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Divided by a common language? Being eloquent and being understood in early fifteenth-century Latins

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to appear in a special issue of *Eranos* (2021),
under guest editorship of G. Barrett and O. Margolis

What did the Romans ever do for northern Europe? Apart, that is, from the aqueducts, the roads and the wine (they go without saying). To any list, the humanists of Renaissance Italy would have added: the language. As the papal secretary and historian, Flavio Biondo (1392-1463), asserted in 1459, before the Romans invaded, the French, the Germans, the British neither knew or had seen letters.¹ With Latin came reading and writing. Biondo's sometime colleague at the curia, Lorenzo Valla (1407-57), dilated more copiously on the benefits that flowed from being initiated into the status of *litteratus*: it gave the vanquished tribes the possibility of learning the liberal arts, of living by a legal code, of attaining wisdom, of, in fine, becoming more than barbarians.² For Valla, the gift of Latin literacy made those he called 'our forefathers' more than conquerors – they were civilizers. For Biondo, those who were subjected to this rule knew they were the lucky ones, *beatissimi*.³ In this vision of the virtues of empire-building, the achievement of the Romans did not lie primarily in their stonework, in the roads and the aqueducts which they imprinted on the invaded landscape. More than that, they constructed an expanse of shared communication; it was a world for which the Fall of Babel held no meaning or fear; it had a towering unity that stood unshaken by the wrath of God – until the collapse of the empire and its civilization.

Humanists like Valla, surveying the imperial ruins, set themselves the task of reviving pristine eloquence. They announced themselves as enemies of barbarians, wherever they were to be found, which was, they asserted, mainly among the inhabitants of those very nations north of the Alps which had benefitted from subjection to ancient Roman rule. Not that those foreigners had the good grace to remain behind the mountain divide – as the pre-eminent Florentine humanist, Leonardo Bruni (1370-1444), famously claimed in his early masterpiece, the *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, they come over here and pollute our education with their language:

¹ Biondo, *Roma triumphans* (Basel, 1559), p. 2. We await the critical edition of the work from the Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo; in the meantime, we now have the first volume of the I Tatti Renaissance Library edition.

² I paraphrase a passage from the preface to Book I of Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantiae*, still most readily available in E. Garin ed., *Prosatori latini del Quattrocento* (Milan, 1952), pp. 594-600. The whole work has been edited by S. López Moreda, 2 vols (Cáceres, 1999), with this passage at i, p. 56. On the passage, see A. Fisher, 'The project of humanism and Valla's imperial metaphor', *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, xxiii, (1993), pp. 301-322.

³ Biondo, *Roma triumphans*, p. 1.

Quid autem de dialectica, quae una ars ad disputandum pernecessaria est? An ea florens regnum obtinet...? Minime vero. Nam etiam illa barbaria, quae trans oceanum habitat, in illam impetum fecit. At quae gentes, dii boni? Quorum etiam nomina perhorresco: Farabrich, Buser, Occam, aliique eiusmodi, qui omnes mihi videntur a Rhadamantis cohorte traxisse cognomina. Et ... quid est, inquam, non in dialectic quod non britannicis sophismatibus conturbatum sit?⁴

The three names that made him shudder – Richard Feribrigge, William Buser, and William of Ockham – are all of scholastic logicians, two of whom (the first and last) were from that furthest-flung region of the former empire, England.⁵ Bruni's words are testimony to the success of English logic in Italy in his lifetime; the humanists were fighting against such fashionable imports.⁶ This was to be a battle over 'which Latin', characterised in this passage as 'whose Latin'. It is a reminder that humanist attempts at reform intervened within a culture where Latin was far from a unitary entity. Lorenzo Valla claimed that after the Fall of Rome for many centuries no one spoke Latin or even understood it on the page.⁷ This, of course, was a gross exaggeration. A language which across the classical world had apparently persisted with a surprising level of commonality spawned many new local vernaculars, but that process was not also its death-throe: it survived into the Middle Ages by multiplying. Latins existed in plurality, defined by region, by subject-matter and by dictates of taste.⁸ The humanists set their face against such variety and envisaged a programme of linguistic cleansing. But their scholarly lives and their professional careers required that they engaged with those who wrote and spoke by criteria other than theirs. The theme of this chapter is what they thought was happening and what they actually did when those encounters occurred.

I. Barbarians at the Curia

⁴ Leonardo Bruni, *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, ed. S. U. Baldassarri (Florence, 1994), p. 247 (para. 25, ll. 1-10). For the tradition of British-bashing in which this sat, see E. Garin, 'La cultura fiorentina nella seconda metà del '300 e i 'barbari britanni'', *La Rassegna della letteratura italiana*, lxiv (1960), pp. 181-195; C. Vasoli, 'Intorno al Petrarca ed ai logici 'moderni'' in A. Zimmermann ed., *Antiqui und Moderni. Traditionsbewußtsein und Fortschrittsbewußtsein im späten Mittelalter [Miscellanea Medievalia*, ix] (Berlin, 1974), pp. 142-54, and P. Boitani, 'Petrarch and the 'barbari britanni'' in M. McLaughlin and L. Panizza with P. Hainsworth ed., *Petrarch in Britain. Interpreters, Imitators and Translators over 700 Years* [Proceedings of the British Academy, cxlvi] (Oxford, 2007), pp. 9-25.

⁵ 'Buser' was identified by Garin, *Prosatori latini*, p. 60 as William Heytesbury which would make those mentioned a fully English triumvirate (on Heytesbury's popularity in Italy, see P. V. Spade, 'The manuscripts of William Heytesbury's *Regulae solvendi sophismata*: conclusions, notes and descriptions', *Medioevo*, xv (1989), pp. 271-313). It is, however, a stretch to make the word in the *Dialogi* that name and more likely it refers to William Buser who was from Brabant and taught at Paris; on him, see C. H. Kneepkens, 'The Mysterious Buser Again: William Buser of Heusden and the <<Obligationes>> Tract <<Ob Rogatum>>', in A. Maierù ed., *English Logic in Italy in the 14th and 15th Centuries* (Naples, 1982), pp. 147-66.

⁶ On this popularity, see, in particular, W. J. Courtenay, 'The Early Stages in the Introduction of Oxford Logic into Italy' in Maierù ed., *English Logic*, pp. 13-32.

⁷ Garin, *Prosatori latini*, p. 598; López Moreda, i, p. 60.

⁸ I have found stimulating J. N. Adams, *The Regional Diversification of Latin 200 BC – AD 600* (Cambridge, 2007) who, against claims of uniformity, gathers detailed evidence of the variety of Latin in the ancient world – but that variety, though manifold, seems small-scale in comparison to that of medieval and Renaissance Latins.

The variety of Latins and the presence of vernaculars made some humanists wonder whether the reach of *Latinitas* had ever been as extensive as Valla was to claim. In early 1435, when Eugenius IV and his entourage were housed in Florence, discussion arose among the papal secretaries and the Chancellor of their host city, the author of the *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, Bruni himself. They were each waiting for an audience with the pontiff and (when they were not regaling one another salacious tales) some – including Bruni – posited that in the streets of ancient Rome jostled together the sounds of two languages, the grammatical Latin of the learned, and the idiom of the plebs, the Italian of its day.⁹ Our earliest source for this debate of 1435 is from one of its participants, Flavio Biondo, who held the opposing view to Bruni, the view which eventually won the day: there was only one language used by all classes, albeit with registers and grades of expression.¹⁰ Biondo wrote up a short tract setting out his reasoning, primarily through reference to passages from Cicero, and addressed it as a letter to Bruni, who responded in like form, unpicking the arguments one by one.¹¹ Bruni’s central assertion was that, given the grammatical complexity of Latin, it was absurd to imagine that the uneducated masses could master it. He mentions two groups as representatives of the uneducated. On the one hand, there are the *nutrices et mulierculae* (contrasted with learned ladies like Cornelia Africana) – an allusion to the unlitrary ‘mother tongue’ in which nurses and matrons would sing lullabies.¹² On the other, there are the *pistores et lanistae*, the bakers and gladiatorial trainers who were illiterate but still capable of making some sense of an orator’s words, just as their equivalents ‘nowadays’ would be able to follow the Latin Mass ‘quod longe facilius est intelligere alienum sermonem quam proferre’.¹³ The selection of these groups is suggestive of the limits of education in Bruni’s

⁹ For discussion of this debate, see M. Tavoni, *Latino, grammatica, volgare. Storia di una questione umanistica* (Padua, 1984), pp. 3-41; A. Mazzocco, *Linguistic Theories in Dante and the Humanists* (Leiden, 1993), pp. 13-50; C. S. Celenza, ‘End Game: humanist Latin in the late fifteenth century’ in Y. Maes, J. Pappy and W. Verbaal ed., *Latinitas Perennis. Volume II. Appropriation and Latin Literature* (Leiden, 2009), pp. 201-242, and G. Marcellino and G. Ammannati, *Il latino e il "volgare" nell'antica Roma: Biondo Flavio, Leonardo Bruni e la disputa umanistica sulla lingua degli antichi Romani* (Pisa, 2015), pp. 1-73. For a recent assessment of ancient perceptions of the variety of spoken Latin, see R. Müller, *Sprachbewußtsein und Sprachvariation im lateinischen Schrifttum der Antike* (Munich, 2001).

¹⁰ The long-standing edition available at Flavio Biondo, *De verbis Romanae locutionis in Scritti inediti e rari di Biondo Flavio*, ed. B. Nogara [Studi e Testi, xlviii] (Rome, 1927), pp. 115 – 30, and revised by Tavoni, *Latino*, pp. 197-215 has now been superseded by the edition of Fulvio delle Donne (Rome, 2008).

¹¹ Bruni’s letter is in his epistolary, VI/10 [Luiso VI/15]. The standard edition remains that of Lorenzo Mehus, 2 vols (Florence, 1741), recently reprinted with an introduction by James Hankins, 2 vols (Rome, 2007), but note that there is also now a French bilingual edition, Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Lettres familières*, ed. L. Bernard-Pradelle, 2 vols ([Montpellier, 2014]), in which this letter appears at ii, pp. 148-62. I cite Mehus epistle numbers, followed in square brackets with the epistle numbers assigned by F. P. Luiso, *Studi su l’epistolario di Leonardo Bruni*, ed. L. Gualdo Rosa (Rome, 1980), and also give the Bernard-Pradelle section and page references.

¹² Bruni, ep. VI/10 [Luiso VI/15], para. 7 (Bernard-Pradelle, ii, p. 156). There is presumably an allusion here not just to the opening of Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* (I.i) but to that of Dante’s *De vulgari eloquentia* (I.i-ii) where it is said of the vernacular that is the language of *non tantum viri sed mulieres et parvuli* which we learn *nutricem imitantes*: ed. S. Botterill (Cambridge, 1996), p. 2. On Bruni’s knowledge of *De vulgari eloquentia*, see Mazzocco, *Linguistic Theories*, p. 214. For a detailed but wayward discussion of the concept of *materna lingua / locutio*, see T. P. Bonfiglio, *Mother Tongues and Nations: the invention of native speaker* (New York, 2010), and for an impassioned attack on the later modern fetishising of the concept (primarily in the German tradition), Y. Yildiz, *Beyond the Mother Tongue: the postmonolingual condition* (Oxford, 2011).

¹³ Bruni, ep. VI/10 [Luiso VI/15], para. 2-3 (Bernard-Pradelle, ii, pp. 150-52).

own city, where there were unusually high literacy rates, if only in the vernacular.¹⁴ What is more, the specific contemporary reference to the hearing of ecclesiastical Latin, combined with the emphasis on comprehension without verbal ability, provide an implicit response to a notable passage in Biondo's tract.

In the process of making his case, Biondo had also drawn a contemporary parallel, one which can remind us what a very real daily issue communication between Latin speakers could be in an international environment like the papal court:

Magnam in curia Romani pontificis servientium nobis turbam, Gallos Cimbros Teutonos Alamannos Anglicos Britannos Pannoniosque, et diversam penitus ab Italica linguam habentes alios, semper esse videmus, qui, etsi litteras sciunt, adeo tamen rudes et artis grammaticae aliarumque et quamdam ex consuetudine sibi comparaverint latini sermonis litterati practicam, illitterati et penitus idiotae dici possint.¹⁵

In this sentence, Biondo deploys his own skill at rhetoric, with the asyndeton of the national designations, and the accumulation of clauses rising to the semi-alliteration of the final phrase – illiterates and idiots. Those words might involve a conscious classical allusion, echoing the same combination of nouns quoted by Nonius Marcellus from the satirist Lucilius.¹⁶ At the same time, there is possibly something else happening. While in classical usage, *idiotia* signified the ignorant and uneducated, Biondo could not have been unaware of the supplementary usage it had gained, of one who could speak only a local tongue, not Latin.¹⁷ It is in this sense that it was used by Bede, an author praised by some humanists but who, as he himself said, was from an *alter orbis*.¹⁸ In contrast to Biondo's later encapsulation of a classical world knitted together by its shared language, here we have the sense that the fabric has long been stretched so far, it is close to unravelling – close but not quite. For, Biondo's insult to other nations is far from gratuitous; its purpose is to introduce his point that, for all their barbarisms and solecisms, 'et tamen orationes sermonesque qui a doctissimis litteratis fiunt quid sibi velint, quas ob res dicantur, intelligunt'.¹⁹ In the progress of his argument, Biondo's intention is to draw a similarity with those in ancient Rome who were unlearned but still, he argues, could follow a Ciceronian oration. A little like them, the cosmopolitan crowd at the latter-day curia made poor speakers but competent listeners.

¹⁴ R. Black, *Education and Society in Renaissance Florence. Teachers, Pupils and Schools*, 1 vol. to date (Leiden, 2007), pp. 1-42, though his estimates (only for male literacy) seem excessive.

¹⁵ Biondo, *De verbis*, ed. Nogara, p. 125.

¹⁶ Nonius Marcellus, *De compendiosa doctrina*, ed. W. M. Lindsay, 3 vols (Leipzig, 1903), i, p. 55 [I.38, II.20-22].

¹⁷ I thank Martin McLaughlin for drawing this possibility to my attention. An additional possibility is that Biondo also has in mind the concept of *idiotismus* as mentioned by Quintilian and Donatus, on which see R. Ferri and P. Probert, 'Roman authors on colloquial language' in E. Dickey and A. Chahoud ed., *Colloquial and Literary Latin* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 12-41.

¹⁸ Bede, epistle to Egbert, *PL*, cliv, col. 659c: 'idiotas, hoc est, eos qui propriae tantum linguae notitiam habent'. For brief discussion of humanist praise of Bede, see my 'Humanist Eloquence among the Barbarians in Fifteenth-Century England' in C. Burnett and N. Mann ed., *Britannia Latina. Latin in the Culture of Great Britain from the Middle Ages to the Twentieth Century* (London, 2005), pp. 68-85 at 69.

¹⁹ Biondo, *De verbis*, ed. Nogara, pp. 125-26.

Not, it must be said, that their accents or their syntax exempted visitors from the requirements of speechifying before the pope. Their performances met with differing responses. Of one *oltramontano* who is discussed elsewhere in this volume – John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester (1427-1470) – it is claimed that his eloquence reduced the humanist pope, Pius II, to tears of joy, but the assertion comes from a biased source, the earl’s secretary and fellow Englishman, John Free (d. 1464/5).²⁰ Perhaps more often, Italian curialists may have wept at hearing ‘their’ language of Latin masticated and massacred in foreign mouths. To give just one example, the ambassador of the Duke of Brittany, Guillaume de Domqueur, gave an oration before Sixtus IV on the feast of Pentecost in June 1481; Jacopo Gherardi remembered it as ‘[non] inepta, quamvis ab externo barbare pronuntiata’.²¹ This did not mean that it was disparaged by all: Gherardi himself notes that it was commended by hearers for its appropriateness, and someone liked it enough to ensure it was printed, presumably soon after delivery.²² The text demonstrates the author was attempting to work to humanist expectations of oratory but clearly Domqueur had not managed similarly to perfect an accepted style of pronunciation. To write fashionably and to speak comprehensibly were two separate tests. The result of the mismatch was that Domqueur did not quite cut a *bella figura* at the curia.

Even to write in a Latin acceptable to the circles of Italian *litterateurs* could be assumed to be a challenge which stretched those of other nations beyond their nature. If we were to take northern European statements about their own eloquence at face value, we would have to conclude that they traced their route south weighed down with a sense of their own inferiority. They were wont to admit their status as barbarians and claim that they had made the journey to Italy in the hope of being taught eloquence where it flourished most. Indeed, for those who were to be pupils of the celebrated educationalist Guarino da Verona (1374-1460) – among them the aforementioned John Free – composing such an admission was a required act of submission, akin to an initiation rite into the network that the schoolmaster span about himself.²³ They made these confessions, it should be added, in humanist Latin, giving the lie to any suggestion that they were incorrigible pupils. Their rhetoric, though, left its mark on their successors as classicising scholars in the following century: the English antiquary, John Leland (d. 1552), writing in his own finely wrought humanist style, described how Free’s sometime patron, William Gray, later bishop of Ely (d. 1478), when studying in Oxford:

animum ad commigrationem in Italianam, eloquentia linguae utriusque eximia ac bonis florentissimam artibus, totum conuertit. Alpes igitur transgressus, Ferrariam

²⁰ R. Weiss, ‘A letter-preface of John Free to John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester’, *Bodleian Quarterly Record*, viii (1935-8) pp. 101-103.

²¹ *Il Diario Romano di Jacopo Gherardi da Volterra*, ed. E. Carusi [RIS, xxiii/3] (Città del Castello, 1904), p. 55. The incident is noted by E. Lee, ‘Changing Views of Foreigners in Rome at the End of the Middle Ages’ in *Cultura e Società nell’Italia Medievale. Studi per Paolo Brezzi* [Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, Studi storici, fasc. 184 – 87] (Roma, 1988), pp. 455-77 at p. 472, but misidentifying the author as ‘an English Carmelite’.

²² Guillaume de Domqueur (Dumo Quercu), *Sermo de Sancto Spiritu* (Rome: Georgius Tuetonicus, 1481?) [ISTC ig00616500].

²³ On this, see my ‘Beyond the Classroom: international interest in the studia humanitatis in the university towns of Quattrocento Italy’, *Renaissance Studies*, xxvii (2013), pp. 533-48.

alacer deuenit; et Guarino ... discipulum diligentissimum praeceptori
diligentissimo se adiunxit.²⁴

Such tales of earlier compatriots setting their hearts on imbibing the eloquence in Latin and Greek at its Italian source served for Leland's generation as episodes in a narrative of progress achieved. It is a story that persists in our day, even in the nomenclature of neo-Latin, which acts as a sort of kite-mark of approval for those forms of early modern expression considered appropriately classical while overlooking those which continued to wallow in barbarisms. Such a philological approach has its logic – just as histories of science which plot the forward march of knowledge have their own coherence – but my focus here is in considering the moment when the paradigm was shifting. What interests us is not how 'better Latin' won the day but how its early forms interacted with other Latins that were available. In introducing some of the main types of linguistic movement between Latins, we will also move between the place the humanists called their homeland and that very edge of civilization which made them tremble at its hellish barbarism – Britain.

II. Two Routes to Eloquence

Of the several forms interaction could take, perhaps the most striking can be represented by the relationship between two biographies, both composed in England in the later 1430s, and both of the recent short-lived, warmongering king, Henry V. One was written by an anonymous Englishman in an indigenous style, the other by a visiting humanist, Tito Livio Frulovisi (fl. 1420s-1440s).²⁵ Until recently, it has been assumed that Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti* was the earlier work, expanded and – it is habitually suggested – degraded by the more verbose *Vita et Gesta Henrici Quinti*. This sits comfortably with conventional assumptions of the sources of creativity in the Quattrocento, Renaissance vitality concocting original works which were then twisted out of shape by those too 'medieval' to appreciate them. In the last ten years, however, it has become accepted that the sequence of the two texts must be the reverse – that the first act of generation was the Anglo-Latin text which Frulovisi then attempted to recast in more humanist guise.²⁶ Their relationship, then, is suggestive of how humanist productivity could be deeply indebted to the intellectual fruits of 'barbarians' alongside whom they lived.

What makes the 'non-humanist' Latin of the *Vita et Gesta* more rebarbative to readers of refinement is that it is in a particular style which enjoyed a relatively short-lived fashion in

²⁴ J. Leland, *De viris illustribus*, ed. J. P. Carley (Toronto, 2010), p. 774 (and cf. p. 772, discussing Robert Fleming).

²⁵ Both works were edited by Thomas Hearne in the eighteenth century, the first mentioned, *Vita et Gesta Henrici Quinti* (Oxford, 1727), under the name of Thomas Elmham, an attribution now rejected so that the author is sometimes identified as 'Ps-Elmham'; the second *Vita Henrici Quinti* (Oxford, 1716), with the title-page naming Frulovisi as Titi Livii Foro-Julienensis. For Frulovisi's career, see my 'Tito Livio Frulovisi, and the place of comedies in the formation of a humanist's career', *Studi Umanistici Piceni*, xxiv (2004), pp. 193-202, and the introduction to the edition of one of his plays, *Oratoria*, ed. C. Cocco (Florence, 2010), pp. xi-xxviii.

²⁶ D. Rundle, 'The Unoriginality of Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti*', *English Historical Review*, cxxiii (2008), pp. 1109-1131; cf. O. Merisalo, 'Is divinus rex. Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti*' in J. Meirinhos & O. Weijers ed., *Florilegium mediaevale. Études offertes à Jacqueline Hamesse à l'occasion de son éméritat* (Louvain-la-Neuve, 2009), pp. 379-92.

penitus extirpavit et ipsam patriam, cum universis incolis suis, eidem patri suo subjectam restituit	reducta
excepto ipso Owanno, capitali rebeli, pre timore in loca deserta et latebrosas caveas, absque pugnancium fortitudine fugiente ibidemque vitam inhonorifice finiente cuius filius et heres isti principi Henrico post in regem coronato serviens ei familiaris extitit domestico famulatu.	preter Owanum quendam Wallicorum caput, qui propter metum et conscientiam facinoris in deserta loca et antra sine comitibus fugatus vitam inhoneste finivit eius Owani Henrico postea regi famulatus est filius.
De hiis Wallie guerris, per multa annorum continuatis curricula, de obsidionibus, conflictibus, frequenti strage, discriminosis incomodis, fortuna et infortuniis, aliisque indefinitis in eisdem contingentibus, expavescens calamus pauca ponit, quia ad veram et certam singulorum noticiam non pervenit.	Et hoc de Wallicis bellis satis, quorum ad certam quoque singulorum noticiam non devenerunt.

The most obvious contrast is that Frulovisi's rendering of the events is here – as it is throughout the biography – more succinct, with an overall reduction of the text by two-thirds. On the rare occasions when he does expand the wording it is in order to insert an established classical phrase, as when he converts *prae timore* into *propter metum* and adds the Ciceronian *et conscientiam facinoris*.³² More often, Frulovisi wields the equivalent of a red pen, excising rotund circumlocutions from the *Vita et Gesta*, though retaining some of the terms, even when they are of dubious usage. An example of this in the passage just quoted is *famulatus*, used in the *Vita et Gesta* as a noun in the non-classical sense of 'household', while Frulovisi, presumably attempting to avoid such a barbarism turns it into a past participle of *famulor*, though that verb was rather more frequent in early Christian than in classical Latin. At other points, he perhaps over-strains to be original, so, for instance, when he reads of Glyn Dŵr hiding in gloomy caves — *caveas* — Frulovisi replaces the noun with *antra*, a term which, in classical Latin, was much more often found in poetry than prose. This is not to traduce Frulovisi as a poor Latinist, but instead to emphasise the struggle he faced in making his source his own text. Some medievalisms were simple to replace – like *bellum* for *guerra* – but, just as often, he must have been uncertain about what would be the *mot juste*. Lorenzo Valla's *Elegantiae* was not yet available and would not, in any case, have helped him with many of his choices. He was, in effect, driving the text towards humanism without a road-map and, moreover, with his end-point still under construction. The *studia humanitatis* was in the making.

³² The phrase is also used by Tacitus (eg *Historiae*, I.xxv) but we can discount Frulovisi's knowledge of that as it was only in the years that he was writing that the text (released from Montecassino in the previous century) was beginning to circulate in Florence: L. Reynolds et al., *Texts and Transmission* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 407-408.

Nor, we should remember, was humanist Latin so obviously superior that it would gain a quick victory. Frulovisi's *Vita* received only a small circulation in England and in Italy, mainly through his own promotion of his work. The fortuna of the *Vita et Gesta* was confined to the country of its production, and the number of extant copies of it is also small, but double of that for Frulovisi's re-working.³³ This, in part, reflects the localised circulation of texts in manuscript culture, though it is plausible to assume that some had access to both works. Certainly, within the Latin culture of fifteenth-century Europe, there was space for both works to live alongside each other.

III. The Limits of Humanist Latin in the Chancery

If the incident just discussed reveals interaction happening between Latins far from the so-called fulcrum of humanist endeavours, another form of cohabitation is on display much closer to their centre-point. Our discussion should attend to the issue raised by Biondo's comment quoted above: the problematics of international diplomatic exchange. His aperçu concerned spoken Latin at the curia but there is a greater wealth of evidence if we consider written correspondence. In doing this, we shall focus not on the curia itself but on the city in which the papacy was resident when Biondo wrote, the *Florentina urbs* which proclaimed itself the birthplace of the *studia humanitatis*. Our primary interest will be in the man who stood chatting with Biondo outside the pope's bedroom and who took the diametrically opposed position on the issue of the languages of ancient Rome – Leonardo Bruni, chancellor of Florence.³⁴ Our question will be both how a humanist addressed foreigners, specifically the English (whom elsewhere Bruni had derided), and how far the recipients could have perceived the humanist agenda from the correspondence they received.³⁵

It was a central claim of the humanists that their eloquence could be of public use, and that those in power would be wise to summon their persuasive skills to participate in the august occasions of state, and in their more quotidian matters besides. In this proclaimed belief in their own utility, the fifteenth-century Florentine humanists followed their intellectual godfather, Coluccio Salutati (1331-1406), himself the city's chancellor. Report was that

³³ I outline the surviving medieval manuscripts of both works at 'Unoriginality', pp. 1129-31.

³⁴ For his time as chancellor, see P. Viti ed., *Leonardo Bruni cancelliere della repubblica di Firenze* (Florence, 1990); id., *Leonardo Bruni e Firenze. Studi sulle lettere pubbliche e private* (Rome, 1992), and G. Griffiths, *The Justification of Florentine Foreign Policy offered by Leonardo Bruni in his public letters (1428-1444)* (Rome, 1999).

³⁵ We are considering, of course, the period before the heyday of humanist manuals of letter-writing on which see G. Guedet, *L'art de la lettre humaniste*, ed. F. Wild (Paris, 2004), esp. pp. 217-87; G. Burton, 'From *Ars Dictaminis* to *Ars conscribendi epistolis*: Renaissance Letter-Writing Manuals in the Context of Humanism' in C. Poster and L. C. Mitchell ed., *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present* (Columbia SC, 2008), pp. 88-101, and J. R. Henderson, 'Tradition and Innovation in Erasmus' Epistolary Theory: A Reconsideration', *Erasmus of Rotterdam Society Yearbook*, xxix (2009), pp. 23-59. For the first half and middle of the fifteenth century, see H. Harth, 'Poggio Bracciolini und die Brieftheorie des 15. Jahrhunderts. Zur Gattungsform des Humanistischen Briefs' in F. J. Worstbrock ed., *Der Brief im Zeitalter der Renaissance* [Mitteilung IX der Kommission für Humanismusforschung] (Bonn, 1983), pp. 81-99, and, on one influential early work, see C. Fantazzi, 'The *Epistolae Ad Exercitatione Accommodatae* of Gasparino Barzizza' in A. Dalzell et al. ed., *Acta Conventus Neo-Latini Torontonensis* [Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, lxxxvi] (Binghamton NY, 1991), pp. 139-46.

Florence's enemy, Giangaleazzo Visconti, duke of Milan, rued that a single epistle written by Salutati for his republic was worth a thousand horse.³⁶ Though he felt at times stifled by the tradition of his own chancery, he was able to ensure classicising rhetoric infiltrated some of its correspondence.³⁷ Such letters were sent not just within the peninsula but also far beyond the Alps.³⁸ Here is one exordium opening a letter sent to Henry IV of England on 18th August 1401:

Inter alia mortalium vitia, serenissime atque gloriosissime princeps et metuentissime domine, nullum turpius, nullumque detestabilius ingratitude potest atque perfidia repiri. Nam si ut eloquentie fons diffinit Cicero gratitudo virtus una est non solum maxima sed etiam mater virtutum omnium reliquarum profecto consequeris est ingratitude maximum esse vitium ac matrem omnium vitiorum...³⁹

The sententious style and the carefully balanced phrasing, let alone the explicit reference to the 'fount of eloquence' announces the epistle's Ciceronian credentials, which Salutati patently thought not inappropriate to be sent to Britons cut off from the whole world. Not all the phrasing, it must be said, is as polished; for instance, 'time and expense' is rendered periphrastically as '[non] sine longo temporis tractu magnoque monetarum dispendio'. Salutati's classicising intentions, however, are apparent and this, as we are about to see, is in notable contrast with the practice of the next generation.

When, nearly forty years later, Leonardo Bruni gathered together his own correspondence to be published in eight books, he chose to open the work with letters which emphasised both his debt to Salutati and the practical application of humanist epistolary style.⁴⁰ The first book begins with a group of epistles to the old Chancellor from Bruni, then in Rome seeking a curial post which, he narrates, he won through a competition set by the pope to draft a response to a letter of the duc de Berry.⁴¹ We might take it as a heroic tale of how the *studia humanitatis* came to be cherished at the very heart of Christendom – though, in truth, it is the story of one humanist's success over another scholar, considering that Bruni's rival for the post, Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia was also an acquaintance of Salutati's and shared his

³⁶ Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *De Europa*, ed. A. van Heck [Studi e Testi, cccxcviii] (Vatican City, 2001), p. 221. For earlier versions of this claim, see the editor's footnote at *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati*, ed. F. Novati, 4 vols in 5 (Rome, 1891-1911), iv/1, pp. 247-48.

³⁷ On the confrontation of styles, see A. Petrucci, *Coluccio Salutati* (Rome, 1972), pp. 93-101, and R. G. Witt, *Coluccio Salutati and his Public Letters* (Geneva, 1976), esp. pp. 23-41; see also C. Griggio, 'Dalla lettera all'epistolario. Aspetti retorico-formali dell'epistolografia umanistica' in A. Chemello, *Alla lettera. Teorie e pratiche epistolary dai Greci al Novecento* (Milan, 1998), pp. 83-108.

³⁸ For the international popularity of his letters, including in England, see Witt, *Salutati and his Public Letters*, p. 5.

³⁹ Florence: Archivio di Stato [hereafter ASF], Signori Missive I^o Cancelleria, registro 25, fol. 51-52, with the Ciceronian tag being from *Pro Plancio*, lxxx.

⁴⁰ On the construction of the epistolary, see P. Viti, 'Sulla struttura dell'epistolario di Leonardo Bruni', *Interpres*, ix (1989), pp. 7-34 (a revised version appears at id., *Bruni e Firenze*, pp. 311-38) and J. Hankins, 'Introduction' in the reprint of Mehus (see n. ++ above). On the development of humanist epistolaries more generally, see C. Revest, 'Au miroir des choses familières. Les correspondances humanistes au début du XVe siècle', *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome. Moyen Âge*, cxix (2007), pp. 447-62.

⁴¹ Bruni epp. I/1-3 [Luiso, 1/3, 4, and 6] (Bernard-Pradelle, i, pp. 108-18).

coterie's interests.⁴² What is more, the letter in question to the duc de Berry, in the form that it survives, could not be said to presage a revolution in papal modes of expression: unadorned and clearly expressed, it does not – indeed, could not, given the subject-matter – shy away from non-classical terms and usages (*schisma*, *scandalum* as 'scandal', *invalidus* as 'invalid').⁴³ It may be that it impressed for its argumentative sequence rather than for any rhetorical flourishes. Of course, what survives may be not be precisely as Bruni drafted it: he does not include his own version in his epistolary. That is not surprising, given that what he was collecting together was his personal correspondence – his *epistolae familiares* – written in his own name, rather than on behalf of an employer. The personal was by no means private, and the publication of an epistolary augmented the circulation of letters by him which was already occurring.⁴⁴ That process of circulation may, at times, have blurred the distinction between the two categories of familiar and official, but a separation was usually present at the point of composition, and that separation was more than merely conceptual.⁴⁵ For, what is notable, is that there is on occasion (though not always) a fissure between how Bruni would write in one of his 'own' epistles, designed to imitate Cicero's practice, and what he saw fit to appear in an official missive.

This is best exemplified by providing a brief comparison of two letters addressed to the same person. The recipient in this example is the English royal prince and sometime patron of humanists, Humfrey, duke of Gloucester (1390-1447). The first epistle, written in Bruni's personal capacity as a scholar, has a certain notoriety, since in it he says he will take on the translation of Aristotle's *Politics* and implies he will dedicate the work to the duke, something he later denied having promised. The passage in question is typical of the style used in this epistle:

...Traductionem igitur Ethicorum noviter a me editam, legi a te ac tanti principis iudicio comprobari gratissimum est mihi, fructumque ex eo maximi laboris mei videor percepisse. Quod autem flagitas ut Politicorum libros eiusdem philosophi tuo nomine in latinum convertam, quamquam opus est magni laboris multarumque vigilarum, tamen quia tanto principi flagitanti denegare quicquam

⁴² On him, see R. Weiss, 'Iacopo Angeli da Scarperia (c. 1360-1410/11)' in id., *Medieval and Humanist Greek* (Padua, 1977), pp. 255-77.

⁴³ The letter was published in E. Martène and U. Durand ed., *Veterum scriptorum et monumentorum historicorum dogmaticorum moralium amplissima compilatio*, 9 vols (Paris, 1724-33), viii (1733), col. 702-705. It gained something of a circulation in France: see, eg, *Chronique du Religieux de Saint-Denys contenant le règne de Charles VI...*, ed. M. L. Bellaguet, 6 vols (Paris, 1839-52), iii (1841), pp. 252-54.

⁴⁴ On the complexities of the early circulation of the letters, see J. Hankins, 'Notes on the Textual Tradition of Leonardo Bruni's *Epistolae familiares*' in id., *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols [Storia e Letteratura, ccxv and ccxx] (Rome, 2003-2004), i, pp. 63-98. On the general point of the public nature of familiar letters, I accept, as emphasised by H. Harth, 'L'epistolographie humaniste entre professionalisme et souci littéraire: l'exemple de Poggio Bracciolini' in *La Correspondence d'Erasmus et L'Epistolographie humaniste* (Brussels, 1985), pp. 135-44, that, at times, 'les frontières entre les fonctions professionnelles et les intérêts littéraires privés ... étaient ... difficiles à définir précisément' (p. 140) but that does not mean that a distinction evaporates. Cf. J. R. Henderson, 'Humanist Letter Writing: Private Conversation or Public Forum?' in T. Van Houdt et al. ed., *Self-Presentation and Social Identification. The Rhetoric and Pragmatics of Letter Writing in Early Modern Times* [Supplementa Humanistica Lovaniensia, xviii] (Leuven, 2002).

⁴⁵ On official letters which circulated within formularies, see Viti, *Bruni e Firenze*, pp. 223-53.

nefas duco, suscipiam id onus eosque libros, quam primum absoluti fuerint,
transmittere curabo.⁴⁶

This was most likely sent in 1433, the same year in which the city of Florence, with Bruni as chancellor overseeing its official correspondence, had reason to write to the duke. The situation which required an explanation involved a certain Piero Bartoli alias Maii, a merchant masquerading as an official ‘procurator seu commissarius’ of Florence; the missive insists he has no such authority and urges the duke to act with dispatch:

...Nos igitur his auditis statim scribendum duximus celsitudini vestre fidem vobis indubiam facientes quod pierus prefatus nullam penitus commissionem habet a communitate nostra vel ab aliquo officiali eiusdem communitatis... celsitudinem vestram rogamus ut velit pro iustitia et pro honore civitatis nostre favores vestros et auxilia prebere eidem consuli ut pierus maii antedictus capiatur et arrestentur eius bona...⁴⁷

The contrast between the two texts is not difficult to detect. To begin with, Bruni in his private capacity writes to ‘so great a prince’ using the *tu* forms, while Bruni the Chancellor of the Republic insists on the – more conventional but less classical – *vester* forms of address to ‘the highness’.⁴⁸ Both epistles employ doublets but to different effect, with ‘opus est magni laboris multarumque vigilarum’ compounding the sense of an arduous enterprise, while ‘procurator seu commissarius’ or ‘a communitate nostro vel ab aliquo officiali...’ acts instead as clarifications. Moreover, while Bruni the humanist looks to purge his prose of non-classical usages, Bruni the Chancellor does not blush to employ a verb like ‘arrestare’ or to use ‘quod’ in the medieval sense of ‘that’.

That the letter concerning Piero Bartoli was not some sort of momentary lapse is revealed by others sent to England during Bruni’s chancellorship. Four years later, when the Florentine bank of the Alberti went bankrupt, correspondence followed concerning the consequences.⁴⁹ The first of these opens in a style approximating more to what we might expect from Bruni’s pen:

Non est nobis incognitum, serenissime rex, quanto favore quantaque humanitate ac benivolentia sublimitas vestra tractaverit dudum ac tractet assidue cives florentinos qui in vestro regno negotiantur, nec est novum sed usitatum cum non modo temporibus nostris sed superioribus etiam etatibus a clare memorie regibus antecessoribus vestris semper nostri cives in illo inclito regno gratiam et caritatem

⁴⁶ The letter is not in Mehus but is Luiso, VI/14 [Bernard-Pradelle, VI/11]. It was printed by A. Sammut, *Unfredo duca di Gloucester e gli umanisti italiani* (Padua, 1980), pp. 146-48 but he misdated it to 1434; it is reprinted by Bernard-Pradelle, ii, pp. 128-30 following the date of 12th March 1433 established by E. Fumagalli in *Aevum*, lvi (1982), p. 348. On the context, see R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, 4th ed., ed. D. Rundle and A. J. Lappin (Oxford, 2013 [printed version: 2016]) [hereafter Weiss⁴], pp. 74-77, and my *The Identity of Renaissance Humanism and England* (in preparation).

⁴⁷ ASF, Signori Missive I^o Cancelleria, registro 33, fol. 133^{r-v} (dated 25th November 1433).

⁴⁸ On Salutati’s earlier abortive attempts to reform such usage, see Witt, *Salutati and Public Letters*, pp. 23-28.

⁴⁹ On the collapse of the bank, see G. Holmes, ‘Florentine Merchants in England, 1346-1436’, *Economic History Review*, xiii (1960), pp. 193 – 208, esp. pp. 197-98.

et cumalatos favores ac protectionem eximiam ab illis illustrissimis principibus reportarint...⁵⁰

The balance of phrasing may not be quite even, but this might appear to herald a move to a Latin somewhat closer to that which Bruni honed in his familiar letters. We might surmise that it was being introduced because of both the gravity of the occasion and the fact that this letter was (*mutatis mutandis*) being sent to a range of affected parties. The style is not, however, consistently sustained, even in this short epistle. For instance, in this later sentence, the practical subject-matter requires phrasing (*muneratio, pro iustitiae complemento*) which is legalistic and medieval:

Nos igitur dolentes, ut diximus, de casu illius societatis maxime propter damna et incommoda hominum vestri regni qui eidem societati pecunias crediderant sub spe future munerationis ac restitutionis omnia fecimus ac facturi sumus pro iustitiae complemento...

In the following months, the signoria was not as good as its word, or so Henry VI claimed when he responded with complaints on behalf of a merchant, William Willey.⁵¹ This time, the Chancellor's response was a long letter of justification of which the following sentence is typical:

Ad sequestrum vero lanarum ipsarum de quo etiam querela sit dicimus nihil esse factum ab officialibus nostris in hac parte contra iuris formam...⁵²

The Latin here may be simple to understand but, once again, it is hardly the graceful Ciceronianism that Bruni mastered in the literary works that carried his name.

It seems, in fact, that it was only after Bruni's death early in 1444 that, for writing to foreign dignitaries, a more fully classicising style was imported into the Florentine Chancery, when Carlo Marsuppini (1399-1453) succeeded to its control. A letter sent on 9th April 1446, to Henry VI, encapsulates the balance between continuity and change:

Si ad alium Regem scriberemus cuius virtutes non satis nobis cognite essent, fortasse longiori principio utendum foret sed cum ad eum litteras demus cuius singularem iustitiam omnes admirantur laudibusque ad celum tollunt quemque

⁵⁰ I have worked from the copy of the letter in Florence: Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale [hereafter BNC], MS. Panc. 148, fol. 62^{r-v} (dated 14th June 1437), which announces itself to be 'Transumptum non nullarum Epistolarum ac litterarum per Eloquentissimum Vatem et Cancellarium dignissimum d. Leonardum Aretinum Compilatarum Sub nomine Excelse Comunitatis Florentie'; on this manuscript, see M. Davies, 'Su alcuni codici di lettere pubbliche di Leonardo Bruni' in Viti ed., *Leonardo Bruni cancelliere*, pp. 341 – 58 and 359 – 69; Viti, *Bruni e Firenze*, pp. 223-53, and J. Hankins, *Repertorium Brunianum: a critical guide to the writings of Leonardo Bruni*, 1 vol. to date (Rome, 1997), no. 907. In the manuscript, this letter does not have an address, but it certainly reached England as it was copied for Thomas Bekynton into London: Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 211, fol. 88^v-89, from where it was published in *Official Correspondence of Thomas Bekynton*, ed. G. Williams [Rolls Series, lvi], 2 vols (London, 1872), i, pp. 248-49.

⁵¹ *Bekynton Correspondence*, i, pp. 250-54.

⁵² Florence: BNC, MS. Panc. 148, fol. 81 – 82^v (dated 25th October 1438).

sepius nostri mercatores non solum equissimum et iustissimum verum etiam humanissimum benivolumque nostre rei publicae experti sunt indignum profecto foret si in causa honestissima longam orationem haberemus. Videremur et enim aut divine vestre maiestatis iustitie...⁵³

The king is still addressed with *vester* forms – this was a tradition of *politesse* too established lightly to be cast aside – but Florence’s self-depiction was transformed: instead of being a *communitas*, in the passage just quoted it is now a *res publica*; elsewhere in this letter it is both a *civitas* and (a term reminiscent of Bruni’s seminal humanist oration in praise of the city) an *urbs*.

The evidence presented here is not intended to deny that Bruni did, on occasion, put his full-blown classicising style at the disposal of the signoria of the city that employed him.⁵⁴ Likewise, it should not be taken to imply that there was a simple dichotomy between ‘non-humanist’ and ‘humanist’. As some of the phrasing just quoted suggests, there could be a mixture within one epistle; furthermore, my own impression is that Bruni allowed shifts of style between letters.⁵⁵ It is as if there are gear changes of rhetoric as it rises up the incline to the loftiest eloquence, with the author reserving his energy for the steeper challenges. It is likely, in other words, that the highest style was deployed for the weightiest events – matters of war, peace and death. The official correspondence Bruni penned for sending to England, however, was never on such issues; as we have seen, the points of discussion were individual miscreants and specific grievances. These were not the sorts of events for which (he appears to have judged) a full Ciceronian Latin need be put on display.

As a consequence, it might seem that if early fifteenth-century English scholars sought to appraise themselves of humanist style, they would have been best advised not to turn to diplomatic correspondence for guidance. This hold true for letters from Florence under Leonardo Bruni’s watch and an investigation of papal missives would provide a similar result. Yet, in not all Italian states was a humanist’s classicising impulse so impressively subdued as in these chanceries. Those same English scholars could – and, on occasion, did – turn elsewhere for inspiration; if they wanted to find a full humanist style deployed in diplomatic correspondence, they could do worse than to peruse the official letters sent from another north-east Italian city: Genoa. There the long-standing Chancellor, Jacopo Bracelli (1390-1466), had none of Bruni’s qualms about deploying his talent at classicising rhetoric when writing in the name of the doge and his city to distant princes.⁵⁶ So, for instance, in the summer of 1435, eager to spread the news of Genoa’s defeat of Alfonso the Magnanimous at the Battle of Ponza, Bracelli wrote to Henry VI of England, opening the letter:

Illustrissime et clarissime princeps. Solent plerumque in magnis rebus calidi [MS: cal^li^lidi] vulgare rumores quibus ea caligo mentibus effunditur ut persepe qui

⁵³ ASF, Signori Missive I^o Cancelleria, registro 36, fol. 71^v – 72.

⁵⁴ Into this category I would suggest fall, for example, the letters of condolence to Isotta Malatesta published by Viti, *Bruni e Firenze*, pp. 365-78.

⁵⁵ A useful sample is provided by the letters concerning military alliances and antagonisms published by Griffiths, *Justification*, pp. 132-81; for a shift of register compare, eg., p. 149 with pp. 169-70.

⁵⁶ On Bracelli, the fundamental work remains *L’epistolario di Iacopo Bracelli*, ed. G. Petti Balbi (Genoa, 1969).

recte egerent inique qui vero inique, sancte et recte se habuisse credantur. Id ne nobis subveniat in re quam dicturi sumus, statuimus celsitudinem vestram his litteris certiore facere eorum qui nuper cum rege aragonum gesta sunt ut si quis forte male narrando enitatur causam nostram deteriore facere cum scierit tantum principem tam late mari terraque dominantem tot preclaris viris circumscriptum [MS: circumscipatum] falli non posse...⁵⁷

Bracelli is as committed to the polite *vester* form of address as the Florentines but his idiomatic expression (as in *mari terraque*) and the possibility that his alliterative opening phrasing, *calidi rumores ... caligo mentibus effunditur*, includes not one but two references to recently refound authors is testimony to his determination to provide a classicising prose in the highest style.⁵⁸ It might legitimately be argued that this epistle is a set-piece which was intended for wide circulation, versions being sent to as many rulers as possible, and not just to the king of England.⁵⁹ What is striking, however, is that other official products of Bracelli's pen concerning more mundane matters are in a similar style. So, seven years later, addressing Humfrey, duke of Gloucester in the name of the doge and on behalf of the merchant community based in London, the Chancellor has nothing of the understated simplicity preferred by his Florentine counterpart:

Nemo est civium nostrorum, illustrissime princeps, sive is ab inclito regno illo in patriam redeat, sive de rebus illis ad amicos scribat qui non de virtutibus vestris summa ac maxima cum laude loquatur...⁶⁰

This letter, incidentally, travelled within England beyond the banks of the Thames, a copy being available to a Yorkshireman when he compiled his own formulary of humanist letters.⁶¹ Over a decade later and, in the context of a bout of English xenophobia (some people never learn), Bracelli had a more delicate assignment in writing to remonstrate with Henry VI, and so opened with eloquent blandishments:

Si ad memoriam superiorum temporum animum revoceris, serenissime et precellentissime princeps, et seniores nostros inclitum illud regnum frequentare solitos audiamus fuerunt profecto secula in quibus non iusticia modo sed leges insuper ac mores omnisque preclara virtus aulas clarissimorum quondam regni anglie inhabitare videntur ipsaque urbs regia Londinia [MS: Londiniam] non tam

⁵⁷ BAV, MS. Vat. lat. 5221, fol. 110^v.

⁵⁸ Did Bracelli have in mind the Plautan 'calidum ... mendacium' (*Mostellaria*, 665)? And, while 'caligo ... effunditur' echoes Seneca's phrasing (*Naturales Quaestiones*, IV.iii.2), is it possible that Bracelli used the noun in its metaphorical sense aware of the line in Catullus: *caeca mentem caligine ... consitus* (LIV.207)?

⁵⁹ At Florence: BNC, MS. Landau Finaly 253, fol. 78-80, this letter is recorded as having been addressed to the king of Cyprus.

⁶⁰ Sammut, *Unfredo duca di Gloucester*, p. 229 (letter dated 26th March 1442).

⁶¹ Cambridge: Jesus College, MS. Q.G.15, a collection of humanist epistles, mainly by Poggio Bracciolini. On this, see my 'Of Republics and Tyrants: aspects of Quattrocento humanist writings and their reception in England, c. 1400 – c. 1460', 2 vols (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1997), ii, pp. 324-330.

una civitas quam vere libertatis incorrupteque iusticie templum quoddam digne vocari...⁶²

Whatever the situation, Bracelli appears to have perceived as appropriate for all international communication the type of classicising Latin which had been made fashionable primarily by scholars based in Florence, while in that city – at least in the lifetime of the most pre-eminent of those scholars – we have seen that a distinction was drawn between familiar and official letters sent to foreign princes. We should wonder why Bruni was committed to such a differentiation. It might be that his own formative experience in the papal bureaucracy, with its firmly established traditions, may have inculcated into him the importance in official international correspondence of clarity, which could be best served by a pared-down type of expression, with an emphasis on commonly used language, and with doublets employed to avoid doubt. He might also have been sensible the limits to the success of his former mentor, Coluccio Salutati, in reforming Florentine practice. If these considerations did affect his choice, then the contrast between his practice and Bracelli's more insistent commitment to Ciceronian prose would allow a paradoxical hypothesis. As Genoa was less central to the humanist agenda than Florence, perhaps it was precisely its 'peripheral' status that allowed it to innovate in areas considered beyond limits in Bruni's city.⁶³

We should return to the question that runs through our discussion and consider what Bruni's practice implies about his attitude to his remote recipients: did he think they lacked the intellectual capacity to savour his best-turned phrases? Were they, for him, the contemporary equivalent of the nurses and bakers whom he disparaged in his debate with Flavio Biondo? Palpably not, given that at least one Englishman – Humfrey, duke of Gloucester – was a recipient of epistles in both styles. It would have been redundant to craft a familiar letter in humanist Latin – let alone follow it up, as Bruni did, by sending to England a copy of his translations from Greek – if he assumed that none at the ducal court would have been capable of deciphering it.⁶⁴ The distinction he made when discussing the languages of ancient Rome was one based not on ethnic origin but on class and on what we would now call cultural capital. Those whom Bruni addressed beyond the peninsula were professional colleagues, if not superiors, as well as being potential patrons for his 'private' literary productions. They were barbarians, but at least they were cultured barbarians, our brand of barbarians. Despite Bruni's own track-record as a Briton-basher, his actions suggest that he recognised that physical separation did not necessarily denote cultural distance. This leaves us with the quandary of his choice, and the suggestion just mooted that it was requirement of diplomatic tradition may not be an entirely satisfactory explanation. After all, as Bruni was capable of reforming the structure of the chancery he ran, it is plausible that he could equally have been strident in demands about the standards of Latin used.⁶⁵ That he did not had a consequence

⁶² Florence: BNC, MS. Landau Finaly 253, fol. 111 (letter dated 4th June 1456).

⁶³ I use the 'scare quotes' because the centre / periphery dichotomy is one which I consider problematic for humanist activity, as I explain in *Humanism and England*.

⁶⁴ The manuscript survives at BL, MS. Harl. 3426, first noticed by A. C. de la Mare: see Rundle, 'Republics and Tyrants', pp. 415-20.

⁶⁵ On the chancery in Bruni's time and the creation of the role of second chancellor in 1437, see D. Marzi, *La Cancelleria della repubblica fiorentina* (Rocca San Casciano, 1910), pp. 187-97.

that was not disadvantageous for him as a scholar. The implication of the use of a range of styles of expression (the differences between them never precisely defined) was that only a proportion of his official letters would stand comparison with his ‘literary’ products. It, therefore, helped provide some insulation of his consciously crafted ‘private’ persona from his ‘professional’ role as a civil servant. A contrast, like that found in the epistles to Humfrey, served to highlight the novel elegance of his familiar letters. The prose he was employed to produce thus became a backdrop against which his personal eloquence could shine. If, then, he did not foment a thorough-going humanist revolution in the offices of the Palazzo Vecchio, one reason may have been that he saw it was to his benefit to differentiate the *negotium* of a chancellor from the *otium* of a newly fashioned Ciceronian scholar.

IV. Humanist Ghost-writers in mid-fifteenth-century England

As a coda to this discussion, we return to England in order briefly to consider the state of diplomatic Latin there. It is usually assumed that the crown’s methods of expression remained largely unreformed until the appointment of an Italian, Pietro Carmeliano of Brescia (d. 1527), as a royal secretary by Henry VII.⁶⁶ This over-simplifies a history from which I want to extract a single element: the occasional – very occasional – recourse to Italians resident in England for the production of both official letters and orations. I wish here to introduce an example of each.

First, in the summer of 1439, an epistle was sent to Albrecht, king of the Romans, in the name of Henry VI, expressing the crown’s opinion on recent events at the Council of Basel. The text reads like a humanist oration, at one point declaiming:

quid enim hiis temporibus sanctiusque pulcrius, quid humano generi utilius atque comodius in hac presertim faece temporum, in hac tanta rerum turbatione dari aut excogitari potuisset?⁶⁷

Its classicising credentials are on display not only in its balanced phrasing, rhetorical questions and repetition (*in hac ... in hac*) but also in its choice of *haec faex temporum*, the dregs of times, a phrase with patristic origins but more recently used by Leonardo Bruni.⁶⁸ If we were to ask how the English royal chancery was able to concoct something so fully in the style fashionable in Italy, it is because they had to hand an Italian, in the person of the papal collector, Pietro del Monte (d. 1457), who was himself something of a humanist.⁶⁹ In one

⁶⁶ The still-influential classic statement of this is D. Hay, ‘England and the Humanities in the Fifteenth Century’ in id., *Renaissance Essays* (London, 1988), pp. 169-232 [first published in H. A. Oberman and T. A. Brady ed., *Itinerarium Italicum* (Leiden, 1975), pp. 305-67].

⁶⁷ *Deutsche Reichstagsakten*, xiv (Stuttgart, 1933), no. 174 (pp. 309-12).

⁶⁸ See R. Fubini, ‘All’uscita dalla Scolastica medievale: salutati, Bruni e i “Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum”, *Archivio storico italiano*, cl (1992), pp. 1065-1099 [reprinted in id., *L’umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici* (Milan, 2001), pp. 75 – 103 at pp. 99 – 100].

⁶⁹ On del Monte generally, see J. Haller, *Piero da Monte. Ein Gelehrter und Päpstlicher Beamter des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Rome, 1941), D. Quaglioni, *Pietro da Monte a Roma* (Rome, 1984), and G. Pellizzarri, *Variae Humanitatis Silva. Pagine sparse di storia veneta e filologia quattrocentesca* (Vicenza, 2009), pp 258-554. For his time in England, see Weiss⁴, pp. 41-46 and D. Rundle, ‘Carneades’ Legacy: the morality of eloquence in the

aspect, he was an unsatisfactory ghost-writer, for they are usually expected to keep their identity secret: del Monte could not refrain from boasting in letters back to the curia that this royal missive was his work.

Something similar happened five years later, though this time it was probably not the royal administration who called in outside assistance. The context was the negotiating of a marriage for the young king with Margaret of Anjou. The events – both the discussions before the French king and the raising of financial support through a plea to the Convocation at Canterbury – required set-piece speeches.⁷⁰ Two orations survive and both are attributed to another humanist then resident in England, Antonio Beccaria (d. 1474), secretary (like Tito Livio Frulovisi before him) to Humfrey, duke of Gloucester.⁷¹ It was not Beccaria's task, however, actually to deliver them: the records show that the diplomat presenting the royal case was an Englishman, Adam Moleyns. It appears he had turned to Beccaria to draft his speeches for him, a task that required the humanist to construct the appeal to the French king as if he himself was an Englishman:

Quid existimamus templum illud celeberrimumque paci dicatum romanos olim condidisse nisi ut feroces animos ac continua cede fervidos solo eo nomine ad quietem tranquillitatemque provocarent et aliquando discerent arma deponere qui iam totum fere orbem sanguine cruentaverant? Illi siquidem quod intra exteris nationes gerendum esset abunde animadvertabant at nos, qui non solum vicinitate sed et affinitate mutuaque sanguinis coniunctatione devincti sumus, interitum nostrum non cernemus, calamitatem nostram non videbimus, cladem continuam non advertemus?⁷²

Bearing in mind what Biondo said about foreign orators, one wonders what Moleyns's pronunciation made of Beccaria's classicising periods. That is not to say, however, that there were many Italians in the audience watching and waiting for any *lapsus linguae*. That, indeed, is the factor which I wish to emphasise about both this intervention and that of del Monte earlier: Englishmen did deploy the rhetoric promoted by Italian *literati* but, in both instances, their intended audiences for it were other northern Europeans, other barbarians.

This, in conclusion, bears on the issue of cultural distance that I mentioned in the previous section. If some of the new breed of Italian scholar promoted their Latin as 'theirs' – as their patrimony from their Roman ancestors – others beyond the peninsula clearly saw no reason that it should be theirs alone. They implicitly disregarded such nationalism, their blindness opening up the possibility that this was a shared inheritance to which all could lay some claim. In their turning to Italians to furnish them with polished prose, there is certainly a recognition of the place where this form of eloquence most flourished – it would be more than a decade before an Englishman himself would compose an oration in the humanist style.

papalist and humanist writings of Pietro del Monte (c. 1400 – 57)', *English Historical Review*, cxvii (2002), pp. 284 – 305. I discuss this particular episode more fully in my *Humanism and England*.

⁷⁰ These speeches are now available at Weiss⁴, Appendix, pp. 46-62.

⁷¹ On Beccaria and his time in England, Weiss⁴, pp. 72-74 and D. Rundle, 'From Greenwich to Verona: Antonio Beccaria, St Athanasius and the Translation of Orthodoxy', *Humanistica*, v ([2012 for] 2010), pp. 109 – 119.

⁷² Weiss⁴, Appendix, pp. 49-50.

At the same time, what is most notable about the examples just provided is that those when this Italian invention was imported, there was no thought given to reserving it for impressing the style's originators. Moreover, they did not consider it necessary to effect an wholesale adoption; it was seen not as the essential replacement but as one extra idiom that could be employed when wanted. What they detected in the humanists' version of Latin was not the future but an alternative, complementary present.