Borges felt as his own. His words emphasize the symmetrical nature of the death of Snorri and his assassin and in addition he interprets the latter’s death as imagined by his antagonist. Death is in relation to a few words: “Arni’s death seems imagined by Snorri. That man to whom a few laconic words announce his death sentence is one of Snorri’s characters, a figure under the control of destiny and even that of the rhetoric of the sagas”.

In Medieval Germanic Literatures, the author takes up the question of the metaphor again, and often returned to it in connection with the kenning or metaphorical form of Ancient Icelandic. During his Martinferrista period Borges had written about this figure, locating the question in the very framework of the avant-garde. The essay "Las kenningar" is included in a book of particular importance in the author’s theoretical-artistic projection, Historia de la eternidad (1933) ["History of Eternity”]. Much later, the poem 'Fragment', from El otro, el mismo ['The Other, the Same One'] (1964) will include several kenningar, adapted as much as possible to Spanish. It has been said that Borges turns to the kenningar because of a theoretical change: he saw what there is of creativity and at the same time repetition in the framework of a series. The kenning is not important to the Argentinian writer because of a desire for radical novelty, from the moment in which he believes that only a small repertoire of metaphors has been provided in history, what becomes decisive is the variant, the fragment, which can be introduced within the large patterns. The kenningar with their intensely crafted nature, belong to a heritage, an established model. Each one represents the carrying out of a possibility in an abstract system, thus it acts not as an irruption of the new but as the metaphorical image of cultural values of the Icelandic community. The kenning is the example of how the new cannot be considered an absolutely surprising act, but rather that one must see in it, according to Borges, that what is strange or new should not be reduced nor situated in a mysterious isolation but that instead it should be manifested, for the sake of its strangeness, in the center of a poetic discourse that constitutes it but does not nullify it. It is at once both culturally universal and specific.

The «Gulo filfros» and narrative fables.1. Some of Olao Magno’s Imitators

by Anna Maranini, University of Bologna

1. The «Gulo» by Apollonio Menabeni.

The fascination of the narrative fables about the people in the North in Olao Magno’s Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus (1557: see the main entry for Olaus Magnus in S. Lindroth’s Dictionary of Scientific Biography, 10, New York 1974, p. 197, but 1568 in Michaud, Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne, 26, Paris s. a., p. 52) did not leave the poet and philosopher Apollonio Menabeni who was born in Milan and later became doctor of the Swedish King John III - unmoved. For Menabeni, in his Tractatus de Magno Animali quod Aileen nonnulli vocant, Germani vero Elend, et de ipsius partium in re medica facultatibus: item Historia Cervi Rangiferi et Gulonis Filfros vocati, wanted to reserve several pages (70-73, in the Coloniae edition, apud Maternum Cholinum 1581) for an animal named «Gulo».

This beast, whom the Germans called «Filfros» to indicate his voraciousness («id est multum vorans»), was never seen by Menabeni, nor - as we now think - by many other Italian travelers in those times. One can, therefore, well imagine how much curiosity and amazement was aroused by the events in which the readership saw it as a main character, even if those events were already described by Olao, from whose work Menabeni drew part of his descriptive and naturalistic elements, above all, when
they read about one of its curious eating habits.

The «Gulo» had such a craving to eat that it ate without restraint and swelled up out of all proportion; but since it had to feed itself continuously «ex sua natura», when it could not «aliud capere», it went looking for two trees so close together as to not be able to pass through them with its swollen belly. Then, with an outburst, it propelled itself through the trees with all its might «dum venter eius inde pressus, quod intus habet in partes posterioriores propulsum exercerit», and so doing, emptied out.

According to Menabeni, the only surviving specimens were in Sweden; actually, not even he had ever seen a live one, but this did not mean whatsoever that they did not exist, because he had been able to touch their skin. The only fact that he could not be certain of was that perhaps there were also some in Lithuania. Menabeni limited himself to saying, in short, that he had heard «ab alijs» and seen «ipse», apparently only the characteristic skin (from the copy of Bologna, B.C.U. Tab.I.G.I.466/4 belonging to the late Ulisse Aldrovandi):

Inter cetera animalia, quae soli Sueciae attribuuntur, est etiam illud, quod ipsorum Suecorum, ac etiam Germanorum lingua Filfras, id est multum vorans, nominatur: et a Cardano cognitum lib. 10 De subtilitate describatur sub nomine Rosomachae, seu Gulosis. Hoc ipsum an in Lithuania inveniatur, intelligere non potui, cum multos diligenter sim percunctatus huius viri authoritate motus. Animal itaque hoc vivum non vidi, sed ipsius pellem pertractavi. Quare quae ipse vidi, et ab alijs i bi audi vi,

Menabeni’s narration isolated the tale of «Gulo filfras» (or rather «filfras», as I argue below) from the rest of the Tractatus on elk and "reindeer"; actually, he wrote a separate tract. It set, therefore, the animal inside an even more fantastic air than that of his teacher Olao - to whom I dedicated in the Appendix (see below) reference passages - as another of his sources, Gerolamo Cardano (1501-1576) had done.

This last person had already left evidence of the belief in the legend of the «Gulo», and it is possible to read the following short tale in his De subtilitate libri xxi, edited for the first time in Nurimberg in 1550, later in
nasci animalia hominum moribus similia

A comparison with the description by Menabeni shows that the latter basically relies upon Olao, while laying claim to having its own specific features: the «Gulo», as a matter of fact, is slightly larger than a fox and very fat and dark; whereas for Olao, it is the size of a large black dog. Both of them, however, agreed that it had a short but very hairy tail.

The burden of a thick pelt was the most obvious physical characteristic for them both. The animal was not edible, but it had such a «commoda et pretiosa» skin as to make it the target of an unmerciless hunt, details Cardano ignored (or was unaware of), preferring to place emphasis on the Lithuanian peoples (whom Menabeni, too, connected in the first lines of his history) and on the symbolical value assumed by the existence of such a voracious animal in their lands («sic Lithuani hominum sunt voracissimi»), as well as on the characteristic of heat, a detail indeed ignored by both Olao and Menabeni, but which was already a characteristic of «potentia» linked to the fur. Menabeni's references to Olao - who, it seems, had written about it after having admitted to a great personal voraciousness (but Menabeni precisely defined this last concept with a «fortasse») - thus were integrated with those of Cardano, thereby creating in chronological order the latest version of the story. The references had to contribute, moreover, to strengthen a by-now consolidated myth in order to transmit and, we believe, render it credible to everyone.

Menabeni also wanted, perhaps, to put to rest some of the sonorous laughter of the shrewder readers, above all those who had ignored the sources and had attributed the unlikely and disagreeable, hygienically-speaking, eating habits to him alone.

None of the well-known sources, and Menabeni less than the others, posed the question how the animal could survive such treatment ... such a drastic dietetic (according to Olao, it could be repeated during the same meal); and thereby, the tricks used by the hunters, such as bringing a «cadaver recens» into the forest and waiting for the greedy animal to hurl itself on top so that they could pierce it with arrows (but «hoc tempore parvis bombardis» noted down once again the precise Menabeni) seem equally exaggerated.

The modern reader might suspect that the hunters were even more stupid than the Gulo, because it would have been less tiring to wait calmly for the moment of the animal's forced discharge, when even such a wild animal would have exhibited some difficulties, at least of a respiratory nature, and then could be knocked out with a blow to the head, thereby preserving its precious pelt from piercing arrows or other damages caused by small mortars.

Indeed, by checking through Olao's text one can verify that, in this detail as well, Menabeni wanted to go his own way, because the hunt, according to his teachers' narration, occurred just at the moment in which the animal was busy discharging itself and the hunter could kill it without harm by shooting a single, precise arrow. This method was quite well-known to all of Olao's readers, because the engravings that accompanied the chapters of the Historia illustrated this detail with clear and simple signs, to almost didactic ends.

The «Gulo» was actually depicted in the form of a large lion-like feline, with long cat whiskers, in the act of discharging; tightly posed, but not stationary, between two trees, in front of the remains of a rotting carcass of uncertain features and in front of two hunters...
armed with bows. The detail in the symbolic portrayal of the cited 1555 edition is crystal clear. See facsimile:

3. The narrative fables.

It is not unrealistic to believe that many older readers as well—no less shrewd than modern readers, nor more accustomed to rude, violent, and illogical behaviors—would have commented ironically on the fact that faced with the violently squeezing trees and the unmerciful hunts, the «Gulo» would have quickly been on its way to extinction, more or less voluntarily, if only for its name. They were obviously aware of the fabulous contents of the old travel narratives, so much so that most of the interpretations written by Olao were eventually refuted by Giovanni Scheffer (1621-1679), in his Lapponia, seu gentis regionisque Lapponicae descriptio accurata.

A few irreverent annotations in Olaos editions still today give testimony to the incredulity of several readers. The most famous, written anonymously, wanted to define the tale about how Finnic women used magical arts as «coglioneria da orbi» (see A. Maranini, Edizioni postillate di Giovanni e Olao Magno in alcune biblioteche emiliane, in «Classiconorroena», 2, 1993, pp. 5-6).

The majority of the readers, all the same, adored the stories in which realistic elements mixed indissolubly with fantastic ones. Among the enthusiasts there also had to be illustrative devotees of these works; for instance Rudolf II, to whom Menabeni dedicated his Tractatus. For all of these people the «Gulo», and especially the conditions in which it would digest, had to be a symbol, among others, of a curious, unknown, and far-off world.

It should not be forgotten that the «Gulo» was also an animal whose magical connotations were accentuated: its fur was so beautiful as to be coveted by the rich and powerful. If used as a blanket, however, the fur brought dreams in conformity with the animal's life, and those sleeping seemed to be possessed by an insatiable appetite and seductively inclined towards other beasts. Even those who would dress again in the furs were not satiated by food or drink. Its fingernails helped against illnesses, the fat healed ulcerous injuries, its blood was blended with honey and used at weddings, and the teeth were sorcerer's charms.

The curious and savage eating habits were present in Olao's tales, but the summary by Menabeni, in a continued history, became a way of isolating these features in respect to other ones. Menabeni had twisted the teaching of Olao, condensing three chapters into one, connecting it as well with Cardano and his doubt about the presence of the animal in Lithuania, and stressing the magical features— even by means of that strange name «filfros», which appeared new.

This in fact seemed absent in Olao; but after a more careful study, it comes to life as the alphabetization of the pronunciation of the name of the animal used by the Germanic peoples: «Vielefraff» or «Vielefras», as one reads in Olao, in his translations, and in many other sources that narrate the «Gulo»'s exploits.

It is possible therefore to hypothesize an error in the text of Menabeni's tract and correct the epitaph «filfros» to «filfras», as did the Dictionnaire universel, historique, critique et bibliographique, 11, Paris 1910, p. 414, which in listing Menabeni's works wrote of the «Tractatus de Magno Animali quod Alcen nonnulli vocant, Germani vero Elendt, et de ipsius partium in re medica facultatibus: Item Historia cervi rangiferi et gulosis, filfras, seu vielfras vocatio». Nevertheless, one can also find the form «uilfros» in Olao, not in the Historia, but rather in one of "advances" of the Carta marina (Ain [sic] kurze Auslegung der neuen Mappen von den Goettenerreich und andern Nordlenden) that was printed in 1539.
4. Francesco Negri.

Bewitched by the «gulone di scandinavia», Alessandro Citolini (1500 - c. 1583), too, accepted the testimony of its eating habits, and he enumerated this beast, among others, in his La tipocosmia (Venetian edit., 1561, p. 236), pointing out its insatiability and contributing to the passing on of its legend; he seemed to put into doubt, for the first time, «la strana forma del suo votarsi» [its strange method of emptying itself out], but, in spite of his travels in northern Europe he apparently could not ascertain its validity.

Francesco Negri (1623-1698), a priest from Ravenna, on the other hand, was absolutely certain that none of the preceding authors had ever actually eyewitnessed the actions narrated in this distant land, far from Europe; consequently, in the 17th century, he set out for the wide expanses of Scandinavia.

The accounts of his long journey, which took place between 1663 and 1666, were edited by his heirs and published posthumously in Padua under the title Il viaggio settentrionale di Francesco Negri (Francesco Negri’s Northern Travel) in 1700 (see also the Milan edition of 1929, edited by Enrico Falqui) and reprinted in Bologna in 1883, edited by Carlo Gargioli, who included as well the Annotazioni sopra l’opera di Olao Magno (Annotations on Olao Magno’s writings).

Negri attributed to the Upsalan archbishop two types of errors: those which could be detected easily even from one who had never set foot in northern Europe - for example, the non-existence of the land Olao called «Biarmia» and indicated as «regio septentrionalis, cujus zenit est in ipso polo arctico, ejusque horizon est idem cum circulo aequinoctiali», since at the pole «sono sei mesi di continuo giorno, e sei di continua notte, che è l’istesso che aver il polo verticale, e l’orizzonte conveniente all’equinoziale» [there are six months of continuous daylight and six of continuous night, which is the same as having a vertical pole, and the horizon convening towards the equinox] - and those which could be proven by an actual visit to those areas; for example, that Olao could never have had, as he declared, friendly conversations with the inhabitants, since the terrain was so icy and uninhabitable «circa elevationem graduum poli arctici 86».

Negri was fond of making, as he wrote, only «veridica relazione» [verifiable accounts], which would not give rise to fancies, and he criticized Olao not only for his genuinely geographical and astronomical features, but also for his fabulous and extravagant narrative episodes: men on horseback, wearing armor that would roll along with the horse as the (non-existent) highly gustful Icelandic winds blew; Norwegian lakes filled with boiling water; seven brothers who had been sleeping in a cellar for a hundred years; gigantic and heavy elks’ racing skills; pigs in Greenland riding sheep into battles against cranes; and other similar things. These shameful inventions or obvious evocations of myths and ancient authors that Olao had manipulated in order to make his narration more fascinating seemed indeed highly reprehensible to Negri, who censured with considerable severity the attribution to Pliny and Solin - two of his most adored Latin authors - of a falsehood; namely, that «in polari regione omnia solis ardore periclitari».

The most striking fact wherein he deduced - without a shadow of a doubt - that Olao had never been to Lapland, was in his description of the "rangiferro", «bestia tricornis, de genere cervorum» that pulled wagons on wheels.

Negri had been able to see it in great herds, he described its life and habits and he designated it as the proof of the survival of the population. This beast was in fact the cherished reindeer, called by locals «puozzo», that fed on «ieghle» grass, that is, on lichen. And it pulled sleighs and provided food for the Laplanders, meat as well as milk and cheese; hides for clothing, sleeping, wrapping up newborns and making ropes; sinews for sewing; tallow for candles; and, it was even money and barter. But it did not have three horns, nor did it pull wagons on wheels - as Olao had fantasized - because it would not have been able to move along the roads, which were covered with snow for
almost the entire year and practically inaccessible even for people on foot. There was also, among the others, an animal called «Iefr», because of its bulk: «medioe more cane, ma più grosso e pesante» [an average dog, but bigger and heavier], with its long, black, and shiny coat used as linings on expensive birettas. They were hunted like other animals, with bows or crossbows (the «archibuso», ancient musket, was reserved for the bear, having one single shot and seldom used), and perhaps they were identifiable as that which the Latin speakers called «Hyæna».

Thus, more than a century after Olao and Menabeni, the «Gulo» reappeared in Negri; however, it was revealed only in part. It was not yet actually entirely clear which beast it was.

Its disagreeable eating habit disappeared, leaving behind only its characteristic voraciousness, which was newly established two centuries later by Melchorre Gioia, in his Esercizio logico sugli errori d'ideologia e zoologia ossia arte di trar profitto dai cattivi libri [Logical exercise on ideological and zoological errors; or rather, the art of drawing profit from bad books], Milano 1824 (pp. 249, 194). There he demonstrated the untruthfulness of the idea that the animals did not allow themselves to be dominated by voraciousness: «il ghiottone si pasce sì inconsideratamente e sì voracemente di carne, che talvolta ne rimane strangolato» [the Glutton enjoys meat so inconsiderately and so voraciously that at times it gets strangled].

For Negri, the «Gulo» was perhaps similar to the Latin Iena (Hyena), an animal that he apparently had not seen, which corroborates the opinion of recent critics (see Viaggiatori del Seicento [Wayfarers in the Seventeenth Century], edited by M. Guglielmimetti, Torino 1967, pp. 49-53). According to them, even Negri - more linked to Olao than he would have us believe - resorted, in part, to the same investigative methodology as his predecessor, making an appeal, if you like, in the permanent postmortem of the narrated events to literary data and parallel fancies in which narrative and descriptive incongruen-

5. One of Negri's sources.

It is rather probable that to make his comparison to the Iena, Negri used what Conrad Gesner had already written about in his Historiae animalium libri. As can be seen, in fact, in the liber primus, entitled De quadrupedis viviparis, whose first edition was published in 1551, followed by a second edition in 1620: «Pinicianus grammaticus nostri saeculi hyænae nomen Germanicum fixit, grabthier, quod circa sepulchra versetur: Ego filfrafs interpretater [sic]: quoniam vel gulo est, velomnino con­
genere i fera, ut iam supra in Gulonis historia dixi» (Frankfurt edition, 16202, p. 555).

Gesner, too, was basically dependent on Olao, in particular on the «libello quem adiunxit septentrionali regionum descriptioni», in which he had treated the symbolic refiguration of the «Gulo» that decorated his Liber (p. 554), unidentifiable in any of the surviving editions of the Historia. These editions, as a matter of fact, dedicate chapter XVIII - which included the most sweeping treatment relating to the entire Northern world to date - to the text and to the drawings relating to the «Gulo».

What does still survive, however, in copies at the Vatican Library and Augusta Library in Perugia is the already cited, small, 8-page booklet published in Venice in June 1539 in Italian (Opera breve) and in July of the same year in German (Ain kurze Auslegung, cit., see also the Stockholm reproduction of 1912), in which Olao "advanced" to his readership the publication of a major future work.

As Olao explained in the Italian edition, his intention was to offer a summary of the main themes, a «brevissimo indice» [very short index] of a «piu giusto volume» [more suitable volume], namely his already begun Geografia delle settentrionali terre [Geography of the northern lands], the work that would then lead to the Carta marina and the Historia.
Among the "advanced" themes there is, on an unnumbered page (that is 3r), the story of the «Gulo», limited to his mildly fascinating digestive portrait, but bearing as well an astonishing implication:

bedeut die thieren die man hayst auf Schuedisch Ierff auf teiitsch uilfrofs uuelche seind unmeslich im essen an underschat. So aber die natur iiberflisig uuiizdt bezungen sysich zuyschen zuay baummen und trucken ihren bauch byss das sysich burgieren und lauffen vider zum frissen als dan kumbt der ieger und schuist sy allain umm ihr haut uuille dan die selben heut dienen dem adel und gross heruzubeklaudung dann syscindt hiipsch gebluemet ouiie au tamasch. Aber uuunu sysolche rock tragen uuuerden syscyher ueruuandelt in der natur des thiers.

The Italian publication shows that the two booklets were not published as translations or from the other but rather as two different versions; moreover, since in the title page he warned against whomever wanted to publish tales on the northern peoples without first obtaining permission from Magno («severiore Summi Pontificis et Veneti Senatus decreto cautum est, ne quis intra decennium, Geographiam Aquilonarium Regnorum, et libros eam declarantes, excudere, vel ab aliis excusam vendere praesumetur sine authoris Olai videlicet; Gothi licentiis»), one could conclude that Olao would have specified - who would provoke vomiting in order to continue eating.

The Italian publication shows that the two booklets were not published as translations one from the other but rather as two different versions; moreover, since in the title page he warned against whomever wanted to publish tales on the northern peoples without first obtaining permission from Magno («severiore Summi Pontificis et Veneti Senatus decreto cautum est, ne quis intra decennium, Geographiam Aquilonarium Regnorum, et libros eam declarantes, excudere, vel ab aliis excusam vendere praesumatur sine authoris Olai videlicet; Gothi licentiis»), one could conclude that Olao would have specified - who would provoke vomiting in order to continue eating. Gesner resorted also to tales he heard himself («ut audio»); among his friends there was a certain «Schenebergerus» who sent him a physical description of the «Gulo», which clarified ordinary characteristics («pili in ea [fera] sunt longi, sed non admodum dense dispositi, nigri, splendentes, ut Zobellae videri possint: minoris tamquam Zobella venditur»). Another friend, I. Zimmerman from Vilnius, also wrote reviving anew its habitual food practices (see Icones animalium quadrupedum viviparorum et oviparorum, cit., p. 79).

Despite the diverse and conflictory sources, Gesner seemed to have attempted a more scientific investigation than his predecessors and to have given the most credence to this description:

evomuerit pascitur. Ursus occidere eam obiviam non potest, ita dentibus se defendit.

The tale did not in any way eliminate the digestive habits of the animal, because these had a deeply symbolic and ethical significance (and because any information whatsoever played a role in science then). The *De quadrupedes viviparitis* takes them up again, however, in a couple of lines attributed to Olao, citing with accuracy all of his sources and smoothing the way for successive naturalistic studies in which the «Gulo» would be given an even bigger place - in the quest for historical sources and, above all, in the confirmation, now amplified, of the symbolical significance inherent in its strange behavior. *(continued)*

6. *Appendix from the Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus autore Olao Magno, Romae 1555.*

a) b. XVIII (c. 7 De Gulonibus), p. 605 (end of the *Epitome* by C.S. Grafeo: *Historia de gentibus septentrionalibus autore Olao Magno a Cornelio Scribonio Grafeo in Epitomen redacta*, Antverpiae 1562, p. 137):

*inter omnia animalia, quae immanis voracitate credantur insanabilia, hoc animal praesenti figur~

expressum, in partibus Sueciae Septentrionalis praepictum susceperat nomen, ubi patrio sermone corpus villosum, et prolixorum pilorum opinatur. Caro huius animalis omnino inutilis est ad vomunt, redeuntque ad mensam, noctes et dies venatione inquirat. Creditur a natura creatum ad tertemque se stringit angustia priore, repetitque humanam escam: sed pellis multum commoda, atque ~evertttur*

Romae 1555.

b) b. XVIII (c. 8 De honestandis hospitibus in harum pellium tegumentis), p. 606 (end of Grafeo’s *Epitome*, p. 137):

*Neque incolae terrarum quastes causa permittunt has pellas educi in alienas regiones, cum et earum tegumentis tracent in hyeme hospites honorabiliiores: argumenum ostendentes sufficiens, sese nihil amoenius, clarissque ducere, quam bonos hospites quovis tempore et ordine magnificare, etiam in vehementi frigore, quando inter alia beneficia lectos tam pretiosissimam stratos, eiusmod exibent praeparatos, proit xvi. libro de hospitalitate gentis cap. xii. exitit declaratum. Sed neque silendum existimo, quod dormientibus sub harum pellium tegumentis, evenire solent somnia, quasi eius animalis vitae, naturaque conforma, in insatiabilitate devorandi, et bestiis insidiis faciendis, et praecavendis: quod forsan sub ratione sit, ut qui species calidas, zinziber, aut piper comedunt, prout Plutarchus habet in Problematibus suis, Videtur et alii sub sesse naturae secretum, ut iis pellibus induti, bibendo et comedendo nullum satiaturatis vestigium relinquant.*


c) b. XVIII (cap. 9 *De modo venandi Gulones*), p. 607:

*Venatorum arte varia acquiritur hoc animal insidiosum (cuius facies partim catt, partim cani similis est) solo respectu pretiosae pellis, hoc modo:
portatur in sylvam cadaver recens, ubi frequentius haec bestiae vagari videntur, praesertim in aquis altis; (aestate enim nihil valent pelles) quo cognito per odorvm, et apprehenso, vincitur, donec ventrem instar tympani extensum, inter arbores angustas, non sine cruciatu cogatur exonerare: sicque occupatum, latam dimissa sanguis, venator occidit. Est alius modus huius bestiae capiendae, per trabes tenuissima chorda distinctas, ut eius levem motu, cadaver edendo stranguletur: vel etiam in effossas scrobes, seu cavemas obliquas, ut fame urgente cadavere immisso vescatur, incidens capitur. Aliaque via vix conceditur, ut canibus apprehendatur, cum ungulas, dentesque, adeo acutae habeant, ut eius congressum formident canes, qui in ferocissimos lupos vires suas extendere solent [end of Grafeo’s Epitome, p. 138].


By Fabio Stok, University of Salerno

For the Middle Ages Ennius was little more than a name (for us it is somewhat more: a list of fragments). But not just any name: in Horace, Ennius is the poet et sapiens et fortis et alter Homerus (epist. 2.1.50); in Cicero (Arch. 22), in Ovid (ars 3.409-410) and in Jerome’s Chronicon (a.Abr. 1850) he is a poet so great as to merit a position in the sepulchre of Scipio; in an anecdote recounted by Cassiodorus, Ennius is a prized source of Virgil’s, dum Ennium legeret [scil. Vergilius], a quodam quid faceret inquitius respondit: "Aurum in stercore quaero" (inst. 1.8). A name recurring so frequently, in different authors, could not but excite interest on the part of Medieval readers, as well as an ambition to track down his works: Adhelm of Malmesbury (VII Century) cited Ennius among the titles of the library of the abbey, but obviously knew only the name (see L. Bönhoff, Adhelrn von Malmesbury, Dresden 1894, pp. 71 ss.); in the age of the Renaissance Pomponio Leto boasted the possession of Ennius’ Annales, arousing the envy of the other Humanists (see A. J. Dunston, "A Student’s Note of Lectures by Giulio Pomponio Leto", Antichthon 1 [1967], p. 92). Some of the attestations that I quote below hypothesised that the work could have been preserved in some codices originating in the Middle Ages and then lost, but this is a hypothesis that can be discarded; at the time of Macrobius (end of IV Century) the work of Ennius had already been lost, quia saeculum nostrum ab Ennio et omni bibliotheca vetere descivit, multa ignorantam, quae non laterent, si veterum lectio nobis esset familiaris (Sat. 6.9.9); Corippus (VI Century) drew on quotations of Macrobius and others, as Baldwin has recently shown (see B. Baldwin, "Corippus and Ennius", Illinois Class. Stud. 13 [1988], pp. 175-82).

With the impossibility of tracking down the Ennius text, the Middle Ages remembered his name, recovering noticeable appraisals in the sources: Beda (VIII Century) quoted Ennius in De schematibus et tropis (p. 610, 20 Rhet. Lat. Min. Halm) by Sedulius, Carm. Pasch. 1.136; Muadwin of Autun took his cue from Ovid (trist. 2.423-424), Carmina lusit item variis en maximus odis Ennius, ingenuis scribens monumenta priorum; l Propterea in terris tenuit tum culmen honoris (ed. Dillmuller I p. 338, II. 79-81); Theodulus (IX Century) from Martianus Capella’s distichum Ennianum (1.42), Adsint praecipe qui curant floridam Tempe, l Quos in distichii serie compleret, Ennius et Priami fortunas intonat (Anticaud. I.5, ed. Wright), derives, for Förster, from Priscian, who quotes (gramm. II p. 97.8-9 Keil) Ennius’ fragment ann. 17 Vahlen [= 14 Skutsch], cum veter oculabuit Priamus sub Marte Pelasgo (see R. Förster, "Zur Handschriftenkunde und Geschichte der Philologie", Rhein. Museum 37 [1882], pp. 111-112);