

HALF OF (WHICH?) LATIN: the Lemmata of Perotti's *Cornu copiae*



By Johann Ramminger

Perotti claims that the Cornu copiae contains “about half of the Latin language”; it is certainly the most comprehensive and well-documented fifteenth-century reconstruction of the Latin lexicon of antiquity. In addition, Perotti pays attention to medieval and post-medieval innovations (i.e. neo-Latin). Some phenomena are discussed and rejected, others are accepted with caution. The paper analyzes the chronological distribution of the lemmata and discusses the criteria employed by Perotti in their selection.

Introduction

Niccolò Perotti's *Cornu copiae* is an encyclopaedic dictionary of Latin arranged as a commentary on the first 147 epigrams of Martial. Its aim – stated in the preface and epilogue, respectively – is nothing less than to recover not only the proper understanding of Martial, whom nobody had understood since late antiquity, but also generally to restore Latin which through lack of knowledge of the language and culture of the Romans had been degraded thoroughly in the intervening period:

Sed ita hunc Poetam exposuit ut ne uerbum quidem reliquerit intactum uisus que plane fuerit non unum Poetam, sed uniuersam Latinam linguam uelle interpretari. Omnem tamen difficultatem superauit studium et diligentia hominis qui que omnia uincit improbus labor; talem que post tot epotas lucubrationum fuligines hunc Poetam reddidit, ut qui supra octingentos annos a nemine fuerat intellectus, iam ab adolescentibus quoque uel mediocriter eruditis possit intelligi (Perotti, *Cornu copiae*, *prohemium* 2).¹

([Perotti speaks under the *persona* of his nephew] But my uncle explained this poet [i.e. Martial] in such a way that no word remained untouched and he appeared not to comment upon one poet, but upon the whole of the Latin language. All difficulty was overcome by his assiduous diligence, ‘all was conquered by persistent work’; after having emptied so many pots of black soot he achieved that this poet who for eight hundred years had been understood by nobody, can now be understood even by youngsters of mediocre education).

¹ Perotti 1989–2001, I, 13.

In the epilogue, Perotti – who has now shed the *persona* of the unwitting participant in the publication of his work – is justifiably proud of his achievement:

Habes, Federice princeps, interpretationem primi libri, quod est universi operis et totius fere Latinae linguae dimidium. Tot enim ac tanta et tam uaria hoc uno libro explicata sunt, ut aliquanto minus sit id omne quod superest. In quo animaduertere facile erit quot et quanti essent, in quibus antehac uersabamur, errores, quam multa forent a clarissimis etiam Latinae linguae autoribus per ignorantiam rerum ac uocabulorum falso exposita, quam multa ob nimiam difficultatem praeterita ac prorsus ommissa (Perotti, *Cornu copiae*, epilogue 1).²

(Here you have, Federico, the explanation of the first book of Martial, which is half of the whole work and more or less of the whole Latin language. So many, so far reaching, and so diverse matters have been explained in this one book that less than half remains. From this it will be easy to appreciate how many and grave errors we were mired in, how many matters were explained incorrectly even by widely recognized Latin authors because of a lack of knowledge of facts and words, how much was passed over or left out because it was too difficult).

Perotti concludes the epilogue by summarizing the double achievement of the work thus: it is to explain and enhance the Roman language.³ Perotti's boast is not an empty one, and his work was no mean feat. It was first printed in 1489, nine years after the author's death, and provided for the first time in the Renaissance a comprehensive overview over Latin documented with examples from the 'best' authors of antiquity. The *Cornu copiae* was an enormous success and immediately became an often consulted – and less often quoted – source of information about Latin.⁴ Also, it furnished the base for the nascent Latin lexicography, and via Calepino's *Dictionarium* (first ed. Reggio/Emilia 1502) and later dictionaries remained present long after its direct influence had waned in the middle of the next century.

Because of the widespread impact of the information provided by Perotti it is important to understand the parameters of his philological work: the nature and state of his sources, and the criteria he applied in the selection of his entered the work. The first critical edition of the *Cornu copiae* published

² Perotti 1989–2001, VII, 285.

³ “ut omnes [...] sacram ... Romanam linguam te imperatore, te duce illustratam locupletatam que cognoscant” (so that all see that the sacred Roman language has been explained and enhanced under your command and leadership), Perotti 1989–2001, VII, 285.

⁴ For an overview over the early reception of the *Cornu copiae* see Ramming 2005, 115–117.

from 1989 to 2001⁵ (in which I took part) tackled many of these issues, especially concerning classical and medieval sources. The editors also had some successes with neo-Latin sources, and more progress has been made since the completion of the edition.⁶

The *Cornu copiae* has two types of entries. The first consists of the lemma, with its meaning, and is authenticated by a quotation from a classical author which illustrates its meaning or usage (a feature which distinguished the *Cornu copiae* from medieval *Derivationes*, which had scant examples, and which must have been very attractive to humanists attempting to write 'proper' Latin). The second type of entry consists only of a lemma, sometimes with a meaning, but no example.

Regarding both kinds of entries it will be important to pay attention to the double chronological stratification of the work, the visible chronology offered by the quotations, whose authors provide us with a seemingly firm timeframe, and the secondary chronology of the texts from which Perotti took the material. Reasons why the secondary chronology may deviate from the primary one are numerous. The lemmata in the *Cornu copiae* can result from variant readings in a ms., which thus – even though apparently attested e. g. by an author like Cicero – are no more than medieval scribal errors (the most significant case is perhaps Pliny's *Natural history*, woefully corrupt before Ermolao Barbaro's interventions in the 1490s⁷). If a quotation is taken second hand from an author such as the fourth-century Nonius (all too often hopelessly mangled in the medieval tradition), or the abridgement of Festus' dictionary (itself already an epitome of an earlier work) made by Paulus Diaconus in the eighth century, or even from Valla's *Elegantiae* in the fifteenth century, the possibilities for errors are multiplied. Words which seem to have a classical pedigree may only be later variants in the secondary transmission.

As for the promised explanation of all matters Roman, the *apparatus fontium* of the *Cornu copiae*-edition shows that, in addition to classical authors, medieval and humanist resources provided a substantial amount of material, – the latter normally without attribution to a classical author or a textual example. Also the reestablishment of the Latin lexicon, while based primarily on classical authors (whom Perotti had excerpted meticulously during his life) and the dictionaries of Festus and Nonius, drew heavily on the medieval dictionaries of Hugutio, Papias, and Balbi. Also later writings such as

⁵ Perotti 1989–2001.

⁶ e.g. Pade 1995; Ramming 1999; see overview in Charlet 2011, 37.

⁷ Humanists were well aware of this problem, but could as a rule do little to improve their textual basis; see Poliziano, Letter to Scala 5.1 from 1493, mentioned by DellaNeva 2007, xix.

Boccaccio's *Genealogia* and Valla's *Elegantiae* have contributed items to Perotti's dictionary. In addition, already Martine Furno in her study from 1995 drew attention to the presence of lemmata in the *Cornu copiae* which are either rare or entirely unattested in antiquity,⁸ even though due to the near-complete absence of neo-Latin lexical tools she normally could not establish a neo-Latin context for her observations. Furno also noted elements from the *volgare*, a phenomenon which has now been analyzed by J.-L. Charlet.⁹

Perotti himself claims that the *Cornu copiae* contains "approximately half of the Latin language".¹⁰ The exact meaning of this phrase in the light of the subsequent revision of the *Cornu copiae* has been much discussed,¹¹ but even if Perotti later added a substantial amount of material to the first version, he still employed a rigorous process of selection which excluded a considerable part of Latin. In the following I shall not try to find new, as yet unidentified sources for the *Cornu copiae* (although many discoveries are undoubtedly still to be made). Rather, this paper will examine Perotti's claim of having treated "half the Latin language" from a lexicographer's point of view. How many of his lemmata are actually attested in the Latin of antiquity? Can we establish a further chronological distribution within this group? Is there a presence of Latin from later antiquity to be found? How many of Perotti's lemmata belong to medieval Latin and/or neo-Latin? How does Perotti approach the Latin of his contemporaries?¹²

The border between classical and medieval Latin will be drawn at c. 600 A.D. in accordance with the conventions of the *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*. Within classical Latin 'late Latin' will *grosso modo* be understood as the Latin of the Church Fathers from Tertullian onwards. For the purposes of the present article neo-Latin will be identified as an innovative stratum of Latin which begins to make itself felt in the late fourteenth century in Italy and expands outside the peninsula in the heyday of the *Cornu copiae*'s influence, at the turn of the sixteenth century.

⁸ Furno 1995, 211–220.

⁹ Charlet 2010. I would like to thank J.-L. Charlet who let me have a copy of his paper before the publication. See also Ramming 2002.

¹⁰ "totius fere Latinae linguae dimidium", see quotation above on p.164.

¹¹ See esp. Stok 2002 (2) and Charlet 2011, 36.

¹² As basis for the neo-Latin part of the material discussed here I will use my ongoing work on the *Neulateinische Wortliste* (Ramming 2003–) and its digital archive (henceforth *NLW*), which at the moment comprises 400 million words. Despite its size the archive is of course very far from complete; all my conclusions are necessarily subject to the limitations of my material base.

Statistics

The text of the *Cornu copiae* comprises approximately 630.000 words, or about 86.000 different forms, and is thus four times as long as, e.g., Valla's *Elegantiae* (130.000/25.000). For this examination I have focused on the *lemmata* of the *Cornu copiae*, i.e. those words which are defined or at least enumerated by the humanist as belonging to 'Latin' (23.000 entries), thus excluding the Latin of the definitions given by Perotti. For practical reasons I have concentrated on a small selection, covering the compounds of *prae-*. Thus we get a sample which is manageable in size and without significant orthographical issues, and which can relatively easily be compared with wordlists from different lexica.

First I would like to establish how successful Perotti is in identifying the Latin of antiquity and separating it from its descendants. We can easily do this by comparing Perotti's *lemmata* to those contained in the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (in the following *TLL*). In the *TLL* there are 1354 *lemmata* and *sublemmata* beginning with *prae-*,¹³ whereas the corresponding part of the index of the critical edition of the *Cornu copiae* contains 252 *lemmata*.¹⁴ After compensating for the differences in lemmatizing between the two,¹⁵ among the total of 252 *lemmata* there are sixteen (i.e. 6%) which are not in the *TLL* and which thus must be attributed to medieval Latin and/or neo-Latin.¹⁶

Perotti's 236 (252 minus 16) classical *lemmata* can be split into two groups, if we compare them to the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (in the following *OLD*), which comprises only what we may loosely call the pagan period of Latin. The *OLD* has 520 *lemmata* with *prae-*, nearly two thirds less than the *TLL*. If we remove those of Perotti's classical *lemmata* which are contained

¹³ These are mostly compounds with *prae-* or *praeter-*, with very few non-compounds interspersed (e.g. *praeciae*).

¹⁴ Removing two entries which are not *lemmata*, but occur in Perotti's explanations (*praecognitio*, *praedicamentum*).

¹⁵ Twenty-nine of these do not appear as *lemmata* in the *TLL*; thirteen of these can be found in the *OLD*, Lewis & Short 1879, or Georges 1913–1918, and are variant forms of *lemmata* contained in the *TLL*.

¹⁶ *praeacceptio* (three ex. in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*, two ex. from the 17th. cent.), *praebito* (Per. refers to a passage in Plautus where modern eds. have *perb-*), *praecelse* (no ex.), *praefluxus* (no examples extant), *praegrauator* (no examples extant), *praeiurator* (no examples extant), *praeiuro* (postulated by Per. to explain *praeiuratio* in Festus, one ex. in Niermeyer 2002, 1086; Latham 1980, 367), *praeliatrix* (one ex. in St. Hildegardis, *PL* 197 col. 881B, some later examples), *praeludium* (common in ma. and hum.), *praeluo* (two ex. younger than Perotti), *praordinator* (one ma. ex., Ps. Isidor, one ex. after Per.), *praerideo* (no ex.), *praerisor* (no ex.), *praeseruatio* (ma., once in a book title from 1483, *ISTC* ic00976500, later frequent), *praesisto* (in *Cornu copiae* with unidentified Plautus-quotation, no ma. ex., one ex. before Perotti, one ex. after), and *praesultrix* (no ma. ex., twice after Per.).

in both the *TLL* and the *OLD*, there remain thirty which are only in the *TLL* and thus belong to late antiquity. From these we have to subtract one (*prae-clauum*):¹⁷ since it is accompanied by a quotation, purportedly from Afranius (but probably stemming from a faulty text of Nonius used by Perotti), we can see that for Perotti this word belonged to early Latin.

While Perotti decidedly privileges the Latin from earlier periods, with the remaining twenty-nine lemmata late Latin is present to some degree. Where did Perotti get his knowledge of these lemmata from? I cannot here give a detailed analysis of these words, which are evenly spread out over the four centuries between Tertullian and Isidor of Sevilla; but I would like to draw attention to one striking fact: As I have mentioned, Perotti likes to illustrate his lemmata with quotations from classical authors. Not one of the twenty nine examples from late antiquity is accompanied by a quotation. This suggests that they may either be second hand excerpts, taken from later texts, notably the medieval dictionaries which Perotti uses heavily (although only five occur in Hugutio)¹⁸, or may be formed by Perotti independently from the earlier attestations and are only coincidentally attested in Late Latin (e. g. *interturbatio*, which occurs in a series of derivatives of *turbo*). Clearly, Perotti had made no effort to collect a significant amount of excerpts from late Latin authors for the *Cornu copiae* (where he does quote from the Church Fathers, his citations – except for Claudian – tend to be either considerably modified or unrecognizable). This is an expression of the general reserve of our humanist towards the Church Fathers as models of Latin style which is confirmed by his editorial activity (which centres on Silver Latin) and his library (which predominantly contained classical authors).¹⁹

Hugutio as a source of classical Latin

This brings us to the next question. Given that the overwhelming majority of Perotti's lemmata belongs to the Latin from before 200, how many of them could he have found in medieval dictionaries? Modern dictionaries of medieval Latin are ill equipped to answer that kind of question because they focus on those words of medieval Latin which are different, not on those that are the same as in classical Latin. I attempted to answer this question by comparing our group of *prae*-lemmata with those of one of Perotti's major sources, the *Derivationes* of Hugutio of Pisa (12th century).²⁰ All in all Hu-

¹⁷ The *TLL* has only one example from a glossary where it explains the anglosaxon *gangren*, see *TLL* X.2 491.83–492.2 (Gatti).

¹⁸ *prae*loquium, *prae*minentia, *prae*rogo, *prae*sbyter, *prae*uarico.

¹⁹ See Marcacci Marinelli 1979, Marucchi 1985, Pade 2003, and Concetta Bianca, "La biblioteca del Perotti", paper delivered at the conference, to be published at a later date.

²⁰ Hugutio 2004.

gutio has 317 lemmata with *prae-*, some sixty more than Perotti. Over half of Perotti's lemmata (139 out of 252) correspond to entries in the *Derivationes* and will in many cases (esp. if not accompanied by a quotation) have been taken from there. Perotti did not, however, take over the lemmata from Hugutio wholesale, nearly 60% were omitted by Perotti (178 out of 317).²¹ Of Hugutio's lemmata three fourths coincide with the *TLL*, one fourth is medieval (235/82). If Perotti had selected his lemmata mechanically, by sheer chance he would have included a quarter of medieval words. Perotti, however, deselected with near absolute accuracy those of Hugutio's lemmata which were unsuitable: out of Hugutio's 82 non-classical lemmata only two are lemmata in the *Cornu copiae* (*praeludium*, *praeluo*), and in both cases the definitions Perotti gives are completely different from those in Hugutio, which excludes Hugutio as a source. This is a remarkable testimony to Perotti's stylistic acumen as a writer of Latin.

Medieval and neo-Latin

The sixteen lemmata in the *Cornu copiae* which are not attested in antiquity (and consequently not contained in the *TLL*) are a rather diverse group:

| <i>medieval Latin</i> | <i>Perotti, Cornu copiae</i> | <i>neo-Latin</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ps.class. / – | praebito | – |
| ps.class. / ma. | praesisto | 1x s.XV., 1x s.XVI. |
| – | praecelse | – |
| – | praefluxus | – |
| – | praegrauator | – |
| – | praeiurator | – |
| – | praerideo | – |
| – | praerisor | – |
| ma. frequent | praeacceptio | – (iur.) |
| ma. | praeiuro | – (iur.) |
| ma. | praeliatrix | 6x s.XVII. |
| ma. | praeluo | 1x s.XVI., 1x s.XVII. |
| ma. | praeordinator | 1x s.XVII. |
| ma. frequent | praeseruatio | 250x |
| ma. very frequent | praeludium | 1300x |
| – | praesultrix | 1x s.XVI., 1x s.XVII. |

The first two on this list Perotti claims to have read in Plautus. For one of them he gives an unidentifiable quotation (*praesisto*), for the other he may

²¹ Two examples of words omitted by Perotti: he excludes *praebendarius*, a word belonging to the church administration, or *praeputiatius*, which, although attested in antiquity, only occurs in ecclesiastical writers.

have depended on a faulty text (*praebito*, modern *perb-*).²² Examples such as these (and the Afranius-quotation mentioned above) are not infrequent in the *Cornu copiae*, and – irrespective of their origin as fabrications of Perotti, faults of the tradition, or fragments of now lost classical texts – Perotti presents them as belonging to classical Latin.

Three of the examples occur in medieval and later texts with some frequency: most frequent is *praeludium*, but also *praeseruatio* and *praeacceptio* are words which Perotti may have come across in a contemporary medical or legal text (even if we have no evidence of this); to the medieval group also belong *praeiuro*, *praeliatrix*, *praeluo*, *praeordinator*, and *praesisto*²³ which are attested in isolated medieval examples.²⁴

I now want to look at our group of sixteen non-classical compounds from a neo-Latin point of view (the right column of the overview). For six out of the sixteen lemmata we have no further attestation in the digital archive of the *NLW* (*praecelse*, *praefluxus*, *praeagrauator*, *praeiurator*, *praerideo*, *praerisor*), they belong to the type of word formed by Perotti himself to complete a sequence of derivations from a single root.²⁵ One (*praesultrix*) has two examples later than Perotti (one ex. each in the 16th and 17th cent.). Also words from the medieval group such as *praeluo* (one ex. each in the 16th and 17th cent.), *praeliatrix* (six attestations in the 17th cent.) and *praeordinator* (one ex. in the 17th cent.) sporadically occur later. *Praeacceptio* is a legal technical term and thus not subject to the humanist demands of style.

To conclude, out of Perotti's 254 *prae*-lemmata this leaves only two which are not classical and occur with some frequency in neo-Latin texts, *praeludium* (1300 attestations in the database of the *NLW*), and *praeseruatio* (250). This absence of neo-Latin may partly be due to my limited selection.

Any normative function Perotti may have envisioned for his work could be implemented with some reliability as far as new words were concerned. The reestablishment of classical usage was much more difficult where Perotti had to deal with the unclassical semantic development of 'classical' words. The following will discuss some strategies he developed for dealing with this phenomenon.

²² *praebitere*, which Perotti claimed to have found in Plautus, is never used for 'perire' in any text I know of.

²³ Three examples in the *Patrologia Latina Database* seem to be errors for *per-*; more reliable may be an example from *Acta Sanctorum Aprilis* 2 (Apr. 11) 39B: "Nam pius Omnitensis, futurorum praescius, cui omnia praesentia praesistunt, sigillum manifestandi militis sui, in aeternae memoracionis indicium, praemisit".

²⁴ In the case of Perotti's *praeliatrix* this includes also examples spelt *proel-*.

²⁵ Stok 2002 (1), 110–111, gives examples.

Neo-Latin beyond the limits of classical Latin

benedico, benedictio (to bless, blessing)

A case in point is *benedicere* and *benedictio*. I will first quote a passage from a text geographically and chronologically close to Perotti, the *Diarium* of Joannes Burchardus, papal master of ceremonies, who started his diary in 1483; our entry is from April 1484:

Post missam venit processionaliter ad locum publice benedictionis, ubi ... populo solemniter benedixit (After mass, the pope went in procession to a place for public benediction, where he solemnly blessed the people).²⁶

Benedicere and *benedictio* (to bless, blessing) in this sense can also be found in Perotti's own works, for example in a sermon delivered before the pope and the cardinals in 1460:

A te uero, Pontifex Maxime, (*sc. requiro*) benedictionem, ... qua in celos ascensus benedixit discipulos suos, Ita te benedicat deus, Summe Pontifex,²⁷

(From you, Holy Father, I desire a blessing, such as the one with which (*Christ*) blessed his disciples when he ascended to heaven. Thus God may bless you, Holy Father ...).

However, when Perotti comes to the entry *benedicere* in the *Cornu copiae*, there is no hint of the ecclesiastical use of the word:

Benedico, laudo, bene loquor; a quo benedicus et benedicentia (*Benedico*, 'I laud', 'I praise'; from it are derived *benedicus* and *benedicentia*).²⁸

This is a startling statement which with a stroke of the pen, as it were, erases thirteen hundred years of semantic development: The word *benedictio*, which has over 20.000 examples in the archive of the *NLW*, is absent in the *Cornu copiae*, the semantic development of *benedicere* in ecclesiastical Latin goes unmentioned as well, even though it has produced what is surely the most frequent contemporary meaning, 'to bless'. Obviously the reason for this omission is stylistic. Neither Perotti nor his contemporaries could ever have doubted that one meaning of *benedicere*, 'to praise', belonged to the best authors, whereas the other, 'to bless' (while much more frequent)

²⁶ Burchardus 1883–1885, I, 8.

²⁷ *Oratio in die circumcissionis* (held on 1 Jan. 1460), quoted from München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, clm 18610, 224r–229r: 229r. The punctuation is mine.

²⁸ Perotti 1989–2001, III, 167 (3.453).

did not and could be ignored in “all of Latin” – even though, we have to add, it could not readily be replaced by a more classical word.²⁹

praedico (to preach)

In other cases contemporary usage is explicitly rejected by Perotti, as in the following:

Praedico uero, primae coniugationis, dico, celebros, diuulgo; a quo ... praedicator, non concionator ut uulgus accipit, sed laudator et diuulgator cuiuscunque rei.³⁰

(*praedico* belongs to the first declension and means ‘to say, celebrate, make commonly known’. Thence *praedicator*, not a preacher, as the uneducated say, but somebody who praises something and makes it commonly known).

Perotti’s position is unassailable as far as classical Latin is concerned³¹; still, his disdain for the speech habits of the *vulgus* in this case was quixotic, if principled, since the use of *praedicare* and its derivatives for ‘to preach’ was so pervasive in medieval and neo-Latin as to engender *predica* in Italian, *predigen*, *Predigt* in German, and *to preach* in English from the Latin etymon.³²

Perotti’s qualification of *praedicator* as belonging to the speech of the *vulgus* reminds us of the importance of the *volgare* within the universe of the Latin language for Perotti. Charlet has recently emphasized that Perotti – in continuation of a line of thought developed by Valla – considered the *volgare* as being a part of Latin; admittedly a degraded form of Latin, but still a segment of the language which to some degree could and needed to be considered within the larger project of “a commentary on the whole of the

²⁹ The normative intent of similar omissions was easily overlooked by Perotti's contemporaries; thus Ermolao Barbaro ridiculed Perotti for having ‘overlooked’ a meaning of *traducere* attested by the Scripture “even though he was a bishop” (Letter 135. 11, ed. Ramming 2001, 687). Cp. Ramming 1996, 89–90.

³⁰ Perotti 1989–2001, III, 166 (3. 451).

³¹ The *TLL* does have a small group “designatur gradus eius, qui praedicationis in ecclesia munere fungitur (sc. de contionatore)”, the authors of the three examples, pope Leo the Great, Fulgentius Ruspensis, and Gregor of Tours, were of course out of Perotti’s purview. See *TLL* s.v. *praedicator*, X 2 548. 53–551. 22: 549. 41–48 (Ramming). Other humanists took a more nuanced position, such as Bartolomeo Scala in his *Apologia contra vituperatores civitatis Florentiae* (1496): “Praedicatores autem Christus primus appellavit, qui, ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρετῆς, ‘Ite,’ inquit discipulis, ‘in universum mundum; praedicate evangelium omni creaturae’” (Scala 1997, 408).

³² See Meyer-Lübke 1911, 503 no. 6718–6719, for the romance languages; Grimm 1854–1961, XIII, 2079; *OED online* s.v. “to preach” (draft revision Mar. 2010, accessed 21 March 2010).

Latin language”.³³ The *vulgus* in the quotation above can hardly be the (Latin-speaking) ‘colleagues’ of the churchman Perotti, but must mean ‘the uneducated’, i.e. those who only speak *volgare*. Confronted with the colliding semantics of the ‘modern’ *predicatore* and the classical *laudator* Perotti is emphatic in rejecting the modern development. Unlike Valla, however, Perotti is not concerned with the morphological development of the *volgare*. The former had explicitly compared the degraded *volgare*-variants with their correct Latin counterparts (“*vulgus ... de ‘Ara Celi’ dicit ‘arocielo’*”),³⁴ whereas Perotti presents the language of the *vulgus* exclusively in a Latin garb. The difference between what is commonly (but wrongly) said in contemporary Latin and what is said by the *vulgus*, i.e. in the *volgare*, is de-emphasized on favour of a sliding continuum between the two. This is generally in accord with Perotti’s own speech habits in letters written in a lower register, and can specifically be substantiated for *praedicator* by a passage from the preface of the *Cornu copiae* where the fictive writer/narrator plays with the tension between the classical meaning ‘*laudator*’ and the later ‘*concionator*’ when he says: “[*There were those of my uncle’s friends who asserted*] that everything in this poet [i.e. Martial] was reverent and virtuous, that with the occasional obscene expression he criticized rather than praised (*laudari*) vices, just as is now the custom of those who deliver sermons in churches and are *volgo* called preachers (*praedicatores*)”.³⁵ *Vulgo* is a vague term, and need in this passage not mean more than ‘commonly’, but clearly it not only refers to some substandard areas of Latin itself, but also encompasses a variety whose appurtenance to Latin had been under discussion, namely the *volgare*. Incidentally, it should be noted that the word *concionator* which Perotti uses to explain *praedicator*, in the sense ‘preacher’ is first attested in Jerome, and rarely afterwards;³⁶ in the only instance where it occurs in Cicero it is a derogatory term (‘demagogue’). It does not occur amongst the lemmata of the *Cornu copiae*.

Neo-Latin words received in the *Cornu copiae*

traduco

Perotti does not reject neo-Latin words on principle. For example, he readily mentions one of the most spectacular innovations in fifteenth century Latin:

³³ Perotti 1989–2001, I, 13 (*prohemium* 2): “*uniuersam Latinam linguam ... interpretari*” (see quotation above on p.163); other relevant passages are collected by Charlet 2010, 302.

³⁴ Charlet 2010, 300; the quotation is from Valla’s *Apologus secundus*.

³⁵ Perotti 1989–2001, I, 14 (*prohemium* 4): “*Nihil apud hunc poetam esse non religiosum et sanctum, reprehendi ab eo obscenitate quadam uerborum uitia, non laudari, ut mos eorum est qui hodie que in templis contionantes uulgo praedicatores uocantur*”.

³⁶ *TLL* s.v. *contionator*, IV 734.48–72: 64–72 (Gudeman).

the use of *traducere* for ‘translate’.³⁷ It is commonly assumed that this meaning first appears in a letter by Leonardo Bruni dating to 1403/4:

Ego autem Platoni adhaereo, quem ego ipse michi effinxi, et quidem latine scientem, ut iudicare possit, testemque eum adhibebo traductioni suae, atque ita traduco, ut illi maxime placere intelligo.³⁸

(I adhere to Plato, whom I imagine to myself as knowing Latin, so that he can judge, and be a witness to his translation; and I translate in such a way as I understand will please him best).

Bruni’s innovation was a huge success, *traducere* is used for ‘to translate’ by nearly all authors of the century, and also Perotti³⁹ admits its existence in the *Cornu copiae*:

Vnde etiam traducere librum ex una lingua in aliam quidam dicunt, hoc est interpretari (Thus some also say *traducere* for the translation of a book from one language into another).⁴⁰

Although Perotti thus registers a usage normal with his fellow humanists, at the same time he expresses his own reserve towards a meaning which obviously is unclassical, with a “quidam dicunt” (some say). Clearly, Perotti admitted this word because he considered it, if not classical, at least of impeccable neo-Latin pedigree.

Ironically, neither he nor Bruni or any of their contemporaries was aware of the fact that this meaning is already attested in an early eleventh-century letter of Notker Labeo (ca. 955–1022), a monk in the abbey of St. Gall.⁴¹

Norm and normal usage

complurimus

Occasionally we find a substantial discrepancy between Perotti’s lexicographical statements and his actual usage. This was implicitly apparent in *benedicere*. A case in point is the word *complurimus*, the superlativ of *complures*. As the *TLL* (s. v. *complures*) shows, this is actually a word or a form attested in antiquity:

³⁷ See Sabbadini 1916.

³⁸ *ep.* 1.8, ed. Bruni 1741, I, 16–17; tr. Taylor 1920, I, 38, with modifications.

³⁹ The development of *traducere* = ‘to translate’ in the 15th century is documented by Ramming 2003–, s.v. *traduco*.

⁴⁰ Perotti 1989–2001, IV, 31 (4.76).

⁴¹ *Epistula* (ca. 1015): “rogatus sum et metrice quedam scripta in hanc eandem linguam traducere, catonem scilicet, ut bucolica uirgilii et andriam terentii” (I was asked to translate some metrical works into the same language [*i.e. German*], such as Cato, as well as Virgil’s *Bucolics* and the *Andria* of Terence). Ed. Labeo 1996, 348. My attention was drawn to Notker Labeo by Pöckl 1996–1997, 9–10.

superlat. complurimi, -ae, -a. fere i. q. 'quam plurimi', quacum voce in codicibus variat. 1 adiectivum: GELL. 11, 1, 1 buceta. CALL. dig. 50, 4, 14, 6 -is constitutionibus. HIL. trin. 10, 41 codicibus. AMBR. in psalm. 118 serm. 10, 35 mala. RVFIN. patr. 1 praef. 4 ceteris. OROS. hist. 1, 15, 8 (de Amazonibus) inter caesas captasque -as duae sorores Antiopae ... retentae. 4, 1, 18 iumenta (4, 14, 8). IORD. Get. 7, 55 aliae -ae gentes. PASS. Paul. 5 servi dei (sic codd. H V Paris. 5357; alii quam plurimi). 2 substantivum: ENNOD. opusc. 3, 8 p. 333, 3 fulsisse eius cunabula ... videre -i. 3, 18 p. 335, 19 stupuere -i. 3, 32 p. 338, 28. [ex coniectura: DICT. 4, 13 interfecto eo (Achille) summa militiae orbata et ademptum -um, sed codd. haud male spei quam plurimum.]⁴²

The *TLL* has attestations from ten different authors. Many of them, however, were not widely read in the Renaissance; none was considered a model of style by humanists. The word is used regularly in medieval Latin texts, and registered in the dictionaries of the time; it should be noted though, that for example Hugutio considers it a compound of *plurimus*, not a superlative of *complures*:

item a plus plurimus, -a, -um, et componitur complurimus, quamplurimus, perplurimus (furthermore, from *plus* is derived *plurimus*, and there are the compounds *complurimus*, *quamplurimus*, and *perplurimus*).⁴³

The word is frequently used by humanists, beginning with Petrarch and continuing with Lapo da Castiglionchio, Bruni, Alberti, Piccolomini; we also find it in a letter by Perotti to Giovanni Tortelli from the Bolognese period (i.e. the early 1450s):

quod Leonardus Arretinus in suo primo bello punico ... complurima etiam scitu dignissima praetermisit (because Leonardo Bruni in his book about the first Punic war left out much even of what was well worth knowing).⁴⁴

Later, however, Perotti as a lexicographer took a more strict stance. In the *Cornu copiae* he says:

Complurimus non reperitur, sed tantum plurimus, quod et 'quam plurimus' dicimus (*complurimus* is not found [*in the best authors*], only *plurimus*, for which we also say *quam plurimus*).⁴⁵

Again, we have to admire the linguistic acumen of Perotti; as the *TLL* shows, the use of *complurimi* by Perotti's contemporaries was entirely inde-

⁴² *TLL* III, 2110, 69–80.

⁴³ Hugutio 2004, 952 (P 102. 31).

⁴⁴ 27. 2. 1452; ed. d'Alessandro 2001, 138.

⁴⁵ Perotti 1989–2001, V, 113 (12. 73).

fensible from the point of view of classical Latin. Just as Perotti, also Ambrogio Calepino, a slightly younger contemporary of Perotti, regularly used *complurimus*, e.g. in his *Life of Gianbono of Mantua*, from the middle of the 1480s:

Nec me praeterit complurimos superiori tempestate apud Aegyptum claruisse, quorum nonnullos herbarum radicibus, quosdam fructibus, alios pane et aqua vitam duxisse constat.⁴⁶

(I am well aware of the fact that in former times there were a number of famous people in Egypt, some of whom are known to have been living just on roots, some on fruit, others on bread and water).

Nevertheless, Calepino did not pass over Perotti's observation, when he asserted in his dictionary (1502), under the lemma *plus*:

complurimus non reperitur, sed tantum plurimus (*complurimus* does not exist, only *plurimus*).⁴⁷

The normative impact of these categorical assertions seems to have been minimal; *complurimi* remained frequent throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Conclusion

If we extrapolate from the sample of lemmata to the *Cornu copiae* in its entirety, the “half of Latin” which Perotti purports to present in the *Cornu copiae* comes from a chronologically limited group of authors. Within the many competing strains of Latin in use concurrently in the late Quattrocento, Perotti is able to identify the lexis of the ‘best’ Latin authors with great accuracy – this despite relying on medieval dictionaries for part of his material. The explosive increase of the Latin lexicon in later antiquity (note the 520 lemmata of the *OLD* for the pagan period vs. the total of 1354 in the *TLL*) barely registers in the *Cornu copiae*. What is present from the Latin of the Church Fathers seems accidental; judging from the quotations from the Fathers inserted into the *Cornu copiae*, his excerpts from that period were poor, if not nonexistent. The same holds true for the occasional medieval word; some of these are terms of law, others are so frequent as to be unremarkable. Both types of words were probably too unobtrusive to be diagnosed as unclassical. Our list of unclassical words also contains some for which the *Cornu copiae* is the only witness. For some of these, other attestations will

⁴⁶ Calepinus 1858, 751D.

⁴⁷ Calepinus 1502, O1v.

surely come to light in the future, but – given their rarity – such words do not seem to be based on contemporary usage.

The *Cornu copiae* only occasionally – either explicitly or implicitly – takes a stance on contemporary Latin. We have found several instances where Perotti ignores or rejects contemporary Church Latin, or speech habits inherited from medieval Latin. Concerning contemporary *volgare*, it has recently been shown that Perotti considered it a part of Latin; as we have seen with *praedicator*, the difference between what is said *vulgo* in Latin, and by the *vulgus* in *volgare*, for Perotti is one in degree, not in substance. Unlike Valla, Perotti is not interested in the morphology of the *volgare*; thus, when he speaks about words from the *volgare*, he employs a morphologically Latin form. So far, no clear pattern has emerged defining our humanist's interest in the *volgare*: two words we have discussed, *benedicere* and *praedicator*, belong to the same sphere(s), have an identical post-classical semantic development, both have an ample fortuna in the romance languages, all of which Perotti ignores in the one case, while he repeatedly discusses it in the other. He seems more at ease with developments of contemporary Latin, if they belong to humanist Latin in its most narrow sense. Perotti is less of a purist in practice than in theory, and his actual Latin in some cases can be far from his theoretical statements. As C. Plesner Horster has shown,⁴⁸ the syntax of Perotti's writings expresses subtle shifts of style within the narrative, but follows the classical paradigm rather loosely, if at all; it may be that such mechanisms can explain some of his lexical choices as well.

These observations suggest several areas of interest for further research. If the *Cornu copiae*, as we have it now, contains “half of Latin”, how did Perotti select it, and which words belonged to the half he deselected? A clearer view of his criteria might emerge if we analyzed the differences between his lemmata and the lexis of the classical authors he most frequently cited, in detail. If the *prae*-compounds are any indication, the *Cornu copiae* contains less than half of the Latin words known to us from before 200 A.D. and only a fifth of those from entire antiquity. Also, we need to anchor the language Perotti presents to us in the lemmata within the totality of the vocabulary of the *Cornu copiae* and within the lexicon of his other writings; a clear criterion of inclusion will emerge from the differences between the lemmata put forth in the *Cornu copiae* and his actual vocabulary in his other writings (as shown above in the example of *benedicere*). Equally, it would be desirable to measure Perotti's lemmata against the Latin lexicon of his contemporaries, to identify linguistic habits which may be reflected in the *Cornu copiae*, and identify words and usages ignored by Perotti. Answers to

⁴⁸ See Horster 2011, in this volume.

these questions – which have become possible only recently with the development of digital databases of Latin texts – will allow us a deeper understanding of the way Perotti worked, and of how his work influenced the shape of early modern Latin.

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