Elegant and inelegant southeast European Latin in 1480–1680: Marko Marulić, Antun Vrančić, Stjepan Gradić

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Summary

Continuity of distinction between elegant, less elegant, and inelegant Neo-Latin will be researched on features of prose texts by three Latin writers from Dalmatia and Dubrovnik: Marko Marulić (Marcus Marulus 1450–1524), Antun Vrančić (Antonius Verantius, 1504–1573) and Stjepan Gradić (Stephanus Gradius, 1613–1683). All texts underwent stylistic changes we can follow and analyse. Between 1480 and 1510 Marulić paraphrased the Legenda aurea; the paraphrase can be compared to its source, with changes presumably making Marulić's text more elegant than the sources. Vrančić rewrote his letters from the 1550s as he collected them, making them more elegant, and leaving in the preserved autographs traces of his changes. Finally, Gradić's Vatican manuscripts include two drafts of his prologue to the Latin translation of Plutarch's Praecepta gerendae rei publicae (the undated

text, composed after 1631, is dedicated to Gradić's older brother Džono / Junius, who lived c. 1611–1665); corrections and differences in drafts reveal an author working hard to improve the elegance of his text.

I will isolate and systematize the changes the three authors introduced with the aim to make Latin more elegant; a preliminary examination suggests that they were mostly improving copia and dignitas, changing the vocabulary and word order, and that they were striving to make their expressions more concise. The small, but comprehensively studied sample will allow me to speculate to what extent the perception of 'elegant Latin' persisted in the two hundred years between 1480 and 1680.

The authors and the works

- Marko Marulić / Marcus Marulus (Wikidata Q336571) in the De institutione bene beateque vivendi per exempla sanctorum (Venice, 1507) partly paraphrases the Legenda aurea (c. 1264)
- Antun Vrančić / Antonius Verantius (Wikidata Q512372) in his collection of c. 790 letters, partly preserved in autograph (author's copies), some items include additional author's changes
- Stjepan Gradić / Stephanus Gradius (Wikidata Q748526) the translation of Plutarch's Praecepta gerendae rei publicae is preserved in two autograph versions; the later one contains additional author's changes. Joh. Georg. Graevius to Nic. Heinsius, 1676: "Non puto quenquam nunc in Italia degere, si discesserimus ab Octavio Ferrario, qui ingenii elegantia, et diligenter scribendi laude sit par Gradio"

(1) Marulić retells the story of a blind saint in 1507

LEGENDA AUREA: Hujus uxor Persinda filiam caecam peperit, *pater autem propter nimiam verecundiam ipsam occidi jussit*, sed *mater ipsam cuidam ancillae suae alendam commisit*. (…) vade ad quoddam monasterium, quod dicitur Palma, ibi invenies puellam a nativitate caecam, quam baptizabis, nomen Odilia impones ei et mox post baptismum visum recipiet. Cumque oculos ejus chrismate liniret, visum clarissime recepit. Haec ab infantia *se Dei servitio subdidit, vigiliis et orationibus, jejuniis et elemosinis die noctuque insistens*. (…) Cum sic Odilia multis diebus in miseria vitae esset, pater misericordia motus super eam praedictum monasterium cum omnibus

appenditiis suis illi tradidit. Post hoc pauco tempore supervivens defunctus est. Odilia sciens patrem suum in purgatorio uri in latere montis, ubi nunc claustrum est situm, *tantum et tam lacrymabiliter oravit, quod* coelum super eam apertum est et lux magna circumfulsit eam et vox dicit ei: propter te *liberatus est pater tuus et in choro patriarcharum collocandus ab angelis ducitur.*

MARULIĆ, INSTITUTIO: Othiliam virginem *pater occidere in animo habebat, solo corporis vitio offensus*, quia caeca nata fuerat. *Mater autem periculo subtractam* monasterio tradidit. Hinc ipsa *virtutibus proficiens defectumque oculorum mentis perspicacitate supplens* pro eo patre, quem sibi tam indigne capitali odio infensum noverat, *ferventer orando effecit, ut* et vivens poenitentiam delicti ageret et defunctus *purgatorii poenas cum paradisi deliciis commutaret.* Ipsa vero corporei quoque visus usum a Deo accipere meruit, quem non acceperat a parentibus.

- O2a: generalisation (jussit / in animo habebat); syntactic transformation (occidi / occidere; propter / offensus); synonyms (propter nimiam verecundiam / solo corporis vitio offensus) LEG pater autem propter nimiam verecundiam ipsam occidi jussit INST pater occidere in animo habebat, solo corporis vitio offensus
- O2b: generalisation (cuidam ancillae alendam / periculo subtractam), syntactic transformation (alendam / subtractam): LEG mater ipsam cuidam ancillae suae alendam commisit INST Mater autem periculo subtractam
- O2c: antithesis (defectum oculorum / mentis perspicacitate), (syntactic) parallelism (proficiens… supplens): LEG se Dei servitio subdidit, vigiliis et orationibus, jejuniis et elemosinis die noctuque insistens INST uirtutibus proficiens defectumque oculorum mentis perspicacitate supplens
- O2d: syntactic transformation (tantum oravit quod / orando effecit ut); generalisation (also shortening and simplification: tantum et tam lacrymabiliter / ferventer): LEG tantum et tam lacrymabiliter oravit, quod INST feruenter orando effecit, ut
- O2e: narrative transformation (direct speech / narration); syntactic transformation (liberatus est et ducitur / poenas cum deliciis commutaret); antithesis: LEG liberatus est pater tuus et in choro patriarcharum collocandus ab angelis ducitur INST purgatorii poenas cum paradisi deliciis commutaret

(2) Vrančić has a change of mind in 1546

VRANČIĆ 1 (crossed out): *Cur id fit, nescio, sed uideris Petre nimium mei* esse oblitus. A te nec nuncium, nec litteras, nec vel unicam salutis aut consolationis significationem accipio, quod quidem aeque me afficit, ac praesens mea calamitas. *[Et quamquam non dubitem] /Nec dubito/* meo te istinc tam tumultuario discessu gravissime offensum, quemadmodum alios multos, qui me charum habuerant, meminique sane saepenumero, quam me amanter aliquando monueris, ne sic de rebus meis, ac statu praecipitarem. *Verum enimvero qua exagitatus Thisyphone, aut quo sceleratiore meo adactus sydere, nescio, uno tantum momento, unaque mentis impulsione, quod uides,* ea perfeci aeger, quae sanus etiam cogitare horruissem, facileque credo communem quandam multorum praesentis aeui fatalem —

VRANČIĆ 2: *Nescio, Petre, cur fit, sed mei videris* nimium esse oblitus. A te nec nuncium, nec litteras, nec vel unicam salutis aut consolationis significationem accipio, quod quidem afficit me aeque ac praesens mea perturbatio. *Et quamquam minime dubitem,* meo te istinc tam tumultuario discessu gravissime offendi, quemadmodum alios multos, qui me una tecum habuere charissimum, quosque vicissim ipse quoque solitus eram eodem, quo te, et studio et veneratione colere, ac memini etiam saepenumero, quam me amanter aliquando hiisdem affectibus monueritis, ne sic de rebus meis, ac statu praecipitarem: *tamen, ut verum fatear, sicut nulla discedendi a vobis suberat legitima causa, ita oppressus morbi magnitudine, usque ad mentis alienationem, quod omnibus plane constabat, non alia certe ulla impulsione, quam, meo judicio, Erynnis alicujus furiis exagitatus, /ac sceleratiore meo quopiam adactus sidere/,* ea perfeci aeger, quae sanus etiam cogitare horruissem, *nunc etiam improbo atque condemno,* et facile credo, communem quamdam multorum praesentis temporis fatalem hanc caelorum vim exstitisse…

P1546v1: *Cur id* fit, nescio, sed videris Petre⋆ nimium *mei* esse oblitus. P1546v2:⋆ Nescio, Petre, cur fit, sed mei videris⋆ nimium esse oblitus.

  • P1546a: word order; omission (id)

P1546v1: A te nec nuncium, nec litteras, nec vel unicam salutis aut consolationis significationem accipio, quod quidem *aeque me afficit*, ac praesens mea *calamitas.* P1546v2: A te nec nuncium, nec litteras, nec vel unicam salutis aut consolationis significationem accipio, quod quidem *afficit me aeque* ac

praesens mea *perturbatio*.

- P1546b: word order (aeque me afficit / afficit me aeque); synonym (calamitas / perturbatio)

P1546vi a: *Et quamquam non dubitem* meo te istinc tam tumultuario discessu gravissime *offensum*, quemadmodum alios multos, qui me charum habuerant, meminique sane saepenumero, quam me amanter aliquando monueris, ne sic de rebus meis, ac statu praecipitarem. P1546V1b: *Nec dubito* meo te istinc tam tumultuario discessu gravissime *offensum*, quemadmodum alios multos, qui me *charum habuerant, meminique sane* saepenumero, quam me amanter aliquando *monueris*, ne sic de rebus meis, ac statu praecipitarem. P1546v2: *Et quamquam minime dubitem*, meo te istinc tam tumultuario discessu gravissime *offendi*, quemadmodum alios multos, qui me *una tecum habuere charissimum, quosque vicissim ipse quoque solitus eram eodem, quo te, et studio et veneratione colere, ac memini etiam* saepenumero, quam me amanter aliquando *hiisdem affectibus monueritis*, ne sic de rebus meis, ac statu praecipitarem

- P1546c: synonyms (et quamquam / nec; non / minime); syntactic transformation (offensum / offendi); additional idea / parallelism (una tecum… quosque vicissim…); intensifying (charum / charissimum); synonyms (meminique sane / ac memini etiam); addition (idea: hiisdem affectibus, referring to vicissim or to studio et veneratione)

(3) Gradić simplifies his expression c. 1640

Vat. lat. 6899 + 6909: satis enim acres ad omnem honestatem stimulos ipsius naturae sponte, ac rationis habemus, nec esse quisquam potest ingenio tam fero, ac tam agresti, qui uirtutis quamlibet nudae ac inornatae specie non *[magnopere]* capiatur: ac si plerique auersos ab ea se, atque abhorrentes experiuntur non tam id uitium a recti ignoratione, aut odio *accidit [proficisci dicendum est]*, quam ab asperitate quadam *atque [ab]* /et/ angustijs, quas partim uere in quęsitu, paratuque bonarum artium offendimus, partim nobis nostra *desidia nostraeque deliciae* /[delitia] desidia nostrę delicię/ confingunt.

6899: qui uirtutis quamlibet nudae ac inornatae specie non *magnopere* capiatur 6909a: qui uirtutis quamlibet nudae ac inornatae specie non *magnopere* capiatur 6909b: qui uirtutis quamlibet nudae ac inornatae specie non capiatur

- G3a: omission

6899: non tam id uitium a recti ignoratione, aut odio *proficisci dicendum est*, quam 6909a: non tam id uitium a recti ignoratione, aut odio *proficisci dicendum est*, quam 6909b: non tam id uitium a recti ignoratione, aut odio *accidit*, quam

- G3b: synonyms, simplifying

6899: quam ab asperitate quadam *et* angustijs, 6909a: quam ab asperitate quadam *atque /ab/* angustijs 6909b: quam ab asperitate quadam atque *[ab]* angustijs

- G3c: synonyms (et / atque); anaphora and change of opinion (ab first added, then crossed out)

6899: partim nobis nostra *[delitia] desidia nostrę delicię* confingunt. 6909: partim nobis nostra *desidia nostraeque deliciae* confingunt.

- G3d: correction

Conclusion

The three sets of samples from three Dalmatian authors, active between 1500 and 1650, were marked and annotated for revisions. The annotations show that in the samples Latin elegance meant primarily a better choice of synonyms and a better word order. Now, the questions inevitably arise what does *better* mean, and how did the authors attain their knowledge of *better*, but this is something that has to be explored further and elsewhere. The samples show also that Latin elegance to an extent had individual features, that it was a a matter of individual preferences, skill and interest. Marulić revised by adding rhetorical figures, especially antithesis; Vrančić strove to make his letters more pragmatically effective – he revised thinking about the individual addressee and the circumstances; Gradić, contrary to the other two, revised by making his text more succinct – in this he is close to later perception of Latin as an exceptionally precise and concise language.

This small comparison of revisions in three sets of samples thus, first, proves that elegance can be pinpointed; second, the comparison shows that elegance, like style in general, has both constant common features, and changing individual ones.