

Some Printed Monuments and their Meanings: The Van Sickle Donation and the History of Classical Scholarship

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We can read the wonderful books, ancient and modern, that John Van Sickle has given to the Center for Hellenic Studies in many ways. Many of them were composed, and some were published, by scholars who are still known to classicists and students of classical reception—from Henri Estienne and Pier Vettori, more recognizable as Henricus Stephanus and Petrus Victorius, to Robert Wood and Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf. As a historian, I try to get a sense of the practices and visions—and sometimes to get hooked on the challenge—of the men who created them, whatever their specialty. They were an extraordinary group, whom I like to imagine together in a single Valhalla, singing and quarrelling. In these notes I try to suggest some of their qualities—and those of the scholarly world they inhabited. I hope two things will become clear: that the past of classical scholarship, like all pasts, is another country, where they do things differently; and yet, that contemporary scholars owe them more than has been remembered until the recent rise of reception studies and the history of the humanities.

This world was populated by a species that is now almost extinct: erudite and idealistic publishers. Two of the greatest ones produced some of these books: Aldus Manutius (d. 1515) and Henri Estienne (1528-98). Manutius, a Roman humanist who gave up teaching for printing, moved to Venice, and there, with the help of his partner, Andrea Torresani, and capital from a wealthy Venetian and perhaps others, dedicated himself to a great enterprise: an innovative scholarly press.¹ For example, he was the first publisher to bring out the collected works of a

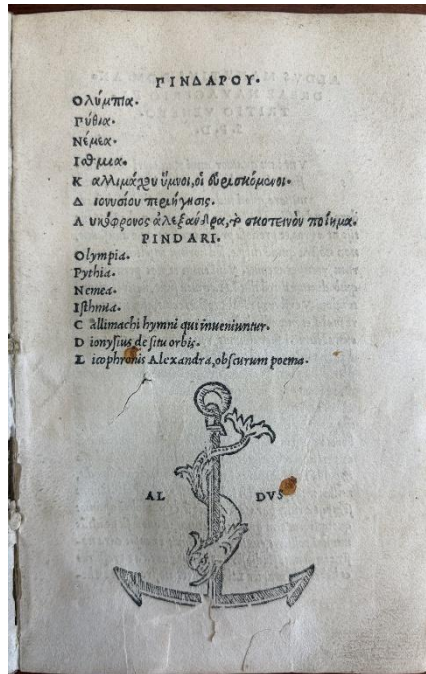
¹ See in general Martin Davies, *Aldus Manutius: Printer and Publisher of Renaissance Venice* (London, 1995; Tempe, Arizona, 1999); Oren Margolis, *Aldus Manutius: The Invention of the Publisher* (London, 2023).

contemporary scholar, the Florentine humanist Angelo Poliziano. But he plowed two furrows with special energy and to great effect. With astonishing courage Aldus organized and published large-format (folio) editions of basic Greek texts in every field, from rhetoric to history and philosophy to medicine. These editions were heroic in scale--Aristotle and Galen filled five volumes each—and even more so in content. Thirty of them were the first editions of their texts. Though Aldus himself published useful aids to learning Greek, few inhabitants of Western Europe could read ancient Greek texts without the help of a teacher or a translation. To produce them Aldus had to collect or borrow Greek manuscripts at a time when few libraries had built up massive collections. One of the greatest of these, the rich collection built up by Bessarion, a Greek cardinal of the Latin church, was in Venice, where it remains, since he had given it to the republic. But it remained largely inaccessible to the Aldine editors. They also had to employ competent editors and proof-readers, hiring both exiled Greeks from the former Byzantine empire and the few Latins who knew Greek well. These men became a legend in the history of Greek learning. Still, the market was small. Aristotle, as we will see, had a special place in European higher education, and that edition sold. Others were still in stock and offered for sale at a discount long after they first appeared.

Despite Aldus's best efforts—and his sincere professions of deep concern for the quality of his editions—they were anything but impeccable. Based on imperfect manuscripts, printed in a heavily abbreviated Greek character typical of the period, based on Aldus's own hand, they were marred by both textual errors inherited from the tradition and new misprints caused by the compositors. Aldus did his best to control the quality of his products. When a serious error came to light only after his first Greek texts were printed, Aldus corrected every copy that remained accessible in his own hand. Yet though he spent close to thirty years organizing and overseeing

his five-volume Galen, it swarmed with mistakes, as Erasmus—who received a copy as a gift—bitterly complained (his tone was partly due to misunderstandings about the Aldine editions of his own works). His enterprise far outran the capacity of the market to absorb Greek texts unaccompanied by Latin translations. Yet it also ensured that the core of the heritage of ancient Greece was no longer vulnerable to destruction.

From 1500 on Aldus responded to the market forces that he had originally braved. He brought out small-format editions—octavos—of the Latin and Italian classics, the works that every educated man or woman needed to know: Horace and Virgil, Caesar and Cicero, Dante and Petrarch--and the great religious writer Catherine of Siena. The format was not his invention. Scribes like Bartolomeo Sanvito had been producing similar books for decades: small books that did not need to rest on a lectern but could be carried in a purse until an opportunity for reading cropped up. They had also devised a new script, italic, that could pack a great deal of text into a small page while retaining elegance and legibility. Francesco Griffo, Aldus's Bolognese typesetter, created an attractive italic font. Aldus and the rival publishers who adopted these innovations made popular texts available in editions of 3,000 copies. They quickly found customers. Courtiers wrote to Aldus about how they used his books to take reading breaks during busy days of government work. Machiavelli described to his friend Francesco Vettori how he passed his days of exile after the Medici retook Florence in 1512, reading octavo editions of the Latin and Italian poets outdoors, by a spring (he reserved the evenings for conversations with the great statesmen of antiquity in his study, no doubt inspired by the ancient historians).



As Aldus grew older, his press went through periods of inactivity, and he showed signs of declining energy. Yet his edition of Pindar—the first text to emerge from his press after a political and military crises had forced it to cease activities for a few year—was marked by innovation of several kinds.² Like his folios, it was a first edition of a Greek text, since only a few lines of Pindar had been printed before in the Latin works of Aulus Gellius and Macrobius, who quoted them. Unlike the folios, though, it was published in the octavo format that he had previously reserved for Latin and Italian texts. Aldus saw this as a useful text. Pindar, after all, was a master of celebratory rhetoric, who lent himself to imitation by poets in Italian Renaissance courts as he had in ancient Rome. In his preface, Aldus promised further editions of classic texts. But he also promised to publish the scholia to the Greek poets, with a systematic

² See the fine study by Douglas F. Bauer, “Problems in the Aldine Pindar,” *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 76, 3 (Spring, 2015), 419-46.

index—an aid to readers that would have been of immense value, if he had managed to complete it.³

Douglas F. Bauer, who has studied this edition with great care, has excavated what was once a mystery widely discussed by scholars. The Pindar, like many of Aldus’s other editions, received less editorial polishing than he promised. Its Latin preface, always the last part of a book to be printed in this period, swarmed with misprints. But he—or a wicked compositor or corrector—also inserted an error that was also a celebration of the great publisher. At the end of Pindar’s 13th Olympian ode, the poet wrote

Ζεῦ τέλει ’, αἰδῶ δίδοι καὶ τύχαν τερπνῶν γλυκεῖαν

Zeus who completes all, grant me reverence and the sweet good fortune of joys [115].

In Aldus’s edition, αἰδῶ, the accusative of αἰδώς (shame or reverence) made way for ἀλδῶ, the dative of Aldus’s name in ancient Greek.⁴ In some copies, including one at Princeton, but not in the one given to the Center, a serious-minded reader has corrected the “mistake”—a sign that scholarship may have lost sight of the quirky good humor with which Aldus and his staff went about their endlessly demanding tasks.⁵

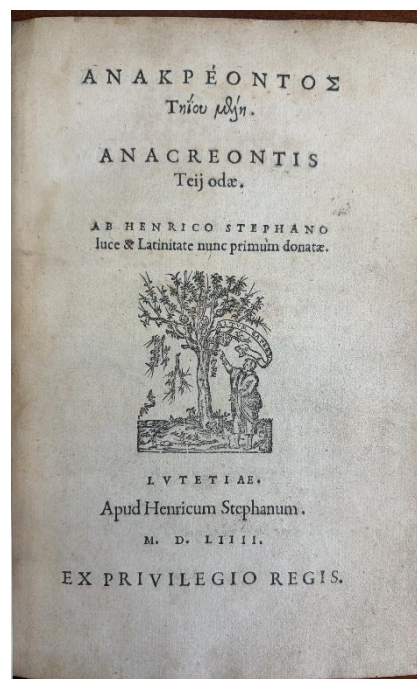
Henri Estienne belonged to a well-established French printing family. His father, Robert, was a pillar of the learned book trade, who employed as many as ten correctors at a time, each from a different country. They used Latin as their common language. In the 1550s, Henri spent a few years wandering through Europe’s libraries, hunting unknown Greek manuscripts and

³ Aldus Manutius, ep. ded. in *Pindari Olympia; Pythia; Nemea; Isthmia. Callimachi hymni qui inueniuntur. Dionysius De situ orbis. Licophronis Alexandra, obscurum poema* (Venice, 1513), sig. [*II*].

⁴ Ibid., 62.

⁵ Bauer, 440-43.

scholars who could help edit them. Eventually he settled in Geneva, where he too ended up bankrupt, after producing the great thesaurus of classical Greek that older classicists will still remember consulting in its weighty physical form. His publishing enterprise began with the *Anacreontea*, which he brought out in Paris in 1554. It is a charming little book full of charming little poems, beautifully printed in the Greek types of Guillaume Morel. They were not the works of Anacreon, for the most part, but late epigrams that had survived with the Greek Anthology, in a single manuscript. Estienne, who recognized their lateness, added an appendix of poems by Anacreon quoted by Greek writers—an early step towards the systematic collection of Greek fragments that has transformed scholarship in the last two centuries--and what he saw as similar texts by Alcaeus and Sappho, as well as a commentary.



Like Aldus's Pindar, Estienne's Anacreon confronts the reader with at least one mystery. In the very first entry in his commentary, he explained why he had put the poem beginning "I want to sing the Atreides" first. Both the manuscript evidence and the quality of the poem, he

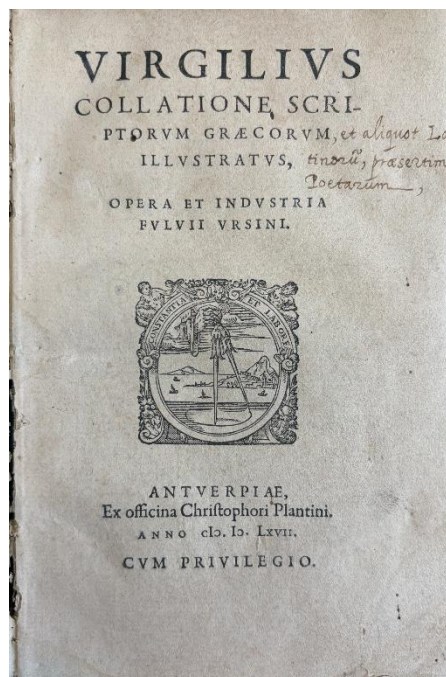
explained, had guided him: “In the other of the manuscripts—that is, the one that I found written in the book, that is *cortice* [tree bark or papyrus], this ode claims the first position, and rightly, in my judgment.”⁶ Many readers, including Lord Byron, who translated this poem into English, and many composers who have set it to music, have agreed with Estienne about its quality. Yet no one has ever identified the manuscript that Estienne identified in such a striking way. He himself did not provide more details, either in the preface to his edition, written in classical Greek, or in any of his other comments. Francesco Robortello, to whom we will return, examined the kinds of manuscript he had seen in his pioneering manual of textual criticism. He dismissed Estienne as a “perridiculus” man who hoped to fool readers into thinking that these little poetic games had a wider value. Scholars have argued about the mysterious codex ever since.

Estienne’s edition was a great success. Learned courtiers, medical men and jurists were expected to produce elegant epigrams spontaneously and effortlessly. In 1578, a flea settled on the bosom of Mlle. Catherine des Roches, a learned woman who conducted a salon at Poitiers with her even more learned mother. The learned men who were present, and the young woman herself, produced a long series of short poems dedicated to the flea, in several languages. These were published as *La puce de Mademoiselle des Roches*. The Anacreontic poems that Estienne first brought to the attention of a European public found endless application in emblem books, love poetry and song books.

And even if Estienne’s textual apparatus proved unsatisfactory, his method of exegesis proved infectious. As he worked over these poems, what struck him most forcibly was their resemblance to much better-known Latin poems by Horace, Catullus and others. French scholars

⁶ Henri Estienne, “Observationes in Anacreontis carmina,” in *Anacreontis Teij Odae*, ed. Henri Estienne (Paris, 1554), 65.

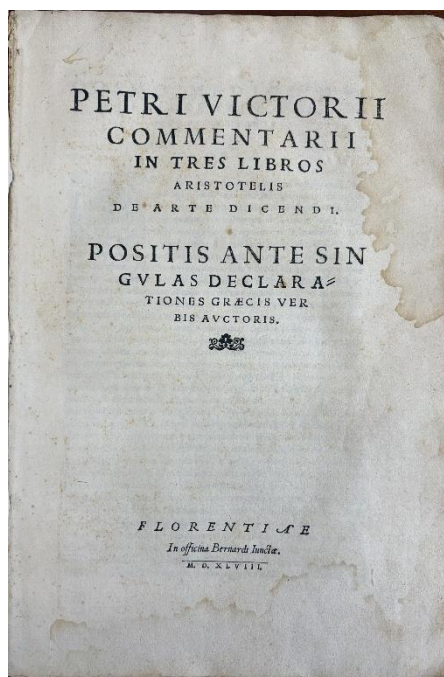
like Denys Lambin were already learning to understand Latin artistry as highly allusive. In his clear, forceful comments, Estienne identified many borrowings, some so close that they looked more like translations than allusions—even as he celebrated the poetic talent that had enabled Roman authors to put their own twist on the texts they stole and make their thefts honorable. This comparative method, meanwhile, was endlessly challenged, adapted and refined—for example, by the Roman scholar Fulvio Orsini, whose exhaustive study of Virgil’s Greek sources was printed by another idealistic entrepreneur, Christopher Plantin, in Antwerp in 1567—a clear sign that Estienne’s approach had spread across the learned centers of Europe.⁷



Both Aldus and Estienne remain celebrities. An excellent mystery novel about Aldus appeared as recently as 2012, and the *Thesaurus linguae Graecae* that was Estienne’s greatest work still figures, in a new, digital form, in the working lives of Hellenists. By the middle of the sixteenth century, astronomers and anatomists, natural historians and vernacular poets were

⁷ John O’Brien, *Anacreon Redivivus* (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1995).

beginning to challenge the cultural supremacy of the ancients. Yet this was still a world of great scholars and great teachers, who expended fantastic amounts of energy on great scholarly projects and produced fantastic amounts of malicious gossip about one another. The Van Sickle gift—together with a book or two available at the Center in digital form through Harvard’s libraries—offers readers a vivid sense of one of these titans: the Florentine classical scholar Pier Vettori (1499-1585). The scion of a prominent Florentine clan, he willingly collaborated with Cosimo de’ Medici, first grand duke of Tuscany, to rebuild classical culture in and around Florence. As a professor at the Florentine Studio from 1538 to 1583 and a hyperactive editor of Greek and Latin texts, he exemplified the best practices of scholarship.



A polymath, Vettori had not read about A.E. Housman’s decision to concentrate on Latin because he could not “attain to excellence” in both Latin and Greek. He also recognized no borders between genres. Vettori produced critical editions of the works of Cicero; Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, *Nicomachean Ethics*, *Politics*, and *Poetics*; the first edition of Aeschylus’s tragedies to

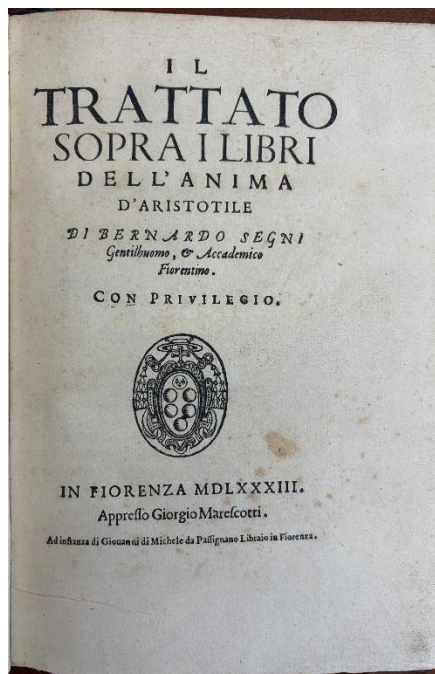
separate the *Agamemnon* from the *Libation Bearers*; the first edition of Euripides' *Electra*; the works of Clement of Alexandria; Hipparchus's commentary on Aratus; the histories of Sallust; and endlessly more, including the Latin works of his friend Giovanni della Casa.⁸

He devoted much of his life to Aristotle. This decision was not surprising. Aristotle was still, in Italian universities, the master of those who know. His books were still set texts for courses in everything from rhetoric and politics to natural philosophy and medicine. Radicals and conservatives taught Aristotle. Sometimes two of them were paid to explicate the same work in the same university at the same time of day. Publishers issued not only rival editions of his works but also rival commentaries on the same works. Even students cared deeply about which works of Aristotle they had the chance to study and how these were taught. In the 1540s, at the University of Pisa, a friend of Vettori's, Francesco Spini, briefed him on a recent incident. Simone Porzio, a notoriously provocative scholar much admired by Cosimo de' Medici, began the first lecture in his course by suggesting that he would teach Aristotle's *Meteorology*. This work was popular for many reasons—not least because it enabled students to see how, or if, their professors could preserve Aristotle's credit as a thinker in an age of new discoveries. After all, in the *Meteorology* he not only stated that the Torrid Zone was uninhabitable but explained why. Pietro Pomponazzi was the academic superstar of the early sixteenth century: he received rival bids from the two most prominent universities in Italy, Bologna and Padua. In the early 1520s, quoting an informative letter from a friend about the “new lands,” Pomponazzi told his students

⁸ Davide Baldi Bellini, “Pier Vettori (1499-1585); Philologist and Professor,” in *Renaissance Politics and Culture: Essays in Honour of Robert Black*, ed. Jonathan Davies and John Monfasai (Leiden, London, and Boston, 2021), 165-97.

that “what Aristotle says here is all foolishness.”⁹ Yet in other contexts Pomponazzi continued to teach Aristotle’s works and use his methods.

Porzio was both radical and innovative. A serious naturalist, he studied empirical evidence as well as the texts of Aristotle and Theophrastus. But that was not enough to satisfy the Pisan students. They knew that Porzio, like Pomponazzi, did not believe that the immortality of the soul could be proved rationally, and that he had tried to give an Aristotelian account of love as the total loss of reason. Accordingly, even as he told them about the wonders of Aristotle’s treatment of nature, they chanted *Anima, Anima, Anima*, increasingly loudly, until he gave in and taught the *De Anima*.¹⁰

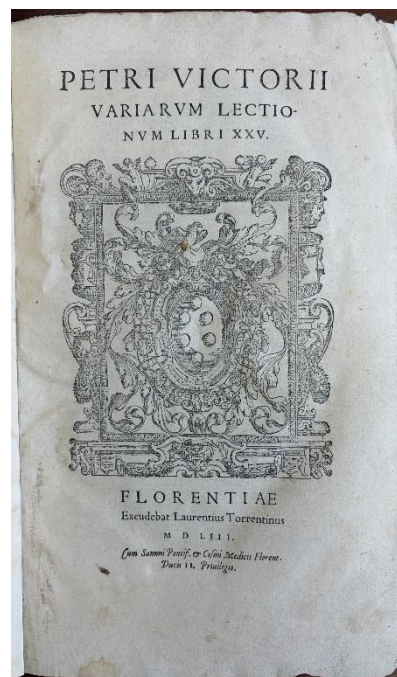


Why did Vettori devote himself to these widely known texts, knowing as he did that he would be doing textual criticism and exegesis in public, even in his lectures, and more so in the

⁹ Bruno Nardi, *Studi su Pietro Pomponazzi* (Florence, 1965), 43.

¹⁰ *Cl. Itolorum et Germanorum epistolae ad Petrum Victorium*, ed. Angelo Maria Bandini, I (Florence, 1758), 43.

published commentaries that he insisted on producing? Doing this was to court, if not disaster, at least contradiction. As teachers worked from the Greek texts and scholars won teaching posts in the expanding philosophical curriculum, every line of these central works literally required comment, as their format shows. In the previous century, Domizio Calderini in Rome and Angelo Poliziano in Florence, tired of burying their best ideas in the vast forests of commentary that grew beside every popular text, selected their best insights and expounded them, as Aulus Gellius had more than 1300 years before, in brief, readable chapters. Vettori too wrote one of these books, a collection of *Variae lectiones* in which he offered readers short essays about carefully selected scholarly problems. Yet the editions of Aristotle's central humanistic works that Vettori and his rivals turned out demanded staggering amounts of work from their editors—and their readers.



The answer is simple: the texts needed him. Vettori had firm views about the principles of textual editing. He believed, as his intellectual model Poliziano had believed before him, that a

good editor must begin by examining all available manuscripts, choose those that represented the oldest tradition, and depart from them only when necessary. Aristotle's treatments of the central subjects of the humanistic curriculum—ethics, politics, rhetoric, poetry—retained their vitality. But when Vettori, preparing to teach, examined editions of the Greek text of Aristotle, he realized at once that these foundational texts swarmed with errors. Picking core texts that every scholar knew as well as he did, he worked through them systematically, gleaning dozens of errors introduced by bad scribal and editorial practices and doing his best to repair them. As he explained in his 1547 edition of the *Nicomachean Ethics*,

Therefore, I healed their wounds, as far as I could; and I took care that they would be printed much more correctly, without the many errors that disfigured them. I have restored to the text many words and whole sentences that were missing. I then removed what were once scholia or notes and had inappropriately crept into the author's text and expelled them from a position where they did not belong. I also corrected and emended many words that were corrupt.¹¹

Confronting all these problems gave Vettori a way to make the case for his method in public.

But he also found that his practices changed as he examined all the sources. On the one hand, the Greek MSS were undeniably imperfect. He explained his view of their value in his *Variae lectiones*:

It is to be regretted that the books about ethics (mores) that Aristotle sent to Eudemons of Cyprus have come down to us in such a maimed and corrupt state. I have devoted myself at certain times (*quondam*) with the aid of ancient books (*ope antiquorum librorum*) to remove the stains that have attached themselves to their remains (*reliquiae ipsorum*). But to tell the truth, I have not been of as much use to them as I was hoping, not just wishing. Yet neither do I regret that labor of mine; it was labor well applied, and to clean up some part, even if not a great part, of so fine a work is no light achievement.¹²

¹¹ Quoted and translated by Baldi Bellini, 171; translation altered.

¹² Quoted by Christopher Rowe, "Petrus Victorius and Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics*," *Classical Quarterly* 74, 2 (October 2024), 753-73.

Vettori had to admit that the Greek manuscripts could not solve all the problems he faced.

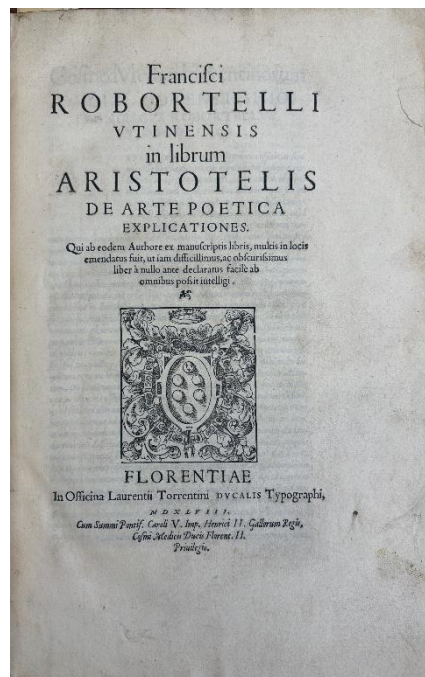
But as he assessed the scope of the problems, he found unexpected help—and developed a more comprehensive sense of the textual resources at his disposal. In the fifteenth century, Leonardo Bruni and other humanists had insisted that the medieval Latin translations of Aristotle were so literal as to be unusable. They argued that translation should be carried on not word for word but sense for sense. Vettori, examining the same materials, saw that they were historically valuable, even vital. Just because they were so literal, the Latin translations could serve as surrogates for the manuscripts that they were based on. In his vastly learned edition of the *Rhetoric*, he explained:

[But I also used] another aid that was not to be despised; I have in fact carefully Studied an old translation. From reading it I was able to learn what the author of the translation read in his Greek manuscript. The translator was clearly a rude man devoid of all cultural refinement; yet he did his work conscientiously, so much so that, while I held that barbarous translation in my hands, I felt that I held the Greek manuscript and heard the words of its language. The translator in fact never even changes the word order, he translates literally and frequently even uses Greek words when he does not understand their meaning, or when he does not see how to render one word with another word. Moreover, since the translation was made c many centuries ago, it is necessary to consider that then the manuscripts of Aristotle were less incomplete and more correct. I therefore found that translation often in agreement with that excellent manuscript [of which I spoke above].¹³

As analyzed by Vettori, the medieval Latin version—the work of William of Moerbeke, who had translated from Greek rather than Arabic—became a surrogate for a lost Greek manuscript. Like the fifteenth-century humanists, Vettori could not conceal his distaste for the barbarous Latin of his source. But he heard an undertone that they missed: the words of a lost Greek manuscript that represented an earlier stage of transmission than that represented in most of the extant ones. Each

¹³ Quoted and translated by Baldi Bellini, 172-73; translation altered.

manuscript had to be interrogated until the editor knew exactly what sort of witness it was, and what sort of testimony it bore. Aristotelian scholars, of course, still depend on the medieval tradition of many of his works in Arabic and Latin to give access to lost Greek sources. They are Vettori's heirs.



Courage and resourcefulness were needed to play this game. Since professors lectured on and edited the same texts, they used their lecture halls to rehearse their arguments. In this public and competitive world, news of their new views could spread long before they were prepared to put them forward in print. In 1546, two years before Francesco Robortello published his pioneering commentary on the *Poetics*, he began a set of auditions before the same student public at Pisa that forced Simone Porzio to lecture on a potentially dangerous subject. Vettori's spy, Pietro Spini, told him what happened, with relish. As Kristine Haugen has shown, Robortello, Vettori, and their many rivals were doing more than explicating Aristotle's text line by line. They were trying to tease out from the very complex materials at the beginning of the

Poetics how tragedy came into being: they were writing, or trying to write, a major chapter in Greek literary history—one that many others who came after, from Friedrich Nietzsche to Jane Harrison, would rewrite in their own terms.¹⁴ Robortello argued that the participants in early tragedies—chorus and protagonists alike—had danced, using rhythm to imitate character, emotion, and action. Unfortunately, as he knew all too well, there was a problem: almost no other source material on the early history of tragedy survived. True, there was Latin material about comedy, but Robortello, as Spini explained, did cite it—or anything else--when the students demanded corroboration for his assertions. Accordingly, “he was driven off the stage by the students’ whistling, which saved Robortello no little work,” since he did not have to move on to the next baffling passage and struggle with it before an audience.¹⁵

When Vettori, twelve years later, took his own turn at recreating the early history of tragedy in the commentary on the *Poetics*, he knew all too clearly what objections he might face. And that makes his boldness more striking. Working on the *Poetics*, he moved from reconsidering the textual evidence to rethinking the text itself. He ventured to change prominent passages even though he had no textual evidence to support his argument. In chapter 24 of the *Poetics*, the manuscripts and the editions and translations that preceded Vettori read as follows:

δεῖ μὲν οὖν ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις ποιεῖν τὸ θαυμαστόν, μᾶλλον δ’ ἐνδέχεται ἐν τῇ ἐποποιίᾳ τὸ ἀνάλογον.

It is necessary in tragedies to present the marvelous, but more in epics, for it can be done in proportion.

Vettori—like his colleagues—knew in his bones as a reader that this was not true. The great epic of his early years, Ariosto’s *Orlando furioso*, was rich in wonders and the marvelous, from

¹⁴ Kristine Haugen, “The Birth of Tragedy in the Cinquecento: Humanism and Literary History,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72, 3 (July 2013), 351-70.

¹⁵ *Cl. Itolorum et Germanorum epistolae ad Petrum Victorium*, ed. Bandini, I, 42-3.

enchanters to monsters. So were the *Odyssey* and many other examples. The word in question was not *analogon* but *alogon*--Aristotle was not describing epic as decorous but contrasting tragedy—which had a place for the irrational—with epic, which had more scope for it.¹⁶

For I read *alogon* [Vettori wrote] and not *analogon*, as formerly appeared in the printed editions, since this word can in no way be in this place; however, the one I have restored, *alogon*, fits this passage marvelously, which is why, as the true sense dictated, I have dared to emend [the text] in this way.¹⁷

Aristotle, Vettori argued, had highlighted and even celebrated the role of the irrational as a central way of promoting wonder in tragedy, but even more in epic. Vettori's bold "conjecture"—as he explicitly labeled it—eventually found enthusiastic acceptance, not only in the commentaries but also in the literary theories of Tasso and other writers of the 17th and 18th centuries. Vettori, in other words, took pleasure in walking the tightrope from which colleagues like Robortello tumbled. This was how the game of scholarship was played.

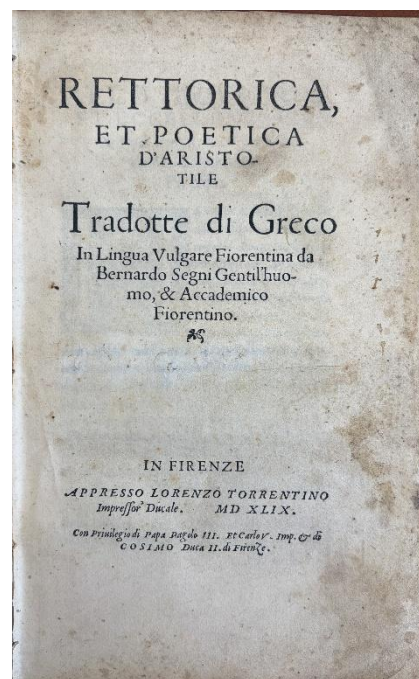
One last point is essential. Vettori was a collaborator by inclination. He opened his lectures and his villa to foreign visitors. German scholars whose Protestant convictions sometimes made them feel uneasy in Italy looked back nostalgically to their time with Vettori, and to his warm and generous hospitality. With Florentines he went further, teaching them the practices of classical scholarship in his own rigorous mode. In 1545 Vettori published the first edition of Euripides's *Electra*. In his preface, he made clear that two young Florentines, whom he had tasked to collate the local manuscripts of the tragedian, deserved the credit for discovering the play:

¹⁶ See Maria José Vega, "Wonder and the Irrational: The Invention of Aristotle's Poetics, 1460a11-18, in the Sixteenth Century," in *Nous, polis, nomos: Festschrift Francisco L. Lisi*, ed. Ales Havilcek, Christoph Horn, and Jakub Jinek (Sankt Augustin, 2016), 279-90l.

¹⁷ Quoted and translated *Ibid.*, 284; translation altered.

Two acute and learned boys, Bartolomeo Barbadori and Gerolamo Mei, pulled this tragedy out of darkness. They looked everywhere for old manuscripts of this poet so that they could collate them with the tragedies that had been printed, which are swarming with errors, ... and they immediately brought it to me, since I had been their teacher in the humanities. Once I had gone over it scrupulously and cleansed a good many passages (the characters were especially confused), I thought it fit to be read.¹⁸

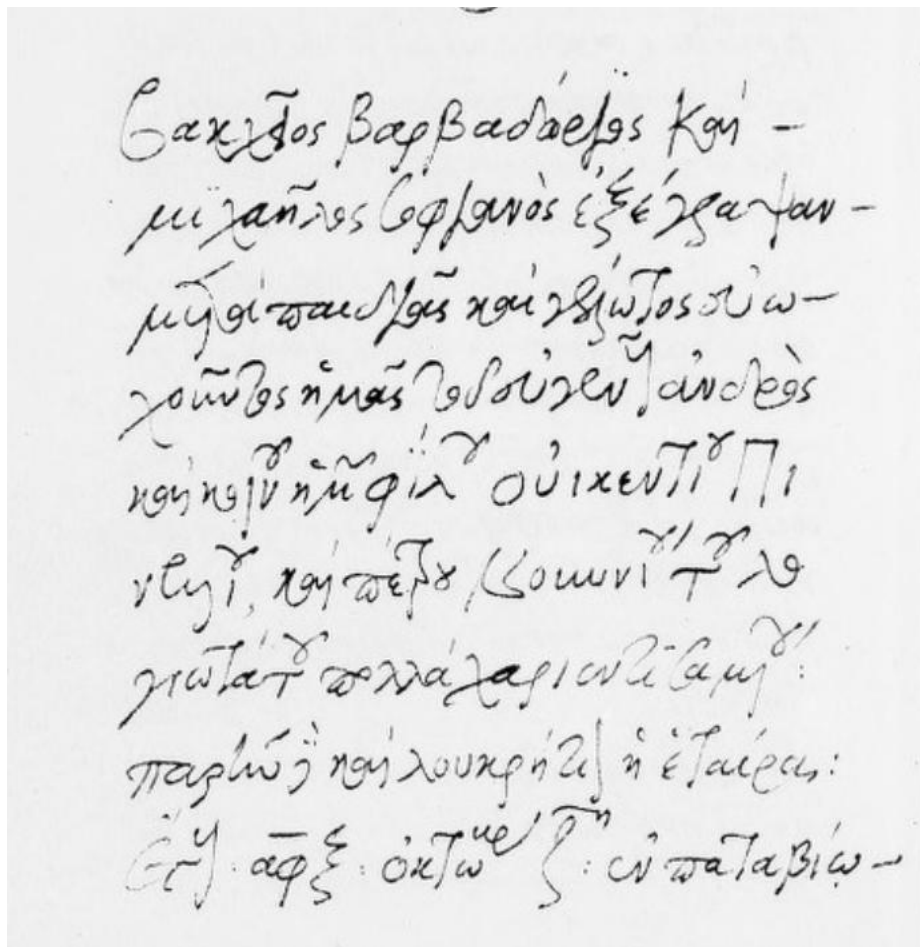
Vettori's model of scholarship made a deep impact on these young men. Mei applied Vettori's lessons to his later studies of the origins of Greek tragedy in the early experiments with opera carried out by the Florentine Camerata. Like other Italian scholars, Vettori saw it as important that Italian translations of Aristotle's works should rest on the best editions—though he complained when his friend Bernardo Segni appropriated too many of his ideas about Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.



Perhaps the best way to convey the spirit in which Vettori practiced philology comes from one of his pupils. Barbadori continued both collating manuscripts and working in company

¹⁸ Quoted and translated by Baldi Bellini, 171; translation altered.

with others as he moved operations from Florence to the Veneto. In 1560 he drew up the colophon of a manuscript of Plutarch's life of Cicero in Greek and Latin, recording that he and the Chian scholar and scribe Michael Sophianus had transcribed it. They did not work in dignified solitude. He recorded the presence of "that noble man and our common friend Gian Vincenzo Pinelli," a famous Venetian bibliophile, who "entertained us lavishly"; another friend who had made many jokes; and, most startlingly of all, "Lucrezia, the cortigiana"—one of the female poets and entertainers who were, in the sixteenth century, among the glories of the Venetian Republic.¹⁹ Scholarship was still a social activity—and when all goes well, it still is.



¹⁹ Colophon, BnF Paris, MS gr. 1750; printed by O. Crusius in *Philologus*, Supplementband 6, 219.