

Digital workshop “Teaching Neo-Latin: texts, materials, didactic challenges”

October 30, 2024

A new understanding of Latin: the case of Dante’s *De vulgari eloquentia*

Syllabus

Reading list

Prior to the teaching session, I recommend that students read a full English translation of Dante’s *De vulgari eloquentia* to get acquainted with its content. Regarding scholarly studies on *De vulgari eloquentia*, I propose:

- Shapiro, Marianne, *De Vulgari Eloquentia. Dante’s Book of Exile* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990). Focus on the ‘Introduction: Dante’s Book of Exile’ and ‘Conclusion: Problems and Perspectives’ (required, available at the Warburg Institute, SAS).

About the use of Latin and the socio-linguistic context of fourteenth-century Italy, I suggest:

- Hall, Robert A. Jr., ‘The Significance of the Italian “Questione della Lingua”’, *Studies in Philology*, 39.1 (1942), 1-10 (required, available on JSTOR);
- Janson, Tore, *A Natural History of Latin* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004). Focus on ‘Part II Latin and Europe’ (required, available at the Institute of Classical Studies, SAS);
- Clackson, James and Geoffrey Horrocks, *The Blackwell History of the Latin Language* (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). Focus on ‘Chapter VIII: Latin in Late Antiquity and Beyond’ (optional, available at the Institute of Classical Studies, SAS).

Text for translation

To guide students through the translation, I underline the key passages and bold the terms of the text that I want them to focus on in case time runs short.

[1] *Cum neminem ante nos de **vulgaris eloquentie doctrina** quicquam inveniamus tractasse, atque talem scilicet eloquentiam penitus omnibus necessariam videamus, cum ad eam non tantum viri, sed etiam mulieres et parvuli nitantur, in quantum natura permittit; volentes discretionem aliquantulum lucidare illorum qui tanquam ceci ambulant per plateas, plerumque anteriora posteriora putantes, Verbo aspirante de celis, locutioni vulgarium gentium prodesse temptabimus, non solum aquam nostri ingenii ad tantum poculum aurientes, sed accipiendo vel compilando ab aliis, potiora miscentes, ut exinde potionare possimus dulcissimum ydromellum.* [2] *Sed quia unamquamque doctrinam oportet non probare, sed suum **aperire subiectum**, ut sciatur quid sit super quod illa versatur, dicimus, celeriter attendentes, quod **vulgarem locutionem** appellamus eam qua infantes assuefunt ab assistentibus cum primitus distinguere voces incipiunt; vel, quod brevius dici potest, vulgarem locutionem asserimus quam sine omni regula nutricem imitantes accipimus.* [3] *Est et inde alia **locutio secundaria** nobis, quam Romani **gramaticam** vocaverunt. Hanc quidem secundariam Greci habent et alii, sed non omnes: ad habitum vero huius pauci perveniunt, quia non nisi per spatium temporis et studii assiduitatem regulamur et doctrinamur in illa.* [4] *Harum quoque duarum nobilior est vulgaris: tum quia prima fuit humano generi usitata; tum quia totus orbis ipsa perfruitur, licet in diversas prolationes et vocabula sit divisa; tum quia naturalis est nobis, cum illa potius artificialis existat.* *Et de hac nobiliori nostra est intentio pertractare.*

(DVE I, 1-4)