JUSTUS LIPSIUS AND THE CHALLENGE OF HISTORICAL EXEMPLARITY

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This article seeks to elucidate the uses of historical narrative in Justus Lipsius’s *Monita et exempla politica* (Antwerp, Plantin: 1605). The work has long been regarded as the lesser and somewhat degenerate sibling of the earlier *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex* (Leiden, F. Raphelengius: 1589; henceforth: *Politica*). I hope to add to our understanding and further our appreciation of the *Monita* by exploring some features of political communication which denote this treatise as more than the ageing scholar’s afterthought. My suggestion is that the *Monita* not merely continues and complements, but in some respects transcends the *Politica* as a work with which Lipsius intended to provide monarch and magistrate with pragmatic political instruction.

The *Politica* recommends itself as the starting point for an examination of the changing dynamics of Justus Lipsius’s political writing. The treatise remains Lipsius’s major contribution to European political thought and the tradition of reason of state in particular.

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The treatise appealed so widely because of its form as well as its content. Lipsius arranged citations from ancient authors by means of connecting sentences, terse definitions, brief summaries and marginal references into a coherent yet altogether flexible discussion of practical and salient political issues of the day. Organised in the form of the *cento*, the work resembled the commonplace-books so familiar to