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of the Epistles
of Marcantonio Sabellico:
The Case of
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Note on the Fortune of the Epistles of Marcantonio Sabellico: The Case of Matteo Bandello

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ABSTRACT: This essay draws attention to the specific phenomenon of borrowings among contemporaries, using as an example Marcantonio Sabellico, whose magnificent descriptions often appeared elsewhere with the role of literary frescoes. I take a close look at the case of a 1493 letter to *Barbavarus* (*Ep.* III 18), part of which was reused by Sabellico in a different context (*Enneades*, X, lib. VIII). After finding this epistle, Matteo Bandello revived it and inserted it in his *Parentalis oratio*, written on the death of Francesco II Gonzaga. An edition of the letter, which ended up becoming a descriptive model *par excellence* of a bucentaur is presented in the Appendix.

KEYWORDS: humanism; Latin tradition; textual appropriation; Marcantonio Sabellico, Matteo Bandello; bucentaur.

1. Foreword

I give in these pages the critical edition of *Ep.* III 18 by Marcantonio Sabellico (1436–1506), preceded by some material for reflection, in the hope of shifting interest towards the study of the letters of this humanist from Vicovaro, in regard to their quality as essays in the art of rhetoric

and models of style, and as paradigmatic texts that have been massively (and silently) reutilized in the literature.¹ The lack of familiarity with these writings —the collection has yet to be published in a modern edition— has meant that their revival, at times *ad unguem*, often passed unnoticed, appearing in the most unexpected contexts, such as the example that will be illustrated here: the oration written on the death of Francesco II Gonzaga by Matteo Bandello (1485–1561), the most renowned storyteller of the Renaissance.

The *Epistolarum familiarium libri XII* (fols. 24–63r of the *Opera* edited by the author: Venice, Albertino da Lessona, 1502 [USTC 854022]) span Sabellico's Venetian period, from his hiring at the Scuola di San Marco (1485) until the months around the work's publication. They include 305 letters stripped of their dates and arranged in an order that is not strictly chronological, further complicating texts that are already challenging, given their allusive language, the tendency to omit names and a frequent use of nicknames, often of impromptu coinage. The letters are of various types and include the dedications/prefaces and other para-texts of previously published works. The rather heterogeneous whole can be briefly divided into two parts: the first (books I–VI) gravitates around his output prior to the release of the *Enneades* (Venice, Bernardino and Matteo Vitali, 1498 [USTC 991473]); the second (books VII–XII) has at its center the aforementioned volume and its diffusion. Cutting across these thematic divisions are the exchanges with family members, old associates of the Roman Academy, and humanists in general. After Sabellico's death, his epistolary work was revived several times as a stand-alone publication before it was merged into the best-known edition of his writings: the *Opera omnia* revised by Celio Secondo Curione (Basilea, Johann Herwagen, 1560 [USTC 673895]: vol. IV, coll. 337–472). We have very few original manuscripts of the letters.

To date, the Epistolary of Sabellico has been turned to very episodically, and only then to extract information relating to his life, the vicissitudes of manuscripts, philological disputes, and the activities of booksell-

¹ For the collection of letters, the author and the bibliography, see Laneri (2020). All the translations in the present article are by the author.

ers and printers. It should therefore be noted that many pieces, though containing information of considerable interest from a historical-literary point of view, have not yet received the attention they deserve. One of these is the sample letter provided here, which contains a chronicle of the celebrations organized in Venice for the diplomatic visit of Beatrice d'Este, who arrived in the city with her brother Alfonso and her Mother Eleonora of Aragon on May 26, 1493. The missive, particularly its descriptive sections, was interpolated in specific works and anthologies as early as the sixteenth century (beginning with Zwinger 1575: 1307–08) and remains to this day an invaluable source for historical and artistic studies on Renaissance dance and musical performance, on the culture of festivals (and, more specifically, on the pomp, the shows and the great Venetian stage sets), on symbols, the survival of myths and the socio-political value of representations in civil and religious ceremonies (e.g., Guarino 1995: 86–105 and Helas 1999: 164–65 and 236–37). Here, of course, the perspective will be different.

2. *From the Epistolarum libri to the Enneades*

Letter III 18 is addressed to a “Barbavarus,” dedicatee of five other pieces (III 6; IV 6, 16; V 27; VIII 6), whose identity is not further specified. He has been identified as Carlo Barbavara (e.g., Bottari 1999: 216) who was among the correspondents of Francesco Filelfo. However, I think it is more plausible that Barbavarus was Carlo's brother, Scipione, who came from a refined humanistic background and was one of the most influential members of the secret Council of Ludovico Sforza, for whom he served as ambassador to Venice from October 1484 to February 1487 (Raponi 1964: 146–146). Barbavara must, therefore, have played a role in the preparations for the visit of Ludovico Sforza's wife, if he managed to involve his friend Sabellico in the celebration.

This letter, one of the firsthand testimonies that record the event, is certainly the most extensive and pertinent, alongside a sequence of letters in Italian that Beatrice sent to her husband to update him day by day on the honors she was receiving (ed. in Molmenti 1880: 604–11; to which is added another shorter one by Eleonora of Aragon to Ercole I

d'Este, ed. in Chiappini 1956: 84–85). Naturally, the authors' perspectives and critical abilities varied. Sabellico limits himself to the public display but he makes observations with a historian's eye, a certain mastery of the interpretation of symbols, and a gift for synthesis. By contrast, the nineteen-year-old Beatrice focuses on the private moments of the stay, giving an immediate and playful view of everything that surrounds her. The passage in question is included in §§ 6–12 (see Appendix). It portrays for us the moment of Beatrice's arrival in the lagoon and the welcome she received from Doge Agostino Barbarigo on his bucentaur, as well as a description of the boat and the simultaneous party on the water.

A decade after the letter in question, Sabellico returned to this same theme out of the necessity to give proper space to the doge's ship and its representative role in displaying the majesty of Venice in the continuation of his great historical work, the *Enneades* (Venice, Bernardino Viani, 1504 [USTC 854023]). He did not, however, feel compelled to try his hand at a new description better suited to this different literary genre and its corresponding register, not to mention the narrative thread itself. Instead, Sabellico opted to reproduce the letter's text with only small variations. This decision is understandable, especially given the number and vastness of the topics that had to find a place in the volume—the second book of the *Enneades* presents a universal history from the Sack of Rome in 410 to 1503—and the short time between the publication of his epistles and the drafting of the last books of his major work.

As in the account given to Barbavara, it is the narrative that offers the opportunity for the sort of ekphrasis that we find in Book VIII of *Enneas* X, at fol. CLXXr, under the heading *Bucentaurus navis*. However, the operation was not very selective; in fact, its repurposing was not limited to the parts strictly pertinent to the boat (its traditional ceremonial function, the way it was decorated, the occupants, its movement through the water, the crowd of smaller boats parading across and covering the entire surface of the water, the glitter of gold on the flags waving in the wind, the amazement and admiration that guided his gaze, and the boat's similarity to the chariot on which the Roman leaders celebrated the triumph). He also included the scenes created for the celebration of Beatrice d'Este. And so, after the description of the doge's ship and its

inevitable procession of honor, we get another view of the spectacle of boys and girls dressed up as little spirits, holding sistra, thyrsi and other symbols, hovering in the air thanks to a system of cables affixed to the highest parts of the boats and moved by machinery hidden from the spectators' view. Lower down and with perfect timing, the same system lifted slightly older children, also of both sexes, dressed as nymphs and tritons. (The text of the *Enneades* is presented in column-format in the next section of this essay to allow for easy comparison with the text of the letter, published in the Appendix.)

Now, the reuse of entire passages, both by the authors themselves in different works and by third parties through textual appropriation, was at that time—as we know—standard procedure. But here the operation is a little unusual, in that the report is the result of direct observation of the ceremony. We cannot doubt the originality and authenticity of the description sent to Barbavara, given that it corresponds with the meticulous contemporary description written by Beatrice d'Este. In Sabellico's historical work, though, the text is used to describe a different ceremony, one that in reality took place a few years earlier: that is, the solemn reception in Venice of the Queen of Cyprus, Caterina Corner, held on the occasion of her renunciation of the title and the island's annexation to the Republic on June 6, 1489.

Naturally, the idea that we are witnessing random coincidences between the two stories due to their repetitive repertoire of performances (inherently not very much in line with Venetian magnificence) is invalidated by the undeniable evidence of a large block of reused text taken from the epistolary report drawn up in 1493 for Barbavara. This textual recycling is further proven by the mention of the poor upkeep of the Este palace (as the destination of the festive water procession), which had nothing to do with the Queen of Cyprus, her abdication or the Corner family.² In all likelihood, Sabellico copied this full-bodied descriptive piece with the intention of portraying the *Bucentaurus navis* without

² A *palazzo* in the neighborhood of Santa Croce overlooking the Grand Canal, known today as Fondaco dei Turchi: built in the thirteenth century by the Pesaro family, it was donated in 1381 by the Republic to Niccolò II d'Este, whose family owned it until 1509.

completely renouncing the boat's intriguing description in the letter and, at the same time, in an attempt to add narrative depth to an episode of greater historical significance than Beatrice d'Este's visit, which at any rate turned out to be politically ineffective. Indeed, mention of her visit in the same work is made only in the quotation below, in which Beatrice is indeed deprived of the party, but not of what constituted its true historical novelty, namely the female rowing race, which is the oldest example we have to date (*Enn.* X, lib. VIII, fol. CLXXIIIr):

Leonora Herculis coniunx in urbem advecta est cum Beatrice altera filia; nupserat haec admodum puella Ludovico Sfortiae. Itum est his obviam ab universa civitate in amicorum principum gratiam suntque in urbe ludi multifariam celebrati, in quibus puellae suburbanae navali cursu certarunt: spectaculum ad id tempus Venetae urbi insuetum.

Eleonora, wife of Ercole, was taken to the city together with her second daughter Beatrice; she had married Ludovico Sforza very young. The entire citizenry came to meet them as a sign of gratitude to the friendly princes and games were held in various places in the city, including a boat race in which girls from the suburbs competed: a spectacle at the time unusual for the city of Venice.

Obviously, most historians and lovers of festivals and the performing arts who have considered this passage in the last five centuries took it from the *Enneades*, a work that was, and still is, better known than the author's letters. They attribute to Caterina Corner's return to her homeland what in actuality was an event organized and implemented for the diplomatic visit of Beatrice d'Este. We find this already in Modius (1586: fol. 50r–v) who entitled his extract *Triumphalis investio Catherinae Corneliae Cyprae reginae*, following Grasser (1624: 439–40), Beyerlinck (1678: 400) and so many others who had as their only source the version preserved in Sabellico's great historical work.

3. *From the Enneades to the Parentalis oratio of Matteo Bandello*

I now come to a case in which the text in question was extrapolated and used by another author who used it in a still different context: the

tranche re-emerges in a Latin oration by Matteo Bandello, the famous storytelling friar who was a source of inspiration for playwrights such as Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Shakespeare.

Escaping from Milan in 1515 following the French reoccupation and finding shelter at the court of Mantua, Bandello was commissioned by Isabella d'Este to write a eulogy for her husband, the Marquis Francesco II Gonzaga, who died on March 29, 1519. From Bandello's autograph letter dated March 20, 1520 and sent to the Marquis's son, Federico Gonzaga, we know that the text of the eulogy (handwritten and attached to the letter) was composed between the summer and the winter of that year, in anticipation of the first anniversary of his death. It was then publicly recited on the following March 29 by the same author who, for the second anniversary, took care to have it delivered to Mantua already printed (s.n. [1520]) under the title of *Parentalis oratio pro clarissimo imperatore Francisco Gonzaga marchione Mantuae IV* (Bandello, e.g., Canova 2016: 81–96 and in Godi 1983: 72–119). It is a very long *laudatio* (the one read aloud must have been a shortened version) that celebrates the intrepid soul and the warlike virtues of this gentleman and mercenary captain as it recounts all his exploits in detail.

The passage that concerns us here can be found at the end of the story of the battle of Fornovo (July 6, 1495) between the army of Charles VIII and the anti-French League. Francesco Gonzaga, who was hired by Venice to lead its forces, makes his entry into the city, where Doge Agostino Barbarigo awaits him on the bucentaur to celebrate his triumph.³ It is at this point that, after a few connecting sentences, we come across what will turn out to be Sabellico's familiar narrative. I reproduce the two texts in parallel below, so that we can appreciate their almost perfect correspondence (for the *Enneades*, I use the main edition; for the *Parentalis oratio*, the critical edition prepared by Godi 1983: 241–302):

³ The battle of Fornovo, or of the Taro, had in fact an uncertain outcome and therefore was not won by the Venetians and there was no triumph on the bucentaur for Gonzaga. It should also be pointed out that it is not Sabellico who falsifies the facts (the episode is correctly recounted in *Enn.* X, lib. XIX, fols CLXXVIIv–CLXXVIIIr), but rather Bandello's encomiastic motives.

Sabellico, *Enn.* X,
lib. VIII, fol. CLXXr.

Caterina Cornelia [...] Augustinus princeps et patres Bucentauro navi exceptam, triumphanti similem per mediam urbem [...] regali apparatu instructas, devexere. Vetus est mos civitatis [...] Bucentaurum purpura et auro insternere. [...] agiturque nunc remo, nunc velis, saepius remulco. Sedet princeps in puppi auro strata, aureo et ipse fere pallio amictus, assidet summus ille ordo dextra levaque maiestatis et silentii plenus; [...] tubae tibiaeque aliaque id genus instrumenta circumsonant. Bucentaurum suburbana praecurrunt navigia [...]; haec publico sumptu auleis et festa fronde in topiarii operis modum inflexa ad tempus instruunt. A prora et puppi pulpita altiuscule attolluntur, quorum fastigiis pueri puellaeque eleganti forma cultuque exquisitissimo, alii alios mentiti genios, latenti machina subnixi puro apertoque librantur aere: hi aurea systra, illi thyrsos aliaque deorum dearumve gestantes insignia; inferiore gradu adolescentes in tritonum et nympharum speciem figurati, suo quisque statu, concentu tamen uno subvehuntur. Aurea ad haec signa toto navigio defixa ventoque agitata-----
-----spectaculum praebent tam voluptuosum ut nullum sit propemodum aliud quod merito huic uni comparari possit. Bucentaurum tanta vis cymbarum sequitur officii gratia ac spectandi studio, ut interdum, quam longe lateque toto stagno fert prospectus, tegantur aquae frequenti comitatu. Quam rerum pompam si quis vetustarum rerum peritus diligentius spectet, haud multum diversam agnoscat ab ea quam veterum scriptorum quidam in Quiritium triumphis prodidere, et q.s.

Bandello, *Parentalis oratio*, pp. 261–62.

Augustinus Barbadicus, dux, Bucentauro navi illum excipi voluit, et, triumphanti similem, per mediam urbem ad aedes, regali apparatu publice instructas, devhei. Bucentaurum vero purpura et auro insternere, in huiusmodi pompis, Veneti consueverunt, quae nunc remo, nunc velis, saepius remulco agitur. Sedebat princeps in puppi auro strata. Assidebat patriciorum ordo dextra levaque, maiestatis et silentii plenus. Tubae tibiaeque atque alia id genus instrumenta circumsonabant. Bucentaurum suburbana praecurrebant navigia. Haec, publico sumptu, auleis et festa fronde, in topiarii operis modum inflexa, mirifice exornata, visebantur. A prora et puppi pulpita altiuscule surgebant, quorum fastigiis pueri puellaeque, eleganti forma cultuque exquisitissimo, alii alios mentiti genios, latenti machina subnixi, puro apertoque aere librantur. Hi aurea systra, illi thyrsos aliaque deorum dearumve gestabant insignia. Inferiore gradu adolescentem, in tritonum et nympharum speciem figurati, suo quisque statu, concentu tamen uno, subvehebantur. Aurea ad haec signa toto navigio defixa ventoque agitata, *et, in primis, victrices ipsius Gonzagae aquilae* spectaculum praebent tam voluptuosum ut nullum sit propemodum aliud quod merito huic uni comparari possit. Bucentaurum tanta vis sequebatur cymbarum, officii gratia ac spectandi studio, ut quam longe lateque toto stagno fert prospectus, tegerentur aquae frequenti comitatu. Quam rerum pompam si quis, vetustarum rerum peritus, diligentius spectet, haud multum diversam agnoscat ab ea, quam veterum scriptorum quidam in Quiritium triumphis prodidere, et q.s.

In addition to the necessary variations of the tenses and some rare changes in the *ordo verborum*, the two texts present minimal differences limited to a reformulation of Sabellico's wording where the texts were stitched together and the removal of information that seemed irrelevant, superfluous and/or excessively didactic. Gone now are: the reference to Palazzo d'Este and information relating to the custom of welcoming important visitors on the bucentaur; its capacity to hold all the city's magistrates and senators; details of the fabrics from which the latter's robes were made; and the fact that certain boats in the procession [the Venetian ones] *paraschermos patrio sermone vocant*. Meanwhile, the only significant adaptation to the new context is the introduction of the ship bearing the Gonzaga coat of arms (including the imperial eagles) into the foreground among the standards fixed on the doge's ship.

Despite these differences, the result was nonetheless an unhappy one. As we have seen, in order to give the bucentaur—the very symbol of Venetian power—its proper importance in the *Enneades*, Sabellico opted for the partial recovery of the epistolary description of 1493, but he did it furtively, using that text to describe a ceremony different from the original one, of course, but still dedicated to a woman. The report from the observation of the celebrations for Beatrice d'Este is undeniably recycled to illustrate the festivities for the return of Caterina Corner. However, perhaps feeling legitimized by the reference to the Romans' triumphal chariot (an entirely humanistic digression detached from the circumstances narrated), Bandello applied to the return of the victorious man of arms a festive setting designed to be suited to female tastes and sensibilities. And so, in the *Parentalis oratio*, Francesco Gonzaga is not led aboard the bucentaur amidst heroic representations and a display of loot or symbols of war (Byzantine chronicles and sixteenth-century ceremonial books testify to Venetian allegories of this type), but rather in an atmosphere of delicate, flower-laden garden boats and amid 'flights' of children impersonating beings connected to the worship of Isis and Dionysus, as well as minor mythological figures linked to nature and water.

Those who have studied the Latin works of Matteo Bandello (e.g., Masi 1900; Fiorato 1979; Godi 1983; Pirota 1997) have noticed neither the atypical nature of this triumphal ceremony nor its actual origin. As a

matter of fact, in the critical edition of the oration (Godi 1983: 261–62) a good deal of time is spent searching for the faintest echoes of classical authors. Regarding the passage taken here as an example, Isidore of Seville (orig. 19, 4, 8) and Ammianus Marcellinus (18, 5, 6) are cited in the apparatus for *remulco*; Persius (4, 7–8) for *fecisse silentia turbae / maiestate manus*; Valerius Maximus (3, 7, 3) for *pleno venerationis silentio*; again Isidore (orig. 19, 26, 8) and Virgil (Aen. 2, 249) for *auleis*, and later Pliny the Elder and the Younger, Cicero, Apuleius, Macrobius, Servius, Appian: all sources or memories, if anything, of the humanist from Vicovaro.

4. *In conclusion*

Marcantonio Sabellico is an author whose weight and, with it, the influence he exercised on prose writers in Latin for at least two centuries, has not yet been fully grasped. Among the numerous examples that I could have cited, it seemed interesting to me to set out a case of textual appropriation made by a brilliant short-story writer who approached Sabellico with the ambition of offering his noble client a stately Latin oratory with pretensions of solemnity, but whose product proved to be rather inappropriate. This example also provides a preliminary glimpse of how bold authorial remixing can spoil an entire tradition. On the other hand, this quick overview is only intended to give a taste of the sometimes-reckless reuse of Sabellico's works and, at the same time, to recall the many pitfalls that can lurk in historical narratives, even those derived from contemporary and authoritative sources. Sabellico had an eminent reputation as a historian (as is well known, he was the first official historian of the Republic and the first man of letters to obtain, in 1486, the privilege of 'copyright'), but perhaps even more incisive was his reputation as an elegant Latin writer. Indeed, many of his pages ended up losing all contact with the realities that initially inspired them and even lose themselves in a purely literary dimension. Among those works of his that were considered exemplary (and that were variously plundered) were the epistles, and Sabellico was keenly aware of their value as works of art, even if he declared himself (with his usual self-effacing politeness) convinced—in a passage from the dedication of the *Epistolarum familiarum*

libri XII to Marcantonio Morosini (fol. 1v of the 1502 edition)—that the collection of letters could compete with his major work, at least from a stylistic point of view:

En duodecim Familiarium epistolarum libri tuo nomine temere prodeunt in apertum, qui etsi humiliore matre (materia dico obscuriore) orti sint quam sorores possintque verius hybridae quam vernae dici, gestiunt tamen Enneadum illarum fratres vocari, quippe qui si ingenuitate vincuntur, festivo vultu et urbanitate cum sororibus certent.

Behold, twelve books of Familiar Epistles are rashly coming to light, with a dedication to you. Although they were born to a mother of a humbler condition (from a darker subject matter, I mean) than that of their sisters and may define themselves as more accurately mixed race rather than home-born, they nevertheless burn with the desire to be called brothers of the famous Enneads, because, even if they are surpassed by their sisters in nobility, they rival them for their cheerful face and elegance.⁴

⁴This article has been translated from Italian by Ken Scriboni.

Appendix

Editorial interventions on the text are limited to the correction of typographical errors. Graphic variation in the edition has been regularized and classical forms restored.

Lettera III 18

(*Epistolarum familiarium libri XII*, ed. 1502, ff. 17v-18r)

[1] Marcus Antonius Barbavaro suo.

Quam in quaerenda amicitia sim foelix vel ex hoc uno, Barbavare, intelligo, quod te talem sum amicum sortitus quo nihil est, ut video, officiosius, nihil amabilius et, quod ex praesenti affectu animi sentio, nihil est tuo genio ad promerendam gratiam accommodatius.⁵ [2] Mirum est quod dicam, sed quia verius vero est dicam tamen: fecisti paucis mensibus quibus haec amicitia nobis inita est ut tantum te hodie diligam quantum eorum neminem qui coniunctissime mecum vixerunt essemque ego vere dignus odio nisi hoc in te animo essem, quippe qui sedulo das operam ut haec inter nos nuper orta necessitudo mutua litterarum frequentia in dies magis augeatur. [3] Vellem ego me eum esse qui per otium possem tibi in officio respondere, equidem plane intelligeres quantum tuis studiis in hac parte delector; praesto tamen, quod possum, gratissimam tibi eorum quae facis memoriam. [4] Interim nolo mihi longiusculum hoc silentium desidiae ascribas: nihil est enim me uno negotiosius, nihil curis districtius.⁶ Perfruo tamen nihilominus tuarum litterarum lectione cupioque et opto in horas tuum in me meritum augeri: me abs te in primis amari volo et quod tua sponte facis ut facere pergas oro te plurimum et hortor. [5] Illud praeterea tuo in me amori et benivolentiae imputo quod me per eos qui

⁵ *accomodatius ed.*

⁶ *districtius ed.*

cum Beatrice Estensi Venetias venire conventum voluisti, licet illi maiora secuti negotia officium non obiverint. Caeterum tam gratum id mihi fuit quam si rite omnia peregissent.

[6] Beatricem venientem Barbaricus princeps et primores patrum, frequenti matronarum coetu, Bucentauro navi exceperunt. Vetus est mos civitatis, in illustrium hospitem adventu, eam navim auro et purpura insternere. Est id navigium senatus et omnium urbis magistratuum capax agiturque tecto remigio, saepius remulco. [7] Sedet princeps civitatis in puppi auro strata et ipse aureo fere pallio amictus, quem omnium civitatis magistratuum senatorumque claudit consessus maiestatis et silentii plenus; hos aurum, purpura et quod minimum est coccus⁷ vestit. Comitantur multi interim variique concentus euntem. [8] Praecedunt longo ordine navigia pleraque⁸ tapetibus, aulaeis⁹ ac festa fronde in topiarii operis speciem varie ad tempus instructa, quibus a puppi pulpita consurgunt ex quorum fastigiis omnifariam apparatu collucentibus pueri puellaeque eleganti cultu, alii alios genios mentiti, occultiore nexu aperto puroque librantur aere: [9] hi sinistra, illi thyrsos alique alia deorum insignia ferentes vehuntur, inferiore gradu aliquanto maiores natu; caeterum, aetate et ipsi florentes, in tritonum et nympharum morem figurati inter suavissimos cantus et odores, suo quisque statu. [10] Plurima ad haec vexilla auro micantia, toto navigio defixa ventoque agitata, tantam spectantibus voluptatem afferunt ut nullum, meo iudicio, sit hodie in terris tam voluptuosum spectaculum quod blando et hilari¹⁰ aspectu possit huic uni merito comparari. [11] Sequitur ducariam navim tanta cymbarum multitudo,¹¹ quibus magna pars civitatis officii causa vehitur, ut ad octo interdum stadia qua longe excurrit tegatur stagni facies. Quae pompae ratio, si a vetustarum rerum peritis diligentius consideretur, non multum dissimilem, etsi in diverso elemento, ab ea reperient qua veteres Romani dicuntur in triumphis usi, [12] ut ornatissima illa navis ac longe maxima sit currus, quum nullus alioqui

⁷ caecus *ed.*

⁸ pleraque *ed.*

⁹ auleis *ed.*

¹⁰ hillari *ed.*

¹¹ multitudo *ed.*

tantae moli possit currus comparari; ille minorum navium apparatus triumphalis pompa quae currui praeferrī solita est, qua simulacra urbium rerumque gestarum series variis erat imaginibus expressa; [13] lintrium vis illa ingens quae Bucentaurum sequitur officia Quiritium triumphantem ducem comitantium, etsi luce illa, quod raro accidere solet, actuariae naves veloces et biremes bellico apparatu instructae sunt pompam illam secutae. [14] Attulit et matronarum coetus eodem die non insuave spectaculum ante oculos civitatis, exquisitissimo cultu praetervectae. In aurea veste nulla hodie conspicitur, quum paucis ante annis pistorum etiam filiae conspicerentur; auro igitur legibus adempto, alio incubuit muliebris luxuria: [15] iam a medio sursum, quicquid est, totum gemmis et unionibus tegitur, ut frugalissimus ornatus quaternis stet milibus aureorum nummum, mediocriter conspicuus denis, duplo aut triplo maiore adhuc conspectione dignus. Formam ex aliis discas, etsi scriptorum sit de hac quoque iudicare. [16] Atque hoc illa comitatu per mediam urbem, cum Leonora matre, ad Estenses¹² aedes delata, ubi biduo post suburbanae puellae ad quinquaginta numero, lineis vestibus succinctae, navali cursu decertarunt: spectaculum huic urbi ad eam diem insuetum, utpote in Beatricis gratiam tum primum excogitatum; secutum virile certamen maiore navium actu, sed quia res nota minus voluptuosum. [17] Postridie illius diei, centum lectae ex omni nobilitate matronae cultu et forma insigni, comitio ad tempus instructo, velut in procinctu steterē; lectissimi iuvenes cum his ad tiliarum cantum in orchestra saltarunt. Mox, inclinante die, tres heroico habitu Indicis beluis sedentes ad tubarum cantum magister scaenae in comitium intulit: hi, magno caveae silentio, semel atque iterum orchestram circumvecti, in eam transivere; [18] tum ibi mutatis modulis, non molli et effracta sed virili et heroica saltatione (qualem Pyrrhicem fuisse suspicari possis) non nihil evagati, quum mira corporis agilitate omnium in se oculos vertissent, sinistra quae manibus quatiebant aureis pomis praefixa repente concrepuerunt atque foliis quae introrsum complexa fuerant dissilientibus, bos, leo et maurus, fidei, pacis et concordiae inscriptione, mediis velut liliis magno plausu et clamore extiterunt fuitque corollarium illud eorum quae postea secuta

¹² *extenses ed.*, *extensas Curione* (Basilea 1560).

sunt. [19] Nam tantisper dum bellaria inferuntur orchestra nonnihil in se caveam revocavit, centum et amplius florenti aetate ministri, ex omni iuventute lecti, ex saccharo¹³ et auro sigilla longo ordine circumtulert et in his signa et imagines sociorum principum, naves cum toto remigio, pistrices, sirenas,¹⁴ tritones atque omnifariam pelagi monstra; inerant et elephantes, cameli, leones, ursi, tigres,¹⁵ pardi, aquilae, vultures, strutiocameli, pavones et mille volucrum genera; [20] quicquid praeterea aestas, quicquid foelix habet autumnus, opificum manus naturae rerum aemulae affabre ex eadem materia effinxerant, quorum pars maxima ad longiorem moram averruncandam a populo direpta est. Tumultuabantur adhuc cunei recenti rapina, quum maior quam ullus antea tubarum clangor ex comitii vestibulo redditus aures et oculos omnium in se vertit. [21] Tum postremus ille scoenicus incredibili spectantium stupore est chorus invectus: elephanti, hippopotami,¹⁶ ibices, harpyiae¹⁷ et aliae parum notae animalium effigies currus et pegmata in orchestram detulere. Hic demum Meleagri amor ac pene totum Calydonis¹⁸ schoema magna scoenicorum arte maiore spectantium voluptate repraesentatum.

[22] Caetera ex aliis cognosces. Quamquam video quam inepte fecerim, qui haec tibi sum scribere adortus quae ex eorum multis qui rei non interfuerunt solum, sed praefuerunt, discere potuisti. Sed ita facto opus fuit ut vel una epistola tecum paria facerem; quae, si cum ornatissimis illis quas ad me dedisti in re non fecerit aequilibrium, verborum saltem habeat hostimentum. Vale.

¹³ sacharo *ed.*

¹⁴ syrenas *ed.*

¹⁵ tygres *ed.*

¹⁶ hippotami *ed.*

¹⁷ arpyae *ed.*

¹⁸ Calidonis *ed.*

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