

TITLE OF THESIS : Imitation in Literary Theory and Practice in Italy,  
1400 - 1530.

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DEGREE : D.Phil.

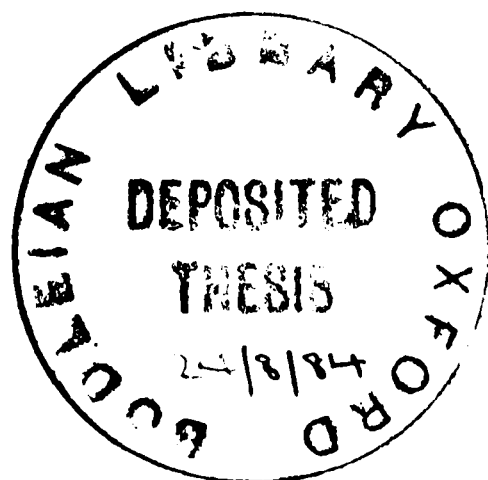
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The standard works on Renaissance literary criticism in Italy devote little space to the period before 1530; and though they recognise the importance of the imitation of literary models in Quattrocento literature, they concentrate on the statements on imitation by Petrarch and Poliziano, and consider only theory. This thesis challenges that traditional view by examining the substantial contributions to imitation theory made by humanists between Petrarch and Poliziano and by adopting a comprehensive approach which embraces both theory and practice, both Latin and vernacular works. The main objective of this research is to demonstrate that imitation is the key to literary theory and practice in the period, and to suggest that literary criticism in the Quattrocento is worthy of more detailed attention.

After an initial chapter on the Trecento, Chapters Two to Four consider the role of imitation in the first half of the Quattrocento, examining the works of Bruni; the contributions of educators such as Vergerio, Barzizza, Antonio da Rho (whose De Imitationibus Eloquentie is studied here for the first time in its full version) and Guarino; and the polemic between Poggio and Valla, which marks a crucial stage in the development of Ciceronianism.

Chapters Five and Six are devoted to the rise of vernacular humanism between 1430 and 1480, dealing with imitation in the works of Alberti and Landino, who outline a programme of development for the volgare based on the imitation of both the content and the stylistic techniques of Latin authors.

Chapters Seven to Nine study the three major literary disputes between 1480 and 1530, showing that the two polemics on imitation between Poliziano and Cortese and between G.F.Pico and Bembo are linked with the quarrel between Barbaro and G.Pico on eloquence and philosophy. An analysis of each dispute both in relation to the other polemics and in the context of the other works of each participant permits a modification of the received view of Cortese as the first Ciceronian; illustrates the proximity rather than the divergence of the views of Pico and Barbaro; and by examining a little-known letter of G.F.Pico demonstrates that his views on imitation are developed about a decade before his exchange with Bembo. Finally, after illustrating Bembo's application of Ciceronianism to his vernacular works and to his Historia Veneta, the thesis concludes by suggesting that with Bembo one stage of the imitation debate comes to a close.



## ABSTRACT

TITLE OF THESIS : Imitation in Literary Theory and Practice in  
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The standard works on literary criticism in Renaissance Italy devote little or no space to the period before 1530, considering any contributions to literary theory before that date as insignificant. Although most such works recognise the importance throughout the Renaissance of literary imitation, or the imitation of another writer or work, they confine themselves to a brief consideration of the famous pronouncements on imitation by writers such as Petrarch and Poliziano, and are concerned only with the theory of imitation. This thesis challenges these traditional views by considering the many significant attitudes to literary imitation held by important humanists between Petrarch and Poliziano and by adopting a comprehensive approach which embraces both theory and practice, both Latin and the vernacular, both prose and verse. The primary aim of this dissertation is thus to investigate literary imitation in Italy in the period between 1400 and 1530 in both its theoretical and its practical aspects, in order to provide a comprehensive picture of a phenomenon which is recognised to be the key to literary theory and practice in the period. In particular the documentation of the various theories of imitation in the period before 1530 will, I hope, demonstrate that this period is of

more than minor significance in the domain of literary criticism.

The more specific objectives of this research are: first, to establish what theories of imitation were held by Italian writers between 1400 and 1530; second, to examine the practice of literary imitation in both Latin and the vernacular, thus providing a detailed account of the rise of Ciceronianism in the development of humanist Latin in the Quattrocento, and documenting the different solutions attempted in the writing of the volgare; and third, to determine which classical texts had the greatest influence in shaping both the theory and practice of imitation in the period.

The opening chapter on the Trecento documents the first stirrings of the notion of imitation in Dante, then examines Petrarch's much more complex articulation of the question, which rightly receives the bulk of the attention in this chapter, before considering the noticeably less theoretical approach to imitation in his successors, Boccaccio and Salutati.

Part Two (Chapters Two to Four) considers the role of imitation in the increasingly sophisticated Latin writings of the humanists in the first half of the fifteenth century. Chapter Two assesses the important contribution of Leonardo Bruni in the practice of imitation, noting the striking difference in quality between his Latin and that of the Trecento humanists. Chapter Three turns to a number of figures of lesser literary stature, mostly teachers or writers on education such as Vergerio, Barzizza, Antonio da Rho and Guarino. In particular

this chapter offers an analysis of the full version of Antonio da Rho's De Imitationibus Eloquentie (c.1432), only a fragment of which has normally been studied hitherto. This study of Antonio da Rho is complementary to similar recent contributions on Barzizza, and fills out our picture of the importance of imitation in minor humanist educators in this period. The chapter suggests that these men, because of the pedagogical aims of much of their writings, encourage the imitation of Cicero theoretically, but are manifestly unable to be rigid Ciceronians in their own practice of writing Latin. Chapter Foour concerns the dispute between Poggio and Valla, which marks an important turning-point in the history of Ciceronianism; for Valla is capable of perceiving that neither Poggio nor, consequently, any of the other humanists of his generation were able to achieve the genuine Ciceronian manner in their Latin, despite their theoretical ambitions in this direction. The polemic between the two men is considered not on its own, but in the context of the other writings of the two men, which helps to illustrate further the distance between the two individuals and the two generations. The question of imitation in humanist historiography, which had been raised in the chapter on Bruni, is developed here by considering Poggio's historical work and devoting particular attention to Valla's Gesta Ferdinandi Regis Aragonum. A consideration of Facio's criticisms of Valla's history and the parallel problems faced by Biondo in his Decades gives evidence of the growing awareness in the humanists of the difficulty of reconciling accuracy with Ciceronian elegance, and suggests that a new stage in the recovery of a truly classical Latin style has now been reached.

Part Three (Chapters Five and Six) is devoted to vernacular humanism in the period between 1430 and 1480. Chapter Five assesses the position of Alberti, illustrating to what extent he can be called an anti-Ciceronian particularly in the Latin he employs for his technical treatises and in his few theoretical statements on the subject. His use of the volgare for serious rather than just playful literature is also indicative of his break with current trends in Italian humanism, even though his programme for the development of the content and language of vernacular literature by means of an imitation of classical works was destined to remain in the realms of theory, after his own exemplary contribution to that programme. Chapter Six follows the more cautious continuation of Alberti's approach in the works of Cristoforo Landino. Landino's Latin is seen to be close to the Ciceronian model, unlike Alberti's, but he is also committed to the embellishment of the vernacular through classical models, though he advocates a more cautious Latinisation of the volgare than Alberti. This chapter is a supplement to recent studies on Landino and suggests that his theory of trasferimento from Latin to the vernacular is the corollary of his youthful contaminatio of Petrarchan and classical motifs in his Latin elegies.

Part Four (Chapters Seven to Nine) deals with the three major literary disputes at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, demonstrating that the two debates on the specific subject of imitation between Poliziano and Cortese (c.1485) and between Gianfrancesco Pico and Bembo (1512-13) are inextricably linked with the dispute between the elder Pico and Barbaro (1485) on the compatibility

of eloquence and philosophy. Each of these polemics is considered not only in relation to the other disputes, but also in the context of the literary development of each of the six participants. Thus Chapter Seven illustrates that Poliziano's position in the exchange with Cortese is perfectly consistent with the literary ideals outlined in the rest of his considerable output in both Latin and the volgare, suggesting that all his works conform to a deliberate imitation of minor writers and lesser genres. The theoretical Ciceronianism of Cortese's letter to Poliziano is, on the other hand, seen to be, in the context of his later writings, a youthful extremism which is later implicitly, if not explicitly, rejected.

Chapter Eight also uses a literary debate as a starting point for a more detailed exploration of the literary ideals and practice of the two protagonists. Pico's letter to Barbaro defending the Latin of the scholastic philosophers, although it may disguise a more complex attitude to the question of philosophical style, is nevertheless seen to be consistent with Pico's other theoretical statements on the subject and with his practice in the writing of Latin in his own works on philosophy. Similarly Barbaro's reply to Pico conforms to his overall approach to Latin in his other writings. But the study of these other works reveals that the positions of Pico and Barbaro on this question of the appropriate Latin style for philosophical works are not so distant as the traditional interpretation of the two letters suggests.

In Chapter Nine a similar approach is employed in studying the

last dispute on imitation, between Gianfrancesco Pico and Pietro Bembo. The polemic is considered not in isolation but in relation to the other quarrels and in the context of the younger Pico's and Bembo's other works. In particular Gianfrancesco Pico's attitudes to imitation are shown to be strongly influenced by the positions taken up by Poliziano and the elder Pico on the topic; and by analysing his introductory letter to his collection of Epistolae it is demonstrated that the views he expresses in the letters to Bembo in 1512 - 13 are developed at least as early as 1506. This confirms that the dispute on imitation does not merely surface at isolated intervals between 1480 and 1530; but that it is a particularly important issue in the years after the deaths of Poliziano, Barbaro and the elder Pico, notably because of the more extreme style of Latin affected by the Bolognese humanists. Gianfrancesco Pico's introductory letter is thus another document which fits into the context of the works by Bolognese humanists such as Garzoni and Pio in these years.

Bembo's letter to Pico is also studied in relation to his other works in both Latin and the vernacular. It is seen to be an important document in the evolution of Bembo's Ciceronianist approach to literary composition, particularly as Bembo's earliest Latin and vernacular poetry suggests that he initially began writing in imitation of Poliziano. He later altered this approach and the letter to Gianfrancesco Pico is the first theoretical statement which underlies the modifications he makes in his works in the two languages. The consistency between Bembo's Ciceronianism in Latin and his Petrarchism in the volgare is again outlined, but an even more



rigorous demonstration of his Ciceronianism is to be found in a consideration of his last, neglected work, the Historia Veneta. The thesis concludes by suggesting that with Bembo this stage of the imitation question comes to an end. Certainly the question of imitation is discussed in the works of Calcagnini, Giraldi Cintio, Ricci and others, but the outcome of these debates no longer affects the way humanists write Latin; and in any case the question of literary imitation recedes into the background somewhat with the resurgence of interest in Aristotle's Poetics, which is more concerned with the way in which art imitates nature than with how to imitate another writer. Bembo's Ciceronian solution to the question of how to write Latin is almost universally accepted in the Cinquecento and puts an end to that variety of imitation which flourished particularly at the end of the fifteenth century and in the first decades of the sixteenth; and this perfection of Ciceronian Latin allows the humanists to return to the more problematic question of the vernacular.

This broad survey of imitation in Italy between 1400 and 1530 leads to a number of important conclusions. First as regards literary theory, it is clear that the imitation of a literary model is a major, if not the major, critical concept in the period, figuring largely in the writings of authors of the stature of Poliziano and Bembo and in the works of minor scholars such as Antonio da Rho. It also reveals the complexity of the debate, showing that Cortese is not the first rigid Ciceronian, that Poliziano is not as extreme as Beroaldo and Pio, and that the elder Pico and Barbaro are not so polarised as is often thought. The increasing number of polemics on imitation around 1500



testifies to the growing importance of the question, and the sophisticated level of some of the contributions indicates that the period before 1530 can no longer be considered as offering only a minor impetus in the domain of literary criticism.

In practice, it becomes apparent that there are many alternatives to the writing of Ciceronian Latin and of Petrarchist Italian before Bembo's solutions for the two languages. Before Bembo there are many different models to imitate in both literatures: it is as much a question of which Latin, as which vernacular ought to be employed. The detailed analysis of the many kinds of criticism made by humanists on their contemporaries' Latin allows us to see the gradual progress of the Ciceronianist movement, which radically alters the nature of learned Latin from the time of Dante to Bembo.

The study of the classical texts which shape both the theory and practice of imitation in this period allows us to observe the growing use of more and more recondite authors, particularly towards the end of the Quattrocento. This variety of models is initially reflected in the odd assortment of Latin styles being used around 1500 but this extreme variety paradoxically leads to the other extremism of Ciceronianists like Bembo and Longolio.

This thesis represents an attempt to provide a comprehensive and detailed account of an important literary phenomenon in a period which is normally ignored by studies of literary criticism in the Renaissance. In particular it seeks to avoid the piecemeal approach

of other works by taking into account practice as well as theory, Latin along with the vernacular. I have tried to offer both a detailed account of imitation in the work of each author studied and to arrive at an overall synthesis. This comprehensive approach has involved the analysis of both literary works and humanist works on philosophy and history, and has obliged me to consider major authors such as Petrarch and Poliziano and minor figures like Vergerio and Antonio da Rho. The effort, I believe, was worth making, not only because in many areas I was covering new ground, but perhaps more important than this, because I have discovered how much still needs to be done.

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IMITATION IN LITERARY THEORY AND PRACTICE IN ITALY, 1400 - 1530

by

Martin L. McLaughlin

[NT 1984]

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## INTRODUCTION

### (i) The Aims of the Thesis

" 'Molti vogliono giudicare i stili e parlar de' numeri e della imitazione; ma a me non sanno già essi dare ad intendere che cosa sia stile né numero, né in che consista la imitazione.' "

This remark is made by one of the interlocutors in Castiglione's Il Libro del Cortegiano (i.39), printed in 1528. Coming as it does at the end of a long discussion about linguistic and literary imitation, it reflects the importance of imitatio as one of the dominant critical concepts of the time, and suggests that the term was more often used than understood. If it was true of Castiglione's time that many talked of imitation without understanding its implications, it is also true of later generations of critics who define Renaissance literature in Italy as imitative without exploring the ramifications of the term.

Recent works have considered the question of literary imitation in Renaissance Italy, but they concentrate on the period after 1530, when all literary questions were reconsidered in the light of the rediscovered Poetics of Aristotle: in fact the Aristotelian notion of imitation is essentially different from the kind of imitation studied here.<sup>1</sup> Consequently scholars such as Ulivi and Weinberg either

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1. B. Weinberg, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, vol. 1, pp. 60ff. For convenience, full publication details of secondary works cited in the footnotes will be found in the Bibliography.

consider the earlier period (1400-1530) as merely a brief prologue to the polemics of the later Cinquecento;<sup>2</sup> or dismiss it entirely as contributing only a "minor impetus in the domain of literary criticism".<sup>3</sup> But to treat the Quattrocento as merely a preamble in which there is no significant contribution to the imitation debate between Petrarch and Poliziano, as Ulivi does, is to ignore the important literary ideas of humanists of the stature of Bruni, Valla and Alberti; and Weinberg's notion that such humanists make only an insignificant contribution to literary criticism also clearly needs modification. Furthermore these recent studies are devoted solely to literary theory; whereas it seemed to me that it was necessary also to take into account literary practice in order to provide a complete picture of the period. The primary aim of my thesis, then, is to investigate what is perhaps the most significant literary concept of a period which is recognised to be of considerable importance in Italian literature, if not in literary criticism, and which is only now beginning to receive the scholarly attention it deserves.

The more specific objectives of this research are: (1) to establish what theories of literary imitation were current in the period 1400 - 1530; (2) to examine how these theories were applied in practice to the writing of both Latin and Italian, noting in particular the rise of Ciceronianism; (3) to document the influence

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2. F.Ulivi, L'imitazione nella poetica del Rinascimento deals with only Petrarch and Poliziano in his brief first chapter.

3. Weinberg, op.cit., Preface, vol.1, p.ix.

of the classical texts which determine this theory and practice. In this way I hope to illustrate the manifold activity that lies behind the generalisation that literature and literary theory in Quattrocento Italy is mostly concerned with imitation.

The premise on which the research is based is that the literary theory and practice of the fifteenth century is worth studying, both in its own right, since it is normally ignored, and also because it does have indissoluble links with the literary history of the Cinquecento. Literary criticism in Italy does not begin with the rediscovery of Aristotle's Poetics. This thesis thus aims to supply at least the basis for that first chapter which is either absent or is no more than a prologue in current studies of Renaissance literary criticism.<sup>4</sup> I have also included an initial chapter on imitation in the Trecento, not only because many of the attitudes to imitation found in Quattrocento writers are inexplicable without reference to the ideas of the previous century, but also because the omission I was trying to supply extends further back than 1400. As long ago as 1954 the Italian critic Raffaele Spongano noted that in order to correct the inaccurate generalisations about the question of imitation

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4. Other scholars have noted the need for this kind of work: "if we wish to have a complete picture of the literary theory and criticism of the period, we need a detailed study of the rhetorical treatises...to supplement Weinberg's work on the poetical treatises." (P.O.Kristeller, 'Philosophy and Rhetoric from Antiquity to the Renaissance' in his Renaissance Thought and Its Sources, p.251.) Similarly Cardini talks of "un'augurabile 'storia delle storie letterarie del Quattrocento', che ancora non possediamo." (R.Cardini, La critica del Landino, p.166 n.45).



"sarebbe, piú che utile, necessaria una raccolta, se non intera, almeno copiosa di tutte quelle pagine in cui, dal Petrarca al Bembo, e oltre, il problema fu dibattuto e vi si scontrarono letterati e filosofi, retori e poeti, artisti e pedanti."<sup>5</sup>

The chronological limits of my research were thus evident to me from the outset: I would chart the development of the imitation debate in an important but relatively neglected period; I would begin with Dante, rather than Spongano's suggestion of Petrarch, because Dante's theory and practice of imitation, though substantially different from Petrarch's, is important per se and in highlighting the differences between a "medieval" and humanist approach to the subject; I would end my survey at 1530 not only because the last contributor to the imitation debate that I consider, Bembo, is an author whose works have been studied thoroughly recently, but also because after that date the substance and the direction of the debate change. The change takes place both because of the influence of Aristotelian theory, and because Latin is no longer a serious alternative to writing in the vernacular. The debate on imitation, which had always been academic in the literal sense, becomes after Bembo's intervention academic in the other sense as well.

More difficult to determine was how to restrict what was

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5. R.Spongano, review of Le epistole "De Imitatione" di Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola e di Pietro Bembo, ed. G.Santangelo, in GSLI 131 (1954), p.428.



potentially a limitless topic. I did not want to confine my research to a survey of the theory only, as Ulivi and Weinberg had done, especially since it was clear that many relevant developments were taking place in literary practice in the Quattrocento. On the other hand, by being prepared to consider both theory and practice, both Latin and the vernacular, both prose and verse, there was the risk of having to digest and order absolutely everything that was written in Italy between 1400 and 1530. In the end the solution was to consider all the theoretical statements on imitation, and to select the practical examples of imitation which, implicitly or explicitly, were most relevant to the theory. The result is, as Spongano predicted, that I have had to examine the works of men of letters and philosophers, rhetoricians and poets, artists and pedants; but I felt that this comprehensive coverage was essential because of the widespread currency of imitation in the period.

As for the material I had to examine, in the case of authors such as Poliziano and Bembo, both primary and secondary sources were readily available; with many of the other figures I was dealing with manuscripts or early printed editions; in two cases I had to consult treatises that were unpublished and existed only in manuscript form. Towards the end of my research one of the treatises was published, thus confirming the importance of these texts.<sup>6</sup> The other treatise,

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6. G.W.Pigman, 'Barzizza's Treatise on Imitation', BHR 44 (1982), 341-352.

the De Imitationibus Eloquentie of Antonio da Rho, has never been published nor even consulted in its full form by any scholar competent in the field.<sup>7</sup> I have devoted considerable space to this treatise, not only because it has never been studied before, but also because together with Barzizza's treatise on the subject it permits us to see how the notions of stylistic imitation, evolved by men of letters such as Petrarch, were adapted for very basic pedagogical aims by minor humanists such as Antonio da Rho. The rest of the material consulted has always been available but has rarely been studied. This thesis thus offers both original material and a fresh interpretation of previously available, but rarely consulted, works.

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## (ii) Treatment

After an initial chapter on the Trecento, this study then examines the ideas on imitation in the period 1400 - 1530 in three major divisions. Part Two deals with the first half of the fifteenth century. Leonardo Bruni is accorded a whole chapter, reflecting the importance of the man in general and in the particular question of imitation; an importance recognised both by the men of his century and of our own. The writers on education are dealt with in a separate

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7. Even Fubini, the author of the entry on Antonio da Rho in the DBI, has not examined the manuscript in Avignon and was unaware that it contained the full version of the treatise (DBI 3, p.576).

chapter, and this Part ends with the dispute between Poggio and Valla, a fundamental stage in the specific question of Ciceronianism. Part Three examines the role of two humanists who are transitional chronologically and linguistically: Alberti and Landino provide links both between the first and second half of the century and between Latin and the vernacular. Finally Part Four is devoted to the three major disputes of the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. Poliziano and Cortese argue on the specific subject of imitation, as do Bembo and Gianfrancesco Pico. The other dispute, between Giovanni Pico and Ermolao Barbaro is officially concerned with the kind of language in which philosophy should be written, but this question had been related to the debate on imitation from the time of Petrarch, and, as I hope to show, the dispute between Pico and Barbaro actually forms an indispensable link between the other two debates. By the end not only will all the theoretical ramifications of the imitation debate have been explored, but also the practical consequences of that debate; by considering these elements it is also possible to observe the two main features of literary history in the age of humanism in Italy: the gradual but by no means linear, development of the Ciceronianist movement in Latin, and the transferral of classical notions and terminology from Latin into the vernacular.<sup>8</sup>

The weaknesses of my approach are obvious but, I think,

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8. Another gap I was trying to fill was to supply an up to date account of the history of Ciceronianism: the only other accounts were written in the last century: C.Lenient, De Ciceroniano Bello apud Recentiores; R.Sabbadini, La storia del ciceronianismo.

justifiable. In the first place the monographic nature of most of my chapters seems a rather inflexible instrument for material that is often essentially fluid and dynamic; but the advantages of this method seemed to outweigh the defects, for it allowed me to discuss the major contributions to the question of imitation in the context of a writer's other relevant works instead of considering them as monolithic pronouncements with no previous or future development in that writer's oeuvre. In any case four of the nine chapters centre on a major dispute, and in these chapters I consider the work of at least two humanists. I was also encouraged to adopt this monographic approach because that was very often the humanist method of discussing literature, and, as Peter Burke put it, "the cultural historian needs to be able to use the categories of the men he is studying to look for their logic instead of imposing his own."<sup>9</sup> The other possible imbalance is that because of the humanists studied, my work, like many other studies on the Italian Renaissance, suffers from a Florentine bias. Again this is defensible on the grounds that from Petrarch to Gianfrancesco Pico Florence is the centre of the major developments in the imitation debate; and in any case there are many non-Florentine humanists considered: Valla, Guarino, Barzizza, Antonio da Rho, Barbaro, Beroaldo all figure prominently in what follows. Any Florentine bias is accounted for by the extra weight that the imitation question had in Tuscany, particularly when it involved the vernacular.

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9. P.Burke, 'The Models and the Methods to come' in TLS, no.3690, 24 Nov.1972, pp.1435-36.

(iii) Terminology

Because of the ambiguity of the term "imitation" in a literary context, a few words need to be said about the history of the concept. When Plato applied the Greek word mimesis to literature he meant that literature represents life or the world or reality in some way, and because Plato considered that reality itself was merely a mimesis of a higher plane of being, the word had a pejorative connotation in a Platonic context. Aristotle also uses mimesis to refer to the representation of life in a work of art.<sup>10</sup> But that is not primarily the sense of the word that I am concerned with here. I am interested in what is called rhetorical imitation, that is to say the process whereby one writer borrows from or is influenced by some aspect of another writer's work. This sense of mimesis was first applied to literature by Isocrates (Adv.Soph.14-18) when he added imitation to the three traditional components of rhetoric: Nature, Theory and Practice.

The Roman rhetoricians almost always included imitation in their rhetorical writings: in the Ad Herennium (I.2.3) the three instruments by which the young writer can become proficient in all parts of rhetoric are ars, imitatio and exercitatio. In practice also this rhetorical imitation played a large part in antiquity: it was a recognised part of the writer's duty to borrow from a previous author

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10. Still the best account of this is R.McKeon, 'Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity' in Critics and Criticism, ed. R.S.Crane, pp.147-175.

in such a way as to signal the imitation to his hearers or readers but always to alter in some way what he borrows. But because the classical writers also disapproved of servile imitation, and also because of the philosophically pejorative associations of the word mimesis, ancient writers tended always to sound a cautious note when discussing imitation (Cic.De Or.II.89ff; Quint.X.2.).<sup>11</sup> There was enough ammunition for and against imitation in the classical writers for both sides in the Renaissance polemics about imitatio to be well equipped.<sup>12</sup>

What there is very little evidence of in antiquity is the kind of imitation known as Ciceronianism in the Renaissance. Certainly there is almost universal praise of Cicero in the ancient writers, notably in Quintilian (eg. X.1.105ff), but nowhere do we find Cicero or any other author being so strongly commended as a model as to become the sole model of style and the only source of diction. The irony of Ciceronianism is that it has no sanction from Cicero himself. The Renaissance cult of Cicero grew out of humanist linguistic purism, but it also was influenced by the fact that Latin was no longer capable of

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11. A succinct account of imitation in Latin is in D.A.Russell, 'De Imitatione' in Creative Imitation in Latin Literature, ed. D.West and T.Woodman, pp.1ff. For a specific study of Cicero's treatment of imitation in De Oratore see E.Fantham, 'Imitation and Evolution: The Discussion of Rhetorical Imitation in De Or. II.87-97 and some Related Problems of Ciceronian Theory' in Class.Phil. 73 (1978), 1-16.

12. For the Renaissance technique of exploiting the imagery of the classical writers on imitation see G.W.Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance' in Renaissance Quarterly 33 (1980) 1-32.

conveying reality accurately: the humanists especially in the Quattrocento were obliged to face the dilemma of having to sacrifice either elegance or accuracy in their Latin writings. In the end the Ciceronians chose to sacrifice accuracy, and it is not without significance that the triumph of Ciceronianism at the beginning of the sixteenth century coincided with the full flowering of Renaissance literature in the volgare: after the reattainment of Ciceronian style in Latin, humanists and writers in Italy could devote their intellectual energies into developing vernacular literature.



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ABBREVIATIONS

- ASNP - Annali della Scuola normale di Pisa
- BHR - Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance
- DBI - Dizionario biografico degli Italiani
- EHR - English Historical Review
- GSLI - Giornale storico della letteratura italiana
- IMU - Italia medievale e umanistica
- JHI - Journal of the History of Ideas
- JWCI - Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes
- Rin - Rinascimento
- RIS - Rerum Italicarum Scriptores
- RLI - Rassegna della letteratura italiana
- TLS - Times Literary Supplement

PART ONE

THE TRECENTO

## CHAPTER ONE

### (a) DANTE

Dante makes only two explicit statements about literary imitation, but since both of these occur in the problematic and unfinished treatise De Vulgari Eloquentia, they must be put into context by examining Dante's other works for implicit hints on imitation and by obtaining a general picture of his views of the relations between Latin and the vernacular.\*

In chapter xxv of the Vita nuova, where Dante defends his use of personification in Italian poetry by pointing to precedents in classical poets, we find an ambivalence in his attitudes to the classical and vernacular traditions that is to be found throughout his writings. He implies a certain inferiority in the vernacular poets: he calls them "rimatori" as opposed to the "poeti" of the classical world. On the other hand he is striving to ennoble poetry in the volgare by showing the affinities between his own poetry and Latin poetry in their use of rhetorical figures. He is bold enough to claim that "dire per rima in volgare tanto è quanto dire per versi in latino, seconda alcuna proporzione ... onde, se alcuna figura o colore

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\* For Dante's works cited in the text I have used the following editions:

La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata, ed. G.Petrocchi, 4 vols (Milan, 1966-7).

Vita nuova, ed. E.Sanguineti (Milan, 1977)

Il Convivio, ed. G.Busnelli and G.Vandelli, 2 vols (Florence, 1934-7).

De Vulgari Eloquentia, ed. P.V.Mengaldo, 2 vols (Padua, 1968).

rettorico è conceduto a li poete, conceduto è a' rimatori." (VN.xxv.4-7). But though he stresses here the similarity between the classical and vernacular traditions of poetry, Dante does not at this stage recommend a general imitation of Latin poets; rather he sees his own verse as imitating classical poems in two restricted ways: first in the use of similar rhetorical devices, and second in a logical and explicable use of such figures. Here he is criticising other vernacular poets who do not imitate classical poets in this latter way, but instead use these devices indiscriminately (VN.xxv.10). The classical examples of personification cited by Dante in this chapter are of some significance, for they are taken from Vergil, Lucan, Ovid and Horace (who in turn is quoting Homer). Thus Dante in his first allusion to the classical tradition invokes that canon of five poets who constitute the "bella scuola" in Limbo and welcome Dante as their sixth colleague. (Inf.iv.82ff).

The form of both the Vita nuova and the Convivio, a mixture of prose and verse, has links with the important works of Boethius and Martianus Capella, but it is the Convivio not the Vita nuova which follows Boethius more closely, since Dante looks back to Boethius not just for the structure but also for the content of the later work. The Convivio is a work of philosophy like the De Consolatione Philosophiae; both works are written in the author's adversity and seek to clear his name (Conv. i.II.13); and Dante explicitly states that the two Latin works which introduced him to philosophy were Boethius' treatise and Cicero's De Amicitia (ii.XII.2; ii.XV.1). Thus the Convivio, despite its similarity of form, belongs to a different

tradition from that of the Vita nuova;<sup>1</sup> it is a more mature work, as Dante himself recognises when he describes the earlier work as "fervida e passionata" and the Convivio as "temperata e virile" (i.I.16), and it is written "con piú alto stile" (ii.IV.13).

But it is not only the prose commentary that has more gravezza than the prose parts of the Vita nuova, for the poems commented upon are not just love poems, the only admissible subject according to the Vita nuova (xxv.6) but behind the amorous content they contain moral truths which the prose commentary expounds by allegory. Now a serious moral message was to be found in the Middle Ages in both Christian and classical writings; but moral truth concealed behind an amoral literal subject was something that was particularly associated with the allegorical interpretation of Vergil. Thus when Dante says to Vergil in the first canto of Inferno:

Tu se' solo colui da cu' io tolsi  
lo bello stilo che m' ha fatto onore. (Inf.i.87-8)

he can only be referring to the poems which have given him honour, and these must be the allegorical canzoni of Convivio.<sup>2</sup> In the Vita nuova there are sonnets and ballate as well as canzoni, in all of which Dante felt he was to a limited extent imitating Latin love poets; but in the Convivio there are only canzoni, in which Dante is putting forward the

1. A.Schiaffini, Tradizione e poesia, pp.131-6 points to the links that the Vita nuova has with medieval hagiography, seeing it as a kind of Legenda S. Beatricis with its emphasis on apparitions and miracles.
2. This at any rate is the interpretation offered by the best of recent commentaries on Inferno: see C.S.Singleton, The Divine Comedy: Inferno, vol. II (Commentary), p.16; Inferno, ed. N.Sapegno, p.10. See also C.Grayson, 'Poetica e poesia di Dante' in Cinque saggi su Dante, pp.75-77.

moral poetic message of a Vergil or a Horace.

Dante's views on the relations between Latin and the vernacular are of particular significance both for his own theory of imitation and for the subsequent development of what came to form part of the "Questione della lingua". In Convivio he contends that Latin possesses greater nobility than the volgare because it is not subject to change; greater virtue because it can express a fuller range of concepts; and greater beauty in that it is a more regular and harmonious language: "però che lo volgare seguita uso, e lo latino arte" (i.V.14). Latin would have been unsuitable for the commentary of the canzoni in Convivio for many reasons, in particular because it would have expounded the allegorical sense of the poems only to those who understood Latin, and these being few in number "lo latino averebbe a pochi dato lo suo beneficio, ma lo volgare servirà veramente a molti" (i.IX.4) - an idea that will be echoed throughout the following centuries. Dante is proudly conscious of his originality in writing a learned commentary in the vernacular, for Latin was the normal medium for commentaries and glosses (i.IX.10). He thus maintains the same ambivalent stance towards the volgare that he had adopted in the Vita nuova. In both works the vernacular is admitted to be inferior: in the earlier work vernacular poets were "rimatori" not "poeti"; in the Convivio the basic metaphor of the feast of knowledge recognises that, being written in the volgare, the bread at the feast is but "pane di biado e non di frumento" (i.X.1). Nevertheless, as in the Vita nuova he had suggested that there are areas where the vernacular is worthy to be compared with Latin, so in the later treatise having devoted most of the first book to purifying the bread of the many blemishes

imputed to the volgare Dante finally hopes that

Questo sarà quello pane orzato del quale si satolleranno  
migliaia e a me ne soperchieranno le sporte piene. (i.XIII.12).

He even claims, contradicting his earlier statements, that the vulgar tongue can adequately express all concepts and is thus of equal vertù with Latin (i.X.12), and that it is also full of "dolcissima e ... amabilissima bellezza" (i.X.13). The third distinction, the greater nobility of Latin, is contradicted at the beginning of the DVE (i.1.4). The very fact that this philosophical treatise is written in the vernacular demonstrates that Dante does not believe that his native language is irrevocably inferior to Latin. Rather he is trying to counteract this theoretical inferiority by a practical illustration of how the volgare can ennoble itself by imitating Latin in certain restricted areas, in a particular use of rhetorical devices in the Vita nuova, and in acting as an equivalent of scholastic Latin prose in the Convivio.<sup>3</sup>

There is similar ambivalence towards the vernacular in the De Vulgari Eloquentia. To begin with, this treatise on vernacular poetry is written in Latin prose, perhaps because Latin can express such technical matters more fully. Secondly, vernacular poets are said to rely on chance in their compositions, while the classical poets depend on a regular poetic art (DVE ii.IV.3). Consequently the former are

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3. For the scholastic prose of Convivio see C.Segre, 'Il linguaggio scolastico del Convivio' in his Lingua, stile e società, pp.244ff; and C.Grayson, 'Dante e la prosa volgare' in Cinque saggi, pp.50-51.



urged to imitate the latter (ii.IV.3; ii.VI.7). And yet in the opening chapter Dante clearly contradicts his statement in the Convivio about the greater nobility of Latin by proclaiming: "nobilior est vulgaris" (i.I.4). He now asserts that the vernacular language is nobler because it was the first language spoken by mankind, because it is spoken everywhere, and because it is a natural form of speech unlike artificial Latin. The whole aim of the treatise is to ennoble poetry in the volgare by giving it a set of rules of poetic art that would make its language and literature as regular as those of Latin.<sup>4</sup>

The De Vulgari Eloquentia is ambivalent, if not totally contradictory, in other respects too. Although the opening of the work proclaims the superiority of the vernacular over Latin, affinity with Latin is regarded as an advantage. Dante seems to consider Latin as a late, artificial construct whose inventors chose sic for the affirmative particle, thereby conferring some kind of priority (anterioritatem) on the Italian vernacular, which uses si. Subsequently in his comparison of French, Provencal and Italian he claims that one of the reasons for Italian superiority over the other two romance vernaculars is that its best poets, Cino and himself, rely more on Latin: "magis videntur inniti grammaticae que communis

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4. There is another contradiction between the two works. In Conv. i.X.12-13 he claimed that prose, as naked unadorned language, constituted a more revealing display of a language's properties than the adornments of poetry; in DVE ii.I.1 he implies that poetry acts as a model for prosewriters: "quod avietum est prosaycantibus permanere videtur exemplar."



est" (i.X.2).<sup>5</sup> Thus Italian has a double affinity with Latin, both linguistic and literary; linguistic in that its volgare bears closest relation to Latin; literary insofar as its best poets depend more on Latin. This dependence is left rather vague: Dante never expands on how he and Cino are closer to the Latin tradition, but we can presume that in the light of the Convivio and Inferno i.87-88 Dante is referring to the moral content of their mature poetry.

It is in this rather ambivalent context, then, that we must interpret the two explicit statements on imitation in the De Vulgari Eloquentia. In Book II of the treatise Dante adapts the classical theory of decorum to his own emphasis. In the first three chapters he considers what kind of poet, what subject matter, and what verse form suit his "vulgare illustre". In the fourth chapter he defends his use of the word "poete" to describe those who compose poetry in the volgare. But he in fact has never used "versificatores" or "versificantes". He seems to be thinking of his use of "poeti volgari" in the Vita nuova xxv: indeed this whole chapter seems to be an expansion of that earlier excursus. In the earlier work Dante had claimed that vernacular poetry could be like Latin poetry "secondo alcuna proporzione"; here he seems to be clarifying that vague phrase by pointing out how vernacular poets differ from the classical poets.

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5. "videntur" now seems to be more widely accepted than "videtur": see the edition of P.V.Mengaldo I. p.17; and also C.Grayson, 'Nobilior est vulgaris: latino e volgare nel pensiero di Dante' in Cinque saggi p.14 for the interpretation of the phrase. There seems to be a contrast between correct imitators of Latin, like Dante and Cino, and groups like the Sardinians whose language ungrammatically imitates Latin: "gramaticam tamquam simie homines imitantes." (DVE i.XI.7). cf. the condemnation of poets who are called geese trying to imitate an eagle (ii.IV.11).

The difference is that the latter wrote great poetry using a language and a poetic art that was regular, whereas poets in the volgare can achieve poetry of high quality but only by chance:

Differunt tamen a magnis poetis, hoc est regularibus, quia magni sermone et arte regulari poetati sunt, hii vero casu. (ii.IV.3).

Consequently for Dante the solution is to imitate as closely as possible the poets of classical antiquity:

Idcirco accidit ut, quantum illos proximius imitemur, tantum rectius poetemur. Unde nos, doctrine operi intendentes, doctrinatas eorum poetrias emulari oportet. (ii.IV.3).

This last sentence is significant for in it Dante suggests that in this theoretical work he is also imitating classical writers by writing an Ars Poetica for the vernacular.<sup>6</sup> But the previous sentence is once again vague and generic. What sort of imitation is meant here?

Presumably imitation of the Latin poets' sermo et ars regularis, i.e. both linguistic and literary imitation, as he had claimed for Italian poetry at i.X.2. But how one should model the poetry of the volgare on the Latin literary tradition is never specified; it is a rather vague imitatio, possibly restricting itself to nothing more than the inculcation of moral themes. This would be confirmed by the fact that the two writers referred to and quoted in this chapter are the two 'moral' poets Horace and Vergil. Having dealt with the

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6. The words imitari and emulari seem to be synonyms here. The words were to enjoy a considerable vogue in humanist thinking on the subject of imitation. But the humanists derived them from Quintilian, whom Dante had not read, and attached two different meanings to the words. For Bembo they will represent two distinct stages in the process of imitation. As Marigo points out in his note on this passage: "Che egli non intenda l'imitazione degli scrittori latini nel senso umanistico sarà chiaro quando si pensi alle regole, agli esempi ed agli scrittori che propone all'emulazione e allo studio, per la 'constructio' in ii.VI." (DVE, ed. A.Marigo, p.189).

seriousness of subject matter, Dante now considers in the following chapters the noble verse form required (ii.V), the correct constructions (ii.VI), and the lofty words needed (ii.VII).

In chapter ii.VI he examines "constructionis elatio" by citing four Latin sentences of increasing complexity and ornatus. The final example, which he describes as "et sapius et venustus etiam et excelsus", is the one to be used in the best canzoni, and Dante explains that one must memorise such constructions because they cannot be defined in the abstract. Therefore in order to familiarise himself with these noble constructions the poet is advised to study the classical poets and the best Latin prose writers:

Et fortassis utilissimum foret ad illam [supremam constructionem] habituandam regulatos vidisse poetas, Virgilium videlicet, Ovidium Metamorphoseos, Statium atque Lucanum, nec non alios qui usi sunt altissimas prosas, ut Titum Livium, Plinium, Frontinum, Paulum Orosium, et multos alios, quos amica sollicitudo nos visitare invitat. (ii.VI.7).

Much has been made of this list of literary models, both for the authors included and for those omitted. The four poets are not surprising; they were the most popular Latin poets studied in the Middle Ages, and form an almost identical canon of poets to that found in the Vita nuova and the Inferno. The only change is the substitution of Statius for Horace in this list, an alteration indicative of Statius' increasing importance for Dante: not mentioned in the Vita nuova, he replaces Horace here, and in the Commedia he appears, like Vergil, as a character. He is also installed here because his style, unlike Horace's, is epic: this also explains the other minor change: Dante here refers to Ovid as the poet of the more serious Metamorphoses,

not the Remedia Amoris as in Vita nuova xxv.

The prose writers chosen are a more curious selection. They are four in number presumably to match the four poets. It is not surprising to find Livy mentioned, given the contemporary resurgence of interest in his Decades which produced the first vernacular translation of Books i - x around 1300, and the later version of the third and fourth Decades attributed to Boccaccio.<sup>7</sup> But the other three authors, Pliny, Frontinus and Orosius would not be the first names to spring to mind as Latin stylists even in Dante's day. In the early fourteenth century few men knew of the existence of two Plinys; consequently Dante was probably thinking of the Elder Pliny's Historia Naturalis, parts of which were known then. Frontinus, author of books on aqueducts and military tactics, is an even more surprising choice;<sup>8</sup> while Orosius is never before or afterwards mentioned as a suitable model, though both Pliny and Livy will be.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps Orosius is cited as a Christian counterpart to Livy, the pagan historian, and both Pliny and Frontinus could be explained because of their scientific content, which would have appealed to the author of the Convivio. Of course Dante does add "multos alios" which could cover the

7. A.Schiaffini, op.cit., p.219 n 54; M.T.Casella, 'Nuovi appunti attorno al Boccaccio traduttore di Livio' Some late MSS read Tullium for Titum Livium.

8. Could Frontinum be a MS error for Frontonem? There is no MS evidence to suggest this, but a famous passage of Macrobius, well known to the middle ages, lists four authors as exemplifying four styles: Cicero, Sallust, Fronto and Pliny. For Sallust Dante would then have substituted Livy, replaced Cicero with the Christian Orosius to counterbalance Livy, and left the other two authors as cited in Macrobius (Saturnalia v.1.7.). Or, reading Tullium, the only change would be the replacement of Macrobius' Sallust with the Christian historian Orosius.

9. Petrarch and Benvenuto approve of Pliny, while Salutati mentions both writers as sound models in his Epistolario, ed. F.Novati, III. pp.79ff.

extraordinary omissions of Cicero, Seneca, St. Augustine and Sallust. But even if these major writers were to be subsumed under "multos alios", it is still odd that Dante should specifically nominate minor authors such as Pliny and Frontinus and make no explicit allusion to the more widely known auctores.<sup>10</sup> It is true that Ciceronianism did not exist in the Middle Ages, but Dante's Latin shows that he was conscious of the teachings of the masters of dictamen, some of whom around 1300 had begun a revaluation of the great orator which has been called "the first revival of Cicero".<sup>11</sup> Indeed Brunetto Latini was one of the most enthusiastic scholars of Cicero in the late thirteenth century, translating some of his speeches, including parts of the De Inventione in his works, the Trésor and the Rettorica, and calling him "il miglior parladore del mondo". The omission of Cicero, then, by Brunetto's "pupil" here must remain an enigma unless explained by the unfinished state of the De Vulgari Eloquentia.

It is also difficult to see what these prose writers had in common to qualify their works as "altissimas prosas" unless it be some rhetorical sententiousness consonant with medieval taste, for in this chapter Dante is less interested in moral or scientific content than in loftiness of construction. The essence of his advice on imitation in the De Vulgari Eloquentia is that the imitation of classical poets

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10. Marigo in his edition explains that in the middle ages Cicero and Seneca were regarded primarily as philosophers not stylists. But presumably, using the same line of argument, Orosius was considered chiefly a Christian historian not a stylistic model.

11. H.Wieruszowski, 'Ars dictaminis in the time of Dante', p.364.

will improve poetry in the vernacular. If in his other works he has looked to the Latin literary tradition for rhetorical figures and moral truths, here he says that study of the best Latin authors of prose and verse will help the vernacular poets to find that "constructionis elatio" that suits the high or tragic style and the canzone. His ambivalent attitude towards the volgare is again in evidence, as he recommends that the more noble, natural language in its search for stability and regularity should turn to the artificial construct of Latin.<sup>12</sup>

The Latin employed by Dante in his various works is the educated language of the schools and the magistri dictaminis; unlike the humanists who succeed him Dante's Latin prose does not set out to imitate the style of any one classical author. Indeed the words, the constructions, the rhythm and the reasoning of Dante's Latin are thoroughly "medieval" and could not be mistaken for classical Latin, as would happen with the writers of the next century. But the level of his language varies in the different works. The De Vulgari Eloquentia displays considerable rhetorical ornament and a number of non-classical neologisms, but this is not surprising given the originality of the subject matter, its technical nature, and the fact that as a literary manifesto written for an educated elite it

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12. Mengaldo neatly sums up the ambivalence and circularity of Dante's approach here: "nel latino è appunto, prima regolarità di locutio e poi di ars, nel volgare viceversa, sicché si prospetta un circolo logico che affida all'imitazione, da parte dei poeti, dello stile regolato dei classici il compito di predisporre il volgare alla competizione con la lingua regolata che è il latino." (See DVE, ed. P.V.Mengaldo, I, p.lxi.)

required the ornatus difficilis.<sup>13</sup> The De Monarchia is less ornate on the whole, has fewer neologisms, and employs rhetorical colores and the cursus only in the proems or when citing other authors. The Epistole are more akin to the De Vulgari Eloquentia in style, with their figurative diction and their emphatic use of the cursus. Only the Letter to Can Grande is less ornate after the opening paragraphs, because it is a commentary rather than a public letter. The Eclogues, if they are by Dante, predictably reveal some imitation of Vergil and the use of the low style, evident in the number of diminutives employed.

The Commedia reveals a more widespread application of the imitative principle than that outlined in Dante's earlier works. He looks to the classical writers not merely for rhetorical devices, lofty constructions, and moral truths; but he also borrows classical material, mythology, invocations. The whole poem is studded with allusions and echoes of ancient authors. The content of Inferno is basically an expansion of the material of Aeneid VI, and not only

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13. Marigo in his edition (pp.319-335) provides a glossary of non-classical neologisms in the text, while Paratore has shown how difficult it is to determine whether any of these terms are genuinely neologisms not found elsewhere in medieval writings. (in 'Il latino di Dante' in Dante nella critica d'oggi, p.119). G.Brugnoli in a number of articles and in his entry on Latino in the Enciclopedia dantesca (Vol.III) has most fully illustrated the variety of Dante's Latin in the different works, especially the more ornate style of the DVE and the Epistole as opposed to the Mon. See in particular his article 'Il latino di Dante' in Dante e Roma, pp.51-71. Brugnoli there analyses the opening sentence of the Mon., but the long, opening sentence of the DVE is equally illuminating, with its variety of cursus (4 planus, 4 velox, 2 tardus), its complex structure, its figures of the blind, and of the water and hydromel (the climax of "aquam...potiora...hydromellum."). Scholastic terms, such as aliqua and discretio, will be criticised by Valla in the next century as non-classical. (Valla, Opera i.393).



classical heroes but even poets and writers themselves appear in Dante's poem. This "arte allusiva"<sup>14</sup> does at times become a conscious rivalry with the classical model, notably in Inferno xxv where Dante is imitating episodes in Lucan and Ovid:

Taccia Lucano omai, la dove tocca  
del misero Sabello e di Nassidio,  
ed attenda ad udir quel ch'or si scocca.  
Taccia di Cadmo e d'Aretusa Ovidio ... (Inf.xxv.94-7).

The idea of emulating ("aemulatio") an ancient author is prominent in Quintilian and will be developed by the humanists of the following centuries, but Dante without reading Quintilian is conscious of the technique of aemulatio or certamen from the classical and medieval tradition of eulogy.<sup>15</sup> Another idea that will be taken up by later theorists is the Aristotelian notion that art imitates nature. Dante subscribes to it because he has read it, not in the Poetics but in the Physics (Inf.xi.99-105).

Dante, then, outlines his ideas on imitation in several places but they are never definitively formulated: he constantly moves from poetic practice to theorising about poetry not vice versa. His early poetry is very much in the manner of Cavalcanti and other poets of the dolce stil novo; yet when he starts theorising about his own poetry in the Vita nuova (1290-94) he claims that he is modelling

14. The phrase was coined by G.Pasquali, 'Arte allusiva' in Stravaganze quarte e supreme, pp.11ff.

15. cf. E.R.Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, p.165. Here Dante imitates Lucan and Ovid's Met, as advised in DVE.



his poetry on the classical tradition of love poetry, by the use and not the abuse of certain rhetorical devices. In his subsequent poetic practice (1295-1300) he seems to be looking towards Provençal poetry;<sup>16</sup> but when he writes the Convivio (1304-7) he sees his own poems as retaining the literal facade of love poetry but behind this he interprets allegorically a philosophical content which he associates with the poems of Vergil. In the De Vulgari Eloquentia (1304-5) he considers an affinity with Latin language and literature as the surest means of ennobling the vernacular. Here again it is a rather general theory of imitation which is being adumbrated, perhaps restricting itself in content to copying the moral import of the classical poets; and in style, the models he nominates are so disparate that the stylistic imitation recommended remains a general search for "constructionis elatio". In fact the examples quoted by Dante as suitable constructions for the vernacular canzone are all sentences in Latin prose. The only thing in common between this "excellentissimum gradum" of sentence and the vernacular poems cited as exhibiting similar loftiness of construction is a certain complexity of sentence structure.<sup>17</sup>

The Commedia marks a new phase of poetic practice which breaks

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16. His debt to Arnaut Daniel is evident in the rime petrose and is acknowledged in DVE ii,X. and Purgatorio xxvi.
17. Perhaps the examples are given in Latin so that they may be translated into any of the vernaculars, or because the rules for ornatus were always exemplified in Latin prose. The latter is suggested by C.Grayson, 'Dante e la prosa volgare' cit., pp.38-9.

with the theory established in the De Vulgari Eloquentia, and reveals a more comprehensive imitation of the classical tradition.

Stylistically Dante's masterpiece contravenes the dictates of his Latin treatise: it is a serious poem which does not employ noble language.<sup>18</sup> Also in terms of content Dante's poetic practice continually exceeds the limits imposed by his previous theorising. The Vita nuova demanded that the vernacular should only be used for love poetry; the Convivio inserted philosophical truths behind the facade of love poems; the De Vulgari Eloquentia accepted three subjects as admissible in the best poetry, love poetry, moral poems, and military or political poetry; and the Commedia's poetry clearly goes beyond these three topics. Although Dante theorised about imitation in his earlier works, it is only in the Commedia that there is a more specific exemplification of the imitation of classical authors, imitatio that would be like the process theorised and practised by later humanists. Though very different from those later humanists, and from his own contemporary "pre-humanists", Dante is the first vernacular poet to invoke the classical tradition and to see his own work as somehow continuing that tradition.<sup>19</sup>

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18. The movement from poetic experience to theorising is well documented in C.Grayson, 'Poetica e poesia di Dante' in Cinque saggi su Dante, pp.83-4. He suggests that the final piece of theory after the Commedia is the Letter to Can Grande, but perhaps also the defence of the vernacular put forward in the Eclogues to Giovanni del Virgilio is the last element of theory after the poetic practice of the Commedia.

19. For the distance between Dante and the early humanists see G.Padoan, 'Dante di fronte all'umanesimo letterario', pp.237ff. But Mengaldo has pointed out that Dante's list of authors recommended at DVE ii.VI.7 is much more secular if not classical, than those recommended in contemporary artes dictandi (DVE, ed. P.V.Mengaldo, I, pp.lxi-lxii n.1). Paratore concludes that if Dante was conformist in his Latin he was certainly revolutionary in his use of the vernacular (art.cit.).

(b) PETRARCH

Petrarch expresses his ideas on literary imitation in several places, but most extensively in three of the Familiars letters (i.8; xxii.2; xxiii.19). In two of these, as well as in other records of his emendations, he can be seen applying his theory of imitation to the composition of both Latin and vernacular works. To draw together his views on imitation we must consider (I) his theory of imitation in general and its sources; (II) his thoughts on the imitation of Cicero in particular; (III) his critical ideas on Latin and the volgare and on his works in both languages; (IV) his practical application of his theory of imitation to composition in both languages\*.

## I

The first letter (Fam.i.8) is to Tommaso Caloiro di Messina who had asked Petrarch's advice on composition. The poet's reply is to repeat Seneca's counsel as contained in his 84th letter. This letter, a fundamental text in classical imitation theory, is worth recalling in some detail. Seneca, instructing Lucilius on literary imitation, insists on three aims: that the young writer's style possess unity, be different from his models, and conceal these models.

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\* For Petrarch's works cited in this section I have used the following editions:

Le Familiari, ed. V.Rossi and U.Bosco, 4 vols (Florence, 1933-42).  
Seniles in Petrarch, Opera Omnia (Basle, 1581): referred to as  
Opera and page reference.

Other Latin prose works in Prose, ed. G.Martellotti, P.G.Ricci, E.Carrara, S.Bianchi (Milan-Naples, 1955): hereafter Prose.

Of these aims the most important is unity, stressed repeatedly by Seneca: "in unum saporem varia illa libamenta confundere" (84.5), "ut unum quidda, fiat ex multis" (84.7).

The images Seneca uses to illustrate these standard ideas also enjoy centuries of currency in the debate on imitation. He begins with the image of the bee collecting pollen from various flowers which it then transforms into its own distinctive product, honey. Of almost equal importance is the digestion metaphor which he also uses throughout the letter: the different models are like so many different kinds of food which need to be digested so as to be a source of strength. There are three other images used: Seneca wants the young writer to resemble his model not as closely as an artistic image resembles its original, but as a son is similar to his father, and he should develop a style that, like a choir, produces a unified tone from a variety of voices.

Petrarch's theory of imitation is in general faithful to these Senecan precepts, but there are some differences and change of emphasis. In Familiares i.8, as in the later letters, he concentrates on the image of the bee and its significance. Whereas Seneca had doubted whether the bees merely collected honey from flowers or whether they actually produced it by adding some additional element (84.4), Petrarch emphatically stresses the latter idea with no hint of doubt: "apes in inventionibus imitandas, que flores, non quales acceperint, referunt, sed ceras ac mella mirifica quadam permixtione conficiunt." (Fam.i.8.2). Here what is significant is not the

literal level of Petrarch's more advanced knowledge of apiculture, but rather the priority which he accords on a figural level to the contribution of the individual. He immediately criticises Macrobius for failing to do this: in Petrarch's eyes the Preface to the Saturnalia merely reproduces the honey of Seneca's 84th Letter without contributing anything personal.<sup>1</sup> Petrarch's letter, on the other hand, elaborates the Senecan text in a way that permits a personal contribution, i.e. by using different words even if the thought is the same as that of the Senecan original: "elegantioris esse solertie, ut, apium imitatores, nostris verbis quamvis aliorum hominum sententias proferamus." (i.8.4).<sup>2</sup> Where Seneca had stressed unity of style, Petrarch now emphasises both individuality and unity of style: "unum nostrum conflatum ex pluribus habeamus" (i.8.5).<sup>3</sup> He sees imitation as the norm for most writers, for few can be totally original; the latter are like silkworms, he says, using another image from the world of nature, for they produce silk from their own bodies. They may be more fortunate, for most of us must be like the bee, transforming what we cull from others into something our own and

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1. Saturnalia I Praef. 5 - 9. G.W.Pigman feels that Macrobius does vary Seneca's text sufficiently to make Petrarch's criticism rather harsh: see his 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance', p.5 n.7.
  2. Petrarch does not say so but this letter itself looks like an example of this ideal kind of imitation: Seneca's sententiae in Petrarch's own words. Other writers on imitation seem to do the same, eg. Alberti and Poliziano. Pigman (art.cit.) suggests that Fam.xxii.2.20 elaborates Seneca Ep.33.11. Petrarch's abhorrence of using the same words perhaps derives from Quintilian's: "imitatio ... non sit tantum in verbis" (Inst.Or. 2.27), where he noted in his own copy of Quintilian: "lege, Silvane, memoriter".
  3. A similar idea in Quint. (x.2.13) earned the comment: "audi, imitator frivole".

remaining content within the limits of our own ingenium (i.8.8.).<sup>4</sup>

The letter ends with a final evocation of the bee metaphor: "nulla quidem esset apibus gloria, nisi in aliud et in melius inventa converterent." (i.8.23).

The second letter (xxii.2), written in October 1359 to Boccaccio, develops the main points and the imagery of the first. Petrarch's practice is to use other writers' words to form his *life* ~~not~~ his style, unless he either acknowledges the author or by significantly altering the words gives the phrase his own individual note:

nisi vel prolato auctore vel mutatione insigni,  
ut imitatione apium e multis et variis unum fiat.  
(xxii.2.16)

Petrarch is faithful to this precept in practice. To give just one example, in the previous letter he repeated Seneca's ideas in his own words, but also quoted Quintilian ("prolato auctore") at a certain point (Fam.i.8.13).<sup>5</sup> Here he continues to stress the importance of the individual's contribution, exploiting another popular image, that of the cloak: "Alioquin multo malim meus michi stilus sit, incultus licet atque horridus, sed in morem toge habilis, ad mensuram ingenii mei factus" (xxii.2.16).<sup>6</sup> Having stressed unity and individuality, Petrarch now broaches a third, connected topic, originality. He

4. Here too he differs from Seneca's discontent: "ne sim me uno contentus" (84.1).

5. U.Bosco, Francesco Petrarca, pp.132-3 illustrates how Petrarch cites authors or significantly alters their wording in the Canzoniere.

6. The cloak image comes from Horace Ep.I.1.95ff. That Petrarch is thinking of Horace here is confirmed by the allusion to the crow in the next sentence "stilus suus cuique formandus servandusque est, ne ... concursu plumas suas repetentium volucrum spoliati cum cornicula rideamur" (cf. Hor.Ep.I.3.18-20).

claims he is not a totally original poet like Horace, Lucretius or Vergil; yet if he follows the paths trodden by others he does not always want to restrict himself to their very footsteps. He prefers to use his own words not those of another writer, and this relationship he defines as similitudo not identitas: even if he is following a model he wants to preserve his own autonomy: "sint cum duce oculi, sit iudicium, sit libertas." (xxii.2.21).<sup>7</sup>

But if this central section of the letter develops the main points of Petrarch's theory of imitation, the rest of the letter is also relevant; for at the beginning he talks about unconscious literary assimilation, and at the end puts his imitation theory into practice. The purpose of the epistle in fact is to inform Boccaccio of changes he wishes made in his Bucolicum Carmen, and the rationale behind these alterations is the application of his theory of imitation to that work in order to avoid using phrases already found in classical poets. He begins by explaining that he has read minor authors such as Ennius, Plautus, Capella and Apuleius less often than major writers like Vergil, Horace, Boethius and Cicero; with the result that in the case of the former he easily remembers if he is borrowing a phrase from one of them, but the major works he has read so often that they have gone not only into his memory but even into the recesses of his

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7. The image of following in someone's footsteps comes from a number of sources: Hor.Ep.I.19.21; Quint.X.2.10; Sen.Ep.33.11. G.W.Pigman (p.21) feels that Petrarch is paraphrasing the Seneca passage in his own words, thus illustrating the similitudo not identitas that he seeks to achieve.



mind and his ingenium. Consequently he forgets that these phrases are not his own original wording ("propria...nova") but belong to another writer ("aliena") and he has inadvertently inserted them into his Bucolicum Carmen (xxii.2.11-14).<sup>8</sup>

There are a number of important ideas here. Firstly, the authors specified by Petrarch are chosen very carefully. Dante too had listed eight auctores in the De Vulgari Eloquentia (ii.VI.7), four poets and four prose writers, the latter being an uneven mixture of major and minor writers. Here the division is not based on poetry and prose, but on the greater or lesser status of the author. The authors chosen by Petrarch and the order in which he names them are carefully considered: each minor writer contrasts with a major one; thus Ennius and Vergil represent heroic poetry, Plautus and Horace clearly go together (comic/satiric poetry), Capella and Boethius (works of learning in a mixture of prose and verse), and Apuleius and Cicero (exponents of widely differing prose styles) are clearly contrasted.<sup>9</sup>

The final part of the letter concerns changes to be made in Petrarch's tenth Eclogue. The line ending "solio sublimis acerno",

8. The notion that minor works remain in the memory while major works blend with the mind originates in Seneca's contrast: "Concoquamus illa; alioqui in memoriam ibunt non in ingenium" (Ep.84.7). Another possible source is the Elder Seneca's claim that what he memorised as a youth remains fresh in his memory, what he memorised recently is easily forgotten and seems new to him. (Contr.I.Praef.3).
9. In Seniles ii.4 Petrarch says that false attributions are made only with minor writers like Seneca or Ambrose, never with Cicero or Vergil "propter inaccessibile...semperque unum styli genus." (Opera, p.762).



too similar to Vergil's "solique invitat acerno", is to be emended to "e sede verendus acerno"; and the phrase "quid enim non carmina possent?", which Petrarch had unconsciously taken verbatim from Ovid, has now to become "quid enim vim carminis equet?". Here, then, he is putting into practice his theory of not using the same words as his model but making a significant change in the phrasing to make it his own; similitudo not identitas is his goal.<sup>10</sup>

The third letter (xxiii.19), also addressed to Boccaccio around 1366, develops the familiar points, first about forming a personal style, then avoiding too close a similarity. Discussing the brilliance of the young Giovanni Malpaghini, he says that the style of this young student from Ravenna will improve, it will acquire its own unity and individuality, and he will soon learn to conceal if not avoid imitation, in which as a young writer he tends to overindulge: "sic ut nulli similis appareat sed ex veteribus novum quoddam Latio intulisse videatur." (xxiii.19.10).<sup>11</sup> The implication is that the mature writer evolves a personal style out of the models imitated, and disguises rather than avoids imitation. Here again is the stress on unity and individuality and on the dangers of similitudo: "curandum imitatori ut quod scribit simile nonidem sit" (xxiii.19.11).

10. He humorously uses a Ciceronian phrase in returning this line to Ovid: "quem illi eripere nec si velim possim, nec si possim velim." (xxii.2.26). cf. Cicero Brutus 287.

11. Here again he seems to be deliberately paraphrasing in his own words two famous passages on imitation: Sen.Ep.84.5 ("ut etiam si apparuerit unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est, appareat") and Horace Ep.II.1.157 ("Graecia capta ferum victorem cepit et artis/intulit agresti Latio.")

He defines this similarity, using Seneca's images, as the similarity of a son to his father, not the resemblance of an artistic representation to its model where the emphasis is on how close the image is to the original. The son's features recall those of the father but they are also very different.<sup>12</sup> Like Seneca, Petrarch stresses the importance of the differences between the new work and the original, but unlike the ancient writer he wants the resemblances not to be hidden but to be noticeable at least to the unconscious workings of the mind:

Sic et nobis providendum ut cum simile aliquid sit,  
multa sint dissimilia, et id ipsum simile lateat ne  
deprehendi possit nisi tacita mentis indagine, ut  
intelligi simile queat potius quam dici. (xxiii.19.13)<sup>13</sup>

Again he insists that although one may use similar ideas and even rhetorical devices, the difference must be apparent in the words: "utendum igitur ingenio alieno utendumque coloribus, abstinendum verbis; illa enim similitudo latet, hec eminet; illa poetas facit, hec simias." (xxiii.19.13).<sup>14</sup> Like the previous letter, this one also ends with the imitation theory being put into practice. Petrarch tells how Malpaghini noticed another line from the Bucolicum Carmen which ends exactly like one of Vergil's, but in this case it is too

12. He is clearly embroidering on Sen.Ep.84.8, and ends an analogy from the pictorial arts which will be echoed by Alberti: "In (filiis)...umbra quedam et quem pictores nostri aerem vocant, qui...similitudinem illam facit, que statim viso filio, patris in memoriam nos reducat." (xxiii.19.12). Alberti claims that students obtain "quella perfettissima aere d'eloquenza" from Cicero, Livy and Sallust (Opere i.71)

13. cf. "ut etiam si apparuerit, unde sumptum sit, aliud tamen esse quam unde sumptum est, appareat." (Sen.Ep.84.5)

14. This Petrarchan passage ought to be added to the list in E.R.Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, Excursus XIX: 'The Ape as Metaphor', pp.538-40.

late to alter it as the poem has already been circulated.<sup>15</sup>

We have seen Petrarch, then, in his desire to eliminate identitas making even minor changes in his Latin poetry. The cause might be thought to be the exigencies of the Latin hexameter which are such that these subconscious borrowings are both unavoidable and also more noticeable. But we shall see that even in his vernacular poems Petrarch is careful to avoid excessive similarity to other writers.

Petrarch's theory of imitation is derived mainly from Seneca and Quintilian, but it is not identical with the ideas of those two authors. Where Seneca stresses unity of style, Petrarch places equal emphasis on maintaining the personal note when imitating. Unlike the classical writers, he remains content with his own ingenium, an attitude dictated by his Christian humanism, and demands that the individual's contribution be evident in his writing. Even when adapting Quintilian's idea of rivalling and outdoing the model, he gives it a Christian tone: "Deum precor, ut si quis me imitatione dignum duxerit, nisu facili quem sequitur consequatur ac transeat." (Fam.xxiv.12.16)<sup>16</sup>. One of the ways of retaining individuality for Petrarch is to use his own words, not those of a literary model,

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15. In a letter discovered by Dr.N.Mann there is further evidence of Petrarch making similar changes to avoid subconscious imitation: he even deletes an "et" to avoid a Horatian echo in Buc.Carm.x.302. See N.Mann, ' "O Deus, Qualis Epistola! " A New Petrarch Letter'.

16. Quintilian X.2.10.

even when expressing the ideas of that model.<sup>17</sup> He recognises the strength of the imitative principle in Latin literature, acknowledging the role it played even in the writings of Cicero and Vergil (Fam.vi. 4.12); but he is very wary of excessive imitation.

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17. Even in his historical work, De Viris Illustribus, he follows his sources for facts not words: "oportet scriptorum clarissimorum vestigiis insistere nec tamen verba transcribere sed res ipsas." (Prose p.220).

## II

Having established the main outlines of Petrarch's theory of imitation in general, we must next consider what was his role in that particular form of imitation, Ciceronianism. Certainly he was the greatest admirer of Cicero's works in the Trecento: he praised them for their moral content as well as for their prose style; he keenly searched for and transcribed Cicero's speeches, philosophical treatises and letters; indeed each time he mentions him Petrarch pauses to praise Cicero, usually in superlative terms. On many occasions he states that he admires Cicero most of all writers of all times (eg. Fam.xxi.10.8; xxiv.2.12; etc.). Perhaps his most significant statement in the light of Quattrocento Ciceronianism is his declaration in one of the letters he addressed to Cicero himself that any of his contemporaries who have any ability in Latin style owe this to Cicero: "tuis denique, it ita dicam, auspiciis ad hanc, quantulacunque est, scribendi facultatem ac propositum pervenisse." (Fam.xxiv.4.4). The notion that any proficiency in literary style comes from a closer study and imitation of Cicero will recur in some humanists of the following century and will even influence their own definition of the Renaissance.<sup>18</sup> But Petrarch, unlike some of his

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18. cf. Poggio (Epistolae, ed. Tonelli, III. p.177): "Quicquid tamen in me est, hoc totum acceptum refero Ciceroni quem elegi ad eloquentiam docendam." Flavio Biondo in Italia Illustrata (p.346) says of Petrarch: "nec tamen eum attigit Ciceronianae florem, quo multos in hoc seculo videmus ornatos", thus seeing the Ciceronian style as a criterion which determines the new age and separates it from the Latin of the Trecento. Alamanno Rinuccini (Lettere ed orazioni, ed. V.Giustiniani p.108) says: "quod illis (mediis scriptoribus) propterea contigisse non miror quia Ciceronis plerique libri in occulto latentes imitandi facultatem illis adimebant."

successors, never went so far as to believe that Cicero was the only writer one should copy. In fact there are at least four areas where Petrarch is critical of Cicero: he can object to him from a Christian standpoint (Fam.i.9); as a humanist he criticises his involvement in the active life (xxiv.2); he is prepared to admit that even the great orator's writings are not completely faultless and to recognise the unattainability of the Ciceronianists' ideal.

In a late letter to Luca da Penna (Seniles xvii.1) we can observe Petrarch recounting the whole history of his love for Cicero only to realise that his style is ultimately unattainable. Even as a schoolboy, when others were busy with their medieval school texts of Prosper and Aesop, he was already intent on Cicero's works. At that stage it was merely the sonority of the orator's words that attracted him and made him feel that whatever else he read sounded harsh and discordant by comparison.<sup>19</sup> This statement contains the germ of a Ciceronianist approach to writing, in which only what sounds like Cicero is admissible. But he recognises that Cicero's style is totally individual and cannot be fully imitated, for he realised that an unidentified work was in fact one of Cicero's because of its style: "esse autem Ciceronis stylus indicio erat. fuit enim celestis viri illius eloquentia, imitabilis nulli" (Opera 946)<sup>20</sup>. Elsewhere, in the De Sui Ipsius

19. Here he seems to be echoing Jerome who more than once contrasts the elegance of Cicero with the crude style of the Scriptures (Ep.22.30; 125.12).

20. These words are perhaps an echo of a Ciceronian phrase: "orationis subtilitas imitabilis illa quidem videtur esse existimanti, sed nihil est experienti minus." (Orator.23.76).

Ignorantia, he reaffirms his admiration for Cicero above all other writers, but points out that this admiration does not necessarily imply imitation; in fact he tries to avoid imitation:

Ciceronem fateor me mirari inter, imo ante omnes qui scripserunt unquam, qualibet in gente; nec tamen ut mirari, sic et imitari, cum potius in contrarium laborem, nec cuiusquam scilicet imitator sim nimius, fieri metuens quod in aliis non probo. (Prose, p.760).

Here we find Petrarch's familiar distrust of excessive imitation, and immediately afterwards he explicitly discusses the meaning of the term Ciceronianus. Like Jerome he contrasts it with Cristianus rather than using it to refer to his style of Latin.

Finally Petrarch is prepared to repeat some criticisms of Cicero, and also to suggest that he is in some respects inferior to Quintilian. In the introductory letter to the Familiares Petrarch upholds Seneca's objections to Cicero's use of the letter for rather trivial content (Fam.i.1.32). Perhaps more significant is Petrarch's high estimate of Quintilian. We have seen how influential the latter is in Petrarch's thought; consequently it is no surprise to find that Petrarch thinks the author of the Institutio Oratoria in certain areas superior even to Cicero, though he never places him as high as Valla was to in the next century. In the De Vita Solitaria he states that Quintilian's rhetorical handbook puts the finishing touches to Cicero's works on rhetoric (Prose p.376). This praise is expanded in the letter to Quintilian (Fam.xxiv.7) and seems to echo Quintilian's own words on imitation and originality:



post tanti viri vestigia novam non imitationis sed  
doctrinae propriae preclarique operis gloriam invenisti  
(xxiv.7.3). 21

Though Cicero's eloquence might be greater, Petrarch feels that the later work is more thorough and more useful to a wider range of students. In a sense Quintilian reinforces Petrarch's enthusiasm for Cicero, for Petrarch quotes on a number of occasions the statement in the Institutio Oratoria (x.1.112) that whoever likes Cicero has already made some progress in rhetoric. On the other hand Quintilian is very cautious in recommending imitation, and this sentence in particular would have discouraged Petrarch from becoming a Ciceronian: "Itaque ne hoc quidem suaserim, uni se alicui propriae quem per omnia sequatur addicere." (Inst. Or.x.2.24).

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21. cf. Quintilian's "Eum vero nemo potest aequare cuius vestigiis sibi utique insistendum putat." (X.2.10).



## III

Petrarch's views on the superiority of Latin over the vernacular are less equivocal than Dante's. Because the volgare is the language of the vulgus he officially despises their language as much as the people themselves.<sup>22</sup> Thus when he calls his poetry in the vernacular Rerum vulgarium fragmenta or "rime sparse" there are two motives for doing so, one related to content and the other to language; he is not merely imitating the classical poets who belittled their love poetry as "nugae", but he is also inspired by his proclaimed distaste for work written in the volgare. Of course there is an element of ambivalence in Petrarch's views also; for these occasional poems which he affected to despise were in fact the object of considerable revision and re-ordering up until the poet's death.

It is worth analysing the reasons advanced by Petrarch for not following Dante's path in employing the vernacular for what he considered to be his major works. Like Dante in the Vita nuova xxv, he sees that the vernacular poetic tradition owes something to the poetry of antiquity. In the introductory letter to the Familiars (Fam.i.1) he seems to consider the Sicilian origins of poetry in the volgare as a kind of renaissance of a Greco-Latin tradition:

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22. His disparaging references to the vulgus are to be found everywhere: eg. Fam.i.1.16; xiv.2.6-7; Vita Sol Pref (Prose p.286); Sen.xvii.2 (ib. p.1152).

Quod genus, apud Siculos, ut fama est, non multis ante  
seculis renatum, brevi per omnem Italiam ac longius  
manavit, apud Grecorum olim ac Latinorum vetustissimos  
celebratum; siquidem et Athicos et Romanos vulgares  
rithmico tantum carmine uti solitos accepimus. (Fam.i.1.6).<sup>23</sup>

But where Dante had looked to the Latin poets as a precedent for his use of prosopopoeia, Petrarch here seems to be thinking of the more ancient rhymed poems of Greece and Rome.<sup>24</sup> Thus for Petrarch vernacular poetry is a renaissance not of the classical tradition of poetry, but of an earlier and presumably inferior genre.

A late letter (Seniles v.2) provides an even fuller statement of his views on the two languages and their literatures. In his youth, he tells Boccaccio, he had turned to the vernacular because Latin literature seemed so rich that there was nothing left to add. Since the new literature seemed undeveloped and offered scope for both addition and adornment, Petrarch devoted himself to the vernacular and had even begun a major work in it ("magnum in eo genere opus") when he realised that the enthusiasts of the vernacular were not really learned and when reading vernacular works aloud they mangled rather than recited them. These two factors, the lack of learning and the ignorant pronunciation of the masses were enough to deter him from writing a major work in the vulgar tongue. (Opera, p.795).

23. In the word "renatum" there is perhaps the first use of the metaphor of renaissance applied to literature by a humanist.

24. Petrarch would have derived his knowledge of early Latin Saturnian verse from Horace, Ep. II.1.157f: "Sic horridus ille/ defluxit numerus Saturnius", a favourite passage (cf. note 11); and from Servius on Georgics II.386.

In this letter we see Petrarch again worried by the problem of originality, as elsewhere (cf. Fam.i.9. or Sen.xvi.2); but in his youth, it seems, he did not perceive the solution arrived at later, that certain themes can never be exhausted and that the weight of the classical and Christian traditions represent an encouragement not an impediment to writing; instead he turned to the volgare to write something that would rival the works of antiquity. This was what Dante had done; and Petrarch's words "magnum opus" suggest that the work he had begun was, like Dante's, a serious moral work, possibly the Trionfi.<sup>25</sup> What is slightly odd is his motive for abandoning the volgare as the medium for his major compositions: he repeatedly stresses the fact that the masses will mispronounce and lacerate his works ("discerpi...laceratum iri...lanient"). Perhaps the reason for this emphasis is that the mispronunciation is an oral manifestation of the ignorance of the vernacular literary public. In many of his attitudes Petrarch is imitating classical poses, but this contempt for popular recitation of his works has few obvious parallels. His hatred for the vulgar crowd stemmed from something in his own personality, was confirmed by the elitism that characterises literary coteries in all ages and that is typical of humanism in particular, and took as its motto Horace's "Odi profanum vulgus".<sup>26</sup> But Petrarch's specific fear

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25. This at any rate is the normal though by no means the unanimous interpretation of the words. Petrarch here seems motivated by the spirit of aemulatio that underlies the Commedia as a whole and which surfaces explicitly at, for instance, Inf.xxv.94ff.

26. Petrarch often quotes or alludes to Horace's phrase: eg. Metr.ii.11; Fam.x.4.4; xxiv.10.114 etc.

of how the vulgus would distort his works seems to be purely personal. The only possible parallel is the pair of anecdotes in Sacchetti about the mispronunciation of the Divina Commedia.<sup>27</sup>

These anxieties about the vernacular are more fully outlined in a famous letter to Boccaccio (Fam.xxi.15). Petrarch claims that the reason he had no copy of Dante was because being a vernacular poet in his youth he was afraid of subconscious imitation, presumably of the type mentioned in Fam.xxii.2.13ff; he did not want to become an "invitus ac nesciens imitator" (xxi.15.11). At the time he boldly believed in the power of his own ingenium to provide him with a personal style: "meum et proprium quendam modum". If there are echoes in his vernacular poems of Dante or other poets, Petrarch did not set out to imitate them or plagiarise them; these were both things which he avoided in the vernacular. Any verbal similarity is due to coincidence or a resemblance of temperament:

non id furtim aut imitando proposito, que duo semper  
in his maxime vulgaribus ut scopulos declinavi, sed  
vel casu fortuito factum esse, vel similitudine  
ingeniorum, ut Tullio videtur, iisdem vestigiis ab  
ignorante concursum. (xxi.15.12). 28

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27. Sacchetti, Trecentonovelle, ed. V.Pernicone, nos. CXIV-CXV. eg. p.254: "e tramestava i versi suoi, smozzicando e appiccando...", which would correspond to Petrarch's "discerpere, lacerare, laniare". Perhaps Salutati's complaint (Ep.iii.373f) about the corrupt nature of vernacular texts of Dante and Petrarch is in the same vein.
28. The reference to Cicero has not been identified by Rossi nor anyone else; yet Petrarch refers to it on other occasions (Fam.xviii.8.14; Vita Sol Pref in Prose p.288). But there also seems to be an allusion to A.Gellius here: "tamquam scopulum, sic fugias inauditum atque insolens verbum" (Noct.Att.I.10.4 where Gellius is in fact quoting from Caesar's lost De Analogia). In De Vita Sol he feels poets are prone to unconscious assimilation: "illis iam ante perlectis, in animo legunt, sepe etiam in animo scribunt; lectione preterita sed presenti ingenio sese attollunt." (Prose, p.366; the last words possibly also derive from A.Gellius I.10.4.).

Here he appears to reject imitation in the vernacular, although he clearly approves of a certain kind of imitation in his Latin works; and we shall see that this is largely borne out in practice.

Although he is willing to concede to Dante what he calls "vulgaris eloquentie palmarum", Petrarch insists that he rather than Dante's enthusiasts appreciates the artistic qualities of the Commedia. Indeed he even tries to pull his predecessor into the humanist camp by claiming that Dante would have detested the ignorant crowd who cannot say why they appreciate his poetry and, an even greater outrage to a poet, continually distort and corrupt his text when they read it aloud: "scripta eius pronuntiando lacerant atque corrumpunt" (xxi.15.16). Here he adds that this fear of distortion was one of the main reasons why he himself abandoned the volgare. Petrarch further tries to make a humanist of Dante by subscribing to the theory encouraged by Boccaccio and echoed by later humanists, such as Salutati and Poggio, that Dante could have written his major work in Latin and thus achieved even greater fame.<sup>29</sup>

At the end of this letter Petrarch gives a more precise indication of the kind of public that appreciated vernacular literature in general and Dante's poem in particular, when he claims

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29. cf. Salutati, Epistolario ed. F. Novati, iii.491. This view is faithfully attributed to Salutati in Bruni's Dialogi (Prosatori latini del Quattrocento ed. E. Garin, p.68).

that he surely does not envy him the praise of the dyers, innkeepers and woolworkers: "nisi forte sibi fulonum et cauponum et lanistarum ceterorumve...plausum et raucum murmur invideam." (xxi.15.22).<sup>30</sup>

This association of Dante with an unlearned public is significant because it seems to be the source of subsequent humanist criticism of Dante as "poeta da calzolari".<sup>31</sup> The singling out of these specific trades seems to have no classical source, indeed it sounds very closely related to the reality of fourteenth century Italy, with its emphasis on the cloth workers. These tradesmen seem to have replaced women as the typical representative of the vernacular public, for it is "muliercule" who are cited in the Letter to Can Grande, and it is to women that Boccaccio dedicates the Decameron.<sup>32</sup> Why has Petrarch here substituted tradesmen for women as the archetype of the unlearned audience? Partly because he is writing to Boccaccio himself, whose major works in the vernacular are officially dedicated to women. We would expect, then, Petrarch to make some association between women and these workers. This he does in another letter to Boccaccio (Sen.ii.1) where he is answering the critics who claim that his

30. "lanistarum" is translated as "lottatori" in Prose cit., p.1011. But n.2 on p.1010 explains that perhaps Petrarch intended it in the medieval sense of "woolworkers". This is confirmed by the later mention of "lanarii" by other humanists writing on similar themes mentioned in the next note.

31. Niccoli mentions "lanariis, pistoriibus" and also "lanistae, sutores atque proxenetae" in Bruni's Dialogi (Prosatori cit., pp.70,84). Cino Rinuccini in his Invettive says humanists regard Dante as "poeta da calzolari". (See A.Lanza, Berte e polemiche del Trecento, p.264). For this whole context of humanist critiques of the Tre Corone see G.A.Holmes, The Florentine Enlightenment 1400-50, Ch.1. Poggio lists "cerdones, sutores, cocos" in Opera I.52.

32. "remissus est modus et humilis, quia locutio vulgaris in qua et muliercule comunicant." (Dante, Ep.xiii.31). Boccaccio's proem to Day 4 seems to echo this: "in stilo umilissimo e rimesso".

Bucolicum Carmen is written in too lofty a style, and challenges them to produce something in Latin rather than dealing with common problems amongst uneducated women and dyers: "non semper in angulis inter mulierculas ac fullones vulgaria eructare problemata." (Prose, p.1066)<sup>33</sup>

If Petrarch believes or affects to believe that his vernacular poetry is inferior because of its content, because of its language, and because, he says, it was written in his adolescence, it is worth considering what his official opinions and aspirations are for his Latin works. Setting aside traditional modesty topoi, it is clear that both Petrarch and his contemporaries considered his style of Latin to be considerably higher than that of other writers of the time. We have seen that in Seniles ii.1 some thought the style of his Bucolicum Carmen too lofty for the pastoral genre. Petrarch dismisses this criticism by saying that to men of "modestiore ingenio" his Latin might seem too elevated, but he was intending to write something lofty. Given the difficulties and allusiveness of even the tenth Eclogue alone, we might well sympathise with his contemporaries who were perhaps accurate in detecting a level of Latin which contravened the classical theory of decorum in this traditionally humble genre.<sup>34</sup> This criticism of his "altior in Bucolicis stilus"

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33. cf. Fam.xii.7.13; xxiv.12.37. Perhaps the link between Dante's and Petrarch's references to women is Giovanni del Vergilio's exchange with Dante. In his first Eclogue he says that Giovanni objects to vernacular works "tum quia femineo resonant ut trita labello." (Ecl.I.53).

34. N.Mann, (art.cit., esp pp.236-7), illustrates the "sheer erudition" of the tenth Eclogue.



(Prose, p.1064), was voiced with regard to Petrarch's Latin in general when its loftiness prevented him from obtaining a post in the Papal curia: "unum obstare dicebatur quod stilus michi altior esset quam romane sedis humilitas postularet." (Fam.xiii.5.12). This letter goes on to offer a scathing critique of contemporary Latin. Of the three styles mentioned in Cicero (Ad Her.iv.VIII.11) Petrarch feels that hardly anyone can write in the grand style, very few can cope with the middle style, and many can manage the low style. But in general the level of Latin employed in the last thousand years is far below even the low style adopted by the classical writers. For Petrarch, then, the decadence of Latin sets in during the fourth century (though presumably he would exclude his favourite Christian authors such as Augustine and Jerome) and lasts until his own day. This period coincides with the Christianisation of the Empire, and Petrarch's attack is presumably directed against the cult of sermo humilis adopted by the Christian writers.<sup>35</sup> He maintains that such Latin has no natural dignity and will not acquire it through its centuries of usage. Apart from the Latin used in the Papal curia, he is also prepared to attack the style of the Imperial Chancery. The frank opening to one of his letters to the Emperor's Chancellor complains about the non-classical use of vos instead of tu. (Fam.xxiii.14.1). He is also aware that he was the first in Italy to revert to the classical usage of the singular, which was then

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35. See E.Auerbach, 'Sermo Humilis', in Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and the Middle Ages, pp.25-66.



imitated by later humanists, even when employed in chancelleries.<sup>36</sup>

Petrarch is also aware that his Latin is much more ornate than the plain style of contemporary legal Latin. In a letter to his friend "Socrates" (Fam.xiv.2) he talks of an important canon lawyer who is constantly asking Petrarch to write something learned in a clear style, but the plain style Petrarch thinks is almost incompatible with erudite subject matter. The lawyer has the "planities legistarum" (Fam.xiv.2.3), and wants the poet's work to be as plain as the text of the law, so that it can be understood without effort. Petrarch's reply is predictable: "vile penitus et abiectum esse quod sine ulla mentis agitatione percipitur." (xiv.2.6); and he reiterates his desire to be read by the few learned men around rather than by the ignorant masses: "vulgi enim laus apud doctos infamia est" (xiv.2.7). There is even a phrase in Cicero which justifies this disapproval of the vulgar crowd and is quoted by Petrarch here (Tusc.IV.3.7). The lawyers, like most other contemporaries, found Petrarch's Latin more ornate than their own, but it is significant that at least one of their number wanted the great humanist to write something drawing on classical poets with which he could embellish his own legal eloquence: "ut (poetarum) ope suis in finibus utatur pyeriisque coloribus civilem facundiam ... condiat atque exornet." (xiv.2.3).

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36. Petrarch makes the same point about reverting to the classical usage of 'tu' in similar words in other letters: eg. Sen.xvii.1 to Luca da Penna. See the section on Salutati for the same point made by a Chancellor.

It is this lofty, ornate quality of his Latin that is at the root of Petrarch's quarrel with the Aristotelians. In the preface to the De Sui Ipsius et Multorum Ignorantia he points out to them that Aristotle taught rhetoric as well as philosophy, but his present day followers have so forgotten his ideals that they think eloquence is detrimental and shameful in philosophy. (Opera, p.1037).<sup>37</sup>

In the next century this question of the compatibility of philosophy with an elegant style will become increasingly important notably in the exchange between Pico della Mirandola and Ermolao Barbaro. Petrarch anticipates all the major questions of humanism, and on this one he seems to be on the same side as Barbaro, demanding that even philosophical matters be written about eloquently. If this sounds like a Ciceronianist attitude, it is confirmed in a further discussion of the topic in the Rerum Memorandarum Libri. There, after admitting that despite Cicero's testimony to Aristotle's stylistic qualities there is no trace of eloquence in the Latin Aristotle, he concludes that this is the fault of the medieval translators of the philosopher, and of contemporary Aristotelians. Because the latter lack rhetorical ability they claim that Aristotle also despised eloquence as though it had no place in important philosophical subjects: "quasi in altis rebus nulla verborum claritas possit habitare, cum contra sublimem potius scientiam altus deceat stilus."<sup>38</sup>

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37. Similarly later in the De...Ignorantia (Prose, pp.744-6) he says that Aristotle in Latin lacks the "verborum faces" which Petrarch finds especially in his favourite authors, Cicero, Seneca and Horace.

38. Rerum Memorandarum Libri, ed. G.Billanovich, ii.31.8, p.65. Further references to this edition are given in the text.

It is at this point that he cites Cicero (De Fin.III.5.19) to the effect that the style should rise in proportion to the seriousness of the subject matter. Petrarch demands a certain level of elegance, then, even in the treatment of difficult topics in philosophy. He requires the same of history - and the problem of what language to use in the writing of humanist history will also surface in the next century - for he admires Livy's work not least for its proximity to rhetoric: "ab arte eloquentie non multum abesse (videtur)." (Rer.Mem.i.18, p.18)

In general, then, Petrarch aims at a consciously elaborate level of Latin in both prose and verse; his Latin works are written for an intellectual elite, with the possible exception of the De Remediis Utriusque Fortune. That work he claims to have written "vulgatum et publicatum loquendi morem secutus, quod michi ad vulgares sepius quam ad philosophos sermo esset" (Opera, p.837). The prefaces to the other works in Latin also reveal more of Petrarch's intentions for these compositions. If the various Invective recall the tradition of Ciceronian invective, the Secretum explicitly alludes to Cicero's dialogues in form: he will avoid using "inquam" and "inquit", as Cicero had done in the De Amicitia. (Prose, p.26).<sup>39</sup>

The most interesting of his Prefaces is the introductory letter

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39. The Secretum also imitates Boethius and Dante, to a certain extent: the opening recalls explicitly Boethius but also implicitly the opening vision of Inferno, while the examination of the seven deadly sins in Book II might be paralleled with the structure of Purgatorio.

to the Familiars. He warns his friend "Socrates" that he does not use the grand style in his letters; in this he is following Cicero who did not use "magna vis dicendi" in his letters or his philosophical works such as De Officiis (Fam.i.1.14). Instead Petrarch characterises the style of his letters as "hoc mediocre domesticum et familiare dicendi genus" which suits the everyday content of the epistles.<sup>40</sup> There will be variety rather than consistency of tone in the collection, reflecting the variety of correspondents to whom he writes, and justified by the digestion metaphor: "stomacum non idem cibus omni tempore delectat, sic idem animus non uno semper nutriendus stilo est." (Fam.i.1.29). This variety in tone is something that for Petrarch indicates the less ornate quality of any work; he uses similar terms when talking of the "vario stil" of his vernacular poetry.<sup>41</sup> This variety is accounted for not only by the wide range of his correspondents, but also by the extended arc of time during which the letters to his friends were composed. Nevertheless he has removed some of the topical details in the letters which would no longer be of interest to his readers. In this he is following Seneca who was critical of

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40. cf. Alberti's "ragionare domestico e familiare" in the Della Famiglia (Opere, I.p.62) which is contrasted with the subtle philosophical style (ib.I.p.84).

41. Apart from the opening sonnet of the Canzoniere, the letter accompanying the edition of the Rime to Pandolfo Malatesta (Sen.xiii.10) also alludes to this variety: "Ante omnia opusculi varietatem vagus furor amantium, de quo statim in principio agitur, ruditatem styli aetas excuset." (Opera, p.923). Similarly he remarks on the Decameron's variety in Sen.xvii.3 to Boccaccio: "excusabat etas tunc tua...stilus, idioma, ipsaque rerum levitas et eorum qui lecturi talia videbantur. Refert enim largiter quibus scribas, morumque varietate stili varietas excusatur." (in E.Golenistchev-Kutuzof, L'Histoire de Grisélidis en France au XIVème et au XVème Siecle, p.250).

Cicero for including too much trivia in his letters (Ep.118.1-2).

Yet on the whole in his Familiares Petrarch is imitating the epistles of Cicero rather than those of Seneca; for the latter writes only on philosophical matters to Lucilius, while Cicero includes "familiaria et res novas ac varios illius seculi rumores" (Fam.i.1.32), all of which relaxes the mind of the reader. In the earlier version of this letter Petrarch at this point discusses another criticism of Cicero's letters. This is the attack on Cicero's epistolary style made by Sidonius in his introductory letter. Petrarch here distinguishes between on the one hand his own criticism of one aspect of Cicero's life or Seneca's rejection of the content of his letters, and on the other the audacity of Sidonius, who has dared to criticise the great orator on the one element in which all agree he excelled, his eloquence.<sup>42</sup> Petrarch believes he is following Cicero in writing at times "admodum exquisite", at other times "familiariter" (i.1.35), and the letter concludes with a final allusion to the variety of the epistles ("diversicoloribus liciis texta") and a recollection of his three models for the genre, Epicurus, Seneca and Cicero.<sup>43</sup>

Despite his claim, then, that "in his epystolis magna ex parte

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42. Both Poliziano and G.F.Pico, when justifying the non-Ciceronian style of their letters, cite Sidonius' criticism: hence it is likely that they possessed this early version of Petrarch's introductory letter. They both echo Petrarch's defence of the variety of their letters.

43. U.Dotti, Petrarca e la scoperta della coscienza moderna, pp.131ff. illustrates Petrarch's fondness for quoting Seneca, who also often cites Epicurus.

Ciceronis potius quam Senece morem sequar" (i.1.32), Petrarch in his epistles is no Ciceronian in the strict sense.<sup>44</sup> He is conscious that he is using a Latin very different from that used by his contemporaries in their letters. Thus when he is talking of an important friend of his at Avignon he says: "Magnum amicum cultuque precipuo colendum Babilone habeo", whereas his contemporaries would normally write in ecclesiastical Latin: "habeo singularem verendumque dominum". Petrarch sees his own wording as a return to a classical style of talking about great men ("prisco et ingenuo loquendi more"), and he cites the way Cicero talks of Pompey as his friend and the way Pliny addresses the Emperor Vespasian. The unclassical "verendum dominum" he categorises as the modern, servile, flattering style of mentioning an important prelate. (Fam.xiii.6.30). Yet elsewhere he knowingly uses the verb "illuminare" in its vernacular sense of "illuminating manuscripts" (Fam.xviii.5.5), and the verb "intercedere" in its medieval sense of "to intercede" not in its classical meaning: "loquor autem nostro more, non veterum, apud quos intercedere impedire est" (xvi.10.1). Petrarch, then, is keen to distinguish his style of Latin from that of the scholastic writers or the writers of dictamen; but he is not prepared to confine himself to the lexis or usage of classical authors, far less to restrict himself

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44. P. De Nolhac (Petrarque et l'humanisme, II p.126) was thus correct: "La prose de notre humaniste est nourrie de Seneque au moins autant que de Ciceron." In a note on that page he shows that a similar view was held by Squarzafico around 1500: "magis Senecae densitatem quam Ciceronis amplitudinem imitatur, unde persaepe ex hoc recentiorem Senecam ipsum appellaverim."

to the words of one author as the later Ciceronianists will do. Instead he uses words even in their "modern", i.e. medieval, meanings; employs many terms not found in Cicero or even in any classical authors; and especially in the letters uses many diminutives. In other words his Latin contains many of the features of the kind of language used by the anti-Ciceronians in the next century. Thus he is not afraid to copy words found only in late writers such as Apuleius, or in archaic authors like Plautus. One of his letters to Tommaso da Messina opens with the diminutives seniculum (found only in Apuleius), corpusculum, and palliolum (an archaism cited by Cicero). He follows this up with nearly twenty lines from Plautus' Aulularia and an allusion to the opening of Apuleius' Metamorphoses (Fam.i.10.1-3).<sup>45</sup>

In practice, then, as in theory, he is an eclectic; he borrows words from a wide range of authors, employs a Latin that has both classical and medieval elements in it. Even had he possessed the will and the instruments to keep separate the ancient and medieval components he would never have done so, because in theory he insisted on not following in the footsteps of a single leader. Yet he feels that his language is strikingly different from that of his contemporaries. Perhaps for Petrarch the major difference is that his Latin lacks the flowery ornateness of the writers of dictamen and has fewer words that belong to ecclesiastical Latin. In his Latin, as in many other aspects of his life, Petrarch thought he was returning to the ways of antiquity but in fact his Latin, like those other aspects, has elements that also belong to his own century.

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45. Fam.iv.17,18,19 are full of quotes and echoes of the Aulularia, while Fam.xiii.11 reworks a section of the Elder Pliny on dogs: see U.Bosco, Petrarca, cit., p.131.



## IV

Finally some details of Petrarch's method of composition in the vernacular and in Latin will reveal how faithfully he applied his principles of imitation in poetic practice. The sonnet "Tutto il di piango", which appears in the Canzoniere as number CCXVI, originally was written in a very different form. The original version appears among the "Rime disperse" with the following opening lines:

Nel tempo, lasso!, de la notte quando  
 piglian riposo i miseri mortali  
 da le fatiche loro, e gli animali  
 similmente stan tutti riposando...

Fubini analysed the two versions of this sonnet which yield "un esempio caratteristico del modo di lavorare del Petrarca", and pointed out that one of the reasons for the rejection of the earlier form of the sonnet was the Dantesque echo both at the beginning and at the end of the poem, and the reminiscence of Vergil in the second line.<sup>46</sup> But the similarity to the Aeneid remains in the later version: "Tutto il dí piango; e poi la notte quando/prendon riposo i miseri mortali." while the echoes of Dante disappear. There is nothing inconsistent in this; for while Petrarch aims in general at similitudo not identitas, he is particularly keen to avoid close imitation in the vernacular, "in his maxime vulgaribus" (Fam.xxi.15.12). Fubini does not make this distinction, but I feel it is an important one, for Petrarch is prepared to be much more overt

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46. M.Fubini, 'Il Petrarca artefice' in his Studi sulla letteratura del Rinascimento, pp.1-12.



in his allusions to classical sources but tends to conceal his indebtedness to vernacular authors. Indeed the Vergilian motif in this poem is taken up at greater length in another sonnet: "Or che 'l ciel e la terra e 'l vento tace" (CLXIV).<sup>47</sup>

Even greater wealth of detail has survived to illustrate the composition of the important canzone "Che debb'io far?" (CCLXVIII). The original first line of this poem ran "Amore in pianto ogni mio riso è volto." This and another seven lines were rejected by the poet in this Latin comment in the margin: "non videtur satis triste principium". Before reaching the definitive version of the opening line he tried "Che faccio omai? che mi consigli amore?", which was presumably altered because it was too close to the ending of a Latin poem cited in Aulus Gellius: "Quid ago? da, Venus, consilium."<sup>48</sup> These details of the poet at work are significant not only as documents of Petrarch's method of composition but as evidence of his application of his theory of imitation to the practice of writing poetry in the volgare. The alterations he effects in his vernacular verse are parallel to the changes he makes in the Latin poems such as the Bucolicum Carmen, for the motives behind these changes are all explicable by his thoughts on imitation, in particular by his search for similitudo not identitas.

47. A close analysis of the imitatio evident in this sonnet is in T.M.Greene, 'Petrarch and the Humanist Hermeneutic' in Italian Literature: Roots and Branches, Essays in Honor of T.G.Bergin, pp.201-224.

48. Noct. Att. XIX.ix.14. Other significant annotations occur at l.67 of this canzone, where 'Pon fren al gran dolor che ti trasporta' has this comment: 'hoc placet quia sonantior'; and at l.77, where the rhymes 'rischiari' and 'cari' are called by the author 'nimis crebris': see A.Romanò, Il codice degli abbozzi di Francesco Petrarca, pp.203-4.

Petrarch's views on imitation, when compared with Dante's, reveal the cultural distance between the two men. In Dante there is general approval of the principle of imitation: classical authors are to be followed in their use of rhetorical figures, in their moral message, and in their lofty style. Petrarch in one sentence seems to be replying to Dante's three areas of imitation: "Utendum igitur alieno ingenio utendumque coloribus, abstinendum verbis." (Fam.xxiii.19.13). He is in favour of imitating other writers' ideas and even their rhetorical figures, but he is wary of using their words. In contrast to Dante's recommendation of imitation in principle, Petrarch stresses the dangers of imitatio: where Seneca had emphasised the importance of unity of style, the humanist insists that the stamp of personal identity should not be lost in excessive obeisance to a literary model. It is not surprising that the medieval poet sees the artist as primarily God's "scriba" (Par.x.27; cf. Purg.xxiv.52-4) while the author of the Trionfi and the Letter to Posterity is concerned for the personality of the artist.

In the De Vulgari Eloquentia Dante regards the imitation of Latin as salutary for the vernacular and in the Commedia he is clearly trying to emulate the serious works of antiquity. Petrarch had initially thought of using the vernacular as a medium in a similar attempt to rival the classical poets and perhaps the Trionfi are the result of that emulation. But Petrarch had no doubts or contradictions about the superiority of Latin over the volgare, so that while his vernacular poetry often imitates the ideas and stylistic devices of the classical authors, he ultimately devoted himself to Latin for the

bulk of his writings.

Petrarch's divergence from Dante is visible in other areas. When discussing literary models he offers a more homogeneous canon of authors than Dante's congeries of major and minor auctores in the De Vulgari Eloquentia (ii.VI.7). In Petrarch we can already see the germs of the Ciceronianist movement, in Dante he is not mentioned at all as a literary stylist. Conversely Orosius, recommended by Dante as a model, is described by the humanist as a mere "coacervator".

More fundamental is their differing choice of literary public. Since Dante recognises the nobility of the vernacular he is determined to share the fruits of the Convivio and the Commedia with the vulgus; but Petrarch, like the pagan authors, hates the "profanum vulgus" and applies the term to any group he regards as uninitiated in the rites of humanism, from the unlearned who can only understand the vernacular to those who read the De Remediis of Seneca, to scholastic philosophers and canon lawyers. This attitude is shaped by two factors. The first is that Horace, who for Dante is primarily a moral poet, author of the Satires and the Epistles, is equally a lyric poet for Petrarch; he is the author of the Odes which Petrarch loves to quote, including the tag "Odi profanum vulgus" (Odes III.1.1). But - and this is the second factor - all poetry reflects the religious environment in which it is born. Thus Dante's poetry in the humble vernacular stems from that medieval form of Christianity which addressed itself to all men and therefore encouraged the use of "sermo humilis". Petrarch could also be defined as a medieval Christian, but because he imitates the pose

of classical poets, he is in turn - like those poets - imitating pagan priests, whose religion was aimed only at the initiated and kept out the profane, vulgar crowd.

The distance between the theoretical positions of the two great Italian poets of the Trecento is paralleled by the difference in their practice. In the vernacular the divergence between the language of Dante and that of Petrarch has already been outlined by several scholars;<sup>49</sup> and I hope to have illustrated how Petrarch's method of composition is closely related to his theory of imitation. There is an enormous gulf between the wide-ranging, almost experimental use of the volgare in Dante's poetry and the polished homogeneity of Petrarch's verse. The distance between the kind of Latin used by both writers is equally great, but has not received the same attention from the critics. Because of the paucity of Dante's Latin verse, it is more significant to compare the Latin prose of the two men. It is immediately clear that in general the scholastic prose of the Monarchia and the ornate dictamen of the Epistolae is very remote from the author of the Familiares who, as we have seen, objects to both those modes of composition. A valid comparison could be made between Dante's second Letter, a consolatory letter of the death of Conte Alessandro di Romena to his two nephews, and Familiares vii.13 to Cardinal Giovanni Colonna on the deaths of his brothers and nephews.

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49. eg. G.Contini, Saggio di un commento alle correzioni del Petrarca volgare; U.Bosco, Francesco Petrarca.

In the first letter there are certain words, typical of the scholastic way of reasoning, which therefore rarely appear in Petrarch: "Quapropter...quatenus...prout" (Ep.II.2). The key words and phrasing of the following sentence belong to the manner of scholastic writing and could never have been employed by Petrarch:

Sed quamquam, sensualibus amissis, doloris amaritudo  
incumbat, si considerentur intellectualia quae supersunt,  
sane mentis oculis lux dulcis consolationis exoritur.  
(ibid).

Other phrases are not only non-classical in construction, but seem to echo Dante's own advice on composition in the De Vulgari Eloquentia (ii.VI.4.): "Ego autem, praeter haec, me vestrum vestrae discretioni excuso de absentia lacrymosis exequiis." (Ep.II.3).<sup>50</sup> Petrarch's letter returns to more classical vocabulary (though there are still some rare words: "refrigerium...evanida...medelam.....sermunculis"), and more classical copulae: "Deinde...enimvero...igitur...Quid multa?" As often in the Familiares, after citing a biblical source (Ecclesiasticus) Petrarch quotes a classical exemplum, Julius Caesar's ability to stand up to fortune without the aid of relatives, and ends with an appeal to Giovanni's "generosam vere romani spiritus maiestatem." (Prose, pp.896-904).

Like his theory of imitation, the Latin that Petrarch uses in practice is indicative of the distance that lies between himself and Dante. In many respects it represents a rejection of medieval values

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50. The sentence is similar to one of Dante's model sentences of DVE ii.VI.4: "Laudabilis discretio marchionis Estensis et sua magnificentia preparata, cunctis illum facit esse dilectum."

and stylistics and a return to something like classical Latin, perhaps something even approaching Ciceronian Latin. But there are many non-classical elements in it, as in every aspect of Petrarch. As he himself said, he lies between two ages, looking both backwards to antiquity and forwards to posterity: "velut in confinio duorum populorum constitutus, ac simul ante retroque prospiciens." (Rer. Mem.i.19, p.19).

(c) BOCCACCIO

Of the Tre Corone Fiorentine Boccaccio was born last and is often considered lowest in stature compared with his illustrious predecessors, Dante and Petrarch.\* Yet although this is a trend that can be documented right from Boccaccio's own lifetime (Petrarch Seniles v.2), the youngest of medieval Italy's literary triumvirate was in some respects more advanced than Dante and Petrarch. Not only was he more familiar with Greek than the other two writers, but he also seems to have been acquainted with a wider range of Latin authors than even Petrarch. Like Petrarch, he had read Quintilian as well as Apuleius;<sup>1</sup> but unlike his mentor, he felt such a strong attraction towards Apuleius' style that he copied out his complete works in his own hand (now the manuscript in the Laurentian Library Pl.54.32), and allowed the African writer to influence significantly his Latin style. Boccaccio also had access to Tacitus' works but this experience does not appear to have had any effect on his Latin. He also knew other minor and late Latin poems unknown to Petrarch<sup>2</sup> - but I mention specifically Quintilian, Apuleius and Tacitus as these writers become in the next two centuries the alternative models for those who oppose the Ciceronianist movement, and also because the writing of prose in

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\* For the Latin works I have used Opere latine minori, ed. A.F.Massera (Bari, 1928); Genealogia Deorum Gentilium, ed. V.Romano 2 vols (Bari, 1951).

1. C.C.Coulter, 'Boccaccio's knowledge of Quintilian'.

2. V.Branca, Boccaccio medievale, pp.281-2.



Latin becomes a more controversial problem of imitation than the writing of Latin verse. This very fact emerges in the works of Petrarch and Boccaccio and is another indicator that they belong to a new generation: for Dante and for the pre-humanists that were his contemporaries poetry was more important than prose, Vergil was the object of more serious study than Cicero; even Petrarch and Boccaccio are initially more concerned with Latin poetry, but after 1350, after Petrarch's discovery of Cicero's Epistolae ad Atticum and his decision to collect his own letters, both men devote themselves almost exclusively to the writing of Latin prose.<sup>3</sup>

Boccaccio often exploits his wide knowledge of Latin authors, but any imitation is almost always in terms of subject matter, and since he offers no theoretical statements on imitation, Boccaccio's use of previous writers is more often to be analysed in terms of his literary sources rather than his stylistic models.<sup>4</sup> But one area where we have a substantial amount of stylistic imitation are the early Latin letters that imitate Apuleius and Dante, exhibiting a taste for an exotic Latin that soon disappears under the influence of Petrarch. If Apuleius is only a transitory influence on Boccaccio, the two fundamental literary models that have an important effect throughout his whole creative life are Dante and Petrarch. If we examine first Boccaccio's Latin works, we will find evidence of this

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3. See G.Billanovich, Petrarca letterato: I. Lo scrittoio del Petrarca, p.135 n.1.

4. G.Velli, 'Cultura e imitatio nel primo Boccaccio' stresses this on p.65.



movement from poetry to prose and a parallel shift from the florid and poetic to the restrained Latin prose style of Petrarch; section II will consider how the vernacular works fit into this pattern.

## I

First the Latin prose works. In the early works of his Neapolitan period Boccaccio imitates the paragons of contemporary taste. He follows in general the current rules of dictamen, in particular some letters of Dante, and embellishes these early letters with many lexical rarities drawn chiefly from Apuleius. The importance of Dante's letters as models is evident not only in these youthful exercises of Boccaccio but also in his autograph Zibaldone (also in the Laurentian Pl.29.8) in which he has copied out three of Dante's Epistole, the one to Cino (Dante Ep.iii), the one to the "Amico Fiorentino" (Ep.xii) and the one to the Italian Cardinals (Ep.xi).<sup>5</sup> It is the letter to Cino (iii) and another letter, which he presumably copied out elsewhere, the letter to Morcello Malaspina (iv), that have the strongest influence on Boccaccio's youthful compositions, the four letters written in 1339 (Ep.i-iv: Massera pp.109-24).

The first letter is addressed to Carlo, Duca di Durazzo, but was probably merely a rhetorical exercise, addressed to an imaginary prince. It is clearly modelled on Dante's letter to Cino in that it deals with a hypothetical question, offers the evidence of the same three auctores and in the same order as cited by Dante in resolving a different question (Ovid, Seneca, the Old Testament), and implies that a vernacular poem is also enclosed.

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5. G.Billanovich, Restauri boccacceschi, p.49 n.1.

Where Cino had asked Dante whether the soul could move from one passion to another, Boccaccio deals with the problem of which quality is more praiseworthy in a ruler, clemency or justice. Dante had cited from Ovid's Metamorphoses and Seneca's De Remediis, Boccaccio turns to the Tristia and to the De Clementia. But the similarities are not confined to content. Dante had talked of the slings of fortune as "Rhamnusie spicula"; Boccaccio embellishes this to make it: "Sed sevientis Raynusie causa, ac atrocitatis Cupidinis importune" (p.109). He combines another phrase of Dante's with words from the beginning of Apuleius' Metamorphoses. Dante speaks of the enclosed poem in these words: "Redditur, ecce, sermo Calliopeus inferius"; but in Boccaccio this becomes: "prout parvus et exoticus sermo, caliopeo moderamine constitutus, vestre magnificentie declarabit inferius."<sup>6</sup> There are echoes of other Apuleian phrases and words in this first letter of Boccaccio ("lacrimas centuculo desiccabo", "rude desultoriumque eloquium"), as well as the diminutive "questiunculam" and other words unattested in classical authors: "Crepor celsitudinis", "cristibie", "creperius" and "balluce".

Billanovich has demonstrated the generally scholastic nature of these early exercises in dictamen by the young law student, and in particular how the first two letters are modelled on two Dante epistles in terms of content and language but that Boccaccio has

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6. Apul.Met.I.1: "praefamur veniam, si quid exotici ac forensis sermonis rudis lucutor offendero."

inverted the status of the two recipients.<sup>7</sup> Thus the first letter, based mostly on the letter to the poet Cino, is addressed to the prince of Durazzo; the second letter, which incorporates large sections of Dante's epistle to the Malaspina lord, is directed to the poet Petrarch. This second letter by Boccaccio is not so much an imitation as a transcription of whole sentences from the Dante letter, interspersed with sentences and phrases from Apuleius.<sup>8</sup> If the style is medieval, the content also is thoroughly contemporary: in praising Petrarch Boccaccio says he is another Aristarchus in grammar, an Ockham in logic, in rhetoric he is "Tullius et Ulixes", in music he is "boetizans", in history he follows "optimum Comestorem" (p.113)!

The third letter also looks like a standard rhetorical exercise. After the letter of praise to Petrarch, a letter of criticism to an unfaithful friend. The language of this letter is even more extraordinary: there is no imitation of Dante, but a number of Apuleian words (on the first page alone "obgannirier", "sepicule", "exanclando") and a welter of words derived from Greek ("cathacreto", "cathagorando", "acromata" etc.). The letter ends with an explicit acknowledgement of the obscure style used: "Cathagrafavi enim obscure, ne forte prius huius rescripti accipias intellectum, quam patrati scelleris meritum sentias accessisse." (Ep.iii.p.117). As this final sentence demonstrates,

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7. Billanovich, Restauri p.50, and p.74 n.1.

8. Branca, Boccaccio medievale pp.219ff. n.2 usefully prints Boccaccio's letter alongside the relevant passages in Dante and Apuleius.

the letter is full of unusual words, sometimes drawn from Apuleius, sometimes derived from Greek, sometimes just lexical rarities that are unattested in any other author or diminutives coined by Boccaccio. The dominant rhythm, as the passage quoted illustrates, is that of the velox, the most artificial of the endings used in the cursus: "accípias íntelleétum", "séntias áccessísse". This use of the cursus and cult of obscurity is a not unexpected feature in someone who was at the time a student of law and was thus familiar with the ars notandi.

The last of the four letters written in 1339 is rather less devoted to such devices. But although these four letters are early works, they are, as Billanovich has pointed out, an important milestone in the reconstruction of Boccaccio's literary tastes and career.<sup>9</sup> In this early period Boccaccio clearly enjoys an eclectic imitation which embraces classical, late antique and contemporary authors. These early dictamina reflect the medieval notary style in their cult of the cursus, the use of colourful and even obscure vocabulary, and in the quotations from and references to the auctores. In particular they reveal Dante's role as a prime exponent of the art of dictamen in his epistles.<sup>10</sup> But where Boccaccio differs from his contemporaries is in his impressive appreciation and imitation of an

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9. G.Billanovich, 'La leggenda dantesca del Boccaccio' (p.49 n.1).

10. R.Witt calls Dante "the greatest exponent of the oratorical style (of the public letter) in the generation after Latini" in his 'Medieval Ars Dictaminis and the Beginnings of Humanism: a new Construction of the Problem' (p.19).

author such as Apuleius. This is not surprising given the level of culture at the Neapolitan court at the time; for Boccaccio's friends at this point were men like Paolo da Perugia, Andalò da Negro and the monk Barlaam. It was only under the later influence of the Petrarchan friends Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro, Barbato da Sulmona, Giovanni Barrili and Petrarch himself that Boccaccio gravitates towards more humanist tastes in his Latin style. Thus in the later letters to Zanobi da Strada (Ep.vi,viii), Barbato (Ep.xi), and Mainardo Cavalcanti (Ep.xx,xxi) there is much less use of the cursus, and a more restrained, classical vocabulary.<sup>11</sup> After the meeting with Petrarch in 1350 and 1351, and his reading of Petrarch's collected letters at the time, Boccaccio alters his epistolary style to imitate his new master's manner. The fact that he erased his own name from these earlier efforts proves how far reaching that revolution in epistolary style was.

If Dante was the model for Boccaccio's earliest letters, Petrarch was the supreme model for most of his writings in his later years. The letter to Iacopo Pizzinga of 1371 (pp.191-7) is significant for assessing the position of Dante and Petrarch in Boccaccio's later idea of the course of Italian literary history. Talking about the revival of poetry he sees a tentative beginning in the medieval works of "Cato", Prosper, Pamphylus and Arrigo da Settimello but he concludes that these do not constitute a genuine classical revival: "opuscula parva

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11. The frequency of Boccaccio's use of the cursus has permitted us to date different works or different versions of the same work: cf. P.G.Ricci, 'Studi sulle opere latine e volgari del Boccaccio' pp.11-20.

nec ullam antiquitatis dulcedinem sapientia" (p.194). The first person according to Boccaccio, to bring the Muses back to Italy from exile was Dante. Yet even he is seen at this stage in Boccaccio's life as a writer who took an indirect route back to antiquity: "nec ea tamen qua veteres via, sed per diverticula quedam omnino insueta maioribus" (p.195). The byways followed by Dante presumably refer to the fact that he used the vernacular not Latin to renew the glories of poetry. The metaphor of the road is continued when Petrarch is then discussed: "vetus iter arripere orsus est... sibi et post eum ascendere volentibus viam aperuit." (p.195). The image of Petrarch opening up the ancient road to Parnassus will be exploited by the humanists of the next century when they chart the history of the revival of letters. But in Boccaccio's letter the idea of Petrarch opening the "vetus iter" seems to be deliberately contrasted with the different route ("nec ea qua veteres via") taken by Dante, and this difference presumably lies in the greater emphasis Dante attached to the vernacular; Petrarch, on the other hand, travelled the same road as the ancients, by using Latin for his major works. At the end of what survives of this letter Boccaccio resumes the image of the road to declare that he is following Petrarch rather than Dante: "Ingenti, fateor, animo in stratum iam iter intravi, trahente me perpetuandi nominis desiderio et fiducia preceptoris mei." (p.197).

Boccaccio's Latin is, then, almost datable by the frequency of the cursus and the number of non-classical words in any piece. Thus the early letter to Petrarch (Ep.ii pp.111-4) makes an interesting



contrast in both style and subject matter with the later De Vita et Moribus Francisci Petrarchi (pp.238-44). The former had praised Petrarch as another Ockham in logic, a Cicero or Ulysses in rhetoric, a Boethius in music, a Seneca in moral philosophy, and another Comestor in scholastic history. The rhetorical nature of this encomiastic list in general as much as the coupling of Cicero with the mythical Ulysses demonstrates that Boccaccio is not seriously thinking of Petrarch's Latin as genuinely Ciceronian. In any case at this stage he would not have had the opportunity to read much of Petrarch's Latin work. By the time he writes the later biographical sketch in the 1340s Boccaccio would have had time to read some of Petrarch's works and to understand the new humanist ideals. He now can say that Petrarch imitates not only the poets Terence, Vergil, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, but also equals Cicero in diction and Seneca in moral philosophy:

Hinc vero morales est philosophos diligenti studio  
ymitatus, et maxime M. Tullium Ciceronem et egregium  
Senecam cordubensem. (p.239)

The differences between this and the earlier passage are significant. No longer are the medieval masters Ockham, Boethius, Comestor presented as ideals; Cicero is not the almost mythical inventor of rhetoric, but mainly a moral philosopher whose "locutio" is to be imitated.<sup>12</sup> The De Vita et Moribus is clearly a work of the 1340s: the content illustrates that the models are no longer the medieval auctores Ockham

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12. Boccaccio specifically mentions a dialogue of Petrarch modelled on Cicero (p.244) probably the Secretum. Hence his praise of Petrarch's "ciceronianam facundiam" (p.224) after his death is not necessarily a mere cliché.



and Comestor, but the new humanist favourites Cicero and Seneca as well as the poets; yet, though poetry, rhetoric and moral philosophy are mentioned, there is no mention of the other humanist discipline, history; Livy has not yet been installed as the replacement for Comestor. Similarly the style of the work shows it to belong to this transitional stage of Boccaccio's development. There are fewer lexical rarities than in the early letter, yet there are still a number of medieval words ("examinatus", "laureatione", "clericalem", "presulatus") and a few drawn from Apuleius: "fuscositate permistus", "gerulonum" "Exotidice". The structure of this work is modelled on the late lives of Vergil, but the most telling indication that this is a relatively early work of Boccaccio is the predominance of the velox rhythm in every sentence ("stúdio ýmitátus", "Sénecam córdubénsem", "mérito iúdicári").

The influence of Dante and Petrarch on Boccaccio is thus fundamental, the importance of the Petrarchan example eventually eclipsing that of Dante. The meetings with Petrarch in 1350 and 1351 effect a revolution in Boccaccio's Latin and determine the subsequent course of his literary output. The letters written by Petrarch to the ancient authors Cicero, Varro, Seneca, Quintilian, Livy (eventually included in Familiare xxiv) were read by Boccaccio in 1351 and from that point on constitute a new canon of prose authors for all humanists.<sup>13</sup> It is also in the last two decades of his life

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13. Billanovich, Petrarca letterato p.107: "Questo libretto delle epistole ai classici...perfezionò particolarmente la conversione...del lettore congeniale di Ovidio e di Apuleio nell'ammiratore di Cicerone e di Virgilio."

that the author of the Decameron turns away from writing in the vernacular to devote himself to learned works in Latin prose: De Casibus Virorum Illustrium, De Mulieribus Claris, De Montibus, Genealogia Deorum Gentilium.

It is when he is defending poets from the charge of being merely "symias phylosophorum" in Gen.Deor.(xiv.17) that Boccaccio comes nearest to making a theoretical statement about imitation. He claims that poets are not mere apes of philosophers, but rather are themselves philosophers since their message is always consistent with the lessons of philosophy. He then draws this distinction between the ape or simple imitator on the one hand and the complex imitation of philosophy to be found in the poets:

Preterea imitator simplex in nullo exorbitat a vestigiis imitati. Quod quidem in poetis minime cernitur, nam, esto a phylosophicis non devient conclusionibus, non tamen in eas eodem tramite tendunt. (xiv.17 p.731).

The mention of "vestigiis" and "tramite" remind us of the image of the road employed in the letter to Iacopo Pizzinga, and also of the many occurrences of this image in Petrarch and other writers on imitation.<sup>14</sup> Boccaccio's conclusion to this chapter anticipates a later development of the imitation debate in Italy; for having stressed the difference of genre between philosophical prose and poetry, he argues that poets could be more accurately described as apes of nature: "In hoc ego poetas esse symias confitebor, quod ego honorabilissimum reor opus, in id scilicet arte conari, quod agit natura potentia." (ib. p.732).<sup>15</sup>

14. See the previous chapter on Petrarch, note 7.

15. See the later chapter on Giovanfrancesco Pico and Bembo. See also H.W.Janson, Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, (p.293) where Boccaccio is called "the originator of the Renaissance concept of ars simia naturae."

## II

The influence of both Dante and Petrarch is also clearly visible in Boccaccio's vernacular verse, as are traces of lesser figures of the dolce stil novo school, such as Cino and Cavalcanti\*. In the 126 poems securely attributed to Boccaccio it is the Petrarchan model that has the most pervasive influence; and although none of the lyrics are datable with any certainty, it is likely that, working on the analogy of the evolution of the Latin works, the early poems are the ones which owe most to Cavalcanti and Dante, while the Petrarchan stamp is more and more obvious in those written after 1350. Although Boccaccio never collected his poems into a unified collection, the inspiration for many of his poems comes from his master's Canzoniere. As Petrarch had played on the associations of Laura, so Boccaccio now explores the resonances of Fiammetta in his poems; like Laura and Beatrice, Fiammetta also is portrayed as dying and beckoning to the poet from the other world (xcvii-xcix); Boccaccio too feels that Love has made him "del vulgo noioso/favola divenire" (lxxxiii); the poems on the death of Dante and Petrarch (cii, cxxvi) recall Petrarch's own sonnet on the death of Sennuccio; the sequence of sonnets against the avaricious enemies of humanism (xciii-xcvi) could be seen as a parallel to Petrarch's poems against Avignon; and certainly the religious poems "O glorioso Re" (cxvi) and "O Regina degli angioli" (cxix) deliberately echo the closing poems of the Canzoniere.

Some sonnets exemplify Boccaccio's normally eclectic practice in imitation. In the following poem the maritime landscape is a

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\* For the vernacular works I cite from the following editions: Rime, ed. V.Branca (Bari, 1939); Opere in versi, ed. P.G.Ricci (Milan-Naples, 1965); Decameron, Filocolo, Ameto, Fiammetta, ed. M.Bianchi, C.Salinari, N.Sapegno (Milan-Naples, 1952).

favourite one of the poet in his Neapolitan days, but the evocation of the noonday heat is classical in tone. The first line derives from Ovid, the second line is an echo of a famous Petrarch sonnet, the fifth recalls Dante:

Il Cancro ardea, passata la sesta ora,  
spirava zefiro e il tempo era bello,  
quieto il mar, e in sul lito di quello,  
in parte dove il sol non era ancora,  
vid'io colei, che 'l ciel di sé innamora,  
en piu donne far festa... (iii.1-6).

But as in his Latin writings, so in his vernacular poetry Boccaccio reaches a stage where he is writing almost totally in the Petrarchan idiom, even though in one sonnet he may draw on a number of different poems from the Canzoniere:

Quante fiate indrieto mi rimiro  
e veggio l'ore e i giorni e i mesi e gli anni  
ch'io ho perduto seguendo gl'inganni  
della folle speranza e del desiro,  
veggo il pericol corso ed il martiro  
sofferto invan in gli amorosi affanni,  
né trovar credo chi di ciò mi sganni,  
tanto ne piango e contro a me m'adiro. (xlvi.1-8).<sup>16</sup>

Apart from the Rime, Boccaccio's other verse works in the volgare offer similar parallels with the Latin compositions. Thus in his earliest narrative poem La caccia di Diana, written like the early pieces of dictamen and the Allegoria Mithologica in his Neapolitan period, we find that the two classical models which are

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16. R.Ferreri (Innovazione e tradizione nel Boccaccio, p.39) talks of the personal note in this poem, but it seems characteristic of Boccaccio only inasmuch as it echoes so many Petrarchan poems as to be almost a cento, rather like the highly derivative early Latin letters. The echoes of Petrarch's poetry here and in other poems are so strong as to contradict the old idea of a "striking contrast...between the influence of Petrarch, minor in extent and late in beginning, and that of Dante, Boccaccio's major inspiration, effective throughout his poetic career." (G.R.Silber, The Influence of Dante and Petrarch on Certain of Boccaccio's Lyrics (p.148). See also F.Suitner, 'Sullo stile delle Rime e sulle polemiche letterarie riflesse da alcuni sonetti'.

most prominent are Ovid (for the scenes of the nymphs hunting) and Apuleius (for the transformation of the narrator into a stag then back again into human form); while the final canto of the poem shifts from the classical tone to the world of the dolce stil novo.<sup>17</sup> Similarly the Filostrato, which was probably written not long after the transcription of the letter of Dante to Cino da Pistoia, incorporates a rehandling of Cino's famous poem that begins: "La dolce vista e 'l bel guardo soave" (Filostrato v.62ff).<sup>18</sup>

The Teseida, composed mostly after Boccaccio's move from Naples to Florence, reflects his increased interest in Dante and also an initial awareness of Petrarch. The poem was intended to be the vernacular epic, the volgare poem on a military subject which Dante says in the De Vulgari Eloquentia was not yet written in his time. Boccaccio explicitly alludes to this gap which he is trying to fill, in the last book of the Teseida.<sup>19</sup> But it was not only his reading of Dante's rhetorical treatise that prompted him to tackle an epic subject; for in 1341 he had heard of if not even witnessed Petrarch's receiving of the laurel in Rome and was aware that this award was partly due to the promise of the Latin epic, the Africa. Certainly

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17. The poem is in the form of a sirventese, and the terza rima also looks back to Dante.

18. The rehandling is again almost a cento of Cino's poem. For the proximity of this poem to the letter to Cino transcribed by Boccaccio see Billanovich, Petrarca letterato cit., pp.66-7 n.1.

19. Teseida xii.84 clearly alludes to De Vulgari Eloquentia ii.II.8.

the poem by Boccaccio has many epic features; it is like the Aeneid in being divided into 12 books; it deals with a military subject, there are funeral games, a catalogue of heroes, epic similes and other elements of the grand style. But since the romantic vein is equally important, the imitations of Ovid that occur tend to consign the poem to the middle rather than to the high style.<sup>20</sup> The language reflects this mixture in content: there are more Latinate words than in the Filostrato but there are also many echoes of themes and techniques of the dolce stil novo poets in general and of Dante in particular.

In the Amorosa visione the visionary subject matter, the structure of 50 canti, the use of terza rima all demonstrate the influence of the Commedia on Boccaccio. The whole poem seems to be an amplification of Inferno IV which develops into a series of triumphs, and thus is emblematic of Boccaccio's position between Dante and Petrarch. On the other hand the Ninfale fiesolano, which was probably the last of the vernacular works in verse to be written by Boccaccio, reveals far fewer literary influences. The parabola of Boccaccio's poetic composition in the volgare, moving from the heavy dependence on previous models evident in the Caccia di Diana to the almost total absence of "esibizionismo culturale" in the Ninfale,<sup>21</sup> runs parallel to the development of his Latin style from the crude and unassimilated

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20. The dedication of the poem to Fiammetta states that "la materia della quale parla...è d'amore". (ed.cit. p.261).

21. The phrase is that of its editor, A.Balduino, in the Mondadori edition vol.III, p.275.

imitations of Dante and Apuleius to the fluency of the later humanist works; and, as we shall see, the vernacular prose works suggest a similar trajectory.

Schiaffini first discussed the significant change that takes place in Boccaccio's prose style in the vernacular from the florid, almost baroque descriptions of the Filocolo, Fiammetta and Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine to the more restrained prose of the Decameron. The first works belong to the earliest period in Boccaccio's writing, between 1339 and 1343, and correspond to the youthful exercises in dictamen. The Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine in one sense can be paralleled in the verse works which illustrate a closer reading of Dante, the Teseida and Amorosa visione; for it seems to be inspired by a reading of Dante's pastoral poems, the Eclogues to Giovanni del Virgilio, which Boccaccio discovered in the mid 1340s. The atmosphere of the Ameto, however, is more that of the classical eclogues than of Dante's. And apart from echoes of Vergil's Eclogues, the work also contains imitations of minor Vergilian works, while the praise of female hair (Com.xii) derives from one of Boccaccio's favourite authors, Apuleius (Met.II.8). This work marks the extreme in Latinate prose in Boccaccio's vernacular compositions and this extreme is possibly partly explicable by the other work which he undertook in this period, the translation of the third and fourth Decade of Livy, now securely attributed to Boccaccio.<sup>22</sup>

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22. A.Schiaffini, Tradizione e poesia, p.261: "Quasi tutta la prosa dell'Ameto è così manierata, esteriore e decorativa, e il periodo tocca il limite estremo...nell'anelito di latinizzarsi." Schiaffini (p.219 n.54) had already suggested that the Fourth Decade had been translated by Boccaccio. Recent studies have confirmed that the Third Decade was also vulgarised by him: see M.T.Casella, 'Nuovi appunti attorno al Boccaccio traduttore di Livio'



It is worth examining the passage in the Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine which is derived from Apuleius, particularly because although many critics allude to it, none consider the passage in detail. It occurs during one of the many descriptions of the nymphs that Ameto sees. Her hair is described in a long period that includes the latinism "immerito" for "immeritamente", the Neapolitanism "cianciosa" for "leggiadra", and Boccaccio's favourite Latinate method of listing using different words to mean "some": "parte ravolti alla testa nella sommità di quella, con nodo piacevole d'essi stessi, vede raccolti; e altri più corti...e altri dati all'aure...quali sopra le candide tempie e quali sopra il delicato collo ricadendo". Apart from the Petrarchan echo of the nymph's hair blown by the breeze, the first clause echoes the description of Fotis' hair in Apuleius' Metamorphoses II.8-9: "conglobatos in summum verticem nodus astrinxerat" (Met.II.9). It is this echo of the description of Fotis that seems to remind Boccaccio of the whole passage in praise of female hair in the ancient author, which he now seeks to imitate here:

A quelli con intero animo Ameto pensando, conosce i lunghi, biondi e copiosi capelli essere della donna speciale bellezza; de' quali se essa Citerea, amata nel cielo, nata nell'onde e nutricata in quelle, benché d'ogni altra grazia piena, si vegga di quelli nudata, appena potrà al suo Marte piacere. (p.932)

Again this is a Latinate sentence in length, complexity and in the construction "conosce i capelli essere". But comparing the sentence with the original in Apuleius, we shall see that it is not quite a translation of the passage since it contains minor variations.<sup>23</sup> Thus

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23. Schiaffini, op.cit., (p.221 n.56) had called it a translation, but although the whole passage remains very close to the original, its differences do seem to have been intended by the author.



the rhymed tricolon "amata nel cielo, nata nell'onde e nutricata in quelle" also occurs in the African author, who is renowned for such devices, but it has been slightly altered by Boccaccio: "caelo delecta, mari edita, fluctibus educata" (Met.II.8). Likewise Boccaccio's phrase "d'ogni altra grazia piena" is more abstract than the more picturesque Latin description of Venus "omni Gratiarum choro stipata et toto Cupidinum populo". Even the final phrase contains a slight variatio in that "appena potrà al suo Marte piacere" was initially "placere non poterit nec Vulcano suo".

The last sentence in the whole paragraph confirms Boccaccio's technique here of remaining fairly close to the original Latin, but introducing some minor changes to prevent it from being mere translation:

Adunque tanta estima la degnità de' capelli alle femine, quanta, se, qualunque si sia, di preziose veste, di ricche pietre, di rilucenti gemme e di caro oro circundata proceda, senza quelli in dovuto ordine posti, non possa ornata parere. (p.932)

He alters Apuleius' order of the bare list of nouns "auro, veste, gemmis" and adds epithets to every element on the list: "preziose veste, ricche pietre, rilucenti gemme e caro oro". The ornate quality of the prose of the Comedia has often been mentioned by critics, but here we can see Boccaccio working in a restricted area and clearly striving to achieve this ornatus by heavy adjectivisation.

Schiaffini's delineation of the development of Boccaccio's prose from the mannered excesses of the Comedia through the more harmonious style of the Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta to the restrained

balance of the prose of the Decameron is still accepted as valid in its main outlines.<sup>24</sup> One of the tests adopted by Schiaffini as well as by others to demonstrate this movement from the decorative to the essential in prose style was to compare two similar passages from two different works. An obvious example is the story in the Filocolo which is then re-used to become the fourth story of the final day of the Decameron. Schiaffini compared the moment in each tale when the knight takes the dead woman in his arms and revives her with his embraces; but his conclusions were more concerned with tone than with style: "Il sensualismo è superato in serenità".<sup>25</sup> The passages compared and analysed by Schiaffini, which relate how the knight's touches and embraces managed to resuscitate the woman, illustrate more psychological restraint than rhetorical development.<sup>26</sup> Yet the same passages can be exploited purely from a stylistic viewpoint. Here is the sentence where the knight's passion overcomes him:

E dopo alquanto, non potendosi di baciare costei saziare, la cominciò a toccare e mettere le mani nel gelato seno fra le fredde menne, e poi le secrete parti del corpo con quelle, divenuto ardito oltre al dovere, cominciò a cercare sotto i ricchi vestimenti, le quali andando tutte con timida mano tentando sopra lo stomaco le distese, e quivi con debile movimento sentí li deboli polsi muoversi alquanto. (p.894).

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24. Schiaffini, op.cit., illustrates the "forma piú armonica" of Fiammetta (p.266) and of the Decameron says: "il periodo boccaccesco è, nel Decameron, meno paludato e complesso e uniforme che nelle opere minori." (p.278). This assessment is still upheld by Branca, Boccaccio medievale p.49: "quel suo entusiasmo culturale troppo indiscriminato e farraginoso trovano un equilibrio limpidissimo e una misura superiore nel Decameron."

25. p.208.

26. See Schiaffini, pp.283-4. The Filocolo passage is also analysed but not directly compared with Dec.x.4, in J.Usher, 'Boccaccio's Experimentation with Verbal Portraits from the Filocolo to the Decameron'

Again a highly complex period with gerunds ("potendosi"), participles ("divenuto"), relative pronouns ("le quali"), inversion ("non potendosi di baciare costei saziare", "andando con timida mano tendando"), Latinate syntax ("sentí muoversi") and a plethora of adjectives (seven out of the ten nouns have an epithet). In the Decameron the sentence is briefer, more restrained both in content and in style:

Vinto adunque da questo appetito, le mise la mano in seno, e per alquanto spazio tenutalavi, gli parve sentire alcuna cosa battere il cuore a costei. (p.687).

Here just one participle ("tenutalavi"), and the few adjectives used are colourless ("questo...alquanto...alcuna"); the most obvious contrast with the earlier passage is the bald statement: "le mise la mano in seno", as opposed to the double verbs and nouns and adjectivisation of the previous phrase: "toccare e mettere le mani nel gelato seno fra le fredde menne". Of course the Decameron contains much more variety than this brief stylistic analysis would suggest; but it is this very stylistic variety that distinguishes the masterpiece from the uniformly rhetorical and imitative works that preceded it. In the Proemio and the cornice of the Decameron he does indulge in the ornate and decorative manner that characterised his earlier works, but in many of the stories, even in the edifying stories of the last day, he is, as we have seen, prepared to abandon many of the rhetorical devices used elsewhere and pursue a more concrete, unadorned style of narration.

Boccaccio's vast literary output, both in Latin and the vernacular, contains many practical examples of imitation but offers no coherent theory of imitatio. From the earliest works to the late

compositions we find him following many different literary models from the classical and late classical authors to the romance and vernacular traditions. Particularly in his earliest compositions in both Latin and the volgare he relies so heavily on one or two literary models as to produce what amounts to a cento, or almost a faithful translation of those works.<sup>27</sup> Certain writers such as Dante, Petrarch and Apuleius remain favourite models from the earliest to the later works; yet despite these constants there remains a perceptible movement in Boccaccio's writing in Latin and in the vernacular, a shift from the derivative and adorned towards the less poetic and more prosaic manner of the later works. The direction of his writings in the two languages is parallel, but the difference is that in Latin this pursuit of less colourful lexis and style is carried out in imitation of Petrarch's example and in accordance with the new humanist canons of prose style; while in the vernacular the less ornate manner of the Decameron seems to be a personal response on the part of Boccaccio to the mercantile milieu which is the inspiration of his major work.

Boccaccio follows Petrarch not only in his altered style of Latin but also in many of his literary attitudes, in his public rejection of the vernacular and its vulgar audience, in his

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27. His first Latin poem, the Elegia di Costanza, resembles his other early works in both languages in "quel...brancolare incerto fra...troppo rigide imitazioni letterarie o ostentazioni di cultura scolastica." (V.Branca, 'Il piú antico carne del Boccaccio' in his Tradizione delle opere di G.Boccaccio, p.211).

justification of the obscurity of serious writers, in his cult of solitude and the contemplative as the appropriate environment for the creative artist. But the striking phenomenon in Boccaccio's adulation for his literary mentor is that he does not echo Petrarch's many pronouncements on the theory of literary imitation, all the more striking in that two of Petrarch's three major letters on the subject are addressed to Boccaccio (Fam.xxii.2 and xxiii.19). Perhaps one reason for this is that Petrarch's primary concern is to avoid using the same words as his literary model, whereas Boccaccio particularly in his early writings is guilty of just this use of "alienis verbis", so much so that at times he seems to be composing a cento, using only the words of the text he is imitating.<sup>28</sup>

Another area of divergence between Petrarch and Boccaccio is in their views of Cicero. The younger humanist, though he does share some of Petrarch's enthusiasm for the great orator, never immerses himself totally in his thought and language, as Petrarch did, and could never really qualify for the epithet "Ciceronian" sometimes inaccurately applied to Boccaccio.<sup>29</sup> More significant models for prose in both Latin and the vernacular were Livy and Apuleius, particularly in the early works. The rather poetic prose of both these writers appealed to the young Boccaccio.<sup>30</sup> Thus although

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28. G.Velli makes some very pertinent remarks on Boccaccio's attitude to the cento, in 'L'Elegia di Costanza e l'Ars Combinatoria del Boccaccio' in his Petrarca e Boccaccio: Tradizione memoria scrittura: "la spiccata predilezione sua per la ricreazione 'a mosaico' sembra collocarlo su un versante se non opposto, diverso rispetto a quello su cui il Petrarca...sceglie di porsi." (p.120)

29. For the sixteenth century view of Boccaccio as a Ciceronian see C.Dionisotti, 'Girolamo Claricio' p.311.

30. G.Billanovich, 'Boccaccio, Petrarca e le prime traduzioni di T.Livio': "Due grandi modelli prosa per il Boccaccio novizio furono Livio e Apuleio: che certamente attrassero le simpatie del suo temperamento, maestoso e florido, sensuale e barocco." (p.331).

Cicero appears in the Amorosa Visione in the company of Seneca (iv.77-78), this can be viewed as a traditional element in such a poem given the precedent in Dante (Inf.iv.141); but the appearance of Apuleius (Am.Vis.v.37-9) reflects Boccaccio's personal tastes; and the African writer figures not in the company of a philosopher like Seneca but alongside the poets: Boccaccio is aware of the poetic quality of Apuleius' prose. Even in the Decameron Apuleius is an important author for Boccaccio, providing the source for two of the novelle (Dec.v.10; vii.2).

In many respects Boccaccio, like Petrarch, reflects the transitional nature of Trecento culture. He looks back to Dante and follows him in many ways; he lives in the shadow of Petrarch and adopts many of his attitudes; but in his knowledge of Greek and of authors such as Tacitus, as well as his cult of Apuleius, he prefigures the later developments of Italian humanism. His vernacular poetry, with its idyllic landscapes and use of diminutives, anticipates the atmosphere of Poliziano's verse; the ornate prose of the minor works, particularly of the Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine, will become both popular and influential at the end of the Quattrocento and beginning of the Cinquecento, as is testified by the printing of these minor works and the printing of a prose work that owes much to the poetic prose of both Boccaccio and Apuleius, the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili of 1499. Where Boccaccio differs from the later humanists and from Petrarch is in his emphasis on the practice of literary imitation and his lack of theory. The humanism and courtly culture of the years around 1500 appreciated Boccaccio for the eclectic writer he was; it was the Ciceronianist approach of Bembo and his circle that mistakenly tried to see Boccaccio as another Cicero.

d) COLUCCIO SALUTATI

Like Boccaccio, Salutati (1331-1406) has little contribution to make to the theoretical side of the question of literary imitation. With the exception of one general statement on the imitation of ancient writers,<sup>1</sup> his thoughts on imitation are to be derived from his practice in writing. His most important works are in Latin - in the vernacular we know of only a few Petrarchan sonnets - and these are either treatises or letters from the large corpus of public and private correspondence which forms his Epistolario. Salutati's teacher was Pietro da Moglio, who, before his acquaintance with Petrarch, taught in Bologna a Latin typical of the medieval style of dictamen.

Salutati's Latin imitated, at least to begin with, the models of this style. His letters, like Boccaccio's, reveal his gradual rejection of medieval models and his approximation towards the Petrarchan style; but his treatises are closer to contemporary scholastic works, especially in subject matter and structure. The De Seculo et Religione (1381) deals with a common topic in a typical binary structure: first the evils of this world, then the advantages of the religious life. The De Nobilitate Legum et Medicine (1399) was a favourite theme in university circles. The De Fato, Fortuna et Casu (1398), De Verecundia (1390) and the De Tyranno (1400) are all

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1. Salutati, Epistolario ed. F. Novati 4 vols (Rome, 1891-1911), iv.148. Further references to this edition are given after quotations in the text.



in the tradition of medieval scholastic treatises in terms of content. Only the De Laboribus Herculis (c.1390) is slightly different: its main theme evinces the medieval enthusiasm for allegorical interpretations of classical myth, but the first book reiterates the defences of poetry advanced by Petrarch and Boccaccio.<sup>2</sup>

Salutati's Latin in these treatises is more scholastic than humanist.<sup>3</sup> The divisions of the works and their terminology have more in common with contemporary philosophical writings than with humanist interests. Even in the first book of De Laboribus Herculis we find poetry defined in almost scholastic terms: "Convenienter possumus cum Aristotile diffinire poesim esse potentiam considerantem laudationes et vituperationes prout metris et figurativis locutionibus concinuntur." (ed.cit., p.14). When he mentions imitation at all it is usually in the sense of art imitating nature (Lab. Herc., p.18; De Nob., p.14 etc.). To obtain a fuller picture of Salutati's ideas on the imitation of antiquity we must concentrate on the letters rather than the treatises. First I want to consider the style of the letters, to note how Salutati reacted against the principles of medieval epistolography and evolved his own style under the influence of Petrarch; then, in a second

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2. De Seculo et Religione ed. B.L.Ullman (Florence, 1957); De Nobilitate Legum et Medicine, De Verecundia ed. E.Garin (Florence, 1947); F.Ercole, Il Trattato De Tyranno e lettere scelte (Bologna, 1942); De Laboribus Herculis ed. B.L.Ullman (Zurich, 1951); as yet there is no recent edition of the De Fato, but the Latin translations from the Commedia by Salutati can be found in E.Garin, L'età nuova (Naples, 1969), 211-213.

3. Though Ullman (De Sec. cit., p.vi) describes Salutati's style in this work as "fere humanisticum", he is thinking more of the sources used by Salutati than the quality of his Latin.



section, his theoretical statement on imitation will be analysed in the context of his general attitude to antiquity and his own times.

## I

Naturally Salutati's Latin style is not uniform: not only did it develop away from imitation of earlier models of dictamen towards something more akin to Petrarchan or even Ciceronian Latin; it also differed depending on the person for whom the Florentine Chancellor was writing, as he warns Benvenuto da Imola: "aptanda sunt verba rebus et secundum diversitatem materie debemus sermones et dictamina variare." (Ep.ii.77). This echoes views advanced by Petrarch in the introductory letter to the Familiars (i.1.28ff); and in a later letter to Pellegrino Zambecari (iii.58-64) Salutati elaborates on this idea of the diversity of taste, and again he seems to be drawing on the Petrarch letter:

illi Sallustiana brevitatis placet, huic copia Ciceronis;  
illum affectata claritas movet, hunc exoticum obscurumque  
dicendi genus; illum oblectant propria, hunc novata  
verba. 4 (iii.62)

This principle of varying the style of a letter according to the status of the addressee accounts for the major division in Salutati's correspondence, the public letters written by the Florentine Chancellor (mostly unpublished) and the private letters (printed in Novati's edition of the Epistolario). Little work has been done on the official letters, but it seems that even in those Salutati instituted some kind of reform, changing their genre from the stilus humilis to the stilus altus, and introducing many classical exempla.<sup>5</sup> On the

4. Petrarch in his introductory letter (Fam.i.1.28ff) stresses the diversity of tastes, as will Poliziano in his first letter. Salutati's reference here to Sallust and Cicero draws on Macrobius, Sat.V.1.7.
5. Some recent studies have appeared: R.G.Witt, Coluccio Salutati and His Public Letters; D. De Rosa, Coluccio Salutati: il cancelliere e il pensatore politico; A.Petrucci, Il protocollo notarile di C.Salutati 1372-3; id. Coluccio Salutati; E.Garin, 'I cancellieri umanisti della Repubblica fiorentina da C.Salutati a Bartolomeo Scala' in La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento, 3-37, stresses the links between the private and official correspondence.

whole, however, in his official missives *Salutati* was bound by the traditions of chancery epistolography: he had to use the plural form of address "vos" as well as other features of the tradition.

In his private letters he constantly reacted against these constraints: in 1370 he complains that this official style is forcing him to forget any elegance he has learnt (i.133); in a later letter to Giovanni Conversino da Ravenna (ii.411-427) he repeats his expression of distaste for the "cancellerie Florentine stilum" but in official letters he has to follow in the footsteps of his predecessors: "ambulamus equidem in istis allocutionibus per antecessorum vestiga." (ii.419-420). In this letter, as in many others, the specific feature of the chancery style to which he objects is the use of "vos" instead of "tu", something that Petrarch too had criticised.<sup>6</sup> Petrarch had been the first to criticise this usage, and had done so because he had realised that to use the singular was to imitate Cicero's usage in his letters, and that the plural form of address belonged to the post-classical period.<sup>7</sup>

If the campaign against the use of the plural was something that *Salutati* had learnt from Petrarch, another lifelong interest is his enthusiasm for orthography, which seems to have stemmed from his

6. eg. i.35,250,259; ii.162,394,418; iii.76,155; iv.19. For Petrarch's objections to the use of vos see Fam.xxiii.14; Sen.xvi.1; Variae ii.

7. Petrarch's phrase in Variae ii ("cum sim unus et oh! utinam integer") is imitated by *Salutati* in i.35 ("sum enim solus et unus et utinam integer!"), i.250; iii.76-8.

acquisition of a copy of Priscian in 1355.<sup>8</sup> The interest is documented from the earliest letters to the final years when he is arguing with Poggio that "michi" and "nichil" are the correct forms (iv.162). He discusses the orthography of Latin words with many of his correspondents, from the minor rhetoricians (ii.110-12, 279-83; iii.158) to more important men such as the signore of Imola (iii.607), Filippo Villani (ii.47), Pierpaolo Vergerio (iv.85), or even religious writers such as Giovanni Dominici (iv.217). In the case of Villani and Vergerio, Salutati was offering advice, as an elder scholar, on the younger men's most important compositions.<sup>9</sup>

But it is Petrarch that is the paramount influence on Salutati. Salutati imitates him in many ways: in his few vernacular sonnets; in his eight Latin eclogues (Ep.i.156-7); in his ambition to write a Latin historical epic (iii.58ff); and in his Latin versions of two of the most famous of Petrarch's sonnets.<sup>10</sup> But Petrarch's most profound effect on the Florentine Chancellor was to direct him towards humanist texts and to change his approach to the writing of Latin. We have already noted his rejection of the plural form of

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8. See B.L.Ullman, The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati, 44-6. This interest in orthography makes Salutati a forerunner of men like Valla and Tortelli in the next century.

9. He read Vergerio's De Ingenuis Moribus, and for Villani he read a first draft and suggested syntactical and orthographical improvements for the final version of De Origine Civitatis Florentie et de Eiusdem Famosis Civibus; for these corrections see G.Billanovich, Restauri boccacceschi, p.30 n.1; M.Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators, p.68.

10. The translations of Pace non trovo (Canz.cxxxiv) and S'Amor non è (cxxxii) are printed in A.Zardo, Petrarca e i Carraresi, App.VI, 306-7.

address in letters. It was probably also his desire to imitate Petrarch that led Salutati to criticise the two salient features of medieval dictamen, the use of an exaggeratedly florid vocabulary, and the insistence on the cursus.

This distaste for excessive adornment first appears in the letters of the late 1360s. To Giovanni Quatrario he declares his own ideals in writing: "plane, aperte et luce clarius dico quod sentio et scribens et loquens" (i.69).<sup>11</sup> In 1369 he praises the style of Marino Ceccoli da Perugia because he does not indulge in the excesses of modern writers ("modernorum lubricatione") or in the cursus of religious authors ("religiosorum rhythmica sonoritate"), but uses rather an old-fashioned solidity of diction: "sed solido illo prisco more dicendi contentus, nil fucatum et maiore quam deceat apparatu comptum proferens" (i.77). This critique of exaggerated adornment seems to echo Petrarch (Fam.xiii.6.30), while the key epithets for Salutati are "clarus" and "solidus".

The most important document in this context is Salutati's letter to Benvenuto da Imola, criticising his first part of the commentary on the Commedia on two grounds: both because its rather humble style is unsuited to the sublimity of Dante's poem, and because when writing about the poet's life Benvenuto has written like a

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11. Guarino, Epistolario, ed. R.Sabbadini, i.85-6 lays similar stress on Cicero's clarity as opposed to Pietro da Moglio's obscurity.

contemporary religious writer (ii.76-8).<sup>12</sup> He presumes that Benvenuto's pedestrian Latin is due to the fact that the commentary is dedicated to his patron, the lord of Ferrara, but insists that "illa stili tenuitas" is inappropriate to the object of his commentary and unworthy of Benvenuto: "aliud profecto ab auctoritate et opinione tua dicendi genus edecumatum atque expolitum... expectamus." (ii.77). The commentator should imitate the commentaries of Macrobius and Boethius on works of Cicero, for those commentaries vie with the Ciceronian work in eloquence.<sup>13</sup> Salutati is even more insistent about his second point of criticism:

ubi auctoris vitam et laudem amplecteris, noli fratrum  
religiosorum morem sequi. an tibi deficit adminiculum  
Ciceronis? (ii.78).

Novati (ii.78 n.2) explains that Benvenuto in the passage in question had begun with a statement from Averroes' Commentary on the Poetics as his text and then proceeded to elaborate this like a preacher with a Biblical text. What Salutati says next implies that the passage lacks the clear structure of any piece of rhetoric, the exordium, narratio etc. Whatever Salutati was criticising, one thing is clear: here he draws a clear contrast between contemporary scholastic writings and a Ciceronian piece. His final criticism

12. Salutati is similarly conscious of breaking the rules of literary "decorum" when he translates "inferiore stilo... infimo dicendi genere" into Latin some lines from Dante's sublime poem (cf. Garin, L'età nuova, p.212). When discussing poor Latin versions of Homer or Plutarch Salutati feels they can be made more sublime by adding conjunctions, questions and exclamations (ii.354-8; 480-3; iii.611).
13. That unusual epithet "edecumatum" comes from Macrobius (Sat.I. 5.17; II.1.8).

alludes to Benvenuto's use of isocolon and the cursus, which he can object to not only on grounds of personal taste but also because it is condemned by Cicero himself in the Rhetorica ad Herennium (IV.20.27): "quid recurris ad illos, qui ad mensuram et, quod apud Tullium nostrum <sup>u</sup>perile est, ex pari ferme numero sillabarum orationis membra distinguunt?" (ii.78).<sup>14</sup>

In his last letter, the reply to Giovanni Dominici's Lucula Noctis, Salutati explains that it is mistaken to think that rhetoric is nothing but the two major features of contemporary dictamen: a florid vocabulary ("splendidorum vocabulorum congeriem") and the use of the cursus ("clausulis lubricantibus trisyllaboque cursu vel quadrisyllabo terminatis") (iv.234). This last statement is of course slightly ironic since it ends with the cursus rhythm most favoured by Salutati, a quadrisyllabic "velox" ending. The "velox" rhythm abounds in his writings, but what he objects to is the excessive pursuit of the cursus and the affectation of clauses with equal numbers of syllables and rhyming endings.<sup>15</sup> In fact the greatest Latinists never sought such effects; that kind of frivolity ("festivitas") arose after the works of Cicero, Sallust and Livy.<sup>16</sup> Here Salutati has progressed from a medieval frame of mind which permitted the

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14. Salutati is thinking of this kind of effect: "profunditas admirabilis, utilitas desiderabilis, fertilitas ineffabilis... utilitas inventionis, utilitas instructionis, utilitas correctionis" in Benvenuto, Comentum super Dantis Aldigherii Comoediam ed. J.Lacaita, I.p.7.

15. He makes the same objections in the De Lab Herc. ed. cit., I.p.56.

16. Festivitas is the term used in the Ad Herennium for rhyming clauses and similar devices: "est in his lepos et festivitas, non dignitas et pulcritudo" (IV.23.32).



masters of dictamen to style themselves "Tullianus imitator" merely because they taught rhetoric, to a historical perspective from which he can see that the characteristic features of dictamen are rejected in classical theory and practice, in the Ad Herennium as well as in the works of Cicero, Livy and Sallust.

It is ironic that while citing Cicero on the importance of clarity (iii.606) to Lodovico degli Alidosi, the Latin term he uses is the non-Ciceronian "claritudo". The other keyword "soliditas" is thoroughly Ciceronian;<sup>17</sup> Salutati applies it to the Latin of men such as Vergerio (iv.38), and also to Petrarch's and to Poggio's style. He extols Petrarch's "illa prisci dictaminis soliditas," and praises Poggio's "eloquentia solida" (iv.126-7). From the foregoing it is clear in what direction Salutati's Latin is developing and what are his ideals in Latinity. An analysis and comparison of an early and a late letter should give a practical illustration of these theoretical ideals.

One of Salutati's first letters to the Papal secretary, Francesco Bruni, sent in 1367, begins thus:

Domine mi quamplurimum reverende. admirabitur forte  
vestra prudentia quod, tandiu tacitus, nunc demum  
ruperim obstinata silentia, et unde hic tam subite  
scribendi pruritus incesserit. (i.42)

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17. Though it is never used by Cicero in the metaphorical sense; perhaps Salutati is thinking of the figurative use of the adjective "solidus" used to describe a sound, unadorned style (De Or.III.103; Brutus 291).



The letter abounds with words and phrases from the traditions of ecclesiastical Latin like that opening address to "Domine reverende" (criticised by Petrarch in Fam.xiii.6.30) and the periphrasis "vestra prudentia". Non-classical syntax, such as the use of "quod" instead of the infinitive in indirect statements, is to be found in all of Salutati's letters, as are non-classical words such as "subito" and "pruritus" (later in this same letter we have the late Latin "ruditas" and "sospitas", as well as ecclesiastical terms "caritas" and "dieta").<sup>18</sup> Even an early letter to a fellow humanist like Petrarch displays similar traits. He begins: "Celeberrimo Petrarce laureato merito domino suo. Facundissime vir..." (i.72), and in the text of the letter he uses the diminutives "sepiuscule" (found in Priscian) and "cupidulus" (72); other rare or unattested forms like "delenificis" (in Fulgentius), "frustratorium", "incivilitas" (75); and terms converted from the vernacular: "capricare...bachalarii...licentiati" (74-5).

In five out of his six last letters Salutati adopts a more classical form of address: "Linus Colucius Salutatus Leonardo Ceccho Aretino summi pontificis a secretis salutem dicit." (iv.113). The letter to Leonardo Bruni which might be contrasted with either the early letter to Francesco Bruni, another Papal secretary, or the one to Petrarch, a fellow humanist, reveals even in its form of address

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18. B.L.Ullman, The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati, 106f gives a fairly comprehensive list of unclassical elements in Salutati's Latin.

how Salutati's Latin has become more Ciceronian: it is not without significance for his Latin that he received a copy of Cicero's Ad Familiares in 1392. After the Ciceronian opening, the letter to Bruni continues with another adaptation of a Ciceronian formula: "postquam tibi per Dei gratiam bene est et michi bene est." (iv.113). The rest of the letter contains very few non-classical terms ("labascunt" and "urbicus" Salutati will have found in Gellius), showing to what extent his Latin has been influenced by his reading of Cicero and his association with humanists like Petrarch, Poggio and Bruni. The only significant feature of Salutati's language in his later years, apart from its more classical tone, is the number of words derived from Greek: "dosim", "pathica", "sophum" and "antipophoram" in this letter to Bruni (iv.116-118). The major cultural influences on Salutati, then, in his later years are his reading of Cicero's letters and his interest in Greek, and both of these influences are detectable in his Latin style.

## II

This late letter to Leonardo Bruni (iv.113 -20) is an important document since it introduces us to the background of a significant debate between Salutati and Bruni on the imitation of antiquity. We have considered the style of the letter, but Bruni was to find fault with both its style and its contents; for the letter was critical of Bruni's unstoic attitude to the tribulations he was undergoing in 1405. Bruni, anxious that the elder statesman's criticisms might undo the good work his earlier recommendations had done in helping Bruni secure the post of Papal secretary, wrote Salutati a letter in reply which found fault with Salutati's Latin.<sup>19</sup> He criticised three phrases of Salutati. First Bruni points out that the opening formula "Linus Colucius Salutatus Leonardo Checcho Aretino salutem dicit" is ambiguous since it sounds as though it is addressed to Bruni's father; if Salutati wants to imitate classical epistolography he should write "Leonardo Checchi filio" or "Poggio Guccii filio". Secondly Bruni objects to the older man's use of two forenames "Linus Colucius" when one is enough and is also "secundum antiquorum normam". Lastly he criticises Salutati's medieval formula in names such as "Vannes de Montecuculo"; Bruni prefers the more classical designation, and styles himself "Leonardus Aretinus" not "de Aretio". Bruni explicitly acknowledges that in his letters Salutati is trying to imitate ancient authors but insists that this

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19. Bruni's Ep.x.5 in Mehus' edition and printed also by Novati in Salutati, Epistolario iv.375-8.

imitation be pursued rationally: "modo ratione id fiat." (iv.376).

Salutati defends himself in another letter to Bruni (iv.147-158). The opening sentence shows he has taken Bruni's first point of criticism to heart and avoided ambiguity: "Linus Colucius Salutatus Leonardo Aretino summi pontificis a secretis salutem dicit." (147); but the insistence on using "Linus" indicates that Salutati is not prepared to yield to the younger humanist on every point. The opening of this reply by Salutati contains his view on how antiquity should be imitated. He repeats his variation on the classical formula ("postquam ergo tibi per Dei gratiam bene est et michi bene est.") which he thought Bruni had criticised also;<sup>20</sup> and he justifies his inclusion of the Christian phrase "per Dei gratiam" in the classical formula in the following terms:

sed antiquitatem sic semper censui imitandam, quod  
pura non prodeat, sed aliquid semper secum afferat  
novitatis. scis me non ignorare morem nostri  
celeberrimi Ciceronis, meque libenter verbis uti suis.  
sed aliud est referre, aliud imitari. habet aliquid  
imitantis proprium imitatio, nec totum est eius quem  
imitamur; relatio vero totum solet exprimere quem  
referimus. (iv.148).

This is Salutati's fullest statement on literary imitation and shows that he is not in favour of a slavish imitation of antiquity, but of an imitation that retains some aspect of modernity ("novitatis"), in this case a Christian formula. This attitude is consistent with his general assessment of his own times and their relation to the

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20. Salutati was mistaken. In fact Bruni had criticised the opening of another letter to Iacopo Angeli da Scarperia: see Ep. iv.112n.

classical past, an assessment that admires antiquity but is proud of the superiority of Christian culture. The passage alludes to his fondness for Cicero, but clearly illustrates how far Salutati is from being a Ciceronian. Rather there is a hint of Petrarch's influence in that differentiation between "referre" and "imitari", in that insistence on the importance of the individual's contribution, the "aliquid imitantis proprium".<sup>21</sup>

In the rest of the letter he justifies his retention of the forename "Linus" not on classical grounds but because the two forenames were insisted upon by his parents at baptism; yields to Bruni on the use of "Cecco"; but reiterates the propriety of the modern forms "Dinus de Mucello, Bartholus de Saxoferrato, Vannes de Montecuculo" because the classical form of the name plus an adjective, though more elegant, is not always suitable: "Bartolus saxoferratensis" and "Vannes montecuculensis" are much more clumsy than the normal medieval forms. All of this is consistent with his statement at the beginning of the letter in defence of "aliquid novitatis", and with his general view of the superiority of res over verba: "offendit... te sonus et non sensus. penes res enim significatas nulla prorsus differentia est." (iv.153); and is in harmony with his defence of contemporary culture in general, as we shall see.<sup>22</sup>

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21. Petrarch Fam.xxii.2.17 stresses the "quiddam suum ac proprium" which even when imitating should be retained. See R.Fubini, 'La coscienza del latino negli umanisti', p.527.

22. Bruni, on the other hand, stands by his principles and addresses letters to "Atto militi Saxoferratensi" (Bruni, Ep. ed. Mehus ii.51).

Salutati's overall assessment of his own epoch compared with the classical past is rather equivocal: if he considers contemporary culture as being represented by the achievements of the Tre Corone he regards the present age as superior to antiquity; if he thinks of his own times as being typified by scholastic culture, he believes that classical antiquity is unsurpassable. His views on Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio require more detailed analysis in order to complete the picture of Salutati's views on past and present.

In particular Salutati's appreciation of Dante seems to have been a gradual process. In the letter on the death of Petrarch he claims that the author of the Canzoniere surpasses Vergil and Cicero in his Latin works, and in the vernacular he is superior to "compatriotam suum Aldegherium Dantem" (i.183). The idea that Dante would have been superior to Vergil and Homer had he written his poem in Latin perhaps came from Petrarch (Fam.xxi.15.22), was expressed by Salutati in a letter of around 1401 (iii.491) and faithfully attributed to him in Bruni's Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum.<sup>23</sup> Even in a letter which exalts the writings of classical and late antiquity (iii.76-91) Salutati states that Dante is superior to ancient writers in "scientia vel ingenio" (iii.84). In one of his last letters, when defending his exaltation of Petrarch over writers such as Cicero and Vergil (iv.126-45), Salutati reverses his earlier

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23. "potuisse illum si voluisset alio stilo uti...omnia quibus intendisset" (Fam.xxi.15-22); "Dantem vero, si alio genere scribendi usus esset...et [Latinis] et Graecis etiam anteponerem" in Bruni (Prosatori latini del Quattrocento, p.68)

judgment of Petrarch's superiority over his compatriot by stating that Dante is supreme in lengthy compositions in the volgare, while Petrarch is best in sonnets (iv.140); and in his final statement on the topic proclaims Petrarch superior to all: "preter Dantem et eum ipsum rhythmis vulgaribus", (iv.161)<sup>24</sup>

His views on Petrarch are also significant because expressed on several occasions over a number of years. Having lauded him above Cicero, Vergil and Dante at his death in 1374 (i.176ff), he is prepared to defend this praise in 1379 (i.334-42), and again in 1405-6 (iv.126-45) when the controversy of ancients and moderns is at its height and the younger generation of humanists, Bruni, Poggio and Niccoli are asserting their enthusiasm for antiquity. More important than the arguments used by Salutati in Petrarch's defence is the accusation that he levels against the young generation: "nimis...defertis et ceditis vetustati" (iv.131). They are exaggeratedly enthusiastic about antiquity, and criticise modern writing "nisi vincant vel saltem redoleant vetustatem." (142).<sup>25</sup> The older humanist has a more balanced view and is prepared to be both more critical of the past, and more appreciative of the present: "hec nostra duo secula, quibus incidimus, non mediocriter emergerunt" (132).

24. See A.Vallone, 'C.Salutati e l'umanesimo fiorentino dinanzi a Dante' (p.77): "Il giudizio su Dante è una continua verifica e conquista: quello su Petrarca nasce definito e concluso."

25. The phrase echoes Macrobius (Sat.I.5.4): "sermo tuus... ipsam redolet vetustatem".



Salutati, then feels that the young humanist avant-garde is guilty of adopting an uncritical approach to the past and a hyper-critical attitude to the present.<sup>26</sup> He is prepared to defend his contemporaries, to value their achievements in general terms and also in particular to uphold an imitation of the past that does not ignore contemporary culture. True, he does contradict these views on occasions, but only when he considers the present as being represented by scholastic writers, by the use of the cursus (i.76), by the use of "vos" instead of "tu" (ii.474), or because it is in the context of a modesty topos. Thus when he rebukes Tommaso Orsini for wanting contemporary literature and claims that modernity can produce nothing new except by patching together remnants of the rich cloak of antiquity:

nichil novum fingimus, sed quasi sarcinatores de ditissime  
vetustatis fragmentis vestes, quas ut novas edimus,  
resarcimus. (ii.145)

this is because Orsini had praised and requested some of Salutati's own writings; hence this disparagement of the present fits into the topos of modesty that every medieval author uses in regard to his own work.

The rhetoric of modesty again conditions the context of his fullest statement on the historical development of Latin (iii.76-91). Here he is disclaiming the comparison, made by his correspondent, between his own letters and those of Cassiodorus. Consequently

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26. cf. G.Holmes, The Florentine Enlightenment, esp. Ch.1.



although he admits that there has been a revival of literature in the Trecento ("emergerunt parumper nostro seculo studia litterarum"), he maintains that even the Tre Corone are ultimately inferior to the ancient writers (iii.84).

This letter is worth considering in more detail because it offers Salutati's most comprehensive statement on literary history.<sup>27</sup> There are the germs of a Ciceronianist attitude in the letter, since Cicero is repeatedly described as the apex of Latin eloquence and the writers of his age achieved "illa scribendi soliditate" that posterity has never regained no matter how imitative it has been.<sup>28</sup> Another Ciceronianist trait is to imply that eloquence declined in direct relation to the amount of time elapsed since Cicero's age. Salutati in fact seems to think of four different periods of Latin in antiquity. After the era of Cicero, there was a second age in which Seneca, Livy and Valerius Maximus flourished; then a third period when Tacitus imitated Livy but never equalled him and writers such as Suetonius, Pliny, Capella, Apuleius and Macrobius illustrated to what extent the Ciceronian bloom had faded ("effloruit...imminuta est", p.82); and finally the patristic era when men such as Cassiodorus, Symmachus, Boethius, Augustine and Jerome revived or rather retained the spark of classical eloquence. The writers of the High Middle Ages he considers

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27. Similar overall views are to be found in Guarino (Ep.ii.505f) and in Antonio da Rho (De Imitatione s.v.lingua).

28. "Culmen", "princeps", "summitas" are all applied to Cicero here; cf. i.301, and 330-333 for similar statements. Salutati even collected Sinonyma Ciceronis (now in a Laurentian MS, Cod. Ashb. 1658 ff.190r-208r): cf. O.Besomi, 'Un nuovo autografo del Tortelli', p.123 n.4.

unworthy to be compared with those of the classical or intervening period ("priscis vel mediis illis dictatoribus" p.83):<sup>29</sup> here he mentions St. Bernard, Abelard, Peter of Blois, John of Salisbury, who are said to be more remote in terms of style than in time from the classical era. It is also interesting that when discussing the revival in his own century Salutati refers not only to Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, but before them to the "pre-humanists" Mussato and Geri d'Arezzo: "et primus eloquentie cultor fuit conterraneus tuus Musattus Patavinus, fuit et Gerius Aretinus, maximus Plinii Secundi oratoris...imitator" (iii.84).

Salutati has thus a relatively individual perspective of literary history. He is aware, unlike Boccaccio and others, of the significance of the early humanists. But his view of the revival of studies is different from the views of the more Ciceronianist humanists. He sees a revival of epistolography in Geri's imitation of Pliny, but Quattrocento scholars will see the revival as stemming from the imitation of Cicero. In addition Salutati sees the efforts of Priscian and Cassiodorus as worthy and close to the achievements of the classical authors; but Bruni, for instance, will criticise the preservation of writers like Cassiodorus and "Alcidus" (whom Salutati quotes at i.187), and Valla will have strong criticism to make of

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29. Is this the first hint of the concept of a middle age? The adjective "medius" is also used in Villani's De...Famosis Civibus when discussing Domenico Silvestri's De Insulis: "describens...quibus nominibus priscis mediis modernisque temporibus fuerint variatae" (in F.Villani, De...Famosis Civibus, ed. C.G.Galletti, p.110.)

Priscian.<sup>30</sup>

Coluccio Salutati's lifetime extends from early in the Trecento to the first years of the fifteenth century. He is very much a man of the Trecento, yet those few years of the new century which he experienced are emblematic of his links with the young generation of humanists and their different way of looking at both past and present. Thus it is symptomatic of the post-Petrarchan age that Salutati has left us no serious work in the vernacular: that will also be the pattern followed by most humanists in the first half of the Quattrocento. Indeed he even transfers pieces of Dante's and Petrarch's vernacular poetry into Latin. Yet despite this monolingual output Salutati retains his interest and his pride in the achievements of the volgare; in fact he reverses another trend that begins with Petrarch, the tendency to ignore Dante and his poem. We saw that Salutati himself initially neglected Dante in favour of Petrarch, but that he eventually recognised the importance of the Commedia and ensured that the question of Dante's position in the literary revival remained in the consciousness of the new generation of humanists.<sup>31</sup>

Though he has little contribution to make towards imitation

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30. Boccaccio sees the first literary revival in the works of Arrigo da Settimello and others (Opere latine minori ed. A.F.Massera, p.194.) Bruni condemns Cassiodorus, Alcidus "et huiusmodi somnia" in the Dialogi (in Prosatori, p.54).
31. C.Dionisotti s.v. Salutati in Enciclopedia dantesca, IV, 1087, points out that the new humanists considered Dante more as a maestro than a modello.

theory, his practice in the writing of Latin is of some significance.<sup>32</sup> It is a Latin that approximates closer to the Ciceronian ideal than either Petrarch's or Boccaccio's Latin; yet it is distinctly unclassical in places, and we know from his one statement on imitation theory that Salutati would never have been a strict Ciceronian.<sup>33</sup> He accepts the Latin of men like Symmachus (ii.141-2; iii.85), Macrobius and Cassiodorus (iii.79ff) without question, but by the end of the fifteenth century the critics of Poliziano will object to the Latin of Statius and Quintilian, never mind the language of Sidonius and Apuleius.

Italian humanists in the course of the Quattrocento were to transform the imitation of Cicero from theory into practice, from a meaningless formula into a literary credo; so it is not surprising that Salutati's fortune as a Latin stylist underwent a complete reversal. At the beginning of the century his contemporaries thought that the letters of the Florentine Chancellor were the supreme models. Even in France his letters were in demand, and both Jean de Montreuil and Salutati's former enemy, Antonio Loschi, called him "princeps

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32. He does exploit the stock images: footsteps (ii.419f; Lab Herc. I.pp.45-6); cloaks (i.133; ii.145,356); the ape (iii.288); painting or statues (i.133; iii.373); flowers (iii.86; Lab Herc. I.p.20); bread (iv.86,316,370).

33. Ullman, The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati cit., 106f and D. De Rosa, Coluccio Salutati: il cancelliere e il pensatore politico, pp.17-18 n.21 detail the unclassical elements of Salutati's Latin. Ullman op.cit., pp.113-4 lists the changes made to one of Salutati's letters in a 1574 edition to make it more Ciceronian. Even the Quattrocento found his Latin substantially unclassical, as we shall see.

latine eloquentie" (Sal.Ep.iv.476-7).<sup>34</sup> Filippo Villani's famous praise of Salutati as the ape of Cicero, though it exploits one of the standard images of the imitation debate, is more a formula than an integral part of that debate. Having extolled his "verborum nitorem, elegantiam et ornatum" Villani turns to Salutati's "dignitas" (another rhetorical technical term): "tanta iam prevaluit dignitate, ut Ciceronis symia merito dici possit" (iv.491-2). The automatic nature of this compliment is confirmed by a nearly contemporary document, the statute re-electing Salutati as Chancellor in 1388 which describes him as "eloquentie fontis et splendidissimi oratorum Ciceronis alumni, et naturalium et moralium unius speculi." (iv.465).

We have seen that Salutati, though admiring Cicero as the apex of Latinity, wrote a Latin that could not accurately be described as Ciceronian. The criticisms made by a humanist of the new century like Guarino of the dictamen of Pietro da Moglio could to a lesser extent have been made of Pietro's pupil. It is understandable, then, that around 1450 Biondo, who saw the revival of letters as stemming from the recovery of Ciceronian texts in the 1420s, could place Salutati in a more accurate position in that revival:

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34. For Jean de Montreuil see G.Billanovich, G.Ouy, 'La première correspondance échangée entre Jean de Montreuil et Coluccio Salutati' esp. p.343. The famous compliment by Giangaleazzo Visconti that Salutati's writings did him more harm than a thousand cavalry is cited by Pius II in his Historia de Europa Ch.54 in his Opera Omnia, p.454.

Colutius vero Salutatius etsi prius didicerit, quam  
Ciceronianae imitatio eloquentiae sui seculi  
adolescentibus nota esse coepisset, et eloquens est  
habitus et multa scripsit prudentiam magis et  
doctrinam quam eloquentiam redolentia. 35

By the end of the century even this attenuated praise has diminished further; Ugolino Verino's epitaph for him begins: "Si non eloquio, gravitate Colucius omnes /superat..."; and a more exacting Ciceronianist like Cortese lumps him with Boccaccio and Giovanni da Ravenna whose Latin is never free from "orationis asperitate maestitiaque", while adding that Giovanni's Dialogi and Salutati's Epistles are no longer read.<sup>36</sup>

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35. In Italia Illustrata in Biondo, Roma Triumphans etc., p.304.

36. De Hominibus Doctis ed. M.T.Graziosi, p.18. Modern assessment of Salutati's Latin, including my own, is still fairly close to Cortese's: cf. D. De Rosa, Coluccio Salutati, cit., p.18: "Stilisticamente benché Filippo Villani chiamasse Coluccio 'scimmia di Cicerone' e Lapo Mazzei fosse solito paragonarlo al grande Tullio, le sue lettere sono ben lontane dall'equilibrio veramente classico e dalla solenne pacatezza dei ben costrutti periodi dell'Arpinate."

PART TWO

THE EARLY QUATTROCENTO



## CHAPTER TWO

### LEONARDO BRUNI

From two of Salutati's letters, one criticising Poggio and his friend for their uncritical acceptance of the superiority of antiquity (Sal. Ep.iv.126045), the other condemning Bruni's slavish imitation of classical formulae (iv.147-58), it could be presumed that Leonardo Bruni belonged to that extreme humanist avant-garde that was the object of Cino Rinuccini's Invettive.<sup>1</sup> Certainly his attitudes are often identifiable with those outlined by Rinuccini and his Latin exhibits a much closer approximation to Cicero's Latin than does Salutati's. But as with Salutati and other humanists, so with Bruni many of his attitudes are ambivalent if not contradictory - indeed this very ability to see and at times to take both sides of any question is a constant feature of humanism, connected with the mastery of the techniques of ancient rhetoric and hence relevant to the popularity of the dialogue as a humanist genre. If "Man the measure of all things" was a motto popular with and emblematic of the humanists of the Quattrocento, their aspirations were equally well summed up in Pythagoras' other famous dictum: "de omni re in utramque partem disputari posse ex aequo".<sup>2</sup>

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1. See G.Holmes, The Florentine Enlightenment 1400 - 50, pp.1ff.

2. Seneca, Epist. 88.43. Apart from this widely used letter of Seneca the humanists of the Quattrocento would also have derived information about Protagoras from the account in Diogenes Laertius IX.51, either in Greek or in Ambrogio Traversari's Latin version. Cf. C.Trinkaus, 'Protagoras in the Renaissance: an Exploration' in Philosophy and Humanism: Renaissance Essays in Honor of P.O.Kristeller ed. E.P.Mahoney, 190-213. Cicero also praises "consuetudo de omnibus rebus in contrarias partes disserendi...quod esset ea maxima dicendi exercitatio" in Tusc.II.3.9.



As with *Salutati*, it is logical both to consider Bruni's general ideas on the imitation of antiquity, his theoretical approach to important questions such as the unity of the Latin language, and the problem of Ciceronianism; and then to analyse his works to see to what extent Bruni carries out in practice his theoretical ideals.

Bruni's conflicting views on his own age and its inferiority to antiquity are set out clearly in the Dialogus ad Petrum Paulum Histrum (1401-3);<sup>3</sup> the first book belittling the achievements of the modern age in general and the *Tre Corone* in particular, the second book rehabilitating them. Baron by hypothesising a chronological lapse between the composition of the two books provides a neat solution to the contradiction.<sup>4</sup> But in view of similar contradictions in *Salutati* and other humanists, and their expertise in the techniques of ancient rhetoric and the dialogue form, and in particular considering that the Dialogus is written to glorify the art of discussion (disputatio and its various synonyms are praised throughout both books of the Dialogus), Baron's hypothesis of a development in Bruni's thought seems at least irrelevant to our enquiry: the contradictions are deliberate, and both sides of the question are explored so that no aspect of it

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3. My page references in what follows are to the edition by E. Garin in Prosatori latini del Quattrocento, 44-98.

4. H. Baron, The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance, revised ed. *passim*.

escapes the attention of the speakers.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore the two sides in the debate merely represent two common topoi: the belittling of the present age in comparison to the past, and the claim that the present outdoes the past.<sup>6</sup> Both attitudes are typical of the humanist approach to their own times: on the one hand, realising how much of the classical heritage had perished, they lamented this loss and blamed the negligence of their own and the intervening age; on the other hand, they were conscious of their efforts to remedy this loss and of their consequent superiority over the period in between.

Thus in Book I Niccoli complains of living "in hac faece temporum atque in hac tanta librorum desideratione" (p.54) and the difficulties of acquiring erudition amidst the shipwreck of all the arts and the absence of learned men. But even in this first book he admits that there are intelligent men ("Neque enim hominibus ingenia desunt" - p.60) and praises Salutati as the equal of any of the ancients. Luigi Marsigli is similarly lauded in Book I, while the extolling of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio to at least the level of the writers of antiquity occurs in the second book. Conversely the Tre Corone receive their due praise in Book II, but their age is still criticised, they are said to have emerged "saeculo repugnante" (96). The Proem to the work and the beginning of the second book

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5. "Quid...plus valere possit quam disputatio, ubi rem in medio positam velut oculi plures undique speculantur, ut in ea nihil sit quod subterfugere, nihil quod latere, nihil quod valeat omnium frustrari intuitum?" (48).

6. See Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, 162-3 for these two topoi being used without contradiction.

praise the city of Florence in terms explicitly recalling those of Bruni's Laudatio Florentinae Urbis (44,76): the city's architectural beauties are extolled and though there is a hint that the intellectual atmosphere in Florence will soon lead to a period of enlightenment, it is clear that that period has not yet arrived:

optimarum artium totiusque humanitatis, quae iam  
penitus extincta videbantur, hic semina quaedam  
remanserunt, quae quidem in diem crescunt, brevi  
tempore, ut credimus, lumen non parvum elatura. (44)<sup>7</sup>

The mixture of pessimism and optimism as regards contemporary achievements is thus not evenly distributed nor respectively allotted to Books I and II, and this too would attenuate the strict chronological division between the books proposed by Baron.

But apart from this ambivalent attitude to contemporary and especially vernacular culture, the Dialogi contain a number of important pronouncements which are uncontradicted, or are taken up by Bruni in his later writings. The criticism of the works of Cassiodorus and "Alcidus", which the intervening ages had preserved while losing much of Cicero's writings, seems to be aimed at Salutati who thought highly of both Cassiodorus and "Alcidus".<sup>8</sup> Cicero's philosophical works are especially valued because not only did he bring the substance of Greek philosophy to Italy but he also provided Latin with an elegant vocabulary to describe philosophical ideas.

7. Perhaps the seed metaphor (semina) derives from Bruni's model for the Laudatio, the Panathenaikos of Aristides (204D.111), where Athens is called the seed of the Greeks after the victory at Marathon.

8. Prosatori, p.54. cf. Salutati, Ep.iii.79; i.187.

This point is made repeatedly by Bruni throughout his life, as is the related notion that the medieval translations of Aristotle are so inelegant that they would be unrecognisable to Aristotle himself, who was interested in rhetoric as well as philosophy (54-8). The union of eloquence and philosophy is an ideal that Bruni will uphold theoretically and will try to pursue in practice. The major targets of this kind of criticism are the scholastic logicians, particularly the followers of Ockham who have abandoned the ancient classical road: "Quid quod non ab illa vetere et vera disputandi via separatum et ad ineptias levitatesque traductum?" (60).<sup>9</sup>

Another constant theme in Bruni's writings occurs in the Dialogi, the polemic against the vulgus. When Niccoli says he rejects the popular appreciation of the Tre Corone, he does so not only because he is naturally at variance with the tastes of the masses but also for another reason, one that goes back via Petrarch to the Ad Herennium: "Ego enim cum quid laudo, etiam atque etiam quamobrem id faciam mihi patere volo." (68).<sup>10</sup> Yet both Petrarch and Dante are specifically associated with the vulgus. In both books Dante is associated with an audience of tradesmen; in the first book he is detached from the

9. The metaphor of the road starts with Boccaccio, who says of Dante: "Nec ea tamen qua veteres via", and of Petrarch: "vetus iter arripere orsus est...viam aperuit." (Opere minori latine, p.195). After Salutati and Bruni it is adopted by Valla: "At philosophia ac dialectica non solent ac ne debent quidem recedere ...a via vulgo trita et silicibus strata." (Op.i.651).
10. Pet.Fam.xxi.15.14 cites Ad Her.IV.2.3: "neque intelligunt quare commoti probent.", when he too is talking of the vulgus appreciating Dante.

intellectuals and left to the "lanariis, pistoribus atque huiusmodi turbae" (70), and even in the second book he is still the favourite of the "lanistae, sutores atque proxenetae" (84).<sup>11</sup> Petrarch is regarded as being the author whose vernacular poems keep the people enthralled (70). Bruni's thought is so dominated by the idea of the vulgus that he regards it as having existed in classical times and as having spoken much the same language as that spoken in his own day, as will be seen later.

As for the criticisms directed at the Tre Corone in Book I, some seem to be so strong that Niccoli's recantation in the second book sounds unconvincing. The major charge against Dante is that he lacked latinitas, particularly in his Epistole; and the reason for this is the kind of Latin Dante read and studied: "Dantem quodlibet fratrum atque eiusmodi molestias lectitasse" (70). Petrarch is accused not only of causing grave disillusionment with his Africa, but also of failing to write successfully in the pastoral genre and in his Invectivae (72). These serious defects in Dante and Petrarch are merely denied in Book II without convincing evidence: it is not surprising that when Bruni writes the Vite di Dante e Petrarca around 1435 there is still the hint of these same criticisms.

The Dialogi in many ways inaugurate a new era. Not only is the

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11. See the section on Petrarch, p. 36 n.31. Elsewhere (Ep.ii.63-67) Bruni regards the vulgus as being composed of "pistores lanistae et mulierculae". For "proxenetae" see Seneca, Ep.119.1.

language the first substantial illustration of a total return to classical Latin, but the content demonstrates to what extent the new generation of humanists have left even the great achievements of the Trecento behind.<sup>12</sup> It is no coincidence that the dramatic date of the dialogue is Easter Sunday 1401, almost exactly a century after the dramatic date of the Commedia: both Dante's poetry and Bruni's prose sum up the aspirations of the two ages, but there is an enormous gulf between them. Apart from the difference in language, the change from poetry to prose is also indicative of the new interests.<sup>13</sup> Yet although the new epoch might be ambivalent in its attitude towards the Trecento, the question of vernacular remains in the consciousness of the humanist avant-garde.

The question of imitation underlies the Dialogi. This first humanist dialogue establishes the genre as perhaps the most popular vehicle for Quattrocento humanism, and in its turn looks back to the great dialogues of Cicero, particularly the De Oratore. Sabbadini hinted at the totally classical tone of the prose when he claimed there was only one neologism ("amicitior" - p.74);<sup>14</sup> but even the fact that there are other words unattested in the classical authors

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12. R.Sabbadini pointed out that in this "primo ampio saggio di prosa umanistica...si respira un'aria nuova" (GSLI 96 (1930), pp.130-131.); while Holmes, (op.cit. p.5) illustrates how the humanists now leave Petrarch behind.

13. See the section on Boccaccio p.54 n.3 . Holmes (p.101) cites a letter to Francesco Barbaro declaring that the poetic, Vergilian fashion of the Trecento has given way to Ciceronian prose. Already Salutati regards prose as more significant than poetry (Ep.i.338f).

14. Sabbadini in the review cited in GSLI 96 (1930), 129-33.

("subirationem" - p.62; "parificatio" - p.90), and a couple drawn from late writers ("scritas" from Gellius, "illaborate" an adverb formed from the adjective in Quintilian) does not invalidate the epithet "classical" applied to the Latin of the Dialogi. The almost total absence of the cursus adds to the unmedieval quality of the language. Imitation is present in another sense. The dialogue is primarily about disputatio and about the state of the artes; and one of the most frequent synonyms for disputatio in the work is exercitatio ("disputandi usum exercitationemque" - p.46). Now the three major parts of rhetorical training according to the Ad Herennium are ars, exercitatio, and imitatio. Thus the Dialogi maintain that there are enough works surviving from antiquity to provide young writers with the art of good writing particularly through imitation, as the work itself illustrates; but it also encourages them to remember the importance of practice and exercise in rhetoric: "Nonne vides oratores, ut prope omnes una voce clament, artem sine exercitatione parum valere?" (66).<sup>15</sup>

Bruni's ambiguous estimate of his own times is evident elsewhere and illustrates his ability as a rhetorician. Thus in the Laudatio Florentinae Urbis he exalts the flourishing of the liberal arts in contemporary Florence:

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15. Ad Her.I.2.3. lists ars imitatio exercitatio as the three parts of rhetorical training. Luigi Marsigli seems to be, like Salutati, portrayed here as a type of ideal orator, who has mastered the technique of imitation: he has not only digested Cicero, Vergil, Seneca "sed etiam verba persaepe sic proferebat, ut non ab alio sumpta, sed ab ipso facta viderentur." (p.50).



Litterae autem ipsae, non mercennariae illae quidem  
neque sordidae, sed quae maxime sunt liberis hominibus  
dignae...in hac una urbe vigent. 16

But in the De Studiis et Litteris, where he naturally wants to praise the erudition of the lady he is writing for, he claims that she will stand out in these times when even a learned man, never mind a lady, is regarded as some kind of miracle (Baron, p.7). Similarly in his Rerum Suo Tempore Gestarum Commentarius, when wanting to exemplify the obscurity of recent times, he claims that he knows more about the age of Cicero or that of Demosthenes than about the period sixty years ago;<sup>17</sup> or when writing the prologue to his translation of Plutarch's Life of Q. Sertorius, an obvious place for the encomium of the past, he talks of contemporary battles as "puerilia quaedam ludicra" (Baron, p.124).<sup>18</sup> An early letter to Niccoli makes a similar point about the absence of modern heroes like Fabius or Marcellus and the consequent difficulty of writing a history of modern times, and comes to this typical conclusion:

Nos vero quid simile aut par? quid egregium aut mirabile  
praeter studia et litteras? Itaque me in illis jactabo  
immodice. (Ep.i.30).

Writing to a humanist like Niccoli, Bruni adopts predictable poses,  
- all the more predictable since the context of the letter is the

16. Edition in H. Baron, From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni, 232-263. My quote is from p.263. For Bruni's other writings I have used H. Baron, Leonardo Bruni Aretinos Humanistische Philosophische Schriften, henceforth cited as "Baron".
17. See the edition by C. Di Pierro in Rerum Italicarum Scriptores xix.3, p.423.
18. Similar idea in Biondo, Decades xxi (Basle, 1531), p.394: "At praelia nostri seculi puerilibus adsimillima ludis."



death of Salutati - despairing of the present in political terms, but taking pride in their pursuit of humanist studies. But while Bruni's pride in the studia humanitatis remains constant throughout his writings, his attitude to the writing of contemporary history undergoes a total reversal.

In his introduction to his Commentaria Primi Belli Punici he feels he has to justify this re-writing of a piece of ancient history when there were modern events "quorum notitia integrior exstet, quae cum dignitate ac laude mandari posse litteris videantur." (Baron, p.122). His motives were to save a part of ancient history which might otherwise have perished altogether and to indulge his taste for an older vintage of history: "vetusta me, ut vina, quae antiquitatem sapiunt, magis delectant." (ibid.).<sup>19</sup> The preference for the antique in place of the modern is consistent with one side of the humanist's outlook, but there is a recognition now by Bruni that contemporary history can be written elegantly and with justification. In fact at the time of this preface (c.1419) Bruni had already begun his major historical work, the Historiae Florentini Populi, and in the Prooemium to that work he claims that the recent history of Florence is in no way inferior to ancient history. The question of historiography had in fact been in his mind for some time; for in the preface to his translation of Plutarch's Vita M. Antonii, dedicated to Salutati, he said there were two ways of writing history, one to recount contemporary events, the other to discover new sources

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19. cf. Salutati's complaint to Poggio: "nisi...redoleant vetustatem adeo mordaciter condemnetis" (Ep.iv.142).

of old histories and present the account in one's own language (Baron, 104). The latter method, he said, was much harder but it was the one he adopted in several of his works, including the Cicero Novus (c.1415), the Commentaria Primi Belli Punici (c.1419), Rerum Graecarum Commentaria (1439), and the De Bello Gothico (c.1441).<sup>20</sup>

When it comes to the more specific question of literary imitation, it is not surprising that the author of the classically elegant Dialogi should differ from a Latinist such as Salutati. We saw in the section on Salutati that Bruni objected to some of the older humanists' imitations of classical epistolography (Sal. Ep.iv.147f; 375-8). It was clear from that exchange that Bruni was more rigid in his approach to imitation, and seemed to be in line with Niccoli's extremism as portrayed in the Dialogi. He objects to Salutati writing to him as "Leonardo Checcho Aretino" instead of "Checchi", because although the older humanist has tried to imitate antiquity in this form of address, this imitation needs to be done rationally: "scio enim te ea de causa fecisse, ut antiquum scribendi morem imitareris; quod michi non displicet, modo ratione id fiat." (Sal. Ep.iv.376). Similarly Bruni's preference for the classical forms of names such as "Leonardus Aretinus" over the medieval forms "de Aretio" is due to his desire to imitate antiquity more correctly: "(antiquitatis) imitatio...michi non displicet, modo recte fiat."

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20. cf. E.B.Fryde, 'The Beginnings of Italian Humanist Historiography: the "New Cicero" of Leonardo Bruni', p.537.

(ib.377). Salutati defended the forms he used because he believed in a less rigid form of imitation, what he defined imitari, not referre (ib.148).<sup>21</sup> Salutati's defence of contemporary medieval forms of writing is thus parallel to his championing of the achievements of the Trecento in the Dialogi and in his letters to Poggio (ib.126-45, 158-70). But Bruni is more strictly classical than Salutati: "Leonardus Atto Militi Saxoferratensi Salutem" is how he opens one letter (Ep.ii.51).

One of the characteristics of humanism is the contempt for what humanists call the vulgus, and Bruni, like Salutati and Petrarch, applies the term to both the uneducated and the scholastic logicians or theologians. In a letter to Niccoli he describes their defence of Plato "adversus indoctorum turbam" (Ep.i.15), where the unlearned are presumably Aristotelian philosophers! In his famous definition of the "studia humanitatis" to Niccolò Strozzi he contrasts a vulgar literary knowledge with a more exact one: "litterarum peritia non vulgari ista et communi sed diligentiore quadam et recondita" (Ep.ii.49),<sup>22</sup> and the clue to the identity of the people criticised here is to be found in another passage where a similar distinction is made:

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21. In the Laudatio "at some points, imitation becomes nothing more than the rather mechanical reproduction of certain rhetorical devices of antiquity." (Baron, From Petrarch...p.159).
22. An idea insisted upon by Bruni: "non exiguam neque vulgarem sed magnam et tritam et accuratam et reconditam litterarum peritiam" (Baron, p.7); cf. also "nec ea (notitia) prave neque vulgaris sed magna et trita et accurata et multa ac diuturna philosophorum et oratorum et poetarum...lectione quaesita" of the knowledge of the language required by the ideal translator in the De Interpretatione Recta. The words echo Gellius' criticism of Seneca's "eruditio vernacula et plebeia nihilque ex veterum scriptis habens gratiae neque dignitatis." (xii.2.1).

Eruditionem autem intelligo non vulgarem istam et  
perturbatam, quali utuntur ii, qui nunc theologiam  
profitentur, sed legitimam illam et ingenuam quae  
litterarum peritiam cum rerum scientia coniungit.  
(Baron, p.6)

In this passage from the De Studiis et Litteris the vulgar are clearly the scholastic theologians, and this is emphasised in the next few sentences where Bruni claims that the ideal union of eloquence and Christian wisdom is to be found in writers such as Lactantius, Jerome and Augustine. The link between the scholastic writers and the unlearned is made in one of the many pages where Bruni attacks the medieval translation of Aristotle. In the Praemissio to his own Latin version of the Ethics he points out that he has gone to Cicero, Seneca and the early Church Fathers for his Latin, whereas the medieval translator wrongly took his unclassical words like delectatio and tristitia from the uneducated masses: "Nam vulgus quidem haudquaquam probatus est loquendi magister." (Baron, p.80).

Bruni is so conscious of the distance between himself and the vulgar crowd that he imagines that a similar cultural gap existed in antiquity, and that the vernacular had an ancient equivalent: "Ego autem ut nunc est sic etiam tunc distinctam fuisse vulgarem linguam a litterata existimo." (Ep.ii.62). This statement sums up Bruni's position in the debate with Biondo about the unity of Latin around 1435, but it does not mean that Bruni therefore rejected the merits of the vernacular. On the contrary the fact that the volgare in Bruni's opinion goes back to antiquity ennobles it; and it is not surprising that in this same letter the man who wrote the Vite di Dante e Petrarca about the same time says this of the vernacular:

Nam et habet vulgaris sermo commendationem suam, ut  
 apud Dantem poetam, et alios quosdam emendate  
 loquentes apparet. (Ep.ii.68).<sup>23</sup>

Bruni's attitude to literary imitation may be summed up in the following sentence from the introduction to his translation of Demosthenes' speeches: "Utilissima quidem imitatio est sed non nisi perfectorum." (Baron, p.131). He makes the same point elsewhere: in the De Studiis he urges the study of only the best authors (ib.p.7), and in his treatise on translation demands that the ideal translator should know and be able to imitate the locutions and figures of speech of the best writers in the target language (ib. p.86). He is thus at odds with Salutati over the question of resorting to neologisms in translation: the older humanist had approved of neologisms in Latin in general (Sal. Ep.ii.218) and specifically in translation (ii.356f) but Bruni in his De Interpretatione Recta wants the translator to avoid "et verborum et orationis novitatem presertim ineptam et barbaram" (Baron, p.86). He is thinking particularly of translating into Latin at this point because he regards it as a language already sufficiently enriched by Cicero to cope with both expression and adornment: "locuples est nec ad exprimendum modo quodvis, verum etiam ad exornandum" (ib. p.78).

Despite this attitude to new coinages in Latin, despite Bruni's

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23. The idea is restated in the Vita di Dante: "Ciascuna lingua ha la sua perfezione e suo suono, e suo parlare limato e scientifico." (in Le vite di Dante, Petrarca e Boccaccio, ed. A.Solerti, p.106).

great esteem for Cicero, and despite his Ciceronian Latin, Bruni is not a Ciceronian. Certainly he regards the man he calls "parens eloquii" (Baron, p.144) and Aristotle as the major authors in the two languages. In that passage where he defines the studia humanitatis to Niccolò Strozzi (Ep.ii.49) as a literary and moral programme for man's perfection, he adds this important, though less quoted, sentence:

fundamenta disciplinamque harum rerum ab Aristotile  
perdisces, ornatum vero orationis et copiam et omnes  
verborum divitias, sermonisque ut ita loquar  
dexteritatem in his ipsis rebus a Cicerone mutuaberis.  
(Ep.ii.49)

This is Bruni's ideal, the humanist who derives his moral content from Aristotle and his eloquence from Cicero, res from the chief philosopher, verba from the greatest orator. Bruni remains faithful to these ideals in practice, particularly when translating Aristotle, as we shall see.

But although Bruni singles out Cicero for superlative praise, especially for having enriched Latin so that it can deal adequately and even elegantly with philosophy (Baron, p.144), and though he repeatedly states that Cicero will never be surpassed, he never restricts himself to the exclusive imitation of Cicero. The Dialogi in genre, subject matter and language were certainly Ciceronian, but Bruni's interest in biographies must have come from his study of Plutarch, while his Historiae and Commentaria follow the historical writers, Livy, Sallust, Caesar.<sup>24</sup> Bruni may consider himself as a

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24. Not only the lives of Dante and Petrarch, but the comparison between the two men by Bruni probably derives from Plutarch's example.

second Cicero in translating the speeches of Aeschines and Demosthenes into Latin, thus replacing the translations made by Cicero which had been lost (Baron, p.144), but he also explicitly imitates Aristides' panegyric of Athens in his Laudatio (cf. Ep.ii.111), and sees himself as replacing a lost section of Livy's history in writing his Commentaria Primi Belli Punici (Baron, p.123). These commentaries are based on, but do not constitute a translation of, Polybius. This kind of work, which seems to be half-way between a totally original composition and a straight translation, was popular with Bruni. The De Bello Italico adversus Gothos (1442) was in similar fashion derived largely from Procopius, and the Commentarius Rerum Graecarum drew mainly on Xenophon's Hellenica. Perhaps his fondness for this genre is explicable in terms of Bruni's desire to preserve ancient sources (Baron, p.122-3), and his feeling that the historian's task is to relate either deeds he has witnessed or the words found in one of his sources, for there is no question of original invention in the writing of history:

In historia vero, in qua nulla est inventio, non video equidem quid intersit, an ut facta, an ut ab alio dicta scribas: in utroque enim par labor est aut etiam maior in secundo. (Baron, p.104)

In his translations from Aristotle he insists repeatedly that he has consulted not only Cicero for the correct philosophical vocabulary but also Seneca, Jerome and Augustine, Lactantius and Boethius (ib. p.80; Ep.ii.1-8; 81-90; 195-217). In one of the many letters he wrote defending his translations he objects to the Greek or Germanic words found in the medieval translations and describes his own method



of securing linguistic purity: "Ego millies singula verba olfacere soleo, priusquam literis mandem. Nullum denique nisi probatum et ab optimis auctoribus michi commendatum recipio." (Ep.ii.88). We shall see, when we examine his actual practice in translating, that Bruni really does almost savour the bouquet of each word he uses to ensure that it is of a good vintage. But although he clearly wants to imitate what he calls the best authors, he never restricts himself to one in particular.

This rather limited eclecticism is apparent not only in Bruni's choice of genre but also in his language. The Historiae open with a proem which clearly echoes that of Livy from the opening expression of diffidence ("Diuturna mihi cognitatio fuit...faciundumne foret") through the standard praise of history as offering outstanding examples to follow or to avoid and the traditional declaration of the difficulty of writing history, to the final sentence where he turns to the foundation myths of his city and hints at his illustrious model: "placuit exemplo quorundam rerum scriptorum de primordio atque origine urbis, vulgaribus fabulosisque opinionibus reiectis, quam verissimam puto notitiam tradere" (p.4).<sup>25</sup> Livy is also the model in Bruni's mind when he claims that Florence's historical enemy, Pisa, is "altera Carthago" (3), and that the deeds of that war are in no way

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25. Page references are to the edition by E.Santini in R.I.S.xix.3. Cp. Livy: "Facturusne operae pretium sim si a primordio urbis res populi Romani perscripserim nec satis scio." (I.1). Perhaps Bruni is deliberately departing from Livy who says of the foundation myths: "ea nec adfirmare nec refellere in animo est" (I.6).



inferior to the famous events of that Punic war. The structure of the Historiae also recalls Livy's work: although not written in Decades, like Biondo's history, Bruni's work resembles the Roman historian's work in that the first book ends with the downfall of Frederick II, as Livy Book I ends with the downfall of the last Roman king;<sup>26</sup> and the war against Milan receives a separate proem at the start of Book X just as Livy writes another proem to the Punic war in Book XXI.<sup>27</sup> Livy is clearly the chief model for Bruni's history which traces Florence's history from the founding of the city to Bruni's own day, uses the appointment of magistrates to mark the beginning of each year, and echoes his Roman predecessor in the battle narratives and rhetorical speeches.

But Livy's history Ab urbe condita is not the sole model for the Historiae Florentini Populi. Both Sallust and Tacitus are sources for two of Bruni's favourite political ideas, which both receive expression in the first book: the republican founding of Florence and the decline of Rome which sets in with the founding of the Empire. But Bruni seems to echo these two historians not only in his ideas but also in his at times terse style.<sup>28</sup> Brief, epigrammatic sentences are typical of Sallust and Tacitus rather than Livy:

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26. Both books end with the retribution for the two kings' cruelties.

27. "Bellum mediolanense...maximum sit existimandum; nam et civitas per id tempus viris opibusque maxime florebat, et nitebatur adversus potentissimum hostem." (p.247). cp. "Bellum maxime omnium memorabile...nam neque validiores opibus ullae inter se civitates gentesque contulerunt arma." (Livy XXI.1).

28. Fryde, (art.cit.,p.534), says Bruni's "terse, Latin style" came from his reading of Thucydides and Sallust.

"Victi procul dubio, Romani vicerunt" (p.11) is reminiscent of many of their paradoxical sententiae; in the following sentence both the thought and the language are Tacitean: "Cessit enim libertas imperatorio nomini, et post libertatem virtus abivit." (14);<sup>29</sup> and the sequence of abrupt sentences describing the violent ends of many of the Emperors (14-5) seems a deliberate attempt to emulate the historian of the Annals and the Histories. This imitation of Tacitus is less surprising when we recall that Bruni recommends in the De Studiis the study of both Tacitus and Livy.

Of course there are also many long, complex periods as well, and the overall tone is heavily classical: the Guelphs are called "adversa imperio factio" (26,28 etc.), the Anziani are "Antianos" (27), the Palazzo pubblico is "aedes publicas, ubi nunc praetorium est" (30) and the podestà is dressed up as "magistratus qui peregrinus eligi consueverat" (31). But Bruni's Latin is not drawn merely from the classical historians: "consignatio" (5) is a legal term, "discursio" (10) is found only in Ammianus, "fomite" (25) comes from Gellius, and "vindicabundus" (11) is a poetic form unattested in ancient authors. The incidence of such non-classical vocabulary is perhaps higher in the Historiae than in the Dialogi, but this is predictable in view of the subject matter, as Bruni himself points out in the proem, where he talks of the "asperitas vix cuiuscumque elegantiae patiens" (3) of his material. The general impression of the Latin of the Historiae is

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29. "postquam...omnem potentiam ad unum conferri pacis interfuit, magna illa ingenia cessere." (Tac.Hist.I.1).

that it betrays that limited eclecticism that is characteristic of Bruni and of other Quattrocento historians.<sup>30</sup>

Bruni's other major historical work, the Rerum Suo Tempore Gestarum Commentarius, clearly belongs to a different genre. Unlike the twelve books of the Historiae the emphasis here is on the ideal of brevity: his memoirs are gathered in a short book in a brief style ("in hoc libello brevi discursu colligere" - p.423).<sup>31</sup> He explicitly acknowledges the difference between history and commentaries in a letter: "Commentaria tamen ab historia multum differunt. Illa enim amplior ac diligentior est: haec contractiora et minus explicata." (Ep.i.135). The commentaries are in fact much briefer and less formal than the History, with probably a higher percentage of non-classical usage. That late Latin use of "discursus", the poetic "decursa tempora" and the unusual form "scisciderant" all occur on the first page of the Commentarius.<sup>32</sup> Another indication of the difference of tone between this and the formal history of the city is the fact that the Ghibellines are no longer dignified - as often in the Historiae - with the classical term "imperii faultrix factio" but are called "gebellinarum partium" (425). In this work more than in any other Bruni is clearly an eclectic not a Ciceronian.

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30. Santini in his introduction to his edition says: "gli storici della prima metà del Quattrocento...si appigliarono a un ben inteso eclettismo." (p.IV).

31. For Bruni and the ideal of brevitas see N.Struever, The Language of History in the Renaissance, p.81 n.107.

32. This archaic form is discussed in A.Gellius Noc. Att.VI.9.16.

Bruni's other major Latin works are translations from Greek. His theory and his practice of translating are worth considering, particularly since his versions of Aristotle make it clear where he stands on one of the issues which will be problematic throughout the century: the relationship between philosophy and eloquence, which will culminate in the dispute between Pico and Barbaro in the 1480s. Bruni follows Petrarch in believing that subjects like philosophy and history should be written elegantly.<sup>33</sup> We have seen his concern to adorn even the difficult material of his history with a classical elegance, and have noted that he, like Petrarch, believes that Aristotle in his own language is an eloquent philosopher (eg. Dialogi pp.56-8) and that he is thus misrepresented in the harsh medieval translations. Certainly Bruni, like Salutati, believes that in translation the thought is more important than the words of the original.<sup>34</sup> He will translate verbatim if it is possible without producing any inconcinnitas or absurditas: but if that is not possible he believes he is acting correctly "si servata sententia paulisper a verbis recedo, ut declinem absurditatem." (Ep.i.17). Nevertheless, if Plato is a graceful writer in Greek it is wrong not to try to reproduce that charis in Latin (*ibid.*). Similarly with Aristotle, it

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33. eg. Pet.Rerum Memorandarum i.18; 1.26; ii.31.8: "Livius ab arce eloquentie non multum abesse (videtur)."; at i.26 (p.31) he cites Augustine on Aristotle: "vir excellentis ingenii et eloquii." cf. also Rer.Mem.ii.31.8.

34. Sal.Ep.ii.356: "res velim non verba consideres"; ii.483: "verborum ordinem...non servavi, sed amplectendo sententiam, noverint me de verborum aut rerum ordine non curasse."

is not a faithful translation which does not convey some of the philosopher's eloquence. Bruni is quite adamant about Aristotle's ability as a stylist and finds it not only in the Politics where the "materia est civilis et eloquentiae capax" (Baron, p.90) - but also in the subtle discussions of the Ethics (ibid.) and even in the Physics and Metaphysics:

Invenies locos nullius eloquentiae capaces eloquentissime ab eo tractatos rebusque obscurissimis splendorem et claritatem per eloquentiam attulisse. (Ep.i.138).

In practice Bruni is faithful to his own precepts of deriving res from Aristotle and verba from Cicero. Thus when he is translating the Ethics he asks a friend for a copy of the De Finibus (Ep.i.125). The fruit of that study of Cicero's philosophical language is to be seen in his own translation and in his critique of the medieval translators. He prefers voluptas and dolor to delectatio and tristitia, particularly since Cicero had translated hedone by voluptas in De Fin.II.4.13. (Baron, p.80).<sup>35</sup> He objects to the semi-Greek words of the medieval version:<sup>36</sup> eutrapelia, bomolochia and agriquia instead of the Ciceronian urbanitas, scurrilitas and rusticitas (ib. 78-9); the differentiation between bonum and honestum as well as the phrase summum bonum for the medieval bonum per se all derive from Cicero. In many cases Bruni has a wealth of synonyms to

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35. He also uses De Fin III.12.40 to criticise the translation of kakia by malitia instead of vitium.

36. cf. Alberti's criticism of Vitruvius in De Re Aedificatoria, ed. G.Orlandi and P.Portoghesi, pp.441f.

choose from, and his choice is based on a close study and imitation of the Ciceronian context: for urbanitas he also considers festivitas, comitas, iucunditas; elsewhere he prefers Livy's imprecatio to the ecclesiastical maledictio (Ep.i.96-7).<sup>37</sup> In his treatise on translation he devotes a whole section to synonyms (Baron, pp.84-6) and concludes that the translator needs to reproduce not only the thought but also the "dicendi figura" of the original: Cicero's "amplitudo et copia", Sallust's "exilitas et brevitates" and Livy's "granditas quaedam subaspera" as well as Plato's charis and Aristotle's "maiestas" must all be evident in the ideal translation (ib. 87f). He even quotes passages from Plato and Aristotle to exemplify their "exornationes", and he stresses the importance of reproducing the rhythms and colons of the original. He concludes that Aristotle's majesty of diction cannot be conveyed unless the translation reproduces his "ornatum numerositatemque".<sup>38</sup>

That this is a Ciceronian approach to philosophy is a point made by the defenders of the scholastic translations of Aristotle. Alonso de Cartagena, the Spanish ecclesiastic, is critical of Bruni's rhetorical approach to philosophical works: in a letter to Pizzolpasso he admits that Cicero is a great orator but he lacks Aristotle's philosophical acumen.<sup>39</sup> Quoting Boethius he says the writer's content

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37. But imprecatio is not found in Livy: modern texts of Livy IX.5.3 now read "precatione"; but here Bruni is checking the bouquet of this word (Ep.ii.88). As he says in Ep.ii.126: "Verborum delectum eloquentiae principium (est)".

38. Aristotle himself saw the importance of prose rhythm: "pedes et syllabas soluta etiam in oratione servandas ostendit." (Ep.i.138).

39. Published in A.Birkenmajer, 'Der Streit des Alonso von Cartagena mit Leonardo Bruni Aretino'.

not his grace is important in translation. For the Spaniard the strict conclusions of philosophy should not be subject to the rules of eloquence, so he defends the translation bonum per se as more philosophically precise than the Ciceronian summum bonum and reasserts the primacy of res over verba:

Non ergo ex eo translatio nostra mordenda est, quod oratorum etiam summorum usitatis verbis discordet, sed in hoc examinanda est, an simplicitatem rerum ac restrictam proprietatem verborum observet.

The churchman Alonso de Cartagena thus adopts a similar stance to that taken by Pico against Barbaro. At about this same time there is another defence of scholastic philosophy which anticipates Pico's position and is perhaps closer to it than Alonso since the author in question is a jurist with humanist sympathies who will eventually succeed Bruni and Poggio as Florentine Chancellor. Benedetto Accolti in his De Praestantia Virorum Sui Aevi claims that although modern writers are inferior to ancient authors in eloquence they are superior to them in philosophy. Accolti is not thinking of the early Church Fathers but of the scholastic philosophers of the last three hundred years, such as Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Egidius and Scotus, men who are more "studiosos rerum" than "studiosos verborum", more interested in "veritas" than in "orationis fuco".<sup>40</sup> The dispute about eloquence and philosophy rumbles on for the rest of the century, but the humanist stance is already evident in Bruni's Ciceronian approach. In the 1480s at the time of the debate between Pico and Barbaro, Battista de'

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40. Edited by C.G.Galletti in F.Villani De Famosis Civibus.



Giudici will again compare Bruni to Cicero, for being more able as a rhetorician than as a philosopher: "Leonardum eloquentiae quidem satis habuisse, philosophiae parum."

Unlike Salutati, Bruni has a substantial contribution to make to the vernacular: apart from two moral canzoni, one in praise of virtue like a canzone by Dante and the other more like Petrarch's final poem to the Virgin, he also writes around 1436 the Vite di Dante e di Petrarca.<sup>41</sup> The date is significant in that it confirms that Bruni's ideas about the origin of the vernacular, outlined the year before in a letter to Biondo (Ep.ii.62-8), make him see it as an inferior language to Latin but still a respectable medium which has its origins in antiquity not in the period of decline and invasion. It is a language that even a humanist can use with dignity.

Bruni is inspired to write a life of Dante because he has found Boccaccio's biography to be "tutto d'amore e di sospiri e di cocenti lagrime...pieno" (p.98), written as though he were still at work on Filocolo, Filostrato, Fiammetta or the Decameron. Boccaccio's Trattatello is thus not so much Bruni's model as his target here. In his criticism of Boccaccio Bruni uses a language that seems to recall

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41. We know from the Vita di Dante (ed. Solerti pp.106-7) that Bruni had studied closely Dante's canzoni "Amor che muovi", "Tre donne", and "Donne ch'avete intelletto d'amore". Boccaccio is not considered by Bruni to be on the same level as Dante and Petrarch, as is clear from the Dialogi and the Vite. Yet Bruni did translate Decameron iv.1. into Latin. Perhaps Boccaccio's vernacular works are much more obviously addressed to "mulierculae et nutrices et vulgus illitteratum" (Ep.ii.67) than Dante's or Petrarch's: this could account for Bruni's neglect of him. Page references in what follows are to Solerti's edition.



the liveliness of the volgare in certain pages of the Decameron: of Boccaccio's taste for amorous details in any work he writes Bruni remarks "La lingua pur va dove il dente duole, ed a cui piace il bere, sempre ragiona di vini..." (99). Only when he is discussing the origin and etymology of the word "poeta" does the humanist regard the vernacular as inadequate: "queste sono cose che mal si possono dire in volgare idioma" (105), presumably because to treat of the meaning of words of Greek origin in this "volgare idioma" is to contravene the aesthetic of decorum. But he goes on to reaffirm the nobility of the vernacular when he declares that the poet is to be differentiated from other creative writers on the grounds of what he writes not because of his language:

lo scrivere in istile litterato o volgare non ha a fare al fatto, né altra differenza è se non come scrivere in greco od in latino. Ciascuna lingua ha la sua perfezione e suo suono, e suo parlare limato e scientifico. (p.106).

That epithet "scientifico" is particularly applied to Dante by Bruni, because, of the two kinds of poets, one inspired by internal furor, the other by study and science, Dante in Bruni's eyes belongs to the latter.<sup>42</sup> Bruni repeats the established humanist thinking on Dante, that he is a better writer in the vernacular than in Latin; but, unlike Petrarch and Salutati, he singles out Dante's Eclogues as a genre in which he is easily surpassed and the Monarchia which is written "a modo disadorno, senza niuna gentilezza di dire." (107).

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42. The notion of the poet's furor comes from Bruni's study of Plato, especially the Ion and Phaedrus (part of the latter he translated around 1424: cf. E.Garin, 'Ricerche sulle traduzioni di Platone') cf. Ep.ii.36-40.

But as in the Dialogi he ascribes Dante's mediocrity in Latin to the age he lived in, which was more adept at vernacular poetry than in Latin prose or verse, and associates him with a scholastic age when men were competent in Latin "al modo fratesco scolastico." (106).<sup>43</sup>

Petrarch is seen to belong to a different epoch. Bruni restates his republican theory of scholarship, maintaining that the development of Latin was parallel to the course of the Roman republic, both reaching their peak in Cicero's time and declining in the Empire and its decadence. In the period of recovery literature progressed to the point it reached in Dante's time, when the volgare flourished but the few who knew Latin knew it badly. Petrarch is associated with the two metaphors of the light and the road, which were by now traditional:

Francesco Petrarca fu il primo il quale ebbe tanta grazia d'ingegno, che riconobbe e rivotò in luce l'antica leggiadria dello stile perduto e spento, e posto che in lui perfetto non fusse, pur da sé vide ed aperse la via a questa perfezione, ritrovando l'opere di Tullio e quelle gustando ed intendendo, adattandosi quanto poté e seppe a quella elegantissima e perfettissima facondia. (290).<sup>44</sup>

But more important than the standard metaphors here is the association between Petrarch and Cicero. It is recognised that Petrarch's Latin is not perfect, not classical, but the road towards perfection in Latin was opened by Petrarch with his discovery of works of Cicero.

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43. "hoc ascribendum...potius temporum vitio" (Prosatori p.60); "Dantem quodlibet fratrum atque eiusmodi molestias lectitasse." (p.70).

44. For the metaphor of the road see above note 9.

This passage is closely connected with the opening of the life of Petrarch, where it was stated that "La lingua latina ed ogni sua perfezione e grandezza fiorí massimamente nel tempo di Tullio." For Bruni it is the discovery and imitation of Cicero's Latin especially in a republic like Florence that will lead to the recovery of classical excellence in both the political and literary spheres. Bruni's antagonist in the dispute over the Latin language, Biondo, will also see the revival of literature as stemming from a recovery of Cicero, but without Bruni's republican emphasis; and it is not Petrarch's discovery of Cicero that Biondo sees as crucial, but rather the discovery in 1421 of the manuscript at Lodi which Biondo helped to transcribe.<sup>45</sup>

How does Bruni's estimate of the vernacular writers evolve in the thirty years between the writing of the Dialogus and the later biographies of Dante and Petrarch? In many respects his attitude in the 1430s is closer to the positions taken up by Niccoli in Book i of the Dialogus than to the apologetic position of Book ii. Dante's Latin is criticised in both works and is associated with the scholastic manner. The difference is in the works criticised: in the early work his Epistole were the target, in the Vita his Eclogues and the Monarchia are attacked, possibly because in the biography it is kinder

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45. In Italia Illustrata, p.346 he says of Petrarch: "nec tamen eum attigit Ciceronianae eloquentiae florem, quo multos in hoc seculo videmus ornatos...Ipse enim et si epistolas Ciceronis Lentulo inscriptas Vercellis reperisse gloriatus est, tres Ciceronis De Oratore et Institutionum Oratoriarum Quintiliani libros non nisi laceros mutilatosque vidit".

to criticise genres that are not popular with the humanists, the pastoral and the political treatise rather than the letters.

Petrarch is praised in both works as the pioneer along the road of humanist studies, but the recognition in the Vita that his Latin is not perfectly classical is closer to the criticism of his Latin works in Dialogus i than to the defence of them in the second book. Yet it would be inaccurate to conclude that the defence of the vernacular in Dialogus ii is merely rhetorical, a sop to Salutati's enthusiasm for the Tre Corone. The Vite after all are not only written in the volgare but also explicitly defend it. They represent Bruni's mature thinking on the status of Trecento culture: he is more critical of the shortcomings in Latin, but is more positive about the achievements of the vernacular.

Bruni's contribution to the history of literary imitation, like his contribution to other aspects of humanism, is of major significance. In terms of theory, his dispute with Salutati over the imitation of antiquity is trivial, but it is also indicative of the gulf between the two men and the two centuries. Salutati favours creative imitation (imitatio) rather than mere reproduction (relatio), not least because that had been Petrarch's position. Petrarch's similitudo and Salutati's imitatio are clearly different from Bruni's quest for identitas with antiquity. The Latin of men like Petrarch and Salutati could never be mistaken for classical prose; the Latin of someone like Bruni and his generation is an almost perfect copy. Partly because he possesses this facility, Bruni is content to sacrifice his own invention for the sake of producing a genuine

antique. Hence his many works which require no inventio: the translations, the imitations, the historical works, the commentaries and biographies.

The strength of Petrarch's personality was such that it figured largely in his theory of imitation: it had to be accommodated, hence his preference for similarity not identity with a classical model. Bruni's personality exists but seems clothed in a Roman toga. He does not have to theorise much about imitation partly because he is so successful at it in practice. The one area where he seems to align himself with medieval ideas is his defence of the michi and nichil forms (Ep.ii.107-8). He tells Antonio da Rho that he has always used these forms because of the authority of men such as Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and Salutati. Those who write mihi are merely a few fools "qui ostentare volunt se antiquarios esse" (ii.107). But although Bruni here appeals to the force of usage and the authority of the great Trecento writers, he does so because he believes that the classical writers were also guided more by usus than by ratio or analogia. He cites the example of words like pessume, optume, lubens and others which had archaic forms in antiquity; and has even noted inscriptions with the forms "coeravit faciundum" instead of "curavit faciendum". Thus although in this instance Bruni supports the medieval orthographical tradition, he does so for humanist motives.

When it comes to his practice in imitation, Bruni prefigures many of the developments of humanism in the course of the century. He inaugurates two of the favourite humanist genres, the dialogue and the

history, and continues the traditions of the other two, the oration and the letter.<sup>46</sup> He develops other forms adopted by later humanists, the commentary and the biography. He is also the first to put into practice the imitation of Greek authors by carrying out a series of translations and imitations of Greek works. In this he sees himself as another Cicero, enriching Latin by importing Greek culture.<sup>47</sup> He is also Ciceronian in his concern for elegant form even when the content does not lend itself to eloquent expression, as in history or philosophy. Yet although he sees Cicero as the peak of Latin culture, he does not regard him as the sole model for the Latin language. When he declares "Utilissima quidem imitatio est sed non nisi perfectorum" he is not merely speaking of Cicero and Demosthenes. In practice he draws his lexis from writers of the Republic like Sallust and Livy, but also from authors from what Bruni would call a period of decline, such as Seneca, Boethius and the fourth century Fathers. A century after Bruni Bembo will also advocate the imitation of only the best authors, but in practice this will be much more restrictive

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46. He considers the letter and the treatise as easier genres than historiography: "libellum quidem aut epistolam...faciliter transigas" (Historiae ed.cit., p.3). That possibly explains why his collection of letters is less weighty than Salutati's. As for his official letters as Chancellor, they too seem to mark a break with the stilus altus of his predecessor in favour of a lower style closer to the classical manner, according to R.G.Witt, Coluccio Salutati and his Public Letters, pp.40-41. His criticism of another official's "coloratis verbis" (N.Struever, op.cit., p.113) seems to confirm this: it is similar to Guarino's objection to Pietro da Moglio's dictamen (Guarino, Ep.i.85).

47. He even wants a copy of Cicero's introduction to his own translations of Demosthenes and Aeschines (the De Opt.Gen.Dic.) "ut...me summo viro propinquum afferam" (Ep.i.98).

than Bruni's prescription. Bruni's "optimos auctores" are not yet confined to the one century, far less to the one writer. It is not surprising, then, that in the course of the Quattrocento Bruni's own Latin will come in for criticism.

His contemporaries like Antonio da Rho and even his critic Alonso de Cartagena show their respect for his Latin by calling him "alter Cicero", "Cicero novellus".<sup>48</sup> Alberti too feels that Bruni is a Ciceronian, while Accolti declares that the Florentine history is written "prisca eloquentia".<sup>49</sup> But in the second half of the century even a Tuscan like Cortese is more critical. He sees that Cicero is not Bruni's chief model in the historical works: "consectatur in historia quiddam livianum non ausim dicere ciceroninanum."<sup>50</sup> Cortese in the De Hominibus Doctis is a rigorous Ciceronian and is thus able to isolate two other characteristics of Bruni's Latin: the fact that he occasionally uses "minus plerunque lectis verbis" (ibid.) and that he was the first to restore the classical rhythm to Latin prose: "hic primus inconditam scribendi consuetudinem ad numerosum quendam sonum inflexit." (ibid.). This refers no doubt to Bruni's avoidance of the cursus, which is almost totally absent from his Latin; but it

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48. Antonio da Rho, 'Oratio ad Scholares' in Reden und Briefe italienischen Humanisten ed. K.Müllner, p.166; Birkenmajer, op.cit., p.164.

49. Alberti, 'Alcune Intercenali inedite' ed. E.Garin, p.179f. Accolti, De Praestantia ed.cit., p.112.

50. P.Cortese, De Hominibus Doctis, ed. M.T.Graziosi, p.24.



is also an accurate assessment of Bruni's sensitivity to rhythm, as was evident on the many occasions when he illustrated Aristotle's concern for prose rhythm and insisted on the necessity of having to convey the philosopher's numerositas. The final irony in Cortese's picture of Bruni, is that he regards him rather as the author of the Dialogi regards Dante; any faults in his Latin are due more to the age that he lived in than to his own ability: "vitium potius corrupte loquendi aetati illi tribuas quam ei scribendi laudem ademeris" (ibid.).<sup>51</sup> Cortese rightly accords Bruni a prominent place in his survey of Quattrocento culture; but Bruni was not only the first to achieve a classical rhythm in his Latin, he was also interested in the achievements of the vernacular to an extent not found in any of his close contemporaries. The humanists we will examine in the following chapters are interested only in perfecting their ability to write classical Latin; only when we come to Alberti will we find an interest in the volgare to match and outstrip Bruni's.

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51. Compare Dialogus i: "quis tam iniquus iudex erit qui eorum culpa hoc ascribendum putet, ac non potius temporum vitio et huic rerum perturbationi?" (Prosatori cit., p.60). The idea recurs in Pico, again with reference to Dante: "in aetatem et saeculum illud...culpam reiciunt." (ib. p.800).



CHAPTER THREE  
HUMANIST EDUCATORS

a) PIER PAOLO VERGERIO THE ELDER

When we turn from men of letters such as Petrarch, Salutati and Leonardo Bruni to humanists whose main interest was teaching, it is not surprising to find a change of emphasis in discussions of literary imitation. Barzizza and Antonio da Rho, while acknowledging the stylistic supremacy of Cicero's Latin, deal with the imitation of model authors in very basic pedagogical terms. Imitatio was only explicitly mentioned by Salutati and Bruni in a few places; but in the humanist educators and the writers of educational treatises the topic naturally receives more attention, and in the context of basic rules of rhetorical training rather than as general stylistic advice.

Pier Paolo Vergerio was the first humanist to write an educational treatise. But before considering the De Inguenuis Moribus et Liberalibus Adolescentie Studiis, written about 1402-3, it is important to look at some of his letters written before that time.<sup>1</sup> In a letter of 1389 to Santo de' Pellegrini he contrasts Santo's reading of Cicero and Seneca with his own studies of dialectic (Ep.13).

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1. For Vergerio's works I have used his Epistolario ed. L.Smith (Rome, 1934), henceforth referred to in the text as Ep; for the De Inguenuis Moribus I have used the edition in V.Roscus, De Docendi Studendique Modo ac de Claris Puerorum Moribus (Basle, 1541), pp.442-500.

Santo's reply (ib.26-8) expresses surprise at Vergerio's ability to be a follower of Cicero in his Latin even while studying logic; and Vergerio modestly acknowledges the compliment and asserts his recognition of Cicero as the supreme model:

Ciceronis me stilum sequi perhibent? verum est illud:  
sequor quo cōminus possum totius eloquentie fontem.  
nescio enim quem potiozem ducem in hoc sectari valeam.  
sed adeo iners tardusque sum ut velociter preeuntem  
obliteratis ferme vestigiis nedum attingere sed videre  
minime possim. (Ep.29).<sup>2</sup>

That this is more than the standard compliment to Cicero paid by all humanists is confirmed not only by Vergerio's elaboration of the image of following in the orator's footsteps, but also by his fullest statement on imitation, which occurs in a letter of 1396 to Ludovico Buzzacarino (Ep.176-9). Here he is offering his correspondent some "generalialia quedam precepta" on rhetoric. After outlining the importance of constant practice ("exercitium assiduitasque disserendi") he then offers advice on imitation, stressing the necessity of choosing just one model despite the Elder Seneca's advocacy of an eclectic approach:

et quamquam Annaeus neminem velit unum sequendum,  
sed ex diversis novum quoddam dicendi genus  
conficiendum, michi tamen non ita videtur, sed  
unum aliquem eundemque optimum habendum esse, quem  
precipuum imitemur. (Ep.177).<sup>3</sup>

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2. For the source of this image and Petrarch's use of it see the section on Petrarch, note 7 , p.21.
  3. Sen, Contr. I. proem 6: "Non est unus, quamvis praecipuus sit, imitandus, quia numquam par fit imitator auctori." Perhaps there is also an echo of Petrarch: "unum nostrum conflatum ex pluribus" (Fam. i.8.2) and the younger Seneca: "unum quiddam fiat ex multis" (Ep. 84.7).

Like many writers on imitation, Vergerio draws an analogy with painting, urging Buzzacarino to act like contemporary painters do when they look at many other painters' works but follow only Giotto's "exemplaria".<sup>4</sup> He confirms that he is in the Ciceronian camp by proclaiming that Cicero is the finest author in both prose and poetry; then adds his own version of the image of the bee and the flowers, which was often invoked by the anti-Ciceronians: "illud omnino curandum est, ut sententiis magis polleat oratio quam verbis, ne similes illis videamur qui flores sectantur, fructus negligunt." (ib.178).<sup>5</sup> This stress on res rather than verba is in harmony with the ideas of Trecento writers such as Petrarch and Salutati, particularly the condemnation of "lubricis aut magno boatu resonantibus verbis" and the warning to avoid obscure or archaic words: "habenda sunt autem vocabula non obscura aut insueta nec vero passim vulgata et puerilia, sed que apud claros auctores cognita celebrataque sunt." (ibid.)<sup>6</sup> The letter closes with Vergerio stressing the importance of natural ability, an element he emphasises elsewhere, particularly in the De Inguis Moribus: "ars enim multum, exercitatio magis, natura preter cetera plurimum ad hanc rem confert." (Ep.179).<sup>7</sup>

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4. cf. M.Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators, pp.43f on this passage.

5. The image begins with Seneca and Petrarch and goes on to Poliziano, but here Vergerio has combined it with the metaphor of fruit, which he also uses elsewhere, to make his case for the imitation of Cicero.

6. cf. Salutati Ep.i.77; iv.234.

7. Ad Her I.2.3 lists ars, imitatio, exercitatio, but natura was often included as well, especially in Quintilian (eg. I.proem.26: "nihil praecepta atque artes valere nisi adiuvante natura").

The emphasis on natural gifts is even more pronounced in the De Ingenuis Moribus. Both the subject matter in general and this particular notion of the importance of the student's natural disposition, as well as many of the traditional metaphors in the treatise, show how much Vergerio is indebted to Quintilian.<sup>8</sup> But literary imitation receives more cursory treatment in the full-scale treatise than in the earlier letter. After expressing predictable humanist attitudes on the loss of texts and on the revival of Greek (ed. cit., pp.470-1) Vergerio insists that the young student learn from the best teachers and from the best authors: "non quibuslibet (autoribus) passim immorari sed optimis" (p.479). Here he does not insist on the reading and imitation solely of Cicero, presumably because this is a treatise on education as a whole, not a letter on the development of Latin style. But there is an insistence on a restricted range of texts which seems to have a quantitative rather than a qualitative motivation, and to derive from Seneca:

Ut enim superfluous cibus non nutrit, sed stomachum  
quidem fastidio afficit, reliquum vero corpus  
aggravat atque infirmat: ita multa rerum copia simul  
ingesta memoriae, et facile in praesenti elabatur  
et in futurum imbecilliores vim eius reddit. (ib.480).<sup>9</sup>

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8. For the emphasis on natural ability see D. Robey, 'Humanism and education in the Early Quattrocento: The De Ingenuis Moribus of P.P. Vergerio'. The famous passage where Vergerio names eloquence, philosophy and history as the "praecipuas civilitatis partes" (p.473), the unusual word civilitas probably comes from Quintilian II.15.25: "(rhetoricen esse) civilitatis particulae simulacrum." but cf. also II.15.33 and II.17.14.
9. Sen. Ep. 2 but esp. 2.4: "Fastidientis stomachi est multa degustare"; and 84.6-7: "alimenta quae...solida innatant stomacho, onera sunt ...Concoquamus illa; alioqui in memoriam ibunt non in ingenium."

Vergerio submitted a copy of his treatise to Salutati but did not pay much attention to his strictures on the sources and the orthography of the De Ingenuis Moribus. In a letter of reply to the Florentine Chancellor (Ep.257-62) he defends his quotation of an anecdote from Cicero instead of the version found in Plato and admits that he is not very diligent in orthography, especially since the glory of writers does not derive from the way they spelt but from what they wrote. He seems in fact to deliberately display his lack of interest in one of Salutati's favourite concerns when he misrepresents the older humanist's advice which had been summed up in the biblical phrase "munda hoc fermentum".<sup>10</sup> Vergerio mockingly replies:

nec me iube frumentum hoc, ut tu appellas, tam  
exquisite mundare. neque enim usque adeo candidum  
ex similagine panem conficere studeo, ut nichil in  
eo furfuris relictum velim. (ib.262)

Vergerio's position in the question of literary imitation is, then, of some significance. In many respects he is to be linked with Bruni: Bruni's Dialogus is of course dedicated to Vergerio, and it opens, like the De Ingenuis Moribus, with a quotation from Plutarch's Vita Demosthenis about the importance of being born in an illustrious city; and both works celebrate the importance of disputatio.<sup>11</sup> Both

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10. Salutati had written: "munda fermentum hoc" (in Vergerio Ep.257) echoing St. Paul's "expurgate fermentum hoc" but Vergerio deliberately misreads the orthography of the word and changes the metaphor to the metaphor of bread which goes back via the Convivio (i.X.1; i.XIII.12) to Seneca Ep.119.3: "utrum hic panis sit plebeius an siligineus ad naturam nihil pertinet"; though Vergerio probably derives the image from his fellow Capodistrian, St. Jerome (Ep.52.6). cf. also the section on Dante.

11. See N.W.Gilbert, 'The Early Italian Humanists and Disputation' esp., pp.205-6.

men were almost exact contemporaries, had similar careers initially, and their first major works in Latin established two important genres that were to remain favourites with the humanists of the Quattrocento, the dialogue and the educational treatise. But there are differences between the two men. Vergerio was only interested in Petrarch's Latin works, while Bruni was also concerned with the vernacular output of the *Tre Corone*; and if Bruni's dialogue form stems ultimately from Cicero, Vergerio seems to look more to Quintilian for his major work.

Yet the most significant aspect of Vergerio's thought on imitation is that he is the first humanist to enunciate, at least in theory, the rule of following only one literary model: in the case of Latin, Cicero. He is prepared to do so even while citing an ancient authority who disapproved of this, and presumably even though he knew that Petrarch, as well as Seneca and Quintilian, had on more than one occasion rejected the imitation of just one author. Similarly he rejects Petrarch's criticism of Cicero for his involvement in the active life, as expressed in Familiares xxiv.3. Vergerio writes a letter in Cicero's name to Petrarch justifying his actions (Ep.436-45): this defence of Cicero is connected with the Ciceronianist ideal proclaimed in the letter to Buzzacarino, and at the end of the letter to Petrarch he makes Cicero apologise for the diminished eloquence of his Latin: "si non ea dignitate, quo quondam, eloqui videor, desuetum michi per multa iam secula usum orationis excusa." (Ep.444). Vergerio thus also hints at a Ciceronian renaissance, as will Guarino and Biondo.

But he is also prepared to ignore Salutati's advice on orthography: in many respects he has stronger ties with the Trecento than with the new century.<sup>12</sup> He is interested in dialectic, and his Latin is in practice less Ciceronian than Bruni's. He has, like Salutati, a lingering fondness for the cursus, and he employs more unclassical terms than Bruni: apart from the early letters, even the De Ingenuis Moribus abounds with forms such as "miserativi", "specialius" (ed.cit., p.453), "repagulis" (462) etc. Vergerio may sound in theory like a Ciceronian of the end of the Quattrocento, his letter in Cicero's name may be woven out of many Ciceronian phrases, but in practice his Latin is closer to Trecento Latin than to that of the Cinquecento.<sup>13</sup>

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12. A similar conclusion about the roots of his educational ideals is expressed by D.Robey (art.cit., p.54).

13. J.M.McManamon S.J. ('Innovation in Early Humanist Rhetoric: the Oratory of Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder') illustrates Vergerio's application of classical ideals to his speeches; but his Latin could not accurately be described as Ciceronian. Apart from the instances cited above, see the lively facetia in his Epistolario (384-7), where his Latin achieves the anecdotal fluency of Poggio. His comedy Paulus is equally lively in linguistic terms (published in Teatro goliardico dell' Umanesimo, ed. V.Pandolfi and E.Artese, pp.49-119). Perosa discusses its unclassical Latin in Teatro umanistico, pp.19,60.



b) GASPARINO BARZIZZA

Gasparino Barzizza's reputation as a scholar and teacher extends from his own time down to the most recent studies on him. In 1422 Guarino on hearing of the discovery of the manuscript at Lodi with the complete versions of De Oratore and the Brutus tells Barzizza that it is appropriate that he should be involved in this renaissance of Cicero on account of his teaching of the orator's works in the schools of Italy: "renascens ad superos Cicero (te) primum in terris delegit hospitem...Quem enim potius quam te Cicero deligeret, cuius ductu atque auspiciis amatur legitur et per Italorum gymnasia summa cum gloria volitat."<sup>14</sup> In the middle of the century Flavio Biondo praises Barzizza's ability as a teacher and feels that the knowledge of the works discovered at Lodi is what makes the difference between the Ciceronian Latin of the fifteenth century and the Latin of Petrarch: "factum videmus ut maior meliorque ea quam Petrarca habuit dicendi copia in nostrum pervenerit aetatem."<sup>15</sup> Even at the end of the century Barzizza's reputation is still intact and still based on the twin virtues of his scholarship and his teaching. Sabellico echoes Biondo's praise of Barzizza's teaching in the Veneto and expressly links his achievement of a classical style with his textual labours: "primus omnium, ut audio, ad veteris eloquentiae umbram... oculos retorsit...ea fiducia fretus quod in tres divinos illos

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14. Guarino, Epistolario ed. R.Sabbadini, i.345.

15. Biondo, Roma Triumphans etc., p.346.



M.Tullii ad Quintum fratrem libros, quum diutissime non extitissent, primus inciderat."<sup>16</sup>

There is no doubt of Barzizza's scholarly expertise. When the Lodi manuscript was discovered it was mainly due to Barzizza and his pupil Cosma Raimondi that the complete texts of De Oratore, Orator and the Brutus were deciphered, transcribed and then circulated amongst fellow humanists.<sup>17</sup> Throughout his life he worked on a project to establish the correct texts of Cicero's major works,<sup>18</sup> and also devoted his considerable abilities to the text of Quintilian. His brilliance as a scholar was allied to his success as a teacher, as his contemporaries realised; and his association with the return to Ciceronian Latin was due both to his textual labours and to his didactic efforts. His teaching methods are recorded not only in the writings of his contemporaries but also in his own didactic treatises. Apart from the works on orthography and composition it was particularly his series of model Latin letters, the Epistolae ad Exercitationem Accomodatae, that won him the reputation as the "apostolo del ciceronianismo".<sup>19</sup> But Sabbadini's phrase, echoed by Mercer in the recent monograph on Barzizza, needs to be used

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16. M.Sabellico, De Latinae Linguae Reparatione in Opera iv.324.

17. R.Sabbadini, Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV, 2 vols, I.100-1; 'I codici delle opere rettoriche di Cicerone'.

18. R.G.G.Mercer, The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza, p.72 talks of the plan 'ad effingendum Ciceronem', of emending all of Cicero's works.

19. R.Sabbadini, Storia del Ciceronianismo, p.12.

carefully.<sup>20</sup> If Barzizza is the apostle of Ciceronianism, it is not a Ciceronianism that is reflected in his own Latin, but rather a devotion to the study of Cicero's works as preached and practised by Barzizza throughout his life. When one studies his Latin style and his statements on imitation it is clear that he is not a strict Ciceronian, though he does recommend the use of the great orator as a literary model.

Like Salutati and Poggio, Barzizza also compiled a list of Sinonyma Ciceronis which would be an indispensable tool in the acquisition of a totally Ciceronian vocabulary.<sup>21</sup> But apart from this list and apart from the rather basic treatises De Orthographia and De Compositione, the short tract De Imitatione is of some relevance here. This too is a rather pedestrian piece, presenting "the nuts and bolts of the technique of imitation, simple advice how to adopt models," and is probably not a finished piece of work.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless it deserves some attention since it bears directly on the topic of imitation.

The work is addressed to those who have just progressed from the study of grammar to the art of rhetoric: "qui sunt novi in hac arte..."

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20. Mercer, p.73.

21. ib. p.66.

22. G.W.Pigman, 'Barzizza's Treatise on Imitation', BHR 44 (1982), p.341. This article provides an edition of the treatise on pp.349-52. My references in what follows are to this edition.

qui primo recedunt a studiis gramatice et statim huic studio traduntur" (ed.cit., p.351). Hence its rather basic approach: the student is advised not to copy passages from the beginnings of letters or speeches since they are more easily recognised (p.350); he is told that imitation can also take place as regards inventio and dispositio as well as elocutio (p.351); he is offered very obvious examples of imitation by addition or transformation. Thus Cicero's phrase "Scite hoc inquit Brutus" can be added to and become: "Scite enim ac eleganter hoc inquit ille vir noster Brutus." (ibid.);<sup>23</sup> and other phrases can be altered by changing the singular into the plural or a nominative into a genitive or by transposing "fecisti satis" to make "satisfecisti"! (ibid.).

But despite this down-to-earth tone the short treatise is based on the major classical authorities. The opening division of imitation into four categories ("videlicet addendo subtrahendo transferendo et immutando" - p.349) derives from Quintilian,<sup>24</sup> while the central section is an elaboration of the metaphors of imitation used in Seneca's Epistulae 84. The fact that Seneca's letter was regularly exploited by the anti-Ciceronians is already an indication of how one needs to modify the epithet "Ciceronian" when applying it

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23. Barzizza uses an analogy from the visual arts to describe what he has just done: "Aliquis pictor pinxit figuram hominis absque manu dextra vel sinistra. Accipiam ego penellum et adiungam manum dextram vel sinistram et etiam pingam sibi cornua in capite. Vide quomodo videtur ista figura multum diversa a prima." cf. M.Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators, p.34.

24. I.5.38.

to Barzizza.<sup>25</sup> Seneca's images of the bee, the digestion of food, the similarity of son to father, the echo of a voice, and the choir are all reworked by Barzizza.<sup>26</sup> When rehearsing the bee metaphor Barzizza differs slightly from his source. Seneca had expressed doubt about whether the bee collected honey from the flowers or some substance which it then transformed into honey; but whereas both Seneca and Petrarch had concluded that there was a process of transformation and improvement involved, Barzizza does not specify such improvement:

sicut enim apes in prato florenti et floribus pleno vadunt, flores candidiores et electiores sugunt et extrahunt mel, ita et nos volentes imitari, quando libros poetarum et oratorum et inprimis Ciceronis nostri legimus, electiora dicta imitari debemus... et nos non accipiamus dicta oratorum et poetarum quos imitari volumus recte secundum literam sed imitemur ita ut non videamur ipsa furari. (p.350).<sup>27</sup>

But though he does not stress improvement on the model, Barzizza clearly here, and throughout the treatise, urges the avoidance of using the same words as the original, and this would obviously exclude him from the ranks of the strict Ciceronians who wished to use only words attested in Cicero. This insistence on using different words probably derives from Petrarch, even though Barzizza does not share Petrarch's emphasis on the unity of style that the successful

25. Petrarch used this letter in his major statements on imitation in *Fam* i.8; xxi.2; xxiii.19. Some of its imagery is used by Poliziano in the debate with Cortese and by Giovanfrancesco Pico in the dispute with Bembo.

26. Barzizza mistakenly reads "echo" instead of "ex quo" at Seneca, *Ep.*84.8.

27. Pigman (*art.cit.*, p.342f) details the differences between Seneca and Barzizza in their use of this metaphor: "Disguising thefts, not making something better, is Barzizza's special province." (p.343).

imitator should achieve.<sup>28</sup> The influence of Petrarch is also apparent in the invocation of the principle of decorum, in insisting that different styles should be used depending on whether one is addressing a judge or a carpenter (p.350), an arrogant or a humble man (p.351).<sup>29</sup>

But although the overall message of the tract is a cautious eclecticism, there is constant reference to Cicero. As in the passage above, so in the rest of the work Cicero has a special prominence: after recalling the way in which a son differs from yet resembles his father, Barzizza adds this sentence which sums up the essence of the treatise: "ita bona imitatio debet esse et accipi ita ut stilus et eloquentia videatur assimilari Ciceroni vel alio oratori, et tamen non esse debet eadem in verbis." (p.350). This epitomises the work in that the stress is on the avoidance of the same words as in the model, while Cicero is named as deserving of imitation but is not the sole model prescribed. It is not surprising that in the two places where Barzizza offers more general stylistic advice Cicero is the chief model to follow: "Qui vult imitari Ciceronem non relinquat." (p.350) is the conclusion at the end of the first part of the work;

28. "unum nostrum conflatum ex pluribus" (Fam.i.8.2) is not echoed by Barzizza.

29. Pigman in his apparatus to the text (p.352) gives the reference to Fam.xxii.2.16 (though it is printed as 2.22.16) for the distinction between the judge and the carpenter; but does not supply one for the difference between the arrogant and the humble man, which seems to derive from Fam.i.1.28: "aliter (decet alloqui) prosperitate tumidum, aliter adversitate contractum."

and towards the end he adapts Quintilian's advice: "Iubeo potius te Ciceronem quam Livium imitari et potius Livium quam Sallustium." (p.351).<sup>30</sup> Cicero is thus accorded the standard theoretical priority but is never made the sole source of sound Latinity.

Although it is not significant that the Latin of this minor treatise lacks Ciceronian polish, it is perhaps indicative that even the language of his model letters, despite some obviously Ciceronian elements, employs words and rhythms that Cicero would never have used.<sup>31</sup> Confirmation of this is the criticism made of Barzizza's style by a strict Ciceronian, writing at the end of the fifteenth century: "ipso orationis genere exilis et tristis, nimia enim cura attenuabat orationem."<sup>32</sup> This is a significant criticism because it reflects not only the rigid criteria adopted by a real Ciceronian, but also the more impartial assessment of a Tuscan.

The praise lavished on Barzizza by Guarino, a fellow teacher from the Veneto, by Biondo, a colleague in deciphering and transcribing the Lodi manuscript, and by Sabellico, another scholar from the Veneto, is not to be totally discounted; but the praise of him as a Ciceronian is to be related more to his recovery of reliable

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30. Quint.II.5.19 is slightly different.

31. Mercer p.97 illustrates the Ciceronian elements in the letters.

32. De Hominibus Doctis, ed. M.T.Graziosi, p.40.

Ciceronian texts than to his ability to reproduce a faithful copy of Ciceronian Latin in his own writings. Only with these provisos in mind can we still talk of Gasparino Barzizza as the true apostle of Ciceronianism and of his "emphasis...on the close imitation of classical (mainly Ciceronian) style."<sup>33</sup> Barzizza's coupling of Cicero with Terence and Priscian is much more indicative of what Ciceronianism meant in the early Quattrocento, and later humanists will criticise the use of poetic words or the reliance on Priscian: "Quid mihi prodesset Cicero sine Terentio et Prisciano et ceteris poetis?"<sup>34</sup>

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33. R.G.G.Mercer, The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza (D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1977), p.5. Pigman's conclusion is the same as my own: 'Barzizza thinks Cicero most deserving of imitation but does not wish to restrict imitation to Cicero alone.' (in his 'Barzizza's Studies of Cicero', p.124).

34. Barzizza, Opera, ed. J.Furietti, i.128.



c) ANTONIO DA RHO

Antonio da Rho was a pupil of Barzizza in Milan in the 1420s and succeeded him as professor of rhetoric there in 1431.<sup>35</sup> In one of his orations he praises Barzizza's work on Cicero in traditional terms: "Ciceronem ipsum ita menti, ita memoriae commendarat, ut vel extinctum ipse ex integro illum suscitare et in lucem afferre quidem potuisset."<sup>36</sup> As a scholar Antonio is inferior to his predecessor, but he continues Barzizza's work and resembles him in many ways, including being the author of a treatise on imitation. The De Imitationibus Eloquentie (1430-34) is, like Barzizza's treatise, very basic in its aims but is wider in scope, more detailed in exemplification and much longer.<sup>37</sup>

The instigator of the work seems to have been that Cosma Raimondi who helped Barzizza transcribe the Lodi manuscript. He urges Antonio in a letter to compose something on imitation (Antonio later incorporates most of the letter into his dedication

35. For biographical details see the entry by R. Fubini in DBI 3, 574-7. His challenge "Le opere di Antonio attendono un più accurato studio" (p.576) seemed to be worth taking up, at least in the case of the De Imitationibus.

36. K. Müllner, Reden und Briefe italienischer Humanisten, p.166.

37. The title is given as De Imitationibus Eloquentie or Super Imitationes Eloquentie. The work exists complete in MS 1054 of the Musée Calvet in Avignon; the MS H.49 Inf. in the Ambrosiana in Milan only contains the first entries in the work up to the word alphabetum (209r - 218v). Where applicable I have given references to both the Milan (M) and Avignon (A) manuscripts.



of the work to Gherardo Landriani).<sup>38</sup> The reason for writing on imitatio is that it is one of the three methods of acquiring eloquence yet there is no ancient work dealing with this subject; the classical writers merely praise imitation and state what writers to imitate: "solum ab his laudata est imitatio et quos quoque in genere imitari oporteret tradiderunt" (A:1r; M:209r). The stress that Raimondi places on Latin words being used "proprie significanterque" illustrates a preoccupation with usage which is evident in other works of the same time such as Vegio's De Significatione Verborum (1433) and of course Valla's Elegantiae. Raimondi even specifies the form the work should take: Antonio should compile a list of "significancia verba et splendida" from the best authors and provide their synonyms and the contexts in which they are used. This will provide the student with "copiam atque elegantiam": the ability to select different ways of saying the same thing is a vital step in avoiding verbatim imitation and in achieving true eloquence. But he warns the student which words to use: "Verbisque utetur non omnibus sed electis atque prestantibus." (A:1v-2r; M:210r). Finally Raimondi claims that such a thesaurus of synonyms and examples will be extremely useful to poor students who cannot afford many books.

Antonio da Rho's reply agrees on the usefulness of the work,

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38. The letter appears in M (209r - 210v) as from Raimondi; but in A (1r - 2v) it reappears almost verbatim as Antonio's dedicatory letter to Landriani. This seems to suggest that A is a later version.

particularly to students without access to books.<sup>39</sup> Imitatio is in some respects more important than ars or doctrina: some men with little learning have become great orators through imitation, while others who knew all the precepts lacked eloquence because they had no model to follow: "deficiente tamen viro quem per vestigia sequerentur" (A:3v; M:210v).<sup>40</sup> But like other humanists Antonio warns against concentrating on verba at the expense of res. As Barzizza warned in his De Imitatione, it is not enough to produce grandiloquent words to be acclaimed as "Cicerones novi"; and he quotes Caesar on the avoidance of unusual words and archaisms. But as for Barzizza, so for Antonio da Rho the author to be read and imitated most is Cicero:

Si qui fuerint querentes ex me quem illis principem  
putem ex omnibus viris hoc ipso commentario  
collocatis lectum et imitatum iri, unum ipsum illis  
plane Ciceronem impingam. Ibi nihil insolens, nihil  
asperum, nihil ferme priscum, ibi nihil vulgare,  
nihil quotidianum offendent. Sed elegantiam ut ita  
dixerim auream, splendoremque verborum in quibus  
nulla prorsus obscuritas, nulle latebre invenientur.  
(A:4v; M:211r)

But although Cicero is the chief model to follow, he is not the only writer to be imitated as will be evident in the rest of the treatise; and here in its introduction the author resorts to the image of flowers to state one of the aims of his work: "calamum verto quo his

39. The reply to Raimondi is in M(210v - 212v); and appears in A (3v - 5r) as "Aliud Prohemium". There is no trace of Raimondi's name in A, perhaps because of his reputation as an Epicurean or because of his suicide. The other dedication of the treatise in A(2v - 3v) is to Bartolomeo Capra and has no counterpart in M. This again suggests that A is a later version than M, and confirms the traditional dating of the work: the terminus ante quem is 1433, the year of Capra's death.

40. Similarly in an introductory lecture Antonio insists on the need for some model to follow as well as ars and natura: "deficiente etenim splendido et ornato viro, quem per vestigia in dicendo passim insequamur, neque graves in sententiis neque elegantes sermonis in cultu splendoreque verborum esse poterimus." (Müllner, Reden, p.167).

commentariis tanquam in ortule quodam pulcherrimo ex multis diversisque floribus nobiliores ac venustiores quosque suaviusque spirantes possint excerpere, quibus eloquentie novaserta intexant atque conficiant." (A:5r; M:211v). Antonio's work is quite anthological in nature and the image of the variety of flowers is often exploited by the opponents of Ciceronianism. Here it suggests the novelty (nova) of creative imitation rather than improvement of the model. This is confirmed later in the work when he gives emulatio as a synonym for Invidia, and makes this distinction between imitation and rivalry: "Imitatio simplex est et livorem atque invidiam non admittit. Emulatio autem habet imitandi studium sed cum militie operatione." (107r). Like Barzizza, Antonio stresses the use of different words from the model, not the urge to outdo or improve the original. Similarly, on the question of Cicero he is very much of the same opinion as Barzizza: Cicero is most deserving of imitation, but he is not the sole source of Latin usage. This attitude is apparent in the work itself.

The De Imitationibus is not a treatise on style.<sup>41</sup> It is a thesaurus, an alphabetical list of synonyms and usage, and its aim is

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41. Pigman, 'Barzizza's Treatise on Imitation', p.341 n.1 suggests that only the prologue is relevant: "The prologue contains extravagant praise of the effects of imitation, but does not refer to it further." The praise of imitation here is traditional rather than extravagant: it derives from De Or II.89ff; and a study of the complete text of the treatise rather than the fragment in Milan yields, as I hope to show, quite a full picture of Antonio's ideas on imitation, which are not merely to be found in the prologue. Neither Pigman nor Fubini nor any other scholar has consulted the Avignon MS.

to provide the student with examples of correct usage of Latin words and also a wealth of synonyms to avoid verbatim imitation of Latin writers. Barzizza's De Imitatione was a theoretical approach to the question of literary imitation, however pedestrian it was; but Antonio da Rho rarely discusses imitatio in the singular, i.e. in the abstract. The title is in the plural, and when he uses this word in the work he means "usage". His procedure is to give the head-word, offer some synonyms or near synonyms, then provide imitationes or examples of its use:

Abscondo - dis, celo - as, occulto - as, abdo - dis, oculo - is, lateo - tes, in idem quasi redeunt; sed nota imitationes. Virgilius enim aiebat: "et vanis sese occultit umbris", i.e. abscondit; et alibi: "tu post carecta latebas". (A:6r; M:214r)

Although the form of the De Imitationibus, an alphabetical word-list illustrating usage, stems from the medieval grammatical tradition, the particular format for each entry seems to derive from Quintilian. The major entry Rhetorica (207v - 215v) cites Quintilian's list of synonyms for "scio": " 'scio, non ignoro, non me fugit, non me latet, non sum nescius' et subdit statim 'et intellego et sentio et video sepe idem valent quod scio'." (215v).<sup>42</sup> Quintilian's approach here is the format used by Antonio for each individual entry in his work. But he is aware of the limitations of his work and how it differs from classical works: Quintilian and Cicero wrote a full rhetorical treatise (ars), Antonio is writing a

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42. Quintilian X.1.12-13.

work on imitatio, hence the many occasions on which he cuts short a discussion with phrases such as "De his iam satis. Non enim artem traditurus sum." (43r etc.). Quintilian and Cicero provide all the rhetorical precepts, while Antonio is interested only in "imitationes et elegantias" (68r; 166v).

He often mentions the imitation of Cicero in the treatise but this is usually in a technical not a stylistic sense, meaning the adherence to the rhetorical rules, particularly of the Ad Herennium, about what figures of speech to employ in the different kinds of oratory and in the various parts of a speech. Here is a typical entry:

Annominatio: est color rhetoricus Ciceronis quem nos Insubres vulgari lingua nominamus beschiso, ut est illud: magis rerum expertem quam expertum; et, Siculis orator non sed arator erit. Quod si imitari volueris Ciceronem, aptissime exordio conseditur, per insinuationem cum risu volumus animos auditorum movere. Narrationi rarissime aut divisioni et ceteris partibus. Item generi demonstrativo et ceteris convenit, si cause leves erunt; si graves, raro vel nunquam. Sed in argumentando soli exornationi tribuitur. Attribuitur etiam aptius figure attenuate quam aliis...Sed raro omni parti epistole, sed dum persuadebis, dimittas illum. (12r).<sup>43</sup>

The imitation of Cicero referred to in all such entries refers to the carrying out of the rules in works like the Ad Herennium about the figures of speech and when to use them.

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43. This entry is atypical in giving a vernacular translation for the figure (bischizzo) and some examples of it. The pun orator/arator derives from Cicero, Phil.III.22; was used by Panormita in his polemic with Antonio: "non erit orator Rhodus, arator erit"; here it seems to be used by Antonio against Panormita; and elsewhere both Bartolomeo Fazio and Valla use it (Valla, Opera i.547).

Antonio da Rho is a Ciceronian in the sense that he acknowledges Cicero as the supreme orator and the ultimate authority in rhetorical precepts, as we saw in the entries on colores rhetorici; and if asked to name one author as a principal model, as he says in the proem, it would clearly be Cicero. He also notes various Ciceronian traits: his liking for compound verbs (37r), his preference for the indicative with etsi and quamquam (128v), his avoidance of per with a superlative like "perillustrissimum" (175v); and under homo he notes: "Homo: homuncio, homunculus, homululus. Cicero nunquam dicit genus humanum sed genus hominum." (101v). But as this kind of entry reveals, the whole process is descriptive rather than normative: there are no warnings about the rarity of the diminutive homullulus or about any of the rare terms amassed by Antonio, nor does he manifest any canonical notions with regard to the authors cited. Gellius and Macrobius are quoted as much as Cicero and Quintilian, and the student is invited to "imitate" every author mentioned. Under bibere he notes: "Apuleius dicit, quem cum aliis imitari poteris sic: 'Abstemius a temeto' idest vino." (25r). In fact it is Antonio's citing of Macrobius as an authority on usage that leads to the dispute with Valla.

Valla had claimed that quisque should only be used with the superlative form of the adjective,<sup>44</sup> but Antonio says that those who

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44. The proem to Elegantiae ii (Prosatori, p.606) criticises without naming Antonio for plagiarising Valla's rules on the use of per, quam and quisquam with adjectives.

think like that should go to the bottom of the class, because Macrobius uses it with the positive form: "Sed recubant in ludi novissimo loco. Legant Macrobius, qui in singulari numero neque superlativo dixit: 'die quoque' idest omni, et 'homine quoque'." (165r). Valla's answer is that Macrobius is a suitable source for erudition but not for elegant usage, and that Antonio will find no examples of this usage in Cicero and Quintilian.<sup>45</sup> Valla also criticises the dubious latinity of scholastic terms such as aliqualter and appropriate and the vernacular, almost vulgar Latin quality of words such as appodiare, birretum, camisia, datiarii, monstra (meaning a military parade), and torneamentum. Scholastic terms, vulgarisms and rarities from archaic or late Latin are listed indiscriminately in the De Imitationibus. In such cases Antonio supplies examples of the use of the classical equivalents of these unusual words:

Appodiare: inniti, niti, inherere quasi idem sonant.  
Tolle imitationes. Cicero ait: "Tu unus  
eris in quo nitatur civitatis salus" idest  
appodietur. (13v).

The poetic "argument" which precedes the work is thus inaccurate in stating that the head words are never rare: "Principio invenies pertrita vocabula semper/obscurumque nihil littera prima dabit./ Perge quod insequitur, tibi multa synonyma current/splendida, que in morem vulgus habere nequit." (A:5r; M:212v).

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45. "Quid est autem cur meum praeceptum tantopere derideas? quia Macrobius aliter usurpat? esto. Quid Cicero Quintilianusque, quos in primis imitandos propono, usurpantne et ipsi aliter, an non? si usurpant, cur non eorum profers potius exempla? Quid Macrobius unum, doctum quidem virum, sed nequaquam ex eloquentibus mihi obiicis?" (Valla, In Errores Antonii Raudensis Adnotationes, Opera i.412.)



In his fondness for Gellius he quotes a number of archaisms or rarities: Gellius' unique verb retare and his adjective amorabundus (a synonym for the equally unusual filocaptus) are listed, as his archaic ex manubiis. He does warn against the use of archaic terms for display, but this warning is not in his own words but is another quotation from Gellius XI.7.1 (251r-v).<sup>46</sup>

The major entries are the technical items eloquentia, epistola, laudare, orthographia, poeta, rhetorica; and the authorial entries on Seneca, Terence, Tullius, Virgil. Under eloquentia we find advice on how to adorn a speech, how many clauses to use in elaborating a sentence, what are the best rhythms to use at the end of the sentence, and what words to use in praising or blaming someone. For adornment he cites De Oratore III.148ff on the use of unusual words, neologisms and metaphors. On the number of clauses to be used in any sententia we are given seven different sententiae on the subject of peace ranging from one to seven clauses, and Antonio's advice is to use between three and seven clauses. The section on rhythm is interesting because it totally ignores the medieval cursus and discusses prose rhythm in classical terms. He notes the different counsel offered on this topic by Capella, Quintilian and Cicero: "(Capella) suo fretus ingenio neque Ciceronem neque Quintilianum emulatur. Quintilianus

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46. The number of lexical rarities and the total absence of any critical comment about them thus contradicts Fubini's claim: "né rimase estraneo il proposito...di orientarsi verso forme ciceroniane, evitando termini rari." (DBI 3, p.576).



autem auctor exactissime diligentie non semper Ciceronis sententiam probat." (70r); and regards Cicero as the principal authority on this subject: "Nunc ad Ciceronem hac in re principem redeamus." (ibid). The final part of this long entry consists of examples of praise or criticism from classical and ecclesiastical writers. Jerome is often cited throughout the work as "Hieronymus meus" and here Antonio claims the saint is on a par with Cicero or between Cicero and Lactantius or Livy. Despite Valla's criticisms, or perhaps because of them, he reiterates his appreciation of Macrobius: "Et si mihi Raudensi credis, hoc habeto: ignorato Macrobio Virgilium ignorari oportere." (73v).

Under epistola he notes that the letter consists of seven parts, and supplies examples of complimentary openings from the letters of Cicero, Seneca, Pliny and Jerome. Laudare is the longest single entry (116v - 126r) offering many passages of praise from other authors to be imitated and including sections from his own speech in praise of Filippo Maria Visconti. Similarly obloqui includes some of his own invective paragraphs as well as more famous extracts from Cicero and Jerome.

Under rhetorica he examines the four components of eloquence: natura, ars, imitatio, exercitatio, and states that the best orator will owe more to learning than to natural ability, more to constant practice than to the reading of Cicero and Demosthenes. And he naturally reasserts the importance of imitation by alluding to Quintilian's saying that much of rhetoric is concerned with imitatio

and by reiterating the claim made in the proem: "malle imitationem homines sine arte quam artem sine imitatione possidere". (215v).<sup>47</sup>

About Seneca he poses three vital questions: is the author of the epistles the same as the tragedian? is Seneca saved? what is the meaning of the phrase "aliud agentibus" in his first letter to Lucilius (223v - 226v). The entry on Terence offers solutions to thirty cruces, while Tullius merely records the praise of Cicero in Quintilian, Lactantius and Seneca as well as Cicero's praise of others in the Brutus. The longest authorial entry, on Vergil (258v - 266v), is mostly a compendium of Macrobius' views on the poet, with additional material from Gellius. In these long items Antonio seems to be trying to fulfil his promise of writing a work that will be useful to students unable to afford texts of the various authors (124r, 215v).

In this anthological approach and in many other respects the De Imitationibus seems to belong to medieval traditions of scholarship. Barzizza's De Orthographia contained an alphabetical lexicon of usage which was also intended to be a compendium of knowledge about the ancient world;<sup>48</sup> similarly Antonio under words such as fluvius, mare, mons, palus and populus gives lists of places

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47. Quintilian X.2.1: "Neque enim dubitari potest quin artis pars magna contineatur imitatione."

48. cf. Mercer, op.cit., pp.50-51.

and peoples mentioned in the classical writers. Barzizza's Sinonima Ciceronis also contained a lexicon providing topics of praise and blame.<sup>49</sup> Barzizza's Commentary on Ad Herennium IV illustrated where the various figures could be deployed in the speech;<sup>50</sup> and his De Compositione also devoted a section to the rhythm of clausulae.<sup>51</sup>

But as with Barzizza, so with Antonio da Rho: the form of the work may be medieval but its substance and its spirit are humanist. There are polemic references to the medieval lexicons, the Catholicon (12v) and Papias' Lexicum (22v); and the dedication of the work to Landriani, and the constant references to Quintilian and Cicero, especially to the De Oratore, all reflect the enthusiasms of the decade after the discovery at Lodi. The enmity between Antonio da Rho and Panormita is hinted at when the entry on luxuria attacks the authors of obscene Latin poems who use Catullus' 16th poem as a defence (134r).<sup>52</sup> Many of the major entries betray an antiquarian interest not unlike that of Biondo (eg. bissextus, consul, denarus, exercitus, ludi etc.).

He has more direct links with leading humanists of the stature of Bruni and Valla. Bruni wrote at least two letters to Antonio and

49. See Mercer p.67.

50. Mercer, p.92. Though Mercer does not consider Barzizza's treatise on imitation, he is correct in saying that his other tracts "stand at the beginning of a tradition of humanist tracts on rhetoric, such as the Rhetorica of George of Trebizond, the De Imitatione Latinae Linguae (sic) of Antonio da Rho and, most notably, the Elegantiae of Valla." (p.95).

51. Pigman, art.cit., p.347 n.20.

52. For details of the dispute see G.Resta, L'Epistolario del Panormita pp.125-7.

both concerned words that are dealt with in the De Imitationibus: in the first letter Bruni answered Antonio's questions about the use of fastidire, in the second he upheld the medieval spelling of michi.<sup>53</sup>

But Antonio clearly rejects Bruni's advice on the second point:

Mihi: et nihil sine c scribi debent. Sic enim in  
omnibus libris antiquis quamquam id moleste  
ferant plerique omnes grammaticuli nostri  
temporis. (144r).

The long entry under orthographia testifies to the importance of a problem which had been preoccupying humanist minds from the days of Salutati and anticipates Tortelli's treatise on the subject. Here the Milanese humanist is critical not of the moderns but of the strict followers of antiquity who write adcurro not accurro, adferro, adgnosco and other forms which he considers "nimis fortasse antique" and which belong to the pure orthography of the era of Aeneas and Evander (168v). His views on the different ages of Latin are similar to those held by Guarino and reflect the interest in the evolution of the Latin tongue which is epitomised in the dispute between Bruni and Biondo in these very years (1435).<sup>54</sup> Under lingua he notes that Greek is held to be a more mellifluous language than Latin, then proceeds to list the four stages of Latin: prisca latina was the tongue of the mythical first inhabitants of Italy; Latina was the archaic language in which the Twelve Tables were drawn up; Romana extended from Plautus to Vergil, and from Cato to Cicero; mixta was the language which

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53. Bruni, Epistolae ed. L.Mehus (Florence, 1741), i.23-45; ii.107-8.

54. Guarino, Epistolario ed. R.Sabbadini, ii.503-11.

resulted from the expansion of the Empire, a language now corrupted by solecisms and barbarisms (129r).

Valla's hostility was aroused by the fact that the De Imitationibus dealt with Latin usage, as did the Elegantiae, and because he felt that Antonio had plagiarised some of his writings. Indeed Antonio often defines his work as being about imitationes and elegantias: "Eloquentie precepta dicendi quam exploratam rationem (Cicero) docuit, ego vero Raudensis imitationes et elegantias signo." (68r).<sup>55</sup> Valla was a scholar of greater stature and could easily fault Antonio's suspect Latin, his unreliable readings,<sup>56</sup> and his failure to adopt a critical approach to the Latin and to the authors whom he cited. The Elegantiae depart from the tradition of the word list to present an erudite series of disquisitions on problematic words. They can attack the Latin of authors dear to Antonio in his work: Macrobius, Gellius and Apuleius. Valla's critique of Gellius and Apuleius is, like his attack on Macrobius, indicative of the critical gulf that separates him from Antonio:

neque vero Raudensi faciendum fuit, ut tam saepe  
A.Gellium pro teste afferret, hominem curiose nimis  
et superstitiose loquentem. Quid dicam de Apuleio,

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55. cf. "Sufficit mihi elegantias dicere in hoc munere et imitationes splendoresque verborum." (166v); "De his igitur imitationibus maxime que versantur circa elegantiam vocabulorum splendoremque verborum totus hic liber est editus." (215v).

56. Valla criticises his reading of fautio for factio in Sallust (10r); and he is at fault elsewhere eg: "Apud Papiam inveni suavium et non sabium; sed tamen in codicibus antiquis inveni semper sabium dictum esse et non suavium. Tu autem tene antiquos, si placet. Sed imitationes vidende sunt." (22v).

in eo praesertim opere, cuius nomen est de Asino Aureo?  
 cuius sermonem si quis imitetur, non tam auree loqui  
 quam nonnihil rudere videatur. 57

The author of the De Imitationibus was clearly aware of the criticisms circulating about his work, since he alludes to them in the proem, in the work itself and in the epilogue. At the end of the work he states why he has thought it useful to provide an index and expresses his apprehension about the work's reception. He is afraid that it contains too much absinthii and not enough mellis and that it contains little original work but many quotations.<sup>58</sup> Yet it is impressive just how much Antonio da Rho does know in an age devoid of concordances and dictionaries. In many respects the De Imitationibus is inferior to a work like the Elegantiae, but in many other ways it is similar: both belong to the new age and to the era of enthusiasm for the recently recovered works of Cicero and Quintilian, and Antonio can claim with justification: "hec namque que scripsimus neque in scholis decantata sunt omnia, neque omnino protrita." (270r).

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57. Valla, Opera i.412.

58. This is almost a quotation from Quintilian III.1.5.

d) GUARINO DA VERONA

Like Barzizza, Guarino was an influential teacher in the cities of Northern Italy and their paths crossed occasionally. The two men wrote letters to each other and Guarino's works De Diphongis and Vocabula are similar to the basic pedagogical texts written by Barzizza. Guarino, born in 1374, was taught by Giovanni Conversino da Ravenna and became proficient in the ars dictaminis typical of the late Trecento before rejecting this mode for the less florid Latin of the fifteenth century.<sup>59</sup>

Two of the factors which led to his rejection of the techniques of dictamen were his learning of Greek under Chrysoloras and his contact with the Florentine circle of humanists after his return from the East. In 1403 he followed Chrysoloras back to Constantinople and there began a series of translations from Greek into Latin, including writers as varied as Plutarch (he had translated 11 Lives by 1418), Lucian (Calumnia translated in 1403) and Isocrates (Ad Demonium in 1405). Presumably in such works there would be no need for the flourishes of the ars dictaminis which was mostly concerned with epistolography. He returned to Italy in 1408 and secured a teaching

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59. For the details of Guarino's biography see R. Sabbadini, Vita di Guarino Veronese (Genoa, 1891) reprinted in Guariniana (Turin, 1964). On the school of Conversino he says: "La scuola del Ravennate non era umanistica: l'umanesimo penetrò a Padova nel 1408 col Barzizza." (p.6). For Guarino's letters I have used Sabbadini's edition of the Epistolario (Venice, 1915-19) 3 vols. (cited henceforth as Ep.)



post in Florence in 1410. His four years there earned him the friendship of men like Roberto Rossi, Palla Strozzi and Niccoli - though he, like so many others, eventually fell out with Niccoli. Bruni would also have been known to him, especially since he too was translating Isocrates and Plutarch. But despite Guarino's high estimate of Bruni - of his Latin he said: "ita Ciceronem exprimit, ut sua (eloquentia) ex Cicerone orta quam imitata dixerim" (Ep.i.103) - he differs from him in being prepared to retain some Greek words in his translations into Latin: philocalos, philoponia, monarchia, democratia (Ep.i.5). The last two words are words which Bruni himself actually cited as one of the defects of the old medieval translations of Aristotle.<sup>60</sup>

But in other respects Guarino exhibits attitudes typical of the generation after Petrarch: there is a very sparing use of the cursus (eg. in the oration at the start of his course on the De Officiis [Ep.i.34ff]), there is the rejection of the use of the vos form in letters as something "plebeius" (Ep.i.269-71), and there is the explicit condemnation, in a letter of 1415, of the Latin of Pietro da Moglio, Salutati's teacher. Guarino has seen a letter written by Pietro, which was probably in the dictamen style that Guarino had learned in Conversino's school, and criticises in particular the obscure and unusual words in the letter. He duly quotes Aulus Gellius (I.10.4) on the avoidance of obscurities and contrasts the

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60. Bruni criticises the medieval translator of Aristotle who used oligarchia and democratia instead of the Ciceronian popularis status etc. (Bruni, Ep.ii.216).



obscure style with Cicero's clarity and use of everyday words:

Ab quo tam aperta, tam clara, tam familiaris usurpata  
est dicendi consuetudo, ut praeter concinnam et  
aptissimam verborum et sententiarum compositionem  
vulgaria omnia ferme et in medio posita communi quodam  
usu atque 'in hominum ore et sermone versentur' (Ep.i.85-86)

Ciceronianism for Guarino, as for Salutati and Petrarch, meant not just a more elegant Latin but also a clear and unobscure style. He puts this principle into practice when he adds in this same letter that the word "hypomnemata" was hardly ever found in the approved authors ("approbatos").<sup>61</sup> Guarino's own Latin was also paid the compliment of being described as Ciceronian, but this epithet he declined with the standard modesty formulae (Ep.i.93,98). He does employ some of the traditional imagery of the imitation debate: he sees himself following in Cicero's footsteps, though suggesting that his model is so far ahead as to be unattainable: "procul tamen vestigia adorans sectabor" (i.212); he believes that Cicero should be particularly committed to memory and fully digested, not sampled in a hurry: "is enim prodesse maxime cibus solet, qui non in transcurso gustatus abicitur." (i.250); and urging a pupil to study Cicero's Letters he adds "decrevi enim ut duce me aut certe comite hunc Ciceronis stilum imbibat, quem illi uti quaedam lactis alimenta instillabo" (i.367).

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61. He similarly stresses the use of clear diction, guaranteed by approved authors, in the writing of history: "Dictio sit crebris per approbatos [scriptores] lectionibus incocta, aperta, virilis, quae rem...exprimat verbis non forensibus, non operariis non occultis non inusitatis sed apertis dignis gravibus, ut cum omnes intelligant, tum periti laudent et admirentur." (Ep.ii.464-5).

The discovery of the Lodi manuscript in 1421 consolidates Guarino's enthusiasm for the author of the De Oratore and the Brutus and also his optimism about the stylistic abilities of the new generation of humanists. In a letter of January 1422 he asks a friend to have Barzizza make a copy of the De Oratore for him, adding that he feels that his own generation can reach a new peak of erudition in the light of such discoveries (i.333). The language here - "ad altum quoddam doctrinarum culmen" is reminiscent of Bruni's ideas at the start of the Dialogus, but the particular association of the new complete texts of Cicero with a revival of scholarship is first made by Guarino, though Biondo will also restate this connection.<sup>62</sup> Indeed the first use of the image of "Renaissance" in this context is in a letter of the same year to Barzizza, in which he congratulates Barzizza on his work on the new texts in these words: "renascens ad superos Cicero primum in terris (te) delegit hospitem." (i.345). Again in 1425 when another text of Cicero reaches Verona, Guarino is delighted not only because he is a great admirer of Cicero, but also because he sees this as an omen of Verona's sharing in the "reviviscentis disciplinae" (i.452).

Guarino not only feels that Cicero's language should ideally be imbibed along with the mother's milk, he also varies the formula for the studia humanitatis to call them the studia Ciceronis (ibid.). But despite this enthusiasm for Cicero, Guarino never restricts himself to

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62. Bruni, Dialogus (Prosatori p.44); Biondo Italia Illustrata, pp.346-7.

Ciceronian lexis. His Latin, while eschewing the florid dictamen style, aspires to a classical clarity but remains at the same time flexible and varied. In May 1419 he acquired a manuscript of Pliny's Letters in Venice (i.233) and it is no surprise to find him imitating Pliny shortly after this. In August 1419 he writes a letter to two friends (i.238-41) inviting them to come and sample the delights of his villa in Valpolicella, clearly modelling his description of his estate on the account in Pliny Ep.V.6. A brief analysis of this imitation will allow us to clarify what imitatio meant in practice to Guarino.

At the start of the letter both writers state their theme: Pliny writes: "accipe temperiem caeli, regionis situm villae amoenitatem quae et tibi auditu et mihi relatu iucunda erunt" (Ep.V.6.3); Guarino's statement of theme looks very similar: "eritque et vobis cognitu et mihi narratu non iniocundum, si quae sit caeli temperies, regionis situs et villae amoenitatem scripto meo intellexeritis." (i.239). The humanist signals his imitation by retaining the same six substantives as in the original - and in fact throughout the letter deals with the three topics in the same order as Pliny.<sup>63</sup> But he has also varied some of the elements, and he seems to have done so in accordance with Petrarch's principle of not using exactly the same

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63. But Guarino's letter is only about a third of the length of Pliny's, because he omits Pliny's details about the interior of the house, the terrace and the hippodrome. Perhaps he omits these because of the many Greek technical terms involved (hypocauston, xystus, hippodromos).

words as the model and also following the very basic rules of variation which were then current, exemplified in Barzizza's treatise on imitation. Thus he makes an obvious shift from singular ("accipe...tibi") to plural ("vobis...intellexeritis"), and vice versa ("erunt" in Pliny becomes "erit"); from positive plural ("iucunda") to negative singular ("non iniocundum"); as well as the more complex variations involving synonyms ("tibi auditu et mihi relatu" becomes "vobis cognitu et mihi narratu") and the reversing of the order of the sentence so that "accipe...erunt" changes to "erit...intellexeritis". This use of both basic and complex methods of imitatio and variatio can be exemplified throughout the letter.

One other passage from this letter shows Guarino involved in both imitatio and aemulatio of his model. Pliny describes the land and the rainfall thus:

sed ubi aquae plurimum, palus nulla, quia devexa terra, quidquid liquoris accepit nec absorbit, effundit in Tiberim. Medios ille agros secant navium patiens, omnesque fruges devexit in urbem, hieme dumtaxat et vere; aestate summittitur immensique fluminis nomen arenti alveo deserit, autumnio resumit. (Ep.V.6.11ff).

Guarino imitates, varies and finally outdoes Pliny, as the Adige does the Tiber:

ibi enim aquarum satis, fontes plurimi, palus nulla, quia quicquid liquoris devexa tellus excipit, nusquam per moram sordere patitur: aut enim ad alenda quae creavit absorbet aut quasi tributaria transfundit in Athesim, qui Veronensem agrum secant non mediocrium navium et maximarum ratium patiens; nec, ut multa antiquorum litteris decantata solo nomine flumina, magni nomen fluminis amittit nec aestate etiam sole sub ardenti aquae altitudine destituitur; quin undanti semper fluit alveo. (i.240).

In the first part of this passage Guarino employs the familiar process

of substituting singulars and plurals ("aquae" becomes "aquarum"), positives and negatives ("nec absorbuit" shifts to "absorbet"), as well as exploiting synonyms ("terra" is altered to the more poetic "tellus";<sup>64</sup> "accepit" to "excipit" etc.). In the second part not only does he imply that the Adige can take bigger vessels than the Tiber, he even seems to allude to his model for this passage when he talks of the great rivers of antiquity which are sung of in the works of classical writers but are great only in this literary sense, since in summer they dry up.

Apart from Pliny, other writers were the object of careful study on Guarino's part: Gellius, Celsus, the new codex of Plautus all received his attention. In 1433 he even prepared an edition of the Elder Pliny's Natural History, although this does not seem to have affected his lexis in Latin, in the way that Pliny was to become popular with the anti-Ciceronians at the end of the century. Nevertheless Guarino was in touch with some men who did not subscribe to the general Ciceronian orthodoxy. Matteo Ronto of Siena, who wrote a Latin version of Dante's Commedia, favoured an unorthodox Latin, as the title of his letter to Guarino of 1430 suggests: "Incipit epistola et latina greca ac prosayca per venerabilem haudnon eximium fratrem Matheum Ronto edita...ad faculentum virum magistrum Guarinum Veronensem." (Ep.ii.118). The letter abounds with oddities such as

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64. The Ciceronian Cortese objects to Guarino's use of poetic words: "Genus tamen dicendi inconcinnum admodum est ac salebrosum; utitur...verbis poeticis quod est maxime vitiosum." (De Hominibus Doctis, ed. M.T.Graziosi, p.26).

"innutio", "stratilatibus", "commanipularis" "gymnosista" as well as the mixture of Latin prose, Latin verse, Greek citations from the Old Testament, and Latin extracts from Roman law.<sup>65</sup>

One of the recipients of the letter about his villa was one Tommaso da Fano, a pupil of Marzagaia da Verona who had also taught Guarino and was "un seguace della corrente apuleiana".<sup>66</sup> Another correspondent ended his letter to Guarino in this alliterative fashion: "Vos vero velim breves ad me perscribere et valitudinem vestram et vestrorum. Valet. Valitudinem meam diligentissime curabo." (i.269).<sup>67</sup> Guarino disapproved of this unclassical ending: although he does not mention the alliteration he criticises the use of the plural form of address (i.271). Yet Guarino himself had been educated in the unCiceronian formulae of the dictamen schools. In an interesting letter of 1452 he reviews his own transition from florid Trecento Latin to the classical clarity of the early Quattrocento.

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65. Sabbadini calls the letter an example of the "stile hisperico, infarcito di grecismi, di neologismi e di glossemi, imparato alla scuola di Apuleio e di Marziano Capella, ed infiorato delle clausole del cursus." (Ep.iii.280). He associates it with that cult of rare Latin evident in Boccaccio's early letters.
66. Sabbadini calls him this (Ep.iii.103). Guarino wrote a Latin poem to Marzagaia (i.223-4), the kind of homage often paid by pupil to former teacher at the time. Marzagaia wrote a De Modernis Gestis which is written in a bizzarre alliterative Latin: "Amplissima facundioris ingenii facultate, felicioris fortune fastigio locandus Colutius Pierius Lucanus..." (cited in Salutati, Ep.iv.508-9).
67. This alliterative Latin suggests that its author, Iacobus de Veritate, also belonged to Marzagaia's school.

His son had found some of Guarino's early letters and had criticised the unclassical lexis ("vocabula...latini sermonis proprietatem minime redolentia" - Ep.ii.582). Guarino explains, in a mixture of metaphors, that in his youth humanism lay in darkness and the classical flowering of the language had withered ("flos emarcuisset"). In his view the main cause of this "sartago loquendi" that replaced classical Latin was the neglect of Cicero, and the corollary of this is that the appreciation and emulation of Cicero guarantees linguistic progress: "solaque ciceronianae dictionis quondam aemulatio ac delectatio vehementem proficiendi causam induxerat." (ii.582).<sup>68</sup> Cicero was replaced by the medieval texts, Prosperus, Eva Columba, the Chartula<sup>69</sup> and his plain elegance gave way to a barbaric, florid style, of which he then quotes a specimen:

Vobis regratior, quia de concernentibus capitanaui  
meo tam honorificabiliter per unam vestram letteram  
vestra me advisavit sapientitudo. (ibid).

Guarino and his fellow humanists would object to many things in this: apart from the use of the plural form of address and the circumlocution "vestra sapientitudo", there are the unclassical verbs, adverb and noun as well as the solecism of "letteram" in the singular.<sup>70</sup> Yet Guarino himself as well as many erudite men of the Trecento, including

68. Similarly in a long letter on the Latin language and its evolution, prompted by the debate between Bruni and Biondo, Guarino sides with the latter and declares that Latin reached its peak in Cicero's time (ii.505). His division of Latin into four ages ("pervetusta", "Latina", "Romana" and "mixta") is similar to Antonio da Rho's ideas and possibly stems from Varro (according to Pietro Crinito, De Honesta Disciplina iii.3).

69. See G.Billanovich, 'L.B.Alberti, il Graecismus e la Chartula' pp.70-71.

70. Yet Guarino uses "sapientitudo" in an early invective (Ep.i.37).



Dante, had used similar formulae. The revolution against medieval erudition was caused, according to Guarino, by the rediscovery of Cicero and by the influence of Chrysoloras. Even a non-Florentine like Guarino recognises the important role played by that city in the "reflorescentis eruditionis" (ii.583). Guarino sees the new progress as an imitation of the process whereby Latin reached its original peak under Cicero: for it was the example and influence of Greek orators and literature that fired the minds of the contemporaries of Cicero. It is thus thanks to Chrysoloras that the darkness and impurity of Latin was purified and illuminated:

Longa itaque desuetudine infuscatus ante latinus  
sermo et inquinata dictio Chrysolorinis fuerat  
pharmacis expurganda et admoto lumine illustranda (ii.583)

Guarino is thinking here of the many translations from Greek made by himself and his contemporaries which helped to bring Greek erudition to the West.

But Guarino was to come under attack from a Greek who had come to Italy from the East. George of Trebizond had come to Venice in 1416 and after a brief return to Crete he taught rhetoric in Vicenza from 1423 to 1427.<sup>71</sup> About 1433 he completed his Rhetorica, an important work in its own right in being the first full scale rhetorical treatise since antiquity, and a crucial work for the assessment of Guarino, because in the fifth book he criticises the Latin of Guarino's most famous work up to that date, the oration for

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71. A good and up to date monograph now exists: J.Monfasani, George of Trebizond: a Biography and a Study of his Rhetoric and Logic



Carmagnola (1428).<sup>72</sup> He takes the opening of Guarino's speech and another passage and alters them from being "absurde composita" to "meliorem formam".<sup>73</sup> This is done mainly by reorganising Guarino's clauses. In the first passage he takes the opening three sentences and shows how to make just one flowing period out of them. But the Greek humanist also criticises Guarino's lexis: he does not see why he has to write "scribentium lumen" instead of "scriptorum lumen", and, even more important, he criticises Guarino's use of "Verum enimvero" in the third sentence of his speech "maxime cum nusquam fere apud Ciceronem hoc legerit."

Guarino's Latin, then, despite its classical polish, is open to criticism even as early as the 1430s. Admittedly George of Trebizond was one of the many humanists with a natural penchant for polemic; but he was also a knowledgeable critic, and one who anticipates in many respects the radical Ciceronianism of the second half of the century.<sup>74</sup> In 1426 he writes a short tract De Suavitate Dicendi which hints at the desire to restrict Latin to the words found in Cicero:

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72. The criticism of Guarino is in Rhetorica (Venice, 1523), pp.68r - 69r.

73. op.cit., p.68r. There is an analysis of Trebisonda's rewriting of the second passage in M.Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators, pp.138-9, where the author draws a contrast between Guarino's dissolutus language and the Greek humanist's compositus style.

74. Monfasani, op.cit., pp.293-4. De Ideis, I.215.

Habes, Hieronyme, de suavitate meum iudicium. Quod ita sequere ut Ciceronis imitatione perficias eius verba...Tu ita imiteris ut ad propositum tuum nunc ab Cicerone, modo ab aliis et Aristotelica magis quam optime tenes philosophia tractis acutissime... sentiis verba Ciceronis accommodes. 75

This sounds like Bruni's ideal, expressed about the same time, of taking verba from Cicero and res from Aristotle, but here there is a stronger emphasis on Cicero. George of Trebizond is the nearest to being a Ciceronian in the first half of the Quattrocento; but he never explicitly demands that Latin should be restricted to Ciceronian lexis. Thus, although in his Rhetorica he claims that Cicero would have been a better historian than Livy and that there is nothing in Cicero that needs altering, unlike Guarino's prose, nevertheless he is prepared to use terms not found in his chief model ("summissio", "transumptio" etc.).<sup>76</sup>

Confirmation of the fact that Trebizonda's critique of Guarino is Ciceronianist and not merely the result of personal rivalry is to be found in Cortese's De Hominibus Doctis. There the Greek's criticisms are recalled and Cortese also brands Guarino's prose as

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75. Cited from Vat. Lat. 6292, 173r in Monfasani, p.294.

76. In the second passage of Guarino that he corrected he did not bother to alter the unciceronian word "machinamentis". His claim that Cicero would have been a better historian than Livy is taken up later by Poliziano. In the Rhetorica he suggests that Livy is a more elegant historian, but that Sallust is preferable "faciliore orationis cursu, et electione verborum, et membrorum rotunditate, et innovatione, in qua potissimum Thucydidem imitatus est" (p.84r).

"inconcinnum" because of his fondness for poetic words.<sup>77</sup>

Guarino makes no explicit pronouncement on literary imitation, but it is clear that he regards the imitation of Cicero and the study of Greek as an index of the stylistic progress of his own generation. His style is certainly "classical" compared with Trecento Latin, yet he never insists that Cicero should be the sole model to imitate; the Ciceronianists of the fifteenth century regard his Latin as impure in vocabulary and halting in its periodic structure. These criticisms seem valid - at least from the Ciceronian point of view. The Latin of Guarino's letters has almost an eclectic quality, with many borrowings from the poets, especially Terence and Persius.<sup>78</sup> Perhaps the strict Ciceronianists would also object to the lively, everyday tone employed in some letters. Many of them deal with rather mundane matters, though here Guarino could point to Pliny again as a precedent. His description of what he will provide as a meal for a friend echoes similar menus in Pliny (eg. Ep.I.15): "non delicata fercula non pretiosa vasa non lautam supellectilem tibi polliceor, rapas fabamque corrodes, cratere bibes fagino et frugali uteris

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77. cf. above note 64. Cortese recalls that George called Guarino "perfractum et in compositione puerilem" (ed.cit., p.26), thus attacking both Guarino's lexis and his composition. He concludes that Guarino had gravitas but also asperitas.

78. The fact that Latin is a dead language means that every time a humanist uses any word - but particularly the rarer ones - he is in a sense imitating some ancient writer. For instance, Guarino in Ep.i.90 uses the unusual Latin word "tantocius", and in the margin Sabbadini supplies a reference to Terence Eun.III.3.61. But it is difficult to tell whether this is a quotation or an imitation on Guarino's part. Perhaps it is worth noting that Valla objects to the rare word "quantocius" used by Poggio, but not found in Cicero, again illustrating that both Poggio and Guarino belong to the same generation. (Valla, Opera i.307).

apparatu" (i.205). The description of "Chichibio", the bishop's cook, is deliberately comic and might well offend the dignity of other humanists: "semper ex parsimonia id agit, ut muco et pediculis fercula pro condimentis adornet; qua providentia larido parcit et sebum mavult quam arvinam." (i.472). In such passages there are many unciceronian words, yet also some poetic words: on both counts Guarino's Latin would be criticised by the strict Ciceronians, and their viewpoint begins to be expressed in Guarino's own lifetime. Humanism undergoes a sea change in the course of the century from the elegant but eclectic Latin of someone like Guarino with its concomitant optimism in the stylistic progress of his contemporaries to the restricted Latin of the Ciceronians and their pessimistic view that nature no longer produces writers of genius.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE DISPUTE BETWEEN POGGIO AND VALLA\*

The quarrel between Poggio and Valla is worth considering in some detail since it not only highlights the important differences in principle between the two humanists and between two generations, but also documents a crucial stage in the history of Ciceronianism.<sup>1</sup> In this chapter the clearest method of proceeding is (I) to examine Poggio's Latin works in general; (II) to look at the theoretical positions of Poggio and Valla as revealed in the dispute between them; (III) to assess Valla's views on Latin as a whole.

#### I

Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459) typifies the thinking of the first generation of Quattrocento humanists in two ways: on the one hand there is the standard theoretical acknowledgement of Cicero as

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\* For Poggio's works I have used the photostatic reprint of his Opera, ed. R.Fubini, 4 vols. (Turin, 1964) - cited in my text as Opera with volume and page number. Volume iii of this edition reproduces Poggio's Epistolae, ed. Tonelli (Florence, 1832-61) with Tonelli's page numbers, so for the letters I cite merely Tonelli's volume and page numbers. For Valla's works I cite from the reprint of the Basle, 1540 edition of his Opera Omnia, ed. E.Garin, 2 vols. (Turin, 1962) - cited as Opera with volume and page number - except for works which have been recently edited: Gesta Ferdinandi Regis Aragonum, ed. O.Besomi (Padua, 1973); Antidotum in Facium, ed. M.Regoliosi (Padua, 1981); and I also cite from B.Facio, Invectivae in Laurentium Vallam, ed. E.I.Rao (Naples, 1978).

1. Pigman's assertion seems overstated: "The acrimonious invectives between Poggio and Valla, though important documents in the story of Ciceronianism, do not contribute to the theory of imitation." (G.W.Pigman, 'Barzizza's Treatise on Imitation', p.341 n.1); especially since all humanists, especially Valla, regard the use of any word found in Cicero as a form of imitation.

the best model to be followed in writing Latin; on the other hand in practice Poggio's Latin displays many non-Ciceronian traits. This inconsistency was first pointed out by Valla in the exchange of invectives between the two men, and the judgment of posterity has sided with Valla in assessing the quality of Poggio's Latin.<sup>2</sup> Both his recognition of Cicero as the supreme model and his eclectic, lively Latin style are evident in Poggio's writings.

In 1436 he advises a Portuguese correspondent to study both Quintilian and Cicero, but particularly the latter since he provides both theoretical works on rhetoric (ars) and practical demonstrations of eloquence (exercitatio) in his speeches. Cicero is not only superior to Quintilian he is "princeps inter omnes" (Tonelli ii.87). Even more explicit is a letter of 1455 to Domenico Sabino in which Poggio refers to "certain people's perverse preference for Quintilian over Cicero" and notes that in his own case whatever qualities he possesses as a Latinist he owes to Cicero: "Quidquid tamen in me est, hoc totum acceptum refero Ciceroni quem elegi ad eloquentiam docendam" (Tonelli iii.177). It is no surprise to learn that Poggio, like other humanists of the time, compiled a list of Ciceronis synonyma, presumably as an aid to Latin composition.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand the bulk of his writings, which consists of

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2. V.Rossi, Il Quattrocento, p.80; E.Bigi, s.v. 'Bracciolini' in DBI 13, p.643.

3. In Opera ii.835-45.

letters and dialogues, exhibits a flexible, almost conversational quality which is not modelled on Cicero.<sup>4</sup> He acknowledges this unelevated tone right from his first dialogue, De Avaritia (1428-9). In the proem he obviates criticism of the work's "planum nimis atque humile dicendi genus" by claiming to enjoy the kind of eloquence which never forces the reader to labour to understand its meaning: "in qua non maior existat intellegendi quam legendi labor." (Opera i.1).<sup>5</sup> There then follows the modesty topos about the writer's "ingeniolum" and the suggestion to others to rewrite this material more elegantly using Poggio's work as a rough copy ("copiolas"). This deprecation of one's own work as notes for a more polished version, though a standard formula, is used several times by Poggio.<sup>6</sup> This fact, coupled with his other statements on style, suggests that he is not merely rehearsing another variation of the modesty topos but is expressing a genuine rejection of the grand style. Certainly Niccoli felt that the Latin of this dialogue lacked ornatus and criticised his inclusion of modern names and personages, such as San Bernardino, in the work. Poggio defended himself by citing the precedent of Cicero, who was more ornate in his letters than in his

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4. R.Spongano, 'La prosa letteraria del Quattrocento', p.viiff. G.Holmes says Poggio "managed to turn the Latin dialogue into something like a living form of expression." (The Florentine Enlightenment 1400-50, p.102).
  5. Poggio thus departs from the Petrarchan tradition of writing a Latin that is intellectually demanding. (cf. Fam.xiii.5; xiv.2).
  6. Bruni used the formula of his Commentaria (Bruni, Epist.i.135); Poggio uses it also for his De Nobilitate (i.64), De Infelicitate Principum (i.392) and Facetiae (i.420).



dialogues. (Tonelli iii.278-80).

But even in the introductory letter to Poggio's collection of Epistles there is, apart from the traditional apology for the unlearned Latin ("volumen quamvis indoctum"), a genuine recognition of the extempore tone of the letters:

quum in ipsas conicerem quidquid in buccam venerat,  
ita ut etiam quaedam vulgaria, quamquam iocandi  
gratia, inserantur...Scripsi autem illas ex tempore  
et manu veloci, ut rescribendi neque ocium esset  
neque voluntas. (Tonelli, p.x) 7

From this favourite tone Poggio gradually evolves a personal poetics, a desire to use Latin for purposes other than the official and the serious. In the prologue to the Disceptatio Convivalis (1450) he points out that less serious topics and a less elevated style are not to be despised, especially if there is a certain wit in the writing: "non repudianda sunt humiliora exercitia, praesertim cum non omnino salis vacua, et remissius quoddam genus." (Opera i.32). These "disputatiunculae" are aimed at a less cultivated audience, he claims. This claim is consistent with views that he expresses in the substance of the work: in the second debate, when canon law is attacked because of its poor Latin, Poggio intervenes to claim that, although it is written in inelegant Latin, it is rich in sententiae, and this satisfies the audience it is aimed at "qui sententias magis quam verborum

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7. Despite the echo of Cic.Ad Att I.12.4 here, this is not a mere topos: see M.Aurigemma, 'Poggio Bracciolini', pp.436-7: "una lingua che non solo ha come modello la lingua epistolare di Cicerone...ma è poi, seguendo in parte un cosciente principio, antipedantesca ed antipuristica."



ornatum aucupantur. Nam si nil tibi placet nisi splendide et ornate dictum, tuos et philosophorum omnium libros contemnes."<sup>8</sup>

The fullest statement of Poggio's stylistic credo occurs, fittingly, in the preface to the work which was to secure him an international reputation, the Facetiae (1438-52). He anticipates two kinds of criticism against this work, one on moral grounds, the other for stylistic reasons; but he claims that it is excessive to demand eloquence in such low matters or when jokes have to be recounted verbatim: "in rebus infimis vel in his in quibus ad verbum vel facetiae exprimendae sunt vel aliorum dicta referenda." (Opera i.420). He combines this defence with the familiar advice to others to rehandle the same material in order to enrich the expressive capabilities of Latin in the Quattrocento: "quo lingua latina etiam levioribus in rebus hac nostra aetate fiat opulentior." (ibid). Poggio's aim in writing the Facetiae is to see if he can write elegantly ("non absurde...non inconcinne") about subjects that were thought difficult to treat of in Latin. Again he is addressing a slightly unusual audience for a work in Latin: the work is not for the severe critics but for the witty and humane: "A facetis et humanis (sicut Lucilius a Consentinis et Tarantinis) legi cupio." (ibid). The allusion to Lucilius implies that the Facetiae, though original in many respects, ultimately belong to the tradition of Latin satire.

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8. E.Garin, La disputa delle arti nel Quattrocento, p.32.

Poggio's other major work, the Historia Florentina, begun in 1453, is rather different in tone from his other compositions in Latin.<sup>9</sup> Written in emulation of Bruni's history, it also imitates the classical historians. The opening sentence deliberately echoes the opening of Livy's history and Sallust's Jugurtha:

Ea scripturus bella, quae Florentinus populus cum  
Vicecomitum familia, quaeve cum ceteris...gessit,  
operae pretium putavi initia, variumque urbis  
nostrae statum usque ad primum cum Archiepiscopo  
bellum recensere paucis. (Opera ii.97-8)<sup>10</sup>.

Since it is basically a monograph about one war, Poggio's history may look more to Sallust than to Livy as a model, but it is still very much in the style of official humanist historiography. If his other works hint at Poggio in more casual clothes, the Historia Florentina are definitely written by the humanist in his toga.

Poggio does not develop any theory of imitation, but certain key words recur frequently enough to indicate that his ideal in Latin is to write "non insulse", "non absurde...non inconcinne", "non omnino salis vacua".<sup>11</sup> He duly recognises Cicero as the optimum literary model, and his letters and dialogues testify to his desire to imitate Cicero in broad terms by writing mostly in these two genres. But he does not restrict himself or others to words found

9. M.Aurigemma, op.cit., p.440: "lo stile della Historia è reso più gonfio di quanto non soglia Poggio...dalla 'gara' impegnata col Bruni, che si combatte sul piano dell'ornamentazione."

10. "Facturusne operae pretium sim..." (Livy.I.1); "Bellum scripturus sum quod populus Romanus cum Iugurtha rege Numidarum gessit." (Sallust, Iug.V.1). Wilcox (The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography in the Fifteenth Century p.131) thus exaggerates in suggesting that where Bruni imitated Livy, Poggio followed Sallust. There is no rejection of Livy as a model at this stage.

11. Even in his translation of Xenophon's Cyropaedia he omitted "quae...concinne dici latine vix posse viderentur." (Cited by N.Struever, The Language of History in the Renaissance, p.149 n.13).

only in the Roman orator. If his history has the solemn tone of humanist historiography, his letters and dialogues have a consciously conversational quality, and the Facetiae seek to do something new for Latin. Poggio's distance from a truly Ciceronian style is attested in Cortese's assessment of his Latin, which in its distinction between Poggio's will and his ability accurately delineates the inconsistency between theory and practice that is typical of Poggio and his generation:

Tendebat toto animo et quotidiano quodam usu ad  
effingendum M.Tullium...Eam...dicendi laudem  
Poggius si non facultate et certe voluntate  
complectabatur. 12

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12. De Hominibus Doctis, ed. M.T.Graziosi, p.34. Modern experts on Poggio's style also recognise his liveliness: R.Fubini talks of his 'latino innovatore e "parlato".' (Introduction to the 1964 reprint of Poggio Opera, p.VII); E.Bigi discusses his "libera imitazione del modello ciceroniano, [la] ricca varietà di lessico, [la] aderenza, specie sintattica, al volgare contemporaneo." (s.v. 'Bracciolini' in DBI 13, p.643).

## II

The dispute between Poggio and Valla (1407-57) began in 1452 when Poggio learned that some criticisms had been inserted in the margin of a copy of his Latin letters. He presumed that Valla was the critic, but in fact a Catalan scholar of Valla's had written the remarks. In the flurry of invectives that followed, the argument was always destined to be won by the younger man, since he could always endorse his scholar's criticism of Poggio when they were justified, and disown them if they were inaccurate. In any event Valla had the last word: Poggio never replied to Valla's fourth Antidotum, and soon after this left to take up the post of Florentine Chancellor.

The substance of Poggio's defence in Invectiva I is that Valla attacks the acknowledged authorities in all disciplines: in grammar he criticises Donatus, Servius and Priscian; in dialectic Aristotle and Boethius; in history Livy and Sallust; in rhetoric Cicero; in brief:

omnes dannat praeter unum Quintilianum quem doctissimum  
omnium qui unquam fuerunt, et ipsi Ciceroni in  
eloquendi arte praefert, homo fanaticus asseverat.

(Opera i.189).

Poggio is thus flattered to be in the same company as Cicero, Livy and the rest, as an object of Valla's criticism.

Naturally the attack on Cicero is singled out as the most conspicuous offence against Quattrocento taste, and Poggio claims to

be a Ciceronian in that he defends Cicero against Valla's attacks. But this only allows Valla to deride even more this champion of Cicero who uses words and syntax never employed by the great orator. While neither humanist is a strict Ciceronian in the sense of wanting to use only words found in Cicero, it is clear from these exchanges that Poggio, despite his defence of Cicero, is less Ciceronian than Valla. Valla at least possesses the critical precision to be a Ciceronian, and is thus able to attack Poggio's use of poetic words (Valla, Opera i.328) and non-Ciceronian terms, such as "disturbium" (ib.i.285), "passio" (i.317) and "bursa" (i.320).<sup>13</sup> He can even demonstrate that certain words used by Poggio have a different meaning in Cicero: "recolo" is not a synonym for "recordor", "perpendo" does not mean "intelligo", and "destinare" is not used in the sense of "mittere" except "apud quosdam posteriores" (i.279-82). Valla actually knows that "affectio" is found in Cicero, but "affectus" in Quintilian, that "intermedius" is only used once by Cicero, and that "impertior" is always used in the active form "impertio" by him (i.299)! Valla's competence in the minutiae of scholarship in an age devoid of concordances and other tools is quite prodigious, and confirms that he belongs to a different generation from Poggio. Even in the broader terms of syntax he is more

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13. Cortese criticises Guarino for using poetic words later in the century (De Hom. Doc. p.26); Bartolommeo Facio criticised Valla himself for using poetic expressions such as "ignis convolvens flammeas pilas" or "templum mugiebat" in his history of King Ferdinand. (B.Facio, Invectivae in Vallam, ed. E.I.Rao, p.75). There is still a fair amount of discrepancy between theory and practice at this stage.

meticulous than Poggio, who lets slip some un-Ciceronian constructions: "sententia digna correctoris" instead of "correctore"; "abhorrere hanc rem" not "ab hac re" (ib.i.285; 304). Valla shows that even the nexus "recipere litteras" is not in Cicero:

'recepi litteras', cum te Ciceronem imitari profitearis,  
cur dicis? qui semper 'accepi litteras' ait. (ib.i.311).

At times Poggio's syntax is not just un-Ciceronian, it is unclassical; and Valla does not miss such sentences as "nihil tam homines impedit ad sapientiam venire." (ib.i.323).

The older humanist lacks the mental faculties to deal with these "quaestiunculae", as he calls them (Poggio Opera i.194). When he does pose as a strict Ciceronian and tries to exploit the same techniques as Valla, he lacks the critical precision to do so. He objects to the rare terms "leguleius" and "architectari" in Valla's proem to the Elegantiae, claiming that Cicero never used them. But in fact they are in Cicero, and Valla quotes chapter and verse to prove that Poggio is really criticising Cicero (Valla, Opera i.295). Valla can further prove how superficial and impressionistic is Poggio's Ciceronianism when he rewrites the opening 37 word sentence of the Invectiva in Vallam I in 21 words, reducing tautologous clauses like "quum...honoris et existimationis laus, aut ingenii fama a malevolis in discrimen adduci videatur" (Poggio Opera i.188) to the essentials: "cum honor et existimatio in discrimen adducitur". (Valla Opera i.302).<sup>14</sup>

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14. Similarly George of Trebizond rewrites sentences of Guarino, and Facio corrects some of Valla's own sentences. Poggio's method of imitating Cicero is called "empirico ed impressionistico" by F.Belmonte (Lettere italiane 32 (1980), p.129).

Poggio is thus open to the criticism directed by Valla's favourite Quintilian against those who try to ape Cicero by ending every clause with the words "esse videatur".<sup>15</sup>

These invectives, though mostly concerned with grammatical minutiae, permit us to see the broader implications of the stances adopted by the two men: Poggio, like the other humanists of his generation, professes a notional Ciceronianism which he is unable to achieve in the practice of writing; Valla, along with other of his generation, possesses the critical intelligence to be a Ciceronian but would never want to restrict himself in this way, especially since he constantly campaigns to have Quintilian put on the same level as Cicero. But the invectives also reveal another critical difference between the two humanists. Poggio defends not only Cicero but also the whole medieval educational "establishment", criticised by Valla: Priscian, Donatus, Boethius, Servius. Where Valla operates a temporal discrimination against the late antique authors, Poggio treats them all as "auctores" whose Latin automatically has "auctoritas":

Latinorum verborum proprietas, vis, significatio,  
constructio non tantum ratione quantum veterum  
scriptorum auctoritate constant. (Opera i.203).

Thus when Valla replaces Lactantius' "placidiora quaeque animalia" with the more classical "omnia placidiora animalia", Poggio defends the Christian writer, along with Boethius and Servius who made similar "errors", simply because he deserves respect as an "auctor". Valla

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15. Quintilian X.2.18.



can easily retort that if usage depends on the authority of ancient writings, he can cite the evidence of all other authors against the usage of these three (Opera i.291). Similarly, if Poggio uses "consultor" in the sense of "adviser" because there is a precedent in Gellius, Valla condemns the latter as "sectator frivolarum elegantiarum" (ib.i.306) or contrasts him with "Ciceronem atque illos summos" (ib.i.314) who would never use an unclassical form like "exercitium". Likewise Priscian is attacked for forms such as "multociens" and contrasted with "elegantes scriptores" (ib. i.325). Poggio, on the other hand, groups together authors from totally different ages to justify his usage. He claims that "instar" is used by Cicero, Vergil and Apuleius "et caeteri qui latine scripserunt" (Poggio Opera i.192). Like Antonio da Rho, he has no hesitation in coupling Cicero with Apuleius, in seeing both writers as valid models who wrote "latine". Valla is able to isolate Apuleius' use of the word and criticise him (Valla Opera i.263); and we know from his dispute with Antonio da Rho that Valla anticipates the Ciceronians of the end of the century in his condemnation of Apuleius' language: "cuius sermonem si quis imitetur non tam auree loqui quam nonnihil rudere videatur." (ib.i.414). But if Valla looks forward to the later Ciceronians in his rejection of late Latin authors, nevertheless he could never qualify as a Ciceronian himself: he always contrasts the late writers with more than one classical author, with Cicero and "illi summi". In any case there was good precedent in his favourite author, Quintilian, for not imitating the writings of just one author;<sup>16</sup>

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16. Quintilian X.2.24-26. Valla possessed Petrarch's annotated copy of Quintilian (Paris MS 7720), so it is not surprising that the two men have such similar views on imitation and Ciceronianism.



and he is explicit on this point in the dispute with Poggio:

At in lingua romana non me ad unum Ciceronem astringas.  
Igitur aliorum quoque testimonia possum repetere.  
(Opera i.295).

## III

The dispute with Poggio reveals the differences between two generations. On the surface it seems that the more rigid Ciceronianists are identified with the older generation of humanists, Poggio, Bruni, Guarino. In a letter to Guarino of 1454 Poggio implies that the two of them belong on one side of the generation gap, with Valla and Perotti on the other (Tonelli iii.110ff). Pius II in his De Liberorum Educatione (1450) lists the humanists whose style is comparable to Cicero's and therefore suitable for imitation: and these are the old guard of Bruni, Guarino, Poggio and Traversari. Valla, as we have seen, confirms this generational divide, but rejects the correlation between the older humanists and Ciceronianism on the one hand, and the younger scholars and the eclectic approach on the other. If anything, Valla and Trebizonda are nearer to the Ciceronianist line. Valla deliberately associates his major work, the Elegantiae, with the new generation, because he had given up hope in the older scholars.<sup>17</sup> He is critical not only of Poggio's Latin: his condemnation of Poggio's poetic words would also apply to Guarino's prose; and his criticism of Bruni's Laudatio is along similar lines: "stilus laxus est et fluens et enervatus... multisque in locis minime latine, ne dicam corrupte, loquens." (Opera ii.75). Valla, like George of Trebizond, also rewrites the sentences of his enemies. Yet he is different from the Greek

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17. "Quae probatum iri bonae mentis iuvenibus, nam senes desperandi sunt, confidimus." (Prosatori p.622).

humanist. The latter is much closer to a strict Ciceronian stance, as we saw; but Valla was especially keen to teach rhetoric in Rome to counter the Greek's criticism of Quintilian: "cum (Trapezuntio) dimidium annum in legenda Rhetorica contendi, quod Quintilianum non desisteret incessere." (ib.i.335).

Quintilian had been a favourite of Valla's from his youth. In 1426 he wrote a Comparatio Ciceronis Quintilianique; but since it is no longer extant it is impossible to say how critical it was of Cicero. Elsewhere Valla does state that he believes Quintilian to be superior to all other writers, but this is in the Elegantiae where he is contrasting him with later grammarians such as Priscian: "In hoc ego a Prisciano libere dissentio...autoritate et potissimum Marci Fabii quem omnibus sine controversia ingeniis antepono." (Opera i.37). In this context Valla is talking of Quintilian's value as a grammarian not as a stylist. This fondness for Quintilian allowed Valla's enemies to exaggerate it into a heterodox rejection of Cicero, as happened in the dispute with Poggio. But it was clear from the invectives that Valla does not criticise Cicero; on the contrary he is more meticulous and accurate as an observer of Cicero's diction and style than Poggio; rather he raises Quintilian to the same level of authority as Cicero. He constantly points out that he regards both writers as supreme in eloquence (Opera i.263), and claims that it is impossible to follow Cicero without obeying Quintilian (ib.i.266).

Following a distinction in his favourite author, Valla's ideal

was to write latine rather than grammatice and he stressed the priority of common usage over grammatical propriety.<sup>18</sup> It is in this context that his attack on the language of scholasticism is to be considered. He wants both philosophy and dialectic to retain the plain usage of antiquity:

At philosophia ac dialectica non solent ac ne debent  
quidem recedere ab usitatissima loquendi consuetudine  
et quasi a via vulgo trita et silicibus strata.  
(Opera i.651)

His Dialecticae Disputationes represent an attempt to clarify both the languages and the thought of dialectic. In the passage just quoted he demands a linguistic clarity that is similar to Guarino's condemnation of the obscurity of dictamen, and to Bruni's rejection of the philosophical language of the Middle Ages. His use of vulgus here seems to mean both the natural language of ordinary people, and the clear usage of the classical philosophers as opposed to the technical terms of the logicians. His approach to philosophy and philosophical language may be regarded as Ciceronian:<sup>19</sup> the De Vero Falsoque Bono and De Libero Arbitrio are modelled on Cicero's philosophical dialogues. But in philosophy and, as we shall see, in theology, history and other subjects, it is usage (consuetudo) which is the most crucial criterion for determining the language to be used. Hence even in a speech in honour of Aquinas he still attacks the language of recent theologi, contrasting them with Jerome, Augustine and Ambrose who never used words not found in the classical authors:

18. Quintilian I.6.27 was the passage in question: Poggio interpreted it as implying: "latine loqui omnium esse...grammatice vero solum eruditorum" (Poggio, Opera i.231); but Valla correctly saw that grammatice related to locutio, latine to elocutio (Opera.i.708). This aspect of the dispute between Poggio and Valla is well documented in S.I.Camporeale, Lorenzo Valla: umanesimo e teologia, pp.180ff.

19. See L.Jardine, 'Lorenzo Valla and the Intellectual Origins of Humanist Dialectic', esp. pp.150ff.

hos doctores ecclesiae latinos reformidasse vocabula,  
 quae auctores latinos, idest suos in loquendo  
 magistros, graecarum litterarum eruditissimos numquam  
 viderant usurpasse, quae novi theologi semper inculcant:  
 ens, entitas, quiditas identitas... (Opera ii.350).

For Valla language is of paramount importance. Hence the enormous labour he devoted to ascertaining the exact meaning of words in Latin, which culminated in the Elegantiae Linguae Latinae. His perspective of the development of Latin is to be found particularly in the proems which he wrote for each of the six books of this work. In the first Proem he maintains that only if language is in a healthy state will the other arts flourish. In his view no one has written latine for centuries, hence the decline in the liberal arts and the related arts of painting, sculpture and architecture. But now, like Bruni and Guarino, he senses a revival both in those arts and in the recovery of Latin, and is confident that this revival will be completed in his lifetime:

his nostris (temporibus) gratulandum est, in quibus si paulo amplius adnitamur, confido propediem linguam romanam...et cum ea disciplinas omnes iri restitutum.  
 (Pros.598)

In the proem to Book II he specifies the boundaries of corrupt Latin. He calls Donatus, Servius and Priscian the last triumvirate of sound grammarians; and as he criticises the language of later theologians, so he ridicules the "modern" grammarians: Isidore, Papias, Everard, Ugucione. He also defends the subject matter of the Elegantiae by saying that he is not inhibited from dealing with topics already treated by ancient authors, because even they could

not provide the final word on this subject.<sup>20</sup> In the third Proem Valla considers the Latin of the jurists, and far from condemning their non-Ciceronian usage, he commends the homogeneity of their Latin, which is remarkable since they wrote centuries apart from each other. Their achievement is all the more commendable in that in subjects that do not permit eloquence they at least attain elegantia and latinitas. For Valla, as for Bruni and later Barbaro, elegance is desirable even in unpromising areas like dialectic, theology and the law. No doubt Valla particularly appreciated the jurists' precision in their language. But as in other subjects, so in legal matters Valla criticises the recent jurists: their language is mixed with "Gothic" impurities, whereas Valla believes that legal students need to be skilled in the studia humanitatis.

In the fourth preface he claims not only that the great Christian writers were interested in style but that Jerome imitated Cicero's philosophical style: "Ciceronis stylum cupiebat exprimere, stylum, inquam, quali ille utebatur in quaestionibus philosophiae." (Pros.616). There is, then, a rigorous consistency about Valla's views on Latin: he looks back to the purity of the classical writers, but admits that even later writers can retain that purity. His enemies insisted that he attacked Aristotle in philosophy, Jerome in

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20. "nulli umquam ab antiquis ad eundem cursum conficiendum viam fuisse praeclusam." (Pros.604). Valla uses the image of the road here, but his conclusion is very different from Petrarch's (Seniles v.2) and Alberti's (De Commodis, ed. L. Goggi Caretti, p.39), both of whom feel inhibited from covering ground already travelled by the ancient writers.

the Vulgate, Cicero and Priscian in grammar. In fact in the Elegantiae there is no criticism of Cicero, though he does note alternative usages. He does take Priscian to task on several occasions ( Opera i.37 etc.), but he only does so, as he explains in a letter to Giovanni Serra, where Priscian, or Donatus, or Servius differ from classical writers in usage: "discrepans ab illorum autoritate" (Opera i.288). Valla is more of a purist than any of his many enemies, and this linguistic rigour is displayed both in the Elegantiae and in the disputes with fellow humanists, such as Poggio and Antonio da Rho.

Valla's In Errores Antonii Raudensis Adnotationes is, like his invectives against Poggio and Facio, a rather pedestrian list of his opponent's faults in Latin. Both Antonio's syntax and his lexis are attacked: "aspirare ad studia" should be "aspirare studiis" (Op.i.392), "ex maxima parte" is found in Cicero, not Antonio's "pro maiore parte" (i.421). As for lexis, Valla objects to both scholastic terms such as "aliquialiter" (i.393), "discretio" (i.415), "praesentialiter" (i.419), and vulgarisms like "avisare" (i.397), "induciari" (i.406) and "granellum" (i.438). He objects to such terms not because they are rare but because they belong to alien cultures, scholastic or vernacular. He has more fundamental criticisms to make of the length of Antonio's work (i.391,417) and of its title. De Imitatione is too vague, according to Valla; Antonio should have added Eloquentiae to the title (i.392). But even "imitatio" is not quite accurate: "Imitationem vocas qui magis usus, consuetudoque atque exercitatio vocari debet." (i.424). But the most significant feature of Valla's



dispute with Antonio da Rho is his ability to discern categories of acceptable authors: Apuleius, Macrobius and Gellius are interesting sources of lexical curiosities, not of sound grammatical usage. As in the polemic with Poggio, Valla implies that the elegant writer ought to imitate the usage of the "magni auctores"; and by that he usually means Cicero, Quintilian, Livy and Sallust. The point is made explicitly in the Elegantiae: "quod ad elegantiam pertinet, ego pro lege accipio, quicquid magnis auctoribus placuit." (Op.i.92).<sup>21</sup>

The dispute with Bartolomeo Facio highlights Valla's linguistic consistency and rigour in another genre, the writing of Latin history. At the very beginning of his Gesta Ferdinandi Regis Aragonum he tackles one of the main problems faced by humanist historians, the changed nomenclature of place-names. Valla's solution is predictable: because he is writing for the present and future generations, he will adopt the contemporary forms of geographical names rather than the classical ones. Thus he will write Florentia not Fluentia, Ferraria not Forum Appii. In these cases the classical authority for the old form is outweighed by lengthy usage of the recent form. As in the dispute with Poggio, he lays greater stress on usage than on the authority of ancient writers: "Itaque in hac re non vetustatis auctoritatem sequar, sed nostrorum temporum consuetudini obsequar." (Gest.Ferd., p.11).

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21. For the difference between Valla's notion of elegantia as relating to semantic precision and the later humanists' idea of it as a stylistic polish, see D.Marsh, 'Grammar, Rhetoric and Method in Valla's Elegantiae', pp.101-3.



Similarly with common nouns he prefers the established form to the classical one. It is particularly this "modern" Latin that arouses the indignation of Facio. In his Invectivae in Laurentium Vallam he objects primarily to Valla's Latinity, but also to the subject matter of the Gesta Ferdinandi, which seems to him to contravene the classical rules of decorum and brevitas.<sup>22</sup> Facio says nothing of Valla's use of the modern forms of place names, but he does criticise other Latin words which reflect modern culture and which should thus not have occurred in the ancient historians: "infans Castelle" should have been avoided by a circumlocution such as "filius natu maximus" (p.72); Valla should not have added vernacular equivalents like "duabus leugis" (p.74) or "parlamentum" (p.102); for "Maomettani" he could have said "Afri Hispaniae incolae" (72-3), for "prophetare" he should have substituted "divinare" (98) and so on. In particular Facio objects to Valla's neologism "equerii" where the classical "equites" would have been adequate (81-2), and to the use of the modern "bombarda" for the ancient "tormentum" (73). He also attacks some poetic words and phrases (75) and even rewrites some of Valla's sentences (113). In terms of content, Facio criticises the episode where the King is said to snore during an embassy (96), the description of the King being assisted by his courtiers and a system of pulleys to consummate his marriage (97) and the details of Caprera romping in the Queen's bed (106)! These elements are rejected not only on moral grounds but also because they contravene the rules of

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22. References to B.Facio's Invectivae in L. Vallum are to the pages of the edition by E.I.Rao.

decorum and probability.

Valla's reply to this is his Antidotum in Facium.<sup>23</sup> In it we find not only a line-by-line rebuttal of Facio's criticisms, but also a clear statement of Valla's ideals in Latin historiography. In the first two books he answers Facio's linguistic criticisms, in the third book he defends the content of his history, and the fourth book is mostly devoted to Valla's Emendationes in T. Livium. The grammatical quibbles, though trivial in themselves, do have broader implications for the writing of Latin. Valla is outraged that Facio accepts the rare supine "discitum" because it occurs in Apuleius but rejects Valla's "parciturum" which has a precedent in Jerome:

(Facius) insanire cepit et Hieronymum carpere tanquam indignum quem imitemur...' (ecclesiasticorum) auctoritas nullius in grammatica momenti est.' 'Quid, maioris ne - inquam - est Apuleius? Ne de eo dicam opere quod de asino aureo blateravit! ' (p.12)

Facio has Ciceronianist tendencies, he wants to exclude from his Latin anything that refers to contemporary culture including the language of Christian writers. There is even a hint that he is critical of Seneca's Latin, which he claims is inferior to the Latin of certain humanists (p.13). Valla is a different kind of linguistic purist: he is prepared to accept forms that occur in late writers or even contemporary authors as long as the terms are of sound derivation and have a reason for existing. He thus points out the ambiguity of

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23. References in what follows are to Valla's Antidotum in Facium, ed. M.Regoliosi.

classical circumlocutions for modern phenomena and reasserts his right to use such terms as "infans Castelle", "papa", "dux genuensis" "delphinus" for the Dauphin (p.95). Similarly he argues that "prophetare" denotes a uniquely Christian activity and is therefore impossible to replace with "divinare", which means something quite different. (p.128). As for vulgarisms such as "leugis" or "parlamentum", he justifies these by saying that he is both imitating Livy, who also gave local names for magistrates, and other institutions, and following the precepts of Cicero who permits such local terms as long as they are introduced by "ut illi loquuntur" or its equivalent (pp.110,137).

The two most crucial modernisms in Valla's history are his own neologism "equerii" and the widely used "bombarda". When he first used "equerii" Valla had anticipated criticisms from men like Facio and had prefaced his use of the word with an explanation of why it was necessary and how it differed from the classical "equites" (Gesta Ferd. p.63). Facio attacks Valla both for his unclassical Latin and for his long digression about the word, which is against the dictates of brevitas. Valla defends the neologism and also his excursus by saying he is imitating Thucydides who includes similar digressions (p.235). Similarly with "bombarda", he is able to reject Facio's classical equivalent "tormentum" as ambiguous, and to insist on the principle "nova res novum vocabulum flagitat" (p.106). "Tormentum" is both too generic, since it refers to many kinds of instrument, and inaccurate, because it is made of wood, unlike the cannon. The clinching reasons for Valla are that the word is now used by many

("a pluribus in usum recepto utor"), and is derived from "ardeo" and "bombus".<sup>24</sup> He reminds Facio that many new terms have had to be invented in other arts and sciences, and even in military science Vegetius already uses terms unknown to antiquity. Valla even wrote a short book on the subject, though this "libellus de novis rebus antiquitati prorsus ignotis" (p.107) is probably merely the few paragraphs on the topic originally included in the Gesta Ferdinandi.<sup>25</sup>

Again these details of scholarship have a bearing on the ultimate direction of Quattrocento Latin. Valla and Biondo are the only two humanists who face the problem of nomenclature directly. Biondo comes to the same conclusion as Valla, though he does not share his contemporary's linguistic rigour, and decides to use the modern form of place names and the recent words for gunpowder.<sup>26</sup> For the humanists the struggle between classical elegance and accurate narration crystallises especially when a Latin historian has to deal with contemporary phenomena or institutions. When Biondo points out that it takes a thirty-eight word periphrasis to describe cannons breaching a wall, using only words found in classical authors, then it is clear

24. "bombus" is Greek in origin but already used in Latin by Columella, Pliny, Apuleius and Macrobius, as Valla points out (p.106). Valla here seems to be more lenient towards these rather late authors, whom he criticises elsewhere. He also often cites Tacitus as a precedent for both style and content (eg. pp.40,135,139 etc.).

25. Gesta Ferdinandi, pp.194-204 prints the passage on the Latin words for mill, cotton, sugar, football, candle, goldleaf, and glasses! See also O.Besomi, 'Dai Gesta Ferdinandi Regis Aragonum del Valla al De Orthographia del Tortelli.'

26. Biondo discusses these problems at the beginning of Decades xxi (pp.393ff) which Valla may have read in Naples in 1443 (see O.Besomi, 'Dai Gesta...', p.85).

that the pursuit of pure Ciceronian language will make Latin a dead language again.<sup>27</sup>

The implications of the dispute between Valla and his adversaries are of significance for the future development of humanism in the fifteenth century. Valla and his enemies represent many different types of humanist. Poggio, as we saw, was a member of the old guard; a first-generation humanist, professing a notional Ciceronianism, which his Latin would never achieve. Antonio da Rho was a minor figure, and his work was an easy victim for Valla's linguistic acumen. Facio, like Poggio, proclaims a theoretical allegiance to Cicero and Livy, but, unlike the older man, is far more restrictive in what he considers acceptable in Latin. In this narrow approach he anticipates the Ciceronianism of the future, but in his defence of the medieval grammarians he is far behind Valla's expertise. Valla distinguishes between the auctores and the grammarians, who merely register usage: "Priscianum ceterosque grammaticos...ab aliis petere preceptorum suorum, non ipsos habere auctoritatem, hoc est non esse auctores." (Antid.p.30). He also discerns further between the magni auctores

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27. "Quis enim non vehementer admiretur, vas aeneum fusile ferreumve, oblongum, tamquam cavo ex gutture, in orbem daedolata librarum sexcentarum septingentarumque saxa, ignis ad interiorem partem sulphureis admoti pulveribus et vaporis concludi impatientis violentia evomens densissimos quosque muros perfringere?" (p.394). The same problems are still met when Latin has to cope with the reality of the twentieth century: the Vatican has greatest difficulty in finding words for new weapons and new technology (eg. "manuballistula" for pistol, "aeronavis capacissima" for jumbo-jet etc! See the article in L'Espresso of 28.12.80, pp.33-34.)

and the later writers like Apuleius and Macrobius; but though he writes Ciceronian dialogues like Bruni and Poggio, in his views on diction he sounds not like a Ciceronian, but like a Quintilio-Ciceronian. Yet he is prepared to admit any word or syntax that has a sound pedigree: terms from the jurists, or the Fathers, or modern terms are all acceptable if they have a linguistic raison d'être. He does not have the prescriptive mentality to be a Ciceronian:

non legem scribo, quasi numquam aliter factum sit,  
sed quod frequentissime factitatum est, praesertim  
a Marco Tullio Marcoque Fabio. (Operai.22).<sup>28</sup>

Valla's scientific approach to language sends Quattrocento Latin far along the road to classical perfection, but it is a road that does not lead anywhere after that. When Valla is using some of those vulgarisms that he defends in the Gesta Ferdinandi, such as "horologium", "campana", "zuccara" or "candela", it seems but a short step to leave the Latin road altogether and join the parallel road of the vernacular. This in fact is what many humanists will do after Latin reaches Ciceronian perfection in the age of Bembo. Even in the late Quattrocento Valla's Latin will come under attack. Not surprisingly, Cortese approves of Valla's linguistic precision, but faults his lack of "structura" and "conglutinatio", which lead to an overall lack of "concinntas": presumably he is thinking of the unadorned prose of the Elegantiae.<sup>29</sup>

28. For Valla's descriptive rather than prescriptive approach to language see R.Waswo, 'The Ordinary Language Philosophy of Lorenzo Valla', pp.255ff.

29. De Hominibus Doctis, ed. M.T.Graziosi, p.40. Modern critics share Cortese's estimate: "scrittore mediocre e piú affettato, spesso, che elegante" says F.Belmonte (art.cit., p.134).

The humanists examined in this chapter all wrote exclusively in Latin, even though that Latin differed considerably. Yet none of them could accurately be called "Ciceronian", though some, like George of Trebizond and Facio, have Ciceronian tendencies.<sup>30</sup> In the following chapters we will consider humanists who wrote in both Latin and the vernacular. Not since the days of Petrarch and Boccaccio were there writers who devoted considerable time to both languages. The intellectual activity of men like Guarino and Valla was channelled into perfecting Latin. But the bilingual output of men such as Alberti and Landino concerns the development of the volgare as well. Writing in both languages becomes the norm for future humanists, and the development of vernacular humanism now needs to be studied.

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30. It is odd to find the inaccurate generalisation that Valla's contemporaries were Ciceronians in the excellent edition of the Antidotum in Facium, when the editor claims that Valla's Comparatio Ciceronis Quintilianique "scandalizzò una grossa fetta della cultura contemporanea, pedissequamente fedele all'imitazione esclusiva di Cicerone" (p.XIII).



PART THREE

VERNACULAR HUMANISM



## CHAPTER FIVE

LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI\*

Alberti, a pupil of Barzizza, possessed his own copy of the Brutus and the Orator, and like his teacher and the other humanists studied so far, he pays superlative compliments to Cicero whenever he is mentioned.<sup>1</sup> "Marco Tullio Cicerone, quel nostro principe degli oratori", says Lionardo in Book i of Della Famiglia (i.55); later he talks to Battista himself about "tuo Marco Cicerone" (i.84); and in an important passage he recommends the best authors to study:

E arei io caro che e' miei s' ausassero co' buoni autori, imparassino grammatica da Prisciano e da Servio, e molto si faccessino familiari, non a cartule e gregismi, ma sopra tutti a Tullio, Livio, Sallustio, ne' quali singularissimi ed emendatissimi scrittori, dal primo ricever di dottrina attingano quella perfettissima aere d'eloquenza con molta gentilezza della lingua latina. (i.71).

Here Alberti, like Valla and the other humanists, distinguishes between the classical authors in their original texts and the medieval manuals, Chartula and Grecismus.<sup>2</sup> Like other humanists writing on education, Alberti insists on the study of the best authors; but unlike his contemporaries, he considers that some writers who are "crudi e rozzi" should nevertheless still be studied for their content:

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\* References in the text are to L.B.Alberti, Opere volgari, ed. C.Grayson, 3 vols (Bari, 1960-73); and to De Commodis Litterarum et Incommodis, ed. L. Goggi Carotti (Florence, 1976).

1. For details of his life see G.Mancini, Vita di L.B.Alberti; C.Grayson, s.v. 'Alberti' in DBI 1, pp.702ff.
2. G.Billanovich, 'Leon Battista Alberti, il Grecismus e la Chartula'; and C.Grayson, 'Cartule e Grecismi in Leon Battista Alberti'.

"Cerchisi la lingua latina in quelli e' quali l'ebbono netta e perfettissima; negli altri togliànci l'altre scienze delle quali e' fanno professione." (i.71). In fact in his Latin works Alberti uses language not found in Cicero, Livy or Sallust: throughout his life he always appreciates the content of these "scientific" writers, and in his technical treatises he writes as one of them.

Given Alberti's considerable output in both Latin and the vernacular, it is necessary first to examine his views on imitation in each language separately and then see if some synthesis is possible. His first Latin work was the Philodoxeos, such a convincing imitation of an ancient Latin comedy that for years it was taken to be the product of the minor comedian Lepidus. In practice, then, Alberti was able to write something that looked genuinely antique, as he recognised himself in the Commentarium that he appended to the play when finally claiming authorship of it: "et comicum dicendi genus et priscum quippiam redolebat."<sup>3</sup> In fact the language of the comedy is not merely classical but at times Plautine, exemplifying a predilection for archaic Latin forms that was to remain Alberti throughout his life.<sup>4</sup> Yet the fact that the play was in prose not verse ought to have been sufficient indication that this was no ancient comedy.<sup>5</sup> In addition

3. Philodoxeos, ed. L.Cesarini Martinelli, p.147.

4. Fubini in his introduction to the anonymous Vita (Rin 12 (1972), p.41) talks of Alberti's "predilezione per il linguaggio poetico (specie dei comici) arcaico o tardivo, e comunque raro".

5. Antonio Barzizza, son of Alberti's tutor, also writes a Latin comedy in prose, but explains in the prologue to his Cauteraria that even learned humanists are still ignorant of the metre of ancient comedy (in Teatro goliardico dell'umanesimo, ed. V.Pandolfi and E.Artese, p.448).

the use of allegorical names for the characters and the elements of late and medieval Latin in the language would have been proof to an expert like Valla that this was not the work of "Lepidus".<sup>6</sup>

The De Commodis Litterarum et Incommodis, written between 1428 and 1432, displays in its polemical tone links with the earlier invectives of Petrarch and Boccaccio. It also evinces a similar aporia to that felt by Petrarch when he considered the wealth of the classical tradition and felt that there was nothing more he could add in Latin (Seniles v.2). This originally led Petrarch to feel that he should cultivate the vernacular, but Alberti does not reach this conclusion yet. Nevertheless the germs of his later cultivation of the volgare may lie in the impasse articulated at this stage in the De Commodis: "et seria omnia et iocosa veteres ipsi complexi sunt, nobis tantum legendi atque admirandi sui facultatem et necessitatem dimiserunt." (De Comm., p.39). Here Alberti notes that the few gaps left by the ancient writers have been filled by the older generation of humanists. The "maiores natu" referred to seem to be men like Bruni and Vergerio, because Alberti says that they write "historiam ...mores principum ac gesta rerum publicarum" (ibid.).

If this early work shows the influence of Petrarch's ideas in thematic terms, stylistically it reflects the language of Cicero.<sup>7</sup>

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6. L.Cesarini Martinelli in her edition (pp.226-7) lists the non-classical forms in the Philodoxeos.

7. Goggi Carotti in her edition specifies "i due letterati-guida della sua formazione giovanile: Petrarca e Cicerone." (p.7); and outlines the Ciceronian structure and terminology of the work (pp.7-9), as does G.Farris in his edition of De Commodis (Milan, 1971, pp.24-29).

Yet although phraseology and structure may be Ciceronian, even in this early treatise Alberti stresses his originality in content ("modo aliquid novi proferamus"), and defends his Latin style as something less grand than that found in antiquity ("non prisce in primis eloquentie" - p.40). Now the claim of originality of subject and the apology for the inadequacies of style at the beginning of a work may merely be standard rhetorical topoi; but in Alberti's case they seem to be more than that. Throughout all his writings there is an emphasis on originality and the pursuit of a personal, unadorned style; and in the De Commodis in particular the ideal of a bare, brief style is not only announced at the outset but pursued in the rest of the treatise: he constantly has this ideal in mind, shaping the work so as to avoid exempla and amplificatio, and always aiming at brevitas.<sup>8</sup>

The epithets that Alberti applies to his Latin in the De Commodis ("nuda", "succincta", "lenis", "ieiuna", "exilis") are not merely rhetorically modest, but rather an accurate assessment of a style that does not conform to the Ciceronian ideal - Cicero in fact warns against these qualities: "dicendi facultas non debeat esse ieiuna atque nuda" (De Or.I.218); "(Xenophon) leniore quodam sono usus est" (ib.II.58); "ne exilis, ne inculta sit vestra oratio" (ib.III.97).

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8. "nudam orationem nostram futuram prediximus...idcirco hos amplificationum locos fugiamus." (p.82); "Sed ista omnia omittamus...nam succincta et lenis, ut vidistis, nostra fuit oratio eritque...facillima et brevissima." (p.97).

Alberti concludes the treatise with a defence of his less than eloquent language that will become one of his hallmarks: "nemo reprehendat si malui parum eloquens quam nimium mordax videri." (p.112).

The Intercenales (1425-39) constitute one of Alberti's most original and characteristic contributions to Quattrocento literature.<sup>9</sup> In these short pieces he develops his "mordant" tone, and imitates a rather unusual model, Lucian.<sup>10</sup> The language of the Intercenales is often unclassical, frequently drawing on early or medieval authors.<sup>11</sup> Thus his protests in the proems - "puerili hoc nostro et inelimato dicendi genere"<sup>12</sup> - are both conventional topos and a genuine justification of a different rhetorical ideal: after all, the fully-rounded Ciceronian period would not suit these brief, satirical pieces. In the proem to Book iv he defends his choice of this rather difficult genre against the demands of those who feel he should cultivate the richer fields of eloquence: again he stresses originality ("difficillimis inventionibus"), as opposed to stylistic conformity ("vulgatioris eloquentie"), presumably referring to his rejection of the Ciceronian dialogue adopted by most of his fellow

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9. C.Grayson, 'Il prosatore latino e volgare', p.275.

10. Cesarini Martinelli discusses his "imitazione di modelli piuttosto insoliti per l'epoca." (Philodoxeos, ed. L.Cesarini Martinelli, p.115 n.2).

11. Garin illustrates his "gusto...per le parole e le forme rare e ricercate" ('Alcune Intercenales inedite' ed. E.Garin, p.126).

12. 'Alcune Intercenales inedite', ed. E.Garin, p.127.

humanists.<sup>13</sup>

But it is in the Proem to Book vii, dedicated to the pioneer of the Ciceronian dialogue, Leonardo Bruni, that we find the fullest statement of Alberti's stylistic alternative to Ciceronianism. Striving to equal Cicero is like trying to catch the moon, says Alberti, yet everyone now judges every work by Cicero's standards:

In aliorumque scriptis pensitandis ita sumus plerique  
ad unum omnes fastidiosi, ut ea Ciceronis velimus  
eloquentie respondere, ac si superiori etate omnes qui  
approbati fuere scriptores eosdem fuisse Cicerones  
statuant. 14

Alberti feels this is absurd, since nature only produced one Cicero, and if he were reborn in Alberti's day he would suffer from the same lack of texts and cease to be eloquent. Yet some critics still prefer only the grand and grandiose style, rejecting as harsh whatever is written with accuracy; they cultivate verbal eloquence and rounded periods, while only a few notice an author's "vim ingenii". Here again Alberti extols content and originality above Ciceronian style, and he clinches his argument by pointing out how varied eloquence is, so that on certain topics even Cicero writes in an unciceronian fashion: "At enim varia res est eloquentia, ut ipse interdum sibi Ciceroni perdis similis sit."<sup>15</sup> As in the De Commodis, he concludes by claiming that he prefers to be one who tries to contribute something rather than standing in idle admiration of the

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13. 'Alcune Intercenales inedite', ed. E.Garin, p.140.

14. *ibid.*, p.180.

15. *ibid.*, p.180.

past.

Apart from the Intercenales and the technical treatises, Momus is Alberti's most significant Latin work. In the proem he again talks of the difficulty of writing anything after considering the achievements of antiquity, and decides that if anything is to be written at all, it has to be original in content ("incognitum atque incogitatum...res novas, inauditas") or at least in style: "Proximus huic erit is, qui cognitas et communes fortassis res novo quodam et insperato scribendi genere tractarit."<sup>16</sup> He sees his own style in the Momus, a mixture of seriousness and humour, as something original in Latin literature.

The technical works in Latin demonstrate the by now familiar concern both for originality of material and for clarity and concision of language rather than eloquence. The opening words of De Pictura illustrate the twin aims of brevity and clarity: "De pictura his brevissimis commentariis scripturi, quo clarior sit nostra oratio..." (iii.11).<sup>17</sup> He draws a distinction between the technical subtlety of mathematical writings and his own cruder treatment of his subject: "pinguiore idcirco, ut aiunt, Minerva scribendo utemur." (ibid.). A glance at the source of the phrase "pinguiore Minerva"

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16. Momus, ed. G.Martini, pp.4-5.

17. Similarly the Elementa Picturae begins: "Quo scribendo sim brevis atque dilucidus..." (iii.115); and De Statua: "caeteris omissis, solum quod ad coeptam explicationem faciat brevissime transigamus." (Alberti, On Painting and Sculpture, edited and translated by C.Grayson, p.122).



(Cicero, De Amicitia 19) confirms that it refers to a style that is the opposite of writing "subtilius". Again this seems to be more than a topos: throughout the treatise Alberti is conscious of his stylistic ideals and modifies its vocabulary and structure accordingly. Thus we find him saying in Book i "Referamus brevissime aliqua de quantitabus..." (iii.33), and in the third book "Sed decet hunc totum locum de motibus brevissime transigere." (ibid., p.75). At the end of the first book he acknowledges that his technical subject does not permit an elegant treatment, but hopes to have attained his ideals of brevity and intelligibility:

sine ulla eloquentia brevissime recitata (sunt)...  
dum imprimis volui intelligi, id prospexi ut clara  
esset nostra oratio magis quam compta et ornata.  
(iii.22)

Alberti stresses the originality of his enterprise in the dedicatory letter to Giovan Francesco Gonzaga ("rei novitate") and in the opening paragraph (iii.9). But apart from these traditional places for claiming originality of subject Alberti insists on it elsewhere: at the end of Book i (ibid., p.41) twice in Book ii (pp.47,87) and at the end of the third book: "primi fuerimus qui hanc artem subtilissimam litteris mandaverimus." (iii.107). Again this is no mere cliché: Alberti is genuinely original in writing on painting in Latin, he has no ancient model, no contemporary example to follow. He correctly points out that Pliny's chapters on art are not exactly a model: "quandoquidem non historiam picturae ut Plinius sed artem novissime recenseamus." (iii.47). Even Alberti's views on pictorial imitation reflect his practice in literature: his advice is to



imitate reality ("natura"), not the work of another painter. A painting is only a representation of reality, he says echoing Plato, hence it is better to imitate a mediocre sculpture than an outstanding painting (iii.101).<sup>18</sup> The closing words of the work are both rhetorically modest and accurate in saying that the art of writing on these technical matters is still in its infancy and that later writers will perhaps perfect it (iii.107). Throughout the De Pictura Alberti is careful not to call his work anything more than "commentarii", which suggest brief notes which others can write up more elegantly.

The other major technical treatise, De Re Aedificatoria, professes at the outset the ideal of clarity:

Sed cum huiusmodi rebus alioquin duris et asperis  
atque multa ex parte obscurissimis conscribendis  
me cupiam esse apertissimum et, quoad fieri poterit,  
facilem et expeditissimum. 19

This sentence, while proclaiming the aim of clarity, is at the same time complex and harmonious, the three ascending adjectives duris, asperis, obscurissimis being balanced by the three opposites facilem, expeditissimum, apertissimum.<sup>20</sup> As in the other works, so here the

18. Classical and humanist art criticism is based largely on metaphors drawn from rhetorical theory (see M.Baxandall, Giotto and the Orators, passim and J.R.Spencer, 'Ut Rhetorica Pictura'.) Alberti is aware of this (he mentions the similarity between artists and orators at iii.93), so perhaps there other artistic ideals which he would apply to literature: in the composition of a "historia" he says the most important elements are "ipsa copia et varietas rerum" (iii.69). Certainly his writings contain both qualities. (See Baxandall, pp.136-7).

19. De Re Aedificatoria, ed. G.Orlandi and P.Portoghesi, p.19.

20. Similarly the De Pictura contained technical language but also balanced periodic sentences (Baxandall, pp.29-31 illustrates this).

search for clarity is no mere commonplace: at the start of Book vi he details the difficulties of writing about architecture, the problems of explanation, vocabulary and treatment.<sup>21</sup>

The treatise on architecture, unlike De Pictura, has a classical model, Vitruvius. But Alberti, even if he wanted to, cannot imitate Vitruvius closely, because the text of the classical work is so corrupt that the Latins thought he wanted to write Greek and vice-versa. The humanist does imitate the ancient author in writing ten books on architecture, and does take many technical terms from him, but in one area he does not imitate Vitruvius "qui ita scripserit ut non intelligamus."<sup>22</sup> Again he emphasises intelligibility rather than eloquence as his aim, and he ends this passage with a final polemical barb against the unintelligible, half-Latin, half-Greek text of Vitruvius: "ita scripsimus ut esse Latina non neges et intelligantur."<sup>23</sup>

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Alberti's vernacular works, whether technical treatises on painting and grammar, or moral dialogues, exhibit the same stylistic ideals as the Latin works. Dealing with difficult, original subjects, he aims at a "stylistic middle ground" of brevity, and unadorned

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21. De Re Aedificatoria, p.441. Alberti's problems of "nominum inveniendorum" in architecture are similar to those encountered by Bruni, Biondo and Valla in historiography.

22. De Re Aedificatoria, ed.cit., p.441.

23. *ibid.*, p.445.

clarity.<sup>24</sup> The Grammatichetta, original in being the first vernacular grammar, reveals its links with the dispute between Biondo and Bruni in the first sentence:

Que' che affermano la lingua latina non essere stata comune a tutti e' populi latini, ma solo propria di certi dotti scolastici, come oggi la vediamo in pochi, credo deporranno quello errore vedendo questo nostro opuscolo, in quale io raccolsi l'uso della lingua nostra in brevissime annotazioni. (Opere iii.177).

The stylistic ideal of brevity ("opuscolo...brevissime") is not merely rhetorical humility, but again an honest assessment of this short series of notes. The kudos accruing to the vernacular from Biondo's thesis is emphasised by Alberti, who claims in this work to be doing for the volgare what Priscian and the Greek grammarians did for the classical languages. Unlike Valla, Alberti makes no criticism of Priscian, but models the structure of the Grammatichetta on the Institutiones.<sup>25</sup>

Della Pittura also offers some insights into Alberti's views of the relationship between antiquity and the present. It differs little from the Latin version of the treatise, though it does seem to be less ornate in omitting some of the exempla, and some of the periodic balances of De Pictura.<sup>26</sup> The prologue to the vernacular

24. "Alberti seeks a stylistic, methodological, and social middle ground between the idealism of classical learning and the realities of contemporary existence." (D.Marsh, The Quattrocento Dialogue, p.80).

25. La prima grammatica della lingua volgare, ed. C.Grayson, p.xxxix.

26. Baxandall illustrates some of the differences in the language and the exempla of the two versions (Giotto and the Orators, pp.29-31, 132-3). N.Maraschio highlights the contrasts between the technical Latin and the richer expressiveness of the vernacular ('Aspetti del bilinguismo albertiano nel De Pictura' p.197, 214ff).

version bears no relation to the Latin dedication to Giovan Francesco Gonzaga, but is rather suitable to the vernacular context in being dedicated to Brunelleschi and in exalting the originality of modern artists. Alberti rejects the topos that nature is now too old to produce men of genius, because in Florence he sees that Brunelleschi, Donatello, Ghiberti, Masaccio and Luca della Robbia are as talented as any of the artists of antiquity; in fact they are superior to their predecessors in that they had no models from whom to imitate:

Confessoti sí a quegli antiqui, avendo quale aveano copia da chi imparare e imitarli, meno era difficile salire in cognizione di quelle supreme arti quali oggi a noi sono faticosissime; ma quinci tanto piú el nostro nome piú debba essere maggiore se noi senza precettori, senza essempro alcuno, troviamo arti e scienze non udite e mai vedute. (iii.7)<sup>27</sup>

Here the theme of outdoing antiquity merges with the motif of originality which, as we saw, is stressed throughout the treatise.

The bulk of Alberti's vernacular works are the dialogues. Though they also aim at clarity and a certain brevity, they are certainly more ornate than the treatises on grammar and painting. They are original in that Alberti discusses the moral topics of Ciceronian dialogues in the vernacular, not in Latin as his fellow

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27. For the topos of nature growing old E. Gombrich ('A Classical Topos in the Introduction to Alberti's Della Pittura', p.173) refers to Pliny Ep.VI.21; but the source is probably Columella I Pref.1-2, especially as that preface has another idea found in Alberti's prologue, that there are no writers to imitate in writing on agriculture (Pref.3-4); and also the phrase "pingui Minerva" (Pref.33) used in the opening of the Latin version, De Pictura.

humanists did.<sup>28</sup> The passage from Book i of Della Famiglia cited at the start of this chapter demonstrated the author's conventional views on literary models. The imitation of the Ciceronian dialogue is obvious, particularly in the first two books, where the dialogue conducted by the older men for the edification of the young Battista and Carlo recalls the format of De Senectute and De Amicitia. The language of the proems to Book i and Book iii seems a deliberate attempt to reproduce the periodic style of Cicero in the volgare. The complex, opening sentence of the first proem recalls Cicero in both style and thought.<sup>29</sup> But although the language of the rest of the work seems latinate in terms of diction, the epithet "Ciceronian" could not be applied to the syntax.<sup>30</sup> The ideal even in the first two books is again that of brevity (i.103,118,126-9): when Battista exclaims after one of Lionardo's contributions "E quanto breve!" (i.118), it is a compliment not a complaint. When he praises Lionardo's "meravigliosa brevità" the epithets recall those Alberti applies to himself in the Latin works: "in tantabrevità parse a me el tuo stile nel dire elegantissimo, facile e molto chiaro...eloquenza

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28. The Latin titles of the four books of the treatise hint at other works on these topics written in Latin by classical or humanist authors: De Officiis...et de Educandis Liberis (i); De Re Uxoribus (ii); Economicus (iii); De Amicitia (iv). As he said in the Momus, his ideal is to write either on an original subject or in an original way; his use of the vernacular for these "classical" topics is original.
29. R.Spongano, 'La prosa letteraria del Quattrocento', p.xvi; Marsh, op.cit.pp.82f.
30. Spongano (ibid.) points out that there are only two Ciceronian periods in the first three books of the work, and they are only Ciceronian in length, not in structure.

non meno succinta che chiara ed elegante." (i.127-9). In fact at the start of Book ii he stresses the difference of style between Book i of Della Famiglia and its classical precedents, saying that the speakers argued "con altro ordine e con altro piacevolissimo modo che a me non pare soleano gli antichi scrittori." (i.83).

The dialogue in Della Famiglia is called "uno ragionare domestico e familiare" (i.62) and is contrasted with the more polished and elaborate reasoning of the philosophers (i.84).<sup>31</sup> Thus even in the first two books Alberti is aiming at a level below the grand style, no matter how ornate the latinate prose may seem. In the third book the unlearned Giannozzo, the protagonist, accurately insists on the unadorned quality of his speech (i.163,168,170). Giannozzo is unlike the other speakers in being unable to provide classical examples for his precepts. Thus he is not just being humble when he claims that his speech has lacked eloquence, order, exempla, and references to classical authorities (i.245).

Ironically, Alberti has a definite classical model in mind for both the content and style of the third book:

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31. There is possibly an echo here of Petrarch's "mediocre domesticum et familiare dicendi genus" used in his letters (Fam.i.1.14). The epithets Alberti applies to the philosophical style also help to clarify his own ideal here: "oscurissime", "sottili" "acuti" are qualities he wants to avoid. Perhaps this is because he considers himself as writing "pingui Minerva" even in this work: the phrase is contrasted with philosophical writing which is "obscurum" or "subtilius" when it is used in Cicero (De Am.19) and Columella (I.Pref.33).

sentirai lo stile suo nudo, semplice, e in quale tu  
 possa comprendere ch'io volli provare quanto i'  
 potessi imitare quel greco dolcissimo e suavissimo  
 scrittore Senofonte. (i.156)

Although the source for this admiration for Xenophon's Oeconomicus may be Cicero (De Sen.59), Alberti is unique in the Quattrocento in setting out to imitate a Greek writer such as Xenophon, who was regarded not as the equivalent of Cicero, but rather as the epitome of the middle style, or as the antithesis of Cicero.<sup>32</sup> It has long been recognised that Alberti in this third book imitates Xenophon's Oeconomicus both in subject matter and in the character of the protagonists.<sup>33</sup> But it is clear from his other statements on style that Alberti sees in the Greek author a classical model for his ideals of clarity and brevity, and that consequently he also imitates Xenophon's style. That he regards Xenophon as a representative of the middle style is confirmed by his choice of epithets in this context ("nudo, semplice...dolcissimo e suavissimo") and by their sources.<sup>34</sup> Della Famiglia, then, does not aim at the grand style nor does it achieve it. Even in the first two books there are as many vulgarisms as Latinisms, plenty of homely proverbs, and many

32. Cicero says the Oeconomicus is written "copiose" (De Sen.59) - Alberti often praises "copia" along with brevity (eg. ii.160). Xenophon is one of the models of the Atticists attacked by Cicero in the Orator, and is associated by him with the middle style: Xenophon and other philosophers write merely for "delectatio" (Or.63), one of the objects of the middle style (Or.69).

33. L.B.Alberti, I primi tre libri Della Famiglia, ed. F.C.Pellegrini (p.234) mentions imitation in terms of "materia" and the "personaggio" of Giannozzo, who recalls Ischomachus in the Greek work; but he does not mention the stylistic imitation which Alberti clearly seeks.

34. Cicero calls Xenophon's style "lenis...dulcior" (De Or.ii.58), "melle dulcior" (Or.32); Quintilian refers to his "iucunditas" (X.2.82)



diminutives.<sup>35</sup> It is the fourth book rather than the third which is anomalous. It was written some time after Books i-iii, probably in connection with the Certame Coronario of 1441. The Certame, an initiative promoted by Alberti, sought to raise the prestige of the vernacular; but because it chose to do so before humanist judges the result was a rather false classicism of the volgare. The fourth book of Della Famiglia thus resembles the hexameter vernacular verse Alberti wrote for the occasion on the same subject, De Amicitia: in both works the vernacular is ennobled by a classical veneer which does not suit it and therefore has no further role in the development of the vulgar tongue.<sup>36</sup>

Even the famous proem to the third book of Della Famiglia can now be seen to contain predictable Albertian motifs as much as a revolutionary programme for the vernacular. As in the other works, so here the themes of intelligibility and originality are aired:

scrivendo in modo che ciascuno m'intenda, prima cerco  
giovare a molti che piacere a pochi, ch   sai quanto  
siano pochissimi a questi d   e' litterati. (i.155).

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35. Spongano, 'La prosa letteraria del Quattrocento', p.xxiii, on vulgarisms; for diminutives see Opere i.32ff; 49; 217, etc.

36. For the more latinate tone of Book iv see C.Grayson, 'Il prosatore latino e volgare', p.283; and R.Spongano, art.cit., p.xxviii. For the poem on friendship ("Dite, o mortali, che s   fulgente corona") in classical metre see Opere ii.45. Alberti also tried to introduce the vernacular verse epistle using elegiac metre, according to Vasari (cf. Opere ii.395). But even Leonardo Dati, another participant in the Certame Coronario, thought the proem to Della Famiglia "grandiori ac asperiori" for the volgare (Opere i.380).



The Teogenio, whose central characters all have Greek names of moral significance, also reveals Alberti drawing as much on the Greek tradition of dialogue as on the Latin one. This is confirmed in the opening pages which recall the idyllic setting of Plato's Phaedrus.<sup>37</sup> Though this model is never explicitly named, later in the first book Alberti again illustrates his pluralistic approach to classical writers: Genipatro reads both Greek and Latin authors, according to his moods: in festive mood he will read Plautus, Terence, Apuleius, Lucian, Martial; for instructive reading he consults those who write "della agricoltura, e della educazione de' figliuoli, e del costumare e reggere la famiglia, e della ragion delle amicizie, e della amministrazione della repubblica." (ii.74); or he reads natural or moral philosophy. This list sounds like Alberti's background reading for the Della Famiglia and Teogenio. Again this list is representative of Alberti's tastes: he too wrote comic works like Terence, and satirical works in imitation of Lucian. He is unusual not only in his interest in Lucian, but also in his appreciation of the classical writers on agriculture. In the short work Villa he seems deliberately to emulate the pithy style of Cato.<sup>38</sup> But the Teogenio is, like the Della Famiglia, a serious

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37. Phaedrus 229Aff mentions a stream, a plane tree, the shade, breeze and grass; Alberti expands and varies these elements: "l'ombra lietissima di questi faggi e abeti, e atorno, dovunque te volgi, vedi mille perfettissimi colori di vari fiori intessuti fra el verde splendere in fra l'ombra...l'aura... l'argenteo e purissimo fonte." (Opere ii.57-58).

38. In Villa Grayson notes "lo stile asciutto e sentenzioso, lontano dal volgare piuttosto rettorico generalmente adoperato dall' Alberti, e forse da attribuirsi al tentativo di imitare in volgare la prosa latina di Catone." (Opere i.456).

moral work in the vernacular; and like his other compositions there is the usual stress on intelligibility: "E parsemi da scrivere in modo ch'io fussi inteso da' miei non litteratissimi cittadini." (ii.55). There is also an allusion to brevity when he describes the work as an "operetta" (ibid): in fact the Teogenio is much shorter than any of his other vernacular dialogues.

Similarly the Profugiorum ab Aerumna Libri profess the twin aims of copia and brevitas. At the start of Book ii he remarks how the first book "con quanta brevità...raccolse molta copia d'ottimi ricordi e sentenze." (ii.137); and in the third book Niccola praises Agnolo Pandolfini's "incredibile brevità, iunta con una maravigliosa copia e pienezza." (ii.160). As in the De Commodis, he aims at concision not only at the beginning but throughout the work: the speakers often restrain themselves: "Ma non voglio estendermi, ch'io sarei prolisso" (ii.118), "non voglio stendermi in amplificare e coadornare questo luogo" (ii.170).<sup>39</sup> Again brevity is seen to be the antithesis of adornment.

The question of originality is also considered in this dialogue. As in the De Commodis, Alberti here invokes the Terentian saying "nihil dictum quin prius dictum" and elaborates on it at the start of the third book. Recalling the story in Vitruvius about the inventor of mosaics, Alberti draws a parallel between him and the learned

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39. For many similar remarks see ii.153,172,176,182.

writer of Alberti's day who adorns his work with the precious fragments of the edifice of classical culture. He concludes that the only originality open to the contemporary writer lies in selecting a different variety of classical jewels and adapting them to suit his own style:

E veggonsi queste cose litterarie usurpate da tanti, e in tanti loro scritti adoperate e disseminate, che oggi a chi voglia ragionarne resta altro nulla che solo el raccogliere e assortirle e poi accoppiarle insieme con qualche varietà dagli altri e adattezza dell'opera sua. (ii.161)

The search for originality and variety are typically Albertian, but the emphasis on fitting the classical model to one's own work ("adattezza") is one of the standard precepts of classical imitation theory.<sup>40</sup> Alberti too stresses the avoidance of any "grave fessura" in adapting classical elements and regards Agnolo Pandolfini's discourse as an example of the best kind of imitation:

vediamo raccolto da voi ciò che presso di tutti gli altri scrittori era disseminato e trito, e sentiamo tante cose tante varie poste in uno e coattate e insite e ammarginate insieme, tutte corrispondere a un tuono, tutte aguagliarsi a un piano, tutte estendersi a una linea, tutte conformarsi a un disegno. (ii.162).

This echoes Petrarch's advice on imitation, using the sententiae of other writers but blending their thoughts to produce a personal, unified tone.<sup>41</sup> Alberti himself seems to be doing just that here; the thought may derive from Petrarch but the metaphor and wording are thoroughly Albertian: "piano...linea...disegno".

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40. Cic. De Or. II.89ff.

41. Petrarch, Fam. i.8.5; xxii.2.16.

De Iciarchia is a much later work and shows differences of language and structure from the other dialogues.<sup>42</sup> The dialogue is Socratic rather than Ciceronian: instead of a series of long monologues by different speakers, there is greater discussion and interaction between the participants. As in Platonic dialogues, the interlocutors begin by establishing the definition of important terms, such as "comandare" and "principe" (ii.193ff). Along with a less latinate diction there are also fewer classical exempla than in the previous dialogues. But despite these differences the rhetorical level of the De Iciarchia is similar to that of the other dialogues: there is the same cult of brevity, the same middle style, the same "ragionamenti domestici" (ii.204) as in Della Famiglia, differentiated from the "scola filosofica accurata" (ii.219).

Alberti, like the humanists studied in the previous chapters, recommends the reading of the best authors and is concerned about levels of eloquence in his writings. But he is less restrictive about literary models both in theory and practice. He approves not only of Cicero and Plato, but also of Cato, Lucian and Xenophon. In practice he extends the frontiers of humanist Latin to cope with the technical exigencies of his works on painting, sculpture and architecture; and

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42. "La sua prosa ivi non ha piú quella densa compagine di lingua e di stile caratteristica del decennio fiorentino; è piú pacata, meno impacciata." (C.Grayson, 'Il prosatore latino e volgare', p.283). Similarly Spongano points out: "la linea di svolgimento della sua prosa è nella progressiva epurazione del latinismo." ('La prosa letteria del Quattrocento', p.xxviii).

in his satirical pieces he draws on the comic writers of antiquity. Even when not dealing with technical matters his Latin is more lively than that of a pedagogical humanist like Guarino.<sup>43</sup> In the vernacular he is equally original: he employs it to deal with subjects which other humanists discuss in Latin, which is why he resorts to a latinate prose, instead of imitating the only available model for philosophical prose in the vernacular, the Convivio. Alberti does not use Latin for the usual humanist genres, he uses it for technical or satirical pieces. Instead he transfers the traditional humanist genres to the volgare, writing vernacular dialogues, elegies and pastorals.<sup>44</sup> But despite the variety of Alberti's output, there is a consistency of stylistic priorities, an emphasis on originality rather than imitation, content rather than form, clarity rather than eloquence. Alberti could never have insisted on the imitation of just one model: in practice his own writings are too varied for that, and in theory he approves of a plurality of models.<sup>45</sup> He recognises the validity of the topos "varia res est eloquentia", and proves it in his own compositions. He

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43. N.Maraschio compares the version of Lucian's Calumnia by Guarino with the account of it in De Pictura and notes Alberti's lively "per capillos" for Guarino's poetic "caesarie", and his "pulla" for Guarino's "obscura", ("pulla" is used by Columella in his Pref.24, one of Alberti's favourite passages, see note 27 above), (N.Maraschio, 'Aspetti del bilinguismo albertiano nel De Pictura', p.216).
44. For the elegies see Mirzia and Agilitta (Opere ii.11-21); for the eclogue see Corimbo and Tirsis (ii.22-27) and C.Grayson, 'Alberti and the Vernacular Eclogue in the Quattrocento.'
45. In his taste for the Latin agricultural writers, Pliny, and the Greek authors, Alberti anticipates the tastes of humanists at the end of the century. Marsh discusses Alberti's "eclectic classicism" (op.cit., p.94) in both architecture and literature.

is, rather, an important figure in the resistance to Ciceronianism: he points out that even Cicero sometimes writes in a different manner, and stresses variety rather than conformity and uniformity. His younger contemporary, Cristoforo Landino, acknowledges Alberti's artistic versatility when he says of him: "come nuovo camaleonta sempre quello colore piglia il quale è nella cosa della quale scrive."<sup>46</sup> And Landino, who turned many of Alberti's practical achievements into a theoretical programme, must now be studied.

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46. C.Landino, Scritti critici e teorici, ed. R.Cardini, vol. i. p.120. Perhaps Landino also thinks of Alberti as an anti-Ciceronian when he praises his "acticam eloquentiam" rather than his Ciceronian eloquence in his De Vera Nobilitate (ed. M.Lentzen, p.40).

## CHAPTER SIX

### CRISTOFORO LANDINO

The importance of Cristoforo Landino (1424-1504) in the literary history of the Quattrocento has recently been reassessed, notably by Cardini.<sup>1</sup> Both in general terms and in particular in his views on literary imitation Landino acts as a link between Alberti and Poliziano.<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive picture of his ideas on the subject it is necessary to consider three different areas of this humanist's activity: (I) his own Latin poetry and his critique of Latin verse in general; (II) his Latin dialogues and his views on Latin prose; (III) and finally his thoughts on writing in the vernacular.

#### I

The bulk of Landino's Latin verse is a collection of lyrics with the title Xandra, similar to other contemporary collections in style and in being named after the poet's lady.<sup>3</sup> The first version (B) of

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1. R.Cardini, La critica del Landino (Florence, 1973); C.Landino, Scritti critici e teorici, ed. R.Cardini, 2 vols (Rome, 1974). These two works are cited henceforth in the text and footnotes as Critica and Scritti. For Landino's other works I have used and cite from Carmina Omnia, ed. A.Perosa (Florence, 1939); Disputationes Camaldulenses, ed. P.Lohe (Florence, 1980).
  2. Though Cardini warns that one cannot talk of "un'unica e univoca linea che partendo da Bruni e passando attraverso Alberti e Landino culminerebbe nella Raccolta Aragonese come al suo esito piú 'vero' e coerente" (Critica, 217), nevertheless I maintain in this chapter that the dominant influences on Landino's ideas on imitation are, apart from classical writers, Petrarch and Alberti.
  3. eg. Marrasio's Angelinetum and Piccolomini's Cynthia.



the work belongs to the years 1443-44 and consists of 53 lyrics, dedicated to Alberti. The later, definitive version numbers 82 poems in three books, collected and dedicated to his patron Piero de' Medici around 1459.<sup>4</sup>

A comparison of these two versions allows us to document a significant change in Landino's literary models. The poems of (B), which were to form the nucleus of the first book of the final version, look mostly to Catullus and Horace for inspiration and imitation. The epigrams in the first version, (B.39) addressed to the pedicator, and (B.49) with its pun on menta and mentula, clearly reflect Catullan models in both metre and content. In the later version most of the obscene epigrams disappear, and most of the new epigrams draw on the vernacular rather than the classical tradition. "De theologo contionatore luxurioso" (i.9) belongs to the novella tradition, as it deals with a preacher who is caught in a convent; another epigram (i.10), about someone claiming to be nobler than the Bardi, is reminiscent of one of Boccaccio's stories (Dec.vi.6); another sums up the plot of many novelle: "Ut moechos abigas, uxorem credis amato,/ Binde, sacerdoti: creditur agna lupo." (ii.24). In these later

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4. The dedicatory poem of version (B) hopes Alberti will appreciate these "sales leves et placidos lepores", thus confirming Alberti's taste for humorous genres and his rejection of the major models, Cicero and Vergil. Landino associates his poems with Alberti's lighter works, Canis and Musca (the latter in fact was dedicated to Landino).



epigrams Landino moves from a strict imitation of classical models towards a kind of contaminatio between the Latin and vernacular traditions.

This tendency is confirmed if we examine the other genres included in the Xandra. In the earlier version the love poems in elegiac metre followed Roman models closely in both content and language, but in its final form the collection contains many poems which illustrate Landino's exploitation of Petrarchan themes and structures. That this is a conscious drawing on the volgare tradition is signalled by the fact that the poems which exhibit this Petrarchan influence most strongly are the opening poems (i.2,3,5,7), none of which had appeared in the first version. The first poem after the dedication has many of the motifs of the first poem of Petrarch's Canzoniere:

Si quis at hamatis transfixus corda sagittis  
pertulerit nostri vulnera cruda dei,  
hic veniamque dabit simul et miserebitur ultro...  
Praesertim ignoscet nimium iuvenilibus annis. (i.2.7-13)<sup>5</sup>.

Other notions in the same poem, that Xandra's eyes have the same effect as the eyes of the Gorgon, that Love found the poet completely unarmed, and that the heart can never recover from the wound of Love, are also Petrarchan. The third poem (i.3), like the third poem of the Canzoniere, tells "Quo tempore Amore oppressus sit". The fifth poem gives a Latin equivalent of the Petrarchan description of the lady:

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5. Almost a translation of "in su 'l mio primo giovenil errore.../ ove sia chi per prova intenda amore,/ spero trovar pietà non che perdono." (Canz.i.3-8).

blonde hair, eyes like stars, ruby lips, teeth as white as ivory. All this produces a predictably Petrarchan paradox: "solus amans magno misere frigescit in igne,/ aestuat horrenti frigore solus amans." (i.5.41-42).

Other poems provide examples of a Latin Petrarchism that is not restricted to content. The seventh poem is nothing less than a Latin sestina in hexameters, with characteristically Petrarchan rhyme-words: "furor", "noctes", "labores", "luctus", "quies", "iuventa". It even ends with the customary adynaton involving all six words:

Sed prius Aeolio crescent sub vellere noctes,  
atque labor Phoebi poterit sibi ferre quietem,  
quam furor aut luctus sinat hanc laetam ire iuventam.  
(i.7.37-39)

There is a similar attempt at a Latin sonnet (i.14), an almost direct translation of "S'amor non è" (Canz.cxxxii).<sup>6</sup>

The second book continues this process of contaminatio between Latin and vernacular models. One poem (ii.7) is a combination of a classical paraclausithyron and a Petrarchan anniversary poem. The next poem is set in the fifth year of the poet's affair and celebrates the Tuscan countryside like Horace's idyll of the Sabine country (Odes.II.17). The next (ii.9) incorporates much of the landscape of "Solo e pensoso":

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6. Alberti too was fond of the sestina (Opere ii.9,48,50). The Latin sonnet has its precedent in Salutati, and will be popular with Lancino Curzio.

Sunt ripae et ripas praetercurrentia curvas  
 flumina, sunt testes frondea rura mihi...  
 me vos in vestris vidistis montibus olim  
 errantem frustra saepe latere, ferae.  
 nam quid profeci? sequitur deus ille nec usquam  
 improbus a nostro pectore flectit iter. (ii.9.5-11).<sup>7</sup>

This contaminatio between the Latin and vernacular poetic traditions will have its counterpart in Landino's theory of trasferimento from Latin into the volgare.

Landino's pursuit of a chaster tone in Latin love poetry stems from the Petrarchan rather than the classical tradition. Not only do the obscene epigrams disappear, but where the classical model like Propertius had been moved by Cynthia's culture as much as her beauty (eg. Prop.ii.3.9), Landino is more impressed by Xandra's "mores venusti" (ii.4.27) and "virtus muliebri in corde virilis" (ii.23.60). The model for Xandra here is the woman whom Landino calls "Laura pudica" (iii.10.4). Years later it is Petrarch's moral tone which makes him superior to the ancients in Landino's eyes:

E' negli affetti amatorii or lieto, or mesto et in  
 forma tutti gli esprime, che né a Ovidio lo pospongo  
 né a Properzio. Ma quello in che optiene sopra tutti  
 la palma, in ogni lasciva materia, benché sia  
 giocondissimo, niente di meno observa lieta modestia,  
 né mai diviene osceno. (Scritti i.138).<sup>8</sup>

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7. "sí ch'io mi credo omai che monti e piagge / e fiumi e selve  
 sappian di che tempre / sia la mia vita, ch'è celata altrui./  
 Ma pur sí aspre vie né sí selvagge / cercar non so ch'Amor non  
 venga sempre / ragionando con meco, ed io con lui." (Canz.xxxv.9-14).

8. Most critics acknowledge Propertius as the chief model. Cardini adds that he is a "modello che già di per sé costituiva una certa novità" (Critica 3); Tateo talks of "l'utilizzazione del petrarchismo in un contesto d'imitazione prevalentemente properziana" (Il Quattrocento, pp.380-1); Coppini says "il Landino funge anche da filtro al passaggio di Properzio nell'opera poetica dei posteriori elegiaci fiorentini." ('Properzio nella poesia d'amore degli umanisti', p.177). But this passage from the Proemio al Comento dantesco and poems like i.21,22,25 etc. show he has Ovid as a model also.

Already in the Xandra the humanist is putting into practice his ideal of a more chaste Latin love lyric. Even in the second book there is a less frivolous tone: the lighter metres of the first book, the Sapphics and hendecasyllables, have disappeared to make room only for elegiacs. In Book iii the moral tone is more pronounced: there are no love poems at all, merely poems in praise of the Medici, on the origins of Florence, on the Aragonese war; epitaphs on famous Florentines; and elegies for Landino's brother, for Marsuppini, Poggio, and Cosimo's grandson. The only time Xandra is mentioned she is rejected as an unsuitable subject in time of war (iii.5.1-10).

Even in this altered content of the third book Landino is still imitating classical love poets, who often included poems on more serious subjects. The models again are Ovid and Propertius. Ovid had included the elegy on the death of Tibullus in Amores III.9; and Propertius' Book IV had dealt with more serious topics. In fact Propertius IV.1, where the poet celebrates the rural origins of imperial Rome, is clearly imitated in Landino's poem on the founding and development of Florence (iii.3). The poem contains an interesting imitation of Vergil which testifies to the increasing importance of the epic poet for Landino at this time.<sup>9</sup> Describing Vieri de' Medici calming the fury of the popolo in 1393, he neatly reverses the famous simile in Aeneid I.148ff by comparing Cosimo's ancestor to Neptune calming the waves (iii.3.65-84). The longest poems in this last book

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9. "la forte presenza dell'Eneide costituisce la maggior novità stilistica di quest'ultimo libro." (Critica, 7-8).

are the elegies for Marsuppini (iii.7) and Poggio (iii.17). Both poems include a resume of vernacular Florentine culture: the first links the last classical poet, Claudian, with Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and Bruni (iii.7.197-206);<sup>10</sup> the second sees the Tre Corone and Salutati as the forerunners of Marsuppini and Poggio (iii.17.23-36). Landino by 1459 is thus moving away from love poetry - although he will write some Latin lyrics on neoplatonic themes for Bernardo Bembo in 1475<sup>11</sup> - towards the serious, moral poets of both the classical and vernacular traditions. The poets he lectures on in the Florentine Studio between 1458 and 1472 are not the love poets, but the moral poets Vergil, Horace, Juvenal and Persius, as well as Dante and Petrarch.<sup>12</sup>

In his Praefatio in Virgilio, the introductory lecture to his course on Vergil in 1462, Landino sees imitation in Platonic terms, regarding poetry as the imitation of the celestial harmonies. But in his later Commentarium in Virgilio (1488) he discusses Vergil's imitation of other writers in terms reminiscent of Petrarch, stressing the Latin poets' achievement of a personal tone despite these borrowings:

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10. The association of Claudian with Florence and Dante derives from F.Villani's De Famosis Civibus, a text later exploited by Landino in the 'Apologia' section of his Proemio al Comento dantesco.

11. These poems are in Perosa's edition, pp.158-72.

12. Cardini, Critica, 16-17.

in aliis imitandis sive Graeci illi fuerunt sive  
 Latini, tam diligentem rationem adhibuit, tanto  
 consilio, ut illa suis quadrarent, ut non aliunde  
 accepisse, sed ipse peperisse ac a se parta aliis  
 mutuasse videatur. (Scritti i.213).<sup>13</sup>

Here Landino implicitly approves of an eclectic imitation rather than the observance of just one model, and is thus nearer to Poliziano than to Cortese amongst his contemporaries, despite the tendency to regard him as an orthodox Ciceronian.<sup>14</sup> This classification of Landino as an eclectic on the question of literary imitation is confirmed if one accepts that, as I argue, the major sources for his ideas on imitation are, apart from the standard classical texts, Petrarch and Alberti. Landino's enthusiasm for these two vernacular authors was already apparent in the Xandra, and will remain throughout all his writings.

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13. Petrarch (Fam.xxii.2.14) says he read Cicero and Vergil so often that when he writes he uses their words "non tantum ut propria ...sed ut nova". Alberti's image of the writer drawing on antiquity like a mosaic artist (Opere ii.162) also seems similar to this passage.

14. Cardini rightly rejects "quell'ascrizione del nostro umanista al fonte ortodosso dei 'ciceroniani' che, avviata da Erasmo ...ha riscosso senza dubbio troppo successo." (Scritti ii.269).

## II

Landino's major Latin prose works, De Anima (1472), Disputationes Camaldulenses (1473), De Vera Nobilitate (1487), clearly reflect in form (and in one case in title) the main philosophical dialogues of Cicero. Not surprisingly, he also conducted courses on Cicero in the Florentine Studio. His introduction to his course on the Disputationes Tusculanae in 1458 reveals to what extent Landino can be called Ciceronian.<sup>15</sup>

Landino certainly regards Cicero as the apex of Latin prose: quoting Pliny, he calls him "Latine eloquentie parens", and points out that before Cicero the only significant works were poetry and annals, whereas the great orator covers every important question in moral philosophy, and is adept at both philosophical styles, the dialectical and the rhetorical ("aut disputando aut suadendo"). It is at this point that Landino attacks the scholastic philosophers in his contribution to the dispute that goes on from the time of Bruni to the polemic between Pico and Barbaro in the 1480s. He recognises the intellectual acumen and erudition of the Aristotelians, but criticises their style:

sed nescio quo pacto nos id quod volunt longe antea  
sua exili et spinosa disserendi subtilitate, cum  
nullum oratorium ornatum afferant, fateri cogunt,  
quam nobis ita esse persuaserint. (Scritti i.14).

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15. Cardini, 'Alle origini della filosofia landiniana' (Critica, 66-84) brings out the polemical significance of this Praefatio.



He contrasts this with Cicero who combines "gravitas" with elegance, and concludes that one must imitate Cicero in philosophical writing, expressing one's thoughts "dilucide, ornate ac graviter" (Scritti i,15). The relevance of the text that Landino is about to lecture on is paramount in this context, since the combination of philosophical insight with elegant expression is an ideal repeatedly stressed in Cicero's Tusculanae.<sup>16</sup>

Landino's specific enemies here are scholars such as Argiropoulos and Rinuccini, who both extol Greek philosophy at the expense of Cicero, and are critical of Landino's rhetorical approach to the subject. Argiropoulos talks about Landino's "plurimis verbis prolixisque admodum orationibus" in teaching philosophy;<sup>17</sup> Rinuccini of his "luculenta sane atque ornata verborum copia".<sup>18</sup> Landino remains unmoved by such criticisms: he is a Ciceronian in that he considers that all subjects should be treated elegantly. Here he is talking about philosophy; ten years later in 1468 he says the same about historiography in the Prolusione petrarchesca (Scritti i.39).

When he writes his own philosophical dialogues they too are in

16. Tusc.I.6-7; II.6-8. Landino's wording here clearly echoes Cicero's plea: "Uberius ista, quaeso. Haec enim spinosiora prius ut confitear me cogunt quam ut adsentiar." (Tusc.I.16). "Exilis" and "spinosus" are usually used by Cicero of the Stoic style of reasoning, which he regards as unsuitable for oratory (De Or.I.83; III.66) and is associated with dialectic (Tusc.IV.9).

17. K.Müllner, Reden und Briefe, p.33.

18. A.Rinuccini, Lettere ed Orazioni, ed. V.R.Giustinian, p.18.



this eloquent Ciceronian tradition. In the proem to the third book of De Anima he again attacks the scholastic style, again alluding to Cicero's words on the subject:

Sed ita cuncta ab omni genere dicendi abhorrent, ita  
dialecticorum sentietis horrent, squalidaque sunt,  
ut vix ad mansuetiores Musas traduci et oratorio cultu  
nitescere valeant. 19

Even the late dialogue De Vera Nobilitate (1487) which owes something to the pervasive influence of Plato's Symposium in these years, looks more to Ciceronian gravitas than to Greek festivitas.<sup>20</sup>

The Disputationes Camaldulenses, Landino's major dialogue, proclaims its debt to Cicero's Disputationes Tusculanae from the title onwards. But the Ciceronian model has undergone some modifications: instead of the classical villa at Tusculum, the ambience of these dialogues is Christian, the monastery at Camaldoli providing the setting. The topics are also thoroughly contemporary: the first book considers the favourite question of the superiority of the active or contemplative life; Book ii is another topical subject: "De Summo Bono";<sup>21</sup> while the last two books offer an allegorical interpretation of the Aeneid. As in the De Vera Nobilitate, in setting the scene

19. De Anima, ed. A. Paoli and G. Gentile, p. 96. "Mansuetiores Musas" derives from Cicero (Fam. I. 9. 23 and Orat. 12); the rest of the sentence is based on Orat. 115, where he says of logic: "quia sua sponte squalidiora sunt, adhibendus erit in his explicandis quidam orationis nitor."

20. "tanta urbanitate festivi<sup>at</sup>que plerique e philosophia graviores loci tractati sunt, ut Laurentianum huiusmodi convivium Platonico symposio non dissimile videretur." (De Vera Nobilitate, ed. M. Lentzen, p. 41).

21. Ficino deals with the topic, as does Lorenzo in the Altercazione.

there seems to be an allusion to a Platonic dialogue, in this case the Phaedrus, when Alberti says: "arbor ipsa et rivus suavi murmure a fonte decurrens platani aquulaeque socraticae imaginem refert." (ed.cit., p.10). But in fact these words allude also to Alberti's Teogenio and to Cicero's De Oratore.<sup>22</sup> Landino's contemporaries certainly appreciated the Ciceronian rather than the Platonic qualities of the work: "in iis libris...Ciceronis dialogos imitatur ad unguem."<sup>23</sup>

Towards the end of the fourth book we learn more about Landino's ideas on imitation in a passage which again suggests Petrarchan influence. Lorenzo says that he knows Dante's poem so well that he can cite from it verbatim, and notes that there is very little in the Commedia that is not ultimately derived from Vergil. On this subject he recalls one of Cicero's rules that his tutor Landino is constantly emphasising; namely that in imitation the writer should not strive to be identical with his model, but to achieve the kind of similarity that is noticeable only to the learned:

esse in aliquo imitando diligentem omnino rationem  
adhibendam, neque enim id agendum ut idem simus qui  
sunt ii quos imitemur, sed eorum ita similes ut ipsa  
similitudo vix illa quidem neque nisi a doctis intelligatur.  
(p.254)

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22. Both Lohe (p.10) and Garin (Prosatori latini del Quattrocento, p.726) give the Phaedrus reference, but see Alberti Opere ii. 57-58 cited in the chapter on Alberti at n.37; and for Cicero compare: "platanus...quae mihi videtur non tam ipsa aquula...quam Platonis oratione crevisse." (De Or.I.28).

23. M.Ficino, Opera Omnia i.667. In Book i of Disp. Cam. both Lorenzo and Alberti claim to be like Cicero in discussing philosophical matters "declamatorie...magis quam philosophice" (ed.cit., pp.35-37).

This passage may loosely recall Cicero's precepts on imitation, but the search for similitudo rather than identitas, for a similarity recognisable only to the erudite clearly come from Petrarch not Cicero:

curandum imitatori ut quod scribit simile non idem  
sit...et id ipsum simile lateat ne deprehendi possit  
nisi a tacita mentis indagine, ut intelligi simile  
queat non dici. (Pet.Fam.xxii.2.20)<sup>24</sup>

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24. The underlinings in these passages are mine and serve to bring out the influence of Petrarch on Landino in his views on literary imitation. Both Lohe (p.254) and Cardini (Scritti ii.69) suggest that "ex Ciceronis praecepto" refers to De Or. II.89, but the thought and wording of Landino's passage are much closer to Petrarch than anything in Cicero. Furthermore, Lorenzo's statement about remembering passages from the Commedia echoes Petrarch in the Familiares letter (xxii.2.12-13) discussing his retention of passages from major Latin authors. If there is a Ciceronian idea in Landino's mind here it is probably statements like Tusc.II.3.8; III.4.7. which stress the distinction between the learned and uneducated (Petrarch of course shares these views, and quotes Tusc.III.7.8. at Fam.xiv. 2.6-7).

## III

Landino's views on the development of the vernacular are most fully stated in the Prolusione petrarchesca (1467), in the proem to his translation of Pliny's Istoria naturale (1474), and in his proem to his commentary on the Commedia (1481). In the first of these works both his ideas on refining the volgare by using it for serious works and the language in which he expresses this thought are Albertian:

E certo se e' considerassino...quello che in essa  
(lingua) ancora imperfetto e quasi rozo si potrebbe  
elimare e con molto ornato ripulire, intenderebbe  
non la natura d'essa lingua ma la negligenza di  
chi l'usa essere in colpa. (Scritti i.33)<sup>25</sup>

Later Landino explicitly pays homage to Alberti in his eulogy of him as both prosewriter and poet:

Ma uomo che più industria abbi messo in ampliare  
questa lingua che Battista Alberti certo credo che  
nessuno si truovi...attendete con quanta industria  
ogni eleganzia, compositione e dignità che apresso  
e' Latini si truova si sia ingegnato a noi trasferire.  
(Scritti i.35-36).

The key terms here are "ampliare" and "trasferire". Landino wants the volgare to expand and imitate Latin both in the formation of new words ("ampliare") and in the content and style of its literature ("trasferire").<sup>26</sup> Alberti is singled out as the best example of

25. The notion that the volgare is inferior to Latin and Greek solely "per carestia di dotti scrittori" (Scritti i.35) comes straight from the proem to Della Famiglia Book iii, as do Landino's two verbs "elimare" and "ripulire": "simile certo sarà la nostra (lingua) s' e' dotti la vorranno con studio e vigilie essere elimata e polita." (Opere i.156).
26. Landino is imitating Cicero's "transferre" which was applied to the parallel process whereby Latin writers transferred Greek culture into their own literature (Tusc.II.5; IV.1; De Fin.I.7). Perhaps he is also thinking of Macrobius who used it to refer to Vergil's imitation of other authors (Sat.V.3.16).

someone who achieved both these objectives. Landino regards the Certame Coronario as a conspicuous instance of this process of "trasferimento", for he also mentions another participant in that contest, Lionardo Dati. Dati is praised for having enriched the language with his poems in classical metres, in short because he "ha comodamente potuto tutti gl'onramenti e colori, e' quali ne' latini in che lui è eccellentissimo, pone, nella nostra lingua trasferire." (ib.i.36). In this Prolusione Landino sees the line of Italian prose as developing from Boccaccio through Bruni to the humanists of the generation before Landino: Alberti, Palmieri and Buonaccorso. Similarly poetry he regards as starting with Dante and Petrarch, then being developed by the humanist tradition in Bruni, Alberti and Dati. The difference between this and his earlier perspective of Florentine culture (Xandra iii.7; iii.17) is that now in the 1460s he appreciates the contribution of the vernacular humanists like Alberti and Dati.

As far as the language is concerned, Landino is one of the first to see the parallels between the vernacular and Greek, a language comprising four or more dialects. But again Greek literature reached its acknowledged prestige only through "una copia quasi infinita di scrittori...e' quali volendo ogni dí nuove cose in quella esprimere nuovi vocabuli fabricavano." (Scritti i.34)<sup>27</sup> The vernacular, then,

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27. Again Landino is imitating Cicero who justified philosophical neologisms by appealing to Greek example: "idque cum Graecis, tum magis nobis quibus etiam verba parienda sunt imponendaque nova rebus novis nomina." (Fin.III.3).

imitating the classical languages, should not be restricted to the words sanctioned by one or more illustrious writers, but rather be cautiously expanded, bearing in mind Landino's famous principle: "è necessario essere latino chi vuole essere buon toscano." (ib.i.38). The volgare must depend on Latin in that its words require the "arte" of Latin, and its thought or "sentenzie" must be drawn from philosophy and the "studi d'umanità";<sup>28</sup> but Landino warns that the language must be enriched by adapting Latin words appropriately, "non sforzando la natura". This last phrase suggests a criticism of Alberti's excessive latinisms;<sup>29</sup> and the final sentence of the work seems also to concern the author of Della Famiglia:

E se alcune cose parranno o troppo oscure o meno facili  
da principio al vulgo che agl'uomini litterati,  
doverrete non piú le vulgari riprensioni temere che si  
facessino e' Latini e massime Tullio che, come ne' suoi  
libri dimostra, benché a torto, in tal biasimo incorse.  
(Scritti i.40) 30

Landino's translation of Pliny's Istoria naturale is, as he makes clear in the proem, a practical demonstration of his theory of "trasferimento". His translation of this important classical encyclopedia is seen as something that will benefit the many who cannot read Latin. The echo of Alberti here shows that Landino

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28. Philosophy as a prerequisite for eloquence is from Cicero: "sine philosophia non posse effici quem quaerimus eloquentem." (Or.14). Perhaps the shape of Cicero's phrase suggested Landino's "è necessario essere latino...".

29. Dati had voiced similar criticisms (see Alberti Opere i.380).

30. Cardini thinks this refers to De Fin.III.3 (cited at n.27), but it clearly refers to "Non eram nescius...fore ut hic noster labor in varias reprehensiones incurreret." (De Fin.I.1).

considers his version of Pliny as part of the same programme of cultural transferral inaugurated by Alberti.<sup>31</sup> The stress here is on the transferral of res rather than verba: "intendendo quanto sia utile e gioconda la cognizione delle cose scritte in Plinio, per farle comuni a queglii che non sanno le latine lettere, hai voluto che io in lingua fiorentina lo transferisca." (Scritti i.91). In fact the verba cause Landino some problems. He has had to translate some terms crudely or obscurely because of Pliny's allusive style in dealing with technical matters and because of the phenomenon of cultural change. Pliny refers to many religious or sporting customs which no longer exist. Thus Landino is now facing the obverse of the problems encountered by humanist writers who used Latin to deal with contemporary phenomena and institutions. Landino's solution is, as always, to imitate Latin authors who borrowed Greek words:<sup>32</sup> similarly he will use Latin words such as "gladiatori", "meta", "circense". Likewise with the technical and botanical names in Pliny he decides to give a concise Latinism rather than to translate "per circonlocuzione" (ib.i.92). Landino is thus the vernacular counterpart to Biondo and Valla who elect to use a brief vulgarism in Latin rather than a classical periphrasis for a modern invention.

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31. "acciò che essendo scritto in lingua comune a tutta Italia e a molte esterne nazioni assai familiare, l'opera sua giovi a molti." (Scritti i.83); cf. "io, scrivendo in modo che ciascuno m'intenda, prima cerco giovare a molti che piacere a pochi." (Alberti, Opere i.155).

32. His examples of Greek words in Latin (philosophia, musica, geometria) show he is imitating Cicero Acad.Post.I.6.24.



In the proem to his commentary on the Commedia, Landino makes the same point as in the Prolusione petrarchesca about the dearth of writers in the vernacular, implying that the history of Florence is inferior to that of Rome and Athens only in the number of its historians. Like other humanists, he sees Cicero and Vergil as the apex of Latin literature; but when discussing the decline of Latin under the Empire, an idea that goes back to Tacitus via Bruni, he omits the distinct republican note evident in Bruni, using the more ambiguous "imperio" instead of "republica":

Crebbono queste due spezie di scrittori (poeti e oratori) crescendo lo 'imperio latino, e vennono al suo colmo in Virgilio e Cicerone, dipoi, diminuendo quello, ancora esse declinorono. (Scritti i.118)

In his list of 'Fiorentini eccellenti in eloquenzia' he provides another account of Florentine culture, but here concentrates on the Latin works. Salutati's Latin is seen as worthy in content, and Bruni is regarded as the first to add "ornamenti" to humanist Latin. This is also the opinion of contemporary humanists on these two men;<sup>33</sup> but Landino again differs from the author of De Hominibus Doctis by seeing the development of Latin in writers such as Dati, Alberti, Acciaiuoli and Lapo da Castiglione. Admittedly Landino restricts himself to Tuscan humanists, but his praise of Dati and Alberti is

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33. "lo stile grave e apprensato, referto d'inespugnabili argumentazioni e abbondante d'ogni copia di sentenzie" (Scritti i.120) is similar to Ugolino Verino's epitaph for Salutati: "Si non eloquio, gravitate Colucius omnes / superat..."; and Landino's view of Bruni is like Cortese's: "Hic primus inconditam scribendi consuetudinem inconditam ad numerosum quendam sonum inflexit." (De Hom.Doc., ed. M.T.Graziosi, p.20).



based on stylistic not chauvinistic motives, as his comments elsewhere on these writers show. Alberti here is compared to a chameleon in always adopting the correct style for whatever subject he deals with; and Lapo's translations from Greek are seen as another "trasferimento" from Greek to Latin of both useful content and sound style. (Scritti i.120-21).

In the section on Florentine artists Landino transfers many of the terms from literary to art criticism: any imitation mentioned is imitation of reality, not of other artists. Hence Stefano Gaddi is called "scimmia della natura"; Masaccio is "ottimo imitatore di natura...e puro senza ornato, perché solo si dette all'imitazione del vero e al rilievo delle figure";<sup>34</sup> and Donatello is praised in terms similar to those of the prologue to Della Pittura: "Donato scultore da essere connumerato fra gl'antichi...fu grande imitatore degli antichi e di prospettiva intese assai." (ib.i.124-25).

Even Dante is seen in this proem in a way that is typical of Landino. He approves of Dante, as elsewhere he approves of Vergil, using both archaisms and neologisms: "Usa verbi propri e triti in consuetudine; usa alcuna volta gli antichi come 'sovente' e simili; fabbrica de' nuovi come 'immiare' e 'intuare' e 'inoltrare'." (ib.i.151).<sup>35</sup>

34. On Landino's terminology here see M.Baxandall, Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy, pp.114ff.

35. He approves of Vergil's neologisms and archaisms in the proem to Disp.Cam. Book iii: "quam priscorum verborum observantissimus fuerit, quam eleganter quaedam nova ex se formaverit." (Scritti i.69).

Landino, unlike Bembo, approves of neologisms in both Latin and vernacular and has a classical justification for them in the works of Cicero and Vergil. Landino is also unlike Bembo in his approval of Dante, and in his view of Dante as a precursor of the humanists, as a writer who anticipates the programme of transferring the excellence of the classical language into the modern one: "Dante fu el primo che...tentò con felice auspicio indurre tutte queste cose nella nostra lingua." (ib.i.137).

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Landino is a crucial figure both in the development of vernacular humanism and in the question of literary imitation. Many of his attitudes are Ciceronian, particularly his demand that all subjects, including philosophy, should be written elegantly, one of the messages of the Disputationes Tusculanae. Even his declaration about the vernacular being "abbondante et elegante" and "ricca" (Scritti i.139), which looks back to Alberti and forward to Lorenzo, is modelled on Cicero's claim in his philosophical works that Latin is at least as rich as Greek.<sup>36</sup> But Landino never sees Cicero as the sole acceptable literary model: his own Latin poetry clearly embraces a plurality of models, including poets from the volgare tradition, and his Latin prose often uses words that are not found in any

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36. "latinam linguam...locupletiorē esse quam graecam." (De Fin. I.10; see also III.4; Tusc.II.35; III.7-10).

classical author, never mind Cicero.<sup>37</sup> This is not surprising since we have seen that Landino approves also in theory of neologisms in both languages. His major translation into the vernacular is not of a Ciceronian work, but of Pliny, and at no time does he criticise Pliny's Latin. In fact Landino shares the enthusiasm for Pliny that characterises advanced humanist circles in the late Quattrocento and is often associated with the anti-Ciceronians. In discussing the technical details of imitation he approves of models that are absorbed so thoroughly as to produce an even, uniform style that proclaims similarity rather than identity. Given these ideas, it is correct to associate Landino more with Petrarch, Alberti and Poliziano rather than with Cortese.<sup>38</sup>

Landino's major importance resides in his role as the theoretician behind the revival of the volgare under Lorenzo. He furthers Alberti's programme of using the vernacular to disseminate the riches of the classical tradition; but he also modifies Alberti's excessively latinate prose and reintegrates a humanist programme of

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37. Even in the Disp.Cam., his most Ciceronian work, we find the rare "gobius" (p.57), the Plautine "blennus" (57), and diminutives such as "deambulatiuncula" (10), "pisciculum" (57), "ingeniola" (89) etc.

38. Cardini associates him with Petrarch and Poliziano, but I hope to have shown that Alberti is also in the same "line": "il Landino - sulla linea del resto della migliore cultura umanistica da Petrarca a Poliziano - non si muove verso il rifiuto dei modelli...bensí verso una ferma richiesta di un processo imitativo non passivo, non materiale ed estrinseco, ma che vivecersa scaturisca dal pieno possesso interiore e personalmente rivissuto della lezione dei classici." (Critica, p.92).

"trasferimento" with the riches of the vernacular tradition of the Trecento. If the difference between Lorenzo's elegant prose and Alberti's latinate periods is "la purezza del dettato", then the merit of the new elegance is ultimately due to Landino who turned his pupil Lorenzo and his associates in the direction of the prose and verse of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio.<sup>39</sup> Dante's importance and Petrarch's greatness had been recognised by humanists throughout the Quattrocento; but Landino was the first to see the Tre Corone as not merely the equal of the ancients but the founders of a new literature, and the first to rehabilitate Boccaccio as the founder of the vernacular prose tradition. Lorenzo's Comento is modelled on the prose and verse of the Vita nuova, and in its defence of the volgare it also upholds the author of the Decameron. Not surprisingly, Landino sees Lorenzo as the culmination of his ideal programme of integration between the humanist and vernacular achievements.

Despite his considerable output in Latin, Landino makes a more important contribution to the volgare. He is interested initially in injecting Petrarchan ideas into Latin poetry, but eventually he evolves a programme of "trasferimento" from the classical to the

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39. R.Spongano, 'La prosa letteraria del Quattrocento', pp.xxixff highlights the differences between the style of Lorenzo and Alberti, and singles out the influence of Dante on Lorenzo as the major difference between him and Alberti. Spongano did not know at the time of the importance of Landino in Lorenzo's circle.

vernacular tradition that is the opposite of that early contaminatio of Petrarchan and classical motifs, and is an index of Landino's movement from the philological humanism of Valla and others to his own vernacular humanism.<sup>40</sup> Indeed the problems he faces in the volgare are the opposite of those met by Valla in the writing of Latin. Yet vernacular humanism need not necessarily exclude the furtherance of Valla's philological science: Poliziano is proof that the two branches of humanism can co-exist.

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40. For the difference between Valla's "umanesimo filologico" and Landino's "umanesimo volgare" see Cardini, Critica, ch.iii passim.

PART FOUR

THE END OF THE QUATTROCENTO:

THE MAJOR DISPUTES

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE DISPUTE BETWEEN POLIZIANO AND CORTESE

Poliziano's dispute with Paolo Cortese is one of the most well known episodes of the imitation debate in the Renaissance, but Poliziano makes important contributions to the question in writings other than this exchange of letters. To put the dispute into the context of these other writings the clearest method of analysis is to consider the following works: (I) Poliziano's Latin poetry; (II) his prose works in Latin, including (a) the prefaces and (b) the letters; (III) his vernacular verse; (IV) Cortese's other works.\*

#### I

Poliziano (1454-94) began writing Latin poetry at a prodigiously early age, producing between 1470 and 1475 the version in Latin hexameters of Homer's Iliad II - V. The translation is admired for its fluency and its Vergilian tone. But even in the four books he translated there is an indication of Poliziano's future development. Books II and III are both a translation of Homer and a "pastiche" of

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\* For the major works cited in this chapter I have used the following editions: for the Latin verse, A. Poliziano, Prose volgari inedite e poesie latine e greche edite e inedite, ed. I. del Lungo (Florence, 1867), Le selve e la strega, ed. I. Del Lungo (Florence, 1925); for the Prolusion to Quintilian and Statius and the exchange with Cortese Prosatori latini del Quattrocento, ed. E. Garin (Milan-Naples, 1952), pp. 870ff; Coniurationis Commentarium ed. A. Perosa (Padua, 1958); for the other works I cite from A. Politiani, Opera quae quidem extitere hactenus omnia (Basle, 1553) - cited hereafter as Opera with page numbers.



Vergil.<sup>1</sup> But in Books IV and V there is evidence of Poliziano's taste for adorning his works with terms taken from minor and even obscure authors.<sup>2</sup> Even at this early stage, then, we find Poliziano rejecting imitation of the major models and evolving a taste for the lesser and late antique writers. This youthful attempt at the grand style was to remain an isolated phenomenon, partly because the Giostra of 1475 was to inspire a different kind of epic and also because already in 1473 he had found a Greek poet to translate who was more congenial to his Alexandrian tastes. Poliziano's version of Moschus' Amor Fugitivus is a short 30-line idyll in which he can exploit the elegant diminutives ("basiolum", "flammeoli", "crispulus" etc.) culled from the authors who were to remain favourites with the poet throughout his short life: Catullus, Martial, Apuleius, Columella.<sup>3</sup> This shift from the grand style of epic to the short, learned poem is indicative of the future course of Poliziano's poetic development.

The statistics of his other Latin poetry confirm this predilection for the short poetry of Catullus and Martial: over a hundred epigrams, thirteen elegies, ten odes and two hymns. Even an

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1. The verdict of S.Orlando ('"Ars Vertendi", la versione dell' Iliade del Poliziano') and A.Levine Rubenstein ('Imitation and Style in Angelo Poliziano's Iliad Translation') in the only two detailed studies of the translation.
  2. Levine Rubenstein, art.cit., pp.61-62.
  3. I.Maier, Ange Politien: La Formation d'un Poete Humaniste, pp.110-12 illustrates how Poliziano inserts dominutives in the final version of the poem; and elsewhere (124ff) documents his underlining of diminutives and compounds in his copy of Catullus.



elegy like In Violas (v) contains its share of diminutives ("munuscula", "redimicula"), though in structure it seems to follow the careful balance of some of Propertius' elegies.<sup>4</sup> Poliziano's Latin elegies are thus modelled mostly on classical examples, with only a superficial acknowledgement of the Petrarchan traditions that Landino had incorporated into the Latin elegy. The most ambitious poem in this genre is the elegy for Albiera degli Albizzi (vii). Here there are some Petrarchan motifs: Albiera's complexion is red and white, her eyes are like stars; and after listing her other physical and moral qualities, the poet ends this description with the alliterative couplet:

Quae cuncta in cineres fati gravis intulit hora,  
mors cuncta immiti carpsit acerba manu. (vii.43-44);

which perhaps owes something to the alliterative line which ends the list of Laura's qualities in "Gli occhi di ch'io parlai sí caldamente": "poca polvere son che nulla sente." (Canz.ccxcii.8).

But apart from being a successful elegy, the poem is significant in other respects. It exhibits what are to be two constants in Poliziano's poetics: the choice of a late Latin author as a model - in this case Statius, Silvae V.1 - and the long, almost asymmetrical ekphrasis or inset (the Febris episode occupies 75 out of 286 lines).<sup>5</sup>

4. The 16-line introduction, then 12 central lines, then a final 16 lines in Poliziano's poem has structural parallels with Propertius I.2; I.3; I.6 etc. L.Spitzer 'The Problem of Renaissance Latin Poetry' analyses the poem's rhetorical rather than its structural qualities.
5. L.Gualdo Rosa notes: "Le reminiscenze delle Selve di Stazio sono continue in tutta l'elegia per Albiera." (Poeti latini del Quattrocento, ed. F.Arnaldi, L.Gualdo Rosa, L.Monti Sabia, p.1025). Apart from language Statius is also a model for the digressive structure (cf. Silvae I.2) and the invention of a learned myth (Silvae II.3) in Poliziano's poem. For the Febris myth see A.Perosa, 'Febris: A Poetic Myth Created by Poliziano'.

The Stanze are similarly modelled on late antique authors and contain a long digression on a mythological subject (the description of the realm of Venus constitutes exactly a third of the poem). In classical literature the ekphrasis often describes a work of art: Poliziano was certainly aware of this, since he comments on Callistratus' ekphrasis describing a statue in the Miscellanea (Opera 265). But the asymmetrical ekphrasis was particularly associated with the epyllion, or short epic, which was what the Stanze would have been anyway even if he had finished the poem. Though Poliziano does not seem to have used the term epyllion, he was certainly aware of the genre: he translated Callimachus' Palladis Lavacra, which also contains a learned, mythological digression (Opera 288ff), and cites Callimachus' views on the merits of the short poem (Opera 246). He also knows of the epyllia written in antiquity: Callimachus' Hecale, Catullus LXIV, Georgics IV, the Ciris, attributed to Vergil, and Statius' Silvae I.2.<sup>6</sup>

The elegy In Lalagen (x) opens with a triple simile, like a poem of Propertius or Ovid, but it also exploits a whole series of reminiscences from less obvious authors such as Pliny, Lucretius, Isidore, before ending on this conceit based on Petrarchan imagery:

Vix te, vix talem ferimus; quod si auxeris illam  
fiam ego, qui nunc sum nil nisi flamma, cinis. (x.23-24).<sup>7</sup>

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6. Apart from the Miscellanea (Opera 246) Poliziano refers to the Hecale also in the Nutricia 426ff; and he is familiar with the Ciris, which he summarises in Manto 90-95. M.M.Crump's definition of the epyllion (The Epyllion from Theocritus to Ovid, pp.22-24) fits the Stanze perfectly.
7. Prop.I.3. and Ovid Amores I.10 are the models for the opening. For the more recondite allusions see M.Martelli, 'La semantica del Poliziano e la Seconda Centuria dei Miscellanea', pp.27f.

But it is the Ode In Puellam (viii) which presents the most harmonious fusion of Petrarchan description with Catullan grace, a combination of the vernacular tradition of description of the woman with elegant and unusual language that has been studied by Martelli and Bigi.<sup>8</sup> In this ode Catullan diminutives abound alongside lexical rarities lifted from archaic and late Latin writers, both Plautus and Apuleius supplying much of the vocabulary: "lusitans", "corculum", "pinnulis", "sororiantes".<sup>9</sup> The metre of this poem, as in the poem on Lorenzo's death (xi), is neither classical nor vernacular but rather the metre of early Christian Latin hymns: even here Poliziano refuses to be bound by the standard metrical models.

For the epigrams against Mabilius, and the satirical or even scabrous poems In Anum and Sylva in Scabiem, Poliziano draws on Catullus and Martial as usual and also the satirists and medical writers, thus exploiting the rarities and compounds of the lower register of Latin.<sup>10</sup> The Sylva in Scabiem follows no obvious model, it fits into no classical genre; but it shows how original Poliziano is and how he savours the unusual lexis employed in this poem. It is also significantly structurally since, like the Stanze, it is a short

8. Martelli, art.cit., pp.33ff; E.Bigi, La cultura del Poliziano, pp.138ff.
9. Frequentative verbs, diminutives, compounds and lexical rarities are the basic components of Poliziano's Latin and of the volgare of the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili.
10. Perosa's fine edition of Sylva in Scabiem illustrates Poliziano's unusual sources for the poem as well as his "tecnica combinatoria" (ed.cit., p.23); similarly Martelli shows how he draws on and combines several different sources: "e tutto un grumo di ascendenze culturali che aspira ad organizzarsi in unita letteraria." (art.cit., p.27).

poem with a learned ekphrasis that occupies a third of the work. Both the Sylva in Scabiam and the Stanze refer to the translation of the Iliad and suggest a contrast with the epic style: the Sylva is a mock-epic, the Stanze an epyllion. But after the linguistic extremes of the Sylva in Scabiam and In Puellam Poliziano turns to more traditional models, Horace and Vergil.<sup>11</sup> His most important Latin poems, the Sylvae, derive their title but little else from Statius, dealing as they do with poetry and literary criticism. But if the language is more predictable, the content of the Sylvae is as recondite as anything in Poliziano. The dedication to the Nutricia contains words which could be applied to all of his works: "multa et remota lectio, multa illum formavit opera."<sup>12</sup>

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11. "rinuncia...alle avventure estreme della giovinezza". (Bigi, op.cit., p.147).

12. Le Selve e la strega, p.113.

## II

- (a) ego Maeonios divina poemata vatis,  
 ut coepi, Latios vertere tendo modos.  
 Sed quoniam variae delectant fercula mensae  
 dulcius et vario gramina flore nitent,  
 saepe mihi numeris ficti referuntur amores  
 et canitur gracili mollis amica pede.  
 Nunc me contractis epigrammata ludere velis,  
 nunc iuvat ad mollem flectere dicta lyram.  
 Saepius eloquium magni Ciceronis adoro.  
 Hic quoque succendunt verba soluta mihi. (viii.135-44).

These lines, from the elegy to Bartolomeo Fonzio of 1473, are significant in a number of ways. They show that even at this early age Poliziano's cult of "docta varietas" underpins his attempts at different genres of poetry, from epic to lyric to epigram; and that the motif of flowers of different colours, which recurs in both his Latin and vernacular works, is a poetic emblem of that variety. It also reveals that his movement from poetry to prose is part of that search for something new, and that despite his emphasis on other authors, he never ceases to admire Cicero. He enjoys Cicero's letters, speeches and dialogues but it is indicative of Poliziano's rejection of the major genres that despite his brilliance as a prose stylist and his interest in philosophy he never composes a dialogue in Latin. In this he is unique amongst the major humanists of the fifteenth century.

His first Latin prose work was the Coniurationis Commentarium, written in the year of the Pazzi conspiracy 1478.<sup>13</sup> The title and

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13. Originally entitled Pactianae Coniurationis Commentariolum, both titles suggest a modest extempore work: as do Sylvae, Miscellanea, and Stanze.

first sentence proclaim Sallust as the chief model. The language and style, particularly the many historic infinitives which Poliziano added in the final version, confirm the Sallustian tone.<sup>14</sup> Even the structure echoes Sallust's monograph on Catiline: after the opening character-sketches of the conspirators Poliziano makes the transition to the central section by varying Sallust's "Res ipsa hortari videtur ..." (Cat.V.9) to "Res ipsa iam postulat..." (p.24). Similarly at the end of the work the description of Giuliano, while owing something to Suetonius, as Perosa suggests,<sup>15</sup> seems more a structural imitation of Sallust's portrait of Cato and Caesar towards the end of the Bellum Catilinae (LIV). Throughout the work Poliziano constantly echoes his Roman model, but he is careful not to imitate him too closely. Thus when introducing the description of Giuliano's character he originally used Sallust's formula "paucis absolvam" (Bell.Cat.IV) but in the final version altered it to "paucis perstringam" (p.63). When it comes to a theoretical discussion of imitation Poliziano is faithful to his practice here and rejects a slavish imitation of one model.

Even in this work Sallust is the principal, but by no means the

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14. Coniurationis Commentarium, ed. A.Perosa (Padua, 1958), p.3 illustrates both the imitation and the variation in the first sentence; and throughout documents borrowings from Sallust, noting the infinitives inserted (pp.14,15,18) to imitate the Sallustian style. The infinitives were considered to aid the achievement of Sallustian brevitas and celeritas in historical works (cf. G.Pontano, Dialoghi, ed. G.Previtera, pp.209ff.)

15. "il Poliziano emula lo Svetonio dei ritratti dei Cesari" (p.62).

only model. Throughout the Commentarium there is a moderate but consistent use of lexical rarities, whether they originate in Sallust himself, or in lesser authors, or are phrases coined by Poliziano himself. Thus to describe the Giostra of 1475 we find "equestre illud cataphractorum equitum certamen" (pp.46-7), a phrase coined by Poliziano from the rare adjective "cataphractus" found in a fragment of Sallust cited by Nonius! There are poetic words such as "festinus" (p.39) and "furialiter" (p.45); and at the climax of the narration the murder of Giuliano is described in vivid Latin adapting phrases from Ovid, Vergil and Apuleius.<sup>16</sup> There are also a number of diminutives and compounds ("gracili corpusculo, colore sublivido" - p.15: "validis articulis, subnigro colore" - p.63) as well as many frequentative verbs: "fugitare" (p.31), "rogitare" (p.35). The rare words predictably come from Poliziano's favourite authors: "toreumata" (p.27: Sallust), "promptuarium" (p.27: Plautus and Apuleius), "occiput" (p.63: Columella, Celsus). Finally there are several phrases which, though composed of individually attested words, are first put together by Poliziano: "alveolum tesserarium" for a gambling table (p.7), "mensa nummaria" for a bank (p.15). Poliziano's practice here is also defended later in a dispute with another historian, Bartolomeo della Scala. The Commentarium is both an

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16. Perosa duly notes the phrases which Poliziano adapts (p.31). Again Poliziano's contemporary, Pontano, approves of the use of poetic diction in historiography in imitation of Sallust and Livy (Dialoghi cit., pp.195ff); but another contemporary, Cortese, does not approve of Guarino's poetic words.



imitation of Sallust and the product of Poliziano's highly individual style. It is a short work, with many brief Sallustian sentences; unlike Bruni, Biondo and other humanist historians, Poliziano would never have taken Livy as his model in an historical work;<sup>17</sup> similarly he rejected Cicero and Homer as his chief models and preferred the epistle to the dialogue, the epyllion to the epic.

It is not surprising, then, to find Poliziano defending ex cathedra the Latin of "second-rank" authors such as Quintilian and Statius. There is no doubt a polemical intent behind his decision to lecture in the Studio on two writers whom he sees as alternatives to Cicero and Vergil. There may even be a hint of criticism of Landino, who in the same period was lecturing on Cicero and Vergil. In his introductory lecture, the Oratio super Fabio Quintiliano et Statii Sylvis, Poliziano ironically proclaims his originality of choice in words that echo a famous passage in Cicero: "novas tamen quasque intactas vias ingrediamur, veteres tritasque relinquamus." (Pros.870).<sup>18</sup> He claims that writers of "inferioris quasque secundae notae" are valid models for young students to imitate on the analogy that young vines are not supported by high props, young riders are not broken in with the toughest horses, young students imitate

17. In the Praefatio in Suetonium (1490) he claims to prefer biographers to universal historians (Opera, 503). His liking for lesser authors is also illustrated by his translation of Herodian rather than Herodotus.

18. "inusitatas vias indagemus, tritas relinquamus" (Cic.Or.11).



first their fellows before their masters.<sup>19</sup> Originality is also an important motive for choosing these authors: there are plenty of commentaries on the major authors, none on Statius and Quintilian.

He defends Statius in detail first. He may be inferior in some respects, but in areas which are important to Poliziano he is supreme. Statius' ability in variety of subject, verbal artifice, recondite learning and unusual words ("doctrina adeo remota litterisque abstrusioribus" p.872) account for his popularity with Poliziano. In particular he appreciates the variety and facility of the Sylvae, defending them as extempore poems on diverse subjects.<sup>20</sup>

In defending Quintilian he begins by stating that he does not prefer him to Cicero; but like Petrarch and Valla he finds the Institutio Oratoria more comprehensive than Cicero's rhetorical treatises.<sup>21</sup> He claims he is doing nothing new in reading Quintilian and Statius: the reason they are read less now is merely the fault of the times, and the misconception that what is different from the language of Cicero and Vergil must necessarily be inferior. Poliziano acknowledges the greater adornment in the later writers, the

19. The image of the vine comes from Cicero, De Or.II.89ff; the image of the rider is also traditional (Quintilian); and the imitation of the teacher derives from Isocrates, In Sophistas 18.

20. In the course on Statius he discusses the meaning of the title: "Inscribitur Sylvarum Liber quoniam sylva indigesta materia a philosophis appellatur." (Florence, MS. Magl.VII.973, f.3r-v).

21. Petrarch, Fam.xxiv.7.3.

increased number of sententiae and flores; but since he believes that one should never imitate just one literary model, he feels it is equally important for students to study these writers as much as the classical ones:

Itaque cum maximum sit vitium unum tantum aliquem  
solumque imitari velle, haud ab re profecto facimus,  
si non minus hos quam illos praeponimus. (Pros.878).

It is at this point that he introduces the image of the bee, adduced by almost all the opponents of the imitation of one sole model, and urges young writers to cull the best style from them.<sup>22</sup> Like Alberti, Poliziano even cites Cicero against the Ciceronians, pointing out that his style varied from the Attic to the Asian styles of rhetoric and that there is therefore no one single Ciceronian style.<sup>23</sup> His final piece of advice is like Seneca's (Ep.84): the young audience should not even be content with the writers he is about to interpret but should also study "alios bonos auctores" (Pros.880).

The compositions of 1484 testify to Poliziano's taste for both pre- and post-classical authors. The prologue he wrote for Plautus' Menaechmi stresses the purity of Plautus' Latin; and although the humanist adorns his metrical prologue with words drawn from his

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22. A useful survey of the imagery exploited in the imitation debate is in G.W.Pigman, 'Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance'. It should be noted here that though he is using a traditional image here, Poliziano characteristically draws it not from the usual source (Sen.Ep.84) but from Lucretius, a "new" and difficult author.

23. L.B.Alberti, 'Alcune Intercenales inedite', ed. E.Garin, p.180.

favourite authors ("perplexabili" - Plautus himself, "catapotia" - Pliny, "stribligine" - Gellius), the emphasis is on Plautus' "puro sermoni Romae urbis vernaculo" (Opera 617). The prologue to a course on Persius in the same year betrays an enthusiasm for that asymmetrical variety of subject and tone which Poliziano himself will cultivate in the Miscellanea. He singles out the "summa inaequalitas" of the satirists, their constant changing of tone, appreciating in particular their linguistic vigour ("nuda verba...energiae plena") and variety ("graeca...peregrina...trita...obscaena...scurrilia." - Opera 516).

It is in the Preface to the Miscellanea, published in 1489, that we find this ideal of inaequalitas set out as Poliziano's literary credo.<sup>24</sup> His chief models in this work are the late classical authors Aelian and Aulus Gellius, whose works deliberately cultivate varietas rather than ordo. Gellius envisaged his work as a prose equivalent of the extempore verse (Sylvae) of contemporary poets; and it was his definition of "Sylva" as "variam et miscellam et confusaneam doctrinam" (Noct.Att.Pref.5) that inspired Poliziano's title and definition of this work: "inordinatam istam et confusaneam quasi sylvam" (Opera 213).<sup>25</sup> He clearly anticipates criticism of both the language and the structure of the Miscellanea, for he defends both in

24. Bigi calls it "la piú cosciente difesa ed illustrazione della propria poetica" (La cultura del Poliziano, p.99).

25. Poliziano's liking for modest extempore titles (Commentarium, Sylva in Scabiam, Stanze) influenced other writers in this period: eg. Pandolfo Collenuccio's Sylva ad Florentinae urbis Novemviros, and in the vernacular Lorenzo's Selve d'amore.

this long preface. He admits to using rare and even barbaric words in the work but this is to please the barbaric and ignorant, so that by gaining a little favour from all sides ("corrassa undique gratiola") the book will sell better! Some will complain that the terms employed in it are "remotiora...quam ut sumpta credantur de medio", which contravenes Cicero's precepts (eg. De Or.I.112); but Poliziano knows that his enthusiasm for the unknown byways of eloquence will never please the man who is clearly his enemy: "qui decem tantum Ciceronis paginas, nihil praeterea lectitaverit" (Opera 214). On his use of rare Latin words he makes a nice distinction, involving two rare but related verbs, which could stand as Poliziano's motto in matters of diction:

Nec enim renovare sit probum quae iam paene exoluerunt,  
si modo haec ipsa non vetustescere adhuc, sed veterascere  
de integro possint. (Opera 214).

The distinction between the two verbs, the first meaning to grow stale, the second to improve with age, derives from the late grammarian Nonius. In the end Poliziano invokes the standard humanist defence of erudite diction by pointing out that the Miscellanea is directed at the learned and the schools, not the wider public.

As for the asymmetrical structure of the work with its long and short chapters, he sees this "dissimilitudo" as a positive feature of the Miscellanea. The variety of the work ensures that there is something to please everyone in it: the rough, unpolished elements will attract some readers, the varied, abstruse diction will appeal to others. The very terms used by Poliziano in this defence deliberately allude to his interest in rare and technical terminology:

Ergo ut agrestes illos et hircosos quaedam ex his  
 impolita et rudia delectabunt, exasciataque magis  
 quam dedolata, nec modo limam sed runcinas experta  
 nec scobinas, ita e diverso vermiculata interim  
 dictio et tessellis pluricoloribus variegata,  
 delicatesiores hos capiet volsos et pumicatos. (ibid).<sup>26</sup>

The image of the mosaic here recalls Alberti's use of the same image and confirms that Poliziano is the true heir of Alberti's varied and technical Latin.<sup>27</sup> The Preface to the Miscellanea is thus in both its content and its language a theoretical and practical defence of varietas and disparilitas. His final attack on his critics allows him to indulge in the lexical variety of Latin invective, and the sources of these diminutives and compounds confirm Poliziano's preference for archaic and late Latin writers: "iactanticuli" (Augustine), "nugivendi" (Plautus), "lucifugi" (Seneca, Apuleius), "blatarii" (Pliny).<sup>28</sup> The Miscellanea is original in scope, breaking with the tradition of the commentary accompanying a single text. Although in this style of miscellaneous textual study he was preceded by Calderini, Sabellico and Beroaldo, Poliziano's work reached a wider

26. Technical terms ("runcinas", "scobinas") by their very nature go against the Ciceronian ideal of clarity (see M.Vitale, 'Classicità letteraria e "fiorentinità" naturale'); hence the humanist dispute with the scholastic philosophers. Bigi illustrates Poliziano's "puro piacere della parola strana e inconsueta" (op.cit., p.142).

27. Alberti, Opere ii.161-62. Elsewhere we have seen Poliziano's Albertian claim that Ciceronian language is not always consistent (above n.23). It is significant also that it is Poliziano who writes the dedicatory letter to Lorenzo of the 1485 edition of De Re Aedificatoria and in it praises Alberti's "remotae literae ...reconditae disciplinae" (Opera 143).

28. A.Mancini, 'Il Poliziano filologo' pp.65-66 illustrates Poliziano's sources here.

public and was to have greater influence.<sup>29</sup>

The Panepistemon (1490-91) similarly illustrates Poliziano's stylistic ideals, underlining in particular his desire to write something original and avoid imitation, his cult of rare, technical words, and his endorsement of a plain philosophical style. In advancing his original plan to arrange all the artes into groups he is conscious of this inventive facet of his imagination: "Sed ita homo sum. Sordent usitata ista et exculcata nimis, nec alienis demum vestigiis insistere didici." (Opera 462). He rehearses the standard attacks on imitators by Plato and Horace,<sup>30</sup> and proclaims the utility and pleasure to be derived from this original work of his, the pleasure coming especially "ex erudita quadam novaque vocum diversarum varietate" (*ibid.*). This last phrase embraces the key concepts of Poliziano's literary ideal: erudition, originality and variety. He clearly relishes the opportunity in this work to display his knowledge of the technical terms of the various artes and to indulge in Latin that is the antithesis of the normal humanist "pompa orationis".

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29. Valla's Elegantiae, a much earlier humanist miscellany, is not really a predecessor, since it concentrates more on linguistic than on textual problems. Mancini (art.cit., p.61) demonstrates that the difference between the two men lies in Valla's "sostanziale accettazione del modello ciceroniano", whereas Poliziano "supera ogni vincolo di modello". On the links with works by Calderini and others see A.Grafton, 'On the Scholarship of Poliziano and its Context'.

30. Plato, Republic X.597ff; Horace, Ep.I.19.19: "O imitatores, servum pecus". The image of "vestigiis insistere" also comes from Hor.Ep.I.19.21-22.

The last and most ambitious of Poliziano's prefaces is the Praelectio in Priora Aristotelis, cui titulus Lamia, published in 1492. The longest of the various prolusions, it displays a very different language from that used in his other introductions. It begins and ends with a fable; and though one automatically thinks of Aesop as a model, Poliziano is more likely to be following Alberti's use of such tales in the Intercenales. In between the two fables the language of the preface is standard, almost Ciceronian Latin, although the thought is typical of Poliziano: he is tackling the Priora Analitica just because they are more difficult than other Aristotelian works and because no one else has written a commentary on them. The language used for the fables is stridently different. The first page and a half alone bristles with lexical rarities, compounds, diminutives and frequentatives.<sup>31</sup> The author is naturally conscious of this linguistic licence and classifies it as the humble style, presumably because of its proximity to comedy and the language used for children's fables. This preface too is thus a demonstration of linguistic varietas, ranging from the standard rhetorical tone of the humanist introductory oration to the "sermo simplex...et humi repens" of the fables at the beginning and the end.<sup>32</sup>

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31. Rarities: "glutire", "exemptiles", "ocularia specilla", "forfici"; diminutives: "puerulo", "terriculum", "rusculo", "mulierculae"; frequentatives: "ventitant", "sessitat", "cantillat" (Le selve e la strega cit., pp.184-86). Pontano uses similar vocabulary in the comic episodes at the beginning of his dialogues.

32. ed.cit., p.226.



Before turning to the letters it is necessary to consider one of Poliziano's last works, which has only recently come to light: the Centuria Secunda of the Miscellanea. The editors of this work have insisted that it differs from the first hundred chapters in that the model for the later work is no longer Gellius, but the Greek authors Athenaeus, Aelian and Clement of Alexandria.<sup>33</sup> But even if the model is slightly different, Poliziano's linguistic ideals are still the same, he is still interested in "verba abolita iam ex latinis exemplaribus" (Misc.ii.23.1). As in the first Miscellanea he is still seeking to preserve ancient words as though they were good wines: "Elegans et antiqua vox est manupretium...verbum vetustum et elegans oculatissimus" (Misc.ii.23.2). He even draws attention to the rare adjective "sororiantes" which he found in Pliny and used in his ode In Puellam (Misc.ii.25). As in the Panepistemon he recognises the erudite, recondite side of his nature: "Sed ita homo sum: nihil aequae me iuvat atque inventiunculae istae rerum reconditarum" (ii.31.8). And as in the first Miscellanea he recognised his enemy in the critic who had only read ten pages of Cicero, so here he knows that such people will not be interested in, say, a Greek epigram cited by Vitruvius, for they are only concerned with knowledge that is "protritum diu proculcatumque ab omnibus" (ii.31.25).

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33. V.Branca and M.P.Stocchi, La seconda centuria del Poliziano, i.p.52. All references to Miscellanea ii are to the chapter and paragraph divisions in this edition.



(b) Poliziano's letters deal with the problem of imitation in a number of places. The most convenient and lucid way of examining his pronouncements on the subject is to consider (1) his introductory letter on epistolary style, and the views of his correspondents on Poliziano's Latin; (2) his exchange of letters with Paolo Cortese; (3) his dispute with Bartolomeo della Scala.

(1) The first letter in the collection, dedicated to Piero de' Medici, constitutes a half-serious, half-playful defence of the Latin used in these letters. As in the Miscellanea, he admits that the characteristic of this collection is again variety: "Est autem omnino stylus epistolarum mearum ipse sibi dispar." (Opera 1). Like Petrarch, he defends this varietas by explaining that each letter deals with a different subject, is addressed to a different person, and consequently has a different style.<sup>34</sup> Though Poliziano fears that this variety of style will provoke the same criticisms that the Miscellanea aroused, he knows he can invoke one of the many rules on epistolography to defend himself. If his letters are considered unciceronian, he agrees, because Sidonius says Cicero should not be followed in writing letters.<sup>35</sup> If someone thinks they are Ciceronian

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34. Petrarch, Familiaries i.1.19; i.1.28.

35. The idea "de Cicerone silendum in epistolis" comes from Sidonius' first letter. Poliziano would naturally be interested in Sidonius as a late Latin author, but perhaps the idea of citing him came from a desire to imitate Petrarch's first letter, which in certain versions also cites Sidonius' criticism (Le Familiari, ed. V. Rossi and U. Bosco vol. i. p. 10.) The Venice (1492) edition of Petrarch's Familiaries contained the version with the Sidonius quote, and Poliziano could have read this, since he did not complete his own collection of letters until just before his death in 1494. (Petrarch, Le familiari cit., i. p. XCIII).

he will admit that he is always trying to catch up with Cicero's shadow. Similarly if some critic says he should write like Pliny, he will reply that he abhors Pliny's century; and if accused of having Pliny as his model, he can again cite Sidonius who claims that Pliny is the supreme model in epistolography. In other words Poliziano is saying that there are enough classical precepts to justify any style in letter-writing.

The views of Poliziano's correspondents on his Latin testify to the increasing polemics on Latin style that occur in these years. Francesco Pucci, for instance, shows his approval of Poliziano's Latin by rephrasing one of the key sentences of the Miscellanea preface to praise Poliziano's "oratio...vario quodam et prope vermiculato intertextu lasciviens, omnesque verborum flosculos captans" (Opera 76).<sup>36</sup> Poliziano in turn shows what side he is on by admiring the style of unciceronian writers such as Alberti, Beroaldo and Pico.<sup>37</sup> Beroaldo's first letter to Poliziano illustrates his anti-Ciceronian tendencies which would also be appreciated by Poliziano. He begins by saying that since Poliziano is superior to him in both erudition and kindness, his own reputation has suffered a slight blot ("minutula labecula"); and ends up hoping that they

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36. Pucci's words echo the Miscellanea preface (Opera 214) and also Quintilian's description of post-classical Latin's "lasciviae flosculi" (II.5.22). Bigi (op.cit., pp.112ff) shows how Poliziano's praise of his friends' style corresponds with his own ideal of "docta varietas".

37. For his admiration of Alberti see above n.27.

have laid the foundations of a true friendship which will be cemented by their literary bond: "quae cum...glutino literario fuerint ferruminata" (Opera 17). This extended metaphor, the diminutives and technical words like "glutino...ferruminata" are all part of the Apuleian style cultivated by Beroaldo and his pupils.<sup>38</sup> In the dispute between Pico and Barbaro Poliziano must have found it difficult to take sides since he knew and admired the style of both men. But although he praises Barbaro's letter here (Opera 118) and elsewhere his enriching of Latin with his neologisms (Opera 301), he seems to have been more sympathetic to Pico's less Ciceronian standpoint. The terms he uses to describe Pico's Latin, even making allowances for the hyperbole of humanist eulogy, genuinely reflect Poliziano's own stylistic ideals: "electa verba, casta latinitas, Atticus nitor" (Opera 118-19). The stress is again on lexical choice and linguistic purity.

One other exchange is of significance since it illustrates the aftermath of the dispute with Cortese. In February 1491 Lucio Fosforo writes to Poliziano defending the Latin of the Miscellanea: "Non enim quis non eloquens dici debet, si suo quodammodo utitur stylo, cum compluria et varia sint genera dicendi." (Opera 37). The reference

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38. This word "ferrumen" will spark off the dispute with Scala. For the Apuleian style see E.Raimondi, Codro e l'umanesimo a Bologna; E.Garin, 'Note sull'insegnamento di Filippo Beroaldo il Vecchio'; C.Dionisotti, Gli umanisti e il volgare fra Quattro e Cinquecento.

to the variety of eloquence and to Poliziano's individualist style clearly alludes to Poliziano's idea of self-expression outlined in the dispute with Cortese.<sup>39</sup> The fact that at the end of the letter Fosforo says that he is staying in the house of Cortese, who is also defending Poliziano ("qui est plane tuus, et omnem impetum adversariorum sustinet") suggests that in 1491 Cortese is more in sympathy with the eclectic ideals of the author of the Miscellanea. Indeed Cortese goes on to adopt the less Ciceronian style of his De Cardinalatu.<sup>40</sup>

Poliziano's reply to Fosforo defines his own position in greater detail. Though many critics have attacked the "portenta verborum" (Opera 37) of the Miscellanea, he maintains that he is not using new words but only employing those found in the major authors. The point here is that Poliziano's definition of these "magni auctores" is much broader than that of most of his contemporaries. Again he stresses that what is different from Ciceronian Latin is not necessarily inferior, and ends with a list of the criticisms that even ancient writers made of Cicero (drawing on Quintilian XII.10.12).

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39. "Non enim sum Cicero; me tamen, ut opinor, exprimo." (Prosatori, p.902).

40. Garin (Pros., p.902 n.1) and Dionisotti (Gli umanisti e il volgare, p.54) assign the De Hominibus Doctis to 1489. A recent editor of the dialogue says it was written in 1491 (M.T.Graziosi, p.xxi), but Fosforo's letter shows that Cortese is no longer a Ciceronian in 1491. In any case the 1489 date makes a logical progression from the dispute with Poliziano (1485) to the De Hom.Doc. (1489) to the De Cardinalatu (1510). On the De Card. see Dionisotti, Gli umanisti, pp.52-79.

(2) The dispute between Poliziano and Cortese probably took place in 1485.<sup>41</sup> It began when Cortese sent a collection of Latin letters, written by his friends, to Poliziano for his approval. The latter's reply is singularly outspoken, especially when it is compared with the eulogistic platitudes that such collections usually evoked from fellow humanists. Seeing that the criterion behind Cortese's selection of letters is their Ciceronian style, Poliziano feels he has wasted his time reading them. Again it is difficult to imagine the iconoclastic force of this remark, directed against the author who had been acknowledged from classical times as the master of Latin prose. But Poliziano openly disagrees with Cortese who clearly approves of a writer "qui lineamenta Ciceronis effingat." (Pros. 902). Instead Poliziano insists on the variety of eloquence, citing the authority of Quintilian and Seneca. Exploiting the traditional imagery of the imitation debate, he says he prefers to be a lion or bull rather than an ape; and after citing Horace against imitators he says they are more like parrots or magpies repeating what they do not understand.<sup>42</sup> It is at this stage that he makes his famous statement about originality of expression: "Non exprimis, inquit aliquis, Ciceronem. Quid tum? non enim sum Cicero; me tamen, ut opinor, exprimo." (Pros. 902). Exprimere is first used here in this reflexive

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41. Though studied by a number of scholars, none of them assign the dispute to a particular year. But since the De Cardinalatu says that he wrote the letter to Poliziano as a "puer", it must belong to 1485 (when Cortese was twenty) or earlier.

42. Later he uses the image of digesting Cicero and other authors ("concoxeris" - cf. Seneca Ep. 84), swimming without a cork (cf. Horace Sat. I.4.120) and running in another's footsteps (Hor. Ep. I.19.21; Quint. X.2.10).

sense of "to express oneself".<sup>43</sup> The whole letter in fact, while exploiting the standard arguments against imitation, stresses the importance of self-expression. He urges Cortese to look away from Cicero and develop "quod tuum plane sit" (ib. 904). Since it is impossible to reproduce Cicero exactly, and is even harmful to the development of the individual's ability, Cortese should concentrate on developing his own individual expression rather than trying to run in someone else's footsteps.

If this letter is broken down into its constituent parts it is clear that it is not only a theoretical defence but also a practical illustration of self-expression. Taking imagery and common-places from other writers Poliziano varies them, using many non-classical terms and short, unciceronian sentences. To the traditional image of the ape Poliziano adds those of the magpie and parrot, and instead of the normal image of the bee as an image of sound imitation he talks of the bull and the lion, suggesting the strength of the individual intellect. To the usual verbs "legere" and "concoquere" he adds "conterere" and "edisco". He uses the Plautine "frustillatim" and towards the end of the letter he again explicitly borrows from the archaic comedian: "obstant et, ut utar plautino verbo, remoram faciunt." (Pros.902). Apart from the topoi against imitation, Poliziano also

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43. T.Cave (The Cornucopian Text, p.42) discusses Erasmus' use of this reflexive form of the verb without pointing out that Erasmus is almost certainly imitating Poliziano's usage here.

originally uses arguments for self-expression. It is encouraged in the first person ("me exprimo"), then in the second person ("quod tuum sit...ipse tibi sis in consilio...tuasque vires pericliteris"), and finally in general, third person terms ("impetum retardant...non potest bene scribere...nihil a se promere").

Where Poliziano uses extremist arguments, implying that there is nothing in between imitation and self-expression, Cortese in his reply is conciliatory. He begins by denying that he is a Ciceronian and by acknowledging the various kinds of eloquence; yet in the fourth sentence he cites from Cicero,<sup>44</sup> as Poliziano had quoted from Plautus, and his second paragraph ends "esse videatur" (Pros. 906). Cortese is accurate in saying he is not an extreme Ciceronian, for even in this letter he uses words not found in Cicero: when saying that young writers need one author to imitate as one-year-old children need a pram before they can walk, the diminutives "anniculi" and "curriculo" are both non-classical words. Cortese also exploits the standard images of the imitation debate, saying that Cicero is regarded as the best diet for the young writer. He feels that all the ancient authors were nourished on the milk of Cicero, but in antiquity they imitated with a method that avoided too great a similarity. He even

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44. "ego is sum qui de altero iudicium facere, ut ait Marcus Tullius, nec velim si possim, nec possim si velim." (Pros. 904); cf. Cic.Brutus 287. This phrase of Cicero's was also used by Petrarch (Fam.xxii.2.26) in one of the letters on imitation which Cortese probably knew. See above, the chapter on Petrarch, p.23 n.10.



admits that contemporaries have forgotten this method. This desire to avoid similitudo suggests that Cortese too is influenced by Petrarch, and this is confirmed when he says he prefers to be similar to Cicero as a son is to his father, not as an ape is to a man, for the son possesses "in hac similitudine aliquid suum, aliquid naturale, aliquid diversum, ita ut cum comparentur dissimiles inter se esse videantur." (Pros.906).<sup>45</sup>

Cortese accepts, then, Poliziano's advice on self-expression to a certain extent, and recognises that it is impossible to imitate Cicero's copia totally. Nevertheless he would prefer to be the ape of Cicero rather than the son of someone else. But the crucial question for Cortese is whether the writer imitates someone or relies on self-expression. He considers imitation of a predecessor to be a universal principle in all arts, and links this with the Aristotelian idea of art imitating nature. The variety of eloquence is in reality merely the different species of the one genus. Cortese thus uses Aristotelian ideas to reduce Poliziano's eclectic varietas to the uniformity of Ciceronianism; for he implies that Cicero embodied the genus of eloquence, and the various writers imitated different parts of that eloquence. The authors mentioned by Cortese as borrowing from Cicero are carefully chosen to include some of Poliziano's favourite

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45. Cortese closely follows Petrarch here: "est sane cuique naturaliter, ut in vultu et gestu, sic in voce et sermone quiddam suum ac proprium" (Fam.xxii.2.17). The images of the ape and father and son are also used by Petrarch in another letter on imitation which Cortese also clearly knew (Fam.xxiii.19.11ff).



writers: Livy, Quintilian, Lactantius, Curtius and Columella. What Cortese attacks in the letter is not self-expression itself, but an extreme form of it: those writers who rely solely on their own talent and end up by lifting words from many different authors and producing an uneven style. Like Poliziano, Cortese embroiders the traditional imagery here: he compares the style of these eclectic writers to a Jew's pawn-shop, where there are coats of many different types and sizes.<sup>46</sup> He concludes by reaffirming the importance of imitation even in the development of the greatest writers of antiquity, and by recalling the unanimous opinion of those writers, that anyone who imitates Cicero is already at least displaying good taste. This is a pointed parting shot, since it is the opinion of Quintilian (X.1.112) that Cortese is citing here to the scholar who had championed Quintilian in his course of 1480. The dispute between the two men ends here partly because Cortese is so friendly and deferential to Poliziano in his letter, and also because his reply is almost unassailable in its conciliatory tone. There is not an enormous gulf, then, between Poliziano and Cortese as is often assumed: if anything Cortese is influenced by Petrarch more than Poliziano is; and it is not, then, surprising that Cortese will later defend the Latin of the Miscellanea and eventually write his final work, De Cardinalatu, in a Latin that is anything but Ciceronian.<sup>47</sup>

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46. The image of the cloak also comes from Petrarch (Fam.xxii.2.16) and goes back to Horace (Ep.I.1.95ff).

47. Raffaele Maffei's introductory letter to De Card. acknowledges Cortese's use in the work of "verba insuper nova ac fere apuleiana" (cited by Dionisotti, Gli umanisti cit., p.78).

(3) By contrast the dispute with Bartolomeo della Scala is more prolonged and hostile. It begins in December 1492 when Scala calls both Poliziano and Barbaro "ferruminatores" because they use such rare Latin terms. Poliziano defends his use of what he admits are "infrequentes voces" but he reiterates the point made in the Miscellanea about giving life to old words:

non debere esse cuiquam fraudi, quod Latinas et apud  
idoneos repertas in usum revocet, ac vetustis novitatem  
dare. (Opera 58).

He reaffirms the principle of the diverse styles to be adopted, depending on content and audience: "non enim idem Ciceronis actiones et Apulei Millesias fabulas decuerit." (ib.59). It is no accident that Poliziano regards Apuleius as the antithesis of Cicero here, because it was in the 1490s that the Apuleian style of Latin became influential.<sup>48</sup> Poliziano goes to the heart of the Ciceronian illusion by pointing out, as Alberti had done, that at times Cicero's style is so "unciceronian" that his writings do not seem to be by the same author. Furthermore, some terms criticised by the Ciceronians now turn out to be the correct reading in the better manuscripts, while other words employed by the Ciceronians are only to be found in badly printed modern editions of Cicero. Finally Poliziano is prepared to reject Julius Caesar's advice to avoid unusual words like dangerous reefs, even though almost every humanist from Petrarch onwards had cited with approval the passage in Gellius which reports Caesar's words.

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48. Beroaldo, Poliziano's friend, eventually produced his commentary on Apuleius in 1500. The Hypnerotomachia Poliphili, which is in many ways the vernacular equivalent of the Apuleian style, was printed in 1499.

(Noc.Att.I.10.4). Poliziano's reasons are that Latin is now no longer a living language, it has to be learned from teachers and texts, so the richness of the language has to be preserved by restoring words used even in obscure authors.

Scala in reply claims that he is not a Ciceronian - and this will be confirmed by his later letters and writings - but apart from Cicero, Sallust and Livy he finds other writers, such as Quintilian, Seneca and the two Pliny's, uneven in style. But he stands by his original criticism, that "ferruminator" is such a rare word that no one knows what it means. It is not surprising, given his literary models, to learn that Scala is a historian. Poliziano condescendingly suggests that because he has been so busy writing his History of Florence Scala has not had time to appreciate the qualities of Quintilian, Seneca and the Pliny's. Moreover as "scriba publicus" Scala's Latin tastes are conditioned into preferring a style "qui a vulgari consuetudine minus abhorreat." (Opera 62). Poliziano hints that their disagreement about style is due to the different public to which the scholar and the Chancellor address their works. This first stage of the dispute ends amicably because Scala refuses to be offended at this patronising tone: indeed he praises Poliziano's "incredibilis, inusitata, incomparabilisque facundia" (Opera 65); and of the three epithets, Poliziano would have appreciated most the second.

But the quarrel flares up again later when Poliziano criticises Scala's Latin verse, in particular his use of the unattested words

"stridaculum" and "clangacem". These objections reveal that Poliziano's notion of suitable authors to imitate, though broader than that of most of his contemporaries, does have limits. He is prepared to use words even if they are only found once in a late author like Apuleius, Columella or even a late grammarian such as Nonius; but he objects to words that have no ancient source. So when Scala says "Interea Florentinus populus ad prioratum me evexit, deinde ad vexilliferatum" (Opera 176) Poliziano objects to the two medieval nouns. Scala at least is consistent: in his historical works he prefers the modern term "magistros proventuum" instead of the classical but inaccurate "aediles curules".<sup>49</sup> Poliziano calls these non-classical terms "dehonestamenta" (itself a very rare word, occurring only once in Tacitus and once in Sallust): his rule appears to be that he accepts any word as long as it appears once in a Latin writer of the classical or post-classical period; but he rejects even widely used modern or medieval terminology. The reason for Poliziano's restrictive attitude to what was accepted practice in humanist historiography, is that he is not only concerned to preserve the richness of the Latin language, but also committed to maintaining its purity. It is instructive here to compare Poliziano's practice as a historian with his theoretical standpoint in this dispute.

In the Coniurationis Commentarium he calls Cesare Petrucci who was

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49. In his Vita Vitaliani Borrhomaei, p.84. Scala is thus adopting the solution approved by Valla, Biondo and other humanist historians: see above chapter 4, and also G.Ianziti, 'From Flavio Biondo to Lodrisio Crivelli', pp.15ff.

gonfaloniere della giustizia "Caesarem Petrūcium, vexilliferum, quod aiunt, iustitiae" (ed.cit., p.37). The difference between Scala's wording and Poliziano's is that the former uses the non-classical abstract noun, while the latter employs two individually attested words; and to qualify what is in effect a political technical term Poliziano inserts one of the phrases which makes such technical nomenclature acceptable: "quod aiunt".<sup>50</sup> When he does use a non-classical abstract noun "archiepiscopatum" (p.11) Poliziano would presumably justify it by showing that the word is used by the early Fathers, unlike Scala's "vexilliferatum". Poliziano too is consistent: he rejects convenient neologisms in favour of linguistic purity in Latin. We noted that even his description of the Giostra does not make use of the neologism "hastiludium" but uses rare words from Sallust to produce "cataphractorum equitum certamen" (p.46); similarly in the Lamia he does not use the neologism for spectacles that had the sanction of both Petrarch and Valla ("ocularia") but prefers a periphrasis composed of an adjective from Celsus and a diminutive used once by Cicero: "ocularia specilla".<sup>51</sup> Thus although in many other respects Poliziano is the heir to Petrarch and Valla, in his attitude to the purity of the Latin tongue he is more rigorous than either of them.

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50. Valla adopted a similar solution, so it is no surprise to learn that the advice to use such qualifying phrases is in Quintilian (VIII.3.37).

51. In the Epistle to Posterity Petrarch says it was necessary "ad ocularium confugiendum" (Prose p.2). Valla mentions "ocularia" as one of the modern inventions which require a modern name. (Gesta Ferdinandi Regis, ed. O.Besomi, p.203). Similarly, although Valla is happy to use "campana" for bell, Poliziano uses the vague but classical "aera" in the elegy for Albiera (vii.268).

## III

If we examine now Poliziano's vernacular works it will become clear that he transfers many of his stylistic ideals to writing in the volgare. The works which are most relevant to our enquiry are the letter accompanying the Raccolta Aragonesa, the rispetti and ballate, and the Stanze.<sup>52</sup>

The letter to Federico d'Aragona accompanying the Raccolta Aragonesa reflects at the beginning the teaching of Landino. The author considers vernacular literature on a par with classical literature: the early Tuscan poets, like classical authors, suffered the neglect of recent ages and also nearly perished in the shipwreck of culture. The Raccolta in preserving these texts is parallel to the recovery and preservation of classical texts that went on throughout the fifteenth century. The justification for treating these early vernacular texts with the same care as that accorded to classical works lies in the excellence of the volgare. The words used in defence of the language echo those of Alberti, Landino and Lorenzo in defining it as "abundante e pulitissima" (p.5).<sup>53</sup> But if the defence of Tuscan is on traditional lines, the stress that the

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52. Since the article by M.Santoro, 'Poliziano o il Magnifico?', most critics now accept that the letter accompanying the Raccolta Aragonesa is by Poliziano. I cite from the edition of Lorenzo, Opere, ed. A.Simioni, 2 vols (Bari, 1913) i.3-8. For the other vernacular works I have used Poliziano, Rime, ed. N.Sapegno (Rome, 1967).

53. Alberti wants the language "elimata e pulita" (Opere i.156); Landino calls it "abbondante et elegante" (Scritti i.139); Lorenzo claims "ognora piú si fa elegante e gentile" (Opere cit., i.21).

author places on its varietas is something to be expected from Poliziano. The quotation from Petrarch's introductory letter to the Familiars also confirms that the author of this letter is Poliziano: "Fu l'uso della rima, secondo che in una latina epistola scrive il Petrarca, ancora appresso gli antichi romani assai celebrato." (p.6).<sup>54</sup>

Also different from Landino's vernacular criticism is the emphasis here on style rather than content in assessing poets such as Cavalcanti and Dante. The poetry of the former is described as "bello, gentile e peregrino", and though he is also praised for his content the stress is on his style: "le quali tutte sue virtù d'un vago, dolce e peregrino stile, come di preziosa veste, sono adorne." (p.6). Both the rather negative judgments on Bonagiunta and Iacopo da Lentini are based on stylistic considerations; and the famous comparison of Cino with Dante in favour of the former, who was able to avoid "l'antico rozzore" (p.7), is only possible because it is made in terms of style not content. Landino would never have reached this conclusion in favour of Cino; nor would he ever have found more to say about the learned, uneven style of Cavalcanti than about the polished verse of Petrarch. Yet this is what the author of this letter does.<sup>55</sup> Similarly in his vernacular verse it is significant that Poliziano

54. "Romanos vulgares rithmico carmine uti solitos accepimus" (Pet.Fam.i.1.6). Poliziano seems to have used Petrarch's letter elsewhere (see above n.35).

55. Cardini (Critica p.203) says of Poliziano's choice of poems in the Raccolta: "Sono scelte di gusto rispecchianti la sua personale poetica di scrittore, tra ballate e Stanze, e determinante è soltanto lo stile."



writes only four sonnets and two canzoni. As in his Latin works he ignores the major literary models and traditional genres, so in the volgare he writes little in the typical Petrarchan genres, concentrating on the minor genres of the rispetto and ballata.

Even in these minor poems one can observe many points in common with the Latin works. Thus the Echo poem ("Che fai tu, Ecco, mentre io ti chiamo? - Amo.") is a conscious attempt to write in the vernacular the kind of clever poem that the Alexandrian poet Gaurus had written in Greek, as Poliziano himself tells us in the Miscellanea (Opera 244). But this is rather an exception since most of the rispetti imitate vernacular not classical models. Yet in the two rispetti sdrucchioli, "Non m'è rimaso del cantar piú gocciola" (lxxxix - p.267) and "Questa fanciulla è tanto lieta e frugola" (lxxxix - p.268), although the form is a popular, traditional one, there is something about the obligation to find rare rhyme-words to complete the rime sdrucchiole that must have appealed to Poliziano's interest in lexical rarities ("disnocciola", "caluggine", "sminuzolo", "scamuzolo" etc.).

His cult of varietas and imitation of more than one literary model is also in evidence here. In "Mentre negli occhi tuoi risplende il sole" (xx - p.235) apart from generally Petrarchan language throughout there is the common Quattrocento theme of "cògli la rosa" combined with a whole line from Dante: "e 'l perder tempo a chi piú sa piú spiace." The imitation of Dante, Petrarch and other Quattrocento authors will also be evident in the Stanze.



Of the ballate the two famous poems "I' mi trovai, fanciulle, un bel mattino" (ii - p.134) and "I' mi trovai un dí tutto soletto" (iii - p.135), exhibit standard Quattrocento themes, language and imagery. In both there are "vaghi fior novelli" and "mille vaghi fiori" of varying colour; and although this is a traditional image from the time of Dante onwards (Purg.xxviii.55ff), it is used so often by Poliziano as to acquire an emblematic force, since it is linked in his mind with his cult of varietas and his cult<sup>of</sup> eclectic imitation.<sup>56</sup> The first of these two ballate derives much of its imagery from a late Latin epigram, but the second also has affinities with the humanist's Latin interests; for the language of the poem includes both technical terms from hunting ("ragna", "parete") and a number of diminutives ("soletto", "lacciuolo", "boschetto"). In another ballata he uses technical terms from falconry ("stanga", "beccatelle" - pp.147-8); and there is a whole sequence of four poems, "Già non siàn perché ti paia" (xiv), "Canti ognun ch'io canterò" (xv), "I' son, dama, el porcellino" (xvi), and "I' ho rotto el fuscellino" (xvii), which all have a popular, unliterary flavour and abound in colloquial diminutives. Even "Una vecchia mi vagheggia" (xviii) is almost a

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56. Levine Rubenstein (art.cit., p.64) suggests that the first use of this kind of image is in his translation of the Iliad (v.734) where he talks of Athena's robe "quem...mira variaverat arte"; but the very first simile that Poliziano had to translate in Homer is equally emblematic: "cum gentes glomerantur apum... et florea rura pervolitant, illa huc pennas haec dirigit illuc" (ii.96ff). He praises Marullo's varietas in similar terms: "nec tot prata coloribus novum ver / pingit, lassula cum reversa hirundo, / quam carmen varium tui Marulli est." (Epig.xxx). Subsequently the image recurs in the elegy to Fonzio (viii.137-8) and in Stanze i.78.

vernacular version of his Latin poem In Anum, this time exploiting the resources of the colourful, pejorative terminology of the volgare.

Poliziano's taste for literary works of modest size is, then, apparent in both his Latin lyrics and his vernacular rispetti and ballate.<sup>57</sup> Even his brief attempt at a more ambitious poem in the volgare, even if he had completed it, would never have been an epic in the grand style, but clearly belongs to the genre of epyllion. The Stanze illustrate the consistency of Poliziano's poetics in both languages. The title suggests a modest work, a number of stanzas; and the content, structure and style of the poem confirm that it belongs to the genre of the short, learned poem in the middle rather than the grand style. We have already noted how Poliziano found the poetry of the Alexandrian poets, Moschus and Callimachus, more congenial to his tastes than the Homeric poem. The chief literary models behind the Stanze are Claudian and Statius rather than Homer and Vergil. It is not a poem about a military victory or a martial hero, but about a young man falling in love and winning a joust for his lady. Structurally it exhibits one of the standard ingredients of the short epic: the ekphrasis, or digression, describing a work of art and occupying a disproportionately large part of the narrative. The language is not consistently heroic, but instead conserves a kind

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57. Most critics agree with the conclusion of G.Ghinassi: "Il Poliziano non è attratto verso la poesia di vasto respiro." (Il volgare letterario nel Quattrocento e le Stanze del Poliziano, p.90).

of middle elegance, which at times is varied to include technical or pastoral diction.

In these technical or pastoral contexts Poliziano can indulge his taste for unusual lexis. Thus when Giuliano praises the pastoral life (Stanze i.19) he uses a number of rare rhyme-words: apart from the diminutives ("pecorelle", "contadinella"), there is the latinism "mastro", and the technical words "vincaastro", "rastro" and "marra". These rime aspre also recall a passage in Dante (Inf.xxiv.14ff). Elsewhere we find more technical terms from hunting in this line: "con archi e lacci e spiedi e dardi e corni" (i.26). And just as the poet enjoyed exploiting the lower register of Latin, so here he relishes these harsh tones with their echo of Apuleius:

Pien di sanguigna schiuma el cignal bolle,  
le larghe zanne arruota e il grifo serra;  
e ruggia e raspa, e per più armar sue forze  
frega il calloso cuoio a dure scorze (i.86).<sup>58</sup>

At the other end of the scale he exploits the lyrical qualities of these diminutives at the beginning of the description of the realm of Venus:

sotto esso aprico un lieto pratel siede;  
u' scherzando tra' fior lascive aurette  
fan dolcemente tremolar l'erbette. (i.70)

The next octave maintains this lyrical tone with further diminutives: "arbuscelli...novelle...augelli...ruscelli." (i.71).

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58. "Aper immanis...callosae cutis obaesus" (Apul.Met.VIII.4).

In the Stanze Poliziano puts into practice that eclectic imitation of different models that he defends in his Latin works. Indeed certain octaves seem deliberately to recall the traditional imagery used in the argument against Ciceronianism: the bee, the flowers, the choir of voices, and the mosaic. One stanza not only introduces the motif of the bee moving from flower to flower, used by Poliziano in his Oratio super Fabio Quintilian et Statii Sylvis, but is also a demonstration in practical terms of his theory of eclectic imitation:

Zefiro già di be' fioretti adorno  
avea de' monti tolta ogni pruina:  
avea fatto al suo nido già ritorno  
la stanca rondinella pellegrina:  
risonava la selva intorno intorno  
scavemente all' ora mattutina:  
e la ingegnosa pecchia al primo albore  
giva predando or uno or altro fiore. (i.25)

The theme here is a traditional one, celebrating an idyllic spring, and the phrasing recalls several Petrarch poems, a line from Dante, and a line from Vergil's Eclogues.<sup>59</sup> The diminutives "fioretti... rondinella" and the rare "pecchia", which actually derives from a Latin diminutive apicula, are characteristic of Poliziano's lexis; and the bee moving from flower to flower is a symbol of the author's poetics. Similarly, the "rose gigli violette e fiori" and "l'erba ...bianca cilestra pallida e vermiglia" (i.77) can be interpreted as

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59. "Zefiro torna" (Pet.Canz.cccx); "la stanca vecchiarella pellegrina" (Canz.1.); the latinism "pruina" is also in Petrarch (Canz.lxvi); "l'ora mattutina" (Dante, Purg.i.115); "resonare doces..silvas" (Verg.Ecl.I.5). Similarly the portrayal of Polyphemus (i.116) draws on both classical and vernacular sources: from Theocritus for subject, from Petrarch for "alpestre note", from Dante for "lanose gote".

emblems of his ideal of varietas. The description of the birds singing in Venus' realm recalls one of Seneca's images of eclectic imitation: "e fra piu voci un'armonia s'accoglie / di sí beate note e sí sublime" (i.90);<sup>60</sup> and the image of the mosaic (i.96) was associated with his eclectic style in the Miscellanea preface (Opera 214). This last stanza (i.96) also shows Poliziano's eclectic technique in practice: the unusual "berillo" is a latinism derived from Claudian: "dolce oriental zaffiro" is almost a quotation from Dante (Purg.i.13); and the final couplet recalls Alberti's image of the mosaic: "per varie pietre el pavimento ameno / di mirabil pittura adorna il seno."<sup>61</sup> The whole context here alludes to the various classical models which contain an ekphrasis describing a work of art: Catullus, Statius, Claudian, Sidonius.<sup>62</sup>

There is, then, a striking consistency about Poliziano's ideas on style and imitation in both languages. Even the drama Orfeo, which is difficult to classify in other respects, reflects these ideas. It is an original genre, a serious drama in the volgare; it is a short work rather than a full-scale drama with five acts; it is eclectic in terms of both metre and language, including even an ode in Latin. The subject, Orpheus' descent into the underworld, comes from the

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60. "Non vides quam multorum vocibus chorus constet? Unus tamen ex omnibus redditur." (Sen.Ep.84.8).

61. Alberti, Opere ii.160-62, also associates the mosaic image with literary eclecticism. It is not surprising that critics talk of Poliziano's "gusto estetico di mosaicista" (G.Ghinassi, op.cit., p.85).

62. Ghinassi, op.cit., p.89.

ekphrasis of a famous classical epyllion, the story of Aristaeus in Georgics IV. Originality, eclecticism, brevity and erudition, the major components of Poliziano's literary credo, are all to be found in the Orfeo as much as in the Stanze.

Poliziano is a major figure in the imitation debate. He pursues eclecticism and originality both in theory (the dispute with Cortese) and in the practice of writing in Latin and the vernacular. Consequently he rejects the major genres, the Latin dialogue and the vernacular sonnet. In his works in both languages we find that "docta varietas", the learned imitation of different models, that he defended against Cortese; in both languages we find him treasuring and exploiting lexical rarities; and in all his work we can observe the influence of the writers of late antiquity.

Nevertheless there are limits to what Poliziano regards as linguistically acceptable in Latin. He is prepared to accept forms which occur in some ancient author, no matter how late the author is or how rarely the word is used; but he is not prepared to validate even widely used terms which were only coined in the middle ages or in his own time, as was clear in the dispute with Scala. Poliziano is often regarded as the heir to the humanism of Petrarch and Valla - and certainly the first impetus towards the anti-Ciceronianist stance of these three humanists comes from their appreciation of Quintilian - but Poliziano clearly parts company with Valla over the question of Latin usage. Valla endorses the usage of what he calls the "magni auctores", and is critical of the Latin of Apuleius and Gellius. But

the author of the Miscellanea wants to preserve any word that is attested in any ancient text; where Valla accorded priority to consuetudo, Poliziano is interested primarily in auctoritas. Valla's (and Scala's) arguments in favour of modern terminology accepted in common usage carry no weight with Poliziano. When critics object to his use of "quelle parole et figure...obsolete" in his translation of Herodian, Poliziano is able to cite "qualche autorità" for each word.<sup>63</sup>

Thus while Poliziano's canon of "autores idonei" is broader than that of his contemporaries, except for Beroaldo and Pio, it does have limits, because he is concerned for linguistic purity as much as richness. But he never rejects Cicero: he even defends him in the opening chapter of Miscellanea i and ii, calling him "latinae copiae genitor et princeps". What he does condemn is the extreme form of Ciceronianism which only becomes possible at the end of the Quattrocento with the increasing mastery of Latin on the part of men such as Cortese and Bembo. In the dispute with Scala he perceives the illusory nature of Ciceronianism in a world of corrupt manuscripts and imperfect printing. But Poliziano's stature as a scholar and as a stylist ensures that the question of imitation remains in the forefront of humanist discussion at the turn of the century. The two decades from 1490 to 1510 are characterised by a linguistic extremism in both Latin

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63. I. del Lungo, Florentia, p.250.



and the vernacular. The Apuleian Latin of the Bolognese humanists, Beroaldo and Pio, flourishes in these years not least because their bizzarre style can be sanctioned by Poliziano's views and his association with Beroaldo. The career of Cortese, who died in 1510, illustrates this trend: he moves from his "Ciceronian" standpoint in the dispute with Poliziano of the 1480s to the eclectic, Apuleian style of his De Cardinalatu. But after the triumph of Bembo's Latin Ciceronianism in the second decade of the Cinquecento, it is the career of someone like Longolius that is paradigmatic of the course of Latin culture after 1510: he moves from an initial interest in Pliny, one of the texts most studied in the 1490s, to the rigid Ciceronianism of his maturity.<sup>64</sup>

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64. Poliziano's pupil Pietro Crinito maintains his master's approach as best he can in the tumultuous years that followed Poliziano's death. He records Poliziano's interest in rarities in his De Honesta Disciplina (ii.15) and attempts an imitation of Poliziano's ode on the death of Lorenzo, with its unusual metre, which is printed in the Aldine edition of Poliziano's Opera Omnia (Venice, 1498). Indicative of the change of climate in the 1520s is Ascensius' 1527 edition of the Epistulae, where Franciscus Sylvius notes on the dispute with Scala: "Politianum imitari multi novitatis studiosi 'adgredi, adloquor,' caeteraque omnia eiusdem generis, 'Vergilium, adulescentem, intellego' fere dicebant. Sed novitatem vicit consuetudo." (Poliziano, Epistulae, Paris 1527, f. CLXXIXr).



## IV

The view of Cortese as a reactionary Ciceronian now needs to be revised. To begin with, it is Cortese who is the revolutionary in insisting on the imitation of a single model, not Poliziano who merely articulates a theoretical defence of the eclecticism practised by all Quattrocento humanists until the 1480s.<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, we have seen that in the dispute between the two men, Cortese is not such a rigid Ciceronian as to insist that the Roman orator be the sole source of Latin diction, an extreme position that belongs to the Cinquecento rather than the Quattrocento. After the dispute with Poliziano, Cortese writes the De Hominibus Doctis (c.1489), the Commentarii in libros Sententiarum (1504) and the De Cardinalatu (1510). The Apuleian Latin of his last work is difficult to reconcile with his earlier Ciceronian position, especially if it is considered an extreme position. Dionisotti explains the change by suggesting that Cortese was always more interested in form than content: hence in his final work, as in earlier writings, he is primarily concerned with elegant verba rather than res.<sup>66</sup> But this does not explain the change of stylistic models between 1485 and 1510. It has been noted above that Cortese is not as strict a Ciceronian as is often assumed: even in the letter to Poliziano he uses unciceronian words, and by 1491 he is defending the Latin of the

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65. "Il ciceronianismo del Cortese...rappresentò...una svolta netta e brusca, di uno che voltava le spalle a un eclettismo cui tutti avevano fatto fino a quel punto buon viso." (C.Dionisotti, 'Calderini, Poliziano e altri' p.159).

66. C.Dionisotti, Gli umanisti e il volgare, pp.52ff.

Miscellanea. If one accepts that Cortese is, then, a Ciceronian in theory but not so rigorous in practice, then the course of his development becomes more explicable.

The De Hominibus Doctis represents the application of Cortese's theory to an assessment of Quattrocento humanist literature, but the fact that the work was never published suggests that the author had reserves about publishing in the 1490s his youthful analysis of recent writers.<sup>67</sup> The work is a Ciceronian dialogue, taking its content and its critical terminology from Cicero's review of Roman orators in the Brutus.<sup>68</sup> The epigraph to the work is a quote from Cicero, indicating that Cortese is going to judge "tamquam criticus antiquus"; and Cortese's friends certainly recognised the Ciceronian style of the work, as can be seen from the commendatory letters from Fosforo and Castellesi that precede the dialogue, (ed.cit., p.xxxi). There is even a letter from Poliziano in praise of it, though unlike the others he makes no mention of Cicero, limiting himself to this compliment: "Stili quoque voluntas apparet optima et ut auguror a summo non diutius abfutura" (ibid.). Apart from its style, the De Hominibus Doctis is also significant in terms of content. It is a history of recent Latin literature, but unlike the surveys by Filippo Villani and Sicco Polenton,

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67. All references in what follows are to the edition by M.T.Graziosi (Rome, 1973). The information about the date of the work and Cortese's dissatisfaction with it comes from the edition by G.Ferraù (Palermo, 1979), cited in the review by M.Pozzi in GSLI 159 (1982), p.136.

68. G.Ferraù, 'Il De Hominibus Doctis di Paolo Cortese' in Umanità e storia: studi in onore di Adelchi Attisani, vol.2, pp.264ff.

Cortese's work sees a literary dark age extending from the end of classical culture to the revival encouraged by Chrysoloras.<sup>69</sup> The Latin of all the Trecento writers, from the Tre Corone to Salutati and Giovanni Conversino, is condemned as barbaric (pp.16-18), and it is Chrysolaras' pupil, Bruni, who first achieves a classical rhythm in his Latin: "Hic primus inconditam scribendi consuetudinem ad numerosum quendam sonum inflexit." (p.20). This probably alludes to Bruni's avoidance of the medieval cursus: Cortese himself was one of the few who realised the importance of rhythm in classical prose. But he is also able to perceive that Bruni's Latin in his historical work is more like Livy's than Cicero's, especially in his use of "minus plerunque lectis verbis" (p.24). Similarly Guarino's prose is criticised for its use of poetic words and its undeveloped periods, the latter also attacked by George of Trebisonde (p.26).

The description of Sicco Polenton's Latin is notable because it repeats Cortese's definition - in the letter to Poliziano - of the faults of eclectic imitation:

vitiosum scribendi genus, cum modo lenis et candidus  
modo durus et asper appareat, et sic in toto genere  
tamquam in unum agrum plurima inter se inimicissima  
sparsa semina. (p.28)<sup>70</sup>

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69. Cortese is like Chrysoloras' pupils, Bruni and Guarino, in regarding the Greek as the main instigator of the revival. Biondo, on the other hand, attached more weight to the Ciceronian fashion encouraged by the discovery of the manuscript at Lodi.
70. "vitiosum scribendi genus cum modo sordidi et inculti modo splendidi et florentes appareant, et sic in toto genere tamquam in unum agrum plurima inter se inimicissima sparsa semina." (Pros. p.910). Perhaps an example of self-imitation here? Certainly Cortese is careful to vary the order of his adjectives, use synonyms for them, and change them and the verb from singular to plural - see above Chapter 3, pp.168-9.

Perhaps the animosity of this criticism is due to the fact that Polenton also wrote a literary history in Latin. The emphatic commendation of Poggio's Latin is probably due to the fact that Poggio upholds Ciceronianism in theory like Cortese. But it is clearly recognised by Cortese that Cicero is inimitable and that Poggio's practice in Latin is very different from his theory: "Sed habet hoc dilucida illa divini hominis in dicendo copia ut aestimanti se imitabilem praebeat, experienti spem imitationis eripiat. Eam igitur dicendi laudem Poggius si non facultate at certe voluntate complectabatur." (p.34).<sup>71</sup> Perhaps the criticism of both Poggio's and Biondo's historical works is due to the increasing humanist interest in the genre: certainly both Cortese and contemporaries such as Pontano express the need for an ars historica. The pedagogical writers of the first half of the century are also criticised: the style of Vergerio (p.28), Vittorino (p.38), Barzizza (p.40), and Pius II (p.48) is felt to be deficient in some respect. Even Valla, despite his work on the exact meaning of words, writes a Latin that to Cortese is "asperior" and is deficient in periodic structure (p.40).

At the end of the dialogue Cortese refuses to comment on the Latin of living writers, but he does reiterate the praise of the earlier

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71. The first sentence repeats verbatim another one from the letter to Poliziano, except that here "aestimanti" replaces the earlier "existimanti" (Pros.910). The sentence itself is an imitation of Cicero's remarks about achieving the Attic style: "orationis subtilitas imitabilis illa quidem videtur esse existimanti, sed nihil est experienti minus". (Or.76).

humanists whom he considers to be most important in the development of Latin in the Quattrocento: Bruni and Campano for their recovery of classical rhythm in prose and verse respectively; Gaza for the union of eloquence and wisdom;<sup>72</sup> and Poggio for his "ingeniosa in dicendo facilitas" (p.72). For Cortese these four represent the mainstream of humanist Latin. The refusal to discuss contemporaries obviates further polemic with Poliziano and possibly Pico. But there is a hint of criticism of Florentine humanism in the few living humanists who are mentioned: Merula is Poliziano's enemy, Barbaro is Pico's opponent in a dispute which Cortese certainly knew of, and Pontano is the chief rival to a Florentine monopoly of humanist erudition. Cortese's silence on Poliziano's eclectic Latin and Pico's scholastic language is in itself a criticism ex silentio.

Apart from a review of Quattrocento writers, the De Hominibus Doctis also offers discussion on important topics. The first such digression is on the place of Trecento culture in the revival of letters. More interesting is the next excursus: Antonius, the main speaker, warns that Bruni's orations are faulty not only because he lacked recent models to imitate; for rhetorical rules are more essential than imitation, and the right kind of imitation is merely the embodiment of sound rules: "Ars profecto via certior est quam imitatio qua opes atque ornamenta ad disserendum suppeditantur...nec enim est aliud imitari quam effingere

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72. The problem will concern Cortese again later, as we shall see in the Commentarii in libros Sententiarum. For the whole question see J.E.Seigel, Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism.

praescriptam disserendi artem." (p.22). This diminution of the status of imitation represents a rapprochement towards Poliziano's position: and this is confirmed by Cortese's criticism of Andrea Contrario, a Ciceronian who is condemned by Cortese in Poliziano's words:

illa lumina Ciceronis ingeniose admodum consecrari  
(videtur) sed aliquanto tamen abest ab optimo genere  
imitandi, et ut amicus noster ait: non ille quidem  
ut alumnus sed ut simia effingit. (p.64).

The other digressions discuss the lack of rules for historiography, though Cortese naturally insists that it should be written with "concinntas" (p.36), illustrate the importance of the early translations from Greek into Latin under Chrysoloras' influence (p.42), and detail the necessity of rhythm even in prose: "Mea quidem sententia est orationem Latinam numerosa quadam structura contineri oportere quae adhuc omnino a nostris hominibus ignoretur." (p.52). Cortese derives his views on rhythm from the Orator; and although the De Hominibus Doctis views humanist literature through a Ciceronian matrix, nevertheless, as we have seen, Cortese is not a rigid Ciceronian in this work: if anything he attenuates his views on imitation.

Another factor in modifying his stylistic attitudes is his interest in the vernacular. At some stage he translates one of Alberti's novelle into Latin (Hippolyti et Deyanirae Historia); and though he thus resembles Petrarch, Bruni and Beroaldo who all made Latin versions of some of Boccaccio's tales, he is unlike them in according the honour of a Latin version to an author of the Quattrocento. In 1492 he sends a vernacular sonnet to Piero de' Medici, adding that he has been in touch with Jacopo Corsi, the improviser poet, and that he has seen the letter

accompanying the Raccolta Aragonese.<sup>73</sup> In 1498 we know from another exponent of vernacular culture, Gaspare Visconti, that Cortese's opinion on the volgare was respected and that he had "una molta affectione a la lingua toscana".<sup>74</sup> It is in this period that Cortese's house in Rome becomes a centre for vernacular poets such as Serafino and Calmeta, with both of whom he competed in the writing of strambotti.<sup>75</sup> He is valued as a critic on vernacular questions both in the 1490s and after 1500, as he is cited on a par with Bembo and Calmeta in Achillini's Viridario (1504).

But despite these vernacular interests, the next major work is in Latin: the Commentarii in libros Sententiarum, printed in Rome in 1504. The reason for Cortese's failure to write a major work in the volgare could well be the demise suffered by important vernacular centres like Florence and Milan in these years, as well as the increasing prestige of Julius II's court in Rome. The genesis and proem of the Commentarii show that Cortese is still "preoccupato della forma".<sup>76</sup> From the proem it seems that Cortese had written a Latin treatise on the duties of a prince, in which he advised the prince to read in his old age the Liber Sententiarum. But Cortese had found the

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73. Cortese's letter was published by Cian in GSLI 28 (1896), 363-4.

74. Dionisotti, Gli umanisti, pp.55-6.

75. V.Calmeta, 'Vita di Serafino Aquilano' in Calmeta, Prose e lettere edite e inedite, ed. C.Grayson, p.64.

76. Dionisotti, op.cit., p.60. For the proem to the Commentarii I cite from G.Farris, Eloquenza e teologia nel "Prooemium in librum primum Sententiarum" di Paolo Cortese (Savona, 1972).



scholastic Latin of this work so unpalatable that he decided to rewrite it in humanist Latin. The Commentarii in libros Sententiarum thus has links with the old Quattrocento debate on rhetoric and philosophy and with the tradition of manuals for princes that was soon to yield its most notorious product. The concern for elegant form in this work is complementary to Cortese's other works and is also Cortese's answer to Pico in his dispute with Barbaro about eloquence and philosophy.

Though he agrees with Pico about the prestige of men such as Avicenna and Averroes, Cortese disagrees with him - without ever naming Pico - about the style in which philosophy should be written. He rejects the idea that philosophy should always be permitted to coin neologisms, advocating instead "an historically-fixed language good for all time."<sup>77</sup> That Pico is the major target here is clear from the language and the imagery Cortese employs. He is directing the words of the proem mainly at the following group:

Nonnulli autem cum philosophiam, quasi marmoream  
quandam sedem constituent, nullo modo ei tectorium  
induci debere censent, nec fas esse putant  
pulcherrimi vultus candori illiniri fucum. (ed.cit., p.22).<sup>78</sup>

Apart from the image of the marble temple, he also uses the images of the coin and the cloak which had occurred in Pico's letter to Barbaro.<sup>79</sup>

77. J.F.D'Amico, 'Cortese's Rehabilitation of Pico della Mirandola', p.41. Cortese's criticism is probably directed also against Platina, who in his Proem to the Vitae Pontificum claims "aetas nostra vel Christiana Theologia...fingat nova vocabula, latina faciat ne veteribus tantummodo id licuisse videretur." (in Prosatori latini, p.696).

78. cf. Pico's "Marmorea domus picturam non recipit...quae tractantur a philosophis tectorio non clarescunt, sed offuscantur. Quid plura? Nonne vulgatum bonas formas cerussa devenustari?" (Pros., p.816).

79. Cortese's "orationem ut nummum tantidem ubique valere credunt, et horridiorem laudant amictum" (p.24) refers to Pico's "non quaerimus in pecunia qua moneta percussa sit" (Pros., p.820) and his reference to Socrates' "toga dissidens" (ib., p.814).



Cortese's allusion to Pico's dispute with Barbaro is confirmation that it too is bound up with the debates on imitation and that all three disputes need to be considered together. Cortese's aim in this work is to extract the important parts of Christian theology contained in the gold-mine of the medieval Liber Sententiarum and give them a finer polish: "ex intima Sententiarum aurifodina ad expolitiones revocare." (ibid., p.30). The words he uses here are indicative of his ideals: the rare, technical "aurifodina", found only in Pliny, as opposed to the rhetorical term "expolitiones", which occurs in two favourite Ciceronian texts of Cortese, the Ad Herennium and the Orator. He aims to force his opponents to admit that to divorce eloquence from philosophy is to separate the skin from the flesh. He is against both the technical terms of scholastic Latin and the neologisms of recent humanist philosophical works. He believes in employing Ciceronian Latin, where possible, as the best vehicle for conveying the Christian wisdom of the medieval Liber Sententiarum; but he does not restrict himself even in the proem to solely Ciceronian diction: many of the unclassical terms here are in fact Grecisms, a linguistic feature that will be even more pronounced in the De Cardinalatu.<sup>80</sup> Nor does he denigrate the learning of the medieval philosophers, he merely wishes to couch that wisdom in more elegant language. He thus seems to lie somewhere between the positions of Pico and Barbaro on this question.

The major differences between the De Cardinalatu and the other

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80. On just one page of the proem, chosen at random, we find: "icterici, tympana, hypothesis, Theologumenon, typum, pinacidiis" (ed.cit., p.30).

encyclopedic works of the early Cinquecento have been nicely discerned by Dionisotti: the works of Giorgio Valla and Raffaele Maffei do not exhibit the same interest in the vernacular, nor the same stylistic ambitions of Cortese's final work.<sup>81</sup> The commendatory letters at the beginning of the work, particularly that of Raffaele Maffei, highlight Cortese's concern for formal elegance in this encyclopedia:

res multa cogitatione quaesitas saepeque duras cultu  
orationis latinitateque mollebat, cuius et tanta  
religio fuit ut sententias inventaque perire mallet  
quam non apte ornateque exire. (Dionisotti, p.78).

This is still a Ciceronianist viewpoint, the concern for elegance even in topics which are difficult to write about elegantly. But the elegance that Cortese now seeks is different from the linguistic ideals of his earlier writings. Maffei explicitly acknowledges Cortese's use in this work of "verba insuper nova ac fere apuleiana" (*ib.*, p.78), though he tries to excuse them by claiming Cortese was forced to use exotic diction because of the nature of the subject matter. The "Monaco Severo" in another introductory letter is equally explicit about Cortese's earlier stylistic ambitions: "ad imitanda Ciceronis vestigia et ad priscum illius aevi eloquium instaurandum semper aspiravit." (*De Card.* IIr); yet he anticipates criticism of the "abstrusa quaedam et recondita verborum ac sententiarum lumina" (*ibid.*) to be found in Cortese's final work; and it is indicative of the change in Cortese's style that he has to defend

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81. Dionisotti, *op.cit.*, pp.60-61. For citations from *De Card.* I have used for the sake of accessibility the text of passages supplied by Dionisotti; when I cite from parts of the work not quoted by Dionisotti I have used the edition of 1510, printed in Castro Cortesio.

Cortese's difficult diction with the excuse used by Poliziano in the Miscellanea, that the work is intended for the erudite not for a wider public. That many of the unusual terms were Grecisms was noted by Vincenzo Mainardi in a third introductory letter to the De Cardinalatu: he claims Cortese is "Graeca ubertate comptus Romana gravitate magnus", and calls the work a "bracteato libro", thus endorsing the vogue for Apuleian epithets (ibid.). Thus while Cortese remains consistent in his concern for formal polish even at the expense of content, his models for achieving that stylistic polish change. In his youth Cicero was theoretically his chief model, though in practice he borrowed from other Latin authors; but between 1500 and 1510 he too is affected by the interest in Greek terms and the cult of post-classical diction in Latin. In fact Lattanzio Cortese appends fifteen pages of "Annotationes" to the De Cardinalatu, to explain the difficult terms used in the work.

Greek technical terms abound, for instance, in the chapter "De Sermone".<sup>82</sup> It is in this chapter that Cortese makes his most important observations on the vernacular. Though he introduces many Grecisms into his writing in Latin, he disapproves of even the cautious Latinisation of the volgare advocated by Landino. Hence he condemns Dante's neologisms and recent barbarisms that have come into the language

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82. "octostichon, hyperbolen, sche,aton, antilogiam, omonyma, cacosynthea, cenodoxia, pedagogimachiae, hypodidasalum, prosopica" (to cite just one from each page of the chapter reproduced by Dionisotti, pp.62-72).

from other tongues.<sup>83</sup> He wants his Cardinals to use that form of the vernacular "quod apud nostros sit consuetudine diuturna tritum" (Dionisotti, p.63); and if this sounds like approval of some form of "lingua cortigiana", this is not surprising in view of Cortese's association with Calmeta.

He now has a more positive estimate of Dante and Petrarch than in the De Hominibus Doctis, but although both Dante and Petrarch are praised for reviving vernacular poetry, Dante's bold metaphors are criticised along with his neologisms such as "immiare" and "intuare".<sup>84</sup> It is at this point that Cortese reaffirms his opposition to Poliziano's "verborum insolentiam" (ib., p.67) and his unusual diction. Presumably here Cortese sees a difference between his own use of unusual words in an encyclopedic work which has to cover all aspects of reality and Poliziano's gratuitous cult of such words as though they were new clothes.

His application of classical principles to vernacular problems is evident throughout the chapter. Two of the three kinds of ornatus are elements which have always interested Cortese: one is the theory of linguistic decorum, the other is rhythm or numeri. When he applies the classical doctrine of the three styles to the volgare he claims that the

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83. Cortese's list of barbarisms coincides in two words with those given by Alberti in his Grammatica: ("vexillum" and "galea" corresponding to Alberti's "bandier" and "elm".) This suggests that Cortese might have seen the MS of Alberti's grammar, which also has links with the circle of Bembo and Colocci.

84. Landino, on the other hand, had praised Dante's use of both archaism and neologism (Scritti i.151).

ornate style is exemplified by Boccaccio's Filocolo, the low by Villani's Cronica, the middle style by the Decameron and by Bembo's Asolani. The mention of these works is not as surprising as may at first appear: by 1510 the Filocolo had been printed more often than the Decameron;<sup>85</sup> a manuscript of Villani's Cronica was leant by Lascaris to Colocci around this time;<sup>86</sup> and the first edition of the Asolani (1505) made a significant impact on many besides Cortese, though it was often regarded as more an imitation of the Ameto than the Decameron.<sup>87</sup>

Cortese's mention of Bembo's Asolani in the same breath as the Decameron and his approval of improviser poets such as Jacopo Corsi and Bernardo Accolti differentiate him from Bembo himself who, critical of courtly literature of the time, turned towards the Golden Age of the Trecento. In the chapter "De Spectaculis" which praises Corsi and Accolti, Cortese expresses his confidence in the present "cum...hominum ingenia videantur praestare florentius quam abhinc annos octingentos sit floruisse iudicandum" (De Card., f.CLXVr). However rhetorical that may be, the claim aligns Cortese with Bembo's opponent in the dispute on imitation, Gianfrancesco Pico.<sup>88</sup> Both in practice, then, and in theory Cortese's ideas on literary imitation change in the quarter century from

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85. Even in this vernacular context Cortese still uses Grecisms: "quod a Graecis philocalon nominari solet"; the Decameron is called "mythologica centuria"; and Bembo's Asolani are defined as a discussion about love "per antilogiam".

86. S.Debenedetti, 'Intorno ad alcune postille di A.Colocci', 71.

87. eg. by G.Claricio in his edition of 1520 (Bembo, Asolani e rime, ed. C.Dionisotti, p.xix. n.2).

88. "Crescunt...verius quam decrescant ingenia" (G.F.Pico in Le epistole "De Imitatione" di G.F.Pico della Mirandola e di Pietro Bembo, ed. G.Santangelo, p.31).

the dispute with Poliziano to his death in 1510. The Latin of De Cardinalatu is substantially different from the Latin employed in the letter to the Florentine humanist and in the De Hominibus Doctis. Apart from the change of genre from the dialogue and letter to the encyclopedia, in its abundance of Greek technical terms, especially in discussing style and language in the chapter "De Sermone", the De Cardinalatu is decidedly unciceronian, since it contravenes the advice in the Ad Herennium (IV.7.10) to use Latin equivalents of the Greek terms. In theoretical terms Cortese is on the opposite side from Poliziano in the first full debate on imitation; but in the dispute between Bembo and Pico, he would have been nearer to the latter than the former. The explanation for this change of position seems to lie partly in Cortese's interest in the vernacular which develops only after the composition of De Hominibus Doctis.

In Latin literature the case for a Golden Age, with Cicero at its peak, had been accepted universally throughout the Quattrocento; indeed Cortese was the first to derive from this premise the revolutionary doctrine that Cicero was the only author to imitate. But in the writing of the vernacular Cortese, a Tuscan, does not see the need for literary models. He consequently approves both of contemporary and Trecento writers, mentioning not only the Tuscan poets Lorenzo and Accolti but also court poets such as Corsi and Tebaldeo alongside Petrarch, and Bembo along with Boccaccio. It is not surprising, then, that his Latin should also evolve from his youthful position of dependence on a single ancient model. The pairing of Cortese with Bembo as Ciceronians is thus only valid up to a point. Even in his earlier works Cortese did not advocate the use of only Ciceronian diction, though he believed

theoretically in a general imitation of Cicero. He never applies this theoretical Ciceronianism to the volgare because, as a Tuscan, he does not regard imitation of a specific model necessary for the development of vernacular style. Bembo, on the other hand, will apply his Latin Ciceronianism to the writing of the volgare because, being able to reproduce almost exactly Cicero's style in Latin, when it comes to the vernacular, he requires, as a non-Tuscan, similar rules for the acquisition of the best form of that language.<sup>89</sup> It is ironic, then, that in 1513 in his dispute with Gianfrancesco Pico Bembo should appeal to the authority of Cortese as a fellow-Ciceronian, when it was clear to Cortese's friends by 1510 that Cortese's final words on the subject would be anything but Ciceronian.

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89. "furono i non Toscani che dovevano imparare quella lingua con sforzo, non molto diversamente...da come imparavano il latino." (C.Dionisotti, 'Niccolò Liburnio e la letteratura cortigiana' in Rinascimento europeo e rinascimento veneziano, ed. V.Branca, p.29).



## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE DISPUTE BETWEEN PICO AND BARBARO

The two major debates on imitation, one between Poliziano and Cortese, the other between Gianfrancesco Pico and Bembo, are often considered together. Indeed Bembo himself specifically recalls the earlier polemic in his letter to Gianfrancesco Pico.<sup>1</sup> But the links between the latter and Poliziano, who adopt the same position on the subject, have never been fully explored. The personal link between the two men is Poliziano's friend and Gianfrancesco's uncle, Giovanni Pico; and we shall see that Gianfrancesco's views on imitation are derived from his uncle's work in general and in particular from his dispute with Ermolao Barbaro on the compatibility of eloquence and philosophy. It is really essential to consider this third debate in order to place the other two in their correct context and to reveal the strands that link all six writers. The clearest order to follow in this chapter is (I) to analyse Giovanni Pico's works, including his letter to Barbaro; then (II) to move from Barbaro's reply to a consideration of his other Latin writings.

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1. Le epistole "De Imitatione" di G.F.Pico della Mirandola e di Bembo, ed. G.Santangelo (Florence, 1954), pp.60-61. Henceforth referred to as Santangelo. For the other works cited in this chapter I have used the following: Giovanni Pico, Opera Omnia (Basle, 1557) - henceforth cited as Opera with page number. For Pico's letters to Lorenzo and Barbaro I have used the edition in Prosatori latini del Quattrocento, ed. E.Garin, pp.796ff. - cited as Pros. with page number, and also De Hominibus Dignitate, Heptaplus, De Ente et Uno, ed. E.Garin (Florence, 1942). For Barbaro's works I have used E.Barbaro, Epistulae, Orationes et Carmina, ed. V.Branca, 2 vols (Florence, 1943) - cited as Ep. with vol. and page number; and Castigationes Plinianaee, ed. G.Pozzi, 4 vols (Padua, 1973-79), cited with volume and page number.



## I

What remains of Pico's youthful Latin poetry is relatively insignificant: they are minor poems, closer to Landino's Propertian elegies than to Poliziano's experimentation in language and metre.<sup>2</sup> Of more interest is his early correspondence with Tommasio Medio, author of some Latin comedies. Medio's letters are dotted with diminutives, indicating the influence of Bolognese humanism; and Pico's replies are in a similar style: he approves of Medio's comedies ("fabellas... dictitasse"), though the subject matter is "sordidiuscula" (Opera 363).<sup>3</sup>

Pico's exposure to Florentine culture in the 1480s led to his interest in vernacular literature, which is revealed in his letter to Lorenzo and in his commentary on Girolamo Benivieni's canzone. The letter to Lorenzo, dated July 1484, is a rhetorical laus in praise of his patron's poetry. Pico claims that Lorenzo's rime are superior to all other poetry in the vernacular. Of the only serious rivals, Dante is deficient in verba, Petrarch in res. This is clearly a rhetorical approach, resembling Salutati's safe claim that Petrarch outdoes Cicero

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2. Giovanni Pico, Carmina, ed. W. Speyer (Leiden, 1964). Kristeller confirms that Propertius is the chief model in the poems (in 'Giovanni Pico and his sources' in L'opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, I. p.50). He also seems to have composed macaronic verse in his youth (E. Garin, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, p.26 n.17) and this mingling of languages is characteristic of Pico's eclecticism in other areas.
  3. Medio's letters are in E. Garin, La cultura filosofica del Rinascimento, pp.267f. Medio's conscious use of diminutives is proved by the fourth scene of the Epirota, where there is a discussion of the significance of "ocello" and "amicula" (I. Sanesi, La commedia, pp.118-21).

in verse and Vergil in prose. The major critical interest in Pico's letter lies in his conformity to the ideas of Poliziano and Landino. The criticism of Dante's language as "horridus, asper et strigosus" (Pros.800) clearly recalls the accusation of "antico rozzore" levelled at him in the letter accompanying the Raccolta Aragonese. The influence of Landino as well as other writers on imitation is evident when Pico claims that Lorenzo adapts what he has taken from Aristotle and Plato to create something new and distinctive:

lego tamen apud te ut nova, ut meliora, et in nescio  
quam a te faciem transformata, ut tua videantur esse  
...Quod maximo est indicio haec te sapere non tam ex  
commentario quam ex te ipso. (Pros.802).<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps it is significant that Pico here avoids the ending "esse videantur" for he is certainly not a Ciceronian, as will be seen in his other Latin works and in his dispute with Barbaro. The stress in this passage on individual style is also reminiscent of Poliziano's letter to Cortese, an almost contemporary document, although the source is ultimately Seneca.<sup>5</sup> The letter ends with praise of Lorenzo's Comento as an "oratio non manufacta, non bracteata" (ib.804) which Pico compares to Caesar's style.<sup>6</sup> This reference to Caesar, and the others to Seneca and Aulus Gellius, indicate Pico's stylistic ideals. Cicero

4. "ut non aliunde accepisse, sed ipse peperisse ac a se parta aliis mutuasse videatur" (Landino, Scritti i.213). The praise of Lorenzo's poetry as an ideal synthesis between Dante's content and Petrarch's style also show Landino's influence (Scritti i.138f; Cardini, Critica p.229).

5. "Turpe est...ex commentario sapere...Aliquid et de tuo profer." (Sen.Ep.33.7).

6. The appreciation of Caesar's unadorned prose is typical of the period: cf. Bembo and Pico in Santangelo, pp.46,48,68,69.

is not mentioned; and is not the model for some of the diction: the Plautine "noctuinis oculis" and "suffuratus", the Apuleian "librili", "austerula" and "insititia", the late Latin adjectives "torosus", "oculatiores" and "bracteata", as well as the neologism "ociulum".

The commentary on Benivieni's Canzona de Amore is the most significant testimony to Pico's vernacular interests at this time (1486). Naturally in this neoplatonic context when Pico discusses imitation he is not talking of imitation of a literary model, but of the imitation of Platonic Ideas:

è da sapere che ogni causa che con arte con intelletto opera qualche effetto, ha prima in sé la forma di quella cosa che vuol produrre, come uno architetto ha in sé e nell'anima sua la forma dello edificio che vuol fabricare, e riguardando ad quella come allo esempio, ad imitatione di quello produce e compone l'opera sua. (Opera 899).

This neoplatonic view of artistic creation does not at this stage exclude the possibility of imitation of another artist: certainly both Pico and Landino seem to assume that both kinds of imitation can co-exist, unlike later theorists.<sup>7</sup> In this commentary on Benivieni's poem and in the letter to Lorenzo Pico manifests a taste for the vernacular canzone and sonnet on the Petrarchan model. But he is also interested in the pre-Petrarchan canzone, as we can see in his quotation from Dante's Le dolci rime d'amor at Commento i.5 (Opera 899) and in his extensive comparison between Cavalcanti's and Benivieni's poems on love. This appreciation of Cavalcanti also shows how close Pico is to the author of

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7. Gianfrancesco Pico tries to integrate the two kinds of mimesis in the letter to Bembo (Santangelo, p.28) but later writers concentrate on just one type.

the letter accompanying the Raccolta Aragonesa. Pico himself wrote poetry in the volgare but his interest in vernacular verse gives way around 1489 to his philosophical and theological speculations (Opera 383).

In his Latin letters there is plenty of evidence of unciceronian diction, especially when writing to close colleagues. When he writes to Andrea Corneo he deliberately uses on more than one occasion unusual Plautine words, drawing attention to their source like Poliziano in the letter to Cortese:

Et firma satis non est amicitia, si qua velut tibicines  
has literarum sibi vicissitudines postulet, quae (ut  
Plauti dixerim verbo) quasi nutantem infirmiusculamque  
furcilent. (Opera 376)

Later he talks of princes treating someone "velut trusatilem, ut inquit Plautus, molam" (ib.378); and throughout the epistles he uses, apart from archaic words, the familiar diminutives and frequentatives of the non-Ciceronian writers: "litteras missitare amicitiae (est) frigidiusculae" (ib.374) he says to Barbaro, and he uses the same frequentative to Cortese (ib.365). His literary tastes are confirmed by his request to Corneo for a copy of Symmachus' letters (ib.383) and his enthusiasm at finding a fragment of Apuleius (ib.368).

Pico often exploits the topos that various writers, such as Lorenzo, Barbaro or Poliziano, are superior to the authors of the past. But this praise of Poliziano is also coupled, as in the letter to Lorenzo, with the stress on original composition: "excude semper aliquid novum." (Opera 365). The same idea is taken up in the De Hominis Dignitate Oratio, where again Seneca is quoted and another topos which

relates to originality is brought in:

Profecto ingenerosum est, ut ait Seneca, sapere solum  
ex commentario et, quasi maiorum inventa nostrae  
industriæ viam praecluserint, quasi in nobis effeta  
sit vis naturae, nihil ex se parere. (ed.cit., p.144)

The notion that nature is becoming effete begins in Lucretius, but is rejected both by classical writers such as Pliny, Columella and Sidonius, and by humanists like Alberti, Pico and his nephew.<sup>8</sup>

Pico's major Latin writings illustrate further the stylistic ideals adumbrated in the letters. Pico expressly admits that the Conclusiones are written in the scholastic style: "non Romanae linguae nitorem, sed celebratissimorum Parisiensium disputatorum dicendi genus."<sup>9</sup> That qualification of the Parisian philosophers as "most celebrated" shows that Pico does not regard their style of Latin in a negative fashion, as most of his fellow humanists did. Even the De Hominis Dignitate Oratio, that pamphlet of humanist ideals, is written in a style that is anything but Ciceronian, with its scholastic terms, diminutives, compounds and rarities. In fact this is just the kind of Latin that Pico defends in the dispute with Barbaro.

The dispute about philosophy and rhetoric begins in 1485 when

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8. Lucr.V.1150ff; Pliny, Ep.VI.21.1; Col. Pref.1-2; Sid.Ep.III.8.1; Alberti Opere iii.7; G.F.Pico (Santangelo, p.31). The idea that the writer must not feel inhibited by the achievements of antiquity is already in Petrarch (Sen.ii.1; v.2) and Alberti (De Commodis, p.39); thus Pico has a strong anti-Ciceronian pedigree behind him, in both classical and modern writers.

9. Conclusiones, ed. B.Kieszkowski (Geneva, 1973), p.27.

Barbaro sends Pico a letter suggesting that although Pico has altered his fluent and florid Latin style to imitate Barbaro's "filum orationis aridum et praetenuum", he has in accordance with the rules of imitation produced a style that still has his own individual stamp: "ita tamen exprimas et effingas aliena, quae sunt pessima, ut videantur esse tua, quae sunt optima." (Ep.i.85). Barbaro presumes that Pico's sound Latin is partly due to his knowledge of Greek, since no great Latin work was ever written by someone ignorant of Greek. It is in this context that he calls the scholastic philosophers "sordidi, rudes, inculti, barbari" (Ep.i.86), for he claims that their style is so poor that they do not deserve to be called Latin writers. Their content might be useful but great writers, whether classical or Christian, have all possessed in addition an elegant style. Form is important, otherwise sculptors would only be praised for working with precious material, and Choerilus would be considered the equal of Homer merely for dealing with an epic subject. Both the substance and the imagery of Barbaro's letter are taken up by Pico.

Pico's reply of June 1485 is worth studying in some detail since it illustrates his own critical ideas and constitutes an eloquent defence of his Latin tastes. He begins, like all humanists, by praising his correspondent's epistle for its lofty language and thought. This opening reference to verba and sententiae is significant because it is one of Pico's favourite critical tools, already exploited in the letter to Lorenzo, and represents here the nucleus of Pico's defence of the scholastics. He adopts a rhetorical technique in summoning one of those "argumentosi homines" to defend himself. This witness claims that the

scholastic philosophers possessed wisdom if not eloquence, which in fact should never be combined with philosophy: "non defuisse illis sapientiam, si defuit eloquentia, quam cum sapientia non coniunxisse tantum fortasse abest a culpa, ut coniunxisse sit nefas." (Pros.808). In these words Pico clearly contravenes the Ciceronian rule that philosophy must always be written elegantly, an idea most emphatically expressed in these years by Cortese and Landino as well as Barbaro.<sup>10</sup> But Pico actually cites Cicero in this letter, for his saying that orators may be judged by the people but not philosophers who require the silent meditation of the few who can appreciate "brevitatem styli, fetam rerum multarum atque magnarum, sub expositis verbis remotissimas sententias." (ib.812). Here the stress on brevity, unadorned words and recondite content shows that Pico is in sympathy with the ideals of Alberti and Poliziano.

As for Barbaro's objection that if philosophers cannot write elegantly they should at least write correctly, Pico agrees that to use "causari" for "produci" may not be writing "latine" but to conclude "igitur non recte" is a false deduction: "Forte quae aures respuunt utpote asperula, acceptat ratio utpote rebus cognatiora". (ib.818-20). The use of the diminutive "asperula" and the frequentative "acceptat" is typical of Pico's language throughout. He claims that philosophers cannot spend time studying Cicero, Pliny or Apuleius; and the choice of

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10. Cicero, Tusc.Disp.passim; for Landino and Cortese see above, Chapters 6 and 7. For the whole question see J.E.Seigel, Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism, passim.



these three authors is certainly intentional: Cicero, the idol of all humanists, Pliny and Apuleius the fashionable authors in the Veneto at this time (notably with Barbaro himself), and all three are cited in the one breath as valid models.

Pico not only exploits the images suggested by Barbaro's initial letter but also many others, including ones associated with the imitation debate. The first image is a traditional one, going back to Boethius' Lady Philosophy, when Pico claims that ornaments and make-up suit a young girl who is "moribus lepidam atque dicaculam" (the adjectives come from Apuleius Met.II.7), but not the sober matron who is Philosophy. As in the letter to Lorenzo, he warns against the surface charm of eloquence that has no sound interior; instead he applies the Platonic image of the Silenus to philosophy, which is off-putting in appearance but full of treasure within.<sup>11</sup> Then he neatly combines the imitation images of the cloak and the shoes, arguing that to complain of the barbaric terminology of scholastic philosophy is to object to Socrates' "laxus calceus et toga dissidens." (Pros.814).<sup>12</sup> Finally he deploys a counter-image to Barbaro's image of the sculptor: in coins one attends not so much to the stamp as to the metal from which it is

11. Symposium 215Aff. A popular image, it recurs also in Rabelais.

12. The toga image comes from Hor.Ep.I.1.95ff, a passage Pico has in mind here; we have seen it used by Petrarch (Fam.xxii.2.16) and others, and it will be used also by G.F.Pico (Santangelo, pp.36, 69,72-3), and Barbaro (Ep.i.106). G.F.Pico will also exploit the image of the shoes (Santangelo, pp.32,72-3) which comes from Cic. De Or.I.231. I am indebted to Dr.L.A.Panizza for the Cicero reference, and for a number of other points in this chapter.



struck, as long as it is gold it does not matter whether it is a German or Roman coin.<sup>13</sup> Like Aulus Gellius, Pico criticises philosophers who are more interested in language than in wisdom: "sed qui, excordes, toti sunt lingua, nonne sunt mera, ut Cato ait, mortua glosaria?" (Pros.820).<sup>14</sup> To combat Barbaro's suggestion that if only content is important then Choerilus is on the same level as Homer, Pico argues that Duns Scotus may be ignorant of good Latin, but he is preferable to Lucretius who is ignorant of the true God and nature. The letter ends with Pico distancing himself from the defence he has just outlined by claiming that it was a mere rhetorical exercise, an attack on eloquence like Glaucus' attack on justice in the Republic, made only to provoke his opponent into praising eloquence. It thus is difficult to establish how serious Pico is in his rejection of eloquence here, but I think that by analysing the language and techniques used in this letter and elsewhere Pico's real stylistic ideals can be discerned.

The letter has been praised from Barbaro's reply onwards for its stylistic qualities: "its style is in the best literary tradition... it is warm throughout with sustained eloquence."<sup>15</sup> This statement needs

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13. The coin image is from Hor.A.P.58-9. Barbaro had called the scholastic writers Germans or Teutons rather than Latins.
14. A misreading of Gellius XVIII.7.3, where a grammarian complains of philosophers becoming too interested in words: " 'vos philosophi mera estis, ut M.Cato ait, mortualia; glosaria namque conligitis et levida.' " Pico's reading was normal at the time (it is repeated by G.F.Pico in Santangelo, p.73); eg. the Venice, 1489 edition reads: " 'vos philosophi mera:estis:ut M.Cato ait: mortuaria glosiaria. Nam qui collegisti et lectitasti res terras et inanes et frivolas.' " (c.CIXv).
15. Q.Breen, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola on the Conflict of Rhetoric and Philosophy', pp.384-5. Even the most recent and "iconoclastic" study of Pico says "it is written in thoroughly humanistic style" (W.G.Craven, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Symbol of his Age, p.38). Kristeller accepts Pico's rejection of eloquence here on the grounds of content, ie. because he expresses similar views elsewhere ('Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and his Sources' cit., p.56 n.80), but in view of the humanists' rhetorical tendency to inconsistency of expression I have preferred a stylistic approach.

qualification. The letter is certainly artfully structured, from the opening captatio benivolentiae through the prosopopoeia of imagining a scholastic philosopher defending his style and refuting Barbaro's objections in a plethora of images to the final praise of Barbaro in the peroratio. But many of Pico's contemporaries would have denied that the language he uses and the sources he cites are all in the best literary tradition. There are certainly echoes of Cicero and Quintilian, and he quotes Horace, Plato and Lucretius; but he also cites from Gellius, Lactantius and Scotus, as well as from the late Neoplatonist Synesius. There are also many linguistic borrowings from Apuleius, Plautus, Pliny and Gellius, along with some unattested diminutives. Despite, then, his final disclaimer that he has written a mere rhetorical exercise, Pico's language and sources are consistent with those of his other works and indicate his true feelings on the question.

Giovanni Pico is a highly independent thinker: he is prepared to attack scholastic ideas in the Conclusiones, and to criticise humanist prejudices in the letter to Barbaro.<sup>16</sup> One of his characteristics as a thinker is his eclecticism, and this eclecticism is reflected in his works: apart from the humanist genres of the poem, the letter and the oration, Pico also writes in scholastic genres in the Heptaplus and the Conclusiones, and follows Dante and Lorenzo as models in the Commento. It is not surprising that as a Latin stylist this friend of Poliziano

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16. E.Cassirer, 'Giovanni Pico della Mirandola' in Renaissance Essays from the Journal of the History of Ideas, ed. P.O.Kristeller and P.P.Weiner, pp.11ff.

and Beroaldo is also an eclectic. Like them , though to a lesser extent, he sprinkles his Latin works with unusual terms culled from the fashionable authors, Plautus, Apuleius, Pliny, Gellius, and indulges in diminutives and frequentatives. But he also uses and defends the use of technical terms from the scholastic tradition. This is where he differs from Poliziano; and he seems to acknowledge this divergence in his dedication of De Ente et Uno to Poliziano: "liceat autem mihi per te, linguae politioris vindicem, verbis uti quibusdam nondum fortasse Latii iure donatis." (ed.cit., p.388). Poliziano, as has been seen, uses only technical terms that have been used by an ancient author. But Pico's justification for such diction is the content, "ipsa rerum novitas et quaedam prope necessitas", and the dedication ends with the line from Manilius that justifies this unadorned Latin and is also cited by Poliziano in the Panepistemon: "ornari res ipsa negat contenta doceri."

The proof of Pico's importance as the link between the two debates on imitation thus lies not only in his personal relations with Poliziano, Cortese and Gianfrancesco Pico, who were all correspondents of his. In addition, his dispute with Barbaro has a wide resonance in these years: Cortese's proem to his Commentarii in libros Sententiarum (1504) is his reply to Pico; and Poliziano sends a copy of the letters of Pico and Barbaro to Bartolomeo Ricci. Poliziano and Cortese are also correspondents of Barbaro; and although the latter does not seem to have had personal links with G.F.Pico, he is mentioned by him as a non-Ciceronian in the second letter to Bembo, and is praised by Bembo in a

letter to Beroaldo.<sup>17</sup> The strands that link all six humanists are close and need to be teased out clearly.

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17. G.F.Pico mentions Barbaro along with Pico, Poliziano and Gaza (Santangelo, pp.74-5). Bembo praises Barbaro along with Pico, Poliziano, Pontano and Pomponio Leto (Opere iv.189).

## II

That Barbaro took Pico's letter seriously is demonstrated by the fact that he initially penned a hasty note beginning "At tu, Minerva, fellem quid provocas?" (Ep.i.100-1), which he probably never sent. His considered response reverses Pico's res / verba distinction by claiming that though he and Pico disagree in writing, they both agree in substance, for he can see through Pico's elegant defence of inelegant writing and his waste of "tot sententiolas prurientes, tam multas historias et exempla remotioris doctrinae quasi flosculos." (Ep.i.102). Barbaro imitates Pico by also resorting to prosopopoeia to introduce an imaginary witness, though the witness is not a humanist, as might have been expected, but a scholastic philosopher from Padua. This man claims that he and his colleagues are suspicious of Pico's eloquent defence. The Paduan's motto is: "Philosophus sum, apodixin desidero, caetera oratoribus relinquo." (ib.103). This laconic, logical statement with the technical Grecism "apodixin" is Barbaro's caricature of the scholastic manner. He makes the Paduan say that he prefers other authors to the philosophers recommended to him by the humanists, Aristotle, Themistius and Cicero. But even the scholastics can see that Aristotle and Plato are fine writers, so Pico's deduction, that because one orator lies all rhetoric is mendacious, is clearly false. Equally fallacious is Pico's assumption that all ornament is "mollis et delicata". In fact both extremes are detrimental to the gravitas of philosophy, both the over-ornate style and barbaric language. What is required is some sort of middle style: "medium quendam tenorem et filum

dicendi" (ib.105), for scholastic language is the lowest form of Latin; indeed it would be better to use the vernacular than this kind of Latin: "Nec enim cultius ipsi loquimur quam cerdones et populus, vernaculo melius usuri quam sic latino." (ibid.).

In the final paragraphs a number of Pico's specific arguments are refuted. He had claimed that Cicero did not require eloquence in a philosopher; but that was only in one particular argument ad hominem: in all other cases Cicero demands that philosophical writing should be clear and elegant.<sup>18</sup> Then resuming Pico's imagery, the Paduan points out that as one goes to a cobbler for shoes and to a merchant for clothes, so for words one should consult an orator. Finally after demonstrating a number of Pico's false syllogisms, including his conclusion that all rhetoric is false and that squalid Latin has a kind of majesty, the scholastic concludes by saying that he would prefer to lose his case than to win it with Pico's eloquent defence.<sup>19</sup>

In theoretical terms Barbaro is generally considered to be adopting a Ciceronian attitude, that even technical matters should be written as elegantly as possible. But in fact he advocates here, as

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18. Pico (Pros.814) had cited Cicero De Fin.I.5.4, but Barbaro can adduce three instances where eloquence is demanded: De Fin.I.3.8; Tusc.I.3.5; Ac.I.33.

19. Cortese similarly attacks those who want "philosophiam squallidiorem et horridiorem esse" (Commentarii proem, ed.cit., p.22); cf. Barbaro's "Horridum, inquit, sermonem et squalidum maiestatis plenum esse." (Ep.i.108). Both passages refer to Pico's claim of "maiestatem ex horrore" (Pros.812).

elsewhere (eg. Ep.i.59), a kind of middle elegance in theory and in practice he uses many non-Ciceronian terms. Apart from the many terms from scholastic reasoning used by the Paduan, such as "syllogismus" and "epichereima", there are legal terms ("reiectioni", "mancipes", "formularii"), grecisms (usually rhetorical terms "rhetoriis", "apodixin", "paralogismus"), diminutives ("sententiolas", "auriculas", "audaculus") and a cluster of neologism ("pomenta", "squalosa", "illuviosa"). Again Barbaro might have claimed that he uses such diction merely to represent scholastic diction in the mouth of the Paduan, but, as with Pico, we find that he uses similar diction in his other works. Neither Barbaro, then, nor Pico adopt as extreme a position as is often assumed, or as their theoretical statements would suggest. Pico is a different kind of eclectic from Poliziano, and Barbaro is not as much a Ciceronian as the young Cortese, as will be seen if we now consider his other writings.

Barbaro again commends the individuality of Pico's style when he reads the Heptaplus in 1489: "in hoc scribendi genere te ipsum non alium sequutus...atque hoc iam nec cum veteribus nec cum neotericis commune, sed tibi peculiare atque tuum est." (Ep.ii.51). Pico is praised for avoiding the excesses of the recent scholastic philosophers and for pursuing his own individual style; elsewhere Barbaro's praise of Pico's personal transformation of the content of other writers ("tuum fecisti quod erat omnium", Ep.ii.85) is reminiscent of Petrarch's advice on the correct method of imitating (Fam.xxii.2.16).



At times Barbaro's stress on the development of a personal style veers towards Ciceronianism: for instance when he criticises a prologue of Giovanni Antonio Panteo for its eclectic style:

Dices quae imitari vellem te. Certum aliquem et  
praecipuum auctorem, non omnes; nunc tu modo Cicero  
es, modo alius, ita nihil tuum est, protinus caetera  
cognoscuntur fuisse non tua. (Ep.i.45)

His advice at the end of the letter also sounds like Cortese or Bembo:

"Res ipsae ab omnibus auctoribus carpendae, genus dicendi aliquoius sciscendum" (ibid.); but although he advocates that the writer follow one particular model, he does not specify that it has to be Cicero.

A subsequent letter to Panteo defines Barbaro's position more precisely. Panteo wanted to know how to express 'latine' the modern post of "provisor exercitus". Barbaro rejects the classical terms "magister equitum" or "tribunus militum" as inaccurate, and suggests "legatus, quem vulgo provisorem exercitus appellant" (Ep.i.82): this qualification would have the virtues of both clarity and Latinity.

On this matter Barbaro is thus much closer to Poliziano than to Valla or Scala.<sup>20</sup> Thus though he uses classical terminology to enhance modern activities - "templum adeo, sacris intersum" (Ep.i.61) is his periphrasis for going to Mass, "Vestales et dicatae Deo" (Ep.i.96)

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20. See Chapter 7 above, for Poliziano's similar solution in the Coniurationis Commentarium. Later in the Castigationes Plinianaes Primae ed.cit., (vol.iii. p.1019) Barbaro rejects the reading "salnitrum" because it is a modern invention: "salnitrum, ut modo in consuetudine vulgi dicitur, factitium et ad tormenta missilium repertum, veteribus fuisse videtur incognitum"; and perhaps the idea of adding a qualification such as "ut vulgo dicitur" comes not only from Quintilian but in Barbaro's case from Pliny, who says he has to use "aut rusticis vocabulis aut externis, immo barbaris etiam cum honoris praefatione ponendis." (N.H.Pref.13).



means nuns - nevertheless he is willing to render the "savio di terraferma" with the Greek term "polemarchos" (Ep.ii.12), and uses the rare "cataphractus" for knights in chain-mail, as Poliziano had done.

These minor details are indicative of Barbaro's overall aim in writing Latin, to write latine on whatever subject. This union of eloquence and philosophy is the ideal upheld in the dispute with Pico and underlined from his first major translation, of Themistius (1481), to his final work on Pliny. The seven prefaces to the various works of Themistius stress this ideal. Barbaro relishes the challenge of translating into Latin a work of natural philosophy, because no topic in Latin is "incultius, horridius, ineptius" (Ep.i.8). He finds no help in the humanist translations of Aristotle except the versions by Gaza of Aristotle and Theophrastus which have enriched the Latin language.<sup>21</sup> In the preface addressed to Merula he says he wants to imitate Pliny's "pressum ac floridum" style but admits that he has had to resort to neologisms (Ep.i.13). But in these he has followed Cicero, by adding a qualification when he first uses the neologism; in any case he has only used ten neologisms in his translation, and they are to be regarded not as permanent additions to Latin, but as temporary props until something better is found. His use of qualifications with neologisms shows that his practice is consonant with the advice given to Panteo.

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21. Yet later he criticises Gaza's "immodico ne dicam parum necessario augendi rem latinam studio" (Cast.Plin.cit., iii, p.926) because Gaza had translated a Greek term, which was already accepted by ancient Latin writers, into Latin. Likewise he condemns Perotti's neologism conclivis on the analogy that Greek does not permit the word sympolites (Ep.ii.56).

In another preface he feels like Lucretius, dealing with technical material in a limited language. Perhaps the mention of Lucretius inspires him to deploy the bee image, claiming that he is like a drone making his humble contribution to Latin and stressing the need for individual production: "non semper a viola ad violam advolandum est, quando pes firmandus; et de te aliquid promendum ingenium quod oleat". (ib.16). Although he concentrates in his translations on rendering the thought rather than the words of the original, he also sees himself as trying to rival the original: "non tam latinum reddere Themistium, quam certare cum eo volui." (ib.9).<sup>22</sup> What he means by this rivalry is presumably endowing the difficult philosophical material with a certain Latin elegance: "omnes Aristotelis libros converto, et quanta possum luce, proprietate, cultu exorno." (ib.92). When he translates the "calculationse suiseticæ" in 1488 he declares that his efforts have confirmed that Latin is not a poorer language than Greek, for he has turned the three thorniest areas of philosophy into acceptable Latin, natural philosophy in Themistius, logic in Aristotle, and finally the "cavillationes suiseticæ" (Ep.ii.22-3). Barbaro's translations are thus a practical demonstration of the theoretical position upheld in the dispute with Pico.

The last preface of the Themistius translations stands out because of its departure from the official Ciceronian language of such dedications. This dedication to Galeazzo Pontico Faccino, like many of Barbaro's letters to him, is full of diminutives ("interpretatiunculam", "eruditulis") and rare terms from pre- or

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22. The idea of rivalling (aemulatio), which will be taken up by Bembo, comes from Quintilian X.5.4. which Barbaro cites here (Ep.i.9-10).

post-classical sources: "lucriones aginatoesque" (Festus), "succenturiaberis" (Festus, Gellius), "praestinare" (Plautus). The letters to Faccino indulge in similar preciousities. In one letter he narrates his daily routine, drawing all the words for food from Pliny and the agricultural writers (Ep.i.60-2); in another he describes his injuries after slipping on the steps leading to his house in Venice (Ep.i.93-4); in another he discusses a crux in Suetonius (ib.66-9). Another letter reveals Barbaro's views on epistolography: Faccino has written one letter which is too ornate and another that is unadorned, but the ideal lies somewhere in between: "Ego volebam medium" (Ep.i.59). A letter should have almost, though not quite, the same amount of ornament as a speech; for although some complain about the many proverbs in Barbaro's letters, there is strong classical precedent for this in Cicero's letters.<sup>23</sup> Barbaro clearly feels that letters to friends require this informal tone, and this one ends with further humble words for food and diminutives: "sententiolam salsiusculam...sordidiuscula" (Ep.i.60).

Letters to other close friends illustrate the same urge to lower the tone of the Latin with common or technical words. There are many technical terms in the letters on astrology to Leonardo Montagna (Ep.i.69-70) and to Girolamo Donato (Ep.ii.29-30); he employs many

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23. Poliziano makes a similar distinction between letters and dialogues, and also approves of the use of proverbs in letters: "Multas epistolae inesse convenit festivitates, amoris significationes, multa proverbia." (Cited in E.Garin, 'La prosa latina del Quattrocento' in Medievo e rinascimento, pp.112-3 n.6).

rare but functional words in his description of a night at the mercy of mosquitoes (Ep.i.74-5), of a wedding feast (ii.17-18) and of his trip to Belgium (i.98-9). Other letters reveal his fellow humanists' tastes in literature: Faccino is working on a commentary on Silius Italicus (i.56), and Merula is advised by Barbaro to take as his models for his history Suetonius and Tacitus, since he is not living in a republic but under a prince (i.54). One of the letters to Poliziano begins with the kind of Latin savoured by both men but criticised by Scala:

Ut ferramenta oleo sic amicitiae officiis extersae non  
contrahunt aeruginem...hominem homini plerumque mores  
et iudicia conciliant, nec minore glutino quam ista  
coeli defluvia ferruminant. (ii.41).<sup>24</sup>

The conscious use of this kind of terminology confirms that Barbaro cannot be simply classified as a Ciceronian. Finally several letters show him grappling with the language of Pliny and Dioscorides: one letter discusses the correct Latin names of plants (ii.45-7), one to Giorgio Valla examines various rare terms from Pliny, discussed in Perotti's Cornucopia (ii.52-7), one to Cortese suggests the correct Latin for sturgeon, lamprey and trout (ii.86), and another considers the words for sugar in Latin (ii.87-8)!<sup>25</sup>

But apart from the letters and his major work, the Castigationes Plinianae, Barbaro displays a more conformist, Ciceronian Latin in

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24. See above Chapter 7.

25. The question had already been raised by Valla: see his Gesta Ferd.Regis., ed. O.Besomi, p.201. See above Chapter 4, p.201 n.25.

his other works. In his official dedications and letters, such as those to Sixtus IV and Alexander VI, in his political orations, and in his two treatises De Coelibatu and De Officio Legati Barbaro opts for a Ciceronian language which eschews the archaisms and preciousities of his letters to his friends, and is devoid of the neologisms of his translation.<sup>26</sup> But his most important work, the monumental Castigationes Pliniana, because of its very nature - a technical work of textual restoration often involving Pliny's unusual vocabulary - precludes Barbaro from employing a Ciceronian manner and confirms that he is closer to Beroaldo and Poliziano than to the Ciceronians. He constantly insists on the importance of Pliny for both res and verba: he tells Pico that without Pliny the Latin language would not be capable of expressing reality, and attests to the popularity of this difficult text by saying that whoever is not studying the Historia Naturalis is regarded as unlearned (Ep.ii.92). He reiterates the importance of Pliny for the Latin tongue in the dedication of his work to Alexander VI in 1492 (Ep.ii.80), and at the end of the work calls Pliny with some justification "latinae rei puppis et prora".<sup>27</sup>

In fact far from being Ciceronian Barbaro in this work aims to copy Pliny's style. He says he will write "praefationibus summotis omnibus et sine ulla verborum pompa" (Ep.ii.71), and elsewhere characterises Pliny's style as "singularis...et admiratione digna

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26. De Coelibatu, De Officio Legati, ed. V.Branca (Florence, 1969).

27. Cast.Plin. ed. G.Pozzi vol.iii, p.1208.

brevitas quae nihil praeterit."<sup>28</sup> In an earlier letter to Giorgio Valla about Perotti's errors regarding Pliny Barbaro is clearly imitating Pliny's language:

Hae sunt aliquot sententiae nostri vitiligenes et  
lichenes, quas ne Perottae quidem aquae viterbiensi  
agro conditae ab eo, quasi ciceronianae alterae,  
possint eluere. (Ep.ii.57).

In these words Barbaro specifically alludes to the opposition between the Ciceronian style and the enthusiasm for Pliny which are both typical of the end of the Quattrocento. Barbaro can even cite classical models for his Castigationes Pliniana Secundae: Dionysius of Halicarnassus or Iulius Pollux who both added supplementary books to their commentaries (Ep.ii.83). And among contemporaries he is following the example of Perotti's Cornucopia in writing a long commentary on one difficult author.

Pico and Barbaro are important figures in the imitation debate at the end of the fifteenth century. While no strict line exists that connects Poliziano, Pico and his nephew on the one side, and Cortese, Barbaro and Bembo on the other, there are significant links between all six humanists. Barbaro is not a Ciceronian like the young Cortese or the mature Bembo.<sup>29</sup> Certainly his argument against Pico, that even philosophy must be written elegantly, is Ciceronian in origin; he does believe in imitating just one model in any genre;

28. Cast.Plin. iii, p.1261. Pozzi in his introduction illustrates Barbaro's "volontà di discorrere intorno a Plinio usando uno stile pliniano" (i.p.CLXI).

29. Though Branca rightly points to the link between Barbaro's "strenuous defence of the absolute value of word and form" and the linguistic interests of Bembo and Fortunio (in 'Ermolao Barbaro and Late Quattrocento Venetian Humanism' in Renaissance Venice, ed. J.R.Hale, p.236.)

and the Latin of his official orations, letters and treatises could be described as Ciceronian. But in his translations, his letters to friends, and in his work on Pliny his lexis has a higher incidence of non-classical terms than Pico's. G.F.Pico acknowledges this when he detects, apart from the neologisms, the influence of Cicero, Pliny, Apuleius and Gellius in Barbaro's Latin; and the slightly less eclectic imitation of Cicero, Livy, Apuleius and Gellius in Giovanni Pico's style.<sup>30</sup>

His enthusiasm for Pliny confirms that Barbaro does not belong in the Ciceronian camp, and he shares a belief in the progress of his contemporaries (Ep.i.86; ii.46) that is often associated with the anti-Ciceronians, particularly in Gianfrancesco Pico. The words used in one letter to express his belief in progress have a significant resonance:

cuncto mortalium generi sicut staturam corporis  
foecunditate seminum sumptitata minorem in dies  
fieri constat...ita vigore animi et celsitudine  
mentis veterascente, haud temere filios reperiri  
qui patribus inferiores doctrina et probitate  
non sint. (Ep.i.28)

The language here ("sumptitata", "celsitudine" and especially "veterascente") recalls the style of Poliziano, and it is not

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30. G.F.Pico, Opera Omnia (Basle, 1573), p.1335. Branca stresses Barbaro's anti-Ciceronian tendencies as his reason for retaining the archaic spelling of some words in his edition of the letters: 'lontano dalla stretta imitazione aureo-ciceroniana...coniava arditamente nuovi vocaboli, inclinava anche a modi e a forme arcaiche o della decadenza più ricercata.' (Ep.i. pp.CXV-CXVI).



surprising that the latter approves even of Barbaro's neologisms which enrich Latin.<sup>31</sup> Barbaro's glossary of technical terms in Pliny which he appended to the Castigationes would certainly have interested the author of the Panepistemon.<sup>32</sup> Barbaro is thus closer to Poliziano than to the young Cortese, even though the latter asks Barbaro's advice on Latin terminology. Barbaro has links with both sides of the imitation debate and is respected by the other five men, including both G.F.Pico and Bembo.

Though Barbaro can adopt the Ciceronian style when he deems it necessary, the bulk of his writings demonstrate that he is unwilling to be bound within the narrow confines of Ciceronian Latin. After the triumph of Ciceronianism in the Cinquecento, writers who follow Bembo, such as Paolo Giovio, see that Barbaro's place is beside Poliziano for his rejection of Cicero and his stress on individual talent:

[Ciceronem] Politianus et Hermolaus fastidisse videbantur, utpote qui omnis eruditionis exundante copia instructi, aliquid in stylo proprium, quod peculiarem ex certa nota mentis effigiem referret, ex naturae genio effinxisse nobilius putarint. 33

Far from considering him a Ciceronian Ludovico Nogarola, who translated Themistius in the sixteenth century, was able to see that Barbaro made the Greek author speak such Latin "ut spreto penitus et rejecto Cicerone, Plinium, Apulejum, Capellam effingere atque imitari tantummodo videatur."<sup>34</sup>

31. For "veterascere" see the famous passage in Poliziano, Opera 214; for the praise of Barbaro's neologisms see Opera 301.

32. The Glossemata are in Cast.Plin. cit. vol.iii pp.1353ff.

33. Jovius, Elogia Virorum Literis Illustrium (Basle, 1577), p.93.

34. Cited in A.Zeno, Dissertazioni vossiane vol.ii. p.379. Bigi's definition of Barbaro's style as "un ardito eclettismo di moduli e di costrutti, che non rifugge da espressioni rare e da neologismi" (DBI 6, p.98) is accurate for most of Barbaro's works, but fails to distinguish the differing style of the orations and treatises.



## CHAPTER NINE

THE DISPUTE BETWEEN GIANFRANCESCO PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA AND PIETRO BEMBO

Gianfrancesco Pico's debate with Bembo on imitation in 1512 has been the subject of substantial interest in recent years, but it has invariably been studied either in isolation or in conjunction with the dispute between Poliziano and Cortese.<sup>1</sup> The younger Pico's views on literary imitation, as expressed in the letters to Bembo, are taken as a monolith, a group of critical ideas without earlier development in his own writings or tenuously related to the theoretical stance of Poliziano. Nevertheless there are relevant antecedents in some of Gianfrancesco's earlier works, notably the introductory letter to his Latin letters, which, like Poliziano's first epistle, constitutes a defence of his eclectic Latin and anticipates by at least five years the principal arguments used in the polemic with Bembo.<sup>2</sup> The appearance of these ideas in the first decade of the Cinquecento confirms that the dispute about imitation is not merely a personal clash between Pico and Bembo, but that it is rather a reflection of the importance of the question in years of increasing extremism in the style of Latin employed by Pico's contemporaries. Little has also been

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1. Santangelo treats the dispute on its own in his Il Bembo critico e il principio dell'imitazione and in the introduction to his edition of the three letters of the dispute (Le Lettere "De Imitatione" di G.F.Pico della Mirandola e di P.Bembo, cit; hereafter cited as Santangelo with page no.). F.Ulivi (L'imitazione nella poetica del Rinascimento) links it sketchily with the debate between Poliziano and Cortese.
  2. It already appears in the Strasbourg edition of G.F.Pico, De Rerum Praenotione...etc (Argentoraci, 1507), cc. Aiiir-Aiiir. For convenience I cite not from this edition, but from the Opera Omnia (Basle, 1573) - cited as Opera with page number.

made of the literary influence of Giovanni Pico on his nephew, whereas many of the ideas and even the very words of the elder Pico recur in the writings of Gianfrancesco.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter I shall follow the order adopted in previous chapters dealing with literary polemics by (I) examining G.F.Pico's other works first in order to place in the proper context of Pico's development the dispute with Bembo; and (II) analysing Bambo's reply to Pico in order to move from it to a consideration of Bembo's views on literary imitation as a whole.

# I

It is not surprising that the younger Pico should have been influenced by his uncle, for, apart from their family ties, the uncle acted as his nephew's spiritual mentor, sending him two lengthy Latin epistles for his moral edification;<sup>4</sup> and Gianfrancesco repaid this debt by collecting his uncle's works and editing them for publication in 1496, prefacing them with his biography of his uncle. The Vita J. Pici Mirandulani, an important document in many other respects, is relevant to our enquiry because of the style in which it is written. It is clear that Gianfrancesco not only affects some of the archaic or poetic words found in his uncle's works, such as "furcilassent" and "baubantes";<sup>5</sup> but he also follows him in some of his major critical

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3. C.B.Schmitt (Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469-1533), pp.38ff) deals with the philosophical influence of the elder on the younger Pico, but no one has studied the literary influences of Giovanni on Gianfrancesco.
  4. Giovanni Pico, Opera Omnia (Basle, 1557), pp.345ff. In this chapter to avoid confusion, the elder Pico's works will be cited from this edition as G.P.Opera with page number; the younger Pico's will be cited merely as Opera.
  5. The unusual Plautine "furcilare" had been used by the elder Pico in a letter to Andrea Corneo (G.P.Opera 376); the Lucretian "baubantes" was actually in one of the letters from uncle to nephew (G.P.Opera 345).

ideas. He reaffirms, for instance, Giovanni Pico's notion that in the Heptaplus the "preciosae illius et rarae supellictilis usus" (G.P.Opera 4r) - a phrase modelled on one in the letter to Barbaro: "supellictilis rarae et preciosae" (Pros.812) - is only for the few who can understand such difficult language and thought. The words he uses to convey his uncle's preference for sacred wisdom rather than the eloquence of Cicero and Demosthenes are significant:

non quod essent, ut illae, calamistris inustae, et  
 corrasis undique fucis, et cincinnis constipatae, sed  
 ut veram, solidam et redolerent et saperent eloquentiam,  
 veris sententiis, vera arte suffultam, essentque...  
 Aegyptiorum opibus non consulto suffarcinatae. (G.P.Opera 4r).

This passage repeats Giovanni Pico's claim of the superiority of res over verba, but it does so in language that is reminiscent of Poliziano rather than the elder Pico, particularly in the rare, compound verbs, "corrasis", "constipatae", "suffultam", "suffarcinatae".<sup>6</sup>

Gianfrancesco's assessment of his uncle's style, though it rhetorically claims that it contains the best of Cicero's copia, Sallust's brevity, Fronto's terseness, Pliny's and Symmachus' florid style and even contains "flosculis plurimis Apuleii";<sup>7</sup> nevertheless

6. "corrasa gratiola" is in the Miscellanea preface, which the younger Pico seems to know well: the epithets applied to his uncle's unfinished works "non tornata", "exasseatas, dedolatas" (5r) also come from that preface (216); and the description of his "stilo...non ascito, sed...multiformi etiam pro rerum varietate" (5r) echoes Poliziano's dispute with Scala (Pol.Opera 58).

7. The first five authors are mentioned by Macrobius (Sat.v.1.7), but G.F.Pico adds Apuleius (Symmachus is mentioned in G.P.Opera 383).

this rather vapid praise does at least contain the solid idea that the elder Pico is an eclectic in both his style and his models. Gianfrancesco himself writes in a similarly eclectic fashion: we have noted his fondness for unusual archaisms favoured by his uncle, unciceronian compounds and epithets redolent of Poliziano, and there are also in the Vita a number of frequentatives ("licitatas actionatasque" - 6r) and diminutives: "minutulum quantulumcumque devoti vel seniculi vel aniculae affectum" (6r). At the end of the biography, when about to relate the final episodes of his uncle's life, he deliberately echoes a prominent passage from Apuleius.<sup>8</sup>

One would naturally expect Gianfrancesco to adopt his uncle's position on the question of philosophy, and although he certainly shares the elder Pico's emphasis on content rather than form, he seems at times closer to Barbaro's stance in preferring a middle elegance that is neither too ornate nor too technical.<sup>9</sup> In one of his own early philosophical works, De Rerum Praenotione (1502), he has deliberately chosen not to write in the scholastic style:

"percunctatorio illo stilo conciso alterne argutulo, minus latino, nil omnino culto, quem Parisiensem appellant." (Opera 370). The epithets

8. "Apuleii verbis admonere consilium est, ne crassibus auribus, et obstinato corde ea putent mendacia..." (7v) comes from Ap.Met.I.3.

9. He echoes Barbaro's translation of Themistius when he says that whoever insists on excessive rhetorical ornament is doing something incongruous in these philosophical matters: "vel ligulam baxeis vel ansulam crepidis ipse reponat." (370); cf. "aut ansulam crepidis, aut ligulam baseis, aut quid aliudpauillum, quod subsultet, reponas." (Themistius, Paraphrasis in Posteriora Analytica, Venice, 1560, p.1).

applied here to the Parisian manner are in contrast with the elder Pico's use of the style of the "celebratissimorum Parisiensium" in the Conclusiones.<sup>10</sup> Gianfrancesco feels that he is more in the tradition of the earlier theologians, Augustine, Jerome and Ambrose rather than following the later scholastic writers. Indeed he maintains that even Aristotle did not write in the scholastic style. Yet he too fears criticism from the Ciceronians, who may feel that the style of this work is not sufficiently rhetorical; to these men he opposes the elder Pico's response, that what is important is not the "florida verba, non eloqui cincinnos sermonisque pigmenta" but the "res" and "veritas" of the work.

That Gianfrancesco's stylistic ideal in philosophical works is some sort of middle style is confirmed in the De Fide Theoremata, where he is obliged by his subject matter to use the more humble Parisian style, and also by his aim to be understood even by those who are not skilled in Latin. But despite admitting that he is imitating those who subordinate Latin eloquence to the importance of doctrine, he still has not totally neglected stylistic considerations: "si quandoque admisimus barbariem non affectaverimus: ne delicatos etiam palatus omnifaria ferculorum immundicie absterreremus." (Opera 215).<sup>11</sup>

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10. G.Pico, Conclusiones, ed. B.Kieszkowski, p.27.

11. "Omnifaria ferculorum" again suggest Poliziano (Elegy to Fonzio, VIII.137): "Sed quoniam variae delectant fercula mensae."

But despite Gianfrancesco Pico's ambition of a Latin style that lies somewhere between the arid, scholastic manner and the rhetorical excesses of the Ciceronians, it is evident from his language that he is closer to the eclectics than to the Ciceronians. This is confirmed if one considers his correspondents, who are the heirs and friends of the great representatives of unciceronian Latin: Pietro Crinito, Aldus Manutius, and Filippo Beroaldo. One of the younger Pico's letters to Beroaldo shows that he too is influenced by the latter's exotic Latin:

Tot me onerasti officiis...ut magnum mihi forte esset  
terrículum ne ponderi succumberem...illae quippe  
infirmiusculae sunt amicitiae quae epistolice  
scriptionibus veluti sustentaculis indigent. (Opera 1312)<sup>12</sup>

But it is in the introductory epistle to his collected letters that Gianfrancesco Pico sets out his anti-Ciceronian ideals in their fullest form before the dispute with Bembo. The letter is addressed to Ludovico Ricchieri of Rovigo, or Ludovicus Caelius Rhodiginus as he styled himself, and is clearly modelled on Poliziano's first epistle both in its defence of the unciceronian language of the letters and in the arguments adduced by Pico to support this defence. Like the Florentine humanist, Pico's major justification for the style of his Latin letters is the fact that there are so many different tastes

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12. This commonplace of humanist epistolography was often used by Beroaldo himself because it allowed him to use unusual words like "scriptio", and diminutives like "infirmiuscula"; Pico the elder had used the topos and this diminutive in his letter to Corneo (G.P.Opera 376). The German publisher of the Strasbourg edition (1507) of Gianfrancesco's works flaunts his Apuleian sympathies by apologising for "labeculas offendicula moramenta et immutationes transmutationesve litterarum ac syllabarum...et id genus errores minutulos."

in Latin language. Some prefer the rounded periodic style, others want the stress to be on wit, some want a natural structure of sentence, others something more recondite. As for language Pico discerns three main groups: there are those who permit only classical diction: "ne verbum promerent quod non inveniri posset eis in libri qui Iulii Caesaris et Octavii tempore scripti fuissent" (Opera 1266); the second group, who want to enrich Latin with legitimate neologisms, are actually following the advice of Cicero, and are more Ciceronian than the first group; and a third set of writers prefer to use "Catoniana et Plautinia verba". When one considers that this letter was probably written about the same time as Cortese's proem to the Commentarii in libros Sententiarum (1504), it is not surprising that Pico should deal with the same problems of classical diction, neologisms and archaisms. Other literary documents of the time also help to explain the context of Pico's letter: in 1503 G.Garzoni, reacting against the Apuleian Latin of other Bolognese humanists such as Beroaldo and G.B.Pio, published his De Elocutione, in which he warns Leandro Alberti to imitate only Cicero; and in 1505 Pio's Annotamenta, although they suggest that he too has modified his earlier "stilo asio", on the question of imitation they show he is still an eclectic; his words recall both Poliziano and G.F.Pico himself:

iudico cuique suum dicendi modum peculiaremque stilum  
a natura comparatum, et sicuti viridissimum et  
amoenissimum pratum diversicolori flore fit illistrius,  
ita romanorum eloquium disparibus dicendi characteribus  
exornatum splendet. 13

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13. Dionisotti, Gli umanisti, p.101. For Garzoni see E.Raimondi, 'Il primo commento umanistico a Lucrezio' in Politica e commedia. Dal Beroaldo al Machiavelli, pp.101ff.



Pico never mentions Pio by name, presumably because he would not want to be associated with that extreme eclecticism, but their views are in general agreement.

Given the variety of tastes in Latin, Pico's conclusion is that it is best to imitate a plurality of models: "ut quoscunque semper et optimos in primis legeremus sed neminem unum sequimur." (Opera 1266). It is not so much the traditional condemnations of imitators, as found in Plato and Horace, that convince Pico; rather it is the power of nature, which ensures that there is always a variety of both mental and physical features in humans: it is nature, not imitation, that produces any similarity between two writers. In particular he criticises those writers who are so devoted to one model that whenever they have to deal with a topic untouched by the model they are instantly revealed as mere "simiae", or - here he uses an original image - like those primitive drawings which are so unlike reality that titles have to be appended to them to denote what they are. Pico repeats Quintilian's words in a way that seems to direct the saying at Cortese: "qui semper asseclae volunt esse nunquam precedunt." Pico's definition of the best type of imitation includes the two elements that will be upheld in the dispute with Bembo, the plurality of models and the emphasis on the natural instinct of the writer: as long as the latter element is respected, imitation is acceptable: "ita nihilominus ne propriam naturam ne veram genuinamque faciem invertas ut similis evadas." (Opera 1267).

At the end of the letter he reiterates his justification of



eclecticism on the grounds of the variety of taste, and gives instances of variations of style within one writer: Plato and Cicero were normally renowned for their clarity, but in their letters they were both obscure and allusive. Like Alberti and Poliziano, Pico points to the dissimilarity of Cicero's style in his various works, adding that Cicero himself was conscious of the gradual maturing of his rhetorical style. Finally, he affirms his confidence in the new age by saying that in the right circumstances even the ancient authors can be surpassed, for nature is not too old to produce worthy writers:

nec nostro etiam tempore lassata natura viribus ut ex  
sese promere nequeat quae digna laude nec veteribus  
perspecta censeantur. (Opera 1267)<sup>14</sup>

And he concludes with a review of all the criticism made even in antiquity of authors such as Vergil, Homer, Demosthenes, Livy, Sallust, Cicero. The introductory letter thus has many similarities to the writings of Poliziano and to the position of Giovanni Pico; but where Gianfrancesco differs from his predecessors is in his use of a wider range of examples of literary variety and in his neoplatonic emphasis on the natural talent of the individual, "propria quaedam ac nativa imago spiritalis". Pico's letter illustrates that the question of imitation and style in Latin is to the fore even before the dispute with Bembo. After the deaths of Poliziano, Pico the Elder and

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14. Although the topos comes from a number of ancient sources, G.F. Pico probably derived it, like much else, from one of his uncle's works: "quasi in nobis effeta sit vis naturae" (De Hominis Dignitate, ed. E. Garin, p. 144); and reuses it in the dispute with Bembo (Santangelo 31) and in another letter in praise of Poliziano, Pico and Barbaro (Opera 1335).

Beroaldo, the question of imitation remains alive and is even exacerbated by the excessively unclassical Latin of their successors, such as Giovanni Battista Pio. It is the presence of Pio in Rome that is also the premise to the exchange of letters between Gianfrancesco Pico and Bembo.<sup>15</sup>

Pico probably came into contact with Bembo through their mutual friend Angelo Colocci, an avid collector of manuscripts of Cicero's works, whose Horti Colotiani were the scene of learned discussion and the haunt of both Pico and Bembo.<sup>16</sup> The letters exchanged between the two humanists suggest that the subject of literary imitation was one of the most controversial topics in Rome at the time. The topic of imitation comes to the fore at this time not only because of the presence of G.B.Pio, but also because of the interest aroused by the content of the first book of Bembo's Prose which was completed around 1512. Gianfrancesco Pico's first letter to Bembo, dated 12th September 1512, substantially restates his views on imitation, as outlined in his introductory letter. His position is still the same: "imitandum inquam bonos omnes, non unum aliquem, nec omnibus etiam in rebus." (Santangelo 24). He uses much the same arguments as in that first letter to justify his approval of eclectic imitation, stressing in particular the need to develop one's natural style rather than

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15. On Pio's presence in Rome and in general see C.Dionisotti, Gli umanisti cit., pp.78ff; E.Raimondi, 'Il primo commento umanistico a Lucrezio' pp.101ff; V.del Nero, 'Note sulla vita di G.B.Pio', esp. p.255; A.Campana, s.v. 'Mariangelo Accursio' (DBI 1, p.126).

16. Santangelo, p.11.

depending on artificial imitation: after all the great authors of antiquity were noted more for their originality than their imitation. As in that earlier letter, he illustrates the great variety of the ancient writers: even in the same genre Livy is very different from Sallust, and amongst philosophers the styles of Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle are equally diverse. Where Pico differs from his earlier statement on imitation is in his direction of Platonic arguments against Aristotelian notions. Thus although Aristotle maintains in the Poetics that the imitative principle, or mimesis, is fundamental in art, Pico upholds the priority of the writer's natural instinct which it is wrong to divert from its natural inclination:

proprium tamen et congenitum instinctum et propensionem animi nactus est ab ipso ortu, quam frangere et aliorum vertere est ipsam plane violare naturam. (Santangelo 27).<sup>17</sup>

For the writer's natural style is based on the Platonic Idea of eloquence implanted in his mind, which is the standard by which he judges all writing.

Also original in this letter to Bembo is Pico's exaltation of inventio over dispositio and elocutio. The writer's invention, or subject, is best if it is free and original; and since the other two parts of rhetoric have to suit the subject matter according to the law of literary decorum, then it follows that disposition and language are conditioned more by the subject than by imitation of another author.

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17. Pico's position is basically the same as Petrarch's: "est sane cuique naturaliter...quiddam suum ac proprium, quod colere ac castigare quam mutare cum facilius tum melius atque felicius sit." (Fam.xxii.2.17).

After rehearsing the familiar claim that nature is not too old to produce writers of genius even in Pico's time, he neatly combines two of the standard images of the imitation debate, the shoe and the footprint. The Ciceronians seem to Pico to be trying to walk in Cicero's exact footsteps, but it is unlikely that a modern shoe will fit the "vestigia" exactly. The climax of the letter is Pico's systematic attack on the Ciceronians. After reiterating the arguments about the variety of Ciceronian Latin (used by Alberti and Poliziano) and the perilous nature of a rigid Ciceronianism which depends on faulty manuscripts, Pico tackles Bembo's claim to be able to write like Cicero on any topic. Even if the modern writer uses only words found in Cicero, unless he retains the same order as in the original text the result will not be Ciceronian: "erunt tamen verba Ciceronis, non autem Ciceronis ea constructio." (ib.35). Pico thus demonstrates the illusory nature of the Ciceronian ideal and the tendency of the imitator to become a mere transcriber of Cicero's texts.

Pico also varies the traditional imagery of the debate. Those who are afraid to write about subjects not discussed by Cicero are like children who cannot speak or young birds who can only watch their parents fly. (ib.27). To describe the Ciceronians using only words found in Cicero to construct their sentences he uses not the mosaic simile but an analogous one: they are building a wall with Cicero's bricks, but because the bricks will not be laid in the same order as in the Ciceronian construction, the new wall will still not be a "Tullianus paries" (ib.35). At the end he describes the variety of tastes in Latin in terms of the cloak metaphor. Some prefer their

cloth to be of Cicero's and Pliny's texture, perhaps allowing some threads from Celsus and Columella; others prefer an older garment, of the style of Cato and Ennius; and a third group clearly prefer Apuleius: "nec desunt qui asinum cum existiment bellum animal et aureum, de illius pilis sibi lacernam conficiant." (ib.36). Pico also introduces some original sources when he makes his final point: both Dionysius of Halycarnassus and Hermogenes insist that all the rules of rhetoric must be subordinate to the innate idea of eloquence in the writer's mind, (ib.37), so that a variety of authors should be imitated in such a way "ut una ex omnibus quae nulla sit illarum... et conflatur et coalescat oratio." (ib.37).

This first letter to Bembo adopts substantially the same stance on imitation as the earlier one to Ludovico Ricchieri. The most significant changes are shifts in emphasis: this letter is directed not generally against those who uphold that just one model should be imitated, but specifically against Ciceronians like Bembo who claim to be able "quaque de re...Ciceroniane loqui" (ib.35); Pico's Platonism now has a specific target in Aristotle's Poetics and its theories; and Pico upholds the priority of content (inventio/res) over form (elocutio/verba). Pico's adversaries here are thus the Ciceronians, the Aristotelians and the formalists who are destined to win the dispute on imitation and whose interests are going to dominate literary discussion in the rest of the century.

Pico's second epistle to Bembo on imitation, though it was probably never sent, is still relevant to our enquiry. He begins with

an elegant adaptation of one of the stock images of the debate, saying that Bembo's stinging reply to his first letter contains so much more honey than poison that Pico would like to rouse him again. Bembo had cited Cortese's letter as an adequate response to those who reject imitation altogether; but Pico points out that the dispute between Cortese and Poliziano is on a different topic (presumably because Pico does not reject imitation totally, but rather the imitation of just one model), and in any case Cortese's Latin is no nearer than Poliziano's to the language of Cicero. At least Poliziano preferred to be a man not a servile swarm or ape; and as for Cortese's image of the father and the son, Pico maintains that many sons are different from and yet superior to their fathers. The rest of the letter reaffirms the points made in the first letter to Barbaro: even Cicero asserted the importance of developing the individual's talent; those who follow only one model can only speak "ex commentario" and produce merely a cento of the model: "orationem tanquam ex diversis pannis centonem" (Santangelo 69); the imitator becomes thus a mere exscriptor (ib.70); it is not enough to imitate Cicero's words without reproducing his content, otherwise such imitators become "Mortuaria glossaria" (ib.73);<sup>18</sup> invention determines style, not vice versa, and so on. The imagery is also traditional: apart from the images of the bee, the ape and the son cited at the beginning, there is also Pico's picture of the Ciceronians as birds confined to cages;<sup>19</sup> the cloth

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18. This mistaken reading of a passage in Aulus Gellius (XVIII.7.3) again comes probably from the elder Pico's use of it in the letter to Barbaro (Pros.820); see above, Chapter 8, p.316 n.14.

19. Perhaps Pico is here varying Poliziano's image of the parrot (Pros.902).

image in the cento; and his remark to Bembo that even if he found Roman sandals to fit Cicero's "vestigia" they would not be adequate, he would also need a cloak (ib.72-3).

The most significant critical remarks are made at the end of the letter when Pico admits that Cicero is the supreme prose writer in Latin, but insists that all the best writers of the past and the present followed not some other model but themselves, "hoc est propriam animi Ideam propensionemque dicendi" (ib.74). Pico then lists Barbaro, the elder Pico, Poliziano and Gaza as modern instances of this approach. Barbaro is seen as a devotee of Pliny rather than Cicero: he uses some of Cicero's words but not his phrasing, otherwise he would never have had enough paper to write his work on Pliny. As for the elder Pico: "Ciceroni magis accedit quam Plinio, sed proprium quiddam et peculiare praeseferit." (ib.75). And Poliziano is accurately characterised as "varius in dicendo", the author of works of uncommon erudition. The letter ends with Pico claiming that he wants to be a real Ciceronian, ie. someone who imitates the Roman orator in warning others of the dangers of imitation.

Gianfrancesco Pico was a prolific writer; but although only a small number of writings have been considered above, it has still been possible to isolate a sufficient amount of evidence to indicate his views on literary imitation. On this matter he adopts substantially the same outlook as that taken by Petrarch and Poliziano. Where he differs from them is in his stronger neoplatonic emphasis when he upholds the priority of the writer's innate idea of style. He belongs



in the eclectic camp, as his own writing demonstrates; in his theory and practice of writing Latin he is influenced by Poliziano and his uncle; in fact when he was editing his uncle's works, he initially thought of publishing them, because of their disorganised state, as "Stromata" or "Miscellanea" (Opera 1321). Gianfrancesco's works on imitation, particularly his introductory letter to another eclectic like Ludovico Ricchieri, belong with the group of works on this subject by Cortese, Pio and Garzoni which have already been studied by Dionisotti and Raimondi.<sup>20</sup> But although Gianfrancesco in many respects looks to the past, he also anticipates the future development of some of the literary trends of the Cinquecento. His rejection of Ciceronianism, which is analogous to his attack on Aristotle in the Examen Vanitatis, is based not only on stylistic reasons;<sup>21</sup> it is also grounded in his disapproval of the use of Ciceronian language in ecclesiastical institutions, and in this he anticipates Erasmus.<sup>22</sup>

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20. Pico's letter to Ricchieri is perhaps one of the "testimonianze inedite o dimenticate" which Grayson also feels is necessary to complete the picture sketched by Dionisotti and Raimondi (C.Grayson, 'Le lingue del Rinascimento' in Il Rinascimento: aspetti e problemi, p.143).
21. For the attack on Aristotle see C.B.Schmitt, op.cit., pp.56ff.
22. The dangers of the elegant but paganising terms of Ciceronian Latin are pointed out particularly in Erasmus' Ciceronianus. It is no coincidence that one of Pico's closest correspondents, Celio Calcagnini, writes on imitation in Latin later in the century (see B.Weinberg, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance, vol.1, pp.60, 100ff.).



## II

Bembo's reply to Pico's first letter to him indicates that the subject of imitation had been discussed orally by the two humanists before Pico put his case in writing. Bembo's distinction here between the written and spoken word and his insistence on the superiority of the former will also be one of the premises of his Prose della volgar lingua, much of which had been completed by this time, January 1513, though not published until 1525.<sup>23</sup> He attacks the hint of inconsistency in Pico's position, who at times seems to reject any form of imitation (in which case Bembo refers him to Cortese's letter to Poliziano), and at other times approves of those who imitate a variety of literary models. Since Cortese has supplied all the answers to the first position, Bembo now sets about arguing to counter the second position. He rejects Pico's neoplatonic reliance on the innate Idea of eloquence, because Bembo's own experience shows that he only acquired this Idea through reading other authors. Bembo pursues this empirical approach by claiming that unlike Cicero or Plato he is not offering an ideal theoretical model, but a real practical one: Cicero. After producing the standard argument against eclectic imitation, that it prevents the development of a unified style, Bembo concentrates on his own experience as a writer.

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23. P. Bembo, Prose e rime, ed. C. Dionisotti (Turin, 1966), p. 74 - hereafter cited as Prose with page number. For the other works I cite from P. Bembo, Opere 4 vols (Venice, 1729).

He states his position on imitation at the start of this section: "eos mihi vehementer probari, qui prosa oratione scripturi Ciceronem sibi unum ad imitandum proponerent; heroicis carminibus Virgilium." (Santangelo 49). He then traces the three stages of his own development in the writing of Latin which led him to this Ciceronian position. He began as an eclectic in both philosophy and style, until the arguments against eclecticism which he has just outlined persuaded him to adopt another approach. In this second stage his goal was the pursuit of a totally individual style; but this too proved unsatisfactory, because his inventio could never be totally original, the subject had almost always been covered by an ancient writer; and if by chance he did find an untouched topic he was dissatisfied with his style, which could never achieve the classical tone: "nullum antiquitatis vestigium, nullam notam referebat." (ib.50). Bembo seems totally contradictory here, aiming at original content but in a classical tone; yet these are the two problems that dogged the humanists from Petrarch's time to Bembo's: on the one hand they wanted to avoid a wholly derivative subject matter (Petrarch and Alberti articulate this ideal most clearly), on the other they were pursuing an elegance of language which had only been achieved in the classical past. Bembo's solution to this Quattrocento impasse is the third stage of his stylistic evolution<sup>4</sup>, the decision to choose a single literary model. He began by imitating mediocre rather than outstanding authors, but found he could not then make the transition to imitating the best. It is at this stage that he excuses his lack of success in Latin because he had also devoted himself to writing in the vernacular. His motives for cultivating the volgare show that

Poliziano's achievements in both languages counted for nothing with Bembo:

ad quae quidem conscribenda eo maiore studio incubuimus  
quod ita depravata multa atque perversa iam a plurimis  
ea in lingua tradebantur, obsoleto prope recto illo usu  
atque proprio scribendi; brevi ut videretur, nisi quis  
eam sustentavisset, eo prolapsura ut diutissime sine  
honore, sine splendore sine ullo cultu dignitateque  
iaceret. (Santangelo 53).<sup>24</sup>

Bembo is confident in progress in a different way from Pico: he believes that those who devote themselves solely to the imitation of Cicero and Vergil in Latin, without the distractions encountered by Bembo, will achieve perfection. Pico had cited the criticism of Cicero voiced in antiquity, but Bembo reduces Cicero's stylistic faults such as verbosity to the personal fault of pride, and this divorce of style from content will allow Bembo in the Prose to proclaim Boccaccio also as a faultless model: "Id enim si peccatum est, non stili culpa, sed animi vitio contractum est...(stilus) esse optimus in vita non optima potest." (ib.55).<sup>25</sup> He ends this section with his famous tripartite division of the imitative process into imitating ("imitari"), catching up with ("assequi") and outdoing the model ("praeterire"). But both this tripartite process and the ultimate goal of surpassing Cicero and Vergil are merely theoretical articulations of his theory of imitation. He does not seriously believe that they can be surpassed by a contemporary.

24. The wording and the concept of decline here derive from Cicero, Tusc.II.5: "Atque oratorum quidem laus ita ducta ab humili venit ad summum, ut iam, quod natura fert in omnibus rebus, senescat brevique tempore ad nihilum ventura videatur."

25. cf. Prose 119, 175.

A more practical critique now follows, in which Bembo differentiates between his two supreme models. He maintains that Cicero's style is so rich and varied that it can be used for any prose genre, even for the writing of a work like Pliny's Historia Naturalis. The argument to which Bembo addresses himself here, that the verbose, Ciceronian style would make the writing of an encyclopedic work such as Pliny's an endless task, no doubt was a topical one, deriving from the popularity of Pliny at the end of the Quattrocento. But in the case of Vergil Bembo is prepared to admit that he is not the universal model for all poetic genres. In works such as elegy, comedy or tragedy Bembo advises the writer to imitate the "principes, singulis in scriptorum generibus singulos". (ib.57). In conclusion Bembo returns to the question of invention and though he admits that it is better to rely on one's own inventio, he claims that there is equal prestige in embellishing a subject already treated by someone else. Bembo ends by drawing a distinction between "imitari" and "sumere" which again highlights the importance of style for the author of the Prose: "imitari" refers only to stylistic imitation, "sumere" is applied to the adaptation of other elements such as subject, order, sententiae. If this distinction is borne in mind, then Bembo feels he is in agreement with Pico: the writer can take ("sumere") from any other author, but should only imitate ("imitari") the best. This distinction coincides with the division into content and style: it is permissible to borrow content from other authors, but for style the model must be Cicero or Vergil.

The letter to Pico is Bembo's literary credo, written in 1513

but valid for the rest of his creative and critical work. He supersedes the position of Pico and Poliziano with their emphasis on content and self-expression to establish the importance of style: "non minor in exornando laus quam in inveniando." (ib.58). His rejection of Poliziano at the beginning of the letter as "docti mehercule ac ingeniosi hominis; sed...non multum prudentis" (ib.40) is complemented by his rejection of any Quattrocento revival in the vernacular. But this had not always been Bembo's view of Poliziano's contribution to the two languages. In 1491 he had helped the Tuscan humanist collate the text of Terence; and his early poetry in both languages had shown traces of the influence of Poliziano. Floriani has illustrated how Bembo rejected in later revisions of his Latin poems the kind of rare words that abound in Poliziano's lyrics. In this process Bembo eliminated neologisms such as "polluvie", compounds ("omnimovens", "polycarpos"), grecisms ("aegipyrum") and rarities ("crissat", "tentigo"):<sup>26</sup> Bembo as a young humanist had clearly imitated the techniques and lexis of men such as Poliziano and Barbaro, at least in his poetry. The revisions made subsequently in his early vernacular poems exhibit an analogous process of discarding elements typical of the Quattrocento, as Floriani says, but in particular typical of the volgare poems of Poliziano: notably diminutives such as "cervietto", "erbette", "boschetto".<sup>27</sup> Bembo's first work in Latin

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26. P.Floriani, 'La giovinezza umanistica di Pietro Bembo' in his Bembo e Castiglione, pp.57-8. The unusual "tentigo" appears in the opening lines of Poliziano's In Anum.

27. See above, Chapter 7, p.284. Bembo eventually rejects the forms typical of Poliziano and the Quattrocento, such as strambotti and capitoli, and includes in his Rime only those sanctioned by Petrarch: the sonnet, the canzone, the ballata and the madrigal.

prose De Aetna (1496), in its interest in scientific and natural phenomena, has links with the work of his fellow Venetian Barbaro; so it is a genuine lament that Bembo expresses in 1505 not only at the death of Beroaldo, but also at the disappearance of scholars such as Poliziano, Barbaro and Pico (Opere iv.188-9). Yet the De Aetna also prefigures the future direction of Bembo's humanism: unlike the works of Poliziano and Barbaro, it is a Ciceronian dialogue both in genre and in language. Bembo was to remain faithful to the dialogue form in all his prose writings.

In 1501 and 1502 Aldus' editions of Dante and Petrarch attest to Bembo's application of humanist techniques to vernacular philology, and his rejection not of classical philology absolutely, but of the kind of scholarship devoted to difficult texts, typified by the work of Poliziano and Barbaro; when Bembo does write a philological work it is again in dialogue form and deals with two standard authors: De Virgilii Culice et Terentii Fabulis. Bembo's attention to Dante and Petrarch was not incompatible with humanist pursuits, but his assumption of Boccaccio as the model for the vernacular prose of the Asolani of 1505 was an original choice at the time. This is evident in the criticism of Bembo's language found in Castiglione and in the Epistola...Marii Aequicolae in Sex Linguis.<sup>28</sup> Bembo himself later revised the work for a second edition in 1530 removing many of the preciousities of his imitation of Boccaccio's early works. Again it is

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28. The Epistola is printed in Dionisotti, Gli umanisti cit., pp.117-121.

the superlative adverbs ("onestissimamente" etc), compounds ("racconfortato"), diminutives ("acerbetta") and latinisms ("discernevole") which are eliminated in the search for a purer vernacular.<sup>29</sup> As for the content of the Asolani Bembo was also unhappy with the emphasis on the neoplatonic notion of love as the chief source of poetic inspiration:<sup>30</sup> thus after 1505 Bembo develops that antipathy towards the neoplatonic stress on content, which is found in the letter to Pico. The Asolani in both title and genre recall the Ciceronian dialogue; and the Tusculanae are a fundamental text for Bembo as they had been for Landino. From them he derives not only his emphatic distinction between content and style (Tusc.I.6) but also his scheme of a Golden Age followed by decline which he applied to the vernacular (Santangelo 53: cf. Tusc.II.5).<sup>31</sup> The third element of this scheme, that after decline came revival, was something which Bembo observed in the triumph of Ciceronianism in humanist Latin literature, and which he then translated into his programme of vernacular revival, as expressed in the Prose della volgar lingua.

It has been suggested by Dionisotti, and by myself above, that behind the theoretical positions on imitation taken up by Pico and Bembo in 1512 lies the personality and the writings of G.B.Pio. But

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29. See Dionisotti's introduction to the Prose ed.cit., p.28.

30. Floriani, 'Primo petrarchismo bembiano' in Bembo e Castiglione, 75ff.

31. Prose p.82 quotes Cicero's words about the richness of Latin in the Tusculans; and see above n.24 for the importance of Tusc.II.5.



in addition to the other documents studied there is a letter which shows that Bembo was in direct contact with Pio before 1512. Bembo wrote in December 1506 to this most extreme exponent of eclectic Latin; and although the content of the letter is insignificant - Pio has sent Bembo some Latin "versiculi" and has asked to be mentioned in one of Bembo's works - Bembo's wording cannot be accidental: "sed te video Ciceronem imitari qui ea facundia cum esset quae nemo, Luceium tamen rogat, ut de se scribat." (Opere iv.195). Pio had moderated his eclectic style but also reaffirmed his refusal to imitate Cicero in the Annotamenta of 1505;<sup>32</sup> so for Bembo to say Pio is imitating Cicero in any respect in 1506 is clearly an allusion to Pio's attenuated eclecticism and a half-serious encouragement to join the Ciceronians. Pio does not alter his style and both he and Pico are on the losing side, when in 1513 he is forced to leave Rome and the new Papal secretaries appointed by the new Pope, Leo X, are the Ciceronians, Sadoleto and Bembo.

Part of the Prose, probably the first two books, were complete by 1512, so there is a predictable consistency in the positions adopted in the vernacular work and in the letter to Gianfrancesco Pico. The Prose, like the letter, start with a clear differentiation between the written and spoken word (Prose 74-5) and proceed to transfer Bembo's Latin Ciceronianism to the vernacular: the written works of Boccaccio and Petrarch, the volgare equivalent of Cicero and Vergil,

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32. Dionisotti, Gli umanisti, pp.93,101.



are the sole models in the new language. Ciceronianism underlies the Prose in another sense. Bembo is aware that the full cycle of Golden Age, Decline and Revival has now taken place in the writing of Latin, thanks to the triumph of the Ciceronians, whereas the vernacular has only reached the stage of decline after the time of Petrarch and Boccaccio:

Vedesi tuttavolta che il grande crescere della lingua a questi due, al Petrarca e al Boccaccio, solamente pervenne; da indi innanzi, non che passar piú oltre, ma pure a questi termini giugnere ancora niuno s'è veduto. Il che senza dubbio a vergogna del nostro secolo si trarrà; nel quale, essendosi la latina lingua in tanto purgata dalla ruggine degl'indotti secoli per adietro stati, che ella oggimai l'antico suo splendore e vaghezza, ha ripresa, non pare che ragionevolmente questa lingua...cosí tosto si debba essere fermata, per non ir piú innanzi. (Prose 131)

The long process of converting medieval Latin into a language that could pass for Cicero's Latin had come to an end by the age of Bembo and Sadoleto: and Bembo's suggestion that the writer should also try to surpass Cicero and Vergil is mere hypothesis. Bembo is in this sense the antithesis of Petrarch in that he signals a programmatic transferral of humanist interest from Latin to the cultivation of the vernacular. He is also at the other extreme from Petrarch in his emphasis on form rather than content; it is not Cicero's or Boccaccio's subject matter which concerns him, but their style: "quelle parti del detto libro, le quali egli poco giudiciosamente prese a scrivere, quelle medesime egli pure con buono e con leggiadro stile scrisse tutte; il che è quello che noi cerchiamo." (Prose 175). It is for this reason also that Bembo, unlike Petrarch, urges chiefly the imitation of verba rather than res. And it is this same exaltation of style over content that allows Bembo to settle the question of Dante

and Petrarch in favour of the latter: "Il soggetto è ben quello che fa il poema, o puollo almen fare, o alto o umile o mezzano di stile, ma buono in sé o non buono non giamai." (ib.176). Once he has established the inferiority of subject matter in the question of imitation, Bembo has no problem in proving that Petrarch should be the supreme model in vernacular poetry: his language is not only more refined, it is also more homogeneous, and Dante is condemned both for his contravention of the law of decorum and his use of latinisms, foreign words, archaisms and neologisms. Bembo's criticism of Dante's poetic practice, "ora le vecchie del tutto e tralasciate (voci)... usando...e talora...da sé formandone e fingendone" (ib.178), reveals how far he is from Landino's perspective, who had praised Dante, like Vergil, for his archaisms and neologisms. Bembo insists on the imitation of previous writers in Latin and the vernacular whose language is superior to that of any other age; and this insistence allows him to dispatch the models of the late Quattrocento in general and of Poliziano in particular: "Seneca e Tranquillo e Lucano e Claudiano, e tutti quegli scrittori, che dopo 'l secolo di Giulio Cesare e d'Augusto...stati sono infino a noi." (ib.122).<sup>33</sup>

Finally an analysis of his last major work, the Historia Veneta, permits us to complete the picture of Bembo's theoretical and practical Ciceronianism. Like many humanist histories, the work has received

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33. Bembo's mention of Caesar and Augustus here show that he belongs to one of the groups Gianfrancesco Pico was addressing himself to in his introductory letter of c.1506. See above, p.338.

little scholarly attention;<sup>34</sup> yet it is an important document stylistically if not historically, since it represents Bembo's practice in Latin as a mature writer after the question of imitation has been effectively settled, and it also concludes the story of humanist historiography which began with Bruni and since then formed part of the imitation debate.

In 1530 Bembo was assigned the task of continuing the official Latin history of Venice from the point where his predecessor, Marcantonio Sabellico, had left off. In the twelve books that he wrote Bembo covered the period from 1486 to 1513, and it might be thought that in writing of such an involved and recent period Bembo would have to contravene his Ciceronian dictates. There are a number of words that do not occur in Cicero, but this is consistent with Bembo's position at the end of the letter to Pico, where he acknowledges the right to take from other writers ("sumere") when dealing with a non-Ciceronian genre. The Historia Veneta follows strictly the classical models: it adopts the annalistic sequence, exploits the set-pieces of battle narratives and accounts of sieges, records portents and contains single and paired speeches. There are no contemporary terms or neologisms, everything is given a classical name. The modern nations are given names like "Rheti et Norici" (Opere i.2), Caterina Cornaro is called "Catherina Venetiis oriunda e gente Corneliorum clara ac illustri" (ib.i.13), a capitano is "copiarum imperatorem" (ib.i.3),

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34. E.Cochrane, Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance, pp.228ff makes some comments; though his feeling that this work was not to Bembo's taste (p.547 n.55) overstates the case.

the capitan del mare is "praefectus classis" (i.13), and Santa Maria dei Miracoli becomes "Mariae clarum miraculis, unde ei nomen est, fanum" (i.18).

More significant is the fact that Bembo deliberately chooses as the opening episode a siege which will test his Ciceronian approach to the limit. The siege of Rovereto (1487) involved the use of incendiary cannonballs which disintegrated on impact and set fire to persons and property. Bembo, undaunted, refuses to surrender to barbaric terminology and wheels out the ancient words from Livy such as "tormenta" and "missilium telorum" (i.3) and manages to cope with the fireballs with classical words and periphrases: "Pilas ferreas non magnopere cohaerentes, picis atque bituminis plenas, igne concluso tormentis muralibus impellebant." (ibid.) Next he relates a joust and duel fought in medieval chivalric spirit but with words of impeccable classical pedigree, even when one of the contendants resorts to his iron mace: "ille ab ephippiis ferrea, quam gerebat, abrepta clava pro gladio utitur." (ibid.). At the end of the first book Bembo is prepared to indulge in an even longer periphrasis to describe how the Venetians practised with an early form of rifle:

quibus fistulis glandes plumbeas magna vi ignis impetu mitterent, atque hostem e longinquo vulnerarent. Eae erant fistulae ad formam atque imaginem eorum tormentorum quibus muri oppidorum dejiciuntur, nisi quod illa ex aere fusili fiunt, maximique saepe sunt ponderis...(i.19).<sup>35</sup>

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35. The diction here comes from Caesar: "fusili ex argilla glandes fundis jacere" (Bell.Gall.V.43.1), and we know of Bembo's admiration for him (Santangelo 46, 48).

His description of the rifle's wooden handles ("fistulae...ligneis alligatae ornamentis") and of gunpowder ("pulvere ad ignem celeriter comprehendum idoneo") sound almost like Biondo's parody of the 1440s.<sup>36</sup> But unlike Biondo and Valla, Bembo proves that the strict Ciceronian approach to historiography can be maintained even in dealing with a contemporary period; indeed he seems to relish the challenge posed by such modern material. Bembo is wholly consistent with the ideals outlined in the letter to Pico: he takes material and terminology from Caesar and Livy, but the style of the Historia Veneta, particularly in the resonant, complex periods, is Ciceronian rather than Caesarian.

Bembo is not the last participant in the imitation debate in Italy, but his is the last effective contribution. Later writers on the subject offer their contributions after the major questions of the future direction of Latin and the volgare have been decided: hence the writings of Calcagnini, Giraldi and others are in every sense academic. Bembo, on the other hand, like Petrarch and Poliziano, influences the development of both languages. Petrarch's Latin represented the first tentative steps towards the Ciceronianisation of the language; Bembo not only marks the culmination of that process, but he also transfers his Ciceronianism to the vernacular using Petrarch himself as one of his models. Throughout the course of the Quattrocento the humanists studied above pushed Latin a stage further towards that classical purity. But as knowledge of the other zones of

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36. See above, Chapter 4, p.202 n.27.

Latin increased, so some humanists of the end of the fifteenth century treasured this increased knowledge and enthusiastically explored the writings of minor authors. But this greater linguistic expertise also allowed other humanists to see more clearly what was and was not Ciceronian, and thus to become equally extreme in demanding a conformity to the language of that one author. Poliziano and Cortese are representatives, respectively, of these two movements, but they are not extreme cases, certainly not as extreme as their successors, Pio on the one hand and on the other Bembo, Sadoleto and Longolio.

The extremism in Latin is paralleled by similar extremisms in the volgare. Alberti's and Landino's programme for a Latinisation of the vernacular does not bear fruit except in the extreme form of the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili (1499). The writing of verse is typified by a varied but unsystematic imitation of Petrarch, especially amongst court poets such as Serafino Aquilano and Tebaldeo. The situation of both Latin and vernacular prose and verse in the first decade of the Cinquecento seems to demand the critical intervention of a Bembo. Unlike Calmeta, he sees the poetry of Lorenzo and Poliziano not as the renewal of the vernacular, but as a symptom of its decline. Unlike Landino, he can dispense with the emphasis on content in literature to concentrate solely on style, criticise Dante's heterogeneous language and erect Petrarch into the sole model for poetry in the volgare. Bembo, as a purist, looks back to two separate Golden Ages in both Latin and the vernacular, and rejects the hybrid contamination of the two languages that characterises the fifteenth century; and unlike Landino, Alberti and other Quattrocento programmes for the

vernacular, Bembo's exhortation to cultivate the volgare bears fruit because in the Cinquecento there is no further need to develop Latin: "Per la qual cosa io per me conforto i nostri uomini, che si diano allo scrivere volgarmente, poscia che ella nostra lingua è...perciò che con quale lingua scrivere piú convenevolmente si può e piú agevolmente, che con quella con la quale ragioniamo?" (Prose 132).



### CONCLUSION

This survey of imitation from Dante to Bembo has, I believe, provided some positive results but it has also, like most pieces of research, mapped out further areas that require consideration and investigation. On the positive side, the analysis of imitation in the preceding pages seems to have fulfilled the overall objective of this research: enough material has been uncovered and interpreted to furnish the basis for an adequate opening chapter on literary criticism in the Italian Renaissance.

As for the more specific aims of the thesis, here too the results have been positive.

(1) The various theories of imitation held by Italian writers between 1400 and 1530 have been examined in detail, and this examination suggests a number of conclusions: (a) that imitation is the dominant critical concept in the period under consideration, its importance being recognised both by major writers of the status of Poliziano and Bembo, and by minor humanists such as Antonio da Rho; and the analysis of the full version of the De Imitationibus complements the recent studies by Mercer and Pigman on Barzizza, which illustrate how the major critical ideas are adapted for the humbler aims of the humanist educators. (b) The views on imitation held by these writers are more complex than is often thought: Cortese was seen to be less of a rigid Ciceronian than is usually assumed, Poliziano and even an extreme eclectic like Pio acknowledge Cicero's abilities, and the distance between Giovanni Pico and Barbaro is not so great as is normally



presumed; in fact both sides of the debate about one or more models draw on the same stock of classical arguments and imagery to argue the two sides of the case. (c) The increasing number of discussions on literary imitation and the flurry of polemics on the subject around 1500 reflect the importance of the matter in years of linguistic experiment. (d) The study of the style of humanists such as Poliziano, Barbaro and Pio permits us to see that it is misleading to describe these writers as bilingual: by the end of the fifteenth century there were many different ways of writing in Latin; it was as much a question of which Latin, as which vernacular to use. (e) The level of debate and literary comment, particularly in the writings of a Valla or a Poliziano, manages to transcend the limitations of the critical terms at their disposal and produce a standard of literary criticism that is at least on a par with the Cinquecento criticism studied by Weinberg.

(2) The analysis of the practice of imitation between 1400 and 1530 has also yielded some interesting results: (a) the practice of literary imitation in the period is more revolutionary than the theory: in fact it is the extreme nature of the exotic imitation evident in the Latin of Beroaldo and Pio and in the vernacular of the Hypnerotomachia Poliphili that provokes much of the theoretical debate in the years around 1500. As often, the theoretical reaction comes after the practice. The equally extreme Ciceronian reaction is caused by the linguistic licence of these texts. (b) This is another confirmation that Cortese is not the first strict Ciceronian. He belongs to a generation too early for that; and as we saw, if anything,

he ended up indulging in anti-Ciceronian Latin. One has to wait for men such as Bembo or Longolio to find rigid Ciceronianism. (c) In the course of this study we have also observed the gradual evolution of Latin from Dante's scholastic language to Bembo's Ciceronian prose. The major figures in this process were Petrarch, Bruni, Valla and the young Cortese but the process is not a linear one. (d) As for the practice of imitation in the vernacular, this survey has highlighted the importance of the contribution of Alberti and Landino, even though their programme for a Latinised vernacular was destined to be eclipsed by the purism of Bembo.

(3) The study of the classical sources that underlie ideas on imitation in the Quattrocento has revealed predictable results. (a) In the course of the century there is an increasing breadth and sophistication in the use of the classical texts on imitation. The reliance on Seneca and Quintilian that was apparent in Petrarch is supplemented by the use of Greek texts (in George of Trebizond) and more recently discovered authors such as Lucretius and Gellius (in Poliziano and Pico). (b) By the end of the century the expertise in assimilating the style of Latin authors is such that it is now possible to reproduce the style of Cicero or Apuleius in an almost perfect copy; and the pioneer along this road of meticulous study was Lorenzo Valla, though he was neither a Ciceronian nor an Apuleian. (c) Though the humanists acknowledged, as their classical sources did, that imitation was not necessarily confined to words and style, but could extend to inventio and dispositio (the pedagogic writers like Barzizza and Antonio da Rho state this explicitly), nevertheless in

practice it was mostly this stylistic imitation that was of most importance. This was inherent in the use of an artificial language like Latin. The nature of Latin, as a language which was not spoken naturally but which lay embalmed in the ancient texts, meant that when a humanist used almost any Latin word he was "imitating" one of the ancient authors. Of course much imitation of content also took place, from Dante's modelling of the Inferno on Aeneid VI to Bembo's patterning of his sonnets on the events as well as the language of the Canzoniere of Petrarch; but the emphasis is always on stylistic imitation.

Perhaps the most predictable but none the less interesting conclusion to be drawn from this survey is that the view of imitation held by each author studied is like a microcosm of his overall approach to art. Dante feels a general inclination to imitate the classical writers but it always remains a rather tentative ambition and it includes some very odd literary models; he seems more sure of the Aristotelian notion that art imitates nature than of how to imitate a literary model. Petrarch stresses the importance of not submerging his personality in his more sophisticated approach to imitation. Salutati is prepared to justify an admixture of contemporary culture in imitating classical models, while Bruni's more classicising theory is paralleled by his more classical Latin. The humanist educators all naturally emphasise the importance of studying and imitating Cicero, though Valla alone in the first half of the Quattrocento possesses the linguistic precision to be a genuine Ciceronian. Alberti underlines the dissimilarity of Cicero's style as well as his own, in

his search for originality of style or content. Landino adopts the classical and Petrarchan emphasis on the transformative element in imitation, which is well suited to his programme of trasferimento from Latin to the vernacular. And in the final debates on imitation Poliziano concentrates on self-expression and imitation of unusual models, the contributions of the two Pico's have a strong philosophical slant, while Bembo's ideas are characterised by a consistent Ciceronian emphasis on formal perfection in both languages. But already in Cortese there is a hint of the impending resurgence of the Aristotelian concern with the imitation of nature rather than the imitation of another writer. From 1530 onwards it is this Aristotelian imitation that is the major, though not the exclusive, preoccupation of the critics.

The reason for this shift of interest from rhetorical imitation to imitation of reality is not just because Aristotle's Poetics becomes the fashionable classical text or because it offers more sophisticated critical tools; it is also because after the intervention of Bembo the problem of which model to imitate in both Latin and the vernacular is largely settled. The flowering of Ciceronian Latin in the first half of the Cinquecento coincides with the vogue for Petrarchism in vernacular poetry. In Latin any debates on rhetorical imitation concern not which model to imitate, but whether to imitate one or more models; and of the models examined only classical authors such as Sallust or Caesar are considered, not Apuleius or Sidonius; and even then they are regarded not as alternatives but as adjuncts to the Ciceronian model. These are the kinds of question that surface

in the writings on rhetorical imitation after Bembo, for instance in the debate between Calcagnini and Giraldis Cintio (1532), and in the treatises of Ricci (1541), Camillo (1544) and Parthenio (1560).<sup>1</sup> I have not considered these later debates both because they have been thoroughly studied by Weinberg and because they make no serious impact on the writing of Latin or the volgare.

As for the direction of future research, the breadth of my survey of imitation has allowed me to see many areas that require further investigation. For the humanists of the early Quattrocento very little interpretative work has been done on the various Epistolari that were established at the beginning of this century by scholars such as Novati, Sabbadini and Smith. Humanist correspondence has been investigated usually for historical or cultural studies but rarely from an aesthetic or literary point of view.<sup>2</sup> The number of recent critical editions of texts by major humanists such as Valla and Poliziano indicates that the bias in favour of the study of the Cinquecento is now beginning to be redressed. But the establishment of a reliable text is only the first step, the premise on which historical and aesthetic interpretations are based; and in the case of minor figures such as Barzizza and Antonio da Rho we do not even possess a reliable text of some works.

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1. For the works of these men see the index and bibliography in B. Weinberg, A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance.

2. I constantly came across statements about other writers like the following about Salutati: "La lingua del Salutati, naturalmente, richiederebbe un'indagine assai più accurata." (D. De Rosa, Coluccio Salutati: il cancelliere e il pensatore politico, p. 18 n. 21).

But perhaps the area most urgently in need of reliable texts and detailed examination is the one which provides the context for the final triumph of Ciceronianism, particularly the work of the Bolognese school of Beroaldo and Pio, and its links with vernacular and courtly culture of the period. The expert in this field is of course Dionisotti, but often he too has only been able to point scholars in the right direction. I want to conclude by following briefly a few of Dionisotti's signposts to fill in the picture of that period of humanism that comes to an end in the first three decades of the sixteenth century.

The dispute between Bembo and Gianfrancesco Pico must, as we saw, be considered in the context of the presence of the anti-Ciceronian G.B.Pio in Rome. But that also involves studying a number of other texts, such as the Dialogus in lingua mariopionea, the Epistola... Marii Aequicolae in Sex Linguis and Mariangelo Accursio's extraordinary Osci et Volsci Dialogus.<sup>3</sup> As Dionisotti pointed out, the triumph of Ciceronianism was not only due to Bembo's more rigorous argumentation and his appointment along with Sadoleto as Papal secretary. More influential than anything that Bembo wrote at that time was Cardinal Adriano Castellesi's De Sermone Latino et Modis Latine Loquendi (1515).<sup>4</sup>

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3. A. Campana rightly points to the need to study Accursio's dialogue in detail: "non è mai stata sottoposta a un esame filologico analitico e ad una precisa esegesi che soli potrebbero rivelarne compiutamente il significato." (s.v. "Accursio" in DBI. 1, p.126).

4. Dionisotti, Gli umanisti cit., pp.107-109.

Dionisotti reproduces the long eighteen-line Ciceronian period which opens Castellesi's work and which tells how in Bologna he refuted the arguments of those who cultivated the language of Apuleius, Sidonius, Fulgentius and Capella. But other statements from the work reveal that it is not only Pio who is the target but also the Latin of men such as Poliziano: "nonnulli etiam nostri temporis scriptores... illud maxime studuerunt ut vel veteratorum rubiginem vel novorum auctorum asperitatem suis scriptis admiscuisse...videantur."<sup>5</sup>

Accursio's Osci et Volsci Dialogus is a satirical exaggeration of the interest of humanists like Pio in archaic Latin words.<sup>6</sup> The dialogue is only comprehensible with the aid of Festus or other lexicons. Oscan's praise of Apuleius is clearly in the manner of Beroaldo:

Illeam suaviloquentiam facundiosam et oratorium  
melos quo ipsum asinum cognomento aureum,  
aurationem auro fastigavit. (ed.cit. A.ii.v).

In the face of Apuleius' eloquence Cicero seems to him to be a mere "polylogum, blacteratorem, lingulacam" (ibid.), so his preferred reading is Apuleius, Capella and Sidonius, who is critical of Cicero: "Asini glossemata, et Capellae Panepistemum, literosique Apollinaris Ciceroni invectivaliter obstrigilientis, vitiligantis, pipulantis, carinentisque vuculas sesquipedales" (ibid.).<sup>7</sup> Oscan and Volcan

5. Cited in Dionisotti, op.cit., p.109.

6. In what follows I cite from Osci et Volsci Dialogus Ludis Romanis Actus (Rome, 1525).

7. The reference to Capella's work as Panepistemum and the allusion to Sidonius' criticism of Cicero show that Poliziano too is involved as an object of satire. The satire also hits at the use of words like "ferruminatum" (A.iii.r) and "aginatores" (B.iii.r), favoured by Poliziano and G.F.Pico.



laugh at the thought that Cicero never anticipated that later generations would imitate not the language that the Romans spoke but the language that they had ceased to speak! (B.iii.r). At the end of the dialogue the Roman matron Romana Eloquentia, who is Cicero's wife and mother of Valla, appears and hounds Oscanus and Volscus from the scene. The political dimension of this literary debate about imitation was apparent in Bembo's appointment as Papal secretary, and the political link is also present here. The dialogue seems to have been composed in connection with the accession of Leo X and the occasion of the granting of Roman citizenship to Giuliano de' Medici; and at the end of the dialogue Romana Eloquentia associates the attack on Ciceronian eloquence with the recent threats to Rome and Italy from enemy powers; the final words she addresses to the audience have thus both literary and political overtones: "Reditura omnia in melius iam credite ac valete." (B.iiii.v).

The career of a writer such as Cristoforo Longolio is paradigmatic of the new Ciceronian era. Born in 1488, he devoted himself in his youth to the study of Pliny and his Latin style clearly belonged to the eclectic tradition: "cum adulescens per omnia scriptorum genera vagaretur, neque quemquam unum sibi imitandum proponeret...".<sup>8</sup> The titles of his early works, Laudes C. Plinii, Historia Herbarum, indicate a humanist in the mould of Barbaro. But he eventually rejected his

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8. All quotations on this page come from the anonymous Life of Longolius printed at the start of the Giuntine, 1524 edition of his Orationes (c.5r).



youthful Latin style for the Ciceronian model, and explicitly acknowledges Bembo as the instigator of this new direction: "Magnopere igitur (Bembo) est cohortatus ut totam suam dictionem ad praestantem illam Ciceronis dicendi formam revocaret, eumque solum ex oratoribus sibi imitandum proponeret." After five years continuous study of Cicero and of no other author Longolio was able to achieve the desired Ciceronian result:

ut post breve tempus cum sibi eam legem indixisset, ne aliis atque a Cicerone sumptis verbis uteretur, ad omnia fere quaecunque animo conceperisset exprimenda abunde ex illo uno verba electa suppeterent.

Longolio's literary development sets the pattern for the new era; even though he seems to be the prime target in Erasmus' Ciceronianus,<sup>9</sup> no one in the Cinquecento ever cultivated the style of Pliny, far less the language of Apuleius or Sidonius. After the contributions, then, of Bembo, G.F.Pico and Castellesi, as Dionisotti shows, "la questione umanistica dell'imitazione fu chiusa in Italia per sempre... Non fu mai più una questione che potesse dibattersi a Roma da un principe filosofo, da un patrizio veneto e da un cardinale, una questione dal cui esito dipendesse l'indirizzo di tutta la cultura italiana."<sup>10</sup>

In the first three decades of the sixteenth century Castiglione

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9. I do not consider Erasmus' Ciceronianus in my survey, partly because it has an international rather than strictly Italian dimension, partly because it makes little impact on Ciceronianism in Italy, and also because the dialogue has been analysed by the large number of Erasmian scholars (eg. the edition by A.Gambara has a very full introduction.).

10. Gli umanisti, p.109.

was in the process of writing one of the enduring masterpieces of Italian Renaissance literature. Il libro del cortegiano, not surprisingly, devotes a considerable amount of time (i.26-39) to discussing literary and linguistic imitation. Castiglione is one of the few non-Ciceronians of the period. The arguments he uses and the imagery he exploits in this discussion come from the imitation debate that we have been studying.<sup>11</sup> He disagrees with Bembo's solution for the vernacular, preferring an eclectic courtly language, and so instead he praises the works of Poliziano and Lorenzo in the volgare (i.37) and defends the Latin of post-Ciceronian writers such as Tacitus and Silius Italicus (i.38). Castiglione, then, is the last great eclectic writer, the only serious threat to Bembo's Ciceronianism, and it is not strange to find that he was educated in Mantua when Pio was there and in Milan when Beroaldo taught there. But Castiglione dies in 1529 as if to confirm that from 1530 onwards a new age begins in many respects in Italy; and the imitation debate, like much else in Italy, changes after that date, so as Emilia Pia says of the discussion of imitation in Il libro del cortegiano: "'A me par... che questa vostra disputa sia mo troppo lunga e fastidiosa; però fia bene a differirla ad un altro tempo.'" (i.39).

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11. In his use of the image of the bee, he seems to deliberately echo Poliziano (Stanze i.25): "E come la pecchia ne' verdi prati sempre tra l'erbe va carpendo i fiori..." (i.26).

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