

A. STRAMAGLIA: [*Quintiliano*] *La città che si cibò dei suoi cadaveri*  
(*Declamazioni maggiori*, 12)

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*La città che si cibò dei suoi cadaveri* is the gruesome title of the equally gruesome twelfth Major Declamation (*Cadaveribus pasti*), one of the nineteen highly colourful mock-forensic speeches which have come to us under the name of Quintilian. Although these Major Declamations, being the only extant collection of complete Roman declamations, are not only great fun to read but can also be used to enhance our knowledge of ancient views on rhetoric, education, ethics and society as a whole, they have long been all but neglected by most scholars. Fortunately, Haakanson's priceless new edition of the texts<sup>1</sup> has heralded a new era, which promises a profusion of commentaries on the individual declamations. After the publication of Thomas Zinsmaier's excellent work on DM 6,<sup>2</sup> the baton passed to Antonio Stramaglia, who has taken the initiative to form an international group of researchers with the aim to provide all Major Declamations with (new) translations and commentaries. Stramaglia himself has taken the lead with DM 8<sup>3</sup> and 12, and the near future will see the publication of DM 3 (*Miles Marianus*, by Catherine Schneider, Strasbourg) and 13 (*Apes Pauperis*, by Gernot Krapinger, Graz), as well as Stramaglia's own critical edition and translation of the entire corpus, which will appear in UTET's collection of *Classici Latini*.

*La città che si cibò dei suoi cadaveri*, the latest accession so far, takes the form of a classical commentary. It consists of an introduction, which is followed by text and translation with a respectable 354 notes, and is concluded with an extensive bibliography. I will discuss the various parts in this order, but first let me provide you with the declamation's theme, which will give you the case in a nutshell:

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<sup>1</sup> Lennart Haakanson: *Declamationes 19 Maiores Quintiliano Falso Ascriptae*. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1982.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Zinsmaier: *Der von Bord geworfene Leichnam. Die sechste der neunzehn größeren pseudoquintilianischen Deklamationen*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Antonio Stramaglia: [*Quintiliano*] *I gemelli malati: un caso di vivisezione (Declamazioni maggiori, 8)*. Cassino: Edizioni dell'Università di Cassino, 1999.

*Cum civitas fame laboraret, misit ad frumenta legatum, praestituta die intra quam rediret. Profectus ille emit et ad aliam civitatem tempestate delatus duplo vendidit et duplum frumenti modum comparavit. Illo cessante corporibus suorum pasti sunt. Reversus ad praestitutam diem rei publicae laesae accusatur.*

Stramaglia's introduction (pp. 13–30) consists of two chapters, the first of which, 'Cannibalismo e tradizione retorica', reveals that cannibalism was a hot topic in antiquity. We know, of course, that it played a part in many famous myths, but evidently, historiographers and philosophers, too, were highly interested in the matter. As for the latter, Diogenes the Cynic and Zeno the Stoic regarded cannibalism as just another taboo, like incest and homosexuality; they argued in favour of it, with, obviously, more than a whiff of sophistry. Historiography, on the other hand, knew a long tradition of (stock) descriptions of sieges in which starved citizens had recourse to cannibalism. In fact, as time wore on, these descriptions turned into veritable 'topoi', which were perhaps even applied where there was in fact no evidence that cannibalism had taken place. The tradition culminates in two 'suasoriae' urging anthropophagy, which are put into the mouths of, respectively, a commander who wants to train his soldiers to harden themselves against scarcity (Polybius 9,24,5–7) and a prominent citizen of Alesia, besieged by the Romans, who proposes to eat those who are unfit for battle (Caesar, *BG* 7,77).

As, on the one hand, rhetoric found a way into historical and philosophical discussions of cannibalism, Stramaglia argues, so, on the other, the 'motif' became popular in rhetoric. Its treatment in Petronius (141) and Juvenal (15) points to the existence, at the time, of repertories containing exempla of famous sieges.<sup>4</sup> Quite likely, but, if true, it makes it very difficult to explain why there is only one declamation left which deals with cannibalism. Stramaglia offers a tentative explanation: "Forse gli autorevoli moniti di figure come Quintiliano e Tacito, che esortavano a bandire 'maghi, pestilenze, responsi, matrigne più crudeli di quelle delle tragedie, e altri temi ancora più favolosi' hanno avuto un'incidenza negativa sulla preservazione di certi

<sup>4</sup> Here (p.19 n.18) Stramaglia refers to Valerius Maximus VII,6 for comparison; while admitting that there is no evidence of a direct use by pseudo-Quintilian of the *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, he assumes the 'topoi' of siege and cannibalism to be part of a common rhetorical heritage.

prodotti più ‘estremi’, quanto meno in ambito latino; ma si resta nel campo delle ipotesi” (p. 20). Although a better explanation has not yet been found, Stramaglia is right to express his reservations, for there is many a lurid tale to be found in the extant collections.

Although there is no material for comparison to be found in Latin declamations, a similar theme has (later, Stramaglia presumes) been treated by Libanius (*Declamation* 13). It deals with the accusation of blasphemy leveled against the Athenians after their siege of Potidaea (c. 432–30) – a siege which forced the Potidaeans to become cannibals, and which ended up in a number of rhetorical treatises of the Second Sophistic as an ‘exemplum’ of the ruthless imperialism of the Athenians. Libanius, like pseudo-Quintilian, focuses on two elements, viz. the moral and religious taint on the cannibals for having committed such outrageous acts, and the assumption that the accused is responsible for them. Throughout the commentary, Stramaglia points out numerous parallels in detail between both declamations.

The second part of the Introduction, ‘Cadaveribus pasti’, is the introduction proper to the declamation as a rhetorical feat. It defines the text as a variation on a declamatory theme: whereas the famine, the dispatching of an agent to buy grain, and the setting of a date before which he must return, are all familiar elements, the cannibalism is an innovation exploited to the maximum to oblige the audience’s thirst for sensation. Every opportunity to invoke pathos is made the most of (as well it might be, for since the agent returned on time, the prosecution actually does not have a leg to stand on, as Stramaglia rightly remarks [p.25]). Indeed, pathos, emerging from ‘evidentia’, from poetic diction<sup>5</sup> and pointed, often bitingly sarcastic ‘sententiae’ alternating with long, high-flown periods, *becomes* an argument. However, as becomes already clear from the diagram (p. 24) of the declamation’s rhetorical structure, which is conventional,<sup>6</sup> this does not imply that there is no room for proper argumentation.

A short section of this subchapter (pp. 27–28) is devoted to dating and ‘Nachleben’ of DM 12. As for the first, on the basis of the many lexical, semantic and syntactic similarities in the text with the works of the younger

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<sup>5</sup> The text contains many allusions to Virgil, Ovid and Seneca tragicus (esp. *Thyestes*, of course).

<sup>6</sup> ‘Exordium’, ‘narratio’, ‘argumentatio’ (‘propositio’, ‘confirmatio’, ‘refutatio’), ‘peroratio’ (‘amplificatio’, ‘pathos’).

Seneca, Petronius, Tacitus and especially Apuleius, Stramaglia concludes (rightly, in my opinion) that it must have been composed in the second century CE. The first sample of its 'Nachleben' presents him at any rate with a 'terminus ante quem': it is Hegesippus' use of the declamation in his adaptation of Flavius Josephus' *Bellum Iudaicum* (V,40–41), in 350 CE. The next item of interest is the appearance, in 1743, of an 'antilogia', written by the Venetian scholar Lorenzo Patarol, which consists of a speech for the defence of the agent.

As for text (based on Haakanson, 1982), translation and commentary, these are conveniently arranged: the Latin text, on the left pages, is faced by a running translation on the opposite pages (pp. 32–89); the notes follow (pp. 91–209).<sup>7</sup> Stramaglia has moreover divided the 28 chapters of the declamation into some seven or eight paragraphs each, which brings the rhetorical structure of the text to a better light and makes it a great deal easier to look things up. In nearly all cases the paragraphs form fairly self-contained units; only once did I notice the interruption of a train of thought (14,2,2–3<sup>8</sup>).

To give you an idea both of the content of DM 12 and of Stramaglia's work, it is perhaps useful to give a short account of the various 'partes orationis'. DM 12, like any other 'controversia', begins with a short statement of the case, which I have already given above. S. provides inventory of similar themes and a short account of the declamatory law of 'res publica laesa', the authenticity of which is dubious, although it has numerous parallels in Greek rhetoric ('*demosia adikemata*'). He also provides a list of declamations which fall under the same law, to which he returns at the point 'partitio?' in DM 12, where the law is discussed.

The 'prooemium' (ch. 1–3,5), which is, like the declamation as a whole, peppered with legal and ethical terms, presents the agent as profit-seeking and indifferent to the lot of his fellow-man. No punishment will be severe enough for him, but he will have to act as a scapegoat to remove the blemish from his fellow-citizens, who have committed a twofold sin: not only have they eaten their fellow men, but also, as a consequence, they have not been

<sup>7</sup> The notes are attached to the translation, which does not quite do them justice.

<sup>8</sup> [2] *Quae comparata nobis mala non delicatas lacrimas habent? Aliquem populum hostilis exercitus intra portas coegit; solet venire ultima obsessis inopia, sed everti certe licet: victor captivum aut occidet aut pascet. Tormenta quidam piratarum tulerunt; felices, quibus contigit innocentia! [3] Mors certe finis est, nec saevitia ultra fata procedit. Aut etiam si ... (etc.)*

able to bury them. Their crime is without precedent: *Famem ipsam infamavimus, et, quod miseris ultimum est, miserationem quoque perdidimus* (3,4; no comment on the peculiar use of *quod*). The commentary, and this goes for the entire declamation, gives ample attention to the various figures used and provides many internal and external references.

The unusually long ‘narratio’ (3,6–11,2) begins with a ‘praeteritio’: the prosecutor wonders, after the unspeakable events, whether he is really going to be able to put them into words (reminding us, of course, of the original meaning of *nefas*, a word which occurs nine times in the declamation). But of course he is, and for the sake of the accused (the judges know, since they have been party to it) he proceeds to disclose the various stages of the disaster that befell his city. After all the grain that the city possessed had been sold, the crops failed dramatically, while wild plants withered before they could be eaten. No solace was to be expected from neighbouring cities, which had been afflicted by the same catastrophe. The people elected an agent to buy grain and impressed upon him the need to return as quickly as possible. They even gave him provisions for along the way. But all this was to no avail, for the agent did what he wanted: to go on a sightseeing tour, to make a profit and to ingratiate himself with another city rather than his own. In the meantime, the people slaughtered all their cattle, consumed their last supplies and sent away their slaves.<sup>9</sup> But finally, when there was no hope left and many were dying, they had to resort to cannibalism. Instead of grain, dead bodies were stored in the warehouses. The dying at first begged their relatives to grant them a funeral, later at least to let them die peacefully. And the people had to eat members of their own families, because others were eaten by their own relatives. Now there is an abundance of grain, but hardly anyone left to eat it.

The ‘narratio’ ends with a ‘praesumptio’, forestalling the agent’s possible defence, and an ‘excessus’ on the inadequacy of a trial in the face of the agent’s horrendous crime and the people’s need to punish the agent as a means of expiation for the abominations that they have committed. The commentary keeps up excellently, devoting a great deal of attention to, among other things, famine ‘topoi’ (e.g. emergency food [n. 74] and the traditional life expectancy of seven days [n.85]), personifications (*fames* as *inpotens domina* [n. 36], *necessitas* [n. 106]), the numerous ‘sententiae’ and

<sup>9</sup> All these are stock elements in descriptions of famines. See *Introd.* pp. 16–17.

cases of ‘evidentia’, a figure which rightly belongs in a ‘narratio’ and is sometimes pleasantly disgusting:

*Ergo rabidi supra cadavera incubuimus et clausis oculis, quasi visus conscientia acerbior esset, tota corpora morsibus consumpsimus. Subit interim horror ex facto et taedium ac detestatio sui et planctus, sed, cum ab infaustis fugimus cibis, urit iterum fames et, quod modo ex ore proiecimus, colligendum est. (9,1)*

“Fu così che ci avventammo rabbiosi sui cadaveri, e ad occhi chiusi – quasi che il vedere fosse ancor più gravoso che il sapersi colpevoli – divorammo interi corpi, un morso dopo l’altro. Subentra intanto l’orrore per ciò che avevamo fatto, il disgusto e l’odio verso noi stessi, il pianto; ma appena fuggiamo da quegli empi cibi la fame torna a bruciare, e siamo costretti a raccogliere ciò che poco prima avevamo sputato di bocca.”

Stramaglia marks out the ‘propositio’ as 11,3–6, but something might be said for letting it run until 12,2, which will preserve the kind of self-contained discussion of the suitability of the law also found in the ‘propositiones’ of e.g. DM 8, 10, 18 (and 19). There, and likewise in DM 12, the law is considered inadequate in proportion to the seriousness of the crime, but appealed to for want of an alternative. I would call this a ‘status finitionis’ or ‘ratiocinationis’ rather than a case of ‘scriptum et voluntas’.<sup>10</sup>

The ‘confirmatio’ (12,1–19,1) contains large descriptive and narrative elements; especially notable are the description of the city as a ghost town inhabited by living skeletons, and a narrative section in which the perspective keeps changing between the citizens, waiting anxiously for the grain to arrive, and the agent, who is enjoying his cruise. In addition, we find a traditional ‘ecphrasis’ of a storm (16,6; notes 176–77) and a ‘sub oculos subiectio’ of the people waiting (17,5; note 187). The speaker’s immense bitterness manifests itself, among other things, in some striking ‘sententiae’, e.g. *frumentum non naufragio perdidimus, non latrocinio: lucro perimus!* (18,5) and

<sup>10</sup> As does Stramaglia n. 117. For these three types of status see e.g. Quint. *Inst.* 7,3 (*finitio*); 7,8 (*ratiocinatio*); 7,6 (*scriptum et voluntas*).

*perit frumentum quia classis venit in portum!* (18,6).<sup>11</sup> The argumentation is based on a classic ‘partitio’ (Stramaglia n. 128): was the state harmed, and was it harmed by the accused? The ‘descriptio’ of the people’s misery, an elaborate ‘comparatio’ with other disasters that can befall a city, the assertion that the harm cannot be undone and has brought irreparable humiliation and shame on the citizens, all put in glaring contrast with the agent’s conduct, answer both questions. The agent is expressly reproached, not for the famine, but for the fact that he returned later than necessary.

Although largely confirmative, the ‘confirmatio’ contains one refutative element. In 12,2–6 a ‘color’ is brought in: it is stated that the agent has demanded that he be tried according to the law on misconduct of an embassy.<sup>12</sup> The prosecutor crushes the suggestion: it is preposterous that a defendant should determine the form of his trial, and the embassy is a side-issue when murder, cannibalism and the violation of graves are involved.

The ‘refutatio’ (19,2–26,1) consists of a series of ‘contradictiones’: (possible) arguments for the defendant are put forward and subsequently invalidated:

– “I brought double the amount.” – you need it for your defence; it is hardly an achievement if it took you so long; if we had known that you were bent on making a profit, we would have paid you anything.<sup>13</sup> The section contains some rare trade terms (*cocionari*, *exactus* [‘hapax’]), clarified in notes 210 and 216, and an apt use of ‘praesens pro futuro’ (nn. 221, 223).

– “If I had not sold the grain to the other city, it would have been taken by force.” – in that case, you should not have cast anchor there; or you should have resisted and called for our aid; but you are lying and using a color, for if they had intended to take it, they would not have paid double the price. Notable are two ‘topoi’: pirates (n. 230) and the dangers of the sea (n. 248).

– “I was driven off course by a storm.” – on the contrary, the wind was in your favour on four consecutive occasions; besides, the fleet shows no evidence of heavy weather damage. The section is concluded with a paradoxical, proverbial ‘sententia’ (*In portu naufragium fecimus, et frumentum ad*

<sup>11</sup> Paradoxical ‘sententiae’ like these keep cropping up throughout the declamation.

<sup>12</sup> *Actio male gestae legationis*. The whole passage is elucidated beautifully in notes 118–123.

<sup>13</sup> The prosecutor’s counter-arguments are quite exhaustive. I shall confine myself to his main points.

*ancoras perdidimus*), which turns the ‘topos’ of a safe haven inside out and for which Stramaglia cites many parallels (n. 259).

– “But the grain is here, and it is twice as much as you ordered.” – the availability of the grain – at last – only serves to deepen our remorse; but it is too late and too much: there is no one left to buy it. The section contains a ‘tricolon’ of proverbial ‘sententiae’ phrased as ‘interrogationes’: *Quid, quod medicina mortuorum sera est? Quid, quod nemo aquas infundet in cinerem? Quid, quod extincto populo etiam novendialis tarde venit?* (nn. 263–64).

– “I returned on the established day.” – you could have come earlier; instead, you deliberately postponed your return, but *we* couldn’t postpone our hunger.

The ‘refutatio’ ends with the prosecutor pretending to grope for a reason for the delay (underhand dealership? A hidden grudge? Or did the agent decide to return with the grain only on second thoughts, because he realized that he would have to account for the delay in any case?), for should the disaster have occurred for no apparent reason, it would have been even harder to come to terms with.

The ‘amplificatio’ (26,2–27,5), which forms the first part of the ‘peroratio’, is introduced by a ‘praeteritio’ of the suffering brought about by the famine, before it passes to the horrors of cannibalism, which are once more discussed at length. It contains two elaborate ‘comparationes’, both amply annotated in the commentary.<sup>14</sup> The first comparison recalls mythological ‘exempla’ of cannibalism (*Credibiles fabulas fecimus, felices miserias, scelerata innocentia*. [26,4]), the second, a ‘topos’, points out that the citizens have behaved worse than wild animals, the latter abstaining from eating members of their own species. The ‘amplificatio’ is concluded with another horrific ‘topos’: *Non in omnibus mortes expectantur: pater liberos esurit, et oppressa decimo mense mater sibi parit: redit in uterum laceratus infans* (27,4).<sup>15</sup>

The second part of the ‘peroratio’ (28), designed to evoke ‘pathos’, starts with an ‘apostrophe’ to the earth, begging it to swallow up the guilty city. In a pair of ‘*fantasiai*’ the prosecutor first sees before him a number of famous infernal punishments awaiting himself and his fellow-citizens. They are al-

<sup>14</sup> Notes 299–310 and 312–321 respectively.

<sup>15</sup> Stramaglia, n. 328, points to Val. Max. 7,6, ext. 3; Petron. 141,11; Heges. V,40,1; Hieron. *Ep.* 127,21,1 and, of course, the epilogue of Libanius’ *Declamation* 13.

luded to in rather vague terms, presenting the audience with the agreeable game of guessing what exactly the speaker refers to.<sup>16</sup> Then, he sees that the mutilated corpses of the victims begin to emerge from their assassins' bodies. The speaker concludes that his own life can only be justified if the agent pays for his crimes.

From the above, you have probably gathered already that Stramaglia's new book is very good indeed. It remains for me to add a few general remarks that will only strengthen that impression. The translation, for one, is excellent. Stramaglia stays as close to the Latin text as he possibly can (the quote from the narrative section will have made this clear), gives a good rendering of pseudo-Quintilian's often emotive and turgid style, and thankfully refrains from chopping up complex periods. If the translation is at times somewhat more explicit than the original, this only serves to clarify the text. Greek and Latin quotes in the commentary are translated if their content cannot be gleaned at first sight.

The commentary is more than sufficient, not only unlocking the declamation to a broader public, but also providing its rhetorical, literary and socio-historical contexts. Furthermore, it contains a great deal of very fine textual criticism,<sup>17</sup> which gives evidence of the scrupulous use of numerous older commentaries and editions.<sup>18</sup> Stramaglia, moreover, does not confine his criticism to passages he wishes to correct; he also mentions and endorses felicitous conjectures made by his predecessors. The commentary is concluded with a bibliography which is conveniently divided in three parts: works directly related to pseudo-Quintilian, declamation and rhetoric; further secondary literature, and 'sigla'. It is a pity that the work lacks registers of e.g. textual criticism, parallels and figures.

In his introduction (p. 30), Stramaglia has stated that he does not intend the commentary to be exhaustive or over-technical: his main aim is to make

<sup>16</sup> Stramaglia n. 338 ff. explains this *lusus* and distinguishes the tortures of Ixion, Tantalus, Sisyphus, as well as the urn of Minos, (or, alternatively, the punishment of the Danaids), Rhadamantus' iron tower, and Tityus.

<sup>17</sup> To give but one example: in 15,6, the rather insipid *Nam in fame nemo quidem mortibus immunis est* becomes *Nunc in fame ne mo<rs> quidem mortibus immunis est* (*mortibus* = *mortuis*, a 'metonymia' not unusual for pseudo-Quintilian, given the ample evidence in note 95).

<sup>18</sup> Esp. Burman's edition of the *Major Declamations* (1720), Warr's translation (1686) and Patarol's edition (1743). The last, which consists of an annotated edition of the DM faced by 'antilogiae', has been consulted for text and notes.

the declamation accessible for both scholars and students. Even if it could have been further expanded with yet more references e.g. to linguistic peculiarities or the other *Declamationes Miores*, these are not indispensable for the goal Stramaglia has set himself. As it stands, the book is complete, in its richness an improvement on the commentary on DM 8, and a great achievement.