CHAPTER 10

Remigio Nannini’s Orationi Militari

Juan Carlos Iglesias-Zoido

1 Remigio Nannini (1518–1580)

Remigio Nannini’s life was full of contrasts. He was a Dominican friar who achieved great fame as an author of profane literature, such as his Rime (Venice 1547) and his acclaimed translation of Ovid’s Heroides (Venice 1555). Such literary activity did not prevent him from being, at the same time, an active participant in the Counter-Reformation. He supervised, at the pope’s behest, the publication of numerous devotional works, the most outstanding being the only anthology of New Testament texts permitted after the Council of Trent. Nannini received his religious training as a friar in Florence, a strict environment in those years, although he spent most of his life in the more open-minded and tolerant Venice. He was a man of the Church whose erudition made him an exceptional compiler, translator, and editor of historical works; in brief, he was a Dominican friar who admired Machiavelli and Guicciardini and, after 1549, became a close collaborator of the Venetian publisher Gabriele Giolito de’ Ferrari, the man responsible for the publication of the most important historical collana in the sixteenth century. It was on the presses of Giolito—the promoter of the ambitious project to make the texts of the key authors of ancient historiography accessible to the Italian public—that he published his first Italian translations of the work of Latin historians, such as Nepos and Ammianus Marcellinus; and, more particularly, it was also here that the most important work of his life was printed: the anthologies of historiographical speeches studied in this chapter.

1 For Nannini’s life, see Tomei (2012). See the chapters by Peraita and Tubau in this volume.
2 Epistole d’Ouidio di Remigio Fiorentino diuise in due libri, Venice, 1555 and re-issued in 1560, 1567 and 1568.
3 Epistle et Evangeli che si leggono tutto l’anno alla messa, Venice, 1567.
4 See Gilbert (1965). His interest in the work of this author is to be seen in his Considerazioni civili sopra l’istorie di F. Guicciardini, Venice, 1582, a work that was widely disseminated throughout Europe.
2 Nannini’s Anthologies of Historiographical Speeches

Nannini composed two large anthologies of historiographical speeches: the *Orationi Militari* (Venice 1557) and the *Orationi in materia civile e criminale* (Venice 1561). The first is an anthology of speeches by political leaders, ambassadors, and generals culled from historical works of Antiquity and also, for the first time, from medieval and Renaissance works. Such was its success that a second edition was published in 1560 (with the addition of more authors until it exceeded a thousand pages) and there was a further edition in 1585. This important publishing task was completed in 1561, with the publication of *Orationi in materia civile e criminale*, a work intended for use in civil life, offering a selection of historiographical speeches, also both ancient and modern, useful in this case for advocates and men of the law.6 This anthology contains numerous examples characterized by their dramatic content7 (the characters are shown delivering speeches at key critical moments in their lives), an approach that exerted an important influence on later literary figures, such as Shakespeare, who might well have known the powerful speeches of Brutus, Marc Antony, and Caesar taken from Appian’s history. The same could be said of Hamlet’s speeches (*Orationi*, pp. 387–391), included originally in the *Gesta Danorum* and recorded by a little known medieval author, Saxo Grammaticus.8 The resounding success of these two anthologies by Nannini ultimately had an influence on the publication of the new type of encyclopaedic anthologies, as can be seen both in the scholarly *Conciones* that Henri Estienne (1528–1598) published in 1570, and, above all, in the French version of the *Orationi militari* that Belleforest published in 1573, with the title of *Harangues militaires*.9

3 The *Orationi Militari*

Nannini’s most important work was the first example of an encyclopaedic anthology and laid the foundations for what eventually became an autonomous

---

6 As stated on its title page, “oltre alla cognizione dell’Historia, s’ha notizia di governi di Stati, e di Republike, d’accusare, e difender Rei, e di molte altre cose utili a ciascuno, ch’attendea alla vita civile” (“in addition to the knowledge of History, there is information about the government of states and republics, about how to accuse and defend kings, and about many other things that are useful to everyone involved in civil life”).


9 See the chapters by Pérez Custodio and Pineda in this volume.