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Humanism and Italian literature

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This chapter will examine the ways in which Italian literature was influenced by the humanist movement in the crucial period in which the *studia humanitatis* dominated the intellectual agenda in Italy, broadly speaking from the time of Petrarch to the age of Lorenzo de' Medici. The two centuries surveyed here embrace a period which begins with the embryonic 'medieval' humanism of Dante Alighieri and terminates in the early sixteenth century, when Italian humanists ceased to form part of the mainstream of creative literature in Italy and the *studia humanitatis* became institutionalized in the university system.

At the outset it is important to distinguish between the classical tradition in general and the humanist movement in particular. To consider every Italian work inspired by the legacy of antiquity in this classicizing age of Italian literature is beyond the scope of this chapter and this book. Instead, I shall focus on vernacular literature in Italy which was either written by humanists or informed by humanist values.

Although Dante is not usually regarded as a humanist, the *Divina commedia* (c. 1307–18) presents a number of features which indicate that to a certain extent the poem derives from a humanist matrix. In a sense Dante 'discovered' the *Aeneid*, in that he was the first to make Virgil talk again to his age after centuries of silence. As he himself was aware, he was the first Italian writer to read the Roman poet in both a political and intertextually creative way – the latter is alluded to in Dante's famous address to Virgil when he meets him in the first canto of the whole *Commedia*: 'You are the single author from whom I derived the fine style which has brought me such honour' (*Inferno* I.86–7). In terms of content, this first vernacular poem on an epic scale, in which Virgil even appears as a character, embraces an ambitious attempt to rewrite in Christian terms the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. The echoes of Virgil are prominent as early as *Inferno* III, notably in the description of Charon, though Dante tends to demonize and portray as a Christian devil Virgil's merely melancholy ferryman.¹ The references

continue throughout the poem, including the climactic moment of Virgil's departure on the summit of Mount Purgatory, when Dante on sighting Beatrice cites Dido's famous words about her love for Aeneas: 'I recognize the signs of the old flame of love' (*Aeneid* IV.23; *Purgatorio* XXX.48). There are also countless echoes of the other three Latin poets that constitute Dante's canon of epic poets: Ovid, Lucan (both appear briefly as characters in Limbo in *Inferno* IV, and Dante explicitly challenges and claims to outdo them in *Inferno* XXV.94–7) and Statius (who also appears as a substantial character, *Purgatorio* XXI–XXXIII). Dante's imitation of classical authors extends from broad borrowings of content to minute reworkings of brief phrases from the ancient poets. But these allusions, though clearly evincing respect for antiquity, nevertheless nurture a constant undercurrent of attempting to outdo or supersede in Christian terms the classic pagan texts.²

Underlying this at times minute intertextual practice is Dante's rather vague theory of literary imitation outlined, but not developed, in *De vulgari eloquentia* ('On Vernacular Eloquence', 1304–7) II.6.7. There Dante urges a generic imitation of classical authors as beneficial to the development of the best style in vernacular poetry. But while the four epic poets named (Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, Statius) are predictable, the four prose authors commended as models for improving poetic style constitute a curious list: Livy, Pliny, Frontinus, Orosius. There is no sensitivity here to major and minor authors: the four prose authors are merely names to balance the four poets; Dante certainly could never have read them in any depth, if at all, and unlike the poets mentioned, they make no impact whatsoever on his (or anyone else's) vernacular poetry. Dante's sensitivity to Latin literature is in this sense typical of his time: he is convinced of the prestige of the classical tradition and consequently of the need to imitate Latin authors, yet he can believe that the Latin of his contemporaries is identical to the language of classical antiquity;³ and despite his sophisticated imitation of the epic poets in the *Commedia*, his general knowledge of the ancient world is defective in many areas.⁴

Dante's attitude to antiquity stressed continuity. His belief that Latin had remained unchanged is paralleled by his being allowed to join the 'bella scola' of classical poets in Limbo: there Homer, Virgil, Horace, Ovid and Lucan welcome him as a sixth member of an élite academy (*Inferno* IV). By contrast, Petrarch's more accurate knowledge of the past made him aware of the discontinuities between antiquity and the present, reflected in his sense of loss and exclusion from that golden age and in his stylistic awareness of the difference between classical and medieval Latin. The case of Horace provides a measure of Petrarch's more precise knowledge of

antiquity: little more than a name to Dante ('Orazio satiro', *Inferno* IV.89), Horace will be rediscovered as a major lyric poet thanks to Petrarch. Another key divergence between Dante and Petrarch was the latter's official denigration of vernacular language and literature in the face of Latin's incomparable achievements. This theoretical primacy of the learned language over the *volgare* was reflected in Petrarch's own writings, which comprised many more works in Latin than in the vernacular (unlike Dante's more equal distribution between the two languages); this preponderance of Latin over Italian output became the norm for his humanist successors in Italy. One consequence was that the new Italian literature, which had started in so revolutionary a manner with Dante's ambitious epic *Commedia*, with Petrarch's own lyric collection, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (c. 1342–70) and Boccaccio's *Decameron* (c. 1348–51), soon atrophied under Petrarch's Latin counter-revolution, and Italian intellectuals for a century after Petrarch's death channelled their efforts into perfecting Latin rather than Italian. In this so-called 'secolo senza poesia' ('century without poetry') humanists did write some works in the *volgare*, but the largest part of their output was in Latin.

Petrarch's theoretical diminution of the status of the *volgare* is, however, undercut by his own work in the vernacular, in particular his collection of lyrics, the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*. Despite the disparaging title ('Fragments in the Vernacular'), and his repeated claim that these were 'nugae' ('trifles') on which he worked as a youth, but which he abandoned on reaching maturity, we know from his autograph manuscript that he continued to work both on individual poems and on the order of the whole collection right up until the 1370s.⁵ Indeed, at one early stage it seems that this collection of *rime* was to have been a lyric synthesis of Latin and romance poetic motifs on a par with Dante's epic fusion of the classical and vernacular traditions. In 1342 Petrarch intended that the opening poem of the collection should be 'Apollo, s'ancor vive il bel desio' ('Apollo, if the fine desire is still alive', *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* XXXIV), a classicizing sonnet establishing at the outset the myth of Apollo and Daphne as one of the carrying structures of the whole collection.⁶ At another stage the concluding poem was to have been 'Vago augelletto, che cantando vai' ('Wandering bird, singing on your way', CCCLIII), a sonnet with a rather Virgilian tone (like CCCXI, it echoes the simile in *Georgics* IV.511–19).⁷ However, in harmony with Petrarch's myth of his own development from young poet to mature Christian philosopher, the whole collection was restructured to open with the penitential sonnet 'Voi ch'ascoltate in rime sparse il suono' ('You who listen to the sound [of my sighs] in scattered rhymes', I), and to close with the recantation of his love for Laura in the

canzone to the Virgin (CCCLXVI). In Petrarch, then, as in Dante, the classical tradition is superseded by the Christian one.

Within this official Christian framework, however, many of the individual poems offer views onto a distinctly classical landscape. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of the classical subtexts and Petrarch's sense of chronological distance from antiquity.⁸ In terms of the content of the whole collection, Petrarch acted like a Renaissance architect, supporting the flimsy vernacular edifice of the love lyric with the sturdy classical columns of two morally weightier themes: the passing of time and the vanity of earthly pleasures.

As for language and style, Petrarch is remarkably consistent in both Latin and Italian. Eschewing in both languages the two extremes of vulgar and scholastic/technical terminology, he cultivates a middle elegance in lexis, as well as a classical harmony and euphony in his famous balanced or antithetical lines, a practice which he imitated from Virgil and Horace.⁹ By endowing vernacular love poetry with morally elevated themes like the passing of time, and by imitating ancient poetry in its attention to structure and formal properties, Petrarch projected the Italian lyric towards a new status of serious rivalry with classical verse.

One poem which illustrates his intertextual practice in both languages is 'Tutto 'l di piango; e poi la notte, quando' ('All day I weep, and yet at night', *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* CCXVI), which was rewritten by Petrarch in a way that excised unwitting vernacular echoes and deepened classical resonances.¹⁰ The underlying strategy in such rewritings is to retain and even enhance allusions to classical *auctores*, but to eliminate traces of *volgare* texts. The imitative rationale behind the rewriting of this sonnet is explained in Petrarch's famous letter of 1359 to Boccaccio (*Familiare* XXI.15.12), where he stresses that he is particularly keen to avoid verbatim imitation especially in the vernacular ('in his maxime vulgaribus');¹¹ yet even an almost direct translation of a line from Virgil or Cicero does not offend him, presumably because by the very act of writing in the *volgare* he is faithful to his precept of using different words from the model.¹² What subtends Petrarch's imitative practice, unlike Dante's, is a more precise theory of literary imitation, which he derived largely from Seneca (*Epistulae* LXXXIV), Cicero (*De oratore* II.89–96) and Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria* X.2), and which he elaborated in a series of important letters.¹³

But although many individual poems reflect a classical/vernacular fusion, Petrarch's public pronouncements on the status of the two languages proved more influential and discouraged his successors from further experiments in this direction. In particular, the 1359 letter to Boccaccio mentioned above, in which he denied any imitation of Dante and distanced

himself from his predecessor, effectively drove a wedge between the humanist and vernacular publics and proved extraordinarily effective in determining attitudes to Dante in particular and to literature in the *volgare* in general.¹⁴

The most spectacular illustration of its divisive influence was in its addressee, Giovanni Boccaccio. A great admirer of Dante in his youth, he had begun writing by imitating the ornate *dictamen* ('letter-writing technique') of Dante's Latin epistles and by translating Valerius Maximus and a decade of Livy into Italian.¹⁵ But after encountering Petrarch in 1351 and discovering the classical sobriety of his Latin letters and his disdain for vernacular culture, Boccaccio erased his own name both from his early Dantesque epistles and from his *volgarizzamenti* (vernacular versions) of the Latin historians.¹⁶ Petrarch's influential separation of the two cultures meant that it was no longer respectable for a humanist to write scholastic Latin or to translate from classical Latin into the *volgare*: Quattrocento humanists, such as Leonardo Bruni and Lorenzo Valla, would translate from Greek into Latin, but the Latin classics had to be read in the original.¹⁷ One work in particular by Boccaccio epitomizes the radical nature of the Petrarchan revolution: his biography of Dante, the *Trattatello in laude di Dante* ('Short Tract in Praise of Dante').

The first version of the *Trattatello* was written between 1351 and 1355; the second one some time between 1361 and 1363. The main differences between the first (I) and second (II) versions were Boccaccio's suppression, in the second redaction, of all mention of Dante's *Epistole*, of the title of the *Monarchia* and of the number of Latin *Eclogues* Dante wrote.¹⁸ It is now clear that it was Petrarch's 1359 letter to Boccaccio about Dante which was the most influential factor in the rewriting of the *Trattatello*, particularly in the implied criticism of Dante's Latin works in the second redaction.¹⁹ In the light of Petrarch's segregation of the Latin and *volgare* public in the letter, Boccaccio was forced to moderate claims which had associated Dante too closely with humanist, Latin culture. In the first edition he had claimed that Dante had restored the Muses to Italy and had revived dead poetry (I.19), performing for the Italian vernacular what Homer and Virgil had done for Greek and Latin (I.84). In the later version such claims are omitted, largely because of Petrarch's categorical separation of the two cultures, aligning Dante's work with the vernacular audience of woolworkers and innkeepers, but putting himself alongside Homer and Virgil (*Familiare* XXI.15.22). In the second redaction Dante no longer appears as the reviver of poetry, presumably because Petrarch wished to claim that glory for himself, and because in the new humanist view of things this literary renaissance could now only be associated with work in Latin, not in the

volgare. Even more indicative of the new anti-vernacular atmosphere is the modification of this passage: '[Dante] became extremely familiar with Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Statius and all the other famous poets: not only was he keen on knowing their works, but in his sublime poetry he managed also to imitate them' (I.22). In the second redaction this is reduced to 'he became extremely familiar with all [of the classical poets], and particularly with the more famous of them' (II.18). All mention of Dante's 'imitation' of classical authors is omitted because for a humanist like Petrarch, and therefore also now for Boccaccio, proper *imitatio* could only take place when writing in Latin.

Petrarch's official condemnations of vernacular literature caused Boccaccio to repent of his early enthusiasms for Dante's Latin letters, of his translations from Latin into the *volgare* and indeed of all his works in Italian (*Epistole XXI*). After 1351 Boccaccio, like Petrarch, turned from poetry to prose and from the *volgare* to Latin, devoting himself to erudite works in Latin prose: *De casibus virorum illustrium* ('The Fall of Illustrious Men'), *De mulieribus claris* ('On Famous Women'), *De montibus* ('On Mountains'), *Genealogie deorum gentilium* ('Genealogies of the Pagan Gods'). Even his late efforts at interpreting Dante's *Commedia* in public (1373–4) he regarded as a misguided 'prostitution of the Muses' which led to his being punished by 'Apollo' with a severe illness (*Rime* 122–5).²⁰ Boccaccio thus epitomizes the cultural schizophrenia induced in Italian intellectuals in the second half of the fourteenth century by Petrarch's radical separation of Latin and vernacular literature, a dichotomy which was not to be overcome until the final quarter of the fifteenth century.

The Italian Quattrocento opens, almost symbolically, with the perfectly classical edifice of Leonardo Bruni's *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum* ('Dialogues dedicated to Pier Paolo Vergerio', 1401–6), an almost exact copy of a Ciceronian dialogue.²¹ The content is secular, the Latin is impeccably Ciceronian and the structure recalls that of Cicero's own *De oratore*. Its dramatic date is Easter Sunday 1401, significantly a century and a year after the fictional date of Dante's *Commedia* (Easter 1300): if the fourteenth century had opened with a major work in vernacular verse, the fifteenth began with an equally revolutionary work in Latin prose. The shift from poetry to prose and from Italian to Latin are both direct consequences of the Petrarchan revolution – Petrarch's prose works in Latin outnumbered his poetic compositions, and the disappointment which greeted his Latin epic, *Africa*, when it eventually circulated among humanists at the end of the fourteenth century, discouraged others from attempting serious Latin poetry.

Bruni's attitude both to his classical and vernacular predecessors was extremely open and unprejudiced. The criticism of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, which Niccoli articulates in *Dialogi* I, may be to an extent counterbalanced by the unconvincing palinode or recantation in Book II; but Bruni maintains his rigorous approach to the 'Three Crowns' of Florentine literature (Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio) in his *Vite di Dante e di Petrarca* ('Lives of Dante and Petrarch', 1436).²² His interest in the genre of biography stemmed from his enthusiasm for Plutarch, which had already resulted in his writing new, critical lives of Cicero (c. 1415) and Aristotle (c. 1429).²³

Bruni was inspired to write the *Vite*, not only to dignify vernacular authors with Plutarchan parallel lives, but also because he found Boccaccio's *Trattatello* 'entirely full of love stories and sighs and burning tears'. Bruni's secular biography also eschewed Boccaccio's fondness for vernacular love lyric and the mystical, theological overtones of his discussion of poetic allegory. But although the biographies illustrate Bruni's enthusiasm for Dante and Petrarch, an important number of critical nuances remain. Unlike Salutati's hypothesis about a Latin *Divina commedia* which would have surpassed Homer and Virgil, Bruni openly admits that Dante chose to write his poem in the vernacular because he knew his Latin writings, notably his *Eclogues* and the *Monarchia*, were inferior to his work in the *volgare*. The latter work is written 'in an extremely inelegant fashion, without any stylistic refinement', and as in the *Dialogi*, Dante's Latin is associated with the hated medieval idiom ('in the scholastic style of the friars').²⁴

Similarly, Bruni's famous praise of Petrarch as the pioneer of the humanist Renaissance also contains hints of criticism which are too often overlooked. For Boccaccio Petrarch had been the reviver of poetry, and for Salutati he had been the supreme Latinist; however, Bruni's tribute to Petrarch is not on account of his Latin works, which fall short of the present age of perfection ('yet his [Latin] style was not perfect'), but in the more general terms of pioneering scholarship, opening up the road of humanist studies, by discovering ancient works. Petrarch's Latin represented a limited Ciceronianism ('modelling his Latin, *within the limits of his knowledge and abilities*, on the most elegant and perfect eloquence [of Cicero]', my italics), clearly below 'the present perfection' achieved by Bruni and his generation. For Bruni, as for Flavio Biondo, a genuine return to Ciceronian Latin was possible only after the 1421 discovery at Lodi of the complete *Orator*, *De oratore* and *Brutus*.²⁵

In 1435 there was an important debate among Italian humanists about what kind of Latin was spoken in antiquity. This has come down to us in the exchange between Bruni and Flavio Biondo, in which Bruni claimed that

there was an equivalent of the *volgare* in ancient Rome, while Biondo rightly argued that the vernacular was born in the wake of the barbarian invasions of Italy.²⁶ The dispute itself can be seen as another consequence of the Lodi discovery, since Cicero's *Orator* and particularly the *Brutus* provide much important linguistic and literary information about the development of Latin rhetoric before Cicero. But if the cause of the debate lay in one Lodi manuscript, its effects were more wide-ranging. The polemic lies behind both Bruni's vernacular lives of Dante and Petrarch, in which he claims that there is a theoretical parity between Latin and Italian, and behind two other innovative works of the decade: *Della vita civile* ('On the Life of the Citizen', c. 1434) of Matteo Palmieri, and *I libri della famiglia* ('The Dialogues on the Family', c. 1433–41) by Leon Battista Alberti. These were revolutionary because in the wake of Bruni's *Dialogi* the moral dialogue had quickly established itself as the flagship genre of humanist Latin, whereas Palmieri's and Alberti's works were the first moral dialogues to be written in the Italian vernacular. Until the 1430s prose works in the *volgare* had been either city chronicles, religious tracts or *novelle*.

The ground-breaking nature of Palmieri's and Alberti's dialogues meant that both works had to be accompanied by explanatory proems. Palmieri's prologue articulates the humanist impasse in the 1430s: his subject is to provide guidance for citizens to lead the good civic life, but since the best precepts for 'bene vivere' ('living well') are in Latin, and the vernacular translations of the classics are so poor as to be unrecognizable, he initially turned to *volgare* texts.²⁷ But he found Dante's poetry obscure, Petrarch's verse too restricted in its treatment of moral matters, while Boccaccio's *Decameron* was replete with dissolute and lascivious matter. The limitations both of *volgarizzamenti* of classical texts and of the 'Three Florentine Crowns' inspired Palmieri to write his own work in the vernacular, and in order not to follow the idealizing tendencies of classical authors like Plato, he composed it in the form of a dialogue with speakers who really existed.

The proem also informs us of the structure of the work: Book I deals with the proper civic instruction of the young person from the moment of birth to maturity; Books II and III are entitled 'De honestate', the former dealing with three of the cardinal virtues (prudence, temperance and fortitude), and the latter with the last but most important virtue, justice; while Book IV, 'De utilitate', deals in its first half with the usefulness to the state of children, wealth and soldiers, and in the second half recounts a legendary vision, granted to Dante, of the rewards meted out to those who serve the state well.

Much of the first book is indebted to Quintilian, echoing key passages from the opening of the *Institutio oratoria* and stressing the superiority of

active, civic virtues over the contemplative life. But the most important passage in the first book is Palmieri's discussion of cultural renaissance. He argues that these periods of excellence are rare because most men are either content with the inventions of their predecessors (Quintilian X.2.4), or are bent on merely making wealth out of the arts. But he acknowledges that he is living in one such rare period at present, when painting has been revived by Giotto, sculpture and architecture are enjoying a renewal, while literature, particularly in Latin, has been reborn for the first time in 800 years, thanks especially to the brilliance of Leonardo Bruni. Like other humanists, he castigates the ignorance of his 'medieval' predecessors, above all in Latin, which is the source and medium of philosophy and other disciplines. By contrast, the present excellence in literature derives from this period of renaissance (Palmieri is the first vernacular author to use the verb *rinascere*) which he sees as a recurrent phenomenon, observable in antiquity as well:

You will see from one day to the next the flourishing of the genius of your fellow citizens, since it is in the nature of things that forgotten arts should be reborn (*rinascere*) when necessity demands it. This is what happened in ancient Greece and Rome, where in one generation orators flourished, in another poets, in another jurists, philosophers, historians, sculptors, depending on whether this or that art was more necessary, more esteemed and therefore taught by the masters of that time.²⁸

The most striking part of the work is the final section of Book IV, in which Palmieri recounts a fictitious vision beheld by Dante on the battlefield of Campaldino (1289), which is clearly intended to represent the vision that inspired the *Divina commedia*, but which is also patterned on Cicero's *Dream of Scipio*. In a passage bristling with echoes of the *Commedia* (especially *Inferno* X and *Purgatorio* V), Dante finds three days after the battle the body of his best comrade rising up before him on the field of combat. His friend tells Dante that in his semi-alive condition he found himself on the edge of the sphere of the moon, where Charlemagne showed him both the lower spheres and hell, as well as the higher ones and heaven, in which he saw 'the souls of all the citizens who governed their republics in a just manner'.²⁹ It is a brief vision of the afterlife, more closely modelled on Cicero than on Dante, including the Ciceronian phrase so much admired by Petrarch, 'the life you lead on earth is but a certain death'.³⁰ The main objective of this final sequence is to harness the vernacular outlook of Dante to the mainstream of classical thought, and also to secularize it, omitting the Christian framework of his poem, in order to stress, as Bruni does in his *Vita di Dante*, Dante's interest in the rewards pertaining to the good citizen.

Alberti, who possessed his own copy of the *Brutus* and the *Orator*, both

discovered at Lodi in 1421,³¹ explicitly alludes to the 1435 polemic in the famous proem to Book III of *Della famiglia*, siding with Biondo's thesis of the barbarian origin of the vernacular, but arguing in favour of the utility of writing in a language comprehensible to the majority. Book I articulates a number of key humanist concepts. The main interlocutor argues that the study of classical literature is both aesthetically pleasurable in itself and an ideal training for public life. In another crucial passage it is recommended that the best Latin authors to study are Cicero, Livy and Sallust, not medieval compilations such as the *Chartula* and the *Grecismus*. Where Alberti differs from his peers is in his appreciation of some other writers who are in style 'crudi e rozzi' ('crude and unrefined') but who should still be studied for their content, if not their language: 'The Latin language should be sought in those writers whose style was clear and in a state of perfection; from the other writers let us take the various scientific ideas which their works teach.' Alberti's interest in the content of these 'scientific' writers (Vitruvius, Cato, Varro) is characteristic of his own polymath personality and of his pluralist approach to style.³²

Throughout *Della famiglia* there is an attempt to imitate the secular tone of ancient dialogue, and mentions of Christianity and modernity are kept to a minimum. In most places God is equated with nature: 'Nature, that is to say God, created man to be partly heavenly and divine, and partly to be the noblest and most beautiful of all mortal creatures';³³ and even when contemporary Christian practice is alluded to, it is camouflaged in pagan terms: 'tempio' ('temple') and 'sacrificio' ('sacrifice') are regularly used instead of 'chiesa' ('church') and 'messa' ('Mass').³⁴ Book III, the most widely read of the four books, in which the unlettered Giannozzo undercuts Leonardo's humanist rhetoric, was explicitly intended to be a modern, vernacular equivalent of Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*.³⁵

Alberti's works in the *volgare*, whether moral dialogues or technical treatises on grammar or painting, consistently embrace the project of validating the vernacular as a medium on a par with Latin. The *Grammatichetta* (c. 1440), the first Italian grammar, now almost certainly attributed to Alberti, is modelled on the structure of Priscian's *Institutiones*,³⁶ and also stems from the 1435 dispute about the status of the vernacular. Though Alberti espouses Biondo's theory that the *volgare* derived from the barbarian invasions, he maintains that it too has a grammatical regularity like Latin. Also connected with Alberti's programme of enhancement of the vernacular was the *Certame Coronario* ('Poetic Contest for the Crown') of 1441.³⁷

The *Certame* was a poetry competition promoted by Alberti, in which he solicited compositions on the classical theme of *amicitia* ('friendship'). But

the contest ended in stalemate, with the panel of humanist judges refusing to award the silver laurel wreath to any of the vernacular entries. Alberti's own submission was a poem entitled 'De amicitia', consisting of sixteen lines of Italian written for the first time in classical hexameter verse, beginning: 'Tell me, you mortals who have placed such a gleaming crown before us, what do you hope to achieve by looking at it?'³⁸ It was probably Alberti who penned the anonymous 'Protesta', in which he berated the humanists for not imitating antiquity by declining to encourage literary competitions of this sort. Certainly, the 'Protesta' shows a sensitivity to the diachronic development of both Latin and the vernacular, which is paralleled in the poem to *Della famiglia* Book III and which shows close reading of Quintilian: 'we shall complain if you, as it seems, demand from our age what the ancient Romans never demanded of theirs: before the Latin language became as refined as it subsequently was to become, they were content with their earliest poets just as they were, that is to say, clever perhaps but lacking in stylistic artistry (*ingegniosi, ma chom poca arte*)'.³⁹

Underlying all of Alberti's works is the question of originality in the face of the classical tradition. It is discussed most famously in the prologue to *Della pittura* (1436), his vernacular version of *De pictura* ('On Painting'). Here he rejects the topos that nature is now too old to produce geniuses, since in Florence he has seen that Brunelleschi, Donatello, Ghiberti, Masaccio and Luca della Robbia are as talented as any of the artists of antiquity; indeed, they are superior in that in their own fields they had no ancient model to imitate and could produce 'arts and sciences never before seen or heard of'.⁴⁰ The topic of originality recurs in the *Profugiorum ab aerumna libri* ('Flight from Tribulation'), also known as *Della tranquillità dell'anima* ('On the Tranquillity of the Soul', 1441–2). At the start of Book III Alberti cites Terence's 'Nihil dictum quin prius dictum' ('Nothing is ever said that has not been said before', *Eunuchus* 41), but embroiders it with a characteristic metaphor. He draws a parallel between the man who invented mosaics from the fragments of material left over from the construction of the Temple of Ephesus and the contemporary writer who adorns his work with the precious remnants of the temple of classical culture. The only originality left to the modern writer lies in selecting a different variety of classical gems and in arranging them to suit the new context.⁴¹

Alberti thus confronted the classical tradition directly and in a series of enterprises attempted to bolster the status of the vernacular: writing serious Ciceronian dialogues and technical treatises in it, demonstrating its grammatical regularity and similarity to Latin in the *Grammaticetta*, and organizing the *Certame Coronario* in an attempt to emulate the poetry contests of antiquity which had proved so beneficial to the development of

Latin. However, nearly all his efforts remained original, even genial, ideas, which were doomed to end in stalemate. The Latinate style of his dialogues had no successors until the more natural Italian prose, a century later, of Baldesar Castiglione's dialogue *Il libro del cortegiano* ('The Book of the Courtier', 1528); his grammar made little impact until the 'questione della lingua' ('the Italian language controversy') erupted fully in the first decades of the sixteenth century; his vernacular hexameters had no immediate heirs and the *Certame* as a whole ended with no winners.

The more successful assimilation of the classical tradition into Italian poetry occurred in the writers of the generations after Alberti: Cristoforo Landino, Angelo Poliziano and Lorenzo de' Medici. As we turn to the second half of the century, it is important to bear in mind that it is characterized by a move back from prose to poetry in the vernacular, and by an enthusiasm for Platonic ideas which was inspired by the translation of all of Plato from Greek into Latin by Marsilio Ficino. In particular, Platonic notions of love blended harmoniously with many of the concepts of the vernacular love lyric tradition, thus enhancing its status.

Landino was the theorist of a vernacular literature resting solidly on the strengths of the classical tradition, a theory summed up in his phrase 'è necessario essere latino chi vuole essere buono toscano' ('whoever wants to write Tuscan well has to know Latin'),⁴² and which found its practical counterpart in the works of Poliziano and Lorenzo. Landino's qualification of his motto with the caveat that phrases and ideas should be borrowed from classical writers without making the *volgare* unnatural ('non sforzando la natura') is both a parenthetical critique of the Latinate style of Palmieri and Alberti, and the clue to why the writers of the Laurentian age were more successful in their synthesis of classical and vernacular elements.

In both his Latin and Italian works Poliziano was concerned to avoid imitation of major models, cultivating instead 'minor' authors such as Quintilian and Statius (on whom he first lectured in 1480), rather than Cicero and Virgil. His critical judgements are reflected in his practice in both languages: as he never wrote a Latin dialogue, so in the *volgare* he avoided the major genres popularized by Petrarch, writing only four sonnets and two *canzoni*, and concentrating instead on the minor, popular forms: *canzoni a ballo* (dance or carnival ballads, consisting of a short stanza with refrain) and *rispetti* (brief eight-line love poems).⁴³ Even in these minor poems, though, one can observe many points in common with his Latin works. The poem about Echo (*Rispetti XXXVI*), for instance, is a conscious attempt to transfer to the vernacular lyric tradition the kind of learned,

witty poem that the epigrammatic poet Gauradas had written in Greek, as Poliziano himself tells us in *Miscellanea* I.22.⁴⁴

His most important vernacular work was the unfinished *Stanze per la giostra* ('Stanzas for the Joust', 1475–8).⁴⁵ Even had it been completed, it would never have been an epic on a grand scale, but would probably, given Poliziano's tastes in literature in general, have remained within the genre of the epyllion, or short epic. The title itself suggests a modest work, a number of stanzas not an epic 'Iulieid' about Giuliano, Lorenzo de' Medici's younger brother. The content, structure and style of the work confirm that it is to be classified as a brief, erudite poem in the middle rather than the grand style. The chief models and sources are Claudian and Statius, not Homer and Virgil. It is a poem not about military victories, 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 describing a work of art and occupying a disproportionately large part of the narrative.⁴⁶

In the *Stanze* Poliziano puts into practice that eclectic imitation of different models that he defends in his Latin works. Indeed, certain octaves recall the standard images of the anti-Ciceronians: the bee (I.25), the flowers (I.77), the choir (I.90), the mosaic (I.96). One stanza not only describes the bee moving from flower to flower, as he would later do in his prologue to Statius and Quintilian, but is also a practical demonstration of this theoretical eclecticism:

Zefiro già, di be' fioretti adorno,
avea de' monti tolta ogni pruina;
avea fatto al suo nido già ritorno
la stanca rondinella peregrina;
risonava la selva intorno intorno
soavemente all'ora mattutina,
e la ingegnosa pecchia al primo albore
giva predando or uno or altro fiore. (I.25)

(Zephyr, the springtime wind, bearing little flowers in his breath, had removed all hoarfrost from the mountains; the little swallow, weary from her wanderings, had already returned to her nest; all around, the woods rustled in the morning breeze, and in the first light of dawn the industrious little bee flew around stealing [honey] from a variety of flowers.)

The theme here is a traditional set-piece description of spring, but the phrasing reworks several lines from Petrarch, one from Dante and an echo of Virgil's first *Eclogue*.⁴⁷ The diminutives 'fioretti' ('little flowers'), 'rondinella' ('little swallow') and the unusual 'pecchia' ('little bee'), which actually

derives from a rare Latin diminutive ('apicula'), are typical of Poliziano's vocabulary; while the bee moving from flower to flower symbolizes, in a self-referential way, the author's poetics, shown to best advantage in this very stanza.⁴⁸ But unlike Alberti's rather heavy-handed Latinate prose, in Poliziano we find polished Tuscan verse coupled with the most exquisite intertextual play and intricate strategies of self-reference.

The *Orfeo* (c. 1480) also embodies the constants of Poliziano's poetics. It is a work of considerable originality, a serious drama about a secular subject in the vernacular and perhaps also an imitation in the *volgare* of a Greek satyr-play;⁴⁹ it is a short work rather than a classical five-act drama; it is eclectic in metre, poetic register and language, including as it does an ode in Latin. The Orpheus myth, with sources in so many ancient texts, including the ekphrasis of the epyllion in Virgil's fourth *Georgic*, automatically allowed Poliziano to echo a variety of classical authors. Originality, eclecticism, brevity and erudition, the main components of Poliziano's literary credo, are to be found in the *Orfeo* as much as in the *Stanze*.

His works in both languages exhibit that 'docta varietas' ('learned eclecticism') that he defends against Paolo Cortesi's Ciceronianism in a famous exchange of letters (c. 1485);⁵⁰ and all his writings betray a penchant for eclecticism and minor models, as well as a connoisseur's delight in lexical rarities. There is certainly a shift in Poliziano's literary career from poetry to philosophy, from 'imitatio' to 'philologia', from the early imitations of classical models in the youthful Latin and Italian works of the 1470s, to the philological restoration of the actual texts of antiquity in the 1480s and 90s. But this shift is not so radical as it appears since for Poliziano humanist scholarship was integral to his own best poetry. His cult of eclecticism is the literary equivalent of his contemporary Botticelli's exploitation of different classical and vernacular sources in his two great secular works of the 1470s and 1480s, the 'Primavera' and the 'Birth of Venus'.⁵¹

Poliziano's patron, Lorenzo de' Medici, was not a scholar, but an important vernacular poet, who in his *Comento de' miei sonetti* ('Commentary on My Sonnets', 1475–91) harnessed some of the key humanist notions of the century to the defence of vernacular poetry. The *Comento* consists of forty-one sonnets linked by a prose commentary. Not only do the sonnets reveal Lorenzo's skill in grafting Neoplatonic motifs onto the vernacular tradition of love poetry, but in the opening pages his defence of the *volgare* is particularly indebted to the humanist debate about language. Thanks to his patronage of the philosopher Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, he knew something about Hebrew: he was aware that Greek was a richer language than Latin, and Latin than Hebrew;⁵² and he was of the view that all three

ancient languages – Hebrew, Greek and Latin – despite their hallowed status, were in origin vernaculars: ‘but they were spoken or written more accurately, regularly or rationally by those who attained honour or prestige in those languages, than they were by the majority of the populace on the whole.’⁵³ By the end of the century, increasing humanist knowledge about the ancient languages is exploited in defence of the Italian vernacular.⁵⁴

Apart from Poliziano’s *Orfeo* with its lyrical shepherds, there were other manifestations of a renewed interest in pastoral in the last decades of the century. Bernardo Pulci’s translation of Virgil’s *Eclogues* was published in Florence in 1482 along with a number of other vernacular eclogues by Tuscan poets such as Francesco Arsochi and Girolamo Benivieni. This popular volume was probably the chief inspiration behind the most important pastoral work of the period, the *Arcadia* (1504) of Jacopo Sannazaro. Consisting of a framing prologue and epilogue, and a narrative of twelve prose chapters, each followed by an eclogue in a variety of metres (*terza rima, sestinas, canzoni*), *Arcadia* represents a felicitous synthesis of classical bucolic motifs and the troubled present of Sannazaro’s Naples, caught between the powerful invading forces of France and Spain at the end of the century. Sannazaro is particularly skilled at fusing the nostalgia of Virgil’s *Eclogues* with the traditions of vernacular love lyric and is proud of his role as the reviver of pastoral poetry: ‘I was the first to reawaken the woods which had fallen asleep, and the first to show the shepherds how to sing the forgotten songs.’⁵⁵ Thanks to Sannazaro’s initiative, pastoral remained popular in the sixteenth century and eventually gave rise to the successful new genre of pastoral drama in Torquato Tasso’s *Aminta* (1573) and Battista Guarini’s *Il pastor fido* (1590).

By far the most extraordinary vernacular text to emerge under the influence of humanism was the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, attributed to Francesco Colonna and published by Aldus Manutius in 1499. A prose romance in two books, it narrates the dream of Poliphilo and the story of his love for Polia, firstly in an allegorical dream sequence in the twenty-four chapters of Book I, then in a shorter narrative in the fourteen chapters of the second book. Apart from the beautiful woodcuts that accompany the text, the work is astonishing for two other reasons: its profound antiquarian knowledge of ancient architecture and technical terms; and its bizarre style, clearly intended to be a *volgare* equivalent of the Apuleian Latin that was so fashionable in northern Italy at the end of the century.⁵⁶ Like Poliziano’s *Stanze*, the work remains in descriptive rather than narrative mode: the many descriptions of woods, pyramids, obelisks, sculptures, triumphs and inscriptions allow not only for imitation of vernacular authors,⁵⁷ but in particular of the difficult, technical writers favoured by the anti-Ciceronian

humanists in the Quattrocento: Plautus, Pliny, Apuleius, Vitruvius and his modern counterpart Alberti.⁵⁸ The rare lexis is embedded in Latinate syntax, with heavy adjectivization, use of gerunds and participles and a fondness for Greek terms, diminutives of nouns and compounds of verbs and adjectives.⁵⁹ But this exotic vernacular, like the eclectic Latin of the anti-Ciceronians at the end of the fifteenth century, was a singular, virtuoso achievement that left no heirs.

It seems appropriate to end the story of humanism's impact on Italian literature at its apogee, with the publication of the *Hypnerotomachia* in 1499. The first decades of the next century saw a return to Ciceronian classicism in both Latin and the vernacular, largely under the influence of Pietro Bembo. Although writers working in Italian still took inspiration from the literature of antiquity, Bembo was the only important vernacular author to make a career as a humanist. His *Gli Asolani* ('The Lovers of Asolo', 1505) expounded Platonic ideas of love, and in the *Prose della volgar lingua* ('Dialogues on the Vernacular Language', 1525) he took humanism's tripartite periodization of golden age, decadent and Renaissance Latinity, and rigidly applied it to the vernacular literature written in the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively; hence his conclusion that as in Latin only Cicero and Virgil were acceptable models, so in the *volgare* Boccaccio and Petrarch were the sole writers one could imitate. But Bembo's other vernacular works owe little to the legacy of humanism. The major Italian authors of the sixteenth century, from Ariosto and Castiglione to Tasso and Guarini, continued to draw nourishment from the classical tradition, but none of them was a practising humanist, and none drew creative inspiration from scholarship in the way that Petrarch, Alberti and Poliziano had done.

The impact of the *studia humanitatis* on Italian Renaissance literature appears to be threefold. First, although humanism initially retarded the development of vernacular literature, diverting intellectual energy into the writing of Latin, it also in one sense emancipated the *volgare*. When Quattrocento humanists realized that Latin was not a supernatural monolith, but a language with a diachronic development, they accepted that the vernacular was not innately inferior, but rather a young language in need of development. Knowledge of Greek, and particularly awareness of the fact that, unlike Latin, it had possessed dialects as well as a literary *koine*, meant that Italian had a prestigious model in one of the ancient languages. Only when the vernacular was defended by humanists, such as Alberti and Landino, and not just by the unlettered champions of the 'Three Crowns', did intellectuals accept the *volgare* as a serious alternative to Latin.

Secondly, humanism enhanced the status of the vernacular in practical terms by introducing new genres, themes and stylistic sophistication. Although a genuine epic would not be written until Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (1575), humanist enthusiasms promoted the introduction of the pastoral, the comedy and the satire into the vernacular. In prose, fifteenth-century humanism inaugurated at least two new genres: the moral dialogue and the biography, alongside the *novelle* and chronicles of the fourteenth century. In thematic terms, poets such as Petrarch and Poliziano could elegantly graft classical themes onto the more slender traditions of romance lyric, and even make poetry out of their own scholarship and study of the past – Petrarch's obsession with the passing of time; Poliziano's eclectic poetics of the fragment and his desire to recover the *disiecta membra* ('dispersed fragments') of the past; Lorenzo de' Medici's introduction of Neoplatonic themes into the vernacular lyric. Humanist writers of Italian not only incorporated some of the great themes of antiquity, but also elaborated a theory of intertextual allusion that was indebted to classical notions of *imitatio*.

Lastly, humanism can be said to have emancipated vernacular literature from its religious origins. Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio had inscribed their classical echoes within an overarching Christian framework, but in the Quattrocento the secularization of Italian literature begins. Bruni's biographies, and Alberti's and Palmieri's dialogues, are entirely secular in tone, while at the other end of the century the important vernacular works of Poliziano, Sannazaro and Colonna are a joyful celebration of the mythical, pagan world of antiquity.

Without humanist influence Italian literature would certainly have developed along very different, but probably more limited, and certainly more religious, lines. With the input supplied by the leading humanist writers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the vernacular was at last able to achieve a theoretical parity with the classical languages, and Italian literature was able to expand the number of genres open to it, to increase the range of themes and to elaborate complex imitative strategies in a secular atmosphere which ushered in the golden age of the first half of the sixteenth century, the age of Machiavelli, Castiglione and Ariosto.

NOTES

- 1 The physical detail of Charon's white beard (*Aeneid* VI.299–300: 'masses of white, unkempt hair lay on his chin') is echoed once by Dante (*Inferno* III.83: 'an old man, with white, ancient hair'), then expanded into a more grotesque

- image: 'his woolly cheeks' (*Inferno* III.97); similarly Virgil's detail about Charon's eyes (*Aeneid* VI.300: 'flames stood in his eyes') is alluded to once (*Inferno* III.99: 'around his eyes he had wheels of fire'), then expanded into something more diabolical: 'Charon the demon, with his eyes of burning coal' (*Inferno* III.109).
- 2 K. Brownlee, 'Dante and the classical poets', in R. Jacoff, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Dante* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 100–19. For intertextual allusions, see M. U. Sowell, ed., *Dante and Ovid: Essays in Intertextuality* (Binghamton, 1991); R. Jacoff and J. T. Schnapp, eds., *The Poetry of Allusion: Virgil and Ovid in Dante's 'Commedia'* (Stanford, 1991).
 - 3 Dante, *Convivio* I.5.8: 'Consequently we can see in the ancient works of Latin tragedy and comedy, which are not subject to change, the same Latin language that we have nowadays; this does not happen with the vernacular, which alters according to the dictates of taste.'
 - 4 On his knowledge of antiquity, see, apart from Brownlee, 'Dante and the classical poets', G. Padoan, *Il pio Enea, l'empio Ulisse: tradizione classica e intendimento medievale in Dante* (Ravenna, 1976), pp. 7–29.
 - 5 MS Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Lat. 3196.
 - 6 P. Hainsworth, 'The myth of Daphne in the *Rerum vulgarij fragmenta*', *Italian Studies*, 34 (1979), 28–44, and his *Petrarch the Poet* (London, 1988), pp. 138–43.
 - 7 E. H. Wilkins, *The Making of the 'Canzoniere' and Other Petrarchan Studies* (Rome, 1951); and more recently, M. Santagata, *I frammenti dell'anima: storia e racconto nel 'Canzoniere' di Petrarca* (Bologna, 1992).
 - 8 For example: 'Erano i capei d'oro a l'aura sparsi' ('Her golden hair was spread out to the breeze', *Rerum vulgarij fragmenta* XC, inspired by *Aeneid* I.319–28); 'Or che'l ciel e la terra e 'l vento tace' ('Now that the heavens, the earth and the wind are silent', CLXIV, from a famous Virgilian description of nocturnal serenity contrasting with the lover's torment in *Aeneid* IV. 522–32); 'Almo sol, quella fronde ch'io sola amo' ('All-nourishing sun, that tree which I love above all others', CLXXXVIII, deriving from Horace, *Carmen saeculare* 9–12); and 'Quel rosignuol che sí soave piagne' ('That nightingale which laments so sweetly', CCCXI, modelled on a famous Virgilian simile in *Georgics* IV. 511–19). See T. M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven, 1982), pp. 111–43.
 - 9 On his language, see G. Contini, *Varianti e altra linguistica* (Turin, 1970), pp. 167–92. For the balanced lines, see D. Alonso, 'La poesia del Petrarca e il petrarchismo (mondo estetico della pluralità)', *Studi petrarcheschi*, 7 (1961), 73–120. Virgil's *Eclogues*, one of Petrarch's favourite texts, provide the most frequent classical models of such balances (e.g., *Eclogues* I.3, 33, 63, 79 etc.) These are also a feature of Horace's *Odes*, another of Petrarch's favourite classical texts, four of which he transcribed into his famous manuscript copy of Virgil (*Odes* II.3, 10, 16; IV.7): see U. Dotti, *Vita di Petrarca* (Bari, 1987), p. 7 n. 7.
 - 10 The echoes of Dante in the first version ('da le fatiche loro' at the beginning of a line, as in *Inferno* II.3; 'Quanti dolci anni, lasso perduto'aggio! / Quanto desio ...' too similar to 'Oh lasso! / Quanti dolci pensier, quanto desio ...' of *Inferno* V.112–13) were removed. But Petrarch retained the Virgilian allusion in

- 'quando / prendon riposo i miseri mortali ...' (cf. *Aeneid* II.268–9: 'It was the hour when the first repose descends on weary men ...'), as well as adding the line 'di questa morte che si chiama vita' ('of that death which is called life'), a reworking of a Ciceronian phrase (cf. *De re publica* VI.14: 'Vestra ... quae dicitur vita mors est'. For a full discussion of the rewriting, see M. Fubini, *Studi sulla letteratura del Rinascimento* (Florence, 1947), pp. 1–12.
- 11 For an English translation of the letter, see Petrarch, *Letters on Familiar Matters: Rerum familiarium libri I–XXIV*, trans. A. S. Bernardo, 3 vols. (Albany, 1975–85), III, pp. 202–7.
 - 12 Cf. Hainsworth's conclusion, in *Petrarch the Poet*, p. 85, on the echo of Ovid in CCLXIV.91–2: 'Citation ceased to be citation by the mere fact of translation ...'
 - 13 In addition to *Familiares* XXI.15, see also I.8, XXII.2 and XXIII.19. Petrarch's own annotations on his manuscripts of *De oratore* and Quintilian are studied in P. De Nolhac, *Pétrarque et l'humanisme*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1907), II, pp. 83–94; P. Blanc, 'Pétrarque lecteur de Cicéron: les scolies pétrarquienes du *De oratore* et de l'*Orator*', *Studi petrarcheschi*, 9 (1978), 109–66; and M. Accame Lanzillotta, 'Le postille del Petrarca a Quintiliano (Cod. Parigino lat. 7720)', *Quaderni petrarcheschi*, 5 (1988), 1–201.
 - 14 G. Tanturli, 'Il disprezzo per Dante dal Petrarca al Bruni', *Rinascimento*, 25 (1985), 199–219.
 - 15 For the text of Boccaccio's epistles, see Boccaccio, *Opere latine minori*, ed. A. Massèra (Bari, 1928). For the translations, see M. T. Casella, *Tra Boccaccio e Petrarca. I volgarizzamenti di Tito Livio e di Valerio Massimo* (Padua, 1982). Even if Boccaccio's authorship of the translation of Livy's Third Decade is disputed, most critics now concur that he translated the Fourth Decade: see G. Tanturli, 'Volgarizzamenti e ricostruzione dell'antico: i casi della terza e quarta Deca di Livio e di Valerio Massimo, la parte di Boccaccio (a proposito di attribuzione)', *Studi medievali*, ser. 3, 27 (1986), 811–88.
 - 16 Giuseppe Billanovich, *Restauri boccacceschi* (Rome, 1945), pp. 49–78.
 - 17 Giuseppe Billanovich, 'Tra Dante e Petrarca', *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 8 (1965), 1–44, at 42–3; and C. Dionisotti, *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* (Turin, 1967), pp. 103–44, especially 115–17. A similar development is visible in the fact that in the 1340s Giovanni Villani could boast about his reading of Latin historians (Sallust, Livy, Valerius Maximus and Orosius) in the vernacular (*Cronica* VIII.36), but that his nephew Filippo Villani writing in the 1380s complained about his uncle's chronicles being written in the vernacular: see Giovanni Villani, *Cronica, con le continuazioni di Matteo e Filippo*, ed. G. Aquilecchia (Turin, 1979), p. 78; and Filippo Villani, *De origine civitatis Florentie et de eiusdem famosis civibus*, ed. G. C. Galletti (Florence, 1847), p. 40.
 - 18 See P. G. Ricci's 'Introduzione' to his critical edition of the *Trattatello*, in G. Boccaccio, *Tutte le opere*, ed. V. Branca (Milan, 1964–), III, pp. 425–35, especially 431–5.
 - 19 C. Paolazzi, *Dante e la 'Comedia' nel Trecento. Dall'Epistola a Cangrande all'età di Petrarca* (Milan, 1989), pp. 131–221.
 - 20 See Boccaccio, *Tutte le opere*, V, pp. 95–6.
 - 21 A Latin edition with facing Italian translation is in E. Garin, ed., *Prosatori latini*

- del Quattrocento* (Milan, 1952), pp. 44–99; for an English translation, see *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni: Selected Texts*, trans. G. Griffiths, J. Hankins and D. Thomson (Binghamton, 1987), pp. 63–84.
- 22 Leonardo Bruni, *Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften*, ed. H. Baron (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 50–69; for an English translation see *Humanism of Bruni*, pp. 85–100.
- 23 Bruni, *Schriften*, pp. 41–9, 113–20; *Humanism of Bruni*, pp. 184–90, 283–92.
- 24 Bruni, *Schriften*, pp. 61–2; *Humanism of Bruni*, pp. 93–5.
- 25 On the Lodi discovery, see R. Sabbadini, *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*, ed. by E. Garin, 2 vols. (Florence, 1967), I, p. 100; see also chapter 2 above, pp. 29, 38–9. Biondo, in his *Italia illustrata* (Basel, 1531), p. 346, shared Bruni's estimate of Petrarch: 'yet [Petrarch] never attained that flowering of Ciceronian eloquence which we now see adorning the work of many in this century . . . Even though he boasted of having discovered at Vercelli Cicero's Letters to Lentulus, he never saw except in a lacerated and mutilated form Cicero's three books *De oratore* and Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*.'
- 26 For the texts and the whole question, see M. Tavoni, *Latino, grammatica, volgare: storia di una questione umanistica* (Padua, 1984). See also A. Mazzocco, *Linguistic Theories in Dante and the Humanists* (Leiden, 1993).
- 27 Matteo Palmieri, *Vita civile*, ed. G. Belloni (Florence, 1982), pp. 3–10.
- 28 Palmieri, *Vita civile*, p. 46.
- 29 Palmieri, *Vita civile*, p. 208.
- 30 Palmieri, *Vita civile*, p. 205. See also n. 10 above.
- 31 G. Mancini, *Vita di L. B. Alberti* (Rome, 1911); C. Grayson, 'Alberti, Leon Battista', in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* (Rome, 1960–), I, pp. 702–9.
- 32 Leon Battista Alberti, *Opere volgari*, ed. C. Grayson, 3 vols. (Bari, 1960–73), I, pp. 70–1. For an English version of the work, see Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence: A Translation of 'I libri della famiglia'*, trans. R. N. Watkins (Columbia SC, 1969). See also C. Grayson, 'Cartule e Grecismi in Leon Battista Alberti', *Lingua nostra*, 13 (1952), 105–6; Giuseppe Billanovich, 'Leon Battista Alberti, il Grecismus e la Chartula', *Lingua nostra*, 15 (1954), 70–1.
- 33 Alberti, *Opere*, I, p. 133.
- 34 See, e.g., Alberti, *Opere*, I, pp. 158, 243.
- 35 Alberti, *Opere*, I, p. 156: 'You will hear [Giannozzo's] bare, simple style in which you can see that I wanted to find out how far I could imitate that most gentle and pleasing writer Xenophon.'
- 36 See Leon Battista Alberti, *La prima grammatica della lingua volgare: la grammaticchetta vaticana*, *Cod. Vat. Reg. Lat. 1370*, ed. C. Grayson (Bologna, 1964), p. xxxix.
- 37 On the *Certame*, see A. Altamura, *Il Certame Coronario* (Naples, 1952); G. Gorni, 'Storia del Certame Coronario', *Rinascimento*, 12 (1972), 135–81.
- 38 Alberti, *Opere*, II, p. 45.
- 39 Cited from Gorni, 'Certame Coronario', 172. Cf. Quintilian X.1.40, where Cicero is said to have imitated even the earliest orators: 'Cicero himself admits that he was helped enormously also by those earliest authors, who were certainly clever but lacked rhetorical skill (*ingeniosis quidem, sed arte carentibus*).'
- 40 Alberti, *Opere*, III, pp. 7–107, at 7. For the topos of nature growing old, see

- E. Gombrich, 'A classical topos in the introduction to Alberti's *Della Pittura*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 20 (1957), 173, who refers to Pliny, *Epistulae* VI.21. But the source is probably Columella, *De re rustica*, I Preface 1–2, especially as that preface contains another idea found in Alberti's prologue, the notion that there are no writers to imitate in writing on agriculture, as well as the phrase 'pingui Minerva' ('of dull intellect', Preface 33), used in the opening lines of *De pictura*.
- 41 Alberti, *Opere*, II, pp. 105–83, at 160–1.
- 42 Cristoforo Landino, *Scritti critici e teorici*, ed. R. Cardini, 2 vols. (Rome, 1974), I, p. 38.
- 43 See D. Delcorno Branca, 'Il laboratorio del Poliziano: per una lettura delle *Rime*', *Lettere italiane*, 39 (1987), 153–206, as well as her introduction to Angelo Poliziano, *Rime* (Venice, 1990), pp. 18, 25.
- 44 Angelo Poliziano, *Opera ... omnia* (Basel, 1553), p. 244.
- 45 Angelo Poliziano, *Stanze, Orfeo, Rime*, ed. S. Marconi (Milan, 1981), pp. 77–137; see also the English translation of the *Stanze* by D. Quint (Amherst, 1979). Although W. Welliver, 'The subject and purpose of Poliziano's *Stanze*', *Italica*, 48 (1971), 34–50, argues that the poem is complete as it stands, no other critic has followed him: cf. P. McNair, 'The bed of Venus: key to Poliziano's *Stanze*', *Italian Studies*, 25 (1970), 40–8; V. Branca, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola* (Turin, 1983), pp. 44–54.
- 46 R. H. Terpening, 'Poliziano's treatment of a classical topos: *ekphrasis*, portal to the *Stanze*', *Italian Quarterly*, 17 (1973), 39–71, sees the description of the *intagli* in the doors of Venus' palace as the centrepiece of the poem.
- 47 Cf. Petrarch's 'Zefiro torna' (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* CCCX.1); 'la stanca vecchiarella pellegrina' (L.5); Dante's 'l'ora mattutina', also at the end of a line (*Purgatorio* I.115); and Virgil's 'resonare doces ... silvas' (*Eclogues* I.5). Another similar set-piece description is that of night (*Stanze* I.60), which echoes two lines of Dante (*Paradiso* XXIII.1, 3), one from Petrarch (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* CCCXI.1) and two from Ovid (*Metamorphoses* III.507, XI.592). Similarly, the portrayal of Polyphemus (*Stanze* I.116) blends both classical and vernacular sources: from Theocritus for subject, from Petrarch (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* L.19) for 'alpestre note' ('alpine notes') and from Dante (*Inferno* III.97) for 'lanose gote' ('woolly cheeks').
- 48 Similarly, the variety of flowers and the multicoloured grass in Venus' garden (I.77) can be interpreted as emblems of *varietas*. The birds singing in Venus' realm – 'e fra più voci un'armonia s'accoglie / di sí beate note e sí sublime ...' (I.90: 'and from the several different voices a harmony emerges of such blessed and sublime notes ...') – recall one of Seneca's images of eclectic imitation: 'Do you not see how a chorus consists of many individual voices, yet it is one sound which emerges?' (Seneca, *Epistulae* LXXXIV.8). The image of the mosaic (I.96) is associated with the eclectic style in Poliziano's important *Miscellanea* preface (*Opera*, p. 214), and the final couplet about adorning the floor with a variety of stones recalls Alberti's image of the mosaic (*Opere*, II, pp. 160–2), which also associates the mosaic image with literary eclecticism.
- 49 For the elements of the satyr-play evident in the *Orfeo*, see Section V of the introduction to Angelo Poliziano, *Orfeo*, ed. A. Tissoni Benvenuti (Padua, 1986).

- 50 See the edition in Garin, *Prosatori latini*, pp. 902–6.
- 51 See C. Dempsey, *The Portrayal of Love. Botticelli's 'Primavera' and Humanist Culture at the Time of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (Princeton, 1992), especially p. 36.
- 52 Lorenzo de' Medici, *Comento de' miei sonetti*, ed. T. Zanato (Florence, 1991), p. 144: 'Greek is adjudged more perfect than Latin, and Latin more than Hebrew, simply because one language expresses better than the other the concepts of the writer or speaker.'
- 53 Medici, *Comento*, p. 149.
- 54 For other classical and humanist ideas that underlie the *Comento*, see T. Zanato, *Saggio sul 'Comento' di Lorenzo de' Medici* (Florence, 1979), pp. 11–44.
- 55 J. Sannazaro, *Opere*, ed. E. Carrara (Turin, 1952), p. 219. For his synthesis of classical and vernacular traditions, see *Egloga* II, which reworks the competitions in Virgil, *Eclogues* III and VIII; and *Prosa* IV, which is modelled on Virgil, *Eclogue* VII: 'the two shepherds were handsome in body, and very young in age: Elpino looked after goats, Logisto tended the woolly sheep; both had hair more golden than mature ears of corn, both were from Arcadia and both were ready to sing and reply to the other's song'; cf. Virgil, *Eclogue* VII.3–5: 'Into the same place Thyrsis had driven his sheep, Corydon his goats with their udders distended with milk: both were in the flower of youth, both were from Arcadia, both were capable of singing and of responding to the other's song.'
- 56 On Apuleian Latin, see C. Dionisotti, *Gli umanisti e il volgare tra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Florence, 1968); E. Raimondi, *Codro e l'umanesimo a Bologna* (Bologna, 1950) and his *Politica e commedia: dal Beroaldo al Machiavelli* (Bologna, 1972); and J. F. D'Amico, 'The progress of Renaissance Latin prose: the case of Apuleianism', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 37 (1984), 351–92.
- 57 The opening sequence in the dark wood clearly recalls the beginning of Dante's *Inferno*, the later accounts of triumphs rework parts of Petrarca's *Trionfi*, while the many descriptions of nymphs are indebted to Boccaccio's *Ameto* (or *Commedia delle ninfe fiorentine*) and the source of much of Book II is the story of Nastagio degli Onesti (*Decameron* V.8).
- 58 For his borrowings from classical and vernacular authors, see M. T. Casella and G. Pozzi, *Francesco Colonna: biografia e opere*, 2 vols. (Padua, 1959), II, pp. 78–149.
- 59 One example must suffice, but almost any sentence in the work would illustrate the style; Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, ed. G. Pozzi and L. A. Ciapponi, 2 vols. (Padua, 1980), I, p. 137: 'Et de soto la strophioia, compositamente uscivano gli pampinulati capegli, parte tremulabondi delle belle tempore umbregianti, tutte le parvissime aurechie non occultando, più belle che mai alla Mimoria fusseron diccate. D'indi poscia, el residuo del flavo capillamento, da drieto el micante collo explicato et dalle rotunde spalle dependuli ...' It is worth noting that where Colonna here borrows just a few words ('capillamento', 'dependuli') from a famous description of hair in Apuleius (*Metamorphoses* II.9), Boccaccio's imitation of the passage reworks whole sentences of the sequence: see G. Boccaccio, *Decameron, Filocolo, Ameto, Fiammetta*, ed. E. Bianchi, C. Salinari and N. Sapegno (Milan, 1952), p. 932.