

# INTERTEXTUALITY AS A STYLISTIC DEVICE IN NICCOLÒ PEROTTI'S DEDICATORY LETTERS

## With an edition of Perotti's letter to Jacopo Schioppo

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The article aims at establishing criteria for identifying intended intertextuality as opposed to linguistic imitation. With examples from Niccolò Perotti's letters of dedication I discuss the rules – some written, others not – of the poetics of imitation that govern such borrowings and how they may be interpreted. Comparing Perotti's practice in these letters with his prescriptions for style in different letter genres in his De componendis epistolis I argue that Perotti uses intertextuality as a stylistic device by choosing a hypotext belonging to the same letter genre as the hypertext, his own letter. The article contains an edition of the letter of dedication to Perotti's treatise De metris.

#### Allusion vs. accidental confluence

Confronted with texts written by fifteenth-century humanists, most scholars must have asked themselves how one distinguishes between the unavoidable effects of their classicising language and references or allusions to earlier authors which an analysis should necessarily take into account? How does one distinguish reference and allusion from accidental confluence resulting from linguistic imitation? Niccolò Perotti, whose dedicatory letters I am going to examine in this article, is also the author of a treatise on letter writing, the *De componendis epistolis* from about 1468. The treatise contains advice that seems – if anything – to make it difficult to answer these questions. Perotti points to Cicero as the author whom young people should imitate more than anyone else:

Quis maxime proponendus est quem studeant adolescentes imitari? Marcus Cicero. Hic in omni dicendi genere omnium optimus fuit, hunc solum praeceptores legant, hunc discipuli imitentur, nec modo uerba eius hauriant, sed etiam clausulas, quin etiam partes ipsas epistolarum interdum furentur et suis inserant. Ita enim fiet ut suco Cice-

ronis quasi lacte nutriti ueri illius imitatores euadant (Perotti 2010, p. 222 § 1119).<sup>1</sup>

(Whom should young people strive to imitate first and foremost? Marcus Cicero. He excelled in every rhetorical genre, him alone should teachers read, his works alone should be studied and imitated by schoolboys, who should drink in his words and phrases and even - if possible - steal whole passages from his letters and insert them in their own. Nourished on his spirit as on milk they will become true imitators of Cicero.)

The training prescribed here by Perotti makes it clear that one needs to be careful when talking about intertextuality in fifteenth-century humanist texts.<sup>2</sup> In *De componendis epistolis* he wrote about the more or less conscious borrowing of words and phrases, or even whole passages, from the admired model, used then as building-blocks by the fifteenth-century writer. These borrowings were not intended as signs announcing the hypotext, one supposes, they were not meant to point back towards their original context, at least not in any other sense than that of emanating the 'odour of Latin-ity'.<sup>3</sup> More than a hundred years earlier, Petrarch had described how he had studied the classics so often and so intensely that he almost absorbed their language and content and, forgetting that their thoughts were not his own, how he used them freely in his own writings.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> For the *De componendis epistolis* see Alessio 1988, and Curbelo Tavío 2000, and 2006. For the *Rudimenta grammatices* as a whole, see Rosen 1981, Milde 1982, Charlet 1991 and 2001, Worstbrock 2001, 59–78, Percival 1981, 1986, 1989, 2000, and Stok 2007. W. Keith Percival also presented a paper entitled "The Treatise on Letter Writing in Niccolò Perotti's *Rudimenta grammatices*" at the 24th International Congress of Humanistic Studies, at Sassoferrato, Italy, 2–5 July 2003, which is available as "The Treatise on Letter Writing in Niccolò Perotti's *Rudimenta grammatices*", <Sassoferratoscript2003.htm> at http://hdl.handle.net/1808/6453.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Minna Skafte Jensen discusses the question of learning vs. originality in a forthcoming study on intertextuality in neo-Latin texts. See Skafte Jensen forthcoming. I am grateful to her for letting me consult the manuscript of her article.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Guarino excuses the language of some of his own youthful writings which were "latini sermonis proprietatem minime redolentia" (which didn't emanate the odour of proper Latinity), see Guarino Veronese 1915–1919, *ep.* 862 discussed in Pade forthcoming. See McLaughlin 1995, the chapter on Humanist Educators, 98ff. and Ramminger 2003–, "redoleo".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "Legi apud Virgilium apud Flaccum apud Severinum apud Tullium; nec semel legi sed milies, nec cucurri sed incubui, [...] etsi per omnem vitam amplius non legantur, ipsa quidem hereant, actis in intima animi parte radicibus [...] nec cuius sint certe nec aliena meminerim" (I read Virgil, Horace, Boethius and Cicero, and not once but thousands of times, and I didn't rush through them, no I took up abode with them [...] even if I should never read them again, what they wrote remains with me since it has struck roots in the deepest part of my mind. But sometimes I forget where all this comes from [...] and I nei-

Petrarch clearly described a way of reading that made the classics an integral part of his own language, which as a result contained within it the memory of previous texts. This is a characteristic of literary language which has been pointed out by modern scholarship. In his famous essay on *The Rhetoric of Imitation* Gian Biagio Conte said that "Readers or imitators (also a type of reader) who approach the text are themselves already a plurality of texts and of different codes, some present and some lost or dissolved in that indefinite and generic fluid of literary language."<sup>5</sup> Conte wrote about classical Roman poets, but with regard to fourteenth- or fifteenth-century readers, or imitators, the situation is not that different, *mutatis mutandis*.

James Hankins once described the way readers in the Renaissance approached classical and some contemporary texts as 'imitative reading'. This process consisted in a conscious effort to appropriate the linguistic and cultural universe of especially classical Latinity.<sup>6</sup> Whereas the intertextuality Conte described has to do with the interrelation between texts, not with the writer's assumed intent, the 'imitative reading' prescribed by Perotti and described by Petrarch and Hankins would ensure that the humanist writer aimed at making his text 'a plurality of texts and of different codes'. A text would 'emanate the odour of proper Latinity' (see note 3) only if the words of Virgil, Horace, Boethius and Cicero had struck roots in the author's mind (see note 4), or, as Perotti put it, he pilfered their words. Petrarch's defence of his imitative reading practices and Perotti's advice that schoolboys should actually purloin whole passages from Cicero's letters and use them in their own make it tempting to quote the ancient distinction between hidden and advertised imitation: in an anecdote the Elder Seneca described Ovid's use of Virgil which happened "non surripiendi causa, sed palam mutuandi, hoc animo ut vellet agnosci" (not for the sake of stealing, but in order to borrow, with the intent that he wanted it to be recognised, suas. 3,7). This is clearly not the effect Perotti's pedagogical treatise aims at. However, what I wish to study in this article are not the interrelations between primarily classical and neo-Latin texts, with disregard to any putative authorial intent – other than the conscious effort to write in a classicising idiom. Rather, I am interested in the borrowings that are meant 'to be recognised', as Seneca phrased it, in how we distinguish them from the mere linguistic

ther remember clearly whose it is nor that it isn't mine), Petrarca 1933–1941, *ep.* XXII 2,12–14 to Giovanni Boccaccio, *a.* 1359 or 1363.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Conte 1986, 29. When Julia Kristeva maintains that language absorbs multiple texts, she to some extent expresses the same idea; cp. Kristeva 1969, 255.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Hankins 1990, 1, 18–26.

imitation, Perotti taught. I also wish to look at the poetics that govern such borrowings, and how they may be interpreted.

In the centuries after Seneca a special genre developed, the cento, which consists entirely of verses from other poems. The name means a sort of patchwork, and the cento enjoyed a moderate afterlife in the Renaissance. We have poetic *centones* from the second century AD onwards. Fortunately the fourth-century Gallic orator and poet, Ausonius, explains some of the cento's poetics in the preface to his *Cento nuptialis*, a wedding poem patched together from Virgil's three major poems. Ausonius explains:

variis de locis sensibusque diversis quaedam carminis structura solidatur, in unum versum ut coeant aut cæsi duo aut unus <et unus> sequenti cum medio, nam duos iunctim locare inteptum est et tres una serie merae nugae (AVSON. 18 *epist*. (350 s.).<sup>7</sup>

(One constructs the poem by taking from various pieces and sentences, so that two half-lines go together in one verse or (*one takes*) one half-line and whole one accompanied by the following half-line. For it is clumsy to use two whole verses after another and three are simply silly).

Ausonius of course writes about a specific genre with its own intricate rules, but the question is whether the small passage isn't relevant for the poetics of intertextuality in general: it is allowed to borrow, even *verbatim*, if only a very little at a time.<sup>8</sup> If so it is relevant also for the subject of this article which is the use of advertised imitation, of borrowing intended to be recognised and therefore to be part of the writer's conscious message, and the more or less unwritten rules of the poetics of imitation. In the following I shall first discuss some criteria that may be useful for identifying intentional allusion or advertised imitation as opposed to linguistic imitation. With these in mind I shall turn to intertextuality as a stylistic characteristic of fifteenth-century letters of dedication and discuss some examples from Perotti's letters.

#### 6+2 criteria for identifying a hypotext

In his introduction to the collection of papers edited in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* Dennis R. Macdonald asks the important question: which criteria ought one use in order to identify the pres-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> I follow the text and commentary of R. Green in Ausonius 1993, 133 and 520.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> I am grateful to Ludwig Braun, who at the IANLS congress in Uppsala 2009 talked about the importance of Ausonius' preface for neo-Latin poetics of imitation. Important is also Petrarch's distinction between *similitudo* and *identitas*. Imitating an ancient author, he aimed at the first. Cp. Martellotti 1977 and McLaughlin 1995, 22–48.

ence of a literary model.<sup>9</sup> Macdonald is mostly concerned with large-scale mimesis, that is when an entire work has that of an earlier author as subtext, but his criteria seem relevant and useful to me also when one is looking for a way to distinguish between what I just called intentional allusion and linguistic imitation in neo-Latin texts.

MacDonald listed six criteria that worked also in the case of hidden imitation. He used them for detecting mimesis in ancient texts, but I believe that in some respects the conditions for literary production that fifteenthcentury writers experienced, resemble those in the Ancient world to such a degree that we may use MacDonald's criteria also in the discussion of Perotti's letters. His first two criteria pertain to the popularity of the proposed model. It must be physically accessible - MacDonald says to the author, but I should think also to the intended public, otherwise the message is lost. Secondly the case for dependence between two texts is strengthened if analogous imitations are known, if the source-text in question has been imitated by other authors. His next three criteria examine similarities between the two texts. The density or the sheer volume of parallels is important, as may be the order of the parallels, i.e. if they occur in similar sequences. Then MacDonald mentions distinctive traits. If two texts contain unusual characteristics that set them apart, the occurrence of the model's distinctive trait in the hypertext may be a clear sign of imitation – MacDonald calls such occurrences intertextual flags. The last criterion is interpretability, an assessment of why the author may have targeted the model for imitation.

To these six criteria, I would suggest adding two more that one may term supportive evidence. The first is also one of analogy, namely the genre of the hypertext: if it is a genre in which writers often imitated ancient texts, readers would be more likely to expect and look for intertextual messages. The second is rather a negative criterion, i.e. the avoidance of dead parallels. If the parallel is an often-used topos in the period the hypertext was written, it is less likely that the source text is important for the interpretation of its descendant. An example of such a topos is the endless variations of the Virgilian, or Ennian, *virum volitare per ora (georg.* 3,8, cp. Enn. *frg.var.* 18 *volito vivos per ora virum*), which with variations are found hundreds of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> MacDonald 2001, 2. Minna Skafte Jensen has a 'checklist of questions' which aims at establishing whether the use of a hypotext may be termed plagiarim or if it was meant to be noted by the reader and should therefore be taken into account when one attempts an interpretation of the hypertext; cp. Jensen forthcoming. The terms hyper- and hypotext were defined by Gérard Genette, who distinguishes between five main types of relationship between texts, cp. Genette 1982, 7–17.

times in neo-Latin texts and simply means 'to be famous' – without a special message to be had if one recognises the allusion to Virgil or Ennius.<sup>10</sup>

#### Imitation as a characteristic of neo-Latin letters of dedication

My first 'supportive criterion', namely the genre of the hypertext, is important for the letters that interest me today, namely the dedicatory letters of Niccolò Perotti. For the forthcoming critical edition of Niccolò Perotti's letters, published by the Istituto di Studi Piceni in Sassoferrato,<sup>11</sup> I am responsible for a volume comprising Perotti's letters of dedication to translations from the Greek, to grammatical, lexicographical, metrical and poetic works. The corpus is written over a period of about 30 years and to recipients with very different relations to Perotti, but even so the variety in style and content of these letters is amazing.<sup>12</sup>

This can partly be explained by Perotti's own view of epistolographic sub-genres. In *De componendis epistolis*, his manual on letter writing, Perotti briefly describes the various letter genres, and the dedicatory letter is not one of them.<sup>13</sup> Clearly we use an anachronistic term when we talk about neo-Latin or Renaissance letters of dedication. None the less, the genre has been the object of a number of studies by modern scholars, one of them by Lucia Gualdo Rosa, who in her 1973 article, "Le lettere di dedica delle traduzioni dal greco nel Quattrocento" demonstrated the close stylistic similarity of these letters to Latin prose prefaces of late Antiquity.<sup>14</sup> Gualdo Rosa based her observations regarding neo-Latin letters of dedication on the analysis of the Swedish Latinist Tore Janson in his monograph on *Latin Prose Prefaces*.<sup>15</sup> According to the two scholars, one of the characteristics of both late Latin prose prefaces and fifteenth-century letters of dedication is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> See for instance "Linque honores et officia publica, desine incessu elato et superbo comitatu per ora civium volitare," PETRARCA *rem fort* 2,35,6; "Ingenio sin fata favent, ut forte per ora/ Docta virum vivus volitem," PETRARCA *ep metr* III 17, 15–16; "per ora multorum ignorantium volitarent," PETRARCA *c med* 3,2 p.896; "digna prudentum volitare per ora," SALVTATI *ep* 3,13 (1374), E1 170; "tali si nomine dignus esse cupis talisque virum volitare per ora," FILELFO-F *sat* I–V p. 83; "minime tantus per ora virum curreret," PICCOLOMINI *pentalogus* p. 124. When possible, for neo-Latin texts I use the abbreviations of the *Neulateinische Wortliste*, Ramminger 2003–.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Volume 1 of the edition has appeared, see Perotti 2003, for which see Charlet 1999, 2002 and 2003 (1). For the preparations for the edition, see also Charlet 2003 (2), 2004, 2005, 2006, 2010 (2), forthcoming (2) and Pade 2004.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> For the influence of recipients on the letters' style, see Pade 2006 (1), Pade & Ramminger 2009 and Ramminger 2009.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Perotti 2010, p. 220–221, § 1116.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Gualdo Rosa 1973.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Janson 1964.

that the author composes the letter using phrases or themes from well-know classical authors, almost as if they were bricks or modules.

#### Perotti's letters of dedication

Perotti's letters of dedication contain plenty of such 'bricks'. Quite often the beginning of the letter contains a clear reference to a well known classical text. We see that in the preface to his translation of San Basil from 1449 which begins "Contemplanti mihi saepenumero," (Often when I consider). One may interpret it as a variant of the usual *Cogitanti mihi*, which recalls Cicero (cp. *de orat.* 1,1 "Cogitanti mihi saepenumero" – often when I think), but the phrase *contemplanti mihi* occurs several times in Macrobius' commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*.

"Soleo mecum mirari" (I use to wonder) in the preface to his translation of Epictetus (to Nicholas V, *a*. 1450)<sup>16</sup> is most certainly borrowed from the *Tusculans* of Cicero to which Perotti also refers elsewhere in the letter. He reuses the opening many years later in the preface to a collection of *Mono-diae* translated and written for the Venetian nobleman Pietro Foscari in 1472.<sup>17</sup> However, if we compare the three *exordia*, we notice how in spite of their similarity they are not identical:

Soleo mecum interdum mirari (Epictetus, *Encheiridion* – Niccolò V, 1450)<sup>18</sup>

Soleo mecum saepenumero admirari (Aristides, Libanius, Bessarion, Perotti, *Monodiae* – Pietro Foscari, 1472)

Soleo saepe mirari (CIC. *Tusc.* 1,48; cp. 3,8 quod admirari saepe soleo, 4. 1 soleo mirari)

In the preface to his metrical treatise, *De generibus metrorum*, dedicated to his friend Jacobo Schioppo, Perotti uses an opening also found in a letter of Pliny:

Nihil a te iocundius nobis potuit iniungi quam [...] (You could not have asked me for anything more enjoyable than [...], *De generibus metrorum* – J. Schioppo, 1453)

Quid a te mihi potuit iocundius iniungi quam [...] (PLIN. ep. 2,18,1)

Again, in spite of the similarity, the two openings are not identical, nor is the opening of the dedication to Federico di Montefeltro of the ps. Aristote-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> For Perotti's translation of Epictetus, see Oliver 1954, Boter 1993 and D'Alessandro 1995.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> For this, see Ament, Doering, Harman, Kobler & Witmann 1957.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> All quotations from Perotti's letters of dedication are from my forthcoming edition.

lian *De virtutibus et vitiis*, which echoes Cicero's letter to Lentulus from the *familiares*, a mechanical repetition of its model:

Tanta est summa tuorum erga me meritorum [...] ut (The favours you have shown me are so many [...] that, ps. Aristotle, *De virtutibus et vitiis* – Federico di Montefeltro, after 1474)

[...] tanta enim magnitudo est tuorum erga me meritorum ut, [...] (CIC. *fam.* 1,1,1)

One recalls Ausonius' description of the poetics of the cento: literal quotations should not be too long.

It is not only the exordium of the letters that tends to be based on classical models. The dedication proper is also regularly expressed in words borrowed from well-known classical texts. We have an example of this in the early dedication to Pope Nicholas V of the Plutarchean *De differentia inter odium et invidiam*, c. 1449, that alludes to Gellius: "primitias quasdam et quasi libamentum meorum studiorum" (my first attempt, a specimen of my work; cp. "primitias quasdam et quasi libamenta ingenuarum artium," GELL. *praef.* 18).<sup>19</sup>

Some of the passages may be viewed with my negative second criterion in mind, that of the exclusion of over-used topoi which constitute dead parallels. Variations of the Ciceronian "soleo saepe mirari" and "cogitanti mihi/ contemplanti/ meditanti mihi" etc., often with *saepe* somewhere near, are legion in neo-Latin literature, not least in the exordium of letters. As for the juncture *studiorum* [...] *primitias* I have found more than 25 examples when it was used either as a dedication-topos or in very similar circumstances, such as 'I would like to show you this first work of mine and hear you opinion about it'.<sup>20</sup> In these cases I doubt that the source text is still active in any significant way in the descendant texts – though one might point out that Perotti with the expression *primitiae et libamentum* gave the phrase a Gellian flavour, which *primitiae* alone would not have had.

On the other hand, the allusion to Pliny at the beginning of the letter to Jacopo Schioppo, "Nihil a te iocundius nobis potuit iniungi" is clearly different. In fact I have never come across the quote elsewhere which may in-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> On Perotti's early translations from Plutarch, see Cassidy 1968, Bevegni 1994, D'Angelo 1994, Stok 1998, Abbamonte & Stok 2011 and Stok 2011.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> E.g.: "hortor moneoque, ut has studiorum tuorum primitias tales esse velis, ut [...]" POGGIO *ep* II 3,5 (*a.* 1430); "ut primitias quasdam studiorum meorum degustandas traderem," PACINI *praef Plutarch vitae* 10,1 § 29; "[...] cui studiorum meorum primitias dedicarem," TORTELLI *praef Plutarch vitae* 1,3 § 20; "Tibi uero potissime has meorum studiorum primitias mittendas censui," RINUCCINI *praef Plutarch vitae* 16,1 § 3; "eidem studiorum graecorum me decet offerre primitias," FICINO *Pimander* sig.a2r; "Suscipe igitur primitias studiorum meorum benevolo animo," GROTIUS-H *ep* 1B (*a.* 1594).

dicate that it deserves a closer look. The phrase derives from a letter of Pliny to his good friend Junius Mauricus, who had asked Pliny to find a suitable *praeceptor* for his nephews:

Perotti, letter to Schioppo

Plinius ep. 2,18

<sup>1</sup>Nihil a te iocundius nobis potuit iniungi quam ut de ratione metrorum conscriberemus Quid a te mihi iucundius potuit iniungi, quam ut praeceptorem fratris tui liberis quaererem?

So in both letters the preceding request from the addressee to the author had to do with an educational matter, in so far as Perotti's treatise on metrics is a teaching manual. And because of the nature of the request, both writers were taken back to their school-time – which Perotti had even shared with Schioppo:

<sup>2</sup> Nam et beneficio tuo in illam	Nam beneficio tuo in scholam
dulcissimam aetatem uidemur	redeo, et illam dulcissimam
reuocati, qua decimum ante	aetatem quasi resumo: sedeo
annum his studiis una operam	inter iuuenes ut solebam
dabamus	

Perotti lingers awhile on that aspect, but then he returns to his model. He had had the pleasure to experience how much authority he now had among their contemporaries, because of these studies; the same feeling Pliny had experienced amongst schoolboys:

<sup>4</sup>Libuit itaque experiri, quantum auctoritatis apud nostros homines ex hiis studiis haberemus

In the next part of the letter there are no parallels to Pliny's letter to Mauricus. Perotti complains that he often found people violently opposed to new learning, but he had decided to disregard their attitude and value the judgements of two or three learned men higher than a thousand stupid complaints. Votes should be reckoned by weight, not by number, and he did not think highly of a public council where normally nothing was more unequal than the equality itself; the wisdom there was disproportional, but the authority the same. Perotti here alludes to another letter of Pliny, in which the latter complains of the stupidity of the senate. Here things did not go well, because the votes were counted and not reckoned by weight:

<sup>6</sup> Ponderari enim, non numer-	Numerantur enim sententiae,
ari sententias cupimus, nec	non ponderantur; nec aliud in
publicum laudamus consil-	publico consilio potest fieri, in
ium, in quo nihil esse in-	quo nihil est tam inaequale quam

aequalius consueuit quam	aequalitas ipsa. Nam cum sit
ipsa aequalitas. Nam cum	impar prudentia, par omnium ius
impar prudentia sit, par om-	est (PLIN. <i>ep</i> . 2,12,15)
nibus est auctoritas	

Before the end of the letter we find two open references to other texts. That is, Perotti does not name the authors in question but advertises his loan by the phrases 'ut ille inquit' and 'ut aiunt' (as he/ they say). The first about sleepless nights, full of study, sweat and toil, comes from Quintilian – who talks about the requirements of voice training, whereas Perotti endured these hardships writing about metrics:

<sup>11</sup> Quod si unquam euigilatae a	et vigilandae noctes et fuligo
nobis noctes et epota, ut ille	lucubrationum bibenda et in
inquit, fuligo lucubrationum	sudata veste durandum (QUINT.
ac sudatae uestes fructus	<i>inst.</i> 11,3,23)
aliquid pepererint <sup>21</sup>	

The second advertised loan is from Persius. Even if the *De metris* will only be used for wrapping up fish and chips, Perotti will still be pleased that he had tried to please Schioppo:

<sup>12</sup> Si uero rem scombris potius,	Linquere nec scombros metuen-
ut aiunt, ac thure dignam	tia carmina nec tus? (PERS. sat.
composuimus, []	1,43)

At the very end of the letter Perotti, I think, returns to Pliny's letter to Mauricus. There are no close verbal parallels, but in both letters we hear about the obligations of friendship, because of which the work was willingly undertaken.

If we return to Dennis MacDonald's and my own criteria for indentifying literary models, I think it has become evident that Perotti's use of Pliny fulfils them quite well. The letters of Pliny were definitely available, both to Perotti and to his intended readers. We know of analogous uses of Pliny's letters, at least by Perotti, who modelled his description of his villa at Sassoferrato, the *Curifugia*, on Pliny's description of his villa, as Jean-Louis Charlet has shown.<sup>22</sup> The parallels are dense, at least in the first part of the letter, and they occur in exactly the same order in the two texts. As to the distinctive traits or intertextual flags, I think the fact that the letter opens

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> The words "ut ille inquit" are added in the margin of Perotti's own copy of the letter, Biblioteca Estense, Fondo Estense 56 (Alpha O 7, 12). Cp. D'Alessandro 2011 n. 15.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Charlet 1995.

with a marked allusion to Pliny should suffice,<sup>23</sup> perhaps supported by the fact that Perotti avoids one of the more conventional topoi for the exordium and chooses one which to my knowledge is unusual. The question then is: if one recognises the parallels, does the letter get a different message than it would have had otherwise? I believe so, or at least it emphasises Perotti's message, for by giving Schioppo the place of Mauricus, Perotti implicitly stresses their close and long friendship and his willingness to help him.

As to my negative criterion about the exclusion of well-worn topoi as signs of imitation: the parallels from Pliny had not become topoi in this or previous periods, so we must assume that they were still active and meant to recall the source text. And finally we need to consider the genre of the hypertext: will the reader expect and look for intertextual messages in it? Definitely so. As pointed out by Lucia Gualdo Rosa, one of the characteristics of fifteenth-century letters of dedication is in fact the use of phrases or themes from well-know classical authors (see n. 14 above).

#### Genre, style and intertextuality

I shall not here go into detail with Perotti's other letters of dedication, but the material I have gathered so far tells me that the letter to Schioppo is in no way unique. I mentioned above that Perotti did not define letters of dedication as an epistolographic sub-genre, and I believe that he would classify his own corpus of dedications differently, e.g. as treating ethical questions, as exhortations to study, on important matters of everyday life or *ad familiares*, different genres that belonged to distinctive stylistic levels. The early dedication of his translation of Epictetus, with its long discussion of remedies against the ailments of the mind,<sup>24</sup> clearly belongs to the genus *de moribus* (on ethics), as had the letters of Seneca, St Augustine, St Jerome and others, who also wrote much about religious matters:

Aliae sunt de moribus, ut epistolae Senecae, epistolae Aurelii Augustini, Hieronymi, Ambrosii, Cypriani, et aliorum, quae multa etiam de rebus diuinis continent, Perotti 2010, p. 220 § 1116.

In the 1470-dedication to his nephew Pirro of the commentary on Statius' *Silvae* Perotti tells how he exerts himself with all his might to give his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Minna Skafte Jensen remarked that a loan that occurs in a conspicuous position, for instance as the very first words of a text, is probably meant to advertise the hypotext; cp. Jensen forthcoming.

 $<sup>^{24}</sup>$  Inc.: "Soleo mecum interdum mirari, Summe Pontifex, stultitiam atque instabilitatem humani generis, quod cum constemus ex animo et corpore, animique salutem saluti corporis longe anteponendam esse existimemus [...]" (I often wonder, highest Pontif, at the stupidity and unsteadiness of mankind. Though we consist of mind and body and are convinced that the health of the mind is more important than that of the body [...]).

nephew, the only one left of his family, a good moral upbringing and a good education. He therefore sent Pirro Statius' *Silvae*, which he had recently corrected and annotated (in his autograph copy, Vat. lat. 6835), hoping that the work would be interesting as well as useful both for Pirro and for other readers; he asked Pirro to go through everything attentively and take notes:

[...] o Pyrrhe suauissime, quem qum fata solum mihi ex omni nostra familia superstitem reliquerint, non iniuste facere uideor, si omnem meum laborem, studium, industriam ad te non modo moribus et uirtute, sed optimarum quoque artium studiis ornandum conor impendere [...] En igitur Siluas P. Papinii Statii ad te mittimus, á nobis proximis feriis emendatas atque expositas et, nisi fallor, non modo tibi, sed caeteris quoque, qui eas legent, non iniocundas neque inutiles futuras. Has te hortor ut diligenter perlegas et, quod in aliis consueuisti facere, singula quaeque animaduertas et notes.

In *De componendis epistolis* Perotti defines one letter genre as *epistolae hortatoriae*, i.e. when we encourage children, family, friends, pupils or princes to decent and honourable behaviour and to study, just as Perotti encouraged his nephew Pirro:

Aliae hortatoriae, ut cum filios, affines, familiares, discipulos, principes, aut quosuis alios ad mores, ad studia, ad laudem, ad decus, ad gloriam cohortamur, Perotti 2010, p. 221 § 1116.

The subject clearly determines the genre. How, then, to define the letter to Schioppo? Though written to an old friend, the letter is perhaps not quite lowly enough in subject to be 'on domestic matters', which Perotti defines as having to do with the household, that is sheep, wine, crop, servants and the like:

Aliae de rebus familiaribus atque domesticis, ut de praediis, pecore, uino, frumento, seruis, et reliquis id genus, *ibid*.

Rather I would say that the letter to Schioppo deals with 'important matters of everyday life'. Perotti's examples of this genre are letters that resemble historiography and deal with events in war or political affairs:

Aliae sunt de rebus quae quotidie accidunt, tamen seueris et grauibus, utpote quae uel belli uel pacis tempore, aut ex castris ad urbem, aut ex urbe in exercitum scribuntur, feré similes historiae, "*ibid.* p. 20.

Though hardly dealing with state affairs, to me Perotti's serious recollections from his and Schioppo's schooldays do seem to fit into the category 'important matters of everyday life'.

As I said, the genre of a letter is determined by the subject matter, and the genre in its turn determines the style in which it should be written. Let-

ters are always written in a less grand style than for instance speeches,<sup>25</sup> but even so Perotti speaks of high, middle and low style in letters. The letter to Schioppo should be written in the middle style, which is used for letters about 'customs, exploits and deliberations about a course of action in war and peace and other serious and important matters':

mediocri cum de moribus, de rebus gestis, de bello, de pace, de consilio capiendo, aut rebus aliis seueris et grauibus tractabimus, *ibid.* p. 221 § 1117.

Levels of style may be determined in various ways, e.g. by choice of vocabulary, length of sentences and rhetorical ornament. On the basis of my analysis here, I would suggest that intertextuality may also be used to create a distinctive level of style. When Perotti writes to his old friend Schioppo, it is no coincidence that he imitates one of Pliny's letters dealing with friendship and education. He also alluded to other texts, as I have shown, but in the end he returned to Pliny's letter. In the case of such large-scale mimesis, I believe the hypotext may lend not only its content but also its stylistic level to the hypertext.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> For this notion, see Pade 2006 (2), 353–355.

## N. Perotti, letter of dedication to Jacopo Schioppo of *De generibus metrorum*, 1453

Perotti composed his popular small metrical treatise *De generibus metrorum* during the autumn of 1453, as a diversion, he maintains, from the exacting work with his translation of Polybius.<sup>26</sup> At the same time he may have composed another metrical treatise, the one on Horace's and Boethius's metres, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*. The *De generibus metrorum* is dedicated to his old friend Jacobo Schioppo.<sup>27</sup>

NICOLAI PEROTTI IN LIBRUM DE METRIS PROHEMIUM AD IACOBUM SCHIOPPUM VERONENSEM. <sup>1</sup>Nihil a te iocundius nobis potuit iniungi quam ut de ratione metrorum conscriberemus. <sup>2</sup>Nam et beneficio tuo in illam dulcissimam aetatem uidemur reuocati, qua decimum ante annum his studiis una operam dabamus, et rem fecimus, nisi nos fallit opinio, quam plurimis non modo adolescentibus, uerum etiam prouectis utilissimam. <sup>3</sup>Ita enim iam diu haec ars obsoleta erat penitusque restincta, ut uel nullus exstaret auctor qui de ea tractaret, uel si quis supererat, adeo mendosus corruptusque esset, ut multa in iis discerentur, quae nescisse rectius fuisset. <sup>4</sup>Libuit itaque experiri, quantum auctoritatis apud nostros homines ex his studiis haberemus, quamquam non lateret nos esse nonnullos, qui ita in capessendis bonis litteris obsorduerunt, ut simul ac emanat noui aliquid etiam ab eruditissimis uiris, non modo á nostri similibus, quod ab illorum opinionibus, quorum doctrina sunt imbuti, discrepet, non solum id contemnant, sed acerrimis etiam uerbis insectentur. <sup>5</sup>Verum his quidem persuasum uolumus pluris nos facere duorum aut trium eruditorum iudicium, quam mille sui similium ineptissimas reprehensiones. <sup>6</sup>Ponderari enim, non numerari sententias cupimus, nec publicum laudamus consilium, in quo nihil esse inaequalius consueuit quam ipsa aequalitas, nam cum impar prudentia sit, par omnium est auctoritas.

<sup>7</sup>Tibi igitur hunc librum, cuius uoluntate hanc prouinciam suscepimus, Iacobe, dicamus, in quo fere omnia metrorum genera á nobis comprehensa sunt ac ueluti per manus tradita. <sup>8</sup>Qua in re incredibile

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> For this translation, see Reynolds 1954, Pace 1988, 1989 and 1981, D'Alessandro 2001, Pade 2009 and Charlet forthcoming (1).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Very little is known about the Veronese Jacopo Schioppo (or Giacomo Schioppi). He and Perotti went to school together, probably in Mantova with Vittorino da Feltre, he is the recipient of another letter by Perotti (inc. "Petiit a me nuper") of 5.3.1453 and of several epigrams, and his death is commemorated by Perotti in a poem (inc. "Invida fata, mihi fidum rapuistis amicum") in the famous codex Perottinus (N IV F 58) in Naples that also contains Perotti's epitome of fables of Aesopius, Avienus and Phaedrus. Cp. Mercati 1925, 20 n. 3 and 27–28; Davies 1984, 133; Boldrini 1999, 105; Curbelo Tavío 2000, 16. For the *De generibus metrorum*, see Boldrini 1998 (1–2) and 2000, D'Alessandro 2011, Monfasani 2005 and Friis-Jensen 2011. For the *De metris Horatii et Boethii*, see Boldrini 1997, 1999 and 2001.

dictu est, quos sustinuimus labores. <sup>9</sup>Adeo quippe omnia non solum praecepta artis, uerum etiam pedum ac metrorum nomina corrupta erant, ut necesse fuerit complures ad ea reperienda non solum latinos, uerum etiam graecos libros euoluere. <sup>10</sup>Noua quoque exempla inuestiganda fuere, multa etiam nostro marte componenda. <sup>11</sup>Quod si unquam euigilatae á nobis noctes et epota, ut ille inquit, fuligo lucubrationum ac sudatae uestes fructus aliquid pepererint, amplissimum uidebor laborum meorum praemium consecutus. <sup>12</sup>Si uero rem scombris potius, ut aiunt, ac thure dignam composuimus, tamen hoc nos maxime consolabitur, quod morem gessimus uoluntati tuae, quem ob egregiam indolem, suauissimos mores, excelsum, dulce, eruditumque ingenium tantum diligimus, quantum alium neminem, tantam ex amore tuo uoluptatem capimus, ut nihil iam sine te nobis dulce esse possit, nec longiora nobis uiuendi spatia dari uelimus quam dum tecum fidelissime amicissimeque uixerimus. Vale. Bon(oniae) etc. Nicolai Perotti Prohemium finit.

<sup>1</sup> Nihil-quam PLIN. *ep.* 2,18,1 <sup>4</sup>Libuit-haberemus PLIN. *ep.* 2,18,1 <sup>6</sup>Ponderariauctoritas PLIN. *ep.* 2,12,5 <sup>11</sup>Quod si-pepererint QUINT. *inst.* 11.3.23 <sup>12</sup>Si uerocomposuimus PERS. *sat.* 1.43

(PROEM TO *ON METRICS* BY NICCOLÒ PEROTTI. TO IACOPO SCHIOPPO FROM VERONA. <sup>1</sup>I could not have wished for a more enjoyable task than writing about the rules governing verses. <sup>2</sup>First, through your kindness I see myself brought back to that sweet age when ten years ago we pursued these studies together. Also, I achieved something, if I am not mistaken, which will be very useful for youngsters as well as for people of a more mature age. <sup>3</sup>In fact, this discipline had become so obsolete and utterly extinct that no author treated it any more or, if someone did, he would be so full of errors and mistakes that one would learn much from his work with which it would have been preferable not to become acquainted. <sup>4</sup>Consequently, I wanted to test how much respect I would enjoy among our contemporaries through these

rubrica ut m7 A. I. S. om. f13 Nicolaus Perottus poeta laureatus Iacobo Schioppo Veronensi salutem v17 w1: om. 15 : plu. d. add. b8: sal. pl. di. r8 : rubrica *om.* f11 <sup>2</sup>reuocati] reuocari v17 nisi om. v6 opinio] obliuio 15 *a.c.* ' obsoleta] absoleta b8 v14 : aboleta 15 p.c.; ad- a.c. uel] ut f11 tractaret] traderet b8 f11 f13 15 r8 v6 v14 w1 iis] his 15 r8 v17 w1 : hiis b8  $^{4}$ Libuit] libet f11 ita post qui posuit m7 s.l. : post litteris posuerunt b8 f11 f13 15 r8 v17 w1 capessendis] capescendis b8 15 v17 obsorduerunt] obsurduerunt b8 f13 l5 r8 w1 ac]hac v17 á nostri] a nostris 15 v17 : in nostri v14 opinionibus] opp- v17 contemnant] contempnant w1; 15 a.c. insectentur] inseptentur v17 : om. f11 <sup>5</sup>uolumus] uelimus 15 pluris] plurimum f11 nos] non v14 <sup>6</sup>Ponderari enim, non numerari] munerari 15 <sup>9</sup>artis *om*. f13 v17 <sup>10</sup>marte] in arte f11 : morte w1 omnium] omnibus v14 <sup>11</sup>euigilatae] euigilare f11 15 ut ille inquit add. in mg. m7; om. b8 15 r8 w1 fu-<sup>12</sup> potius *om*. r8 nos *om*. w1 ligo] fulgo 15 eruditumque] conditumque r8 dari] dare w1 amantissimeque f13 r8 amicissime fidelissimequeque (!) Bo postscriptum om. b8 v17 w1

studies – though I am well aware that quite a few so fusty when it comes to the pursuit of learning that, the moment something new is published, even by the most learned and not just by the likes of me, they regard it with contempt and attack it bitterly, if it is at variance with the opinions of those whose teachings they have been imbued with. <sup>5</sup>However, I want these people to know that I value the judgement of two or three knowledgeable people more that the incompetent criticisms of a thousand of their ilk. <sup>6</sup>Votes should be weighed, not counted, and I do not approve of a public council where nothing is more unequal than equality itself, since everybody has equal influence, though they are unequal in judgement.

<sup>7</sup>So to you, Jacob, on whose wish I undertook the task, I dedicate this book in which I have treated nearly all types of metre and, so to speak, hand them on to you. <sup>8</sup>You will hardly believe how much effort went into it. <sup>9</sup>Not only were all the rules for verse composition faulty, but the names of the feet and the metres were corrupt as well, so that I had to read through numerous works, Latin as well as Greek, in order to find them. <sup>10</sup>I also had to search for new examples and to compose not a few on my own. <sup>11</sup>But if my sleepless nights, the pain suffered through my lucubrations and my drenched clothes have produced some results, I shall think myself richly rewarded for all my toils. <sup>12</sup>On the other hand, if I have produced something fit only to wrap up fish and chips, as they say, it will still be a consolation that I complied with your wishes. Because of your outstanding abilities, your exquisite manners, your noble, mild and learned mind I value you above all others. I so rejoice in your good opinion that nothing can please me when you are not there, and I do not wish to be accorded life beyond that which I can have alongside you in faithful friendship. Farewell, Bologna, etc. End of N. Perotti's proem.)

Sigla<sup>28</sup>

- b8: BOLOGNA, Biblioteca Universitaria, 12, Busta I cod. 10, f. 157<sup>r-v</sup> (with an anonymous commetary on Persius. Also N. Perotti, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*). Paper, 4o, s. XV, ff. 189, mm. 165x240, cursive humanist hand. "Ex bibliotheca Co. Francisci Zambeccari". Frati 1908, 112–13.
- f11: FIRENZE, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magl. VII 1204, ff. 164<sup>r</sup>-165<sup>v</sup> (with Horace. Also N. Perotti, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*). Paper, fly-leaves parchment, s. XV, mm. 216x145, ff. II+193 (190 numbered)+II, several hands. Provenance: 'Di Luigi del Sen.re Carlo Strozzi' (f. IIr); 'O.B. Augustini Sarraceni' (f. II<sup>v</sup>). Galante 1907, 136.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> The sigla are those used for the Sassoferrato edition of Perotti's letters.

- f13: FIRENZE, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Magl. XI 141, f. 71<sup>r-v</sup> (with Hyginus. Also N. Perotti, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*). Paper, s. XV, 212x143, ff. 156 numbered, four hands: a) 1–57, b) 71–100, c) 105–27, c) 129–56 (the rest is blank). Provenance: "Di Luigi del Sen.<sup>re</sup> Carlo Strozzi 1679" (initial flyleaf). Galante 1907,141–142.
- LONDON, British Library, Harl. 5372, f. 80<sup>r-v</sup> (with grammatical treatises. Also N. Perotti, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*, partial). Mbr., s. XV, ff. 138, mm. 222x138, quinions. Written in Italy, probably French provenance. Kristeller 1965–1997, IV, 186.
- m7: MODENA, Biblioteca Estense, Fondo Estense 56 (Alpha O 7, 12), ff. 62<sup>r</sup>-63<sup>v</sup>, (also N. Perotti, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*, the translation of Hippocrates, *Iusiurandum* and the letter to Iacopo Costanzi). Mbr. misc. s. XV (before a. 1460). From Perotti's library. Text in a hand imitating his, notabilia and graeca by Perotti. Winestem initials and borders, Perotti's coat of arms from before 1460. d'Alessandro 2011.
- r8: ROMA, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale Vittorio Emanuele, Fondo Vittorio Emanuele Varia 10 (619), ff. 232<sup>r</sup>-233<sup>r</sup> (with Sextus Rufus. Also N. Perotti, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*, and the translation of Hippocrates, *Iusiurandum*). Paper, s. XV, several hands. Badly damaged and largely unreadable. From the Altemps collection. Kristeller 1965–1997, II, 125.
- v6: CITTÀ DEL VATICANO, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 3027, ff. 80<sup>r</sup>-81<sup>r</sup> (with Perotti's translation of Epictetus, *Encheiridion*, Plutarch, *De fortuna Romanorum*, his *De metris Horatii et Boethii*, the translation of Hippocrates, *Iusiurandum* and the letter to Iacopo Costanzi). Paper, *s*. XV, white vinestem initials and borders, bishop's coat of arms (Gonzaga?).
- v14: -, -, Vat. lat. 6526, ff.114<sup>r</sup>-115<sup>r</sup> (large collection of Perotti's letters). Paper, s. XVI. Partly copied from v6 and "Ex codice M.SS. ipsius Perotti apud Perottum Torquatum". Mercati 1925, 136–138; Kristeller 1965– 1997, II, 381 and VI.
- v17: -, -, Vat. lat. 6847, f.4<sup>r-v</sup> (collection of Perotti's letters). Paper, s. XV. Kristeller 1965–1997, II, 341 and 584.
- w1: WIEN, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vindob. lat. 3250, f. 150<sup>r-v</sup> (with Don. *gram.* Also N. Perotti, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*, the translation of Hippocrates, *Iusiurandum* and the letter to Iacopo Costanzi). Paper, *a.* 1469 (f. 184<sup>v</sup>), several northern hands. "Explicitunt uocabula partium indeclinabilium secundum ordinem alphabeti per me Benedictum Geylsprunner de Wollenzach, anno d. 1468, xii decembris," f. 184<sup>v</sup>. Provenance: "M. Briccium de Cilia". Endlicher 1836, 225–227; *Tabulae codicum*, 2, 244.

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Verona: Boninus de Boninis, de Ragusia (or [Rome: Ulrich Han (Udalricus Gallus)] or [Padua: Albertus de Stendal]), c. 1483. Also N. Perotti, *De Horatii ac Boethii Severini metris* and (tr.) Hippocrates, *Iusiurandum*. ISTC ip00298000.

Paris: Georg Wolf, 29 Apr. 1490, with N. Perotti, *Rudimenta grammatices*. Also N. Perotti, *De Horatii ac Boethii Severini metris* and (tr.) Hippocrates, *Iusiurandum*. ISTC ip00325320.

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Paris: Félix Baligault, 18 Feb. 1493/94, with N. Perotti, *Rudimenta grammatices*. Also N. Perotti, *De Horatii ac Boethii Severini metris* and (tr.) Hippocrates, *Iusiurandum*. ISTC ip00327800. Same 20 Jan. 1495. ISTC ip00328800; 25 March 1495. ISTC ip00328900; 6 Sept. 1496. ISTC ip00329900.

Venice: Johannes Tacuinus, de Tridino, 23 Oct. 1497, with F. Mataratius [Maturantius], *De componendis versibus*. ISTC im00351000.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Mercati 1925, 25 n. 1 and 27 n. 3 argues that it is unlikely that Perotti, who lived in or near Rome at the time, should have published the work in Bologna,

[Basel]: Jacobus Wolff, de Pforzheim, [1497–1500], with N. Perotti, *Ru-dimenta grammatices*. Also N. Perotti, *De Horatii ac Boethii Severini metris* and (tr.) Hippocrates, *Iusiurandum*. ISTC ip00332000.

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\*Paris: [1504]: venundantur parrhisiis in vico sancti Iacobi sub leone argenteo, idibus martiis. With N. Perotti, *Grammatica*, cum textu Iodoci Badii Ascensii et cum eiusdem expositione suis locis cum solitis additamentis inserta, i.e. *Rudimenta grammatices*. Also N. Perotti, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*, and (tr.) Hippocrates, *Iusiurandum*.

[Basel]: 1506, with N. Perotti, *Grammatica*, i.e. *Rudimenta grammatices*. Also N. Perotti, *De metris Horatii et Boethii*, and (tr.) Hippocrates, *Iusi-urandum*.

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