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PECULIARITIES OF THE USE OF ANCIENT QUOTATIONS IN THE PORTRAITURE OF THE RENAISSANCE ERA

Abstract: The article is devoted to the peculiarities of the use of quotations from ancient authors' works in the form of inscriptions on secular portraits of the Renaissance period. It outlines the cultural and historical prerequisites that determined the peculiarities of portrait painting development in this period as well as the use of Latin inscriptions therein. The key underlying role in cultural development of this period played the change of religious and philosophical paradigm, the general cultural humanistic orientation of the era, as well as the revival of classical ancient ideas. These factors ultimately determined the selection and application of Latin inscriptions in the Renaissance portraiture. This paper analyses the grammatical features (change in the grammatical design of individual quotation elements) and structural transformations (abbreviation or, conversely, supplementation) of the ancient quotations on portraits depending on their respective functional load, which the painters availed themselves of, in order to explicitly convey their artistic intention. The article scrutinizes various semantic transformations undergone by ancient quotations in terms of their use in a completely different (as regards to the original text) cultural context. It also offers general description of the functional semantics of ancient quotations on secular portraits of the Renaissance period.

Keywords: *Renaissance, Portraiture, Latin Inscriptions, Ancient Quotations, Reception of Antiquity.*

1. Introduction

The tradition of inscribing works of art enjoys a long history, so much so that it cannot be attributed to innovations of either the Renaissance in general, or portraiture of the same period in particular. Inscriptions were being actively used on the works of art (particularly fine art) of various genres and directions for centuries. The actual cartellino (paper with inscriptions) first appeared in Flemish painting and later – in the first half of the 15th century – also in Italian. At the same time, inscriptions had varied functional charges. Thus, in portrait painting in addition to general information about the depicted person or about the artist, textual elements could also contain various quotations. Usually they were more than just a mere add-on to the picture. Their function was to demonstrate or reinforce the status, intelligence, or wealth of the sitter, drawing parallels with a certain period of his life, significant events, etc. By referring to sources outside the painting, they create allusions, thus helping in creating ‘a connection between the persons represented in the work and the viewers’ (see, in particular, Wallis, 2015:p.30–31). As Casciello points out,

‘originally performing the function of bearing the signature of the painter, by the beginning of the 16th century the cartellino or letterina was used to convey more refined and subtle contents, namely references to ancient Greek and Roman culture <...> these short texts played a key role in the interpretation and understanding of the paintings in which they were displayed’ (2019:p.199).

2. Methodology and corpus

The Renaissance has witnessed an active development of portraiture. Almost all portraits contain Latin or Greek inscriptions on it, and these ‘inscribed texts are often so eye-catching, so integral to the overall design, that they fairly demand equal time with the portraits themselves’ (Vredeveld, 2013:p.509). In the context of such a study, the question of the purpose for using particular quotations from various ancient texts, as well as the modifications thereof in the portrait itself depending on the intention of the artist or the customer is of particular interest. Therefore, the object of our research are the portrait paintings and engravings of the Renaissance

period (14th – 16th c.)², which contain inscriptions – quotations from the works of Roman and ancient Greek authors, as well as reminiscences and allusions to ancient works. The subject of the study are the peculiarities and specific features of the usage of quotations: changes in their grammatical design, lexical components and semantics depending on the context of application.

The source for selecting the research material, namely, Latin inscriptions, were reference publications and online catalogs of large museum³ collections containing detailed factual information about the work of a particular master.

By means of the unselected sampling method, about two hundred portraits of the 14th–16th centuries with Latin inscriptions were singled out from the presented works for the purpose of the study. The works where (mainly) Latin is used to indicate the name of the depicted person or where a standard formula *AETATIS SUAE* is used were not taken into account, since such inscriptions are not informative in terms of analysing the application features of ancient quotations on portraits. The inscriptions on the portraits were analysed from the point of view of origin and the authorship of the applied quotations.

The purpose of the study was to introduce Latin inscriptions applied in Renaissance portraiture into scientific linguistic circulation, as well as to determine and analyse the peculiarities of the use of ancient quotations. Likewise, it is important to investigate the linguistic and graphic features of the inscriptions used in portraits; however, given the scope and ambiguity of this issue, it would require a separate study.

²Of course, the art of portraiture in the Renaissance period was not limited to paintings and engravings. At this time, as a result of imitating ancient traditions, a large number of portrait busts, as well as portrait medals, appear, for example. However, considering the object of our research, such types of portraits were not taken into account. Although most of them are accompanied by Latin inscriptions, they are not quotations from the works of ancient authors.

³Gemäldegalerie, Berlin, Germany; Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, Spain; Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam, Netherlands; National Gallery of Art, Washington, USA; Northampton Borough Council, Northampton Museum and Art Gallery; Oud Sint-Janshospitaal, Bruges, Belgium; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; The British Museum, London, UK; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City, USA; The National Gallery, London, UK; The National Portrait Gallery, London, UK; The Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA; The Royal Collection Trust, London, UK; Uffizi Gallery, Florence, Italy; Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, Germany (see the list of artwork references).

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Historical Prerequisites for the Use of Ancient Quotations in Portraits of the Renaissance Period

Researchers of the portraiture are particularly interested in the Renaissance period, because according to many of them it was the time of intensive development of portraiture, which was akin to a major turning point in the history of portraiture and determined the development of portraiture as an independent genre.

The compelling spread and peculiarity of portraiture during the Renaissance period was influenced by political, social and economic, technical and stylistic factors (Woods-Marsden, 2013:p.443, 449; *Italian Renaissance*; Dillon; Gisbey, 2019). A critical role in cultural development of this period, in general, played the change of religious and philosophical paradigm, the general cultural humanistic orientation of the era, as well as the revival of classical ancient ideas. It was the impact of these factors that ultimately determined the selection and application of Latin inscriptions in the Renaissance portraiture.

The general cultural humanistic orientation of the era was determined by the transition from theocentrism to anthropocentrism with a special interest in the personality and individuality (Woods-Marsden, 2013:p.443; *Italian Renaissance*). As the result, such 'social awakening of the individual' (Toftul, 2014:p.149) led to a significant increase in the role of portraiture and 'had already promoted the early modern invention of the portrait *per se*' (Woods-Marsden, 2013:p.443).

The revival of classical (ancient) ideas became 'the goal and the essence of the new culture' (Dillon; Gisbey, 2019). The Renaissance art, according to the definition of King, 'was intoxicated by antiquity' (2015:p.24), which was perceived as the highest authority, the ideal of human perfection, 'worthy of imitation, exegesis, and, most importantly, constant re-interpretation' (Celenza, 2008:p.27–28), in the light of which modernity was evaluated. The greatest artists and thinkers of the Renaissance aimed to surpass their cultural ancestors. Renaissance humanists 'transformed European civilization, completing the synthesis of Greco-Roman and Christian culture begun by the Church fathers in the last centuries of the ancient world' (King, 2015:p.5).

The characteristic feature of Renaissance portraiture is the use of inscriptions as a result of ancient epigraphic traditions imitation. The vast majority of inscriptions are in Latin, which thanks to the activities of humanists survived as a common means of communication and remained the basic language of education. Inspired by ancient texts, humanists aimed at writing correct classical Latin (basically,

Ciceronian) themselves and teaching others to do the same (Mout, 2016:p.28), and therefore, eventually by the late 15th century the ability to write acceptably classical Latin became routine among educated elites (Celenza, 2008:p.37–39).

Along with purely technical and stylistic techniques, inscriptions on portraits served as effective means of individualization, focused attention on some characteristics of the sitter to give their best representation. This made it necessary to select quotations to be applied on portraits as inscriptions with particular care.

3.2. Key Features of the Use of Ancient Quotations in Renaissance Portrait Painting

3.2.1. Sources of quotations on secular portraits of the Renaissance period. The majority of portrait inscriptions are quotations from the works of classical authors⁴. This is reflective of the general cultural revival of ancient ideas, ‘an attempt to capture in contemporary language the outlook and values of the Greek and Roman past’ (King, 2015:p.25). As Vickers notes, Renaissance humanists approached literature in the essentially utilitarian manner, ‘as an arsenal of resources which could be re-used in their own composition’ (2002:p.83). ‘Grammar school students were encouraged to collect phrases from their reading in a commonplace book, to be deployed in their own compositions’ (Faraday, 2021). As a result, a large number of books appeared in which quotations, sayings, metaphorical statements, etc. from the works of ancient authors were given according to thematic, alphabetical or other principles. ‘The budding writer no longer needs to read the whole of ancient literature: modern middlemen were doing it for him’ (Vickers, 2002:p.83).

The most common sources of quotations used as inscriptions on analysed secular Renaissance portraits were works of Roman poets Virgil, Martial, Ovid and Juvenal. In their works, portrait painters often resorted to direct or indirect quoting of ancient historians (Titus Livius, Cornelius Nepos, Pliny, Strabo), rhetoricians (Cicero), and philosophers (Seneca, Hierocles of Alexandria, Bias) as well. Although there are Greek authors among the above-mentioned, as a rule they are quoted in their Latin translation (e.g. Jan van Scorel. *Portrait of a Young Scholar*, 1531; Jacometto Veneziano. *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1470).

On some portraits, we can see Latin inscriptions that directly or indirectly mention the epitaph that was engraved on the tomb of the last Assyrian king Sardana-

⁴One can distinguish several groups of inscriptions in the Renaissance portraiture, depending on the source or the author: quotations from ancient sources and early medieval authors; quotations from the contemporary works; quotations from religious works (mainly Latin translations of the Bible), mottos and gnomes.

palus. Strabo gives the Greek text of this epitaph: Σαρδανάπαλλος ὁ Ἀνακυνδάρᾳξεω παῖς Ἀρχιᾳλῆν καὶ Ταρσὸν ἔδειμεν ἡμέρη μιῆ. ἔσθιε πῖνε παῖζε, ὡς τᾳλλα τούτου οὐκ ἄξια [Sardanapalus, the son of Anacynдарaxes, built Anchiale and Tarsus in one day. Eat, drink, be merry, because all things else are not worth this (Strab. XIV,5,9)]. The versed Latin version of the epitaph of Sardanapalus can be found in the translation of Strabo's work *De situ orbis*, made by Gregorio Tifernate and published at Treviso in 1480 (Vredeveld, 2012:p.569): Sardanapalus, Anacindaraxis filius, Anchialem et Tarsum una die condidit. Ede, bibe, lude. Et: | Cum te mortalem noris praesentibus exple | Delitiis animum. Post mortem nulla voluptas. | Namque ego sum pulvis, qui nuper tanta tenebam. | Haec habeo quae edi, quaeque ex(s)aturata libido | Hausit; at illa manent multa et praeclara relictā. | Hoc sapiens vitae mortalibus est documentum. These poetic lines (in full or abbreviated form) are present in many editions of the 16th–17th centuries. The phrase *Edite, bibite, post mortem nulla Voluptas!* [Eat, drink for after death there is no pleasure] was quite common on ancient tombstones, household items, as well as in the songs of German students of the Renaissance period. Occasionally it can also be found in the works of substantially later periods.⁵

We can find a reminiscence of the Sardanapalus's epitaph on the *Portrait of Sir Thomas Chaloner* by unknown Flemish artist (1559) that is accompanied by the distiches⁶:

*SARDANAPALVS AIT, PEREVNT MORTALIA CVNCTA, | VT
CREPITVS PRESSO POLLICE DISILIENS | QVÆ PEREVNT NIGRO
FUGIVNTQ(UE) SIMILLIMA FVMO: | VREA QVANTVMVIS, NIL NISI
FVMVS ERVNT, | AT MENS CVLTA VIRO, POST FVNERA CLARIOR
EXTAT | PONDVS INEST MENTI CÆTERA VANA VOLAT* [Sardanapalus said all mortal things perish, like the sound of a finger-snap; those which perish and flee just like a black smoke, however golden they may be, will be nothing but smoke, but the cultivated mind belongs to the man all the more vividly after death. Real substance is a property of the mind, other empty things fly away]

Another case of using a Latin translation from a Greek original is the inscription *DIALOGUS DE TEMPORE* on the reverse of a double-sided portrait of *Sir Christopher Hatton* by William Segar (c. 1581). It is the most voluminous among the analysed inscriptions:

⁵Variola, F. (2010) *Post mortem nulla voluptas* [oil on paper]. <https://www.saatchiart.com/art/Painting-Post-mortem-nulla-voluptas/57840/1264759/view>

⁶The verses were probably written by Sir Thomas himself, who, besides his reputation as a statesman and soldier, is also accredited with having been one of the best Latin verse writers in the reign of Elizabeth (*Notes and queries*, 1866:p.27).

*Cuius opus; quondam Lysippi dic mihi quis [=quis] tu; tempus quidnam operae | est tibi; cuncta domo, cur tam summa tenes; propero super omnia | pernix, cur celeres plantae; Me levis aura vehit cur tenuem tua dextra | tenet tonsoria falcem; omnia nostra fecans redit acuta manus, cur tibi | tam longi pendet a fronte capilli, fronte guidem [=quidem] facilis sum bene posse | capi cur tibi posterior pars est a vertice calva; posterior nemo | prendere me poterit, talem me finxit quondam sytiomus [=sycionius] hospes, et | monitorem hoc me vestibulo posuit, pulchrum opus artificem Laudat | pro Iuppiter o quam [=quam], debuit hoc pigros sollicita[r]e viros [A Dialogue of Time: Whose work are you? Of Lysippus, once. Tell me who you are. Time. What do you do? I subdue all things. Why do you so occupy the highest place? Swift, I hurry over all things. Why are your feet swift? The light breeze carries me. Why does your shearer's right hand hold a slender crescent? My severe hand, as it cuts, makes all things mine. Why do long locks hang from your forehead? From the front, I am easy to be held fast. Why is your posterior part bold at your head? No one posterior can seize me. Of that kind [Lysippus] of Sicyon created me once, visitor, and placed me in this entrance hall as a lesson, a beautiful work praises the artist, oh Jupiter, oh that this was destined to stir up lazy men]*⁷

When analysing this inscription Minnigerode arrives at the conclusion that it is a variation of the inscription on the infamous now lost statue of Kairos, which was built by Lysippus (400 BC) and stood in front of his house in Sycion (2021:p.333). Actually, the inscription itself 'hints' at this connection, because the text mentions the name of the sculptor, and in order to understand this connection and the inscription in general, the viewer must have a certain idea of who Lysippus is. It is on the pedestal of this statue, as Minnigerode claims, that the mentioned verse was engraved, which is attributed to Posidippus of Pella (c. 300 BC), and later it was preserved in the *Greek Anthology* (2021:p.333). After the publication of Alciato's emblem, both image and poem became widely popular and appear in other 16th century emblem collections (Daly, 2013).⁸

An interesting example of combining parts of quotations from different sources to achieve a complete outline of the customer's idea is the inscription on the *Portrait of a Lady* by Neroccio di Bartolomeo de' Landi (c. 1480). The artist's inability to outperform nature is expressed in the inscription *QVANTVM HOMINI FAS EST*

⁷ Translation of the poem is quoted according to the edition Minnigerode, 2021.

⁸ In 1586 (Leiden), Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* included an English translation of *In Occasionem*. George Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient and Moderne* (1635) has a similar emblem under the title *Occasions-past are sought in vaine; But, oft, they wheele-about againe*.

MIRA LICET ASSEQVAR ARTE | NIL AGO MORTALIS EMVLOR ARTE DEOS [Whatever a human being is permitted to, I attain through my prodigious art; yet, a mortal competing with gods, my effort is useless]. According to Caciorgna (2005:p.153), an original distich was written by a classy humanist who managed to create a spectacular blending of ancient and Christian sources:

(1) The formula *Quantum homini fas est* is found, for example, in Seneca's texts (Sen. *De Cons.* XVII,1). It can also be found in St. Augustine's texts (*Opus imperfectum contra secundam respensionem Iuliani*), Fulgenzio vescovo di Ruspe (*Responsio contra Arianos*), Isaac de Stella (*Epistola de officio missae*) (Caciorgna, 2005:p.153). Some lexical references and thematic convergence can be found in a passage from Seneca (*Ep.* CIV,23).

(2) The expression *mira arte* is often found in classic poetry; for example, in the LXIV poem of Catullus (Catul. LXIV,50–51), the phrase *mira arte* is used to denote the preciousness of the wedding coverlet from the bed of Peleus and Thetis: *Haec vestis priscis hominum variata figuris | Heroum mira virtutes indicat arte* [This blanket, decorated with ancient figures of people, | depicts the stories of heroes with extraordinary art]. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Pygmalion, who is 'indignant at the defects with which nature has endowed the female soul abundantly', did not love any woman, so he sculpted his ideal woman from snow-white ivory and fell in love with her: *Interea niveum mira feliciter arte | sculpsit ebur foramque dedit, qua femina nasci | nulla potest, operisque sui concepit amorem* (Ov. *Met.* X, 247–249) [But one day, thanks to his wonderful artistic talent, he successfully sculpted a block of white ivory and crafted such a form from it that no other woman could ever possess, so much so that he fell in love with his creation]. Neroccio, like Pygmalion, painted a portrait of the ideal woman in accordance with the aesthetic canons formulated in the Middle Ages, which were maintained until the Renaissance. The ideal model presented by the artist is a female figure that meets the established rules of beauty in line with the refined tastes: golden hair, purity of complexion, elegance of proportions (Caciorgna, 2005:p.153).

3.2.2. Modifications of ancient quotations on secular Renaissance portraits.

The semantic, etymological, linguistic and cultural analysis of Latin inscriptions on secular portraits of the Renaissance period shows that the original author's text has been adapted and modified in accordance with the purpose of using the quotations.

The scope of the quoted text could vary from three words to sprawling poetic lines. The short one could be either an original quotation, or an aphorism formed

by reduction of the original text. We can see the original short quotation on the *Bust Portrait of a Young Man* by Giovanni Battista Moroni (c. 1560). It has the inscription *DVM SPIRITVS | HOS REGET ARTVS* [As long as breath animates these limbs (Verg. *A.* IV, 336)] with the words of Aeneas, confirming his commitment to Dido, queen of Carthage, as he is forced to abandon her.

The partially altered words of the Sibyl from Virgil's *Aeneid* are used as an inscription on the posthumous *Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici*, the founder of the Medici family, by Jacopo Pontormo (c. 1520): *VNO AVVLSO NON DEFICIT ALTER* [When one branch is torn away, the next fails not]. This phrase is a brilliant example of an inscription as an effective means of acknowledging and emphasizing the status, pedigree, position in the social hierarchy of the sitter. There was changed only one word *Primo* to *Uno* in the quotation from Virgil's *Aeneid* (cf. original: *Primo avulso non deficit alter | aureus, et simili frondescit virga metallo* (Verg. *A.* VI, 143–144) [When the first is torn away, a second fails not, golden too, and the spray bears leaf of the self-same ore]). Such a seemingly minor change was actually very important, because the phrase acquires a completely different meaning. This way it emphasizes the ancient origin and the continuity of the genus, where the depicted person is far from being the first in his family tree. Committed to the principle of the coherence of the image and the inscription, Jacopo Pontormo places the inscription on a mysterious scroll, curved around the laurel branch⁹ (Broncone) – a heraldic emblem used by Medici as a symbol of continuity and rebirth of the dynasty.

Among popular quotations in the 16th century was a sentence from Virgil's *Aeneid* *FATA VIAM INVENIENT* (Verg. *A.* 10.113) [The fates will find a way] – the words of Jupiter at the meeting of the supreme Roman gods. An unknown artist uses it in the *Portrait of Lord Edward Russell* (1573).

Since the portraits were intended for an intellectual, educated environment, for the accompanying texts in their portraits, the portraitists were using quotations from the works of ancient authors, which is obviously related to the respective orientational patterns in the society. It was this reckoning on the recognisability of some quotations, even though quoted in fragments, that allowed some portraitists to put only part of the quotation on the portrait, just enough for it to be recognized and understood by the audience, e.g. on the posthumous *Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici* by Jacopo Pontormo (c. 1520) (see above). The expression *Omnia dat Dominus non habet ergo minus* on the large group *Portrait of Pierre de Moucheron...* by unknown artist (1563) and on the *Portrait of Girl at the Virginal* by Catharina

⁹This phrase is written on a scroll so that we can see only separate letter combinations.

van Hemessen (1548) is visible only partly on a musical instrument (the virginal) due to the peculiarities of its construction. An unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist (c. 1547–50) on the *Portrait of Thomas Wentworth* uses a quotation from the Virgil's *Aeneid* (Verg. *A.* V,344: *Gratior et pulchro veniens in corpore virtus*). The features of these inscriptions on the portraits allow only partial recognition of the original text of the quotations, presuming such an extent of familiarity of the audience therewith, that even partial inscription would suffice to recognize the allusion.

On some portraits, on the contrary, the ancient quotation is supplemented with a text in order to more accurately reproduce the artistic intention. The aforementioned quotation from the Virgil's *Aeneid* (Verg. *A.* V,344) on the *Portrait of Thomas Wentworth* (Unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist, c. 1547–50) is supplemented for precision purposes by the text: *Corporis effigie pulchrior est (animi?)* [Fairness of form to virtue adds new grace | Yet the mind's portrait far excels the face].

Some portraits contain the inscriptions, which are the paraphrases of the famous quotations. The inscription on the portrait *The Merchant Georg Gisze* by Hans Holbein the Younger (1532) *Nulla sine merore voluptas* [No pleasure without regret] is a paraphrase of a quotation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: *Nulla est sincera voluptas, sollicitumque aliquid laetis intervenit* (Ov. *Met.* VII,453–454) [There is no such thing as pure joy, some apprehension accompanies happiness]. The content of this inscription is somewhat inconsistent with the symbols of health (Basil), friendship (Rosemary), family ties (a letter from his brother), prosperous trade (other correspondence and sealing strips) and other attributes of a happy life of a successful person depicted in the painting, i.e. the merchant. On the basis of such inconsistency, art historian Buck asserts, that 'the apparently splendid world of the rich merchant Gisze is thus by no means as sound and stable as it appears at first' (1999:p.88–95).

The poem *DIALOGUS DE TEMPORE*, inscribed on the reverse of a double-sided painting of *Sir Christopher Hatton* by William Segar (c. 1581), is a paraphrase of the subscription under *In occasionem* emblem with an image of Fortune from the book *Emblematum liber* by Andrea Alciato,¹⁰ published in dozens of editions from 1531 onwards.

¹⁰ *Lysippy hoc opus est, Sicyon cui patria. Tu quis? | Cumcta domans capti temporis articulus. | Cur pinnis stas? Usque rotor. Talaria plantis | Cur retines? Passim me levis aura rapit. | In dextra est tenuis, dic, unde novacula? Acutum | Omni acie hoc signum me magis esse docet. | Cur in fronte coma? Occurrens ut preudar. At heus tu, | Dic, cur pars calva est posterior capitis? | Me semel alipedem si quis permittat abire, | Ne possim apprenso postmodo crine capi. | Tali opifex nos arte tui caussa aeditit, hospes: | Utique omnes moneam, pergula aperta tenet* [This image is the work of Lyssippus, whose home was Sicyon. Who are you? I am the moment of seized opportunity that governs all. Why do you stand on points?

In some cases, while keeping the original text intact, customer allows himself to change the grammatical design of individual elements of the quotation or individual lexemes.

The epigram on the *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi* by Domenico Ghirlandaio (1489–90) reads *ARS UTINAM MORES ANIMUMQUE EFFINGERE POSSES | PULCHRIOR IN TERRIS NULLA TABELLA FORET* [Art, if only you were able to portray character and soul, no painting on earth would be more beautiful]. This inscription is almost exact quotation of two lines of an epigram by Martial (Mart. X.32.5; cf. original: *Ars utinam mores animumque effingere posset!*); there is only one change: the verb *possum, posse, potui* is used in the second person singular instead of the original third person, making the speaker address Art. According to Shearman, the artist, Ghirlandaio, has composed the inscription (1992:p.112). Instead, DePrano (2008), considering the reality of artists' education and social status in Quattrocento Florence, as well as the patronage context of this work, attributes the authorship of the revised version of the text to humanist Angelo Poliziano, who was quite well acquainted with the texts of Martial and had the necessary poetic flair for the transformation of the text.

The expression *Docet vanam sine viribus iram esse* (Liv. I,10,4) is used by Titus Livius to describe the easy victory of Romulus over the offended inhabitants of Cenina, who, without coordinating their actions with other peoples offended by the Romans, attacked the Roman lands themselves. Unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist uses a grammatically modified part of this sentence (the infinitive clause of the original was converted into an independent sentence) in the *Portrait of Sir Edward Hoby* (1583): *VANA SINE VIRIBVS IRA* [Anger without strength is in vain].

Taking into account the fact, that the era when original texts were created and the period when quotations borrowed from these texts for inscriptions on portraits were being used, had a completely different cultural context, changes in semantics thereof seem natural: the meaning embedded in the original quotation by the author was partially or completely modified. As a rule, the quotations took on a more religious colour. For example, on the above-mentioned *Bust Portrait of a*

I am always whirling about. Why do you have winged sandals on your feet? The fickle breeze bears me in all directions. Tell us, what is the reason for the sharp razor in your right hand? This sign indicates that I am keener than any cutting edge. Why is there a lock of hair on your brow? So that I may be seized as I run towards you. But, come, tell us now, why ever is the back of your head bald? So that if any person once lets me depart on my winged feet, I may not thereafter be caught by having my hair seized. It was for your sake, stranger, that the craftsman produced me with such art, and so that I should warn all, it is an open portico that holds me] (Alciato, Andrea (1531) *Emblematum liber*. Augsburg, Heinrich Steyner, p. 299. <https://www.emblems.arts.gla.ac.uk/alciato/emblem.php?id=A15a120>).

Young Man by Giovanni Battista Moroni (c. 1560), the quotation *DVM SPIRITVS | HOS REGET ARTVS* undergoes modification compared to the original and is used ‘as a statement of religious fidelity’¹¹. Such a change in the semantic load of this quotation is also observed when it is used on other works of art of the 16th century, as well as in later times.

Cicero’s saying *Nec spe, nec metu* (Cic. *Red. Sen.* III) [Neither hope nor fear], which can also be found in Seneca’s *De Constantia Sapientis* (Sen. *Dial.* II,9,1) was popular in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (López Poza, 2011), taking on the meaning of a call to a stoic life, to the acceptance of all life’s troubles without hope or fear. This meaning is preserved in the *Portrait of Sir William Daniel* by unknown artist (c. 1604), where the quote is used as an inscription.

The modified text of the aforementioned Sardanapalus’s epitaph is inscribed on the reverse of *Portrait of a Lady* attributed to Jacometto Veneziano (c. 1470): *V LLLL F | DELITIIS ANIMVM | EXPLE | POST MORTEM | NVLLA VOLVP|TAS* [Satisfy the soul with delights for after death there is no pleasure]. Such change of the first part of the expression gives it the completely different meaning, which corresponds to the cultural context of that period.

The *Portrait of a Young Scholar* by Jan van Scorel (1531) has the Latin inscription *QUIS DIVES? QUI NIL CUPIT – QUIS PAUPER? AVAR(US)* [Who is rich? He who desires nothing – Who is poor? The miser] authored by Bias – one of the seven sages, according to Avsonii.¹² The ancient wisdom contained in the quotation takes on new shades of meaning when combined on with another Latin inscription on the *Portrait of a Young Scholar* by Jan van Scorel (1531): *Omnia dat dominus non habet ergo minus* [The Lord provides everything and yet has nothing less], thus forming a Stoic syncretism or Cynic wisdom with Christian one.

3.2.3. Functional load of Latin inscriptions in the Renaissance portraiture.

Depending on the scope, content, subject matter, changes to the original text and particular placement in the picture, the functional load of Latin inscriptions in the Renaissance portraiture was different. Without going into a detailed analysis, which requires a separate study, let us outline the most important of them.

The inscriptions on the portraits could reflect the living principles of the sitters and were used as mottos and slogans. The quotation from Titus Livius *VANA SINE VIRIBVS IRA* (Liv. I,10,4) [Anger without strength is in vain] is used as a slogan in

¹¹ *The Frick Collection*. <https://www.frick.org/exhibitions/moroni/11>

¹² *Avsonii Septem Sapientum Sententiae*. <https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/aus.sept.sent.html>

the *Portrait of Sir Edward Hoby* by unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist (1583). It seems quite logical considering the activities of Sir Edward Hoby: he was an outstanding diplomat, Member of Parliament, scholar, and soldier, and in 1582 the Queen knighted him. Obviously, this very change led to the appearance of an inset scene in the top right-hand corner of a portrait created a year after this event, in which a woman stands carrying a scroll with the inscription: *RECONDV̄TVR NŌ RETV̄DV̄TVR* [Laid aside, but not blunted], which is a comment on the trophy of martial implements that lies in the grass in front of her. The figure may be read as an allegory of Peace, or it may represent the Queen herself. Marcin Śmiglecki a few decades later (in 1611 in Köln) used the same quotation from the work of Titus Livius as the title of his polemical treatise, having expanded it based on the content of the work to *Vana sine viribus ira ministrorum evangelicorum*, which was very popular at the time in the Catholic world.

In the *Portrait of Walter Devereux* by unknown artist (1572), the quotation of Cornelius Nepos is used: *VIRTVTIS COMES INVIDIA* [Envy is the companion of virtue], which is a variation of a popular in the Middle Ages maxim, first mentioned in Nepos in the following context: *Est enim hoc commune vitium magnis liberisque civitatibus, ut invidia gloriae comes sit et libenter de iis detrahant* (Nep. *Cha.* III,3). It was not by chance that the aforementioned quotation was used as an inscription in the analysed portrait. It was the motto on the coat of arms of the Devereaux family, to which the depicted Walter Devereux, 1st Earl of Essex, 2nd Viscount Hereford (1539–1576) belonged.

On some portraits the inscriptions, usually made in the first person, express the subjective attitude of the customer, sitter or artist to a certain phenomenon. The *Portrait of Robert Sydney* by unknown artist (c. 1588) supplemented with the inscription *INVENIAM VIAM AVT FACIAM* [I shall find a way or make one]. The origin of this expression is associated with Hannibal, who according to the legend gave such answer to his commanders regarding the (im)possibility of crossing the Alps on elephants. The written record of the phrase is found in Seneca's tragedy *Hercules Furens* (Sen. *Her. F.* 275–276): *Inveniet viam, aut faciet* (Amphitruon's words about Hercules). It is obvious that the customer prefers the changed grammatical form of the verbs (used in the first person instead of the third person singular of the original), so that the audience gets the impression that the sitter himself is speaking to them. Considering how the quote was changed compared to the original, we can say that it is the motto of the sitter, a statement of perseverance and purposefulness.

The change in the grammatical form of the verb in the quotation of an epigram by Martial used as an inscription on the *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi* by Domenico Ghirlandaio (1489–90) determines the perception of this inscription as an expression of the personal attitude of the author or the customer to the depicted. Shearman states, that this inscription is ‘spoken’ by the artist, Ghirlandaio, as a lament at the limit of his skills to fully represent Giovanna, both in her character and her mind (1992:p.112). DePrano (2008) identifies the ‘speaker’ as her husband, Lorenzo Tornabuoni, a poet and a humanist scholar.

On numerous portraits, inscriptions are instrumental in helping the artist to achieve by far the most important goal of portraiture – the glorification of virtues (usually Christian) or other inherent personal qualities of the sitter.

On the *Portrait of a Woman Inspired by Lucretia* by Lorenzo Lotto (c. 1530–33) the woman holds out in her left hand a scrap of paper, on which is drawn a sketch of her namesake, the Roman Lucretia committing suicide by stabbing herself. The inscription on the portrait is an abbreviated quotation from *Ab urbe condita: NEC VLLA IMPVDICALV]CRETIÆ EXEMPLO VIVET* [After Lucretia’s example let no violated woman live] (cf. original text: *vos, inquit, videritis, quid illi debeatur: ego me etsi peccato absolvo, supplicio non libero; nec ulla deinde inpudica Lucretiae exemplo vivet* (Liv. I,58,10)). The Latin text in conjunction with the picture should remind viewers of the story about Lucretia, which would have been familiar to educated upper class of the time. The portrait, while displaying the beauty of the sitter, also proclaims her virtue. Lucretia took her own life, proving that she would sooner die than live after the violation that made her unchaste. According to Casciello, the use of this quotation on the portrait proves that the woman would, under certain circumstances, act like the ancient Roman lady (2019:p.201–202), demanding of all women to acknowledge, and by so doing, agree to marital fidelity and to cast aside any thoughts of treachery. The Lucretia’s story truly resonated with the worldview of Renaissance society, and therefore was a popular source of inspiration for many of the best known European painters of the period and later.¹³

¹³We can see the depiction of the plot about Lucretia, in particular, in the paintings of Master Charles III of Durazzo. (*Tarquin and Lucretia*, c. 1400), Francesco Francia (*Lucretia*, c. 1505–08), Sodoma (*Death of Lucretia*, 1513), Titian (*Tarquin and Lucretia*, 1571), Vincent Sellaer (*The Death of Lucretia*, 16th c.), Parmigianino (*Lucretia*, 1540) Follower of Raphael (*Suicide of Lucretia*, c. 1530–50), Unknown artist (*The Suicide of Lucretia* 1550–1650), Guido Reni (*Lucretia* 1640–42; *The Death of Lucretia*, 1634), Unknown artist (*Lucretia*, mid-16th–mid-17th c.), Felice Ficherelli (*The Rape of Lucretia*, c. 1638), Jehan Baleschoux (*The Unannounced Return by Night of L. Tarquinius, Collatinus and His Companions to Find His Wife Lucretia Weaving*, c. 1618), Toussaint Gelton (*The Suicide of Lucretia*, 1671), Godfrey Kneller (*Lucretia*, c. 1672–75), Giovan Gioseffo dal Sole (*Rape of Lucretia*, c. 1690), Italian (Roman) School (*The Death of Lucretia*, 1670), Giovanni Battista Pittoni the Young-

On the reverse side of the posthumous portrait of *The Duke and Duchess of Urbino Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza* by Piero della Francesca (c. 1473–75), which together with a similar image of her husband forms a diptych, depicts the Triumph of Battista Sforza (1465–1466). The artist tacitly emphasized the feats of the depicted, since traditionally luxurious triumphs were staged after glorious victories in Ancient Rome. There is a large inscription in Latin in the lower part: *QVE MODVM REBVS TENVIT SECVNDIS | CONIVGIS MAGNI DECORATA RERVVM | LAVDE GESTARVM VOLITAT PER ORA | CVNCTA VIRORVM* [She preserved modesty in happiness; adorned with the fame of her great husband; the praise of the deeds flies from the lips of all men]. Although the quotation is not directly borrowed from the work of the ancient author, its part (*volitat per ora cuncta virorum*) is an allusion to the epitaph of Ennius, the text of which is quoted by Cicero in the *Tusculan Disputations*, reflecting on posthumous glory: *Aspicite, o cives, senis Enni imaginis formam: | Hic vestrum panxit maxima facta patrum? | Nemo me lacrimis ... | Cur? voluto vivos per ora virum* [Behold old Ennius here, who erst – | Thy fathers' great exploits rehearsed? ... | Let none with tears my funeral grace, for I | Claim from my works an immortality (Cic. *Tusc.* I,34).]¹⁴ Of course, at the end of the 15th century, at the time of the creation of the portrait, the idea of posthumous fame, the ways and necessity of its acquisition (especially for a woman) was perceived completely differently than in the ancient times. Each element of Battista's image extols conjugal virtues: she rides on a cart pulled by two unicorns (a symbol of purity and chastity), holds a prayer book in her hands, and behind her are allegorical figures of the three Christian virtues: Faith (dressed in red with a cup and sacramental bread), Hope (behind), Mercy (dressed in black with a bird on her lap, a symbol of the sacrifice of a mother who gives her own life for the survival of her family and children) and Temperance (behind in the foreground). The inscription emphasizes not only the depicted virtues, but also the second nature of women in society at that time. Combined with the portrait of a man – a virtuous Christian ruler – these images create a complete picture of the ideal pious Christian family.

Hans Holbein the Younger on the *Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam* (1523), a renowned humanist scholar and theologian, cites the Latin inscription across

er (*Death of Lucretia*, c. 1736–39), Italian (Bolognese) School (*Lucretia*, 17th C), Gavin Hamilton (*The Death of Lucretia*, c. 1763–67), School of Fontainebleau (*The Rape of Lucretia*, 18th c.), Unknown artist (*Tarquin and Lucretia*, 1800–50), Pietro Antonio Sasso (*The Suicide of Lucretia* (after Guido Reni), 18th c.) and many others.

¹⁴<http://www.attalus.org/cicero/tusc1A.html>

the pages of the book on the shelf behind Erasmus: ILLE EGO IOANNES HOLBEIN, NON FACILE VLLVS / TAM MICHI MIMVS ERIT, QVAM MICHI MOMVS ERIT [I am Johannes Holbein, it will not be so easily to emulate me as to denigrate]. This phrase is a reference to Pliny the Elder's life of Zeuxis, in which Zeuxis stated that carping was a great deal easier than imitating: *invisurum aliquem facilius quam imitaturum* (Plin. *Nat.* 35.29) [It would be easier to find fault with him than to imitate him]. This portrait is an example of intellectual symbiosis and mutual recognition of the merits and skill of the artist and the sitter. The image embodies the achievements and the best features of the sitter. On the other hand, Erasmus, who was, according to Margolis (2018) the author of this inscription or at least was responsible for its content, in turn praises the artist as a genius of painting worthy of admiration. The educated viewers should have understood the reference of the Latin inscription to the famous ancient painter Zeuxis, who painted vines so realistically that birds flew to peck the grapes. This portrait is also a vivid example of the use of inscriptions in combination with additional expository and symbolic details to complement and specify the general meaning. Here the parallelism between Zeuxis and Hans Holbein the Younger is also reinforced by the partially drawn curtain, which was supposed to remind the audience of the famous contest between Zeuxis and Parrhasius.

A similar correspondence between the Latin inscription and the image could be found in the *Portrait of Sir Thomas Chaloner* (Unknown Flemish artist, 1559) as well. In the inscription, which refers to Assyrian king Sardanapalus, we can read about the transience of life (PEREVNT MORTALIA CVNCTA), which passes like a finger-snap (CREPITVS PRESSO POLLICE DISILIENS) – the corresponding gesture is also depicted on the portrait. The true value mentioned in the poem (MENS CVLTA) is reinforced by the image of the blazing book, a symbol of intelligence and knowledge, on the scales in the sitter's right hand.

On the reverse of a double-sided painting of *Sir Christopher Hatton* by William Segar (c. 1581) we can observe a close text-image reciprocal relationship between the image and the poem *Dialogus de Tempore* inscribed beneath it¹⁵. The artist depicts Time (*Tempus*) as a man with all the attributes described in the poem: he occupies the upper part of the picture, and in addition, he is depicted on a cloud, which symbolizes superiority over the world (*summa tenes*), his celerity (*celeris plantae*) is symbolically represented by wings on his ankles (which should remind the audience of Hermes, whose attributes were winged sandals), his right hand holds a shearer (*tenuem tua dextra tenet tonsoria falcem*), long locks hang from his

¹⁵ See Minnigerode, 2021.

forehead (*longi pendet a fronte capilli*), posterior part of the head is bold (*posterior pars est a vertice calva*). The transiency of human life, which the inscription refers to and which is depicted as Time, is also personified by the image of Lachesis in the central part – one of the Moirai, which measures the thread spun by her younger sister Clotho, and in fact, decides when the thread of human life will be cut.

The use of quotations from ancient works as inscriptions on portraits is not limited only to the Renaissance period, but continues during the later centuries as well.

4. Conclusions

During the Renaissance, the Latin quotations from the works of ancient authors were widely used as inscriptions on secular portraits. It was caused by a number of political, social, economic factors and to the greatest extent by changes in the cultural context of the era.

Among the analysed inscriptions on secular portraits, we found direct or indirect quoting of ancient poets (Virgil, Martial, Ovid and Juvenal), historians (Titus Livius, Cornelius Nepos, Pliny, Strabo), rhetoricians (Cicero), and philosophers (Seneca, Hierocles of Alexandria, Bias) as well. The texts of Greek authors are quoted in Latin translation, e.g. the sayings attributed to Greek sage Bias (J. van Scorel. *Portrait of a Young Scholar*, 1531), the epitaph on king Sardanapalus's tomb cited in the Greek text of Strabo (J. Veneziano. *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1470), the inscription from the lost statue of Kairos by Lysippus (W. Segar. *Portrait of Sir Christopher Hatton*, c. 1581), the words of Greek painter Zeuxis referred by Pliny the Elder (H. Holbein the Younger. *Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1523).

The length of the quoted texts could be different. The short one consisting only of several words could be either an original quotation (G. B. Moroni. *Bust Portrait of a Young Man*, c. 1560; J. Pontormo. *Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici*, c. 1520; R. Walker. *John Evelyn*, 1648; Unknown artist. *Portrait of Lord Edward Russell*, 1573), an aphorism formed by reduction (L. Lotto. *Portrait of a Woman Inspired by Lucretia*, c. 1530–33), paraphrases of the original text (H. Holbein the Younger. *Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1523), or only the fragments of the familiar and recognizable quotation (e.g., C. van Hemessen. *Portrait of Girl at the Virginal*, 1548; J. Pontormo. *Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici*, c. 1520; Unknown artist. *Portrait of Pierre de Moucheron...*, 1563; Unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist. *Portrait of Thomas Wentworth, 1st Baron Wentworth*, c. 1547–50). On some

portraits, sprawling poetic lines are used as inscriptions (W. Segar. *Portrait of Sir Christopher Hatton*, c. 1581).

The authors of the portraits and / or the commissioners played fast and loose with the quotations, changing them and composing them according to their respective needs or artistic intentions. Sometimes the original ancient quotations are supplemented with some word or phrases (e.g., Unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist. *Portrait of Thomas Wentworth, 1st Baron Wentworth*, c. 1547–50). In order to achieve the complete coverage of the idea in the inscription, quotations from various sources were combined, thus creating a completely new text (Landi, c. 1480).

Some ancient quotations, while generally preserving their original appearance, underwent grammatical modifications. In particular, the customer allows himself to change the grammatical design of individual elements of the quotation, e.g. the grammatical form of the verb (D. Ghirlandaio. *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi*, 1489–90; Unknown artist. *Robert Sidney*, c. 1588), the syntactical structure of the clause (Unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist. *Portrait of Sir Edward Hoby*, 1583), or individual lexemes (J. Pontormo. *Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici*, c. 1520).

Ancient quotations used as inscriptions on portraits of the Renaissance period had undergone completely or partially changes in semantics, compared to the original use, due to the layering of new shades of meaning taking into account the cultural context of the era. Quotations from the works of ancient authors acquired, as a rule, a more religious color (G. B. Moroni. *Bust Portrait of a Young Man*, c. 1560; J. Veneziano. *Portrait of a Lady*, c. 1470; J. van Scorel. *Portrait of a Young Scholar*, 1531).

The functional load of Latin inscriptions in the Renaissance portraiture was not only a determining factor in the choice of a specific quote from the work of an ancient author, its scope, but also determined the changes and modifications that the original text underwent. Reflecting the living principles of the sitters, the short (or reduced) ancient quotations on the portraits could and were used as mottos and slogans (Unknown Anglo-Netherlandish artist. *Portrait of Sir Edward Hoby*, 1583; Unknown British Painter. *Portrait of Walter Devereux*, 1572; Unknown artist. *Robert Sidney*, c. 1588). To express the subjective attitude of the customer, sitter or artist to a certain phenomenon, the grammatical form of the verb in the inscriptions was usually changed into the first person (D. Ghirlandaio. *Portrait of Giovanna degli Albizzi*, 1489–90; H. Holbein the Younger. *Merchant Georg Gisze*, 1532).

Many of the analysed inscriptions are used for the glorification of virtues (usually Christian) or other inherent personal qualities of the sitter (L. Lotto. *Portrait of a Woman Inspired by Lucretia*, c. 1530–33; P. della Francesca. *The Duke and Duchess*

of Urbino Federico da Montefeltro and Battista Sforza, c. 1473–75; H. Holbein the Younger. *Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1523) as well as acknowledgment and emphasis of his status, pedigree, position in the social hierarchy (J. Pontormo. *Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici*, c. 1520). Others in combination with additional expository and symbolic details complement and specify the general meaning (H. Holbein the Younger. *Portrait of Erasmus of Rotterdam*, 1523; Unknown Flemish artist. *Sir Thomas Chaloner*, 1559; J. Pontormo. *Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici*, c. 1520; W. Segar. *Portrait of Sir Christopher Hatton*, c. 1581).

The tradition of using Latin quotations from ancient works as inscriptions was so deeply rooted in the fine art and especially in portraiture of the Renaissance period that it persisted for the next several centuries as well.

Some of the analysed quotations were used beyond the portrait painting only. These quotations (especially short, apt sayings) are repeatedly found in printed publications of the time, on coats of arms and emblems, etc., so much so that in the form of catchphrases some of them are still being used to this day.

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ОСОБИНЕ УПОТРЕБЕ АНТИЧКИХ ЦИТАТА НА ПОРТРЕТИМА У ДОБА РЕНЕСАНСЕ

Резиме

Чланак је посвећен проучавању одлика коришћења цитата из дела античких аутора у облику натписа на парадним портретима доба Ренесансе. Представљени су културно-историјски предуслови који су одредили карактеристике развоја портретног сликарства овог периода и употребе латиничних натписа у њему. Кључну улогу у развоју културе овог периода одиграла је промена верске и филозофске парадигме, општа хуманистичка оријентација епохе, као и оживљавање класичних античких идеја. Ови фактори одредили су избор и употребу натписа на ренесансном портрету. У чланку се анализирају карактеристичне појаве у граматици (промена граматичке форме појединих елемената цитата) и структурне трансформације (скраћенице или, наопако, додаци) античких цитата на портретима, које су уметници користили у зависности од функционалног оптерећења натписа да би јасно пренели своју уметничку замисао. У чланку се анализирају различите семантичке трансформације кроз које пролазе антички цитати с тачке гледишта њиховог коришћења у апсолутно другачијем (од оригиналног текста) културном контексту. Такође је приказан и општи опис функционалне семантике античких цитата на парадним портретима доба Ренесансе.

► *Кључне речи:* Ренесанса, портрет, латински натписи, антички цитати, рецепција антике.

Preuzeto: 13. 1. 2024.
Korekcije: 16. 5. 2024.
Prihvaćeno: 31. 5. 2024.