

INTRODUCTION

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In April 2016, together with Eric Pumroy and David Cast, I organized an interdisciplinary, two-day symposium at Bryn Mawr College (Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania), dedicated to the Humanist Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459) and his exceptionally wide variety of literary activities in and beyond Florence. Distinguished speakers, including our president emerita and Renaissance scholar Nancy Vickers, traveled from the other side of the Atlantic and the West Coast to gather at Bryn Mawr College, highlighting the richly variegated nuances of the intellectual world in early Renaissance Italy and investigating Humanism in its vibrant driving force towards modernity. The title for the symposium *Classicism, Humanism, and Modernity: Poggio Bracciolini and Beyond* is here modified to better represent this collection of essays, which stands on its own and includes, updates, and enriches that collaboration rather than just representing a record of the proceedings of our successful colloquium. The core of this volume lays out a range of exchanges between hugely influential figures in 15th-century Florence, while at the same time focusing on Bracciolini's vibrant contribution to many fields of knowledge in the Western intellectual tradition, spanning across politics and historiography, material and print culture, translation and language acquisition, philology and manuscript studies, calligraphy and paleography. The authors who contributed to this volume naturally worked independently, and yet their essays touch on and interrogate the cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural scholarship of salient and intertwined aspects of early-Renaissance culture.

Poggius Florentinus (1380–1459), as Bracciolini proudly called himself, was an influential intellectual, a pivotal figure in the early history of Humanism, a well-known scholar, and a prolific writer. In David Rundle's words, he was «the most human of humanists» (2005: 1). In 1405, Bracciolini was made *scriptor* in the Papal Curia; in 1410, he became Papal secretary and, finally, in 1453, Chancellor of Florence, after having worked for seven pontiffs during his fifty years in the papal service. He joined the generation of civic humanists that glorified learning (*studium*), literacy (*eloquentia*), and erudition (*eruditio*) as the chief concerns of man,

and held that government was a shared responsibility for all its citizens. Moreover, and to the points of some essays published here, as a young man, Bracciolini had been employed by Coluccio Salutati as a copyist in Florence, and there he had mastered the new art of humanist handwriting. Later, as a book hunter, he found and identified many classical manuscripts, which, moldy and inaccessible, had lain unread for hundreds of years in European libraries. Thanks to Stephen Greenblatt's best seller titled *The Swerve: How the World Became Modern* (2012 Pulitzer Prize Winner for Nonfiction and 2011 National Book Award for Nonfiction), Poggio Bracciolini, «the greatest book hunter of the Renaissance» (13), has been riding a wave of recent attention in the United States for his discovery of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*.

Within the impact of civic Humanism and the much-debated notion of *florentina libertas*, Massimo Zaggia's *The Encomium of the "Florentina Libertas" Sent by Poggio Bracciolini to Duke Filippo Maria Visconti* offers a new critical edition of Bracciolini's letter, dated 15 September 1438, to Duke Filippo Maria Visconti in Milan, which constitutes an addition to Phyllis Gordan's *Two Renaissance Book Hunters*, 1974, and a development from the Harth edition, 1984–1987. The letter represents «a manifestation of civic pride» in Florence against Milan. Based on the geographical distribution of the eighteen surviving manuscripts of this Latin *epistola* (Florence, Rome, Naples, Venice, Vicenza, Basel, Vienna, Prague, Munich, Berlin, Lüneburg, Dresden) «we can truly say that this letter from September 15, 1438 has done much to spread the legend of Florence in Italy, in Europe, and today, also in America». Along the same lines of political engagement and military power, particularly from the fourteenth-century conflicts between Florence and Milan, Outi Merisalo's essay titled *The Historiae Florentini populi by Poggio Bracciolini. Genesis and Fortune of an Alternative History of Florence* articulates a philological analysis of Bracciolini's final historical work *Historiae Florentini populi*, published posthumously by his son, Jacopo Bracciolini (first printed Latin edition 1715), claiming that it is «not a continuation, nor even a complement, to Leonardo Bruni's (1370–1444) official history of Florence». In a similar philological vein, Bracciolini's scholarly production at large, as well as the international reputation that his dialogues gave to him, is examined by David Rundle in *Poggio Bracciolini's International Reputation and the Significance of Bryn Mawr, MS 48*, in which the author brings to our attention the relevance and Europe-wide fortune of the manuscript housed in the Goodhart Gordan collection at Bryn Mawr College, as well as its *littera antiqua*, scribe, illuminator, and provenience: «Its scribe, known for both his peripatetic lifestyle and his interest in promoting Poggio's works, produced the main part of the codex somewhere in the south of England, and then it left his hands to be illuminated, probably in London, for its intended owner». Rundle ends the essay with two

philological appendices (a description of the manuscript and a collation of the English copies) and begins by asserting that «Poggio Bracciolini was not to everybody's taste». Indeed.

Being known throughout his career for criticizing fellow humanists, scholars, linguists, historians, architects, and so on (Niccolò Niccoli, Biondo Flavio, Leonardo Bruni, and his well-known rival Lorenzo Valla), Bracciolini's argumentative dialogue constitutes a pivotal moment in his intellectual endeavor and clearly demonstrates the endless tone of his invectives and disputes. By keeping in mind his ongoing intellectual and ideological quarrels, the volume includes studies on the humanist's exchanges with two distinguished intellectuals. Stefano Baldassarri's *Poggio Bracciolini and Coluccio Salutati: The Epitaph and the 1405-1406 Letters* articulates a philological examination of Manuscript Magliabechiano VIII.1445, housed in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence, which contains an epitaph that Poggio Bracciolini wrote for his mentor Coluccio Salutati (Baldassarri, 2012: 96–98): «Most likely, Poggio composed his epitaph right after Salutati's death, when the Florentine government expressed the intention of building a sepulcher for the renowned chancellor in Santa Maria del Fiore». The passage in question concerns the account of the Roman origins of Florence («Videbimus, ecce videbimus [...] originem a Romanis») and thus covers an «extraordinary political import» that brings the debate on civic humanism back to center stage and pinpoints that «the main lesson that Poggio learned from Salutati was his teacher's passion for knowledge». David Marsh's essay *Poggio and Alberti Revisited* explores the tension and conflict that characterize the relationship between Leon Battista Alberti and Bracciolini: from their friendship, as curial secretaries, to the deterioration of their collaboration, as resulted in the 1441 *Certame coronario* during which Bracciolini, as one of the jurors, refused to award the literary prize to Alberti. Marsh reflects specifically upon the use of irony and satire embraced by both writers who were «inspired to critiques of contemporary society by the Greek satirist Lucian». Nevertheless, the two humanists differ greatly in regard to ethical issues concerning the use of allegory, «which Poggio rejected but Alberti embraced».

Bracciolini's contribution to graphical innovation, visual materiality, and the book market is a driving force in the development of a revolutionary paleographical turn. His practice of copying with the old Carolingian script is the particular object of research in three essays with a perspective on the philological discourse within textual scholarship at large (Ricci), on the material evidence within manuscript visuality (Sisis), and on inscriptions in capital letters (Shaw). Roberta Ricci's *Shifting Times, Converging Futures: Technologies of Writing Beyond Poggio Bracciolini* invites us to explore the new textual consciousness that marked the passage to scrupulous editing criteria and modern technologies of writing,

which ultimately emphasizes the historical dimension and the perennial validity of the philological tradition, including the *informatica umanistica*. Bracciolini's figure within the intellectual milieu of this time articulated the foundations of what would become the specialized culture of the technology of writing. Not coincidentally, by reviving, copying, and circulating the *littera antiqua* in the name of clarity and legibility, he enacted a cultural process that led to technical competence as we «rethink textual transmission and textual scholarship in this digital age». Philippa Sissis's *Script as Image: Visual Acuity in the Script of Poggio Bracciolini* examines the dialectic between the graphic substance of writing – image and words, visuality and materiality within the manuscript. The script itself «becomes a medium for the self-presentation of a humanistic consciousness inscribed in the reproduction of the revised texts and thus a visual paratext on the ancient authors». Sissis considers the interest in materiality also in earlier book collectors, noticing that by then «books are often seen only as documents and texts without taking into account their materiality and historicity as objects that have been transmitted over the centuries». Yet, for Humanists manuscripts are valued in their historical and material dimension in light of the notions of modernity and legibility. Finally, Paul Shaw's *Poggio Bracciolini, an Inscription in Terranuova, and the Monument to Carlo Marsuppini* examines in detail the «strangest Renaissance inscription» in the church of S. Maria in Terranuova Bracciolini, a Tuscan town located between Florence and Arezzo. This text shifts from a contemporary Florentine sans serif to a very close recapitulation of the *capitalis monumentalis* of Ancient Rome. In comparing the Terranuova inscription with that carved in the monument to Carlo Marsuppini in S. Croce, Shaw argues that they show Bracciolini's efforts to apply the new script to public settings. The completion of the Marsuppini monument a few months before his death meant that Bracciolini «lived to see the classical Roman capitals he had studied and copied over a half-century earlier finally reappear in public in Florence».

The next two essays bring forward new elements of Bracciolini's intellectual life in reference to his travelling in Italy and around Europe, touching again upon issues of reputation beyond the peninsula, on which Rundle also sheds light. David Cast's *Poge the Florentyn: A Sketch of the Life of Poggio Bracciolini* situates Poggio's works in Europe within the wider historical and intellectual context of that time, with a general account of his life and the *fortuna* of his texts, among all the *Liber Facietiarum* across the centuries, «in the ever-increasing number of the histories of the culture of the Renaissance», to fast-forward to the 20th century and the third millennium (Ernst Walser, Eugenio Garin, P.O. Kristeller, Hans Baron, Nancy Streuver, Rudolf Pfeiffer, Riccardo Fubini). Julia Gaisser's *Poggio and Other Book Hunters* touches upon the crucial activity of book hunting over time from Aulus Gellius (second century CE) to Fran-

cesco Petrarca, Giovanni Boccaccio, and Poggio Bracciolini, including the anonymous discovery of Catullus around 1300 and the three fourteenth-century descendants of the lost manuscript. Bracciolini salvaged and identified numerous forgotten and unknown manuscripts. The essay speaks in detail of the discovery of Quintilian and Lucretius in 1416, just a few months apart from each other.

Last, but definitely not least, the reader may ask a very legitimate question: Why *Due giornate di studio* at Bryn Mawr College on Poggio Bracciolini? Eric Pumroy's contribution titled *Poggio Bracciolini, Phyllis Goodhart Gordan, and the Formation of the Goodhart Collection of Fifteenth-Century Books at Bryn Mawr College* shifts the emphasis to this wide question, by reflecting upon Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan's *humanitas* and the legacy she left at Bryn Mawr College with her scholarship on Poggio Bracciolini. Gordan (1913-1994) was one of the leading Renaissance scholar of her generation as well as author, translator into English, and editor of Bracciolini's letters in the study titled *Two Renaissance Book Hunters* (Columbia University Press, 1974). This essay draws attention to the research material that she and her father pursued starting from her undergraduate studies at Bryn Mawr College – a collection that «is one of the great renaissance book collections in the US, but the building of it is also an interesting story of the intersection of scholarly, familial, collecting and financial interests in the middle part of the twentieth century».

This forum draws its strength from the richness of its sources and insightfulness of its cross-disciplinarity, featuring contributions by established and emerging scholars who investigate from different perspectives the deep cultural, literary, and paleographical impact Bracciolini's multiple activities had in the centuries to come. Each essay elaborates on interdependent queries spanning across fields and artistic productions of early-modern times in its re(dis)covery and investigation of the classical tradition, where the concept of *humanitas* extends to the manuscripts themselves. I trust that the quality of the chapters, the combination of topics and approaches, as well as of scholars at different stages of their careers, will make this collection a point of reference for the scholarly discourse on Poggio Bracciolini that paves the way for further investigation. I express my sincere gratitude to friends and colleagues at Bryn Mawr College who made the 2016 Symposium possible and successful: enthusiastic and knowledgeable *laureande/i* and the *dottoranda* Justinne Lake-Jedzinak; Nona Smith, Director of Sponsored Research; Provost Mary Osirim for having believed *ab initio* in this project; and Oliva Cardona, our administrative assistant, who profusely worked well beyond the tasks required by the overall project. Not least, I am deeply grateful to all the speakers who accepted my invitation to join us in April 2016 (during the last snowstorm of the season on the East Coast!), to those who contributed to this collection of essays, and to Eric Pumroy (Spe-

cial Collections) and David Cast (History of Art) for the help in organizing this event. Special thanks go to Daniel Armenti for the meticulous, patient, and last minute editing, and to Stefano Baldassarri for his tremendous guidance in the publication of this volume – I am immensely grateful for his guidance. Last but not least, I also thank my family for the unwavering support at every stage. This volume is for all of them: mamma, Emma, Emilio, Harsh, Leah, and Ryan.

The symposium was dedicated to the memory of Renaissance scholar Phyllis Walter Goodhart Gordan, Bryn Mawr College alumna, Class of 1935, who died on 24 January 1994. So is this book. She greatly benefitted so many learned societies and institutions (The Renaissance Society of America, The Grolier Club, the New York Public Library, The American Academy in Rome, The American Philological Association, The Yale Libraries Associates, Bryn Mawr College) and her bequest generously supported my study of Poggio Bracciolini at Bryn Mawr College. She is, thus, the reason for this volume.

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