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A Rare Edition of  
Angelo Poliziano's *Nutricia*

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# A Rare Edition of Angelo Poliziano's *Nutricia*

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this note is to draw scholars' attention to a little-known edition of Angelo Poliziano's *Nutricia* (Leipzig, 1517). One of the only two surviving copies of the volume (Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, 76, 39) contains annotations which constitute indisputable proof of how Poliziano's poems attracted the interest of Renaissance readers.

KEYWORDS: Italian humanism, Latin poetry, Angelo Poliziano, Italian and German printers, Marginalia, Hieronymus Adam.

**T**he *Nutricia* is the last poem in a series of four *Silvae* written by Angelo Poliziano (1454–94), an accomplished poet both in Latin and the vernacular, a philosopher, a scholar of high prestige, and the author of an extensive correspondence with other Italian humanists. Modelled on Statius's occasional poetry, the collection, which represented the culmination of Poliziano's poetic achievement, was begun in 1482 and completed four years later. The subject of the first, the *Ambra*, is the exaltation of Homer, font of all poetry and eloquence; the second, the *Manto*,

is a general introduction to the poetry of Virgil, and the third, the *Rusticus*, constitutes a verse treatise on the life of the countryman based on Virgil's *Georgics* and Hesiod's *Works and Days*. The longest of the *Silvae*, the *Nutricia* celebrates poets and poetry itself from earliest mythical times to Poliziano's own day.

The *Silvae* were attracting interest from Italian printers even during Poliziano's lifetime. Following publication of the *Manto* by Antonio Miscomini in Florence in 1482, an edition of the *Rusticus* was issued by the same printer a year later, and in November 1485 the Florentine Niccolò di Lorenzo prepared an edition of the *Ambra*. Published by Miscomini, the *editio princeps* of the *Nutricia* appeared in Florence on May 26, 1491 and was followed by a reprint by the Bolognese Francesco (Platone) de' Benedetti less than a month later, on June 21. In early 1492 Miscomini reprinted the *Rusticus* and the *Manto* in quick succession (February 7 and 23), and in June of that year individual editions of the *Manto*, the *Rusticus*, and the *Ambra* came off de' Benedetti's printing press in the space of just three weeks. The de' Benedetti volumes were the basis of the Aldine *Opera omnia* of 1498, published four years after Poliziano's death. No Italian edition of the *Silvae* was printed in the sixteenth century even though the poems continued to circulate in Italy in manuscript form. In contrast, in the first half of the century the fame of Poliziano's Latin poetry travelled widely elsewhere across Europe and, between 1506 and 1554, no fewer than twenty-three editions of the texts were published in the Low Countries, in the German-speaking world, in France, and in Spain.<sup>1</sup>

A highly distinctive feature common to most sixteenth-century editions of the *Silvae* is the abundant exegetical material. Heavy marginal and interlinear manuscript annotation in many of the copies consulted and the inclusion of printed annotations in several editions of the poems clearly indicate that Poliziano's Latin poetry was the subject of commentary across Renaissance Europe well into the last decades of the sixteenth century. The texts were also part of the syllabus of several academic institutions of the time (Coroleu 2014: 63–67). One of those humanists who may have deemed the pieces suitable for the teaching of the Latin

<sup>1</sup>This paragraph draws extensively on Coroleu 2014: 47–48.

language and the introduction to the classical world for students was Hieronymus Adam *Bautzenus* (or *Bauczenus*, fl. 1517–40), a town councillor of Bautzen, in Saxony, and responsible for the edition of the *Nutricia* discussed in this note.<sup>2</sup> Published by Jakob Thanner in 1517, Adam's edition is a good indication of contemporary interest in Poliziano's Latin poetry in Leipzig, where two editions of the *Rusticus* were also published in 1512 and 1521.<sup>3</sup> The text used by Thanner for his edition was the Florentine edition of the *Nutricia*, with Poliziano's dedicatory letter to Cardinal Antonio Pallavicini Gentili. In addition, the volume printed in Leipzig includes a short poem in elegiacs on the title page, in which Adam praises Poliziano as poetic heir to Virgil and Homer, and encourages the reader to purchase his edition:

Salve quo toto nihil est foelicius orbe,  
 salveto Angelica, culte libelle, manu.  
 Nam tu Maeonias dubio certamine Musas  
 ausus et Andinos aequiparare modos.  
 Caetera, quid vultis? Vulgaris turba poetae  
 cedite, vos albis ille praeibit equis. 5  
 Hic Phoebos et Musis et cedro digna loquutus,  
 cur igitur vatem non tibi, lector, emis?  
 Quid verbis opus est? Nihil huic, mihi crede, secundum,  
 nil, quod non herbam porrigat, ipse leges. 10  
 QUID MANET INTACTUM?<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *Angeli Policiani Sylva cui titulus Nutritia*, Leipzig: Jakob Thanner, 1517. Information on Adam is scarce. In a letter from Philipp Melanchthon dated August 15, 1540 he is comforted after the death of his young son earlier that year (Melanchthon 1979: 73 and see Melanchthon 2003: 35 for information about Adam's position as town councillor in Bautzen).

<sup>3</sup> *Angeli Politiani Silva cui titulus Rusticus in poeta Hesiodi Vergiliique Georgicon enarratione pronuntiata*, Leipzig: Jakob Thanner, 1512 and Leipzig: Valentin Schumann, 1521 (respectively, VD16 P 4001 and VD16 P 4003).

<sup>4</sup> "Hail, elegant little book, happier than whom there is nothing in the entire world. I bid good day to you, written with Angelic hand. For, in an open contest, you dared become equal to the Maeonian Muses and to the metres from Andes [Virgil's birthplace]. You others, what do want? You, mediocre crowd, give way to the poet. He shall ride ahead of you on his white horses. 'He has spoken of things worthy

Only two copies of this text are known to have survived (Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek 76, 39, and Zwickau, Ratsschulbibliothek 6.1.29 (3)) and the volume features both in the *Verzeichnis der Drucke des 16. Jahrhunderts* (VD16 ZV 26477) and in the catalogues of the above-mentioned libraries. I therefore do not claim to have discovered the 1517 edition of Poliziano's *Nutricia* but, to the best of my knowledge, the book has not elicited any interest from scholars working on the dissemination of Italian humanism in sixteenth-century Europe. Of the only two extant copies, the one held in Copenhagen is worthy of note as it contains reader's markings which provide proof of how the *Nutricia* may have enjoyed exposure at the time.<sup>5</sup> The annotations, interlinear and marginal, are written in the same hand, which has a distinct slope (Figure 1). Annotation is restricted to two well-defined sections within the poem: lines 169 to 190, a passage focusing on the *furor poeticus* (fol. A5r–v), and lines 232 to 302, where poetry's primitive manifestations in classical and biblical antiquity are discussed (fol. A6v–B2r).

As a rule, the annotator employs interlinear glosses to paraphrase or otherwise explain the meaning of a word used by Poliziano, while reserving marginal notes for cross-references. In the interlinear comments the annotator's initial concern is with making clear the syntactic relation between words. He provides word-order marks by connecting related terms appearing in the same line through underlining or crossing out. At 257 (“*dulcia terribili mutans psalteria bello*,” “alternating the sweet psalterly with horrid warfare”), the annotator marks the relation between adjectives and nouns according to the following system: “dulcia terribili mutans ~~psalteria~~ bello.” A similar example can be found in 267: Mox chaos et teneri ~~prima incunabula~~ mundi (“[Then they sang of] chaos and the pristine beginnings of the young universe”).

of Apollo, the Muses and the immortal cedar’ [Persius, *Sat.*, I, 5, 42]. Oh, reader, why then do you not buy yourself a poet? Of what use are words? Believe me: you shall not read anything that comes close to this one, anything which may not admit defeat. What remains untouched?” Unless otherwise noted, translations are mine.

<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to Gregor Hermann (Ratsschulbibliothek, Zwickau) for confirming that the volume held at Zwickau only contains some underlines at the beginning of the text (fol. A2a).

In other cases, the annotator draws lines between the subject and the verb, particularly when both elements are separated by several lines and the relation between them is none too clear (182 *mirantur* – 184 *vates*).<sup>6</sup> At times, he is also interested in clarifying potentially ambiguous demonstrative pronouns (292 *illius*, “Orfei”). Interlinear annotations are also employed to unravel the identity of a character referred to with a general term (256 *puer*, “David”; 296 *vati*, “Orfeo”). The bulk of the interlinear notes included in the Leipzig edition is, however, lexical and it amounts to synonyms which are simpler than the terms employed by Poliziano: nouns (169 *praecordia*, “pectora”; 270 *ferarum*, “bestiarum”; 289 *pinnas*, “alas”), adjectives (246 *praelustria*, “insignia”), participles (302 *divulsum*, “ablatum”) or adverbs (256 *modo*, “paulo antea”; 273 *mox*, “statim”). The annotator shows interest in issues of *realia* and mythology occasionally commands his attention. This type of annotation is used to elucidate the meaning of seemingly difficult names, above all of patronymics (233 *Ampycidem*, “Ampyci filium Mopsum” [Mopsus, son of Ampyx, was a soothsayer in Thessaly]) and to unravel the identity of mythological figures (272 *Delia*, “luna”; 295 *Stygii coniunx mirata tyranni* [“then the spouse of the Stygian tyrant, marvelling...”], “Plutonis”).

Marginal glosses, by contrast, are used by the annotator to deal with questions of imitation and originality. Lines are usually drawn between the words commented on and the marginal annotations. The author of the manuscript notes included in the Leipzig *Nutricia* comes across as knowledgeable enough to establish reactions across the vast corpus of classical literature (Hesiod, Pliny, Macrobius, Horace, Ovid, Virgil) and to point out parallels between Poliziano and Roman poets, chiefly with respect to the contents of a passage. At 283–84 Poliziano states that “Nec fabula mendax / Parrhasio lapides movisse Amphiona plectro” (“it is no lying fable that Amphion moved stones with Mercury’s lyre”). Echoing Ovid and Horace, our annotator refers to the

<sup>6</sup> In the following references, I use italics for Poliziano’s text and quotation marks for the reader’s glosses. All English translations of the *Nutricia* are quoted from Poliziano 2004.



magical power of Amphion's music, by which the stones came together for the building of the walls of Thebes:

Ovid. li. 3 amatoria Saxa tuo cantu, vindex iustissime matris, fecerunt muros officiosa novos. Et Hora. in arte poetica: dictus et Amphion, Thebanæ conditor urbis, saxa movere sono testudinis et prece blanda ducere quo vellet.<sup>7</sup>

The story of Orpheus (lines 285–317, albeit annotated only up to line 302) also allows the annotator to identify two well-known Latin sources drawn on by Poliziano in his poem:

Virg. 4 Georg. Quin ipsae stupere domus atque intima Leti Tartara caeruleosque implexae crinibus angues Eumenides, tenuitque inhians tria Cerberus ora et Ovid. li. 3 amatoria saxa ferasque lyra movit Rhodopeius Orpheus Tartareosque lacus tergeminumque canem.<sup>8</sup>

Our annotator is also well acquainted with humanistic literature. Without naming it, he alludes, for instance, to the commentary on Virgil by Flemish printer and educator Josse Bade (Badius Ascensius, 1462–1535) in order to elucidate the identity of Calchas, the most distinguished seer among the Greeks before Troy. At 241–42 Poliziano addresses him by asking “[Quid loquar] Aut qui mille rates peritura ad Pergama duxit, / Thestoriden?” (“[What shall I say of] the son of Thestor, who led to Pergamon [the citadel of Troy] thousand ships bound to perish?”). Though he wrongly ascribes it to Horace (“et quoque Hora. in li. 2 [illegible word]”), our annotator seems to be aware of the Virgilian source (there

<sup>7</sup> “Ovid in Book Three of *The Art of love* [323–44]: ‘At your song, Amphion, just avenger of your mother, the stones obligingly made Thebes’s new walls.’ And Horace in *The Art of poetry* [394–96]: ‘Amphion, too, the founder of Thebes, is credited with having moved stones by the strains of his lyre and led them where he would with this sweet blandishment.’”

<sup>8</sup> “Virgil in Book Four of the *Georgics* [481–83]: ‘the house of the dead itself was stupefied, and innermost Tartarus, and the Furies, with dark snakes twined in their hair, and Cerberus held his three mouths gaping wide,’ and Ovid in Book Three of *The Art of love* [321–22]: ‘Thracian Orpheus, with his lyre, moved stones and wild beasts, and Tartarus’s lake and Cerberus, the triple-headed hound.’”

are several occurrences of the name *Calchas* in Book Two of the *Aeneid*) and quotes Badius's commentary accordingly: "Calchas, Testoris filius, apud Troiam ex numero passerum a serpente voratorum, quot annorum obsidio Troiae futura esset, praedixit" ("Calchas, son of Thestor, at Troy predicted how many years the siege of Troy would last from the number of birds devoured by a snake," Virgil 1541: 148).<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, of all contemporary authorities, it is Poliziano's testimony and methodological approach which the annotator draws on most heavily in his annotations. There are several explicit examples of how our annotator relies on Poliziano's own words in order to clarify difficult passages in the *Nutricia*. At 236–37 Poliziano refers to Tiresias, who —according to Callimachus, whom Poliziano follows— was blinded by Athena after he stumbled onto her bathing naked but was compensated with the gift of prophecy. In the Leipzig volume under review the passage elicits two marginal annotations which complement each other (Figure 1). In the first one, placed in the left-hand column, the identity of Tiresias is explained through the testimony of Propertius (*Eleg.* IV, 9, 57–8) and is further confirmed with a quotation from Poliziano's *Ambra* (289–90):

Prop. li. 4 eleg. magno Tiresias aspexit Pallada vates, fortia dum posita Gorgone membra lavat. Et Politianus in *Ambra* Baculum dat deinde potentem Tiresiae magni, qui quondam Pallada nudam, et hoc raptam pensavit munere lucem.<sup>10</sup>

The second marginal annotation, in the right-hand column, expands on this information by referring to chapter 80 ("Politianus miscell. ca 80") from Poliziano's own *Miscellaneorum Centuria prima*, a collection of printed notes on grammatical, chronological and antiquarian topics. Po-

<sup>9</sup> Our annotator seems to have written a brief interlinear note on Calchas during the first reading of the poem (242 *Thestoriden*, "Calchas Testoris filius"). At a later stage he must have explained the identity of Calchas by developing, in the marginal note, information already contained in the margins.

<sup>10</sup> "Propertius in Book 4 of his *Elegies*: 'At great cost did the seer Tiresias set eyes on Pallas, when with her aegis laid aside she bathed her valiant limbs.' And Poliziano in the *Ambra*: 'then he gives him the powerful staff of the great Tiresias, who once saw Pallas naked, and compensated with this gift the seized light.'"

liziano's philological work is elsewhere invoked by the annotator, as with the passages in the *Nutricia* dealing with the physician and soothsayer Melampus (235 "miscell. ca 50") and with the word *psalterium* (257 "miscell. ca 14").

We are walking in the footsteps of an annotator whose chief interests are lexical matters and grammatical analysis as well as the identification of parallels and sources in the literature of ancient Rome. The notes examined here present the usual repetitive explication of obvious and simple vocabulary so commonly found in schoolbooks. By contrast, no attention is paid to rhetorical figures, something which may reflect the type of (less advanced) reader the annotations aim at or may simply be put down to the annotator's particular interest (or lack thereof). But who could our annotator be? It would be very tempting to ascribe the authorship of the annotations found in the 1517 Leipzig edition of the *Nutricia* to Adam. Yet, samples of his handwriting (Figure 2) have thus far proved unhelpful, and preliminary examination does not seem to support any possible link between Adam's hand and that of the annotations in the copy of Poliziano. We know, however, that Adam was interested in poetry and in ancient poets as attested by his editions of Cicero's *Pro Archia* (Leipzig, 1518 and 1521) and of Virgil's works (Leipzig, 1519).<sup>11</sup> Even if there is no record of his involvement in teaching practices, these editions are clearly books for the classroom, the *Pro Archia* being dedicated "candide Lipsensique iuuentuti" (fol. Air). A further school (or university) volume prepared by Adam must have been his edition of the *Nutricia*, and it would not be foolish to imagine our man reading the text privately and occasionally annotating some of its lines. Regardless of whether the annotator is Hieronymus Adam or an even lesser-known individual, the notes scribbled in the 1517 edition of Angelo Poliziano's *Nutricia* constitute yet another proof of how the poem claimed the attention of Renaissance readers.

<sup>11</sup> The titles of Adam's editions are *Eloquentissimi Ciceronis pro Aulo Licinio Archia poeta insignis oratio*, Leipzig: Wolfgang Stöckel, 1518 and 1521 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, 2 A.lat.b. 163 and 4 A.lat.b. 750, 7) and *Publii Virgilii Maronis poetarum Achillis minutiora opuscula seu mavis lusus et lectione et imitatione dignissimi*, Leipzig: Jakob Thanner, 1519 (Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, P.o.lat. 1682 v). I am grateful to Barry Taylor for drawing my attention to Adam's editions of Cicero.

# Appendix

## *Figures*





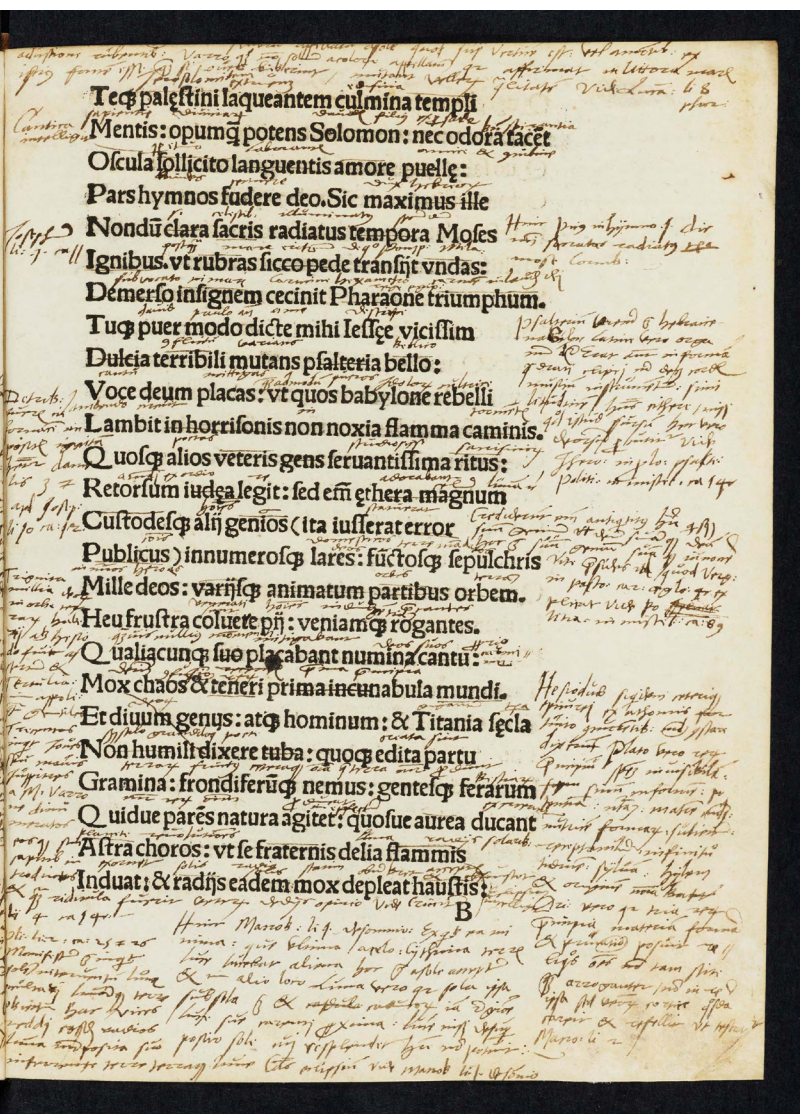


Figure 1: Angeli Policiani Sylva cui titulus Nutricia, Leipzig: Jakob Thanner, 1517, fol. A6v–B1r, Copenhagen, Kongelige Bibliotek, 76, 39. Reproduced by kind permission of the Royal Danish Library.

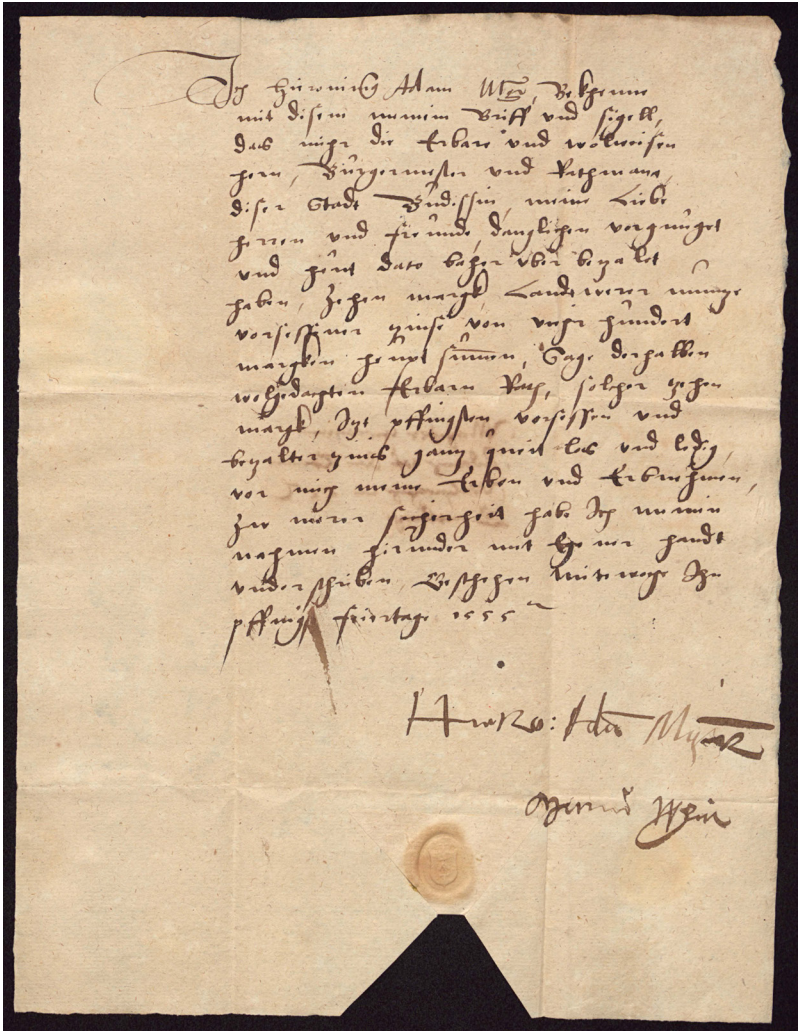


Figure 2: Magister Hieronymus Adam acknowledges receipt of 10 marks land-tax on June, 5 1555, Stadtarchiv Bautzen, 61000–2457. The document is in the public domain. (<https://www.archivportal-d.de/item/BGHIEP3KJHYA2EUJI4MESJJULIWHUOWF>).

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