ANNA MARIA WASYL
KRAKÓW

MAXIMIANUS AND THE LATE ANTIQUE READING OF CLASSICAL LITERARY GENRES

Students of late antique Latin poetry often, and justly, emphasize that the canons of form and content established by the Augustan *classici* cannot be applied to texts written four, five or six centuries later, in a completely changed socio-political, cultural and ideological context, and for a public having its own, very well defined, literary tastes. It is undoubted that the poetological and aesthetic differences between the literature of late antiquity and the heritage of the period labeled as the 'golden age' of Latin writing must not be explained in mere terms of quality[1]. Yet, it is also equally true that the very essence of late antique poetry is the constant exploitation, interpretation and reinterpretation of the 'classical' tradition. The writers for whom the only Empire that will last is the Empire of a Sign – Latin willingly adopt 'ancient' means of expression, genres, themes, *topoi*, apparently not considering themselves "prisoners of the past". On the contrary, they do not shrink from revising the masters of old, reading them over with their non-classical eyes and reusing, if not recycling, their works.

It is remarkable that among the genres rediscovered by the late antique poets one can find the Augustan elegy, a form which, as it might seem, had fallen into disuse in the imperial literature. What is not less significant is the fact that the elegiac corpus of Maximianus, composed presumably, although not indisputably – as it is only the author to give us his own story – in the 6th century A.D.[2], enjoyed a considerable popu-

[1] As emphasized also by Schneider (2001: 459) in a paper on Maximianus which I will quote here several times.

[2] On the dating of Maximianus's corpus see in particular: Merone 1948: 337-352; Shanzer 1983: 183-195. The proposal of Ratkowitsch (1986) to postdate Maximianus's

larity in subsequent centuries being paraphrased[3], quoted and even recommended as a schoolbook[4]. Maximianus was, indeed, one of the *auctores* respected by the Middle Ages, yet it might be implied that his medieval copyists and, consequently, readers paid relatively less attention to the very 'elegiac' form of the oeuvre than to its ethical content[5].

The modern history of the definition – or rather the redefinition – of Maximianus's work in its formal context starts, as W. Ch. Schneider rightly observes[6], at the beginning of the 16th century. In 1501 a young Venetian humanist by the name of Pomponius Gauricus prepared the edition of the corpus, which was, actually, only the third edition altogether[7]. It is apparent that Gauricus intended to focus on the formal, i.e. generic, aspect of the oeuvre, since he proposed to read Maximianus's couplets not just as 'elegiac poetry', but precisely as 'erotic elegies'. The young editor divided the 686 verses into six separate poems. His division did not follow those made in the two earlier editions[8], nor did it reflect the textual appearance of Maximianus's verses in the medieval manuscripts[9]. Pomponius Gauricus singled out four pieces treating four various women episodes (Lycoris, Aquilina, Candida, *Graia puella*) and two more 'poems' constituting, respectively, the introduction and the conclusion of the oeuvre. The division of the text into six

poetry to the Carolingian period has found, in effect, little support; a short summary of the arguments against the thesis of Ratkowitsch is given by Consolino (1997: 363-365).

[3] Cf. Leotta (1985: 91-106), who also publishes the text of the 9th century paraphrase of Maximianus' s *elegy 1*.

[4] On which below. On the medieval reading of Maximianus: Coffman 1934: 252-253 (n. 2).

[5] Maximianus was copied with other late antique writings of mainly ethical character, the *Disticha Catonis* and the fables of Avienus. It is worth noting, however, that in one of the best manuscripts (*Etonensis*, Bl. 6, 5) the Maximianus's work is included with Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*, which, as Coffmann (1934: 251) rightly observes, at least suggests their affinity to the Roman love poetry. Before Gauricus, several 14th century manuscripts attribute Maximianus's work to Cornelius Gallus, Consolino (1997: 366) quoting Mariotti (1994: 215).

[6] Cf. Schneider 2001: *passim*.

[7] The two previous ones were the Utrecht edition of 1473 and the Paris edition (I follow the information provided by Ellis [1884: 9]).

[8] Cf. Schneider 2001: 446-447.

[9] The manuscripts present the text either continuously, or, in more cases, display within the continuous written text various initial and paragraph graphic signs which can be understood as segmentation indicators; yet, since there are enormous differences in the segmentation of the text from manuscript to manuscript, these signs can hardly serve as a basis for the determination of inner structure of the work.

separate 'elegies'[10], the center of which are those devoted to female protagonists, was undoubtedly inspired by the reading of the love poetry of Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. Gauricus, as it seems, aimed to format Maximianus's text as 'classical' collection of elegies, comparable with the books of the Augustan masters. What is more, the eager youngster announced that the edition he had prepared contained not just a work modeled on the Augustan elegists, but actually a work by an Augustan elegist, namely by Cornelius Gallus, the ill-starred singer of Lycoris.

It is not improbable at all that Pomponius Gauricus was a clever forger rather than merely a naïve lover of the ancient literature. Nevertheless, what does strike in his approach to Maximianus's verses is not only a certain reluctance to accept the mysterious name mentioned in l. 486 (or 'elegy 4', l. 26) as the very name of the author, but also a strong determination to make the edited text really look like 'classic' Roman elegy. The young Venetian does his best to adapt the late antique 'material', which seemed elegy-like to him, to what he knows about the genre created by Gallus not simply because he is a forger, but much more because he is a 'humanist' (even though a forger, he still merits the title) and recognizes the exemplary status of the Latin literature of the 'golden age'[11]. Symptomatic is the fact that for Gauricus the fundamental marker of 'elegy' (=Augustan elegy), apart from the meter, is the erotic content and the book format: it must comprise (several) separate poems. Apparently, the young manuscript-hunter does not even take into consideration the elegiac *carmina continua*, sometimes also dedicated to love: *Ars Amatoria*, *Remedia Amoris*[12], both by the matchless experimentalist, Ovid, not to speak of the late antique *De reditu suo* by Rutilius Namatianus, in fact not so far from erotic tones, at least if love for the *Urbs* is concerned[13].

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[10] Throughout my paper I put the term elegy / elegies, if referred to Maximianus's oeuvre, in inverted commas to emphasize its dependence upon Gauricus's division of the text.

[11] Schneider (2001: 457) sounds very right saying that Gauricus connected Maximianus's poem with the name of Gallus 'not simply to make money, but mainly because of the renaissance of classical antiquity, to which the classical poetry of the Augustan age should serve as the decisive guide'.

[12] One might also think of *Fasti*. and, to some extent, of *Tristia* II.

[13] Fo (1986: 14 [n. 15]), mentioning these works as examples of 'elegiac *carmina continua*', emphasizes the particular nature of each of them for which none of these texts seems to constitute any kind of 'model' elegiac *carmen continuum*.

Interestingly, even though the ascription to Gallus was eventually refuted, the arrangement of Maximianus's corpus made by Gauricus, and, which is actually the core of the problem, his very 'conclusion' that Maximianus is interpretable as elegist precisely because his work consists of – or at least is divisible into – separate poems treating love or, more exactly, love memories of an old man, now not at all a lover, gained acceptance (or at least prevailed). Contemporary editors cannot simply do without Gauricus's text division even if they propose to read the poem as *carmen continuum*[14]. Critics, who would often label Maximianus as "the last Roman elegist", emphasize the poet's dependence on the great Augustan models for whom the 'standard' form was a collection of various 'units'[15].

Now, the point is that the ecdotic tradition of the work, patronized, so to speak, by Gauricus, has helped us notice many important aspects of Maximianus's poetry. It is hardly questionable that: **1**) the poetic

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[14] In the two most recent editions Schneider (2003) as well as Sandquist Öberg (1999) number the verses both continuously and according to the division by Gauricus. Guardalben (1993) maintains the Gauricus's division.

[15] Fo (1986: 14 [n. 15]), who also notes: 'Che la forma standard proposta dai più autorevoli modelli latini per questo aspetto del genere elegiaco sia quella della raccolta di vari brani indipendenti mi sembra difficilmente impugnabile'. Interestingly, Fo (1987: 349-350) himself in his next paper on the problem presents the question as follows: 'Ora, noi siamo di fronte ad un'opera che 1) è una raccolta di elegie (o – meno probabilmente – una sola grande elegia)'; 'Massimiano scrive elegie (o una grande elegia a episodi)'. Fo seems to suggest, at least implicitly (or at least that is how I understand his admission that both possibilities could, actually, be taken into consideration), that certain conclusions about Maximianus's poetics can be drawn no matter how one interprets the form of the work: as one 'elegia' or as a collection of 'elegies'. This is precisely to what Schneider (2001: 451-452) opposes. In his opinion Maximianus's pieces must not be read as "self-contained units", and this is not possible unless we look at the work as a coherent opus, an elegiac *carmen continuum*. I would consider it hardly questionable that Maximianus requires both inter- and intratextual approach as individual 'episodes' or 'sections' are strongly interrelated and inter-dependent, one might wonder, however, if such intratextual reading would not be possible also if one thought of the oeuvre in terms of a 'book of elegies'. In the tradition of the Roman elegy we could find certain examples of books of elegies in which separate poems are, in fact, interrelated and should be seen in the wider context of the whole work. I think here of Ovid's exilic elegies, particularly of the *Tristia*, and even more particularly of *Tristia* I, sometimes defined as 'elegiac epic in miniature' (Claassen 1999: 191) or 'Ovid's Odyssey' (Rahn 1958: 116). After the opening poem, a kind of introduction to the whole exilic oeuvre, interconnected are elegies 2 and 4 (storm on the sea), framing the 'epic' elegia 3 (last night in Rome). It is true though that the dependence of Maximianus's *elegies* 2-5 (to use Gauricus's pattern) on the long introductory section ("elegy 1") is much stronger than the dependence of individual elegies of the *Tristia* I on the *Tr.* I 1.

persona of the corpus is an old man, unfit for love and ready to die, as he presents himself in ll. 1-292 and 675-686 or – if we prefer the Gauricus's pattern – the 'elegies' 1 and 6, telling us his love stories in episodes, which might be entitled Lycoris, Aquilina, Candida, *Graia puella*, respectively, 'elegies' 2, 3, and 4; **2**) Maximianus (the author) does intend his opus to be viewed against the Augustan elegy, and in particular – not exclusively though, as we shall see – against this subtype of the Augustan elegy that might be labeled as 'erotic'; **3**) this elegiac flavor is so strong throughout the work that the reader, if provided with any interpretive competence whatsoever, cannot simply ignore it. Nevertheless – and here is where we touch the very difference between the late antique and the classicizing view of the grand (=Augustan) poetry, concerning, above all, the question of the imitation of the 'classical' literary models – **4**) Maximianus's reader (who I mean now is the late antique reader, contemporary with our mysterious poet), not less than Maximianus himself a connoisseur of the literary tradition of *Roma aeterna*, was certainly delighted by the fact that he or she had been given a work which immediately activated his / her poetic memory, and in particular the memory of so charming a genre as the Augustan elegy, but at the same time did not expect this work to be of exactly the same 'format' as the model. Besides, the late antique reader would have probably looked with a more favorable eye at the idea of an elegiac *carmen continuum*, or even of an elegiac narrative (as I noted earlier, a possibility already explored by Ovid and Rutilius), a construct hardly acceptable for some contemporary critics[16]. Actually, Maximianus's readership would have appreciated the very fact that the 'Tuscan'[17] poet had proposed an elegy (what I mean now is a genre, hence the singular, although I am personally quite close to many of Schneider's conclusions) of a form 'deviating' from the Augustan canon. The late antique literary public did not fear a form not easily interpretable in 'old' generic categories, which does not mean that they failed to recognize

[16] Spaltenstein (1983: 195, C. 1997) in his commentary concludes – giving in fact an overtly negative evaluation of the Maximianus's work – that the oeuvre can hardly be considered an "elegy", as it is mainly narrative in form, therefore he classifies it as 'genre narratif', closer to epic, novel or history, which objects to the nature of elegiac poetry.

[17] Again, it is only Maximianus himself, often called "Etruscus", to give some information about his origin, see the following statements: 'hic me suscipiens Etruscae gentis alumnum' (*elegy* 5, 5 / l. 225); 'succubui Tusca simplicitate senex' (*elegy* 5, 40 / l. 560).

or were already completely disinterested in or indifferent to those categories. On the contrary, genre remained one of the most important and valid interpretive criteria throughout antiquity, and in particular in late antiquity. Yet the question that the late antique readers most probably would have asked in this regard would be not just "what genre does this or that work belong to", but rather "how does this or that work use a certain genre (genres)", even "how does it play with a certain genre (genres)?" In fact, the late antiquity and the late antique literary public preferred works that allowed more than one interpretive option also in terms of 'genre'; once again, the point is that the interpretation of a text in genre perspective helped the readers not only 'classify' it, but also, if not above all, situate it in a certain, sometimes more than one, literary context, which, consequently, opened up the possibility of the intertextual reading.

Maximianus's poetry was to the liking of his age. Students of his literary techniques have already noticed that the 6th century elegist often draws on elements of other – meaning: 'extra-elegiac' – literary genres[18], the best, and the most studied, example being probably the lament inclusion in ll. 607-624 ('elegy 5', ll. 87-104); the addressee of this ritual mourning is *mentula* (for those not yet completely at home with Maximianus's poetic world)[19]. The problem deserves though a more systematic approach and a closer analysis. It should be emphasized that the polyphony of tones, generic overtones in the first place, is not *a* characteristic, but *the* characteristic of Maximianus's poetics. It is made clear in the part of the work that must be interpreted as programmatic even if we hesitated to interpret it as separate 'elegy 1', the long opening piece (ll. 1-292). 'Elegy 1' is a bravura of the poet's skills in playing with various generic devices (themes, vocabulary, narrative strategies). These elements are later on reused, often amplified, in the following segments of the work. Therefore, it is worthwhile to focus on the lengthy introductory part (otherwise known as 'elegy 1'), providing a more thorough insight into the richness of its generic overtones. 'Elegy 1' merits a closer re-examination giving not so much a – one more – overview of its 'subject', in a 'linear' order, so to speak[20], but

[18] Consolino (1997: 397) in passing: 'Infine arricchisce la sua poesia con spunti tratti da altri generi letterari (dalla satira all'epigramma, dall'epitafio all'inno religioso)'.

[19] On which Ramirez De Verger (1984: 149-156); J. L. Arcaz Pozo (1995: 79-88).

[20] On *elegy* 1 in particular: Gagliardi (1988: 27-37).

rather an analysis of singular passages, particularly relevant to the question raised in the present paper, namely "in what generic perspective(s) Maximianus should be / could be read?"

Erotic language and themes, constantly present in 'elegies' 2-5 – treating protagonist's love affairs with Lycoris, a life partner who has left him some time ago; two young girls once loved and courted, Aquilina and Candida, both loves, though, not consummated; finally, the mature and experienced *Graia puella*, the witness of his humiliating collapse into impotence – in 'elegy 1' are only 'guest starring', precisely in ll. 59-100. It is in this passage that the poetic persona, now a *tremulus senex*, confesses that he was once a young gentleman (the antithesis *olim-hodie* is also often exploited in erotic elegy), handsome and pleasing everyone: 'cunctis *formosus* ego *gratusque* videbar' (l. 71), a *sponsus generalis* (l. 72), on seeing whom every girl blushed and sought to hide herself, but in such way that she could give him at least a glimpse of some part of her:

> erubuit vultus visa puella meos
> et modo subridens latebras fugitiva petebat,
> non tamen effugiens tota latere volens,
> sed magis ex aliqua cupiebat parte videri,
> laetior hoc potius quod male tecta fuit. (66-70)

The two adjectives used in l. 71, *gratus* and *formosus*, are easily recognizable as technical terms of erotic elegy[21]. Yet what is particular here is that both are used to describe a man. Especially *formosus* sounds unusual in this context as the commonplace was to praise the elegiac *puella* for being '*formosa*'; in fact, also our author will later on speak of 'formosa Lycoris' ('elegy 2', 1 / l. 293). It appears then that Maximianus will portray his protagonist as a dandy, a narcissist elegiac (self) lover. To be exact, the picture is not so one-dimensional: some verses earlier the young man was shown as a brave hunter and sportsman, not at all effeminate (we shall return to this aspect later), and in the following distich he will also turn out *castus*, which, considering the age, may not be completely free from Christian associations, but, as should not be forgotten, is not a notion alien to elegiac tradition either, from Catul-

[21] Webster (1900: 69).

lus's 16, 5-6 to, particularly relevant here, Ovid's 'Musa lasciva, vita *casta*', *Tr.* II 354[22]:

> sed tantum sponsus, nam me natura *pudicum*
> fecerat, et *casto* pectore durus eram. (73-74)

Nonetheless, the dominant tone of the old man's confession, in this passage, is the one of egotist self-appreciation. He preferred not to suffer "the bondage of wedlock, however pleasant"[23] ('nullaque coniugii vincula grata pati', l. 62), remaining "cold bachelor upon a wifeless bed" ('viduo frigidus usque toro', l. 76)[24], rather than to marry a girl that would not have been the very one. A well-trained reader will immediately notice Maximianus's Muse striking an Ovidian chord as the long list of 'ingredients' to make an ideally beautiful woman given in ll. 77-100[25] evokes, but at the same time counters, the catalogs known from Ovid's *Amores* II 4[26] and *Ars Amatoria* III 263-288; one might also point to *Ars* II 658-662 and, quite opposite in toning and thus closer to our author, *Remedia Amoris* 325-330[27]. Whereas the poet born in Sulmo declared: 'centum sunt causae, cur ego semper amem' (*A.* II 4,10)

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[22] Also *Amores*:

> *et nulli cessura fides, sine crimine mores*
> *nudaque simplicitas purpureusque pudor.*
> *non mihi mille placent, non sum desultor amoris:*
> *tu mihi, siqua fides, cura perennis eris.* (*Am.* I 3,13-16)

We see Ovid speaking of his *pudor* and Maximianus emphasizing that he was *pudicus*. Like Ovid, Maximianus points out his *simplicitas* in *elegy* 5,40 / l. 560: 'succubui Tusca *simplicitate* senex'.

[23] For the English translation of Maximianus I quote (unless I find the translation incorrect) Lind (1988).

[24] 'Vincula grata pati' (l. 62), as Webster (1900: 68) notes, an erotic paradox; the expressions "frigidus" and "viduo toro" also belong to the elegiac language, as Consolino (1997: 373) points out.

[25] 'quaerebam gracilem, sed quae non macra fuisset', l. 85; 'candida contempsi, nisi quae suffusa rubore / vernarent propriis ora serena rosis', ll. 89-90; 'aurea caesaries demissaque lactea cervix', l. 93; 'nigra supercilia, frons libera, lumina nigra', l. 95; 'flammea dilexi modicumque tumentia labra', l. 97.

As regards l. 90, Webster (1900: 71) notes: '*aurea*: the fashionable color in Augustan times, especially with filles de joie'. It is tempting to conclude that Maximianus's ideal is but a sum of literary (= fictitious) women of the Roman poetry, a kind of his "Corinna".

[26] Cf. Consolino (1997: 373).

[27] Webster (1900: 69) points to: Ovid, *Remedia* 327 f.: 'Qua potes, in peius dotes deflecte puellae'; Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* II 657 f.: 'Nigrior Illyrica cui pice sanguis erit'.

and assured that every woman could please a man (*AA*. III 263-288; II 658-662), the late antique elegist summarizes 'omnis foeda mihi' (l. 77). Were the reading of Maximianus to be confined only to ll. 59-100, one might easily presume that the tenor of the work is rather even, nostalgic maybe, but not mournful, and not without some lighter shades.

However, as I mentioned above, the passage 59-100, marked with expressions and motifs known from erotic poetry, stands in sharp contrast to the general tone of 'elegy 1' (or, if we prefer, the introductory part of Maximianus's oeuvre). What seems worth noting is that to emphasize this contrast is the poet himself; he, somewhat abruptly, breaks up the description of his would-be wife, adding a bitter comment, as if to discipline his very self:

> singula turpe seni quondam quaesita referre,
> et quod tunc decuit, iam modo crimen habet. (101-102)

"What was once proper for a youngster, is not so for an old man" – a topos, deep-rooted in the ancient poetry, brings back the theme with which the whole oeuvre opens, of the grim old age, *miseranda senectus* (l. 55), as contrasted with youth, love (Webster is probably right juxtaposing Maximianus's *turpe seni* with Ovidian 'turpe senex miles, turpe senilis amor', *Am.* I 9, 4[28]), even life. It is symptomatic that a medieval author of *Accessus ad Auctores* writing about Maximianus notes:

> In hoc autem libro senectutem cum suis viciis vituperat iuventutemque cum suis deliciis exaltat. Est enim sua materia tardae senectutis querimonia[29].

For the 12th century commentator the book can be epitomized as '*querimonia* tardae senectutis', a lament of (over) the old age; interestingly, he does not even mention the love topic. The observation points quite well to the fact that Maximianus is interpretable not only in the context of erotic elegy, but also, if not mainly, in that perspective of the Roman elegy, or even elegy in general, to which the well-known term '*flebilis elegia*'[30] seems more appropriate, the elegy of sorrow and

[28] Webster (1900: 73).

[29] Text edited by Huygens (1954); also Huygens (1970).

[30] Ovid, *Amores* III 9, 3. Interestingly, the term *querimonia* as referred to elegy is used by Horace in *Ars Poetica* 75-76: 'versibus impariter iunctis *querimonia* primum / post etiam inclusa est voti sententia compos'.

complaint, the *tristis elegia* of the exiled Ovid, as if programmatically opposed to the writings of the Love's teacher ('non sum praeceptor amoris', *Tr.* I 1, 67). Ovid is, in fact, a model particularly close to the late antique poet, which we have, actually, already noticed also in the 'erotic' part of 'elegy 1'. It is precisely Ovid's *Tristia* that we can read in the subtext of the phrase 'non sum qui fueram' (l. 5)[31], one of the most famous, if not the most famous Maximianus's line, willingly reused by his admirers from the anonymous imitator of the 9th century until the Italian proto-Romantic poet, Ugo Foscolo[32]: The relevant Ovid's passage is *Tristia* III 11, 25 ff[33]. *Poeta-exul*, addressing an enemy who mocks at his misfortunes, begs:

> Non sum ego quod fueram. Quid inanem proteris umbram?
> quid cinerem saxis bustaque nostra petis?
> Hector erat tunc cum bello certabat; at idem
> vinctus ad Haemonios non erat Hector equos.
> Me quoque, quem noras olim, non esse memento:
> ex illo superant haec simulacra viro.
> Quid simulacra, ferox, dictis incessis amaris?
> Parce, precor, Manes sollicitare meos. (25-32)

We can speak here not only of verbal echoes. What is parallel is the very imagery employed in the two texts. Both poets compare their present situation to the one of a "living death". Ovid calls himself but an empty shadow (*umbra inanis*, l. 25; *simulacra*, l. 30), the ashes and tomb (*cinis*, *busta*, l. 26) that the mysterious *improbus* should not profane. Maximianus announces that the best of him has perished ('periit

[31] Webster (1900: 61) also points to Hor., *Carm.* IV 3: 'non sum qualis eram'; the *carmen* exploiting the theme of old age and love, in which however, having first declared: 'me nec femina nec puer / iam nec spes animi credula mutui' (29-30), the poet eventually confesses his feelings for the young Ligurinus. Maximianus, at least in this *elegy* 1, keeps on saying that an old man is unfit for love. Leotta (1989: 81) mentions Prop. I 12, 11: 'non sum ego qui fueram'. Consolino (1997: 367-368) though rightly observes that in this case (as in the case of Horace's *Carm.* IV 3) we may speak of some verbal echoes, but the contexts are also completely different. Therefore, she emphasizes associations with *Tr.* III 11, arguing however that the situations of the two poets are similar, but not completely the same, whereas Ovid, in fact, asks for forgiveness, Maximianus does invoke death as such. Yet what Ovid says in *Tr.* III 11 is very much in tune with Maximianus, as I point out above.

[32] Leotta (1989: 81-84).

[33] The allusion is noticed also by Spaltenstein (1983: 81, C. 1016).

pars maxima nostri', l. 5) and expresses a moving wish to die as soon as possible[34]:

> solve precor miseram tali de carcere vitam:
> mors est iam requies, vivere poena mihi (3-4)
>
> vivere cum nequeam, sit mihi posse mori.
> o quam dura premit misero condicio vitae,
> nec mors humano subiacet arbitrio.
> dulce mori miseris, sed mors optata recedit;
> at cum tristis erit praecipitata venit.
> me vero heu tantis defunctum partibus olim
> Tartareas vivum constat inire vias (112-118)

Occasionally, similar confessions can be also found in Ovid, who in *Tristia* III 7, 7, paraphrasing a typical epistolary formula, admits: 'vivere me dices, sed sic, ut vivere nolim'. The most striking example is maybe a passage from *Tristia* III 2. *Poeta-exul* directs to gods a fervent prayer asking that the door of his tomb will open:

> Ei mihi, quo totiens nostri pulsata sepulcri
> ianua, sed nullo tempore aperta fuit?
> Cur ego tot gladios fugi totiensque minata
> obruit infelix nulla procella caput?
> Di, quos experior nimium constanter iniquos,
> participes irae quos deus unus habet,
>
> exstimulate, precor, cessantia fata meique
> interitus clausas esse vetate fores! (23-30)

In Maximianus we hear the pitiable *senex* pray Mother Earth to mercy her suffering child and take him back to restore dead limbs to their native soil:

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[34] Consolino (1997: 368-9) points out similarities between Maximianus and Boethius, who in the elegy opening *De consolatione philosophiae* expresses the wish that the death terminate the suffering of the old; what is common between the two authors is the motif of *deprecatio senectutis*, the observation that the death delays to put an end to the life of the wretched ones and a kind of *makarismos*, wishes to die at the right time.

'suscipe me, genetrix, nati miserere laborum:
membra peto gremio fessa fovere tuo.
horrent me pueri, nequeo velut ante videri,
horrendos partus cur sinis esse tuos?
nil mihi cum superis: explevi munera vitae,
redde, precor, patrio mortua membra solo.
quid miseros variis prodest suspendere poenis?
non est materni pectoris ista pati' (227-234)

This time we cannot speak of verbal repetitions but, instead, of an analogy of literary strategies adopted by the two poets. Ovid several times makes use of the prayer and the prayer-like elements, exploiting the emotional potential of this form. Prayers, in fact, mark his *elegia tristis* with a special flavor of 'sadness'[35]. Maximianus's prayer to Mother Earth is supposed to produce a similar effect on the reader, provoking a kind of tender sympathy. Important is the rhetoric he employs, the expressions like *membra fovere gremio* (l. 228), *maternum pectus* (l. 234) bring back to the mind the sweetness associated with the notion of motherhood (as Webster observes[36], there is also the tombstone reminiscence in *gremio tuo* if referred to the earth, an aspect to which I will soon return), which, willy-nilly, makes the reader think of the old man in terms of a helpless child. We should admit that the late antique elegist is a true master at playing with various, sometimes opposite, emotional undertones: his description of the *senex* is, for the most part, overtly ironic – in fact, the praying old man is shown "leaning on his cane" ('baculo incumbens', l. 223), "propping with *truncus* his tottering legs" ('trunco titubantes sustinet artus', l. 235; the word used here, *truncus*, a log, is a humorous exaggeration if used instead of *baculus*, a cane, as earlier in l. 223[37]) – yet at times, like in ll. 227-234, not wholly unsympathetic.

Ovid in his exilic elegies, advertised as a kind of palinode of "the playful singer of tender love" ('tenerorum lusor amorum', *Tr.* IV 10, 1), often re-exploits motifs typical of erotic poetry. One of such reinterpretations can be found in *Epistulae ex Ponto* I 10. The letter is built upon

[35] We should think in the first place of the two interrelated elegies of the first book, I 2 and I 4 or of *Tr.* III 8.

[36] Webster (1900: 85).

[37] *Ibidem* (1900: 86).

the theme of *erotika pathemata*[38], symptoms of love as comparable to signs of other diseases: lassitude (*languor*, technical term in erotic elegy), aversion to food, insomnia, pallor, weak, emaciated limbs. These troubles – the *poeta-relegatus* adds – do not result from immoderate drinking or passion, their cause is the exile; he is ill with homesickness (ll. 30 ff.):

> longus enim curis vitiatum corpus amaris
> non patitur vires *languor* habere suas. (3-4)
>
> os hebes est positaeque movent *fastidia* mensae,
> et queror, invisi cum venit hora cibi. (7-8)
>
> is quoque, qui gracili cibus est in corpore, somnus,
> non alit officio corpus inane suo. (21-22)
>
> vix igitur possis visos agnoscere vultus,
> quoque ierit quaeras qui fuit ante *color*.
> parvus in exiles sucus mihi pervenit artus,
> membraque sunt cera *pallidiora* nova. (25-28)

Maximianus once again follows in the footsteps of Ovid. His *senex* suffers from the very *senectus*. The late antique poet uses the technical term *languor*: ('hoc quoque quod superest langor et horror habent', l. 6, and in the verbal form: '[mens mea] corpore *languet* / atque intenta suis obstupet illa malis', ll. 125-126[39]) and, like his model, among the symptoms of the illness, mentions the unnatural, deathlike paleness[40], loss of appetite connected with indigestion (a pitiful paradox: 'praestat ut abstineam: abstinuisse nocet', l. 160), changed walk, growing smaller and weaker, like a baby:

> ipsaque me species quondam dilecta reliquit,
> et videor formae mortuus esse meae.
> pro niveo rutiloque prius nunc inficit ora
> *pallor* et *exsanguis* funereusque *color*. (131-134)

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[38] Nagle (1980: 61-62).

[39] Webster (1900: 75) quotes Ovid's *Tr.* IV 1, 4: 'mens intenta suis ne foret usque malis'.

[40] Webster (1900: 76) juxtaposes Maximianus's l. 134 with Ovid's *Tristia* III 1, 55: 'exsangui [...] colore'.

quae modo profuerat, contraria redditur esca:
fastidita iacet, quae modo dulcis erat (161-162)

non habitus, *non ipse color*, non gressus euntis,
non species eadem quae fuit ante manet. (211-212)

contrahimus miroque modo decrescimus, ipsa
diminui nostri corporis ossa putes. (215-216)

fitque tripes, prorsus quadrupes, ut parvulus infans (219)

Thus, both poets propose a very particular use of the motif of *erotika pathemata*, as both declare to compose something that might be called "elegy without love"[41]: Ovid because he has been punished precisely for his two crimes (duo *crimina*, *Tr.* II 207), *carmen et error*, Maximianus – because what once was proper, now is a *crimen* (l. 102). For both celebrating the *teneri amores* has the flavor of the forbidden fruit: Ovid tries to avoid the very theme[42] (though the more he does, the more present it is in the hypotext), Maximianus tells stories none of which ends well[43]. Both, instead of love, focus on what remains if the *teneri amores* are taken away: the sadness; Ovid – the sadness of exile as public and spiritual death, Maximianus – the sadness of the old age, 'primitiae mortis' (l. 209). For both in their mournful state (Maximianus: 'in luctu', l. 7; Ovid: 'luctibus', *Tr.* I 1, 6), and in their mournful elegy, there is no room for *lusus* and joy as there is no room for poetic embellishment and charm: Ovid sends his book to Rome unadorned, with rough

[41] I paraphrase Conte's (1991) inspiring title: 'L'amore senza elegia: i *Remedia Amoris* e la logica di un genere'.

[42] As stated in the programmatic *ex P.* I 1:
accipe quodcumque est, dummodo non sit amor.
invenies, quamvis non est miserabilis index,
non minus hoc illo triste quod ante dedi.
rebus idem titulo differt (14-17)

[43] Lycoris's episode is summed up as follows: 'his *lacrimis* longos, quantum fas, *flevimus* annos, / est *grave*, quod *doleat*, commemorare diu' (*elegy* 2, 73-74 / l. 365-366); Aquilina's case opens with words: 'Nunc operae pretium est quaedam memorare iuventae / atque senectutis pauca referre meae, / quis lector mentem rerum vertigine fractam / erigat et *maestum* noscere curet opus' (*elegy* 3, 1-4 / l. 367-370); Candida's story is commented in this manner: 'et nunc *infelix* [tota] est sine crimine vita / et peccare senem non potuisse pudet' (*elegy* 4, 51-52 / l. 511-512), finally, the affair with *Graia puella* ends up with the shameful disability to perform the sex act.

and disordered hair ('incultus', *Tr.* I 1, 3; 'hirsutus sparsis ut videare comis', ibid. 12), he admits not to find any pleasure in joining words to meter ('parvaque, ne dicam scribendi nulla voluptas / est mihi nec numeris nectere verba iuvat', *ex P.* IV 2, 29-30[44]); Maximianus writes "no alluring poems" since "the greatest joy of song has fled" ('carmina nulla cano: cantandi summa voluptas / effugit et vocis gratia vera perit. / ...non blanda poemata fingo', ll. 127-129); it is worth noting that both poets advertise their works as ostensibly autobiographic, as if opposed to *blanda poemata*.

In light of all these analogies we may conclude that the Ovidian *elegia tristis*, understood precisely as the one in which love is absent by definition, constitutes a kind of 'first inspiration' (the 'root cause', so to speak) for Maximianus's text: what the late antique poet adopts is the general tone of sadness as the mood of someone who cannot be what he was once (*non sum qui fueram*) and certain literary strategies (among which also the ostensible autobiographism, mentioned above). The end-product though can hardly be interpreted as an Ovidian imitation, even though the allusions to the poet born in Sulmo are ubiquitous throughout the oeuvre. Besides, in the Maximianus's work, and especially in the long opening section, there are strains traceable back not only to Ovid's elegy, and even not just to elegy as such, but also to other literary forms and motifs.

Richard Webster in his commentary rightly points out the presence of sepulchral commonplaces in Maximianus's text[45]. The observation is all the more important because, as should be emphasized, it refers not only to linguistic, but also to structural aspect of the work, in particular of 'elegy 1'. The late antique poet makes quite an extensive use of words and phrases belonging to the tombstone vocabulary, which is very much in tune with the general idea of the poem, namely that the present state of the protagonist, the *tarda senectus*, can be compared only to the one of the living death ('mortua membra', l. 232; 'vivamque iacendo', l. 239; 'quo postquam iacuit, misero quid funere differt?', l. 237). Indeed, what Maximianus seems to imply is that as the old age is

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[44] Cf. Webster (1900: 75).

[45] Webster (1900: 8) and later on throughout his commentary, especially to *elegy* 1, p. 58-89.

similar to death[46], so the very body of an old man is similar to grave in which he buries his own senses:

> morte mori melius, quam vitam ducere mortis
> et sensus membris sic sepelire suis. (265-266)

Particularly relevant, however, is one passage evoking not just epitaphic phraseology, but the very composition of tombstone inscriptions, or epitaphs in general, understood also as a literary form[47]. The description made in ll. 9-78, a kind of self-portrait of the *senex* as a young man, is modeled on typical epitaphic presentations[48], often written in the 1st person, as if the deceased spoke for his / her very self. As a matter of fact, epitaphic inclusion can be also found in Ovid's exilic elegy (*Tristia* III 3)[49], where it underlines the deeply emotional character of the letter addressed to the poet's wife. Maximianus's passage though is too long to be called just an 'inclusion'. Besides, it is closely interrelated both with the preceding and the following part of the text and so cannot be interpreted as self-contained unit; in fact, it 'naturally develops', so to speak, into the catalog of women given in ll. 79-100.

The section takes the usual eulogistic tone of epitaphs: the 'dead person' is presented as a renowned orator: ('orator toto clarus in orbe fui', l. 10)[50], full of physical and moral qualities ('his ornatum meritis', l. 59). Expressions like: *toto in orbe* (l. 10), *provincia tota* (l. 59), *cunctis* (l. 64), *omnibus* (l. 72) are typical hyperboles of the graveyard

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[46] Webster (1900: 68) notes that the paradox describing death (and love) is used by Maximianus to describe the old age: 'tu me sola tibi subdis, miseranda senectus, / cui cedit quicquid vincere cuncta potest', ll. 55-56.

[47] Luxorius and especially Ennodius use the form in their epigrams; Venantius Fortunatus develops the form into a longer composition, like for example *Epitaphium Vilithutae*.

[48] Webster (1900: 62).

[49] *quosque legat versus oculo properante viator,*
grandibus in tituli marmore caede notis:
hic ego qui iaceo tenerorum lusor amorum
ingenio perii Naso poeta meo;
at tibi qui transis ne sit grave quisquis amasti
dicere Nasonis molliter ossa cubent (71-76)
We might also think here of Ovid's poetic autobiography in *Tristia* IV 10.

[50] Webster (1900: 62) observes that the verse close is borrowed from the tombstones.

style[51]. Yet the whole picture is, again, a combination of tinges, serious and less serious. Among the merits of the young man, apart from physical strength, stamina, patience, contentment with little[52], the eagerness in carousing is also mentioned ('cessit et ipse pater Bacchus stupuitque bibentem / et, qui cuncta solet vincere, victus abit', ll. 43-44)[53], whereas his natural bashfulness is complemented by a distaste for *puella foeda et rustica*. Thus, the section does not even pretend to be a 'conventional' epitaph. Rather, it is an ostensible play with the form. In fact, what the 'epitaph' seems to commemorate is not a person as such, once young and beautiful, (the reader cannot ignore the detail that the 'deceased' is still alive, or at least *vivit iacendo*[54]) but, more accurately, the very youth, the joy and 'true' life now buried in the decrepit body. Besides, if we take into consideration that the poem opens with words which cannot be understood otherwise if not as a pathetic complaint, indeed a kind of *invocatio mortis* ('Aemula quid cessas finem properare senectus? / cur et in hoc fesso corpore tarda venis?', ll. 1-2), the 'epitaphic' section assumes quite a particular connotation: it seems as if the 'epitaph' were written not to defeat death, but precisely to invoke her, to beseech her to come[55]:

> solve precor miseram tali de carcere vitam,
> mors est iam requies, vivere poena mihi (3-4)

A sensitive reader will certainly not remain totally indifferent to what Maximianus says about the *senectutis vitia* (or *vicia*, to spell in accordance with the 12th century *Accessus*); his image of the wretched old man, tired with his own life and his very self, however ironic at times, is neither inexpressive nor banal. Nevertheless, what he or

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[51] Webster (1900: 69).

[52] 'pauperiem [...] amavi', l. 53, as Webster (1900: 67) observes, one of the commonplaces that became tombstone cant.

[53] Szövérffy (1967/68: 355-356), who proposes to interpret Maximianus's poetry as satiric (especially of anti-feminist tendency) notes this passage.

[54] Editors differ in interpreting l. 239: Webster (1900) and Schneider (2003) edit the verse: '*vivamque* iacendo'; Guardalben (1993) and Sandquist Öberg (1999), on the contrary, emphasize the impersonal tone of the expression: '*vivatque* iacendo'.

[55] Webster (1900: 60) notes that the verb *properare* used in l. 1 is typical of tombstone vocabulary. Yet, it is technical of premature death, whereas here the sense is quite the opposite: senectus cessat properare finem. *Mors – requies*, death as peace, a typical sepulchral motif.

she must notice in the first place – provided that he / she is conversant with the Latin literary tradition – is the overt self-consciousness of this poetry: the late antique elegist enjoys playing with forms and themes, sometimes altering their original meaning or function (an 'epitaph' inserted into a kind of *invocatio mortis* is an example of such alteration), and expects that his readership will discover this intertextual dimension of his work. Therefore, it seems to have been quite a hard task to read Maximianus's poetry wholly 'seriously', paying attention only to the 'sad' and 'realistic' content and not to the artful form.

We must not forget, however, that one of the reasons of the medieval popularity of our poet was precisely the fact that his text does also offer a possibility of such 'serious' reading. The author of *Accessus ad Auctores*, quoted earlier, gives the following summary of the oeuvre:

> Maximianus civis esse romanus unus ex nobilioribus ex libri auctoritate narratur, forma quoque electus ac rethoricae artis ceterarumque artium diversarum pericia instructus veraciter probatur. In hoc autem libro senectutem cum suis viciis vituperat iuventutemque cum suis deliciis exaltat. Est enim sua materia tardae senectutis querimonia. Intentio sua est quemlibet dehortari ne stulte optando senectutis vicia desideret, utilitas libri est cognitio stulti desiderii, senectutis evitatio. Ethicae subponitur quia de moribus tractat.

The medieval commentator tries to classify Maximianus's poetry on the basis of its content and aim. In his opinion the general tendency of the text is protreptic: to persuade the readers out of longing for the old age (bearing in mind the *senectutis vicia*)[56]. As regards the subject, the book treats 'morals' and thus can be labeled as 'ethical'. In fact, in many medieval manuscripts Maximianus is categorized as '*ethicus*'[57]. The stamp does not seem particularly informative at first sight, we should remember though that the late antiquity and (especially) the Middle Ages often described with the term 'ethica' the hexametric poet-

[56] Similarly Eberhard of Bethun (ca 1212): 'Quae senium pulsant incommoda maxime scribit / Et se materiam Maximianus habet'. Coffman (1934: 253), who quotes this distich, notes that 'though the following passage [...] is vague and general, certainly the love poetry by implication is not the important element'.

[57] See Coffman (1934: 253 [n. 5]) on the transmission of Maximianus's text, which also shows that in the Middle Ages he was, indeed, read in the context of ethical literature. It is worth pointing to a note made in the manuscript: London. Reg. 15 A VIII (13th cent.): 'Explicite IIII Liber ethicorum *sanctus* Maximianus'.

ry of Horace (*Sermones*, *Epistulae*) and Juvenal (satires). Both satirists (it is *Orazio satiro* whom we meet in Dante's *bella scola*[58]) were read above all for the instructive *exempla* they gave.

A closer analysis of Maximianus's text reveals several Horatian and Juvenalian inspirations. Of particular importance, however, is the fact that what we find in the late Latin elegiac opus (again, mainly in the introductory part or 'elegy 1') are not only allusions to specific passages, but also similar themes and motifs. Their presence is too conspicuous not to encourage the comparative reading along with analogous statements of Horace and Juvenal.

The description of the young man given in ll. 9-78 is undoubtedly (over)idealized[59], which is related to its 'epitaphic' dimension, analyzed above. He was characterized by very 'Roman' qualities: *eloquentia* ('orator toto clarus in orbe fui', l. 10; 'saepe perorata percepi lite coronam; 'et merui linguae praemia grata meae', ll. 13-14), *virtutis opes*, *tollerantia rerum* (l. 33). *Tollerantia rerum* revealed itself in endurance, despite hunger, little rest, cold, heat, wind, rain (ll. 35-42). The resources of virtue would show in hunting, wrestling and running:

> si libuit celeres arcu temptare sagittas,
> occubuit telis praeda petita meis;
> si placuit canibus densos circumdare saltus,
> prostravi multas non sine laude feras;
> dulce fuit madidam si fors versare palaestram,
> inplicui validis lubrica membra toris.
> nunc agili cursu cunctos anteire solebam (21-27)

Pointing out hunting as preferable leisure activity for a young man, a synonym of manliness almost, is not casual. A careful reader of Horace will probably remember that the poet born in Venusa, addressing his young friend Lollius, determined to cultivate a *potens amicus*, recommended hunting precisely as 'Romanis sollemne viris opus' (*Epist.* I 18, 49), bringing good health and fame. Interestingly, Horace opposes hunting and fighting to staying home writing poetry; a young man, striving to move high up the social ladder (achieving the friendship of the powerful, *petere nobiles amicos*, is a condition sine qua non in this

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[58] *Divina Commedia*, *Inf.*, IV 89.

[59] Szövérffy (1967/68: 356).

respect), is supposed to turn out *vir Romanus* not a versifier devoted to *inhumanae senium Camenae* ('surge et inhumanae senium depone Camenae', *Epist.* I 18, 46; 'adde, virilia quod speciosius arma / non est qui tractet; scis quo clamore coronae / proelia sustineas campestria', *Epist.* I 18, 52-54; 'quamvis nil extra numerum fecisse modumque / curas', *Epist.* I 18, 59-60). Maximianus's youngster was more *kalokagathos* as he would intertwine hunting, wrestling and running with composing "alluring poems" and "competing at tragic song". Nor would he hesitate to defeat others in drinking capacity, however difficult it is "to make one mind bear two ways of living that clash"[60]:

> saepe poetarum mendacia dulcia finxi
> et veros titulos res mihi ficta dabat (11-12)
>
> nunc tragico cantus exsuperare melo. (28)
>
> at si me subito vinosus repperit hospes
> aut fecit laetus sumere multa dies,
> cessit et ipse pater Bacchus stupuitque bibentem
> et, qui cuncta solet vincere, victus abit.
> haut facile est animum tantis inflectere rebus,
> ut res oppositas mens ferat una duas. (41-46)[61]

The juxtaposition of being satisfied with little food and spending night and day carousing with some drunken friend does produce a com-

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[60] What is interesting, in the following lines Maximianus alludes to Horace's *Carm.* III 21, 9-12. Webster (1900: 66) observes that: 'the juxtaposition of *Socratem* and *Catonem* here almost proves that Hor. *Carm.* III 21, 9-12, in *Socraticis madet / sermonibus* brings the same charge against Socrates as against Cato – hence the use of *madet*'. I would say that what Maximianus proposes is a very literal, and therefore ironic, reading of Horace's expression.

Maximianus:	Horace:
hoc quoque virtutum quondam certamine magnum	Non ille, quamquam Socraticis madet
Socratem palmam promeruisse ferunt,	sermonibus, te negleget horridus:
hinc etiam rigidum memorant valuisse Catonem:	narratur et prisci Catonis
non res in vitium, sed male facta cadunt. (47-50)	saepe mero caluisse virtus. (*Carm.*, III 21, 9-12)

[61] Schneider (2003) reads in l. 46: *feret*.

ical effect, which aims to counterbalance the tone of complaints about the old age made again in ll. 55-58. Nevertheless, one could hardly miss that even in this passage Maximianus focuses on ethical aspects or, to be exact, on ethos of an ideal young man – who, as he will emphasize some verses later, is supposed to be *laetus*[62] – an ethos based upon cultural and literary tradition. Maximianus's *iuvenis* looks very much like a young Roman aristocrat of Horace's times, what is more, his philosophy of life is also very 'Horatian'. The contentment with little he is so proud of cannot be not associated with the Venusinus. Putting together the relevant passages should suffice:

Horace: 'pauperiem pati amice' (*Carm.* III 2, 1); 'modico contentus' (*Serm.* II 2, 110); *Carm.* 'rerum dominus' (III 16, 25); 'nil cupiendo' (*Carm.* III 16, 22-23).

Maximianus: 'pauperiem modico contentus semper amavi / et rerum dominus nil cupiendo fui'(ll. 53-54).

If Maximianus's picture of a model young man could be viewed against a parallel description by Horace, the analogy in portraying the old age is even closer, which does not mean however that the late antique elegist only repeats certain expressions or remarks. In fact, Horatian motifs in Maximianus's text are given a much more 'pessimistic' interpretation. Let us take into consideration ll. 181-190. The poet asks paraphrasing Horace's *Epistle* I 5, 12: 'Quo mihi fortunam, si non conceditur uti?':

> quid mihi divitiae, quarum si dempseris usum,
> quamvis largus opum, semper egenus ero?
> immo etiam poena est partis incumbere rebus,
> quas cum possideas est violare nefas.
> non aliter sitiens vicinas Tantalus undas
> captat et appositis abstinet ora cibis.
> efficior custos rerum magis ipse mearum
> conservans aliis, quae periere mihi;

[62] *exultat levitate puer, gravitate senectus:*
inter utrumque manens stat iuvenile decus.
hunc tacitum tristemque decet, fit clarior ille
laetitia et linguae garrulitate suae. (103-108)

sicut in auricomis dependens plurimus hortis
pervigil observat non sua poma draco. (181-190)

For Horace accumulating wealth was 'simply' pointless if one should not be allowed to use it. Such is the sense of the simile he gives in *Sat.* I 1, 62-72: a man who would say: 'nil satis est' (l. 62), obsessed with the desire to have more and more, is ridiculous in his greed, comparable only to Tantalus, thirsty and hungry in the middle of foods and water which elude his grasp. Maximianus's picture is less black and white. For him an old man, poor in his richness, must not dissipate what he possesses because he is supposed to keep it: he has become guardian of his own wealth[63], even though he guards it for others, not for his very self. Thus, he is not only similar to Tantalus or to the dragon in the garden of Hesperides[64], in fact: he must be like Tantalus: it is a crime (*nefas*) to squander one's wealth as it is a punishment (a misery (?) *poena*) to depend upon it, to care for it. Once again irony is intertwined with pathos. An old man is ridiculous because he cannot, even, he must not avoid being so. Old age is pathetic by nature.

Similarly 'more pessimistic' is Maximianus's version of the well-known passage from *Ars Poetica*, devoted to *aetatis cuiusque mores*[65]. Juxtaposing the two descriptions one can notice that details pointed out by Horace are exaggerated in the late antique text. If Horace's *senex* would manage all his affairs *timide gelideque*, delaying ('dilator', l. 172), Maximianus's is doubtful and trembling, maybe also of fear ('dubius tremulusque', l. 195), dreading foolishly his every act ('stultus quae facit ipse timet', l. 196). If Horace's *senex* is afraid of the future ('<p>avidusque[66] futuri', l. 172), Maximianus's is expectant of ill ('semperque malorum / credulus', ll. 195-196). Finally, if Horace's *senex* glorifies the times when he was young ('laudator temporis acti / se puero', ll. 173-174), Maximianus's not only praises the past, but also

[63] The very expression *custos rerum* is Horatian (*Carm.* IV 15, 17), cf. Webster (1900: 80).

[64] The golden apples were symbolic of youth and love, which means everything that the old age is deprived of. An old man is 'sentenced' to guard goods of which only young will be allowed to make use.

[65] A motif, as we know, originating from Aristotle, *Rhet.* II 12, 1388 b 31. Aristotle's description of an old man (Aristotle, *Rhet.* II 13). Consolino (1997: 371) points to some similarities between Maximianus and Horace *Epist.* II 2, 55 f.

[66] I follow Brink's (1971: 239-240) edition and his commentary on the passage, therefore I read *pavidus futuri*, afraid of the future, not *avidus futuri*. The whole line 172 is, in fact, far from easy to understand: on †spe longus† Brink's (1971: 239).

despises the present years ('laudat praeteritos, praesentes despicit annos', l. 197). Horace's *senex* is *censor minorum* ('castigator censorque minorum', l. 174), probably too harsh a critic to be taken seriously, Maximianus's though lays himself open to ridicule believing to be the only wise and learned[67]: in fact, he laughs with those who mock him, not fully aware, as it seems, that he applauds his very self[68]:

Horace, *A.P.* 169-174:

Multa senem circumveniunt incommoda, vel quod
quaerit et inventis miser abstinet ac timet uti,
vel quod res omnis timide gelideque ministrat,
dilator, †spe longus†, iners <p>avidusque futuri,
difficilis, querulus, laudator temporis acti
se puero, castigator censorque minorum.

Maximianus, 195-200:

stat dubius tremulusque senex semperque malorum
credulus, et stultus quae facit ipse timet.
laudat praeteritos, praesentes despicit annos,
hoc tantum rectum, quod sapit ipse, putat.
se solum doctum, se iudicat esse peritum
et quod sit sapiens desipit inde magis.

arridet de se ridentibus, ac sibi plaudens
incipit opprobrio laetior esse suo. (207-208)

The author of *Accessus ad Auctores* is right arguing that Maximianus's poetry constitutes a kind of *vituperatio senectutis*. Indeed, the picture of the old age given in 'elegy 1' is overtly 'satiric' both because of the very tone of particular comments and because of its intertextual dimension. The late antique elegist portrays the *senex* through obser-

[67] For l. 198 Webster (1900: 81) notes also Horace's *Epist.* II 1, 83: 'vel quia nil rectum, nisi quod placuit sibi ducunt'; for l. 200 *Carm.* I 34, 2-3: 'insanientis dum sapientiae / consultus erro'.

[68] In l. 207 Maximianus may, in fact, allude to Horace's *A. P.* 101: 'ut ridentibus adrident'. If so, the sense of the allusion may be very sarcastic. Horace speaks of the reaction of the public watching comedy and applauding the play that suits their tastes. In this context, the old man might be considered, at one time, a spectator and an actor playing unconsciously his own comedy.

vations made by two greatest Roman satirists, Horace and Juvenal. If Horace's *Ars Poetica* 169-174 inspired Maximianus's sketch of the old man's *mores*, Juvenal's *Satura* 10, 188-288[69] turned out an excellent source of information on physical symptoms of aging. In this case the 'Tuscan' poet does not quote or paraphrase specific phrases, nor does he follow Juvenal's technique as such: instead of catalog of similes[70], he gives a 'precise' list of the afflictions of old age, enumerating them one by one. Problems with hearing, sight, changed looks, dry, parched skin, bad health, weak digestion, being unfit for love are all treated more or less in detail by Juvenal[71]. What is interesting, we might presume that Juvenal's description is more minute and vivid (in many aspects it is), yet at one point it is Maximianus whose remark seems, in effect, more pungent. Juvenal depicts old man's dementia, which features are forgetting the name of one's slaves and not recognizing faces of old friends or even children[72], Maximianus however summarizes bitterly: 'nec credere possis / hunc hominem humana qui ratione caret' (ll. 143-144). Such generalization can hardly be found even in Juvenal.

So far I have shown that Maximianus is readable in the context of Latin 'ethical' poetry because of the subject he treats (*aetatis cuiusque mores*) and because of the authors he alludes to, in particular Horace and (additionally) Juvenal. It is not less interesting, however, that the very style of Maximianus's expressions is in certain aspects similar to that of 'ethical' (or satiric) poets. Hugo of Trimberg in his *Registrum* praises Maximianus for 'multi notabiles versus'[73]. In other words, Maximianus is *sententiosus*; his poetry, again, particularly in the introductory part, abounds in units (aphorisms: *sententiae*, *proverbia*) easily detachable from their original context and reusable for new purposes, in *florilegia* offering moral precepts for schoolboys. It is worth quoting some most telling examples:

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[69] Cf. Webster (1900: 73).

[70] Cf. Juvenal's l. 219-226 treating the number of all possible diseases an old man may suffer from.

[71] Juvenal: dry skin and changed looks (l. 191-195), deafness (l. 213-216), problems with sight (l. 227-228); gastric problems (l. 203-204); impotence (l. 204-206); bad health in general, as mentioned above (l. 219-226). Maximianus: 'tremulus senex' (l. 195); Juvenal: 'cum voce trementia membra' (l. 198).

[72] l. 232-239.

[73] Quoted by Curtius (1997: 64).

virtus fulvo pretiosior auro (19)

maior enim mediis gratia rebus inest (82)

haut facile est animum tantis inflectere rebus,
ut res oppositas mens ferat una duas (45-46)

diversos diversa iuvant: non omnibus annis
omnia conveniunt: res prius apta nocet. (103-104)

cuncta trahit secum vertitque volubile tempus[74]
nec patitur certa currere quaeque via (109-110)

ortus cuncta suos repetunt matremque requirunt,
et redit ad nihilum, quod fuit ante nihil (221-222)

quaecumque solent per se perpensa placere,
alterno potius iuncta decore placent. (31-32)

felix qui meruit tranquillam ducere vitam
et laeto stabiles claudere fine dies:
dura satis miseris memoratio prisca bonorum,
et gravius summo culmine mersa ruit (289-292)

In fact, Maximianus's diction is aphoristic. His statements about old age, moral and physical condition of the *senex*, often compressed into one or two distichs, are almost 'naturally' convertible into separate proverbs or exclamations. One must admit that these remarks are for the most part not at all facile. Below I list some of such maxims recomposed into a kind of short *deprecatio senectutis*, starting with an apostrophe to the personified Old Age and ending with a grim conclusion: "it is better to die rather than to live so wretched a life". This draft 'florilegium' intended as a sort of 'Maximianus minor' is aimed to show that the reading of the work as a dissuasion from longing for the old age ('quemlibet dehortari ne stulte optando senectutis vicia desideret') is, indeed, one of the interpretive possibilities suggested in the very text:

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[74] Schneider (2003) reads *trahi* in l. 109.

tu me sola tibi subdis, miseranda senectus,
cui cedit quicquid vincere cuncta potest;
in te corruimus, tua sunt quaecumque fatiscunt,
ultima teque tuo conficis ipsa malo (55-58)

singula turpe seni quondam quaesita referre,
et quod tunc decuit, iam modo crimen habet (101-102)

cogimur a gratis animum suspendere rebus,
atque ut vivamus vivere destitimus (155-156)

lux gravis in luctu, rebus gratissima laetis,
quodque omni peius funere, velle mori (7-8)

o quam dura premit misero condicio vitae,
nec mors humano subiacet arbitrio.
dulce mori miseris, sed mors optata recedit;
at cum tristis erit praecipitata venit. (113-116)

iam pavor est vidisse senem, nec credere possis
hunc hominem humana qui ratione caret. (143-144)

talia quis demens homini persuaserit auctor
ut cupiat, voto turpior esse suo? (151-152)

morte mori melius, quam vitam ducere mortis
et sensus membris sic sepelire suis. (265-266)

It would be an oversimplification, however, to argue that the ethical dimension of Maximianus's poetry, emphasized by his medieval enthusiasts, objectively prevails over other aspects of the text[75]. As I have

[75] As was suggested by Agozzino (1970), who, as it seems, follows the medieval interpretation of Maximianus quite strictly. He concludes (p. 47&27) that Maximianus is 'narratore moralista di episodi ad alto valore educativo' and reads Maximianus's poetry as 'raccolta sapienziale, di lettura facile, agevole anche ai pueri delle scuole. [...] Il "Massimiano" è ethicus [...] nella descrizione dei mala senectutis [...] e quindi nell'insegnamento che ne deriva per chi non voglia adeguarsi al ciclo della vita: ciò comporta anche la vituperosa impotenza del vecchio osceno: al lettore (come quello tardoantico e quello medievale, abituato ad una lettura transletterale) la saggia deduzione e il salutare ribrezzo'.

tried to show in my analysis, one can hardly point to one overall tendency of the oeuvre, whether 'serious' or 'ironic', autobiographic or just the opposite. The lengthy introductory part ('elegy 1') programmatically plays with several generic traditions, encouraging the reader to focus not less on the 'content' as such than on the very 'form' of the work. In fact, it is through the form – and even through particular forms (like 'epitaph' or 'prayer'), recalled, reused, often reinterpreted – that the meaning of the oeuvre in all the variety of tones is generated. Undoubtedly, 'elegy 1', constituting a kind of "motivating context" for the whole opus, announces and determines its 'elegiac' dimension. As I have shown, what Maximianus proposes is a very peculiar, even inverted version of Latin elegy: the elegy without love. In the 'erotic' passage of 'elegy 1' (ll. 59-100) the ideal elegiac lover could not enjoy the *teneri amores* because he did not find a girl worth to be his partner. For his miserable alter ego, the *senex decrepitus*, what was once proper now is a *crimen* (l. 102). It is tempting to translate this *crimen* as "a sin"; indeed, what our poet seems to offer is the "Augustan" elegy – and the "Augustan" *eros* – as rethought and rewritten in the Christian era. What is important, however, is the fact that Maximianus's *eros*, so different from the love cherished by the Augustan elegists, is not yet *eros Christianus* either, spiritual and not carnal. Nor does Maximianus intend to compose an elegy moralisée, even though the ethical discourse is tangible throughout the text. The message of the work is neither simple nor univocal, as neither simple nor homogeneous (*simplex et unum*, as Horace would say) is its very structure. The opening piece ('elegy 1') persuades the reader into activating all his / her poetic memory and reading Maximianus not as a 'new' Augustan or quasi-Augustan elegist but as a bold, and so unfaithful, translator of the 'classical tradition' into the language spoken by quite a different culture.

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