

## PREGLEDNI ČLANKI

## Review Articles

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THE POWER OF IMAGES AND FORCES  
OF FRAGMENTS IN THE WORKS OF  
PIER PAOLO VERGERIO THE ELDER

A sixteen-year-old from Koper named Pier Paolo Vergerio (around 1369–1444) came to Florence in the mid-1380s. The youth, who had started his education in Padua, chose Florence as the environment for his intellectual growth. He got in touch with the chancellor Coluccio Salutati and became his close associate in the pursuit of the knowledge of antiquity and its renewal in a cohabitation of rhetoric, ethics and history.<sup>1</sup> Vergerio started lecturing in logic at the Bolog-

<sup>1</sup> On Vergerio, cf. introduction of Leonard Smith to Vergerio's epistolary, Pier Paolo VERGERIO, *Epistolario*, Fonti per la storia d'Italia 74, Roma 1934, pp. XI–XXXI; David ROBEY, Virgil's Statue at Mantua and the Defence of Poetry. An Unpublished Letter of 1397, *Rinascimento*, 2 ser. IX, 1969, pp. 183–203; Hans BARON, *La crisi del primo rinascimento italiano. Umanesimo civile e libertà repubblicana in un'età di classicismo e di tirannide* (ed. R. Pecchioli), Firenze 1970, pp. 140–148; David ROBEY, P. P. Vergerio The Elder: Republicanism and Civic Values in the Work of an Early Humanist', *Past and Present*, 58, 1973, pp. 3–37; IDEM, Aspetti dell'umanesimo vergeriano, *L'umanesimo in Istria* (ed. Vittore Branca, Sante Gracciotti), Firenze 1983, pp. 7–17; Alan FISHER, Three Meditations on the Destruction of Vergil's Statue: The Early Humanist Theory of Poetry, *Renaissance Quarterly*, XL/4, 1987, pp. 607–635; George HOLMES, *The Florentine Enlightenment*, Oxford 1992, pp. 15–16; Philip JACKS, *The Antiquarian and the Myth of Antiquity. The Origins of Rome in Renaissance Thought*, Cambridge 1993, pp. 67–71; Andrea BOLLAND, Art and Humanism in Early Renaissance Padua: Cennini, Vergerio and Petrarch on Imitation, *Renaissance Quarterly*, XLIX, 1996, pp. 469–487; John M. McMANAMON, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder. The Humanist as Orator*, Tempe 1996. On Vergerio's writings on the three disciplines in his texts, cf. especially David ROBEY, Humanism and Education in the Early Quattrocento: The *De ingenuis moribus* of P. P. Vergerio, *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance* XLII, 1980, pp. 27–58 and John M. McMANAMON, INNOVATION in Early Humanist Rhetoric: The Oratory of Pier Paolo Vergerio The Elder, *Rinascimento I*, 2 ser., XXII, 1982, pp. 3–32.

na University as early as 1388, but he returned to Padua two years later. Despite his occasional contacts with the core of the Florentine renewal, he played a truly significant role in the development of early humanism.<sup>2</sup> The indirect contact was by no means fruitless. This paper attempts to clarify his attitude to antiquities and consider his importance in passing his insights to others.

Ever since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, Padua was a major centre of antiquary studies, from the interpretation of archaeological finds in the age of Lovato Lovati to Petrarch's identification of guidelines that were based on effigies of Roman rulers on medals and were supposed to give impetus to the spiritual formation of great contemporary figures.<sup>3</sup> Early humanists in Padua kept an interested eye on what was going on in Florence, so any talk of precedence, of giving or receiving influence, would be unrewarding in relation to these cities. Bruni's *Dialogues* show that it was precisely the Paduan milieu that resolved some formative issues of humanist culture. The celebratory spirit of the Second Dialogue presents Niccolò Niccoli, who used the previous discussion to attack the older generation for their supposed ignorance, justifying himself with claims that he proved his attachment to Petrarch by going to Padua, where he copied the poet's *Africa*, and brought the copy to Florence.<sup>4</sup> Petrarch's evocative text, which initiated human-

<sup>2</sup> Words addressed to him by Leonardo Bruni in the introduction to *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*: "... corpus quidem tuum a nobis montes et valles intermedie separant; memoriam vero atque caritatem nec distantia loci, nec ulla unquam a nobis separabit oblivio", indicate their spiritual kinship, but also introduce the reader to one of the main topics of the dispute: bringing closer the terms *distantia* and *praesentia* in the discussions on antiquity and the present time. Cf. Leonardo BRUNI, *Opere letterarie e politiche* (ed. Paolo Viti), Torino 1996, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> On early antiquarians, cf. Roberto WEISS, *The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity*, Oxford 1988, pp. 1–58, and JACKS 1993, cit. n. 1, pp. 1–73. On Petrarch's use of visual sources, cf. Annegrit SCHMITT, Zur Wiederbelebung der Antike im Trecento. Petrarca's Rom-Idee in ihrer Wirkung auf die Paduaner Malerei. Die methodische Einbeziehung des römischen Münzbildnisses in die Ikonographie „Berühmter Männer“, *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XVIII/2, 1974, pp. 167–218.

<sup>4</sup> BRUNI 1996, cit. n. 2, p. 126, «Franciscum vero Petrarcham tanti semper feci, ut usque in Patavium profectus sim, ut ex proprio exemplari libros suos transcriberem. Ego enim primus omnium *Africam* illam huc adduxi, cuius quidem rei iste Colucius testis est.»

ists into the world of ancient Rome at a time when its power emerged, roused Vergerio's interest too. During his second stay in Florence in 1394, he worked with Salutati to prepare the text for publication.<sup>5</sup> Again, Vergerio wished to emulate his great predecessor by choosing the same patrons, the powerful Carrara family, but with a significant difference: his devotion to the public sphere and even to the political weight of his rhetoric. Even before Quintilian's text was discovered in its entirety, Vergerio showed the awareness that Cicero's precepts on the involvement of intellectuals in state affairs, which had scandalized Petrarch, had to be implemented. This is confirmed by the readings of *Africa*: Vergerio increasingly saw them as far-reaching and important motivations, where the basic "mechanisms" had been largely prepared by Salutati in his texts, related to the issue of presenting and disseminating knowledge about antiquities to a community.<sup>6</sup> The first results can be seen in the respect paid to Petrarch's genius in his biography, and, shortly afterward, in the use of the powers of evocation, where Vergerio personifies Cicero's "voice" as the orator's "response" to Petrarch's famous epistle from 1345, where the poet laments Cicero's involvement in the struggles between Pompey and Caesar.<sup>7</sup>

As demonstrated by the words spoken by Salutati in Bruni's dialogues, addressing oneself in private (*in solitudine sequi locui*) became unacceptable. Knowledge absorbed by the mind had to be exchanged and, like in ancient discussions, displayed through different positions. The paragon of personal virtue and feeling of bliss appeared as an idea that had to be shared within the larger community. Dispute

<sup>5</sup> Paolo Viti notes the possibility that Niccoli brought the text to Florence in 1396, as a transcription of the edition arranged by Vergerio. Cf. BRUNI 1996, cit. n. 2, p. 127., n. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Salutati was more than a censor to the younger generation. In his etymological analyses, allegorical interpretations of ancient names and contemporary buildings (Hercules in *De laboribus Herculis*, the Florentine baptistery as the temple of Mars in *Invectiva in Antonium Luscum*), Salutati provided the humanists with new insights. As noted by Witt, the Florentine chancellor even started discussing complex problems of the cognitive theory, as seen in an epistle from 1394, which talks about the roles of senses, mind, body, and the terms *sensus communis*, *phantasia*, *intellectus*, *mens*. Cf. RONALD WITT, *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati*, Durham 1983, p. 298.

<sup>7</sup> On Vergerio's letter to Petrarch, cf. McMANAMON 1996, cit. n. 1, p. 52.

(*causa*), used by humanists as a prominent epistemological principle, did not allow lingering within reliable dogmas. In this way, humanists made an important step to accepting and applying the insights which they gained on topics that were not seen as unilateral and dogmatically codified any more. Vergerio's documents stand out because they make a diagnosis similar to the one from the *Dialogues*, about the neglect of important skills like rhetoric.<sup>8</sup> Eloquence, once used by the great Romans to order the life and welfare of the state, had to be revived.

Vergerio responded to such challenges in writing and speech; it is not surprising that he was fascinated by Petrarch, recognized as a major founder of the ideals of humanism. This constant swerving between meditation and action, which had a special and important place in Petrarch's life, can be seen in Vergerio's speeches, some invoking ancestors, others intended for his contemporaries. His most eminent recipient from the past was Saint Jerome, to whom Vergerio dedicated ten speeches between 1392 and 1408, praising the saint's withdrawal from the world.<sup>9</sup> Speeches addressed to the saint had the role of a moral corrective for worldly actions. They are similar to Petrarch's confiding to St Augustine; however, they do not stop at confiding personal issues to a letter, but are presented to the community on the saint's day, with the intention of affecting it according to the rhetorical principles of *docere et movere*.

Such scholarly promotion in the first humanist communities in Padua and Florence was focused on identifying and preserving values received from the past. One of the earliest examples of such identification can be found in 1397, at a time of renewed strife between

<sup>8</sup> *Dialogi* include the judgemental figure of Niccoli, who uses the statement of *tanto doctrinarum omnium naufragio* to question his age. It initiates the discussion on all kinds of understanding of the past, because a criticism of the present must compare with those who lived in the past. Cf. Bruni 1996, cit. n. 2, pp. 96–98. The words *indocti homines*, *penuria*, *magna transformatione*, *obscuritas*, are not directed only at “trans-oceanic” barbarians of unutterable names, but will also be used to motivate contemporaries to change.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. ROBEY 1973, cit. n. 1, pp. 27–29. Vergerio held the speeches at the celebration of St Jerome, on 30 September, admiring his “taming of the flesh”, renouncing Rome for Palestine. Cf. Pierpaolo VERGERIO, *Sermones pro Sancto Hieronymo* (ed. John M. McManamon), Tempe 1999.

Milan and the states of the Bologna Alliance.<sup>10</sup> Early that year Giangaleazzo Visconti decided to attack the region of Mantua, which was ruled by *signore* Francesco Gonzaga. It turned into a victory for Carlo Malatesta, the master of Rimini and leader of the army of the Bologna Alliance, who raised the army in July and August, defeated Visconti's general Jacopo del Verme near Governolo in late August, and entered Mantua, where he allegedly ordered the destruction of a monument to Vergil.<sup>11</sup> That obscure event was vigorously denounced by humanists, and the three most eminent epistles have been preserved: one from Vergerio, one from an unknown author, and one from Salutati. Vergerio's epistle is the earliest reaction to the "event": it is a bitter text of 18 September 1397, addressed to pope's vicar Ludovico Alidosi.<sup>12</sup>

Vergerio wrote the epistle, as he explains at the end, moved by pain and rage (*dolor impetusque*), which he tried to cure by convincing the ruler to make the destroyer amend his crime. Vergerio chose Alidosi as his recipient because he considered him to be a great man of his day, respecting orators and poets. By apostrophizing these two groups of people, Vergerio set up a special form of dispute. In this "case", the protagonists can be identified like parties in a court proceeding, which must be pointed out because the crime itself – suppressing the memory of pagan antiquity – was presented as something new.

<sup>10</sup> On the struggles in the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, cf. BARON 1970, cit. n. 1, pp. 30–32 and GENE BRUCKER, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence*, Princeton (New Jersey) 1977, p. 148.

<sup>11</sup> On political events related to the Malatesta, cf. P. J. JONES, *The Malatesta of Rimini and the Papal State. A Political History*, Cambridge 1974, pp. 114, 128. Contemporary historiography (Goro Dati, Bruni) does not mention such an action of the general against "Vergil's monument". FISHER 1987, cit. n. 1, p. 607, believes humanist epistles regarding the existence and destruction of the poet's statue, which was supposed to stand in Mantua "for centuries".

<sup>12</sup> The second epistle, like Vergerio's, was sent from Bologna, where the news of "demolition" came from nearby Mantua, probably at the same time as the news of Malatesta's victory; its date is 25 October. The third epistle, from Salutati, was sent on 23 April 1398 to the Bologna chancellor Pellegrino Zambecari. Cf. FISHER 1987, cit. n. 1, p. 607. On the anonymous epistle cf. ROBEY 1969, cit. n. 1, pp. 183–203.

Vergerio starts by wondering at Malatesta's actions: the fame of the man and his family, as well as his interest in letters, seem utterly unrelated to such an act. Malatesta, who built his character of a famous general on foregoing qualities, did something that jeopardized the most important element of his posthumous life: his glory. Vergerio believes that Carlo in Mantua, blessed with good fortune in the recent battle, wanted his glory to overshadow the poet's. But he went the way of Herostratus' wickedness, which is not glorified but censured by posterity. Carlo is guilty not only of destroying a concrete work of art, which apparently had stood in Mantua as a homage to its greatest citizen, but also of speaking against poets – whom he equalled with histrions, actors considered to be obsessed – and against Cicero, whom he called a “puny lawyer” (*causidicus*).<sup>13</sup> Vergerio responds to these judgments with a miniature discussion on the notion of remembrance, power of images, *damnatio memoriae*, and the optimism of letters, which is the seed of memories and potentials for rebirth. In this way, Vergerio was one of the first humanists to explicitly research the parallel nature of material and written existence of antiquities. Already the first paragraphs, after recalling the crime of Herostratus, pose the question if we would remember anything at all without the power of the written word.<sup>14</sup> We would know nothing about Hercules' descent into the nether-world, nothing about Troy, buried in the silence of ashes, nothing about Ulysses or Alexander the Great. But there are intermediaries between those bare names (*nuda nomina*) and our times: poets inspired by God, who transmit immortal glory.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> On *histriones* cf. FISHER 1987, cit. n. 1, pp. 609–610. In his letter, Salutati countered the attempt to equate poets and *histriones* by saying that poets do not make gestures, but create things that will cause them. The creator should not be confused with the performer.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. VERGERIO 1934, cit. n. 1., p. 192, «Quanquam que potest esse, non dico eterna, sed vix longa ullius rei memoria sine scriptorum ope?»

<sup>15</sup> WITT 1983, cit. n. 5, p. 66 writes that Salutati was also confused by the relations between virtue and glory: this is why he loved praise but hated braggarts. But, after reading Cicero's words from *Tusculanae disputationes*, I, 2, 4: “Honos alit artes, omnesque incenduntur ad studia gloria, iacentque ea semper, quae apud quosque improbantur”, he transformed his humility into a nobility of leaving the traces of his existence in letters.

Those who find themselves in what was then Rome, says Vergerio, will not learn much from citizens about the Romans from Livy's histories, who founded the city and spread its glory. Vergerio takes the ignorance about Rome, which could be remedied only by careful observation combined with the reading of written sources, and contrasts it with the situation he shares with most of his predecessors:

"On the other hand, in truth, how many people do you think there are who have never even seen Rome, but seem to know famous Romans and their history as well as if they had been part of it? Thus it turns out that we have better understanding of things that are removed from our age and memory, but described by famous people and authors, than of those experienced the day before. In fact, human remembrance is easily lost and survives barely a century unless it is confided to books and literary recollection."<sup>16</sup>

But this recognition of the power of writing, which marks the nobility of bestowing, as well as the offer of consolation to all those who will never actually see Rome, but have it in the pages of their books, does not mean resigning to further destruction. Here Vergerio is trying to avoid the fundamental paradox of his epistle, and his understanding of the "art" of inheritance includes not only writing but material artefacts too. To convince his contemporaries of how Carlo Malatesta sinned against the principles held by his ancestors, contemporaries, descendants and against his own fame, Vergerio offers them an example from antiquity. In Suetonius he found a report about the decision of the Roman senate, made after the death of the emperor Domitian, to erase the emperor's name from all public monuments. These rules of destiny, which greatly depended on a man's actions in the world, show *damnatio memoriae* as a dimension of memory, struggling against the death of matter, finding life in fragmented, synecdochic testimonies of a former existence. Carlo's guilt is all the bigger for the fact that he, as a ruler

<sup>16</sup> VERGERIO 1934, cit. n. 1, p. 193, «contra vero, quot esse putas qui nec Romam quidem viderunt unquam, illustres tamen Romanos resque eorum magnifice gestas ita norunt ut interfuisse rebus ipsis videantur? itaque fit ut res ab nostra etate memoriaque remotas melius cognoscamus, si modo sint claris viris illustrate et auctoribus, quam que recentior dies attulit. memoria namque hominum facile perit, et vix unius seculi vivit etatem, nisi libris et memorie litterarum commendetur.»

whose ancestors were friends with Petrarch, decided to obliterate the effigy of the poet who was forbidden by emperor Augustus to burn the *Aeneid*. A man's deeds, guided by the instructions of virtue—impersonalities reached and internalised by virtuous people during their lives—are what is left for immortality. This is why it is even more sinful to commit such denials in Carlo's time.

After condemning Carlo Malatesta and the citizens of Mantua, who allowed the statue to be torn down, Vergerio starts the dispute about the cause of its destruction. Here, the discussion on the power of writing turns into a speech on the *power of image*, which has cognitive potentials. Vergerio recalls another passage from Roman historiography, Sallust's description of how Scipio drew strength from watching the statues of ancestors:

"Because posterity, too, feels its spirits soar when watching them, and their minds are greatly stimulated for virtuous and glorious life; Scipio used to watch statues of great men and say that he was overwhelmed by the desire to follow them."<sup>17</sup>

Such stimulation, which is the opposite of the sympathy of Cicero looking at the ruins of Corinth or early humanists considering their ancestors, was deeply rooted in Roman culture, forming the very mechanism of continuity and change within it.<sup>18</sup> But Scipio's observation of stimulating sights was focused on images of well preserved traces, not their fragments. The energy that filled Scipio during observation proved to be the way used by humanists, after a rupture, to "start all over again". Therefore, the scenes of ancestors in sculpture or painting were not supposed to frustrate, but to invigorate. The complex process of understanding through observation, comparison and identification, among other things, created the first hints of the modern pro-

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 196, «nam et posteris, cum hec vident, magna sunt incitamenta animorum, ingeniisque ad virtutem et vite gloriam ingens calcar ex his additur; quale solebat dicere Scipio, cum illustrium virorum imagines cerneret, magnopere se ad eorum imitationem concitari.» Cf. also Sallust., *De bello lugurth.*, IV, 5.

<sup>18</sup> On Cicero's perception of Corinthian ruins and the problem of temporal distance, cf. *Tusc. disp.*, III. 22, 53, «... magisque me moverant Corinthi subito aspectae parietinae quam ipsos Corinthios, quorum animis diuturna cogitatio callum vetustatis obduxerat.»



tective attitude to antiquities. As seen from recent studies on Pliny's *Historia naturalis*, the Romans felt there was no greater proof of bliss (*felicitas*) than the insight that everyone strived for, to understand the way human beings used to look like. That belief in images as substitutes for biological existence was the medium not only of orators, who respected the ancestors in their initial appropriations from the Greek culture, but also of philologists like Varro, historiographers and artists. Pliny wrote that Varro planned to describe seven hundred persons in his text *Imagines*, and that "his invention was a gift to us, for which even gods must be envious, for not only did it bestow immortality but transmitted it throughout the world so that the persons dealt with, like the gods, could dwell everywhere".<sup>19</sup>

We see that the coexistence of material and written creations was already considered imperative for the heritage in the culture of antiquity; the fall of the Empire and the discontinuity caused by a new paradigm of civilization, however, opened a gash where words and things diverged and came into new existences, subordinated to allegoresis, or into the death of oblivion. In Vergerio's time, it was supposed that at least some lost parallels between these separate routes of the subjects of memory would be restored. In the part of the epistle dedicated to the cause of destruction, Vergerio was interested in the issue of *tolerance*.

"Does Vergil not deserve a statue because he was a pagan? I find it similar to the thinking of those who, having come to temples and seen images of Christ being flogged or crucified by Jews or pagans, gouge out their eyes to make them seem fiercer, and express their great

<sup>19</sup> Cf. JACOB ISAGER, *Pliny on Art and Society. The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art*, London and New York 1991, p. 117, which relies on Pliny, *Hist. nat.* XXXV, 2, 11. Cf. also GIAN BIAGIO CONTE, *Latin Literature. A History* (trans. J. B. Solodow, ed. D. Fowler, G. W. Most), Baltimore and London 1995, p. 214, saying that the work was also called *Hebdomades* and was written around 39 BC. This need to communicate with the spirits of ancestors and to transmit that noble enchantment to the posterity is also felt in the passage from Cicero's *Tusc. disp.*, I. 14, 31: «Quid procreatio liberorum, quid propagatio nominis, quid adoptiones filiorum, quid testamentorum diligentia, quid ipsa sepulcrorum monumenta elogia significant nisi nos futura etiam cogitare?»

devotion and piety by disfiguring the cruel faces of lictors, as if life gained value by destroying pictures instead of suffering sin and joining virtues. It seems we believe that the images of pharaoh, Pilates and Herod, as well as evil demons, with all the terror painters could give them, should be expelled from temples and erased from walls. It is believed that Rome should be one great ruin, since it has monuments of antiquity and ancient religions. But if we allow such leaders to destroy everything not related to Christianity or otherwise alien to it, we will certainly not allow this to pass in silence.”<sup>20</sup>

Vergerio continued to condemn the destruction of relics in 1398, when he accompanied Cardinal Francesco Zabarella to Rome on a diplomatic mission to pope Boniface IX.<sup>21</sup> There he wrote an epistle to an unknown recipient, where he developed the discussion on the dualism of body and mind, by which Rome kept on living despite its physical mutations. The ineffable stench of abandoned cities, where the remains of glory are covered with shrubs or soil, has a very clear cause: ignorance and negligence of men who could respond to the spirituality of Rome only by destroying it. Therefore, Vergerio writes:

“My health, praise the Lord, has been impeccable since I arrived here – I achieved that with moderation and exercise, the best cures to attain and maintain vigour; but my soul and mind are ill.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> VERGERIO 1934, cit. n. 1, p. 197, «illud vero preterire non possum, quod Virgilius, quia gentilis fuerit, indignus sit statua; simileque hoc michi videtur eorum rationi, qui, cum in templis Iudeorum gentiliumque imagines vident Christum aut verberantium aut crucifigentium, oculos illis, ut queque iratior videtur, eruunt, truculentasque lictorum facies ex multa religione pietateque deformant, quasi quidem in delendis imaginibus ac non magis in tollendis peccatis componendisque virtutibus meritum vite consistat. iam ergo et Pharaonis imagines et Pilati atque Herodis, itemque malorum demonum, quas tam horribiles quam pictoribus placet cernimus, templis avellende parietibusque delende erunt; Roma magnam ruinam sentiat oportet, in qua sunt tot vetustatis, tot prisce religionis monumenta. sed si ita patiamur, iubente eo, dirui omnia que ad christianam religionem non attinent aut ullo pacto adversa sunt, illud certe non patiemur taciti.»

<sup>21</sup> On Zabarella and his writings cf. HOLMES 1992, cit. n. 1, p. 62.

<sup>22</sup> VERGERIO 1934, cit. n. 1, p. 212, «michi vero, gratias Deo, posteaquam huc veni, valitudo corporis integra fuit, quam frugalitate et exercitio confeci, medicamentis optimis et habende et retinende sospitatis; verum animo atque ingenio laboro.»

Although the vastness of the city, the numerous places of worship and the presence of holy sites of Christianity fill him with vigour, he confides to his friend in the second part of the epistle that he is troubled by strange emotions:

“I am not depressed, but my mind is more inert than usual; but the opposite should be true – in this place, where so many divine minds flourished, my strength and spark (if I have any) should flare up all the more unless everything dies down from decay and old age, so the same things that harm the body poison the powers of the spirit.”<sup>23</sup>

For this reason, the catalogue of the most important locations of Roman pagan topography, sticking out of “the bowels of the hills” (*montium viscera*), includes a significant passage accusing the contemporaries:

“Still, then, the violence of the greedy and lazy populace has not succeeded in removing most traces of the ancestors; it is the violence of a populace seemingly envious of the glory of antiquity and therefore wanting to erase its memory. Since the memory of events is usually maintained in two things – books and buildings – there are two crafts employed by Romans to bring death and destruction upon them. First is painting: to paint napkins for pilgrims, painters destroy the most useful books, the only copies remaining in the world. Then there are those who make furnaces: so as not to convey stones from afar, they tear down buildings to turn marble and stone into lime. This is why the greater number of exceptional buildings has already been torn down and is being demolished every day.”<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 215, «non est igitur ut sim deteriori animo, verum ingenio sum tardiore quam soleo, cuius causam non satis ratione conicio: quod contra fieri deberet, ut ubi tot divina ingenia floruerunt, hic, si qua est in me visac scintilla, eo amplius excandescere debuisset, nisi fortasse omnia situ et vetustate torpeant, et que noxia sunt corpori, eadem quoque animi vires inficiant.»

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p., 216, «nondum igitur efficere tantum avare atque ignave plebis violentia potuit quin ex prioribus multa supersint, que quasi glorie sue invida ad obolendam vetustatis memoriam nititur. cum enim duo sint quibus extare rerum memoria soleat, libris scilicet atque edificiis, duabus artibus Romani in eorum excidium perniciemque contendunt: pictorum scilicet, qui, ut sudaria peregrinis effingat, utillimos plerunque et qui in orbe unici sunt libros evertunt; item eorum qui fornaces exercent, qui, ne lapides e longiuo vehant, edificia destruunt, uti marmor et vivum lapi-

Vergerio's interest in these sources of knowledge on antiquities had a specific purpose. Already the earlier texts show his wish to create a kind of propedeutics, whereby he wanted to include knowledge from the past into a consistent humanist education. When he returned from Florence, where he spent some time in 1399 learning Greek from Manuel Chrysoloras, he decided in Padua to use his fresh impressions to write a pedagogical discussion called *De ingenuis moribus ac liberalibus studiis*. This is another text that puts forward Vergerio's faith in the possibility of reviving ancient knowledge, which had fallen into disuse, neglect and oblivion. This Vergerio's work stands out for having been widely read and influential in the development of humanist pedagogy and epistemology. Moreover, it conveys the optimism of the belief that it is possible, in an age when culture is diagnosed as dying away, to create a "remedy" to those confusions, as well as the theoretical observations in creating a new *curriculum* and, consequently, a different society of educated people.

The text was written in 1402 or 1403 in Padua and dedicated to Ubertino, son of the ruler Francesco Novello.<sup>25</sup> Vergerio had two basic considerations regarding his assumed reader: how to adapt to direct addressees and how to build an educational system that would reveal the sympathy for inherited antiquities in the descendants of the Romans, free-thinking Italians, and eventually all Europeans. As for the first issue, it can be noticed that the text is directed towards two goals: promoting knowledge and promoting military skills. This combination was considered by Vergerio as truly worthy of a future ruler, who should be aware not only of the friendship of his ancestors with scholars like Petrarch, but also of the importance of military arts.<sup>26</sup>

dem convertant in calcem. qua ratione plurima iam egregia edificia diruta sunt et diruuntur in dies.»

<sup>25</sup> On the dates, cf. Smith, in: VERGERIO 1934, cit. n. 1, p. XIX, who locates the appearance of the work between 1400 and 1402. BARON 1970, cit. n. 1, p. 145, thinks that it was written before 1402. HOLMES 1992, cit. n. 1, p. 15, thinks that 1402 would be the right year. ROBEY 1973, cit. n. 1, p. 14, shared that opinion, but changed his mind seven years later (ROBEY 1980, cit. n. 1, p. 27), moving the dates to the end of 1402 and the beginning of 1403, i.e. to the end of Vergerio's sojourn in Padua.

<sup>26</sup> There were several reasons for this at the time, from Visconti's conquest of Padua in 1388 to the Venetian invasion of the city in 1405, when the Carraras were finally expelled.

Vergerio was led by such considerations not only in the written testimonies he left us, but also in his inconstant worldview, as his earlier sympathies for republican administration like the one in Florence turned in Padua towards a monarchic principle.<sup>27</sup>

On the other hand, there was the issue of introducing knowledge into communities that inherited antiquities. For that purpose, Vergerio creates a program for young men with the task of recognizing values and linking with energy sources from antiquities.<sup>28</sup> He finds a solution in constructing some kind of a theory of impressions, which covers a large part of his discussion: it becomes a prerequisite for talking about a certain strategy of humanists in creating their own culture. This theory stems from the mentioned Scipio's lessons on urging to action, and Vergerio applies it to current observations of and insights into antiquities, but also develops its power for far-reaching purposes: to affect the character of boys.<sup>29</sup> These talents must be recognized as different (*ingeniorum varietas*), and there must be a response to the difference: some boys are soft, others are governed by black bile, or by fathers, or by excessive wealth. Therefore, Vergerio takes Hercules' choice as exemplary:

"He saw before him two paths, one of virtue and the other of pleasure, and being, as it happened, at the age when one must choose one's way for all of life, he withdrew into a solitary place. There, by him-

<sup>27</sup> Such changes corroborate Baron's arguments on the political determination of humanist thought and speech. ROBEY 1973, cit. n. 1, pp. 3–37, convincingly shows that the issue of republican freedom was never crucial for Vergerio, by pointing out the document *De monarchia*, written between 1394 and 1405, as the best text for understanding his political choices.

<sup>28</sup> On the "energies" emanating from antiquities, cf. Leonard BARKAN, *Unearthing the Past. Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture*, New Haven – London 1999, p. XXXI, which points out that early archaeological practices in the making of renaissance culture had the purpose of exploring the "energy gap – the sparking distance – that exists between an artistic source and its destination."

<sup>29</sup> Vergerio expresses this belief by saying: «Nam quod teneris mentibus insitum est, alte radices mittit, nec facile postea divelli ulla vi potest», Pier Paolo VERGERIO, *The Character and Studies Befitting a Free-Born Youth, Humanist Educational Treatises* (ed. Craig W. Kallendorf), Cambridge, Mass., London 2002, p. 58.

self, he thought long and hard (judgment and discernment being weak at that age), and after rejecting pleasure, he at last embraced virtue.”<sup>30</sup>

The challenges of the contemporary world, embodied in the suggestive power of Roman ruins and opposed to happy necessity (*felix necessitas*), which forces one to do good, are counteracted by a strong opponent in this system of understanding and intellectual formation. Two ways of life, leisure and action, are reflected in the division of the mind (*duplex intellectus*) into speculative and practical, itself reflected in the division of sensitivity to different kinds of inspirational sources from the antiquities.

Having considered those natural givens, Vergerio tries to sort them into branches of education: *trivium* and *quadrivium*, with the addition of poetics, physics, medicine, law and theology. In these pursuits, the path of understanding is redirected towards fruits useful for the community. It leads from the discovery of antiquities, where the reader lives in the company of many voices, to independence, which comes about when insights are applied to life. For that reason, Vergerio insists on a very thorough education of boys, who should, as in Cicero's formation of traces, think of the future. So the anecdote of Socrates' advice to young men that they should look at themselves in the mirror is broadened by Vergerio into the advice that boys should look into the living mirror (*vivum speculum*) of the ancestors, the mind image of the virtuous, deduced from reading. Like in the mentioned epistles, here the types of sources are clearly separated: the book is a more reliable conveyer of former existences; it is a second memory (*secunda memoria*). Books are the prerequisite of understanding and holy life, their purpose is adapted to the transferability of knowledge through copying.

<sup>30</sup> VERGERIO 2002, cit., n. 27, pp. 34–35, «Hic enim cum duas cerneret vias, unam virtutis, alteram voluptatis, forte id aetatis agens quando de tota vita deliberatio sumenda est, in solitudinem secessit ibique multum ac diu secum cogitans (ut est ea aetas imbecillo iudicio consilioque), virtutem tandem reiecta voluptate complexus est.» Cf. also Theodor MOMMSEN, Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua, *The Art Bulletin*, XXXIV/1, 1953, pp. 178–192, who finds the renewal of motives in Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*.

“For human memory and objects passed from hand to hand gradually decay and scarcely survive the lifetime of one person, but what has been skilfully entrusted to books endures forever. Perhaps a picture or carven marble or cast metal can excel even a well-written book, but such objects do not describe the times, nor do they readily disclose motivation in all its variety; they only express exterior states and fall easily into ruin. What is preserved in literary form, however, not only renders speech but also distinguishes styles of speaking and represents people’s thoughts. And if it has been published in numerous copies, it cannot easily perish, provided its diction is distinguished.”<sup>31</sup>

Written documents, as well as palpable works of art, warn us with their force, but also with their corruption, of the need for man and antiquities to coexist and be bequeathed to posterity:

“If by chance we are not able to create anything ourselves, we ought at least to pass on carefully the books we have received from those who have come before us to those who will come after, keeping them whole and uncorrupted, and in this manner we will usefully serve the interests of posterity and give past generations at least this one recompense for their labors.”<sup>32</sup>

Finally, we should point out yet another Vergerio’s thought, which deals with changed circumstances of receiving antiquities in relation to Petrarch’s time. Having presented Ubertino with the skills that will make up *studia humanitatis* and form a new generation of people, enriched with old knowledge and a feeling of presence of old

<sup>31</sup> VERGERIO 2002, cit. n. 27, pp. 44–45, «Memoria etenim hominum et quod transmittitur per manus sensim elabitur et vix unius hominis aevum exsuperat. Quod autem libris bene mandatum est, perpetuo manet, nisi pictura forsitan aut excisio marmorum aut fusio metallorum potest etiam tale quiddam praestare. Verum ea nec signant tempora, nec facile varietatem indicant motionum, et exteriorem tantum habitum exprimunt, ac labefactari facile possunt. Quod autem literis traditur non modo haec quae dicta sunt efficit, sed et sermones quoque notat et cogitatus hominum effingit ac, si pluribus exemplariis vulgatum est, non facile potest interire, si modo et dignitas accedat orationi.»

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., pp. 46–47, «Idque, curare debemus, ut quos a prioribus accepimus, si nihil ipsi ex nobis gignere forte possimus, integros atque incorruptos posteritati transmittamus: eoque pacto et his qui post nos futuri sunt utiliter consulemus et his qui praeterierunt vel unam hanc suorum laborum mercedem repensabimus.»

authoritative spirits, Vergerio makes a short remark near the end of the text: the first step towards knowledge is *the ability of doubt*.<sup>33</sup> In the culture of the renaissance, still very young, the ability to doubt, and to practice the repudiated ancient custom of approaching the truth, stands against the institutions of early medieval culture, which was greatly influenced by Gregory the Great. This pope, who until humanist times bore the image of a destroyer of pagan idols, was in his age able to eradicate observer's scepticism and establish the faith in the authenticity of myth.<sup>34</sup> The New Testament parable of the doubting Thomas (John 20:25–29) certainly helped; its power left its mark on the medieval displays of Rome made *outside* Rome. This division between material artefacts and written or oral reflection on such artefacts was opposed by Vergerio's generation with autopsy and direct confrontation with the archetype.

The ability to doubt is related to the young, who had to start displaying their knowledge before others, because disputes have become an important element of will, sharpening the mind, shaping the language and fortifying memory. The force of memory (*memoriae vis*) is directed towards the past, where it finds sources and vigour, and towards the future, in constant self-monitoring and enrichment of one's thoughts and uttered words. The world of antiquity, whose historical layers were uncovered by the sensibility of the Paduan and Florentine humanists, was, therefore, a living mirror. It contained depths beyond the observers' view of their own faces: new orators, sculptors and architects could, by looking at *others* in that world, search the areas of their own inspiration, their insights, their own split identity. Those who carried on the humanist project of rebirth looked at their own interests and intentions with

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 64, «Primus etenim ad disciplinas gradus est, posse dubitare ...»

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Tilmann BUDDENSIEG, Gregory the Great, The Destroyer of Pagan Idols. The History of a Medieval Legend Concerning the Decline of Ancient Art and Literature, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28, 1965, pp. 44–65. Richard KRAUTHEIMER, *Rome. Profile of a City, 312–1308*, Princeton 2000, p. 61, describes a change occurring in Gregory's age: "Miracles and spirits, good and evil, he treated as full reality, sincerely believing in them as spiritual forces. Where two centuries earlier educated Christians had remained sceptical, Gregory and his contemporaries accepted all this; to work miracles was simply in the nature of the sainted and their relics."



the face of Janus: turned to the past and thinking of the future, they used elements of new discoveries about antiquity to change their cognitive principles. Vergerio's elaboration of Petrarch's intuitive understanding of Rome, deduced from the readings of Livy, and direct sensory experience of the spectacle of ruins, provided humanism with an educational system that assumed an exchange of insights, a dispute about something mysterious, unclear or fragmentary, and thus stimulating.

Inheritance is a dialogical process that assumes the existence of a carrier of communication. In Vergerio's age, the mediator between two parties was a trace or fragment, which was not only a mystery facing rationality, but also an image of a trauma, which the humanists wanted to put up as a constituent element of their culture. Unlike the early Romantic interpreters of *la mélancholie de la ruine*, humanists used fragments as the basis for critical reaction, invigoration, involvement and construction of a paradoxical bifocal culture, which thirsts for the past as much as for an ideal future. It is precisely in that sense that the texts of Pier Paolo Vergerio in the late 14<sup>th</sup> to 15th centuries talk about traces, synecdoches of the world of antiquity in words and images that should inspire writers and artists. That is how foundations were laid to build a new culture from the ruins and death of the desolate Rome.

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pregledni znanstveni članek – review article

## MOČ PODOB IN SILE FRAGMENTOV V DELIH PIERA PAOLA VERGERIJA STAREJŠEGA

Članek razpravlja o percepciji starin koprškega humanista Petra Pavla Vergerija Starejšega (ok. 1369–1444). Avtor na primeru treh tekstov (pismo iz l. 1397 o podiranju Vergerijevega kipa v Mantovi, pismo iz 1398 o rimski topografiji in pedagoška razprava *De ingenuis moribus* iz 1402–1403) prikazuje razvoj Vergerijevega kritičnega odnosa do uničevalcev antičnih spomenikov ter razvoj teorije o moči podobe, pomenu spomina ter o posledicah uničevanja. Pri tem je uvedel sistem humanističnega učenja, pri katerem sta igrala glavno vlogo altruizem in ohranjanje starin. Za Vergerija so tako pisane kot stvarne starine predstavljale točke krepčila, intelektualne formacije in razvoja kulture spomina ter tradicije. V njegovih tekstih je čutiti razvoj ideje o sugestivnosti ostankov antične kulture (od teksta do podobe), tako da se le-ti kažejo kot zgodnji poskusi vzpostavitve humanistične epistemologije. Vergerijev poziv k skepsi kot kognitivnemu načelu in k dialektični razpravi o ohranjenih dokumentih se je pojavil sočasno s postopnim opuščanjem alegoreze v florentinskem humanizmu in se tako vključil v vse živahnejša kritična iskanja arhetipa, tako v filoloških postopkih kolacioniranja kot pri formaciji umetnikov.