Dutch scholars and British Lords: Poggio's Quintilian in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

The romance of the first great discovery by Poggio Florentinus of a full text of Quintilian's *Institutiones* has never dimmed from those first days in 1416 when Poggio announced his great find. The history of this MS., or rather the lack of history, after 1495 has only increased the hold this *monumentum renascendi studiorum litterarum* has upon men's minds. Poggio found the complete version of the *Institutiones* at St. Gall in 1416 and in a period of fifty-four days copied it in his own hand while at Constance. The history of this Poggian apograph from 1416 until 1495 is now well known largely through the efforts of Remigio Sabbadini, Ernst Walser, B.L. Ullman, and N. Rubenstein. After Poggio's death the apograph passed to his son, Jacopo, and from Jacopo it found its way into the Medicean library. From this point at the end of the fifteenth century until the present day the MS. has been lost to scholars and its history has been obscure. The text-critical value of Poggio's apograph is of no consequence now, for M. Winterbottom has admirably traced the MS. families of the *Institutiones* and demonstrated that the fifteenth-century MSS. are of no text critical relevance. Yet it is not without some interest to historians of classical scholarship and to those interested in the wanderings of MSS. in general to attempt to discover the later history of the Poggian apograph, for it is a history which involves one of the greatest classical scholars of the seventeenth century and at least two lords, one English and one Scottish.

The early history of the manuscript in detail would seem to be as follows. The manuscript remained in Poggio's library, although it was obviously made available for other scholars to copy. In the inventory of Poggio's library it was listed as number forty-seven, 'Quintilian on paper ... in the


hand of Poggio.\textsuperscript{3} Upon the death of Poggio, his son Jacopo inherited this valuable relic\textsuperscript{4} of his father’s literary zeal and realizing its worth put it to good use by donating it to the Medici library, where it remained at least until 1495.\textsuperscript{5} From that year to the present day, the MS. has been lost. Only one mention has come to the general attention of scholars. The great eighteenth-century librarian of the Biblioteca Laurenziana, Bandini, recorded that the Abbé Gédoy in his translation of the In\textit{stitutiones} had stated that the great Poggian apograph had found its way into the library of the Earl of Sunderland.\textsuperscript{6} To this statement we shall return shortly.

The library of the Medici was not favoured by fortune with a quiet and untroubled history. In the early years the fate of the library was intimately tied to the fate of the family, a circumstance which led to frequent periods of instability. In the sixteenth century, especially, the library seems not to have been secure in its possessions, but rather to have suffered from pilferage and a constant loss of texts. Among these, we may suppose, was the manuscript of Quintilian’s In\textit{stitutiones} ‘manu Poggi’. How this manuscript left the shelter of the Medici library may well remain obscure forever, but there seems little doubt that it was in the sixteenth century that it did so. In the Index of the library prepared probably around the year 1534 two texts of Quintilian are listed. The first is catalogued simply as ‘Quintilianus satis vetustus’. The second is entered as ‘Quintilianus diligentem emendatus’.\textsuperscript{7} Neither entry mentions Poggio. Normally one might still be able to suggest that one of these two was, indeed, the Poggian apograph unrecognized by the compiler of the Index, but this seems unlikely. However, there is every reason to suppose that the apograph of Quintilian was signed by Poggio. Surely, the compiler would have noticed if one of the two MSS. of Quintilian he had listed was so signed, for he noticed this in a number of other entries. He lists a MS. of Cicero, for instance, as: ‘M.T. Cic. de Oratore. Paradoxa. Brutus, manu Poggi descripti’.\textsuperscript{8} Another MS. the compiler enters thus: ‘Eusebii de temporibus cum Hieronymo, et Prospero, manu Pogii’.\textsuperscript{9} The absence, therefore, of any such annotation to either of the two manuscripts listed in the Index of c. 1534 would suggest that the compiler found no indication that either MS. was the Poggian

\textsuperscript{3} Ernst Walser, op. cit., p. 52, n. 5.
\textsuperscript{4} Nicolai Rubenstein, art. cit. p. 398.
\textsuperscript{6} Cf. M. Winterbottom, art. cit., p. 340, n. 3; B.L. Ullman, op. cit., p. 52.
\textsuperscript{7} Index Bibli\textit{othecae Mediceae} (c. 1534). Operette in\textit{edita... Libreria Dante. No. ii} (Florence 1882), p. 14.
\textsuperscript{8} Index Bibli. Med., p. 14; this entry immediately follows the two MSS. of Quintilian.
\textsuperscript{9} Index Bibli. Med., p. 16.