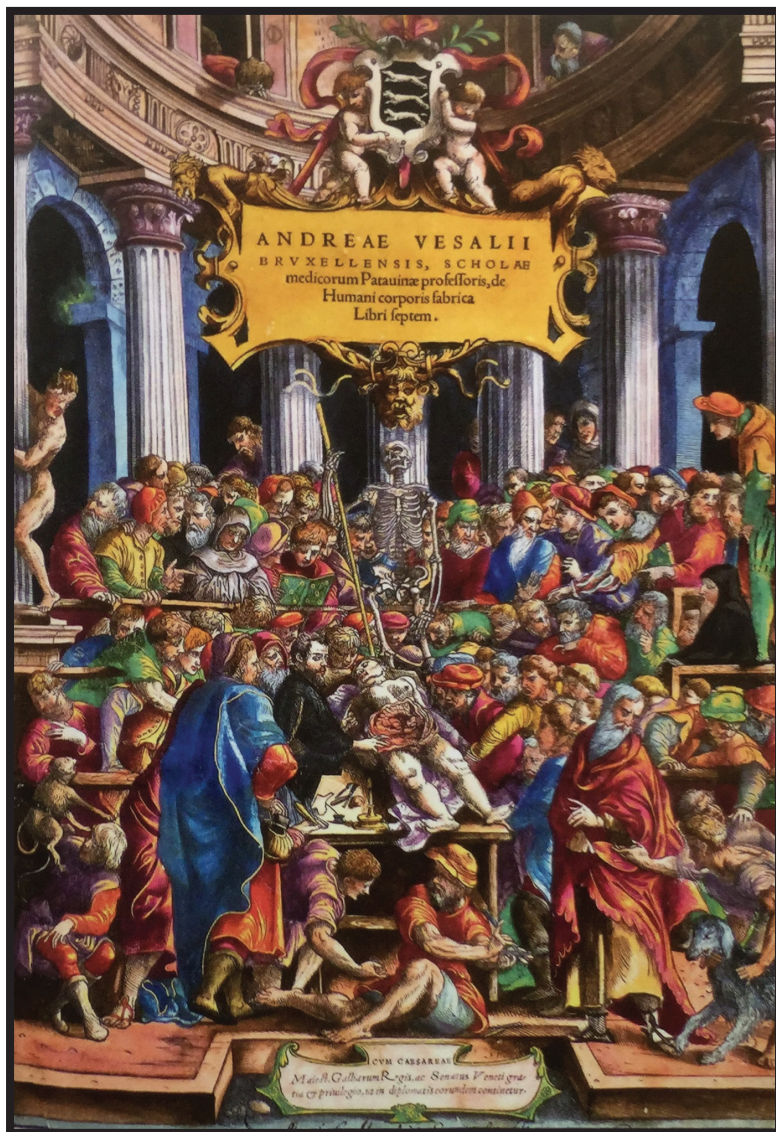


# IMAGINING VESALIUS

An Ekphrastic, Scholarly and Literary Celebration  
of the 1543 *De Humani Corporis Fabrica*  
of Andreas Vesalius



Editor

RICHARD M. RATZAN

First published in 2020

by the University of California Medical Humanities Press

UCMedicalHumanitiesPress.com

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University of California Medical Humanities Consortium

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences UCSF

3333 California Street, Suite 485

San Francisco, CA 94143-0850

Designed by Virtuoso Press

Cover photo: Koblenz: Courtesy of Bibliothek des Staatlichen Görres-Gymnasiums

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ISBN: 978-0-9963242-9-8

Library of Congress Control Number: 2020943584

Printed in USA



DEDICATION:

ὄν οἱ θεοὶ φιλοῦσιν ἀποθνήσκει νέος

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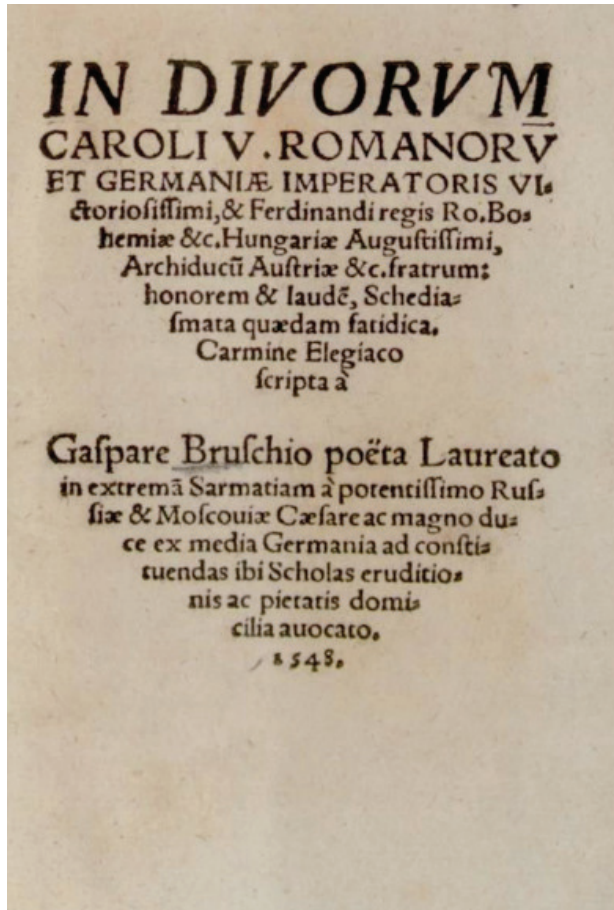
GASPAR BRUSCH (1518 - 1559)

“De poculo Caesareo”

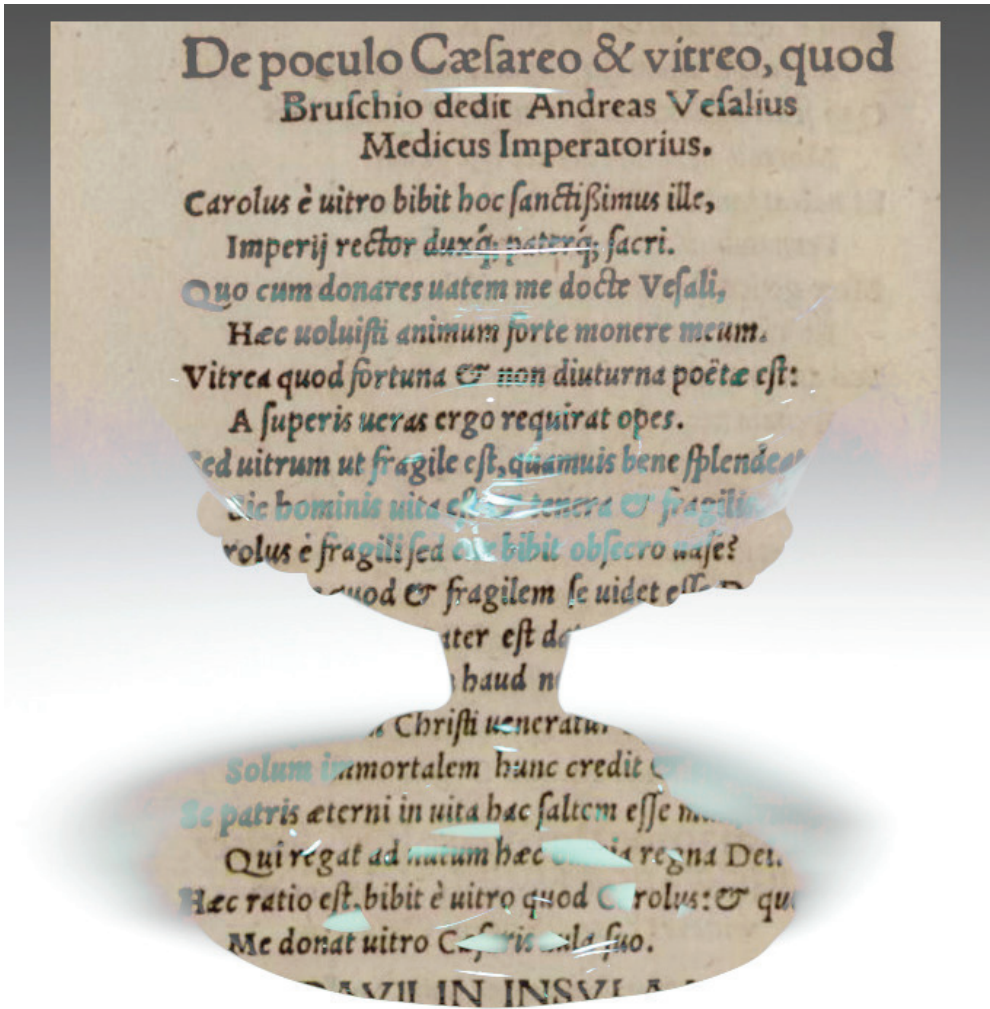
Translated from the Latin by  
David M. Ratzan  
Richard M. Ratzan



Kaspar (or Gaspar) Bruschi. Courtesy of Wikipedia



Title page of Gaspar Bruschi's 1548 (first edition) book of poems containing his poem about the goblet Vesalius gave him. Courtesy of Google Books



Composite image of period goblet and title page of Bruschi's "De Poculo Cæsareo" by editor.

## INTRODUCTION

Gaspar (also written “Caspar” and “Kaspar”) Bruschi was born in Schlackenwald in Bohemia 1518, the son of a shoemaker, bookseller and merchant. He attended the Latin school in Eger, then attended the University of Tübingen briefly, after which he began traveling widely through Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Austria, collecting material for his writing, which was often scholarly. It is of no little interest that the web of associations in the 16<sup>th</sup> century around Vesalius includes Bruschi’s studying with Melanchthon (who also wrote a poem to Vesalius included in this volume) in Wittenberg in 1542. He seems to have earned some of his income from his poetic encomia of nobility and the wealthy, in addition to a salary as a schoolteacher. At the young age of 23, he came to the attention of the Emperor Charles V, who crowned him “Poeta Laureatus” in 1541 at the Imperial Diet at Regensburg.<sup>1</sup>

Bruschi published prolifically, both as a poet and a historian. His major historical accomplishments were his *Monasteriorum Germaniae* (1551) and *Magni operis de omnibus Germaniae episcopatibus epitomes* (1549). Additionally, his description of the Fichtelgebirge is still valued by German historians. He became a pastor in Potendorf near Regensburg around 1555 and soon thereafter, in 1559, was murdered in a forest – Horowitz, his biographer, says he was shot through the back of the head – but not robbed, leading the authorities to believe the killer was someone offended by something Bruschi had written.

It is unclear how and when Bruschi met Vesalius, but in a letter he wrote to Joachim Camerarius in 1546 he recommends a former student of Vesalius. We also know that both he and Vesalius were in Augsburg at the same time in 1551. Known conventionally by the first two words of its title, the poem “De poculo,” (“On the cup”) was first published in 1548, and seemingly written while Bruschi taught Roman writers like Vergil, Terence and Cicero in Lindau on the Bodensee (Lake Constance), which is to say sometime in 1546 or 1547.<sup>2</sup> The poem commemorates Vesalius’s presentation to Bruschi of a glass cup that had once belonged to Charles V and serves as the coda to a slim volume of

“inspired improvisations” dedicated to emperor and his brother Ferdinand I: *In divorum Caroli V. Romanoru(m) et Germaniae Imperatoris victoriosissimi et Ferdinandi regis Ro. Bohemiae etc. Hungariae Augustissimi, Archiducu(m) Austriae etc. fratrum: honorem et laude(m), Schediasmata quaedam fatidica. Carmine Elegiaco scripta à Gaspare Bruschio poeta Laureato ...*, (printed in Augsburg; Munich BSB: Res/Asc. 802).<sup>3</sup> Horowitz hands down a particularly mordant verdict on Bruschi’s attempt to curry imperial favor with this work: “Das Büchlein ist eines der wenigst erfreulichen aus Bruschi’s Feder, keines riecht so sehr nach Stellenjägerei, in keinem ist der Syrup und Zucker der Schmeichelei so widerwärtig stark vertreten” (“This little book is one of the least pleasant from Bruschi’s quill: no other reeks so much of job-hunting, in none is the syrup and sugar of bootlicking laid on so sickeningly thick.”)<sup>4</sup> Bruschi nevertheless thought these encomia good enough to republish in a second and enlarged edition in 1550, adding two poems immediately preceding “De poculo” and a dedicatory poem to Georg Geinger, the former vice chancellor and current advisor of Ferdinand I, whom he calls his “Maecenas” (a political advisor to the Roman emperor Augustus and famously the patron of Virgil and Horace).

O’Malley in his biography of Vesalius (1964: 213) proposed that Charles V might have given the cup to Vesalius sometime in 1546 in gratitude for his treatment of the Venetian ambassador Bernardo Navagero, and that sometime thereafter Vesalius gave the cup to Bruschi. He appears to be in some doubt about when this act of regifting might have taken place, suggesting that it could have even happened as late as 1550 or 1551 (1964: 454, n. 136). It seems, however, that O’Malley was unaware of the first edition of this poem in 1548. It stands to reason that the poem commemorates a gift Vesalius made before 1548, since Bruschi had already left Lindau in late 1547. Interestingly, Bruschi also touched up “De poculo” for republication, revising the first line.<sup>5</sup> We have printed the text of the first edition, but comment on his revisions in the notes.

### Meter and Style

As one might hope of a school master and poet laureate, Bruschi was a competent Latin versifier, if not a brilliant one. Elegiac couplets, or a dactylic hexameter followed by a dactylic pentameter, were one of the most popular Latin verse forms in the Renaissance, and Bruschi had certainly learned the

rules well, which had begun to be rearticulated on the basis of poets like Virgil and Ovid by the likes of Jan de Spauter and those who followed him at the turn of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> Thus he shows no false quantities (i.e., vowel or syllable lengths) in this poem, gives no prosodic value to *h*, and uses elision freely (unlike medieval Latin poets). In his hexameters Bruschi also evinces a stylistically correct preference for third-foot masculine caesurae (line 5 is a conspicuously disastrous exception), dactyls in the fifth foot (the one exception is line 13), and trisyllabic and disyllabic line endings. With respect to the pentameter, he successfully avoids spondees in the second hemiepes (the pentameter was divided into two “half lines,” or hemiepes) and ends all but one of his verses with the preferred disyllable (the exception is line 8, which ends in a deprecated trisyllable). Finally, he obeys the general rule that the unit of sense is the couplet.

Though technically correct, his versification (at least in this poem) is decidedly pedestrian. Bruschi thus finds himself leaning too ponderously on spondees, particularly in the first foot (e.g., lines 3, 13-15), and making recourse to elision (newly readmitted by Humanist prosody) far more frequently than his classical models, or even some of his contemporaries, recommended (e.g., lines 5, 7-8, 14-15; in all, a total of 13 elisions in just 18 lines), with five lines having two or even three elisions.<sup>7</sup> He also has a tendency to elide monosyllables other than *est*, a practice which was increasingly considered poor form (e.g., lines 7, 14-16). His vocabulary and word placement is repetitious: at certain points this serves his theme (see the notes), but overall it suggests that his powers of expression were somewhat constrained and limited by metrical necessity. This is not to say that Bruschi was utterly incapable of turning out a nice line. Indeed, his pentameters are often quite pleasing and well constructed (e.g., lines 2, 4, 6, 10 and 18); and, as some of the notes below show, he is at times able to use rhetorical devices such as word order, variation, and repetition to good effect.

### Themes

As noted above, the occasion for this poem was Vesalius’s gift of a glass drinking vessel, which, Bruschi tells us, had been used by Charles V himself. When refracted through his poetic lens, this glass is translated into a symbol or, perhaps more accurately, its materiality becomes a touchstone for a web of

symbolic meaning that he proceeds to weave.

Brusch first asks what it means that Vesalius, a learned doctor, has presented him, a *vates* or an inspired poet, with this fragile gift. (See note to line 3 of translation, below.) He concludes that it is to be understood as a warning for him as a poet not to trust to fickle fortune, but to seek a truer foundation from the powers above. It is difficult here not to hear an echo of Horace's programmatic claims to poetic fame in *Odes* Bks. 1-3, where in the first poem he vows that he will strike his head against the stars, if he be granted the status of *vates* (*Odes* 1.1.35-36: *Quod si me lyricis vatibus inseres, / sublimi feriam sidera vertice*), while at the end of the collection he declares that he has succeeded in erecting a poetic "monument more lasting than bronze" (*Odes* 3.30.1: *Exegi monumentum aere perennius*).<sup>8</sup>

This meditation on the fragility of fortune (an important theme for early modern thinkers, such as Machiavelli, e.g., chapter 25 of *The Prince*) leads Brusch to see human existence as essentially glassy: shining and splendid, but also delicate and easily shattered. If so, why would Charles, the invincible ruler of the Holy Roman Empire (*invictissimus* was a standard epithet, and indeed written into the first line of the second edition), use such a symbol? Brusch answers his own question at the center of his poem, where he reaches his prophetic apogee: it is because Charles understands that he is a "fragile god" (line 10: *fragilem ... Deum*). It is an arresting image, to be sure; and one that Bruschi immediately proceeds to deconstruct over the next few couplets. Although the entire world is given over to Charles, he nevertheless piously recognizes his own mortality, and is thereby transformed back into a man, with the line ending of 12 echoing 10, as *esse Deum* becomes *esse virum*. This recognition entails the further acknowledgement of the immortality and spiritual sovereignty of the true God in Jesus Christ, confirmed in the final repetition of *esse Deum* in line 14. The proper world-order has now been restored, as Charles is once again God's temporal servant, dutifully ruling His empire as a holy viceroy.

The cup is thus imagined as a double, nested symbol: first for Charles, as a reminder of his splendid, divinely sanctioned, but ultimately limited power on earth; and then for Brusch, as a warning of the fragility of his own fortunes. This lading of so much meaning onto a simple gift may well strike us as overwrought (as it did Horowitz), but gifting, particularly of high value art objects, was a well-established part of Early Modern society, particularly



at court.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, Bruschi was not the only poet to write about court gifts: Ferdinand I, one of the dedicatees of the volume, had some years earlier commissioned Wilhelm Shurf to write a poem about a unicorn horn that had been a gift of the Polish King Sigismund (1506-1548).<sup>10</sup> In all this Vesalius is represented as nothing but a conduit, bestowing not so much an object as a symbolic talisman of the court on Bruschi. In fact, his agency is completely elided in the final couplet as he is made to stand in for the court itself (18: *Me donat vitro Caesaris aula suo*). Significantly, the poem does not establish that Charles marked out this gift especially for Bruschi, much less instructed Vesalius to give it to him, although this may have been the case. It seems much more likely, as O'Malley imagined, that the gift was between Vesalius and Bruschi (1964: 213). In any event, we see Bruschi here inserting himself into the gift exchange economy of the Habsburg court and its trade in symbols.

### Notes to Introduction

- 1 The bibliography on Bruschi was most recently collected by J. Flood (2011), *Poets Laureate in the Holy Roman Empire: A Bio-bibliographical Handbook* (Berlin, De Gruyter), pp. 249-256. A. Horowitz's biography remains fundamental: *Caspar Bruschius. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Humanismus und der Reformation*, Prague and Vienna, 1874.
- 2 Horowitz 1874: 109-116.
- 3 A digital copy of the book is now available online via the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: <https://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/title/BV001379272>.
- 4 1874: 115.
- 5 Cf. Horowitz 1874: 125, who notes the new dedication, changes to the title page, and the addition of new poems, but not the re-editing of this or any of the other poems in the first edition. This book is now scanned and online, courtesy of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek: <https://opacplus.bsb-muenchen.de/title/BV009009404>
- 6 Ford, Philip J., "Neo-Latin Prosody and Versification", in: Brill's *Encyclopaedia of the Neo-Latin World*, General Editor Craig Kallendorf. Consulted online on 21 February 2020 <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004271296\\_enlo\\_B9789004271012\\_0005](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004271296_enlo_B9789004271012_0005)>. See also J. IJsewijn and D. Sacré (1998). *Companion to Neo-Latin studies, Part II: Literary, linguistic, philological and editorial questions*. Leuven, Belgium: Leuven Univ. Press. Pp. 423-33.
- 7 Ovid, the master and exemplar in the Early Modern period of the elegiac couplet, admits approximately one elision every four lines. See Kent, R. G. "Likes and Dislikes in Elision," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 54 (1923),

86-97.

- 8 On the early modern knowledge and reception of Horace, see Carlsmith, C. (2013). "A Roman Poet in the Venetian Republic: The Reception of Horace in Sixteenth-Century Bergamo." *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 44(4) 963 - 984.
- 9 See H. Watanabe-O'Kelly (2002), *Court Culture in Dresden: From Renaissance to Baroque*. New York, Palgrave and the dissertation of I. Horacek (2015), "Alchemy of the gift : things and material transformations at the court of Rudolf II," unpublished dissertation, University of British Columbia. <http://hdl.handle.net/2429/52830>.
- 10 Horacek, "Alchemy" (2015): 145-146.

### Text of the 1548 original publication

*De poculo Caesareo & vitreo, quod Bruschio dedit Andreas Vesalius Medicus Imperatorius.*

- Carolus è vitro bibit hoc sanctissimus ille  
Imperii rector duxq(ue) paterq(ue) sacri.  
Quo cum donares vatem me docte Vesali,  
Haec voluisti animum forte monere meum.*
- 5 *Vitrea quod fortuna & non diuturna poëtae est:  
A superis veras ergo requirat opes.  
Sed vitrum ut fragile est, quamvis bene splendeat, ipsa  
Sic hominis vita est & tenera & fragilis.*
- Carolus è fragili sed cur bibit obsecro vase?*
- 10 *Nempe quod & fragilem se videt esse Deum.  
Ille quidem terris pater est datus omnibus, at se  
Mortalem tamen haud nescit is esse virum,  
Idcirco patrem Christi veneratur Iesu,  
Solum immortalem hunc credit & esse Deum*
- 15 *Se patris aeterni in vita hac saltem esse ministrum,  
Qui regat ad nutum haec omnia regna Dei.  
Haec ratio est, bibit è vitro quod Carolus: & quod  
Me donat vitro Caesaris aula suo.*

Translation

On the imperial crystal goblet, which Andreas Vesalius, Imperial Physician,  
gave to Bruschius

The most holy Charles himself drank from this glass,  
Ruler, leader, father of a holy empire.  
And when you, learned Vesalius, bestowed this on me as a poet,  
You perhaps wanted to warn my soul of the following:  
5 For the poet, fortune is glassy and ephemeral:  
From the gods, therefore, let him seek true wealth.  
Yet just as glass is fragile, however much it may gleam,  
So is human life itself delicate and fragile.  
But why, pray, did Charles drink from a fragile vessel?  
10 Surely because he sees that he is a fragile God.  
He is indeed a father given to all the lands, but he  
Well knows that he is himself a mortal man;  
Therefore he worships the father of Jesus Christ  
And believes that He alone is Immortal and God,  
15 While he himself is but the servant of the eternal father in this life,  
Who is to rule all these kingdoms by the will of God.  
This is the reason why Charles drank from a glass, and why  
The court of Caesar presents me with his own glass.

## Notes to translation

1. In the second edition of 1550 the first line was amended to read: *Carolus è vitro bibit invictissimus isto*. “Charles the invincible drank from this very glass.” *Invictissimus* was a standard epithet in Charles’ imperial titulature. The reasons for the change may have been political, since the substitution destroys the echo of *sanctissimus* in line 2 (see next note), but it is also not without its stylistical advantages, as B. revises a clunky chiasmic order (i.e., A - B - b - a - a: *Carolus è vitro bibit hoc sanctissimus ille*) with a more balanced imbricated line (i.e., A - B - a - b: *Carolus è vitro bibit invictissimus isto*).
2. A very nice line: *sacri* at the end of the pentameter modifies *imperii* in hyperbaton, with the order echoing that of the hexameter: *Carolus* (i.e., the *imperator*)... *sanctissimus - imperii ... sacri*.
3. B. relates himself to Vesalius syntactically with parallel and interlocking predicative phrases, contrasting his role as an inspired vates with Vesalius’s as a learned scientist, i.e., *vatem me docte Vesali* (A - a - B - b), thematizing a commonplace divide, if not antagonism, between philosophy and poetry. The juxtaposition thus calls attention to an important difference in vocation, signaled in the title of this collection: *schediasmata quaedam fatidica*. Sir Philip Sidney in his *Defense of Poesy* (written in the late 1570s, but published posthumously in 1595) has much to say on the relationship between philosophy and poetry, and says this of the figure of the *vates*: “Among the Romans a poet was called *vates*, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or prophet, as by his conjoined words, *vaticinium* and *vaticinari*, is manifest; so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestow upon this heart-ravishing knowledge.” (Sidney, P. *The Defence of Poesy*. Cambridge, MA; Hilliard and Brown, 1831: page 9)
4. One desired quality of a pentameter was to coordinate the words in hyperbaton at the end of each hemiepes or half-line. Thus *animum* is modified by *meum*, each standing at the end of its respective half-line. Over time, there was a recognition of a classical preference for having the adjective precede the noun, as we see in line 6 (*veras ... opes*; cf. lines 9 (a hexameter), 10, and 18); but this convention was perhaps not yet well established in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. The other main rhetorical figure was to have the related pair bookend the verse, as we see in lines 2 (see note above) and 12.
5. There may be an element of Humanist practice that escaped us, but if not, this line is perhaps the most incompetent in the poem. The elision of *fortuna* and *et* at the third foot means that there is no caesura at all. Worse still from a rhythmical

perspective, this leaves a diaeresis at the end of the third foot, dissolving the line neatly in half, leaving it broken-backed. Finally, in order to arrive at this unhappy result, B. must employ not one, but two elisions.

6. The final *o* of *ergo* usually scans as long, but in this period final *o* was often seen as a *syllaba communis*, or a vowel whose quantity could be treated as long or short according to the poet's need. *Requirat* is either jussive or potential subjunctive.
9. For the hyperbaton connecting *fragili* (placed right before the caesura) and *vase* at the end of the line, see the note to line 4 above.
10. B. accentuates the shocking image of a fragile God by delaying the word *Deum* until the end, putting the stylistic preference for coordination at the end of the hemiepes (see note to line 4 above) to good rhetorical effect. This might seem close to blasphemy or idolatry, but it is not only the capitalization that suggests that it is indeed God (as opposed to some "deity") to which B. is assimilating Charles: in the immediately preceding poem B. also declaims that Charles is the very image of God, the face of piety itself (*De imagine divi Caroli V. Schediasma à Bruschio ei aculatum, cum videret comedentem Caesarem*, "An inspirational utterance of Bruschius when he saw the emperor eating"). See the note to line 12.
11. The punctuation of the 1548 edition mistakenly placed a comma after *at*, which was corrected in the second edition. It was permissible to end a hexameter with two monosyllables, cf. line 17. We are using here the punctuation of the second edition.
12. The hyperbaton of *mortalem ... virum* (cf. notes to lines 2 and 4) parallels that of line 10 as B. begins to resolve the oxymoronic figure of the *fragilem ... Deum*. B. here demonstrates command of a particular stylistic refinement of the pentameter (on display elsewhere in his work), which allowed a monosyllable that was not *est* to stand before the caesura only if preceded by another monosyllable or a pyrrhic ( ~ ~ ), like *tamen*. This achievement, however, is somewhat vitiated by his recourse to the colorless and grammatically redundant pronoun *is*.
13. A heavily spondaic line, with the rhythm making no apparent contribution to the meaning. *Iesu* is the regular genitive form.
14. Another heavily spondaic line with two somewhat clumsy elisions in the first hemiepes. Here the echo of line 10 (*esse Deum*) is surely intentional, replacing the image of Charles as a fragile temporal God with that of the one true immortal God the Father, the spiritual King of Kings. The syntactical connection of lines

13-15 is somewhat loose. In these three lines there are two independent clauses, i.e., those dependent on *veneratur* (12-13) and *credit* (14), and two dependent clauses in *oratio obliqua* set off by *credit*, i.e., *hunc ... esse Deum* (14) and *se ... esse ministrum* (15). There is, however, only one possible conjunction: *et* in line 14. Whether this is postponed and should be taken to connect *veneratur* (12-13) and *credit*, or if instead it should be taken to connect *immortalem* and *Deum* as predicates in line 14, is difficult to decide. The fact that there is certainly no connection between the two dependent clauses, i.e., *et* in line 14 cannot be taken as connecting the two infinitives in indirect statement, weighs in favor of the latter interpretation, since this would mean that there would be parallel asyndeta between the independent and dependent clauses. In all events, we have added conjunctions not in the Latin in order to make clear what we read as the intended meaning.

15. Yet another spondaic line with three elisions, two of which are monosyllables. Charles finally assumes his rightful role as God's chosen temporal authority on earth, having moved through a series of predicates from *Deus fragilis* (10) to *vir mortalis* (12) to *minister patris aeterni*.
16. For this use of the subjunctive, see Gildersleeve's *Latin grammar* (1895 reprint in 2003 by Bolchazy-Carducci), §630.
18. *Aula* here, as in English, is used metonymically to mean the court, i.e., courtiers. *Suus* is normally reflexive, and so should properly refer to the grammatical subject, i.e., the *aula*. However, it is commonly used as a purely possessive adjective (instead of the regular genitive of the pronoun *is*, i.e., *eius*) when the speaker or author is emphasizing the possession of the logical subject, as in this case, where B. is saying that he received Charles' *own* cup. Cf. Kuehner-Stegmann, *Ausführliche Grammatik der lateinischen Sprache* (4th ed., 1962), 1.1 (Satzlehre: Erster Teil), §117, A.4 (pp. 603-606).