages, various impressive three-dimensional spaces.<sup>38</sup> Concretely, he describes

<sup>36</sup> Interestingly, some characteristic notions occur in Pontano's *Hendecasyllabi* more often than in Catullus's *Carmina*: 'cachinnus', 'chachinnulus' ('laughter') – 2 times in Catullus's *Carmina*, but 30 times in the *Hendecasyllabi*; 'iocus', 'iocari' etc. ('joke', 'to joke') – 6 times in the *Carmina*, but 16 times in the *Hendecasyllabi*; 'ludus', 'ludere' etc. ('play', 'to play') – 4 times in the *Carmina*, but 9 times in the *Hendecasyllabi*. See Schmidt, "Catullisch, catullischer als Catull" 214–215.

<sup>37</sup> For Giberti, cf. Pighi G.-B., *Gian Matteo Giberti* (Verona: 1900; repr. Verona: 1955).

<sup>38</sup> Paolo Giovio, *Dialogi et descriptiones*, ed. E. Travi – M. Penco (Rome: 1984) 147 ff., the preface on 167–172. For Giovio's biography cf. Rovelli L., *Paolo Giovio* (Como: 1928); for Giovio as a historiographer see Zimmermann T.C. Price, *Paolo Giovio. The Historian and the Crisis of Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Princeton U.P.: 1995); on the dialogue *De viris et foeminis aetate nostra florentibus*, *ibid.* 89–105.



three different landscapes on the island of Ischia, where he had joined the court of Don Ferrante d'Avallo, count of Pescara, and his wife Vittoria Colonna.<sup>39</sup> Giovio unfolds in front of his audience, so to say, a triptichon of landscape painting, or a set of three *vedute*.<sup>40</sup> The first landscape shows the hills and valleys of the eastern part of the island, which can be seen from the Aragon castle, the second the quiet sea of the south-eastern part of Ischia with its spectacular shore consisting of lava rocks, and the third landscape a little crater lake to the north of the island, where nowadays Ischia Porto is situated. These landscape descriptions were neither a goal in themselves nor could they serve as a kind of tourist guide. Instead, they function as meditative frame.

In this respect, the landscapes themselves display two features that are relevant for the textual meditation the reader is expected to undertake. First, the very form of these three landscapes and the manner in which they are presented, suggest that they are conceived as *theatres*, *Schaubühnen*. They are all circular or semi-circular. The first landscape is built up by the circle of hills around the Aragon castle; the second represents a quiet bay surrounded by volcanic rocks. The third, the Crater Lake, is literally called a 'natural amphitheatre'. Second, the landscapes are filled with different hunting scenes. In the first landscape, the reader discerns the count of Pescara who, accompanied by a large hunting party, is hunting deer. The hunt itself is characterised as a theatrical performance, 'spectaculum'. In the second landscape, the rocky bay, a large fishing party on boats is to be seen, again under the leadership of Don Ferrante. In the third landscape, the crater lake, another hunting party takes place; their prey are water birds.

Their construction as theatres on the one hand enlarges their potential of visual evidence, and, on the other hand, as mnemonic places. They function as *theatres of memory*. The reader is invited to locate the historical persons described in Giovio's treatise in these landscapes. It is highly important that the *spectacula* performed in these theatres of memory are hunting scenes. Why so? Giovio's historical work is a reaction to the Sacco di Roma of 1527, in which Rome was devastated

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. chapter VII "Ischia (1527–1528)" esp. 86–94. On Giovio's relationship with Vittoria Colonna cf. Volpati C. "Vittoria Colonna e Paolo Giovio", *Roma* 11 (1933) 501–516, and Vecce C. "Paolo Giovio e Vittoria Colonna", *PSSC* 54 (1990) 67–93.

<sup>40</sup> Especially as a member of the Papal Court, Giovio was of course well acquainted with contemporary landscape art. Later, his „museo“ housed a number of *vedute*; cf. Della Torre S., "Le vedute del museo Gioviano", *Quaderni erbesi* 7 (1985) 39–48.

by the soldiers of Emperor Charles V.<sup>41</sup> Giovio was on the side of the losers, as he served as a physician at the court of pope Clement VII.<sup>42</sup> Zimmermann refers to Von Pastor's vivid description of the situation: 'While the Holocaust raged in stricken Rome, Giovio remained with the pope in Castel Sant'Angelo. Clement VII was a virtual prisoner. Spanish troops guarded his chamber. His days were spent in desperate negotiations over his ransom. [...] As the implacable heat of summer came on, plague broke out, and the stench of rotting corpses made it impossible to remain on the battlements when the wind blew from the city'.<sup>43</sup>

In the dialogue, Giovio wants to restore, albeit in a literary work, the situation of Italy's glory days before the Sacco. The work is conceived as a consolation with respect to the recent chaos. The hunting scenes present a suitable theatre of memory because they perform "the play of control and order". They display man's control over chaotic nature.<sup>44</sup> Giovio probably was well aware of what he was doing. It is no coincidence that he calls the lake an 'amphitheatre'. By this he alludes to the Roman amphitheatre in which animal hunts (*venationes*) took place. These hunts featured ritual elements connected to the affirmation of the established political order, namely, the power of the Imperium Romanum under the leadership of the Emperor.<sup>45</sup> As with Poggio's and Pontano's dedicatory prefaces, the landscape functions as a *leçon par l'exemple* for the meditative processes the reader is expected to engage in. Thus, the dedicatory prefaces provide extremely efficient meditative frames construed in such a way as to guide the attention of the reader immediately and continually to the heart of the required meditation.

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<sup>41</sup> Chastel A., *The Sack of Rome*, trsl. B. Archer (Princeton U.P.: 1983); Hook J., *The Sack of Rome* (London: 1972).

<sup>42</sup> For this aspect, cf. Capparoni P., *Paolo Giovio Archiatra di Papa Clemente VII* (Grottaferrata: 1913); Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio*, chapter VI ("Clement VII and the Sack of Rome (1523–1527)") 60–85.

<sup>43</sup> Zimmermann, *Paolo Giovio* 86.

<sup>44</sup> For this aspect cf. Walker S., "Making and Breaking the Stag: The Construction of the Animal in Early Modern Hunting Treatise", in Enenkel K.A.E. – Smith P.J. (eds.), *Early Modern Zoology. The Construction of Animals in Science, Literature and the Visual Arts, Intersections 7* (2007) vol. II 317–337.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Wiedemann Th., *Emperors and Gladiators* (London–New York: 1992). Similarly, the gladiatorial shows were used as transmitters of political values: for this, cf. Enenkel K.A.E., "The Propagation of *fortitudo*. Gladiatorial Combats from ca. 85 BC to the times of Trajan and their Reflection in Roman Literature", in idem – Pfeijffer I.L. (eds.), *The Manipulative Mode. Political Propaganda in Antiquity: A Collection of Case Studies* (Leiden–Boston: 2005) 275–294.

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