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## Patronage and Humanist Poetry: Francesco Filelfo and Francesco Sforza

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Recent scholarship has produced a revisionist interpretation of the *Sphortias*, an encomiastic epic poem written in the middle of the fifteenth century by the Italian humanist Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481), claiming that Filelfo criticized his hero, Duke Francesco Sforza of Milan (r. 1450–1466), under the guise of flattering praise. This paper argues that a closer reading of the passages upon which this new interpretation is based proves it untenable. In fact, the portrayal of Sforza and his antagonists in the *Sphortias* is a telling illustration of the *modus operandi* of a poet who was working in a precarious environment and who, in his search for patronage in the complex, multi-polar

political landscape of Quattrocento Italy, felt the need to balance his manifold loyalties without endangering his employment prospects. The question should not be to what extent a poet in Filelfo's position was "sincere" in praising or criticizing his hero or the latter's enemies, but rather which message he wanted to convey, and which image he wanted to promote of himself as a producer of encomiastic literature, while maintaining his authorial autonomy. An examination of the *Sphortias* from this angle, reckoning also with Filelfo's other writings about Sforza, illustrates the tension between the author's declared intention to offer a true presentation of historical facts and the needs of panegyric literature.

JEROEN DE KEYSER profesor je latinskog jezika i književnosti na Katoličkom sveučilištu u Leuvenu i glavni urednik časopisa *Humanistica Lovaniensia: Journal of Neo-Latin Studies*. Nakon što je stekao magisterij iz klasične filologije na Sveučilištu u Ghentu i specijalizirao se u srednjovjekovnom i renesansnom latinskom na Sveučilištu u Firenci, doktorat je obranio na Sveučilištu u Torinu 2008. godine. Bio je Frances A. Yates Fellow na Institutu Warburg u Londonu te gost istraživač na Sveučilištu Sapienza u Rimu i Sveučilištu Cambridge. U svojim se radovima bavi humanizmom 15. stoljeća, transmisijom latinske i grčke književnosti u vrijeme renesanse, poviješću retorike i latinske epike, historiografije i epistolografije. Priredio je sljedeća djela talijanskog humanista Francesca Filelfa: latinske prijevode Ksenofontovih djela (2012), *De exilio* (2013), *Sphortias* (2015) i *Sabrana pisma* (2016).