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LANDSCAPES OF EXILE: (SELF)-PORTRAYALS OF DISPLACEMENT IN ITALIAN
RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

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Presence is the language of love.

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Abstract

Landscapes of Exile examines the phenomenon of exile in Renaissance Italy using an integrated approach that analyzes the spatial practices and their effects on the literary production of six Renaissance writers who were uprooted from their country, city, and/or community of origin. The authors in this study, namely Francesco Petrarca, Biondo Flavio, Leon Battista Alberti, Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, Ippolita Maria Sforza, and Niccolò Machiavelli, embody a representative range of the different typologies of exile that existed in the Renaissance and make for a particularly illuminating case of the multifaceted (political, hereditary, marital etc.) reasons that engendered them. This dissertation represents the first critical attempt to situate the study of exile in Renaissance Italy within the scholarly discourse surrounding mobility in the early modern period. In doing so, it does not only acknowledge exile as an agent behind the mobility of early modern people, but it also accounts for how this idiosyncratic mode of experiencing movement (or lack thereof) prompted writers to develop ways to translate and respond to their physical and emotional dislocation in literary form that are directly informed by this experience.

Specifically, this dissertation explores how the spatial, social, and gendered perspectives from which Renaissance exiles looked at and read the world affected the form, approach, and content of their literary production and how their writing responded to the experience of displacement on three main levels, each of which corresponds to one of the three chapters of this dissertation: epistolary, methodological, and narrative. Through a close-up analysis of the relation between these authors' literary corpuses and the shifting geographies in which their writing took place, this dissertation recasts exile as not only a legal and social condition, but a creative position from which to write that has a profound impact on the development of one's literary identity and voice.

Introduction

Just as in literature one differentiates “styles” or ways of writing, one can distinguish “ways of operating” – ways of walking, reading, producing, speaking etc. [...] Thus a North African living in Paris or Roubaix (France) insinuates *into* the system imposed on him by the construction of a low-income housing development or of the French language the ways of “dwelling” (in a house or in a language) peculiar to his native Kabylia. He superimposes them and, by that combination, creates for himself a space in which he can find *ways of using* the constraining order of the place or of the language. Without leaving the place where he has no choice but to live and which lays down its law for him, he establishes within it a degree of *plurality* and creativity. By an art of being in between, he draws unexpected results from his situation. (*The Practice of Everyday Life*, 30)¹

On a brisk winter morning in Chicago, on February 25, 2020, the members of my committee and I met to discuss my dissertation proposal on the phenomenon of exile in Renaissance Italy, the spatial implications, and their effects on the literary production of six Italian Renaissance writers who were displaced from their city and/or country of origin. By the time the colloquium was over, I was officially admitted to candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Italian Studies. On such a significant and celebratory day, little did I know that the world was going to shut down in a matter of only two weeks after I reached this coveted milestone in my academic career. As I embarked on the daunting yet stimulating journey of writing *Landscapes of Exile: (Self)-Portrayals of Displacement in Italian Renaissance Literature*, the COVID-19 outbreak

¹ Text cited from Micheal De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven F. Rendall. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

was declared a public health emergency of international concern and people across the globe suddenly locked down, upending their lives, jobs, and routines. Disoriented as everyone else at this point might have felt, struggling to find some semblance of normalcy, and left with nothing but time on my hands, I started pondering over how the coronavirus pandemic brought the normalization of enclosure, isolation, and forced immobility and, as a consequence, heightened our feeling of displacement, increased our need for human connection, and changed our perception of space and distance. Soon it dawned on me how these considerations closely resonated with some of the research questions I had been asking myself about exile in Renaissance Italy and its spatial, social, and literary implications, such as: which set of conditions constrained people's mobility in the Renaissance and which ones propelled it? What shape did displacement take and what constituted exile in Renaissance Italy? How did early modern writers reframe their lives, relationships, literary and spatial practices in the face of exile?

As the connections between past and present forms of displacement surfaced, so did the differences. The first and most blatant one is the fact that nowadays the word 'exile' has deeply political connotations and it is associated with the state, or period, of either forced or voluntary absence from one's country or home, usually for political reasons.² However, in late medieval and Renaissance Italy the official terms used to designate politically motivated forms of exclusion were *bando* or *bannus* (respectively the Italian and Latin for 'banishment').³ When

² This and similar versions of contemporary definitions of the word 'exile' can be found in the Oxford English Dictionary, Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Cambridge English Dictionary, and Collins English Dictionary among others.

³ See Desiderio Cavalca, *Il bando nella prassi e nella dottrina giuridica medievale* (Milan: A. Giuffrè, 1978): pp.17-22; On the topic of exile in Renaissance Italy see in particular: Randolph Starn, *Contrary Commonwealth: The Theme of Exile in Medieval and Renaissance Italy*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion in Early Renaissance Florence*.

applied in this historical context exile, whose etymology comes from the Latin *exilium, ex solum*, “outside of the soil,” was a broad and dense term used to refer loosely to coerced and self-imposed removal from one’s original country, city, and community as well as figurative, spatial, religious, and even emotional displacement or enclosure in another.⁴ This dissertation takes up the early modern acceptance of exile, hereafter used interchangeably with the word ‘displacement,’ opening up the meaning that we presently assign to it in order to begin understanding the ways in which past instantiations of this century-old phenomenon differed from our own and, ultimately, to challenge their remoteness from our present experiences.⁵

Specifically, *Landscapes of Exile* focuses on an aspect that is often overlooked both in the analysis of this phenomenon and the employment of this term in the early modern period, that is to say its relation to mobility. In it, I consider and analyze exile as an idiosyncratic mode of experiencing movement (or lack thereof) across space that, despite being ubiquitous in the Renaissance, is only rarely surveyed in the scholarly literature concerning mobility in this period.⁶ In other words, my dissertation acknowledges the forces (political, familial, social, intellectual, or purely psychological) that compelled early modern individuals or groups of individuals to leave their familiar abodes or to stay behind when other members of their families left. In doing that, it looks at exile’s internal and external, visible and invisible, direct and

(Turnhout: Brepols, 2007); Christine Shaw, *The Politics of Exile in Renaissance Italy*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁴ Stephen A. Barney et al., *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 125: “Exile (*exilium*) is so called as if it were ‘outside of the country’ (*extra solum*), for someone who is outside the country is called exile (*exul*).”

⁵ In his essay “Exile in the Reformation,” *Space and Self in Early Modern European Cultures*. (2012): 200-218, Lee Palmer Wandel speaks of the 16th century religious persecutions and expulsions that forced hundreds of European Christians, Jews, Muslims, on the road in terms of ‘exile’ and ‘displacement’ and repeatedly refers to religious exiles as refugees.

⁶ See Lee P. Wandel’s essay as one of the few exceptions to this rule.

indirect manifestations, as well as at how it re-qualifies spaces and landscapes (both physical and literary ones) and affects people's relationships and engagement with them.

The literary nature of my dissertation brings me to analyze a distinct and rather elitist expression among the many nuanced forms that exile took in Renaissance Italy, that is to say 'literary exile.' By this I mean the experience of male and female individuals who found in the writing practice an unconstrained creative space that enabled them to live with, respond to, and find meaning in the displacements that defined their lives. I aver that literature is a generative space for analyzing the position of the exile subject in the Renaissance and that the socio-political and legal lens through which this phenomenon has been mostly analyzed thus far has kept us from apprehending the implications that displacement had on the literary practices of those who suffered from it. While early modern exile affected men and women of all social classes, having the means and freedom to write was almost exclusively a prerogative of the wealthy. The exile writers I selected as case studies for my dissertation, which are Francesco Petrarca, Biondo Flavio, Leon Battista Alberti, Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, Ippolita Sforza, and Niccolò Machiavelli, were all born into fairly prominent families who enjoyed a leading role in the politics and business of the cities they originally belonged to. Ironically, social status and family ties can be counted among the main factors behind their exile, at least until the half of the 16th century, as the latter was often driven by political reasons and/or marriage.

Within the subcategory of literary exile, the protagonists of this dissertation embody a representative range of the different 'typologies of exile' that existed in Renaissance Italy and make for an illuminating analysis of the multilayered reasons (hereditary, marital, legal, political etc.) that engendered them. For instance, Petrarca (1304 – 1374) was the son of a White Guelph notary banned from Florence in 1302. Though his father's status was not legally extended to him,

he identified all his life as an 'exile' and created his literary persona around this inherited condition. Biondo (1392 – 1463) was of exile descent, though this did not affect him the way his political and professional forms of exile did. He experienced banishment from his native city firsthand (1423-25) and repeatedly endured displacement because of his curial career. Alberti (1404 – 1472) was born an illegitimate son into a Florentine family who suffered from mass banishment in 1401. Despite not being officially considered a full member of his father's family because of his inborn status, he legally inherited the ban once he turned sixteen and experienced it until the sentence was lifted eight years later. Alessandra M. Strozzi (c. 1408 – 1471) was the wife and later widow of Matteo di Simone Strozzi, banned from Florence in 1434, and mother of Filippo and Lorenzo, who inherited the legal banishment from their father when they became of age. While as a woman she did not experience exile in the form of forced relocation as the men in her family did, her inner dislocation within Florence is directly related to the status and responsibilities of widow and mother of exiles that she was vested by way of her marriage. Ippolita Sforza (1445 – 1488) was the daughter of Francesco Sforza, duke of Milan, who brokered her marriage with Alfonso II of Aragon, grandson of the Aragonese king, to solidify the allegiance between the two city-states. At the age of twenty she underwent nuptial displacement, a standard though nevertheless disorienting experience of physical translation to another house, city, and in this case country for women during this time. Machiavelli (1469 – 1527) was compelled to withdraw himself from political life after falling into disgrace upon the return of the Medici family to power in 1512 and suffering banishment, incarceration, trial, and torture in Florence's prison.

While, on the one hand, the plasticity and plurality of meanings that the exile takes in the Renaissance pose a challenge to a comprehensive and uniform investigation of this complex yet

fascinating phenomenon, on the other, they call for a new critical approach to the study of an experience that can only be understood in a qualitative way by an attentive case-by-case analysis of its multifaceted instantiations. Though by no means exhaustive, *Landscapes of Exile* lays down the stakes for further studies into the numerous typologies of exile that existed in the Renaissance, acknowledging the need for a more expansive and in-depth assessment of both their causes and effects.

I. Structure and Intellectual Impact

This dissertation employs an interdisciplinary method that combines the close-reading and analysis of literary texts and non-literary sources with spatial studies and historiographical approaches to reconstructing, examining, and shedding light on the ways in which these writers' discrete experiences of displacement influenced and informed their literary production.⁷ While the definitions 'exile literature' and 'literature of exile' have commonly been used to encompass literary works that deal with exile explicitly as their subject matter, *Landscapes of Exile* opens up this notion to include epistolary, historiographical, and narrative works where "exile is the condition but not the visible cause of an imaginative response."⁸ Precisely, it explores how the

⁷ The non-literary sources examined include criminal registers, lists of sentences, official dispatches, and tax registers.

⁸ Among the scholarly literature on 'exile literature' see David Marsh, *The Experience of Exile Described by Italian Writers: From Cicero Through Dante and Machiavelli Down to Carlo Levi*. (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2013), Alberto Asor Rosa, *La letteratura italiana e l'esilio*. (Rome: Carocci, Università degli studi di Roma La Sapienza, 2011), "Exile Literature." *Annali d'Italianistica*. Vol. 20. Arizona State University, 2002.; For the definition of "literature of exile" and "literature of counter-exile" see Claudio Guillén, "On the Literature of Exile and Counter-exile," *Books Abroad*. Vol. 50. (1976), pp. 271-272: "Broad though the spectrum of these literary responses has been, it can be observed that they range, in the main, from a pole A to a pole B. Pole A is the direct and near-autobiographical conveyance of the actual experiences of exile itself by means of emotions reflecting the experiences or of attitudes developed toward them. Pole B is the imaginative presentation of relatively fictional themes, myths or proposed ideas and beliefs growing from what are essentially the consequences

spatial, social, and gendered perspectives from which these writers in exile looked at and read the world affected the form, approach, and content of their texts and how their writings responded to displacement on three main levels, each of which corresponds to one of the three chapters of this dissertation: epistolary, methodological, and narrative.

The foundational figure who introduces this dissertation and ties together its different characters and chapters can be none other than Petrarca. The 14th century poet laureate authored some of the most renowned, original, and influential books of prose and metrical letters written in early modern Italy, succeeded at ‘rediscovering the past’ and reawakening both in his contemporaries and posterity the interest for the literary and material monuments of antiquity, and exercised a control over his self-representation and exilic narrative that are paradigmatic and that will inspire generations of writers to employ letters and other narrative genres as literary devices to portray their displaced selves.⁹ Appropriately, this dissertation begins with a brief overview of Petrarca’s chief role in the transformation of the classical epistolary tradition into the most suitable genre for the “making of the self” in the Renaissance. This mandatory assessment is crucial to start evaluating the full extent of the influence that his letters had over the female and male exile writers and the different levels of response to exile that are under investigation in this dissertation, as well as appreciating these writers’ awareness of their belonging to Petrarca’s

in the changing writer, or group of writers, of the initial experiences. A certain kind of writer speaks of exile, while another learns from it. In this first case, which is common in poetry and often assumes elegiac modes, exile becomes its own subject matter. In the second, which may lead to narrative and essays, exile is the condition but not the visible cause of an imaginative response often characterized by a tendency towards integration, increasingly broad vistas and universalism. Writings of the former sort can be rightly regarded as examples of the *literature of exile*. Instances of the latter compose what I shall call *literature of counter-exile*, that is to say of those responses which incorporate the separation from place, class, language or native community, insofar as they triumph over the separation and thus can offer wide dimensions of meaning that transcend the earlier attachment to place or native origin.”

⁹ See Roberta Antognini, “*Familiarium rerum liber*: tradizione materiale e autobiografia” in *Petrarch and the Textual Origins of Interpretation*. (2007), pp. 205-229. Also, see Petrarca’s *Guida al viaggio da Genova alla Terra Santa: Itinerarium Syriacum*. Ed. Ugo Dotti. (Milan: Feltrinelli, 2018).

humanistic legacy in spite of the resistance that several scholars have demonstrated, over the century, towards their inclusion in such categorization.¹⁰

Chapter 1 is dedicated to an analysis of the literary genre that all physically displaced writers in the Renaissance unarguably resorted to overcome spatial distance, that is to say letter writing. In this chapter, I investigate the dialogic relation that exists between the epistolary corpora of Strozzi, Sforza, and Machiavelli and their experiences of exile, factoring the discrete forms of displacement that they each endured among the key elements that simultaneously influenced and informed the content, form, language, interlocutors, and functions of their missives. My close reading of their letters enables me to reconstruct the spatial practices they engaged with as well as to map the cartography of spaces and patronage networks to which, by virtue of their exile, these writers were either granted or forbidden access to.

In chapter 2, I address the temporal distance through which Renaissance writers in exile articulated their displacement from a past they strove to reconstruct in their works. The main character in this chapter, Biondo, partook in the humanist endeavor to rediscover antiquity, being involved in and at the same time benefitting from the preservation and transmission of both physical and textual monuments occurring in the Renaissance. Additionally, he suffered from different typologies of exile that influenced his professional and literary trajectory and directly enabled the development of his pioneering historiographical method and innovative writing of

¹⁰ On the topic of Petrarca's influence and his humanistic legacy see Georg Voigt, *Il risorgimento dell'antichità classica: ovvero, il primo secolo dell'umanesimo*. (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1888-90), 27: "Il genio del Petrarca, per dir tutto in una parola, sta nel mondo dell'Umanesimo da lui richiamato in vita. E non solo nell'aver fatto rivivere l'antichità sepolta in un lungo letargo, ma nell'aver messo a tenzone il passato col presente che lo circondava, antiveggendo in questa lotta il sorgere di un'età nuova. Quivi egli additò un compito arduo e immenso, ma fecondo quant'altro mai, diè l'indirizzo ad una moltitudine d'ingegni, e se anche dopo poche generazioni altri lo sopravvanzarono, successe a lui come lo scopritore del Nuovo Mondo, il quale dopo breve volger di tempo, si trovò in fatto di cognizioni positive superato da qualunque fanciullo frequentasse la scuola."

history. By examining the textual evidence of his methodology found in two of Biondo's historical geographies vis-à-vis the direct and oblique, spatial and temporal forms of displacement he endured in his life, I answer the question of how Biondo's translated the latter into literary experiments in historical writing that by engaging with the past's spatial and physical manifestations challenged its perceived remoteness and fostered its revival.

Finally, in chapter 3 I delve into how exile writers represent and incorporate displacement as a storyline in their narrative works. The enactment of exile in fictional texts such as those by Alberti and Machiavelli is manifested in the decision to feature displaced characters as protagonists and plots that revolve around their movements across physical and metaphysical worlds. In this chapter, I analyze the personal and socio-political circumstances under which these works were written to reveal how these factors directly informed the storyline, spatial contextualization, and representation of displacement in these works. By examining how the settings and the protagonists' movements across them are represented, I shed light on the different ways in which Alberti's and Machiavelli's personal experiences of exile fueled their literary creativity and illuminate the process of translating them in narrative form, promoting an understanding of exile that other literary genres do not afford.

While the three levels identified as the main forms of literary responses to exile cannot comprehensively embrace all the different ways in which these writers' literary corpus has been affected by and consequently responded to displacement, I argue that together they make for a complementary study of the impact that exile had on Renaissance authors whose lives and works can be better understood when approached and interpreted in light of this phenomenon. In doing so, this dissertation takes displacement as a critical agent behind the literary production of Renaissance writers in exile, contributing to furthering the study of the relationship between

space and writing in Italian Renaissance literature and advancing a line of inquiry emerged in the latter half of the 20th century as part of the ‘spatial turn’ in the humanities and social sciences that uses space as an analytical and interpretative framework for literary studies.¹¹ More to the point, it responds to a call for a spatial approach to the study of ‘literary exile’ in the Renaissance that considers the effects that the shifting personal geographies in which these writers’ literary practices took place had on them, that is to say the influence that they exercised over the way they oriented themselves to the world and how they chose to represent it in literary form. By bringing these two perspectives together, this dissertation recasts exile as not only a legal or social condition, but a creative position from which to write that has a profound impact on the development of one’s literary identity and voice.

Landscapes of Exile creates a more distinct understanding of the cultural and literary history of exile in Renaissance Italy, placing special emphasis upon the creative tension born out of the possibilities and constraints opened and imposed by this rather pervasive condition among early modern writers. It informs our approach, analysis, and appreciation of historical writings of the self (Chapter one), of the past (Chapter two), and of creative narratives (Chapter three) that have greatly influenced the shape these literary genres have taken over the centuries. Moreover, this dissertation represents the first critical attempt to situate the study of exile in Renaissance Italy within the scholarly discourse surrounding mobility in the early modern period. By doing so, it proves to have clear contemporary relevance as it engages with the issue of displacement as a signature characteristic of our modern era. By reflecting on the medieval and early modern origins of this phenomenon, this dissertation contributes to the historicization of a topic that

¹¹ For a comprehensive overview of the transforming impact that the “spatial turn” had on literary studies see Robert T. Tally, *The Routledge Handbook of Literature and Space*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017). See also Indranil Acharya and Ujjwal Kumar Panda, *Geographical Imaginations: Literature and the ‘Spatial Turn.’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022).

enhances our contemporary understanding of the world. It reveals that exile is not an exclusive or defining feature proper to the 21st century, but rather one that the early modern European culture shared as a precondition to identity and that our contemporary society inherited. As such, its humanistic significance transcends the chronological and disciplinary limits of the fields to which it primarily belongs to encompass all disciplines across the humanities and social sciences committed to advancing the scholarly understanding of the driving forces, processes, and outcomes of human displacement.

II. *Petrarca and the Creation of a Humanist Legacy Rooted in Displacement*

The story of Petrarca's role in the rediscovery and transformation of the letter into the most representative literary form of self-expression in the Renaissance is an autobiographical story of "recovery, epiphany, and imitation."¹² Dramatized and memorialized for posterity in his *Familiars* XXIV, 3 is the poet's foundational encounter in 1345 in the cathedral library of Verona with Cicero's collections of personal letters to his friend Atticus.¹³ According to Petrarca's self-serving narrative, his discovery of the missives of the single most influential letter writer of antiquity inspired him to include personal matters (*familiaria*) in his epistles, from

¹² Carol E. Quillen, *Rereading the Renaissance: Petrarch, Augustine, and the Language of Humanism*. (1998), p. 109.

¹³ *Fam.* XXIV 3; *LFM* 3:317: "Francesco sends his greetings to Cicero. After a lengthy and extensive search for your letters, I found them where I least expected, and I then read them with great eagerness. [...] Alas, forgetful of your brother's advice and of your many wholesome precepts, like a wayfarer at night carrying a lantern before him, you revealed to your followers the path where you yourself stumbled most wretchedly." *Fam.* I 1; *LFM*, 1: 10: "I shall for the most part follow the example of Cicero more than that of Seneca in these letters. [...] Cicero restricted his philosophical concerns to his books and included in his letters accounts of the highly personal, unusual and varied goings-on of his time." Petrarca's discovery of Cicero's letters is also mentioned in *Fam.* XVIII 8; *LFM* 3:58 to Francesco Nelli: "I happened by chance to come upon Cicero's letters, a magnificent book replete with great variety and with this kind of friendly discourse."

which comes his decision to call his first collection of letters *Familiarium rerum liber*, and to adopt a style that aimed at recreating in writing the intimacy of oral communication with a friend considered “*tamquam alter idem*.”¹⁴ The importance of Petrarca’s mythical discovery of Cicero’s letters is heightened by the fact that he found in them the inspiration to arrange and publish his own collected letters.¹⁵ Indeed, Petrarca’s *Familiares* and *Seniles* are the end product of a painstaking editing labor that he personally undertook and that brought him to gather, carefully select, revise, write, and assemble his letters over the course of over two decades of his life.¹⁶ Hence, Petrarca’s published books of familiar letters constitute a retrospectively polished and somewhat unified literary reworking of his life story, assembled under the premise of offering both to his contemporaries and to his posterity an intellectual and spiritual autobiography of himself.¹⁷

¹⁴ Cicero’s dialogue *De amicitia* was a point of reference for Petrarca’s concept of friendship, as he openly expresses in several letters including *Fam. XVIII 8*; *LFM 3:58*: “I was delighted too in having, as he says in one passage, followed in his footsteps. To make this still clearer, I shall cite Cicero’s very words: while writing to Atticus he changes his mind many times and then adds, as if speaking to himself: “Don’t you change your opinion as often?” And he replies as I said: “I speak with you as with myself.”; The bibliography for Petrarch’s friends and friendships is vast. See: Ernest Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Reginald Hyatte, *The Arts of Friendship: The Idealization of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature*. (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1994); Alexander Lee, “The Holy Passion of Friendship,” in *Petrarch and St. Augustine: Classical Scholarship, Christian Theology and the Origins of the Renaissance in Italy*. (2012), pp. 229-275; Enrico Fenzi, “Petrarca e la scrittura dell’amicizia (con un’ipotesi sul libro VIII delle Familiari,” in *Motivi e forme delle Familiari di Francesco Petrarca*. (2003), pp. 549-589.

¹⁵ In this regard, see Roberta Antognini, “Familiarium rerum liber: tradizione materiale e autobiografia,” in *Petrarch and the Textual Origins of Interpretation*. (2007), p. 207. “Possiamo sicuramente aggiungere che nelle *Ad Atticum* stesse Petrarca trova un esplicito riferimento alla raccolta. Infatti, in una delle ultime lettere (XVI 2[5], 5), scrive Cicerone: “Mearum epistularum nulla est collatio; sed habet Tiro instar septuaginta; et quidem sunt a te quaedam sumendae. Eas ego oportet perspiciam, corrigam. Tum denique edentur” (“Non esiste ancora una raccolta delle mie lettere: Tirone ne conserva una settantina; per altre potresti pensarci tu. Ma bisognerà rivederle, correggerle: solo allora potranno essere pubblicate” [testo latino e traduzione in Vitali 1960]). In vista della futura raccolta delle *Familiares*, questo monito suona particolarmente suggestivo e aggiunge un altro tassello alla storia.”

¹⁶ For a detailed account of Petrarca’s editorial epistolary labor see Giuseppe Billanovich, *Petrarca letterato: I. Lo scrittoio del Petrarca*. (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1947).

¹⁷ For Petrarca’s autobiographical letter writing project see Roberta Antognini’s monograph, *Il progetto autobiografico della Familiare di Petrarca*. (Milan: LED, 2008). See also Daniela G. Folena,

Petrarca's zealous editorial labor ensured him that his books of letters mirrored the form that he intended for them to have.¹⁸ Despite his choice not to include letters written by his correspondents in his *Familiars* and *Seniles*, it is nonetheless critical to elaborate first on the "auto-" and then on the often-ignored "bio-" graphical aspects of his letter writing to better understand how they both contribute to foster the literary persona that he so painstakingly labored to create for himself. To this end, we need to first explore both the legal and historical circumstances underlying Petrarca's claims to exile.

Petrarca suffered from a typology of exile that, similarly to that of other writers of this dissertation, is inherited. He was the son of Ser Petracco di Parenzo, a notary from Arezzo whose family had ties with the Florentine leading figures of the White Guelphs.¹⁹ Petracco worked for the Florentine Signoria (1300-1301) and for the Riformagioni (1302) until the Black Guelphs came into power in Florence in April 1302 whereupon he was affected, together with many of his fellow colleagues and partisans, including Dante Alighieri, by the exclusionary measures taken against members of the White faction.²⁰ Indeed, after being accused on October 20 1302 of filing a fraudulent petition, fined one thousand petty lire, and threatened with the amputation of his right hand if he failed to pay, he fled Florence with his wife, Eletta Canigiani, and as a

"Familiarium rerum liber: Petrarca e la problematica epistolare," *Alla lettera: teorie e pratiche epistolari dai Greci al Novecento*. (1998): pp. 51-82.

¹⁸ For instance, refer to *Fam.* V 17; *LFM* 1:272 about the danger of a lost letter which exposes Petrarca's fear that letters circulated in their original form, thus in an extra-programmatic way, that could expose things he did not want to show: "I am not unaware of your astonishment that I should appear to bear so badly the loss of a single letter. [...] In it I had said many things against fortune, against the softness of men and especially my own; and with many exhortations to virtue and not a few attacks against our century and against the vices that now seem to rule all over the world, I had provided the letter with a double spur. So true was all of this that upon rereading it I scarcely thought it was my work."

¹⁹ Luca Marozzi, "Retorica dell'esilio nel *Canzoniere* di Petrarca," *La letteratura italiana e l'esilio*. (2011), pp. 71-94.

²⁰ Wilkins, *Life of Petrarch*.

consequence he was sentenced and banished.²¹ Francesco was born two years later, in 1304, in Arezzo. Despite being the son of a *bannitus*, at the time of his birth the Florentine authorities had not extended Petracco's banishment to his male heirs and thus he did not share his father's legal status.²² That Petrarca, who in his youth studied law in Bologna, was well aware of the differences between his father's legal condition and his is evidenced by the language of exclusion that he uses throughout his literary production when speaking of himself and his status. Indeed, he refers to himself as an 'exile' and adopts the word *exilium* both to underscore his own freedom from criminal charges as well as to describe the sense of alienation and physical displacement that he inherited as birthright.²³ Indeed, soon after his birth he and his family moved first to a property owned by Ser Petracco's father at Incisa, later to Pisa, and around 1311 relocated near the papal seat of Avignon, where Petrarca grew up among many Florentine *fuoriusciti* who were residing there with their families.²⁴

The story of his birth and of his displaced beginnings are recalled and dramatized in the two letters that serve as the opposite poles of his familiar epistolary collections, namely the dedication to his *Familiars* and the "Letter to Posterity", which constitutes the epilogue to the *Seniles*.²⁵

I, begotten in exile, was born in exile (*Ego, in exilium genitus, in exilium natus sum*) [...] I experienced danger even before being born and I approached the

²¹ Laurence Hooper, "Exile and Petrarch's Reinvention of Authorship." *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 69. (2016), p. 1220.

²² *Ibid.*, 1223-1224.

²³ *Ibid.*, 1221.

²⁴ *Fuoriscito/i* was the Italian vernacular word employed to indicate a person who had been banished. Its Latin equivalent was *bannitus/i*.

²⁵ *Sen. XVIII 1*; *LOA* 1992, 2:672-74: "I was born in exile in Arezzo in the year 1304 of this last age, which began with Christ, at dawn on a Monday, July [20], of honorable parents, of Florentine origin. [...] The first year of my life I spent partially in Arezzo, where nature had brought me to light; the six following years in my father's country home in Incisa, fourteen miles above Florence, after my mother had been recalled from exile; my eighth year in Pisa, the ninth and thereafter in Transalpine Gaul, on the left bank of the Rhone in the city called Avignon."

threshold of life under the auspices of death. Arezzo, not an ignoble city of Italy, recalls all this. It was there that my father, expelled from his native city, fled with a large number of good men. From there, in my seventh month I was taken and carried throughout Tuscany on the arms of a strong man [...]. Our Tuscan wanderings ended in Pisa whence I was once again snatched, this time at the age of seven, and transported by sea into France.²⁶

This paradigmatic passage, found in the former of the two letters aforementioned, represents the keystone to the “narrative of exile” that reverberates throughout Petrarca’s entire literary corpus and that functions as a structuring framework for his epistolary autobiography. Likewise, it foreshadows the portrayal of his restless life that he keenly promoted by comparing himself to famous explorers and frequently recurring to travel metaphors in his letters.²⁷ The words “I, begotten in exile, was born in exile,” represent the first of a series of identifications with a displaced status that he shares with the other characters of this dissertation despite them not always laying explicit claims to it in their works.²⁸

The choice of vocabulary of exclusion on Petrarca’s behalf signals a singular degree of awareness and appropriation of its current nuanced connotations and uses, coupled by an exemplary level of control over his self-representation that affected the way generations of displaced writers portrayed themselves in their own letter collections and, implicitly or explicitly, in their other literary works during and after the Renaissance. For instance, we know Machiavelli

²⁶ *Fam.* I 1; *LFM* 1:8; Read Francesco Petrarca, *Res seniles: aggiunte e correzioni: indici*. Ed. Silvia Rizzo, Monica Berté. (Florence: Le lettere, 2019).

²⁷ *Ibid.*: “Compare my wanderings to those of Ulysses. If the reputation of our name and of our achievements were the same, he indeed traveled neither more nor farther than I.”; *Sen.* XVIII 1; *LOA* 1992, 2:674: “The first year of my life I spent partially in Arezzo, where nature had brought me to light; the six following years in my father’s country home in Incisa [...]; my eighth year in Pisa, the ninth and thereafter in Transalpine Gaul [...]. There, then, on the bank of that very windy river, I spent my boyhood under my parents, and then my adolescence under my follies, but not without losing absences. [...] Then I set out for Montpellier for the study of law [...]; then to Bologna where I spent three years [...]. So at the age of twenty-two I returned home. I call home that place of exile, Avignon, where I had been since my later childhood, for habit is like second nature.”

²⁸ *Le familiari* I,1, Ed. Dotti (1993-1994), 1:15: “Ego, in exilium genitus, in exilium natus sum.”

was very intentional about the way he framed his exile experience in his famous letter to Vettori of December 10, 1513. Following in Petrarca's footsteps, he exploited the epistolary medium's potential for self-representation and highly dramatized his estrangement from civic life recurring to a series of poetic and rhetorical *topoi* taken from both the classical and medieval tradition.²⁹ By way of doing this, he aimed at and succeeded in including himself within the Italian exilic literary tradition, determining in a very Petrarchan fashion both how he wanted to be perceived by his contemporaries and remembered by his own posterity.³⁰

Machiavelli's Petrarchan fashion constitutes a perfect segue into the exploration of an aspect revealing Petrarca's level of control over his literary persona that is often bypassed by scholars focusing on his self-fashioning, that is to say his "biographical" one. While Petrarca decided to include only letters written by him in his *Familiare*s and *Seniles*, references found in these same epistles testify to how dedicated and keen he was on duplicating both the letters sent and those that he received.³¹ The fact that Petrarca and his correspondents kept copies of the letters he received finds an additional confirmation in the 77 extant epistles addressed to him that to this day have been discovered and that, only in recent years, have been collected and published for the first time in a single volume.³² The *Lettere a Petrarca* comprises epistles written to the poet laureate over the course of his life by some of his closest Tuscan friends like Giovanni Boccaccio and Francesco Nelli, to whom he dedicated the *Seniles* under the

²⁹ See Stella Larosa, "Autobiografia e tradizione letteraria nella 'giornata' di Niccolò Machiavelli." *Interpres*, XXIII, (2003), pp. 223-75.

³⁰ For the centrality played by Petrarca in Italy's intellectual history and his humanistic legacy see Rocco Rubini, *Posterity: Inventing Tradition from Petrarch to Gramsci*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022.

³¹ For an explanation of Petrarca's system of writing and copying letters, including the difference between *transmissiva* (letter written to be sent) and *transcripta in ordine* (letter copied and properly modified in order to be included in his epistolary collection) see Roberta Antognini, "Familiarum rerum liber," pp. 221-223.

³² See *Lettere a Petrarca*. Ed. Ugo Dotti. (Turin: Nino Aragno Editore, 2012).

pseudonym of Simonides, as well as contemporary humanists and eminent political and cultural leaders including the chancellor of the Florentine Republic Coluccio Salutati, the Emperor Charles IV of Bohemia, and the Venetian Doge Andrea Dandolo.³³ These letters prove to be a particularly fascinating and complementary read as they allow to reconstruct the epistolary dialogues on the basis of which Petrarca constructed his books of letters, enabling readers to hear about the poet's life, thoughts, and reputation from a voice other than Petrarca's. While the volume does not provide enough details on the origins of each group of letters to determine whether they were copies made by/for Petrarca or by his correspondents, one group of letters in particular stands out as likely having been assembled by Petrarca himself.³⁴ This is the collection of letters that Nelli (130? – 1363) wrote to Petrarca over the course of their thirteen-year-long friendship.³⁵

Different elements set this collection apart from the others included in the volume. First, the fact that this is the largest group of letters written to Petrarca by the same correspondent. Indeed, whereas of Boccaccio's twenty-five extant letters only four were addressed to Petrarca, though he certainly wrote many more which must have gotten lost, and Salutati's amount to five, Nelli's surviving collection includes a total of thirty letters written exclusively to Petrarca. Second, the notion that these letters have been collected and assembled by Petrarca himself, an

³³ The list of correspondents whose letters to Petrarca are included in Dotti's edition includes: Giovanni di Matteo Fei, Barbato da Sulmona, Guglielmo da Pastrengo, Benintendi Ravagnani, Paolo De Bernardo, Giovanni Dondi, Lombardo Della Seta, Pietro da Moglio, Franceaco da Fiano, Checco di Meletto Rossi, Carlo IV's chancellor Jan ze Streda, Niccolò Acciaiuoli, Roberto Guidi di Battifolle, and Niccolò II d'Este.

³⁴ Enrico Cochin, *Un amico di Francesco Petrarca. Le lettere di Nelli al Petrarca*. (1901), pp. 147-48. "È assai probabile che la raccolta di lettere delle quali il Par. 8631 ci presenta esempio, sia stata messa insieme a cura del Petrarca. È un fatto che le epistole di quella collezione si riferiscano tutte a lui, esclusivamente e ci è noto d'altra parte come egli procurasse, e con quanta cura, la raccolta degli scritti del Priore di Santi Apostoli."

³⁵ *Ibid.* Their friendship dates back to when they first met in Florence, in 1350, to 1362, the year before Nelli's death.

enterprise which he alludes to in *Seniles* III, 3 where he prays Boccaccio to help him curate Nelli's works now that he was dead.³⁶ Knowing these details engenders a series of questions regarding the intentions behind Petrarca's resolution to preserve and monumentalize the letters he received from a friend who does not strike readers (past and contemporary) as being the most erudite and refined among his correspondents.³⁷ While Ugo Dotti, the editor of the volume, sees Petrarca's decision, coupled with that of choosing him as the ideal dedicatee of his latest letter collection, as a way to repay him for being "one of the main contributors to his poetic fame," this interpretation can be further complicated when looking at the content of these letters.³⁸

Nelli's letters to Petrarca allow to learn details about more private aspects of the poet's life such as his relationship with his son Giovanni, whom Nelli mentored during the time he spent in Avignon (1357 – 1358), as well as about some of the most controversial decisions he took, including that of accepting Giovanni Visconti's offer of patronage in Milan which angered many of his other Florentine friends.³⁹ Similarly, Nelli's letters uncover the other half of a

³⁶ *Sen.* III 3; *LOA* 1992, 2:79: "Now, since heaven likes this sequence of events, it is fitting, unless I am mistaken, that I should do for him what I decided that he should do for me. Therefore, if any of his works and letters of any kind remain unfinished, divide them fairly between us. And inasmuch as our fortune also separates us, and considering our individual talents, send my portion to me; keep yours for yourself. Let him live in heaven and in our memories as long as we live; after us, however, let him live in the memory of posterity who, if they know him, will hold him dear – and I am not being misled by love. Whatever is required, though weighed down by my own burdens, I promise my assistance humbly, conscientiously."

³⁷ *Lettere a Petrarca*, (2012), pp. 5-6. "Come mai, ci si può chiedere, Petrarca volle tenere, e far sì che ci venisse tramandato, una così fitta corrispondenza con un uomo sì mite ma dalla cultura notevolmente approssimativa e che stendeva le sue lettere in una lingua materiata di idiotismi fiorentini, di ruvidezze medievali, di barbarismi, sempre nel faticoso sforzo di modellarla sulle antiche forme giusta l'esempio del grande maestro?"

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8. "Ecco: forse abbiamo toccato il punto più segreto e trepidamente umano che spinge Petrarca a prediligere un uomo di non pure eccezionale levatura intellettuale come Francesco Nelli: egli sapeva, per dirla un po' brutalmente, che, lui prediligendo ed elevandolo a ideale destinatario di tutta la sua ultima produzione epistolare, da un lato lo consegnava alla posterità con il nome di Simonide, dall'altro compensava adeguatamente uno dei maggiori diffusori della sua gloria poetica."

³⁹ For Nelli's relationship with Giovanni Petrarca see letters 18, 19, and 28. Regarding Petrarca's decision to relocate to Milan, see letter 8.

friendship whose traces can be found in the forty-one prose letters plus three metrical ones that Petrarca addressed to the prior and confirm how their relationship was founded on mutual affection and on his pure esteem and devotion for the poet.⁴⁰ Ultimately, most letters testify to how widespread Petrarca's fame was among his contemporaries and simultaneously contribute to promote it by staging how his letters were greeted by acclamation, read among the circle of Florentine friends who would reunite at Nelli's house to hear the words of their master, and finally disseminated so that others could appreciate their content and author.⁴¹ All these elements, when considered together, make it possible to argue that by taking it upon himself to entrust Nelli's name and his epistles to posterity, Petrarca is not only crediting him, as Dotti claimed, for the active role he played in the transmission of his poetic fame, but also he is implicitly capitalizing on the biographical portrayal that these letters offer of him and ensuring that they can and will be used to validate and perpetuate the persona he labored so long to craft in his epistolary autobiography.

With regards to the latter, one element of Petrarca's image that he ensured his *Familiaries* and *Seniles* would chronicle and memorialize for posterity is his exile. While his legal status did

⁴⁰ Petrarca addressed a total of 44 letters to Nelli: 29 *Familiaries*, 3 *Seniles*, 6 *Sine Nomine*, 3 *Disperse*, and 3 *Metricae*.

⁴¹ For Petrarca's widespread fame among his contemporaries see *Lettere a Petrarca*, (2012), p. 179. "Sii dunque felice, ti prego, e non soltanto perché il tuo nome corre sulla bocca di noi pochi, ma perché si estende ormai su quella di un'intera folla; folla che, attratta dal profumo della tua gloria, tende ardentemente l'orecchio, rimane attonita, dà in ammirate grida di gloria. Forse tu arriccerai il naso sentendoti acclamato da una turba di popolo, ma tu sai bene che in parecchie cose essa vede giusto e che, se non altro, sa eseguire il buon giudizio dato dalle persone più savie." For how his letters were received see *Lettere a Petrarca*, (2012): p. 79. "Avevo invitato a convito alcuni nipoti del reverendo vescovo di Firenze [...] ed ecco, fortuna ancora maggiore, a tanta compagnia aggiungersi il nostro Giovanni Boccaccio, il tuo Lappato, ossia quel Lapo di Castiglionchio [...]. Stavamo quindi dandoci da fare perché alla refezione succedesse il piacere di una conversazione e di un confronto di idee, quand'ecco un messo battere alla porta e tutta la casa andare a rumore. [...] Fattolo entrare costui trae dalla sua borsa, offerendocela, non già due tue lettere ma due tue gemme. La felicità è al culmine. Viene per prima letta quella che inizia *Risi ut iubebas*, e dopo averne udita la lettura, tutti coloro che erano a convito da me furono presi da ammirazione [...]. Quanto poi alla seconda [...] essa generò in tutti noi gioia insieme a paura."

not officially banish him from nor confined him within a specific territory, his inherited condition affected his relationship with space and practice thereof, consequently fostering that sense of displacement and alienation that led him to identify and portray himself as an exile. This is especially showcased in his familiar letters, which Petrarca employed to simultaneously create and validate his exile narrative.

Plenty of textual evidence points towards Petrarca's employment of letters as a means to perform his displaced identity. For instance, in *Fam.* XV, 3, written to the Florentine grammarian Zanobi to recount his attempt to "flee the storms of the Curia to return to Italy," Petrarca confesses: "One important consolation has been granted me in each place of exile; just as I seem to have succeeded in adapting myself to this place, I could do the same in any other as required, with the exception of Avignon."⁴² In this passage, Petrarca specifically employs the vocabulary of exclusion to underscore his spatial vulnerability and the tireless motion from one place to another that his life has been like.⁴³ Nonetheless, he is also suggesting that he finds comfort knowing that his displaced condition granted him the faculty to successfully adapt himself to any place he may be living in the future. Considering how this letter was written at a moment in time (February 22, 1352) when he was resolute to leave the South of France to relocate to Italy and how, as he himself claims in a letter of April of the same year to his longtime friend Lelio, different Italian and French courts were competing for his presence, the adaptability exile trained him for strikes as a convenient faculty to own.⁴⁴ This information, coupled with Petrarca's contentious decision in 1351 to reject the invitation from the Florentine authorities to become a full citizen maintaining that he was absent "by choice," bespeaks the beneficial and voluntary

⁴² *Fam.* XV 3; *LFM* 2:254-257.

⁴³ Theodore J. Cachey speaks of Petrarca's "vulnerability with respect to his place in the world (or lack of it)" in "Poetry in Motion." *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch*. (2015), pp. 13-25.

⁴⁴ For Petrarca's attempts and desire to leave the South of France see *Fam.* XV 3, 4 and 8; *LFM* 3.

nature of the spatial and social detachment that he claims for himself by invoking the status of exile.⁴⁵

While it is possible to legitimate Petrarca's self-identification and representation as an exile on the basis of the inborn displacement that he suffered because of his inherited condition, during the course of his life he purposefully turned his alienation into an asset by carving his literary identity into the very same exilic narrative that his epistolary collections and poetic corpus as a whole contribute to create. By way of doing this, he established an exemplary model for the way letter writing came to be conceived and practiced by exile writers like the ones I will analyze in chapter one, whose epistolary collections present several elements of continuity with Petrarca's books of letters. In what follows, I will show how these writers also learned from Petrarca how to employ letters to engage with their displaced identity and what in return letters are capable of revealing about how their discrete typologies of exile affected their spatial practices as well as their social and cultural mobility.

⁴⁵ *Fam.* XI 5; *LFM* 2:95: "But when was a citizen, absent by choice, ever recalled by plebiscite or by senate decree when a country was not in danger? [...] What son ever had his land, lost by his father or his ancestors, restored by public decree?"; See Ginetta Azzusas, "Studi sulle epistole: L'invito della Signoria fiorentina al Petrarca." *Studi sul Boccaccio* 4 (1967), pp. 207-240.

Chapter One. Experiencing and Portraying Displacement in Renaissance Letters

The first chapter of this dissertation is dedicated to an analysis of the literary genre that all physically displaced writers in the Renaissance unarguably resorted to, that is to say letter writing. Employed to account for one's whereabouts, ask for favors or updates on the state of familiar, political, or civic matters, or communicate impressions, ideas, and states of mind, letters were the primary and often only medium through which exiles could establish and maintain contact with the people they were distant from.¹ Specifically, this chapter aims at investigating the dialogic relation that exists between the epistolary corpora of three Renaissance writers, namely Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, Ippolita Sforza, and Niccolò Machiavelli, and their experience(s) of exile, focusing on what letters reveal about the ways in which displacement affected their spatial, social, and cultural mobility as well as on how the discrete forms of exile that they each endured both influenced and informed their epistolary writing.

Whether as a result of legal proceedings taken directly against them, as is the case of Machiavelli or as a condition inherited by marriage, as for Strozzi and Sforza, these writers encompass a range of the multifaceted instantiations that exile took in the Renaissance. As a matter of fact, the impact that their displaced condition had on their letter writing has been rather overlooked by scholars focusing on Renaissance letters and by those who investigate this early modern phenomenon from many different standpoints. Chapter one of my dissertation addresses this shortcoming by analyzing these writers' epistolary collections through the lens of exile, that is to say accounting for the influence that their removal from familiar geographies and access

¹ A foundational contribution to the study of the evolution of the *ars dictaminis* within the cosmopolitan tradition of late-medieval and early modern humanistic Latin literature is Ronald Witt's "Medieval 'Ars Dictaminis' and the Beginning of Humanism: A New Construction of the Problem." *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 35. No. 1. (1982): pp. 1-35.

to/constraint within novel landscapes, foreign communities, and strange cities exercised over the way they oriented themselves to the world and in return how they wrote their letters.

Despite the fact that the circumstances under which they were confronted with exile may be different and that they each started writing letters at different points in time based on their literacy skills and needs, Strozzi, Sforza, and Machiavelli dedicated all their adult lives to letter writing, finding in this practice an unconstrained, familiar, and productive space that enabled them to cope with, resist, and make meaningful their dislocation. Paying attention to the content, interlocutors, historical contexts, and especially physical and social spaces where their epistolary correspondences were written, in this chapter I will show how letter writing provided them with a scope for overcoming the emotional and practical strains that displacement imposed on them as well as with a medium to serve other self-interested purposes (personal, intellectual, political) that are strictly tied to their exilic condition.

This chapter opens with an investigation of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi's letter writing practice, which ought to be ascribed to the prolonged alienation from her sons, Filippo and Lorenzo, who inherited from their late father Matteo Strozzi the legal banishment from Florence once they became of age. While as a woman she did not experience exile in the form of forced relocation as the men in her family did, nor as a physical translation to another city or country because of marriage as it is the case of Ippolita Sforza, Alessandra's letters testify to her novel degree of spatial and social mobility and to an inner dislocation within Florence that is directly related to her status and responsibilities of widow and mother of exiles. Examining the epistolary correspondences she exchanged with her sons over the course of almost thirty years that she was separated from them will allow me first to identify and map the new cartography of spaces that suddenly became accessible to her – at the neighborhood, urban, and suburban level – and which

she started practicing precisely by virtue of her inherited condition.² Second, it will reveal how her reliance on and use of the epistolary medium developed over time. Indeed, in my analysis I will show that while at the beginning she used letters primarily to preserve the emotional bond with her sons and exercise her maternal influence over them, later, when the political situation in Florence allowed her to take a more active role in her sons' return, she also employed them to gain favors from influential citizens and engaged in letter-writing campaigns on their behalf, performing through her letters an authoritative and decisive role in restoring her family's union and preserving its social standing in Florence.

Unlike Alessandra, Ippolita Sforza belonged to a noble ruling family that considered education a form of cultural capital essential for a girl of her status. At the age of ten, Ippolita was betrothed to Alfonso II of Aragon, duke of Calabria and heir to the Neapolitan throne, and was thus destined to play a critical diplomatic role as future wife and queen. Accordingly, in her youth she received alongside her brother Galeazzo Maria a humanistic training that comprised the teaching and assiduous practice of letter writing, for which she soon developed a keenness that while at first may have been rooted in her desire to impress and please her demanding parents and to communicate with them when they were apart, it later ended up meeting both her personal as well as institutional needs. An analysis of her abundant epistolary production (which amounts to over 300 vernacular letters, though evidence shows she also wrote letters in Latin)

² I consulted the following editions: Alessandra M. Strozzi, *Lettere di una gentildonna fiorentina del secolo XV ai figliuoli esuli*. Ed. Cesare Guasti. (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1877). Also, Alessandra M. Strozzi, *Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi: Letters to Her Sons (1447-1470)*. Ed. and Trans. Judith Bryce. (Toronto: Iter Academic Press, 2016).

will demonstrate how throughout her life she relied on letter writing for a variety of purposes which diversified in nature after her forced departure from Milan and marriage to Alfonso.³

By looking at the different ways in which she wrote and employed letters before and after her physical translation to Naples, in this chapter I intend to illustrate how Ippolita's epistolary practice is inextricably linked to her experience of displacement on the one hand because the former permitted Ippolita to maintain her presence and stay in contact with the people she had left in Milan, and on the other because the latter enabled her to establish a network of relationships that she would cultivate through letter writing. Furthermore, close reading of her epistolary correspondences alongside letters from Alessandra M. Strozzi, her son-in-law, Marco Parenti, and other historical documents and chronicles of the time will allow me to reconstruct her nuptial journey from Milan to Naples which activated, physically and symbolically, her nuptial displacement. Similarly, the letters she exchanged with her brother Galeazzo and her dear friend and *colega* Lorenzo de' Medici will provide textual evidence to demonstrate how she was able to turn what during her time was considered a standard though nevertheless disorienting experience into an opportunity to carve for herself a role and a position that would afford her power and visibility in the political landscape of 15th century Italy.

My investigation into the reciprocity between exile and letter writing in the Renaissance culminates in the analysis of one of the most examined, discussed, and cited, yet often misconstrued cases in the history of Italian literature, that is to say that of Niccolò Machiavelli. Throughout the centuries, the exile and the letters of the Florentine Secretary have been investigated by many literary scholars, philosophers, political scientists as well as historians

³ See Ippolita Maria Sforza, *Lettere*. Ed. Serena Castaldo. (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004). Also, Ippolita Maria Sforza, *Ippolita Maria Sforza: Duchess and Hostage in Renaissance Naples: Letters and Orations*. Ed. Diana Robin, L. Westwater. (Toronto: Iter Academic Press, 2017).

who, despite repeatedly stressing their interrelatedness, did not single-mindedly focus on problematizing and understanding the nature of the relation between the two the way I intend to do in this chapter. Additionally, Machiavelli's epistolary corpus represents a distinct and fascinating case study for the investigation into the link between letters and exile in so far as it comprises two distinctively auto-biographical epistolary collections, the official dispatches and missives that he sent and received as part of his political and diplomatic duties during his time at the service of the Florentine Republic (1497-1512) and the familiar letters he exchanged with family members, closest and most loyal colleagues, friends, fellow humanists and politicians over the course of thirty years including the time before, during, and after his withdrawal from Florence's political scene (1497-1527).⁴ While most of Machiavelli's scholarship regards the two collections as separate entities and, at least until the 1970s, mistrusted the former, considering it a "subproduct" of his political activity, in this chapter I approach and investigate his epistolary labor in its hybrid entirety so as to interrogate and illuminate the relation that exists between his letter writing practice as a whole and the discrete forms of displacement that he endured throughout his life.

Indeed, during his Secretary years Machiavelli experienced a constant and intense form of dislocation that brought him to feverishly practice public and private places, city-states, countries, and battlefields, which both official and familiar correspondences (written and received) provide extensive evidence of. Contrariwise, evidence drawn from his personal letters shows how after being dismissed from his post of Second Chancellor and Secretary of the Ten of

⁴ For Machiavelli's familiar letters I consulted Niccolò Machiavelli, *Machiavelli and His Friends: Their Personal Correspondence*. Ed. and Trans. James B. Atkinson and David Sices. (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1996). For his official ones, I used *Legazioni, commissarie, scritti di governo. Vol. 1-7*. (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2002-2011). All translations are mine unless specified otherwise.

War, confined within Florentine territory for one year (November 1512- November 1513), and incarcerated for about a month in the Bargello (March 1512), the mobility associated with his political profession was taken away from him, leaving Machiavelli to confront himself with a different type of physical, social, and emotional displacement.

Abundant scholarship has been written on the subject of Machiavelli's exile in the Tuscan countryside using passages taken from a handful of his most read familiar letters. In this chapter I will use textual evidence drawn from the entirety of his *post res perditas* auto-biographical epistolary correspondences to account for his actual "situatedness" in space vis-à-vis his literary representation of it, which in return will lead me to problematize some of the too often crystallized interpretations that have been given of his exile. In doing this, my aim is to show how Machiavelli did not suffer from one linear experience of displacement the way it has often been suggested based on the common identification of his exile with the famous "giornata" that he rhetorically constructed as a reply to his friend Francesco Vettori's letter (December 10, 1513). Rather, I aver that during his life he endured two contrasting forms of displacement to which his epistolary corpus testifies, one being the displacement propelled by the constant mobility that his career demanded of him and the other the sense of alienation from that same mobility that he experienced because of the sudden halt to his official political and social engagements.

As a whole, this chapter is a study of one of the most practiced and representative literary genres in Renaissance Italy seen as a literary response to a displaced condition that the authors whose epistolary production I analyze endured during their lives. By comparatively looking at their epistolary correspondences through the lens of exile I aim at accounting for the different ways in which displacement shaped the content, form, language, interlocutors, and functions of

their letter writings. Similarly, another element that profoundly influenced the way generations of Renaissance writers approached and engaged with this genre is their awareness of there being a standard for familiar epistolary writing programmatically set by Petrarca and meant to be followed by anyone who wanted to partake in his tradition. That is why the foundation of the upcoming inquiry into the relation between exile and letter writing is firmly anchored on my introductory analysis of Petrarca's chief role in the rediscovery and adoption of the classical epistolary form as a literary genre in the Renaissance.

I. Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi and the Displacement of Widowhood

The groundwork laid down by the aforementioned analysis is foundational to investigate in depth the other instantiations of dialogic relation between exile and letter writing in the Renaissance that are under investigation in this chapter. Each of the three characters of this chapter experienced a distinctive form of displacement, determined by their status, gender, social class etc., that translated to different degrees of spatial and cultural mobility and/or constraints which subsequently affected the way they practiced and employed letter writing throughout their lives. For instance, Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi's letters to her sons are a precious first-hand source of insights into the female experience of displacement that she inherited and endured due to her husband's political failure that departs from the narrative of physical and social exclusion so often associated with this early modern phenomenon. Indeed, the epistolary correspondences she exchanged with them over the course of their prolonged absence from Florence attest to how her status as widow and mother of exiles afforded her considerable scope for action that she would not otherwise have had. Specifically, her letters document the novel degree of spatial and social mobility within the city's institutional, religious, and political spheres that she was granted

because of it. By looking at the effects that this form of inherited displacement had on her spatial practices at the neighborhood, urban, and suburban level, we are positioned to map the new network of spaces that she was able to inhabit by virtue of her condition as well as the type of social relations that this ‘alternative’ form of mobility helped her construct and maintain. Furthermore, an examination of her epistolary correspondences will expose the increased reliance on letter writing as well as the diversified uses that she did of letters during the long arch of time she engaged with this practice, proving how it served as an instrumental medium in her campaign to lift her sons’ exile and restore her family’s union.

The case of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi is representative of those early modern women whose reading and writing abilities were, if not entirely developed, at least considerably enhanced out of necessity.⁵ Indeed in Renaissance Italy, the ability to read and write was deemed not only unnecessary for most women who carried out their traditional domestic role in the home, but even dangerous, as it was thought that these skills would grant them access to and therefore expose them to morally questionable realms.⁶ In the face of these hurdles, at times women were prompted to acquire or consolidate literacy skills as a result of the particular circumstances in which they and their families found themselves because of political, economic,

⁵ Ann Crabb, “How Typical Was Alessandra Strozzi of Fifteenth-Century Florentine Widows?” *Upon My Husband’s Death: Widows in the Literature and Histories of Medieval Europe*. Ed. Louise Mirrer. (1992), p. 48: “Like most patrician women she had learned, in her childhood, to read, write, and keep accounts [though no evidence remains about her schooling]. She was also, like other women, in the limits of her learning. She felt uncomfortable doing complex accounts or composing formal letters. [...] In fifteenth-century Italy, only a few women from aristocratic or professional families were highly dedicated devotees of arts and letters.”

⁶ See Judith Bryce, *Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi. Letters to her Sons (1447-1470)*, pp. 2-5. Also, a foundational reading on the topic of women’s education, culture, and writing in Medieval and early modern Italy is Luisa Miglio, *Governare l’alfabeto. Donne, scrittura e libri nel Medioevo*. (Rome: Viella, 2008).

or personal reasons as it happened to Alessandra.⁷ Born in a patrician family of nouveaux merchants, she was married at the age of sixteen to Matteo di Simone Strozzi, a diplomat and devoted humanist who belonged to one of the most illustrious Florentine families of the time and who was accused in 1434, along with other Strozzi members, of conspiracy against Cosimo de' Medici and thus banished to Pesaro for five years.⁸ Alessandra was able to join her husband in exile along with their children only to be forced to return to Florence when he suddenly died of plague a little over a year later.⁹ Back in her native city, her new status of widow and head of a fatherless family whose members were bound to pay the consequences of Matteo's banishment brought her to take upon herself a series of practical responsibilities that under different circumstances she would have at the most shared with her husband. Such duties compelled her to

⁷ Armando Petrucci, "Alfabetizzazione e organizzazione scolastica nella Toscana del XIV secolo." *Governare l'alfabeto*. (2008): p. 51: "Si può dire insomma che nella Toscana del '300/'400 la condizione più comune per la donna – laica naturalmente, perché per le monache il discorso è diverso – fosse ancora quella dell'analfabeta o quanto meno illetterata [...]. Ma pur se rozze, sgrammaticate, faticose, quelle emersioni dall'oceano del silenzio ci furono e aspettano chi ne racconti la storia. Parlare di educazione grafica per le elementari manifestazioni scritte di queste donne può sembrare un non senso, così come parlare di cultura scritta a proposito di testi per lo più assai poveri e dalla semplicissima stesura. Sono quasi sempre relitti di un'educazione incompiuta, quando non addirittura prove di uno sforzo autodidattico scaturito da esigenze intime e profonde. È per comunicare al proprio marito, al padre, ai figli lontani che le fiorentine prendono in mano la penna."

⁸ The biography of Alessandra is reconstructed on the basis of several sources including Mia Cocco, "Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi." *Italian Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*. (1994), pp. 198-206; Judith Bryce's English translation of her epistolary collection as well as Ann Crab's monograph *The Strozzi of Florence: Widowhood and Family Solidarity in the Renaissance*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

⁹ Matteo left Florence on November 12, 1434 and arrived to Pesaro on the 18 when he presented himself in front of the authorities who would report back to the Signoria about his timely arrival; Bryce 10-11: "Matteo Strozzi's role in the 1433 defeat of the Medici is not entirely clear, and sources such as his grandson, Lorenzo di Filippo, and the anti-Medicean bookseller and biographer Vespasiano da Bisticci, insist, surprisingly, on his innocence. Nevertheless, on Cosimo de' Medici's return, Matteo was one of only four Strozzi to be exiled: these included the notional head of the wider lineage, Palla di Nofri Strozzi, and members of whose family we glimpse in Alessandra's letters." See Vespasiano da Bisticci's entry on Matteo Strozzi in *Renaissance Princes, Popes, and Prelates*. ed. M. P. Gilmore. (Harper Torchbook: New York, 1963).

cultivate literacy and numeracy skills which enabled her, as testified in her letters, to manage hers and her children's finances, deal with local banks, and handle the family affairs.¹⁰

Specifically, her reliance on literacy skills increased as a direct result of the extensive epistolary correspondence that she exchanged with her exiled sons, Filippo (1428 – 1491) and Lorenzo (1432 – 1479). Indeed, Alessandra's epistolary production – which counts 73 extant letters, despite evidence indicates that she wrote many more which have gotten lost – is attributed to the physical separation of mother and sons brought about by the financial hardship and formal banishment from Florence that the latter inherited from their father.¹¹ As Judith Bryce argues in her English translation of Alessandra's *Letters to Her Sons (1447-1470)*, Alessandra's literacy was “instrumental” in allowing her not only to communicate with her sons regarding familial, economic, and political matters, thus bridging the spatial and emotional gap caused by their absence, but also, I would add, to engage in the letter writing campaigns that contributed to their return.

Bryce's work is one of the latest series of studies dedicated to Alessandra's epistolary correspondence which, over the course of the years since they were discovered in 1877, have been examined and regularly cited by political, economic, and social historians as well as Renaissance scholars interested in the epistolary female voice and, more in general, fifteenth-century Florence.¹² Contrariwise, the figure of wives, mothers, and widows of exiles and their

¹⁰ See Letter 3; Bryce 43: “Commend us to Niccolò [Strozzi]. I haven't replied to his letter as I've had so much to do, what with sorting out Matteo's, coming to the agreement with the Sales officials, and arranging to go to the country: indeed, I never got around to going because I didn't have the time.”

¹¹ No letters remain about Alessandra's early years of widowhood (1435 – 1447) and there is also a gap of five and a half years in Alessandra's letters (between Letter 11 written to Lorenzo on February 1453 and Letter 12, the only extant letter to her youngest son Matteo, of September 1458) of which it is not possible to account for.

¹² Cesare Guasti discovered them and edited the first Italian edition of her letters *Lettere di una gentildonna fiorentina del secolo XV ai figliuoli esuli*. (Florence: G.C. Sansoni, 1877). Among the latest studies see Ann Crab. *The Strozzi of Florence* as well as a number of other important articles on the topic

role in the aftermath of 15th century Florentine politics of conspiracies and banishments have been the object of only a handful of studies written in the 1990s.¹³

My analysis of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi's letters aims at foregrounding the inherited experience of displacement that is possible to discern from them. In doing this, my investigation of Alessandra's epistolary correspondence partakes in the effort of scholars such as Susannah F. Baxendale and Margery A. Ganz to advocate for an approach to the study of this early modern phenomenon that acknowledges its female instantiations and gives voice to displaced women in order to create a more distinct understanding of the different typologies of exile that existed in the Renaissance. Whereas it is true that Alessandra's letters testify to and consequently shed light on issues such as kinship, marriage, and political exclusion in Quattrocento Florence at large, they do that from the perspective of a woman who, despite not being legally compelled to leave her native city the same way the men in her family were, suffered from exile and paid as great a price while staying behind.¹⁴

Before delving into the analysis and close reading of Alessandra's epistolary correspondence, it is important to briefly situate her displacement within the context of 15th century Florentine women's experience of physical separation from the male members of their families. In this regard, Alessandra's distance from her husband and sons is far from being exceptional when compared to that of other early modern women belonging to mercantile

of Alessandra's letters mentioned in following notes; Maria Luisa Doglio, "Scrivere come donna: fenomenologia delle lettere familiari di Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi." *Lettere e donna: scrittura epistolare femminile tra Quattro e Cinquecento*. (1993), pp. 1-15; Manuela Doni Garfagnini, "Conduzione familiare e vita cittadina nelle lettere di Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi." *Per Lettera: scrittura epistolare femminile tra archivio e tipografia*. ed. Zarri. (1999), pp. 387-411.

¹³ See Susannah F. Baxendale, "Exile in Practice: The Alberti Family In and Out of Florence." *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 44. No. 4. (1991), pp. 720-756; Margery A. Ganz, "Paying the Price for Political Failure: Florentine Women in the Aftermath of 1466". *Rinascimento*. Vol. 34. (1994), pp. 237-257.

¹⁴ Women's different legal status prevented them from being legally exiled.

patriciate families. On the contrary, it was rather common for patrician women at this time to experience separation as a result of male absence from the city on business or in the service of political office, which often required them to spend extended periods of time away from home, as well as in the more tragic event of banishment, which could last for a definite or indefinite number of years.

Exile, in the form of physical exclusion from the city, was endemic in Quattrocento Florence, where it was used by different ruling factions as a device to dispose of political rivals and potential enemies under the pretense of securing social stability. Some of the most influential families in the history of Renaissance Florence suffered from banishment during the 15th century and consequently many patrician women found themselves in the same position as Alessandra did. Alessandra's own mother, Caterina d'Alberto di Bernardo Alberti, belonged to the rich and distinguished house of the Alberti of Florence whose male members, including her father, suffered from mass banishment in the late 14th century, testifying to Alessandra's familiarity with exile since her young age.¹⁵ However, unlike most mothers, wives, and daughters of exiles whose voice can be heard obliquely through the lens of those who spoke for or about them, Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi left first-hand written sources that make it possible to reconstruct, examine, and interrogate the personal experience of displacement that she inherited.

Along with the letters to her exiled sons, Alessandra also kept an account book, her *Libro di ricordi*, in which she meticulously recorded financial transactions, debts, as well as taxes owed and paid as a way to manage hers and her family's Florentine businesses.¹⁶ The fact that

¹⁵ For more detailed references to Alessandra's natal family see Crabb, *The Strozzi of Florence*, 23.

¹⁶ Unfortunately, it was not possible for me to consult her *Libro di ricordi* as it has never been published nor it is available in digital format. It has only been studied as part of the 1980's thesis *Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi e il suo Libro di ricordi 1453-1473* of Maria Luisa Fioravanti at the Università di Firenze, thesis also not available in digital format.

Alessandra wrote so many letters and maintained the Strozzi's account book, a practice reserved to the head of the household and thus considered a male prerogative in this period, accounts for the circumstances in which her family found itself after her husband's banishment and death in 1435.

A widow in her late twenties, mother of four (two boys and two girls) and pregnant with her youngest son, Matteo, who was born months after his father's death, Alessandra and her surviving children were left to face the consequences of her husband's exile and death on a personal, financial, and political level.¹⁷ Unlike Matteo di Simone Strozzi, who had been raised in one of Florence's largest and more prestigious lineages and who, as an adult, devoted most of his time to politics and humanistic studies (his mentor had been the celebrated orator, statesman, and humanist Giannozzo Manetti), the Strozzi siblings and Alessandra were confronted with the restraints imposed by their inherited status.¹⁸ The fact that Matteo had been a *bannitus* affected all aspects of their lives, from their chances of securing a good marriage, to their ability to repay the tax debts that weighed on them, as well as to the family's economic prospects had the male siblings remained in the city. In fact, the threat of a possible banishment lingering over Alessandra's sons brought the oldest two, Filippo and Lorenzo, first and then Matteo Jr. to

¹⁷ For a direct reference to Alessandra's condition see Letter 3; Bryce 41: "But imagine how hard it is for me: when I think how I was left as a young woman with five children to raise, and all very young as you were then."

¹⁸ Matteo di Simone Strozzi was a Renaissance civic humanist. He was devoted to literature, collected manuscripts, studied ancient authors and was literate in Latin – his surviving correspondence in Latin showing him exchanging and discussing manuscripts. His handwriting is a *humanistica*, not a *mercantesca* come per Alessandra. In Letter 14 to Filippo, Alessandra mentions having been raising money by selling personal possessions which included properties, artworks, and books that belonged to her late husband. Similarly, in Letter 17, written after the death of her youngest son Matteo, she reports to Filippo how her late husband's mentor, "Messer Giannozzo [Manetti] has been kind enough to write me a letter [of consolation]. I derived a great deal of comfort from it, seeing the affection and love he bears you, and how charitably and with how many good examples he exhorts me to have patience," adding that "because of I do not feel myself capable of replying to so great a man as he is, I will not do so, but ask you to please thank him on my behalf to the best of your ability." (Bryce 85)

voluntarily leave Florence years before their formal expulsion was sentenced in 1458 and to go work for their Strozzi relatives, where they received the training in business that would later make them wealthier than their father ever was.¹⁹ “I have no other good in this world than the three of you. I have sent you away one after the other, thinking only of your well-being and with no regards for myself (“per la salute vostra mi v’ho levati a uno a uno dinanzi, non guardando alla mia consolazione”) and now it grieves me so much to see this last one leave,” says Alessandra in a letter of December 1499 to Filippo, commenting on her pained decision to send Matteo to live in Naples so that he could help in the family’s business.²⁰

On a similar note, in Letter 11, the first of a handful of surviving letters written to Lorenzo who, at the time of writing, in 1453, was in Bruges, one of the Strozzi’s most important European headquarters, she recounts her children’s age including how long it had been since each of her sons had departed from Florence:

Filippo is twenty-four years old. His birthday was back on 4 July, and on 7 March it will be twelve years since he left Florence. You were twenty on 21 August and it’s seven years this month since you left. Matteo will be seventeen on 1 March, and on 7 February it was three years since he went away. Caterina will be twenty-two this coming May, and Alessandra was eighteen last August. So now you know about everyone.²¹

Many elements of this passage stand out, from the fact that Alessandra does not follow a chronological order when rehearsing her children’s birthdays – indeed, the succession of her three sons’ biographical information is uninterrupted by that of their sisters, Caterina and

¹⁹ Bryce 11-12: “[Filippo] must therefore have left in 1441, aged twelve. Filippo worked for his Strozzi relatives, first in Barcelona, and subsequently in Valencia, but when Niccolò do Lionardo conceived a plan to set up a business in Naples, Filippo’s wish, subsequently granted, was to relocate with him rather than to remain in Spain. [...] By the early 1450s, Lorenzo had transferred to northern Europe, working first in London for a distant relative, Lodovico Strozzi, and his brothers, and then in Bruges for Iacopo Strozzi.”

²⁰ Letter 4; Bryce 47.

²¹ Letter 11; Bryce 66.

Alessandra, who were respectively Filippo's and Lorenzo's junior by two years – to the extreme precision used to calculate how long it had been since each of her sons left Florence. These details are telling as they do not only testify to Alessandra's sharp memory and numeracy skills, but also to the mark that her sons' prolonged absence left on her life.

Letter 11 happens to be the last surviving epistle among those Alessandra wrote to her sons before their legal banishment from Florence, leaving a gap of more than five years in their epistolary exchange which it is not possible to account for.²² Nonetheless, this missive is representative of the set of themes that is possible to identify throughout Alessandra's entire epistolary correspondence with her sons, an exchange that aimed at preserving the emotional bond tested by their physical separation while addressing topics of immediate concern such as financial issues, education, kinship, household keeping, marriage, as well as physical proximity and distance. Likewise, Letter 11 acquaints the reader with Alessandra's letter writing style and personality. Unlike the stylistically and rhetorically crafted letters written by contemporary male and female humanists who had been schooled in the Petrarchan epistolary tradition, Alessandra's familiar letters adhere to the conventions of the mercantile correspondence of this period, which privileged content over form.²³ Her prose is forthright, vivid, and colloquial, mirroring closely

²² Ibid., 71: "On November 6, 1458 the *Otto di guardia e di balia* emanated a decree which, among other categories of banishments, identified the sons and male descendants of named families who had been exiled in 1434 or since. The list included Alessandra's three sons. Until that moment it hadn't been official. The terms were strict: exile for a period of 25 years, a minimum distance of 100 miles, then reduced to 50 miles outside of Florentine territory and deprivation for life of the right to hold office. In January 1459 the exclusion zone was reduced to 50 miles (provided that there were no entries into Florentine territory) and for the particular category in which the Strozzi brothers found themselves, the rules regarding correspondences were also modified, allowing them to "write to each other without showing all our letters to the *Otto di Guardia*" (Letter 12; Bryce 72).

²³ For more details on this convention see Ann Crabb, "How To Influence Your Children: Persuasion and Form in Alessandra M. Strozzi's Letters to Her Sons." *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400-1700: Form and Persuasion*. (2005), pp. 21-41; also, Maria Luisa Doglio, "Scrivere come donna: fenomenologia delle lettere familiari di Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi." (1993), pp. 1-15.

the language spoken among her kin while still being able to convey her personal outlook on the world.

In this letter, for instance, voicing her vexation about the number of heavy taxes that were imposed on her by the Comune, Alessandra tells Lorenzo how the latter was “determined to eat me alive” (“però che ci è il Comune che m’ha a *consumare*”), an expression that was frequently used in the vernacular Tuscan when referring to money and that attests to her command of the mercantile idiom.²⁴ Similarly, in the same letter when rebuking her son for his bad behavior she resorts to a mix of maternal authority and proverbial wisdom in order to persuade him to improve:

What I am hearing is that you are not conducting yourself as I would wish, and I am extremely displeased by that, and very afraid that one day some great calamity will overtake you and you will end up badly. As they say, he who doesn’t do as he ought, gets what he hasn’t bargained for. [...] I see you know more about throwing money away than making a penny profit; and that is the opposite of what you need to do.²⁵

The fact that Alessandra could demand obedience and exercise such influence over her adult sons when, according to contemporaries, widowed mothers were expected to consult with their sons by the time they were in their mid-teens, is explained by factors that are directly tied to the discrete circumstances in which she found herself after her husband’s exile and death. While her status as widow accorded her a power over her children and a series of duties she would not otherwise have as a married woman, the fact that she was the widow and mother of exiles led her to perform an even more authoritative and pivotal role within the family into which she married and to which she felt tied by a bond stronger than the one with her natal family. Indeed, Alessandra had a rather detached relationship with her family of birth, the Macinghi,

²⁴ Letter 11; Bryce 66. For contemporary connotations and uses of the verb “consumare” I referenced the *Dizionario Tommaseo Bellini*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 67; see also Crabb, “Persuasion and Form in Alessandra M. Strozzi’s Letters to her Sons,” p. 24.

complicated by a long inheritance dispute of which it is also possible to find reference in Letter 11.²⁶

Alessandra's letters to her sons represent the best textual evidence from which to examine her inherited experience of exile as well as apprehend and problematize the impact that it had on her spatial and social mobility. Interestingly, it seems that Alessandra was the one who began the process of saving the family letters that her son Filippo later continued, an effort that testifies to her role as custodian of the Strozzi's memory and to her regarding letters as part and parcel of their joint effort of restoring the family's union while maintaining its social standing.²⁷ Likewise, Alessandra's epistolary correspondence paints a vivid picture of the role that marriage played in determining a woman's social as well as spatial place in the Renaissance, meaning the one she held within her household, community, and patronage network as well as one she occupied in relation to the environment in which she lived.

With regards to the latter, Alessandra's letters abound with information regarding the physical spaces that she inhabited and those that became accessible to her because of her condition. During the early years of her widowhood, Alessandra chose to rent out the large

²⁶ Alessandra's detachment from what remained of her natal family, the Macinghi, may have been possibly motivated by the long inheritance dispute. In this regard, see Letter 11; Bryce 65-66: "Antonio Macinghi and Niccolò Soderini are determined to dispossess me of the farm that belonged to Zanobi [her brother], and they are threatening to ruin me, and are telling all sorts of tales. Although the property is rightfully mine, nevertheless there's some doubt, and they could cause me problems, not because of what's right, but due to the power of Niccolò Soderini. I think that in order to save time and money, they will go to the palace of the Signoria and serve me with petitions. If Niccolò's power is more effective than my rights, he will win; but if the right prevails and I am not done an injustice, then I will. I'm now waiting for them to send me a summons, and am preparing to defend myself as best as I can." Also, another reason that may explain the detachment is the fact that in this society, after they had married, women became members of another family and lineage for all practical purposes and thus inextricably linked their interests to theirs.

²⁷ Alessandra M. Strozzi's letters embody the "intreccio fittissimo fra scrittura dell'esistere pratico e quotidiano e scrittura della memoria genealogica," which Maria Luisa Miglio defines as one of the key characteristics of XIV century Florentine writing. See Petrucci, "Alfabetizzazione e organizzazione scolastica," p. 37.

Strozzi townhouse in the quarter of Santa Maria Novella, which she had claimed together with other properties belonging to her late husband's estate in lieu of the repayment of her dowry of 1,600 florins, and to live together with her children in a smaller house in an effort to improve the family's finances.²⁸ Direct reference to Alessandra's ownership of the Strozzi's townhouse as well as a sketchy description of it can be found in one of her earliest extant epistles, Letter 2, which she wrote to Filippo in 1448:

I'm letting you know that a little house belonging to Messer Palla was sold by the Commune to Niccolò d'Ainolfo Popoleschi. This house adjoins our property on two sides, being on the corner of the street behind us, that is, between the stable and our ground floor room, and one wall of the house faces onto our courtyard. On the right side when you enter the courtyard is our old house and on the side of the rear entrance is our stable, as you know; while on the left hand side is the wall of the said house.²⁹

In this letter, Alessandra's remarks are part of an extended discussion regarding the sale of a small property adjacent to hers which originally belonged to Messer Palla di Nofri Strozzi, the most distinguished member of the lineage and one of the wealthiest men in Florence, banished together with Matteo in 1434. While the amount of details regarding the Strozzi's townhouse that can be inferred from this letter are minor, Letter 2 attests to Alessandra's influential position and her agency within her immediate family as well as the Strozzi lineage at large.

Indeed, as she states in her letter, "the legal papers [for the sale of Messer Palla's former house] can't be drawn unless I give consent as the only person with adjoining property," meaning

²⁸ See Crabb, "How Typical Was Alessandra Strozzi of Fifteenth-Century Florentine Widows?" pp. 49-51: "When Alessandra married, she moved in with her husband's parents and brother, as well as her husband. [...] Patrilineal had particular importance and patricians clustered together in family neighborhoods: Alessandra's ties with the Strozzi were strengthened by the years she lived among more than thirty Strozzi households. [...] After Matteo died, Alessandra became the owner of much of his properties, despite Florentine inheritance customs. Her husband's assets had been eaten up by taxes that were levied on an enemy of the regime, and his children and heirs were left with nothing but debts. Alessandra however was able to rescue two houses in Florence (including the family home), a villa and several farms in Tuscan countryside."

²⁹ Letter 2; Bryce 36-37.

that as the owner of the Strozzi's townhouse Alessandra knew that she had "the right of first refusal" to the sale of the property next to hers.³⁰ The most telling part of this letter concerns precisely the reasons why Alessandra may have not wanted to agree to the sale. In explaining her reasoning to Filippo, she argues: "if I had the money, I wouldn't lose the opportunity of this house ("s'io avessi il modo a danari, non m'uscirebbe delle mani") because if someone else buys it and wanted to do any building work, they would block the light to our ground floor kitchen, the courtyard, and all the area behind; and our house would be *worth* nothing if we lost the light from the courtyard."³¹ The pragmatism that emerges from these words demonstrates Alessandra's acute awareness of Florence's real estate value and clearly proves how her intended refusal was motivated by her own interest in purchasing the next-door house. This is confirmed by a later passage in the letter where she states that if she did not owe the money for her oldest daughter Caterina's dowry, which was due in 1450, she "wouldn't let it [the little house] out of my hands [...] and it would be a very good thing for this *house* ("che gitterebbe un grande acconcio a questa casa"). I'm not saying this for my own benefit because I don't have long to live, but for yours and that of your descendants. We won't always be in our present difficulties, and if we were to buy the little house, we could put our own in order, so that it would be the finest of the quarter [of Santa Maria Novella]."³²

³⁰ Ibid. "I am letting you know that a little house belong to Messer Palla was sold by the Commune to Niccolò d'Ainolfo Popoleschi. [...] Now Popoleschi has resold it to Donato Rucellai, Giovanni's brother. And Donato has sent to ask me to agree to him buying it because the legal papers can't be drawn unless I give consent as the only person with adjoining property. I've replied saying that I see I have the right of first refusal, and that I want to write to my brothers-in-law and to you, and that we will do whatever all of you decide."

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 37-38.; The original, found in *Lettere di una gentildonna fiorentina del secolo XV ai suoi figliuoli esuli*, ed. Cesare Guasti, 39, reads: "non me la lascerei uscir di mano, che la pagherei de' danari s'hanno a riavere dal Comune; che gitterebbe un grande acconcio a questa casa. E nollo dico per me, che poco tempo ci ho da vivere; ma per voi, o per chi di voi uscissi; che sempre non si starà in tante fatiche: che con quella casetta s'acconcerebbe questa, che sarebbe la più bella casa di questo quartiere."

These words display Alessandra's enterprising character and show, like Ann Crabb suggested, the extent to which in the early modern period a woman could assume the interests of the lineage into which she married. In fact, Alessandra believed that buying the next-door house would benefit the Strozzi family (the *casa*, as she refers to in her letters) in the long run, allowing them to start accumulating properties in the same neighborhood where her son Filippo would later build the family's famous palace, Palazzo Strozzi.³³ Thus, Alessandra's status as widow and mother of Strozzi exiles granted her an agency over her marital family's properties, finances, and legacy that allowed her not only to maintain, but actually to consolidate the Strozzi's social standing by way of contributing to physically expand their spatial presence within Florence's urban topography.³⁴

Similarly, her inherited condition brought Alessandra to extend her activities outside the strictly domestic sphere more than the average Renaissance patrician woman could, enabling her to practice spaces beyond her house, neighborhood, and even city. Proof of these interactions with the outside world can be found in many of her letters, which account for the array of responsibilities that she was bearing as well as for her engagement in local and foreign politics for the purpose of seeing her sons' exile repealed. In the opening letter of her epistolary collection, Letter 1, written on August 24, 1447 to announce Caterina's marriage to Marco Parenti to Filippo, who was living in Naples at the service of King Ferdinando (Ferrante) of Aragon, readers learn that because of her tax debts Alessandra had been "*pestered* by no fewer

³³ On the Strozzi palace see F. W Kent, "'Più superba de quella de Lorenzo'": Courtly and Family Interest in the Building of Filippo Strozzi's Palace." *Renaissance Quarterly*. (1997), pp. 311-323; also, on the role of architecture as a stage for social, political, and economic self-representation see Michael Lingohr, "The Palace and Villa as Spaces of Patrician Self-Definition." *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*. (2002), pp. 240-272.

³⁴ The idea of urban spaces as containers that help shape and memorialize individuals' and families' remembered history in the Renaissance is well articulated in the "Introduction" to Crum's and Paoletti's *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

than four different offices collecting taxes on behalf of the government” (“sono stata *molestata* da no’ meno di quattro Ufici, che hanno a riscuotere pel Comune”) and that she had spent “These last six months [doing] *nothing but go around from one office to another*” (“da se’ mesi in qua non ho mai avuto a fare altro, *che andare ora a questo Uficio e ora a quest’altro*”) until she was able to negotiate with tax officials a series of installments.³⁵ As indicated by these words, Alessandra was forced to regularly visit local public offices in order to comply with tax and legal demands on behalf of her family in Florence as well as of her two adult living sons, Filippo and Lorenzo, of which she managed the finances until their banishment formally ended in 1466.³⁶

A letter written to Filippo on October 12, 1465 (Letter 55), confirms how, during that same month, she had personally gone to visit the authorities in charge of the tax reductions that had recently been announced for the whole city of Florence: “They’ve given an audience to everyone who’s gone to see them [...]. I did my best and took the certificate of the arbitration agreement given by Giovanni di Cosimo, and the one for the properties that were sold for five hundred and seventy florins that were used for paying the Macinghi and other needs of mine, and for tax payments.”³⁷ According to the text of the letter, she had taken with her the necessary documents to see if she qualified for such reductions despite not being hopeful that she would be among the ones to benefit from it, as she restates in the following missive addressed to both her sons: “I think that, in any case, I won’t have much of a reduction, and I’ll just have to accept everything as being for the best.”³⁸ This last sentence is especially telling as it displays not only

³⁵ Letter 1; Bryce 32. With regards to her debt, in the same letter she mentions having “two hundred and forty florins’ worth of [tax] debts.” Marco Parenti belonged to a well-off Florentine family involved in the silk business. He will be one of Alessandra’s closest counsellors and strongest ally in the campaign for lifting her sons’ exile.

³⁶ Young Matteo died of tertian fever in Naples in 1459. Alessandra’s sorrow for the loss of her youngest son is discussed in Letter 17 and Letter 18.

³⁷ Letter 55; Bryce 188.

³⁸ Letter 56; Bryce 190.

Alessandra's outlook on life in the face of difficulties, but also her deep acceptance and compliance with the rules imposed by the same government that oppressed her.³⁹ The fact that, despite the complains that can be found in some of her later letters, she bravely put up with the erosion of her capital and diligently paid taxes for many years was motivated by her desire to maintain the family's good standing with the Florentine authorities in whose hands her sons' future lied.⁴⁰

Several other passages in her epistolary collection show how Alessandra went to great lengths to have her sons' exile repealed, interceding for them in person as well as through letter writing campaigns. Alessandra's determination to do what it takes to get her sons back is particularly evident in a set of letters she wrote to Filippo between September and December 1464 (Letter 36 and 37). The first one of the two is dated a little over a month after Cosimo de' Medici's death, on August 1, 1464 and is written by Alessandra from *Le Selve*, the property that her daughter Alessandra and her husband, Giovanni Bonsi, owned in the Arno valley. Commenting on how the widespread discontent with the Medici regime provided fresh hope in regard to their possible repatriation, Alessandra stresses her willingness to brave the plague in search of news if need be: "For this reason, it isn't necessary for me to be in Florence; although, if I'd heard even the slightest hint that it was being discussed [the subject being the exiles' repatriation], I would have paid no heed to there being plague here, even if it were carrying off

³⁹ Garfagnini, *Conduzione familiare e vita cittadina*, 391.

⁴⁰ See Letter 47; Bryce 165, where she complains about the expenses for the celebrations of Ippolita Sforza's wedding festivities in Florence: "The new bride and these Signori are expected here in five or six days' time. There have been fine festivities in their honor, and it's said that a huge amount of money has been spent, and many people are complaining. The heaviest burden will be borne by the weakest, because the others will help themselves by virtue of the tax reduction."

twenty people a day.”⁴¹ These emotionally charged words convey the extent to which, as a mother, Alessandra was willing to go to see her sons’ exile lifted, including putting her life in danger by leaving the countryside where she had repaired to escape the plague that was hitting Florence.⁴²

Less than two months later, Alessandra sends Letter 37 to Filippo from Florence to report her active involvement in the intercession for their return. In it, she relates having visited influential citizens who could plead their cause as she did with Messer Agnolo Acciaiuoli, a family friend and important anti-Medicean figure whom her sons-in-law “thought I should make the effort to go and ask for advice [...], in the belief I would hear what I wanted from him.”⁴³ The fact that both Marco and Giovanni agreed that Alessandra should personally pay a visit to Acciaiuoli, whereas in other cases it had been decided they should be the one doing the visit, testifies not only to the fact that as a mother of exiles she was in the position to enter into negotiations on behalf of the male members of the family, but more importantly to how, at times, because of her condition she was considered the most effective and suited person to do it.

The same holds true about the visit she paid to the convent of Le Murate on November 14, 1465, an event she relates to her sons in Letter 59: “..my usual complaint has kept me at home for a number of days. Yesterday, however, I *made an effort* to go to the Murate (“*mi sforzai d’andare alle Murate*”), where I spoke with the abbess, because she is very close to Niccolò [Soderini], and very devoted to him.”⁴⁴ The reason for visiting the Benedictine Convent of Santa

⁴¹ Letter 36; Bryce 130; *Letter di una gentildonna*, 324: “chè non arei guatato per moria che vi fussi, quando bene ne fussi iti venti per dì, se io avessi inteso un piccolo accennamento di ragionamento di questa materia.”

⁴² References to the plague can be found throughout Alessandra’s correspondences. See Letter 2a, 4, 6, 7, 36.

⁴³ Letter 37; Bryce 133.

⁴⁴ Letter 59; Bryce 201.

Maria Annunziata located in the quarter of Santa Croce, at the opposite end of that of Santa Maria Novella where she lived, was to speak with Scolastica Rondinelli, the convent's abbess whose family had been banished, together with the Strozzi, in 1434.⁴⁵ Counting on her sympathy and on her anti-Medicean ties with Niccolò Soderini, Alessandra's brother-in-law who had recently been elected as the new Gonfaloniere di Giustizia and with whom Alessandra was not in good terms because of the lawsuit that he and other Macinghi relatives had brought against her over the family's inheritance in 1452, Alessandra went to "beg her [the abbess] to write him a letter full of love and charity," hoping her request would move Niccolò to help his nephews.⁴⁶ This plea was part of a bigger letter-writing campaign that Alessandra and the whole Strozzi family were conducting to influence people and events in favor of the brothers' return to Florence. Indeed, throughout her sons' exile and especially in the years immediately preceding their return, Alessandra exchanged letters with ambassadors, statesman, and eminent citizens and masterfully succeeded in exploiting the epistolary medium to extend her patronage network far beyond the local level without ever leaving the Tuscan territory.⁴⁷

The topic of whether Alessandra should move to Naples to be closer to Filippo and Lorenzo or stay behind in Florence is recurrent in her written correspondences to her sons.⁴⁸ For

⁴⁵ For information about the order, the convent, and the figure of Scolastica Rondinelli see Sister Giustina Niccolini, *The Chronicle of The Murate*. ed. and trans. Sandra Weddle. (2011), pp. 73-122.

⁴⁶ Ibid.: "I asked her to remind him of those poor souls who have done nothing wrong, and particularly of the two of you, who are his nephews. She was only happy to do so and she told she would offer many more prayers for this."

⁴⁷ References to these letters and to her patronage network across Italy can be found in her epistolary correspondences to her sons as well as in their replies and in the letters that her son-in-law, Marco Parenti, wrote to Filippo and Lorenzo.

⁴⁸ See Letter 18; Bryce 88: "Just so you are not amazed by what I write in this letter when I say: 'if I am not to live in the same place as the two of you', you should know I am saying this, not because I don't wish with all my heart and soul to live with you always - but I said it because it's up to you to decide whether I go or stay. And I see from this last letter of yours that you've been thinking I might come to Rome at Lent and you would do the same for two months. I interpret this as meaning that you didn't intend for me to come and live with you in Naples; therefore, my son, advise me whether you want me to come or stay here, so that I am clear about what you want me to do, and I'll do it."

instance, when discussing this prospect in a letter to Filippo, date April 20, 1465, she voices her feelings as follows:

Let me tell you where I stand: being with you has always been my intention, and what I've wished for ("è sempre stato l'animo mio e la mia volontà d'essere presso a voi"); but you can see how long it's taken to finish off my affairs here, and then, once that was done, there's been some hope that you might be able to return home. This is why there's been a delay in arranging the marriage: and I, given my age, and my poor health, and not believing I would ever see the day, had become disheartened and had almost given up hope of ever having such consolation, except through letters. However, seeing Lorenzo, and hearing of your inclination to take a wife, and that you're resolved to take this step, it seems reasonable to me, as well as being my duty, to remain here ("mi pare ragionevole e dovere ched io estia") until this has been accomplished, which would be soon. And I tell you that even without this marriage business, I wouldn't hold out much hope of coming to live with you, because there would continually be obstacles ("impacci") preventing me from doing so and denying me the consolation of being with you.⁴⁹

Despite suffering greatly for their prolonged absence and wishing to be reunited with them, Alessandra's resolution to remain in Florence was ultimately motivated by a combination of financial, familial, and personal reasons and obstacles. As a Florentine citizen, Alessandra felt a deep sense of belonging towards her city and community of origin and understood her identity as a direct function of the unique network of integrated spatial and social positions that she occupied due to her condition as widow and mother of exiles.⁵⁰ Her own inherited experience of displacement afforded her not only the possibility to extend her activities and influence outside the strictly domestic sphere into Florence's institutional, religious, and private spaces, but vice versa to open up the Strozzi residency and bring the outside world in it. Indeed, numerous letters testify to how, over a period of more than twenty years, Alessandra welcomed in her house many important citizens who would go visit her to relay information about her sons, update her with

⁴⁹ Letter 45; Bryce 157-58.

⁵⁰ For an informed investigation of the connection between the social lives of early modern Florentines and the spatial realities of their city see Roger J. Crum and John T. Paoletti, *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

the latest news on local politics as well as show their support to the Strozzi's campaign.⁵¹ Thus, examining Alessandra's epistolary correspondence vis-à-vis her inherited experience of exile allows to apprehend how, unlike the men in her family, her female instantiation of displacement took place almost entirely within the boundaries of the city and country in which she was born. Nonetheless, precisely her inherited condition granted her a degree of mobility that enabled her to confidently navigate the complex web of spatial and social relations that Florence's urban fabric was made of and to orient herself in the face of the alienating challenges she was confronted with.

The case of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi represents one instantiation among the range of ways in which women experienced displacement in the Renaissance that this chapter begins to tackle in the hope to lay the groundwork for further scholarly inquiry into the different typologies of exile of which men and women suffered at this time. Nonetheless, her example is critical as it helps expose the close tie that bound female instantiations of this phenomenon to marriage in the early modern period. Indeed, marriage played a decisive role in determining both the type of mobility that was granted to/imposed upon women as well as the types of milieux that they could

⁵¹ See Letter 26, Bryce 105: "Also Montelupo, who's in the service of the *Parte Guelfa*, came to visit me. He embraced me on your behalf. Though the case is far from being atypical when compared to that of 15th century Florentine widows as well as wives, daughter, and mothers of exiles, and made much of me out of consideration for you. He told me the ambassadors held you in high regard, and it's been a great source of comfort to me to hear such news about you from everyone."; Letter 45, Bryce 160: "Then on Thursday I had a visit from two gentlemen who say they live not far from you [these were Rinaldo and Carlo Mormino]. They spoke very highly of you and send you praises, and I thanked them for their visit, saying they were most welcome in the house, and offering to do whatever we could for them."; Letter 54, Bryce 187-88: "You had visits from Niccolò Martelli, Francesco Benci. And other kinsmen. [...] The captain seems to you to be a foolish person and I agree that rather than having a sword by his side, he'd be better off with a distaff, and be busy spinning. I think he'd be prepared to render any service, if he only could!"

inhabit, which could be located within the boundaries of their city of origin but also, as it happened for Ippolita Sforza, could extend as far as to another country.⁵²

II. Ippolita Sforza's Nuptial Displacement in Her Neapolitan Letters

Exile in the Renaissance was an exceptionally varied phenomenon, with not only historical and political circumstances but also gender, locale, and socio-economic standing affecting each person's case and response to their type of dislocation. As my analysis of Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi's letters demonstrated, her inherited condition of widow and mother of exiles played a major role in her social and cultural emancipation, forcing her to rely on and consequently improve the basic literacy and numeracy skills she was taught in her young age to handle the personal, economic, and political affairs of the family she was now in charge of. In what follows I will show how Ippolita Sforza's noble origins and upbringing were responsible for determining not only the set of skills and type of literary practices she engaged with, but also the spatial and social position that she came to occupy in the political landscape of 15th century Italy. Through an analysis of her vast vernacular epistolary collection, I intend to familiarize readers with a different though fairly standard instantiation of female exile that was enforced upon women in the early modern period, that is to say their nuptial displacement. In this regard, a close reading of Ippolita's letters, coupled by those of Alessandra Strozzi, Marco Parenti, and other documentary evidence of the time will allow me to retrace the nuptial journey from Milan to Naples that physically and symbolically activated her displacement. Similarly, an

⁵² Among the Italian and Anglo-American contributions on the topic of early modern female mobility see in particular: Dinora Corsi, *Altrove: viaggi di donne dall'antichità al Novecento*. (Rome: Viella, 1999); Rita Mazzei, *Donne in viaggio, viaggi di donne: uno sguardo nel lungo periodo*. (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 2009); Patricia Akhimie and Bernadette Andrea, *Travel and Travail: Early Modern Women, English Drama, and The Wider World*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019).

examination of the content, form, language, and correspondents she wrote to before and after her physical translation to Naples will reveal a wealth of information about her experience of displacement as well as the diversified purposes for which she employed letters during her life showing how, while Ippolita's forced dislocation left her bereft of a true place to call "home," the intense letter writing training she had received and her life-long engagement with this practice grounded her in a tradition of which she became one of the few and most important female representatives of 15th century Italy.

Ippolita Maria Sforza was the daughter of Bianca Maria Visconti, the only legitimate child of duke Filippo Maria Visconti of Milan, and Francesco Sforza, the commander-in-chief of the Visconti's army who became duke of Milan five years after Ippolita's birth, in 1450. In the Renaissance, daughters belonging to noble and elite families who were destined to marry into prominent lineages and to play, as part of their responsibilities as future wives, important diplomatic roles the way Ippolita was were often raised and schooled the same way their male siblings did and, especially if they were their same age as their brothers, benefitted from the humanistic training intended for them. This happened to Ippolita who, being her brother's, Galeazzo Maria, junior by one year, partook in his classical education which included learning how to write letters and prescribed consistent training in the epistolary practice. Under the cares of their preceptor, Baldo Martorello, a protégé of Vittorino da Feltre, professor of rhetoric and founder of a humanist school in Mantua, the two Sforza siblings learned how to read and write Latin, the first language in which they started writing letters.⁵³ Though Ippolita's Latin letters

⁵³ I chose to follow Mele's spelling of Baldo's last name, Martorello, though in many sources I consulted his last name appears as Martorelli. Ippolita also studied Greek under the refugee scholar Constantine Lascaris, who had received in 1458 the chair of Greek in Milan. He wrote a Greek grammar for her use, the *Erotemeta*, which he dedicated to her. He was part of the retinue of people who followed her to Naples in 1465, where he obtained an appointment at the University. She was also trained in the liberal arts and in the precepts of household's *oeconomia*. An invaluable source of information about the Sforza

have not survived, evidence of her mastery of the language can be drawn indirectly from five extant Latin letters written by Galeazzo in response to his sister's, which praise her words as "*verba sapientissima*," as well as directly from three Latin orations she wrote and delivered respectively when she was ten, fourteen, and twenty years old.⁵⁴

If writing and exchanging letters in Latin was part and parcel of the humanist pedagogical training that Ippolita received, vernacular letter writing was a "familiar" practice that she undertook in her young age and that she exercised in a Petrarchan fashion throughout her entire life. Extant letters exchanged between the Sforza siblings and their parents testify to a systematic and tireless epistolary practice on the part of Ippolita and Galeazzo, who employed them to provide their parents with updates on their studies, health, and pastimes as well as to show their deference and receive praise from them in return. Ippolita's epistolary collection comprises a total of three hundred and twelve vernacular letters, written over a period of almost thirty-five years, starting from 1453, when she was only eight years old, to 1487, the year before her death. Whereas the fact that Ippolita's vernacular correspondences did not circulate publicly during her time is confirmed by the lack of references to her Italian prose style in the portraits that early modern biographers left of her, nonetheless in the last twenty years they have been made the object of extensive research by Renaissance scholars interested in the epistolary female voice.⁵⁵

siblings's education is Monica Ferrari, "*Per non manchare in tuto del debito mio: l'educazione dei bambini Sforza nel Quattrocento*. (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 2000).

⁵⁴ Ippolita wrote the following orations: *Wedding Oration for Tristano Sforza and Beatrice d'Este*, 1445; *Oration for Pope Pius II*, 1459; *Oration for Bianca Maria Visconti*, 1465. The texts of the orations, together with the letters, can be found in Diana Robin and Lynn L. Westwater. *Ippolita Maria Sforza. Duchess and Hostage in Renaissance Naples: Letters and Orations. The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe: The Toronto Series*, 55. (Toronto: Iter Press, 2017).

⁵⁵ For early modern biographers of Ippolita Sforza see Giovanni Sabadino degli Arienti's *Gynevera, de le clare donne*, 1490; Giacomo Filippo Foresti da Bergamo's *De plurimis claris selectisque mulieribus opus*, 1497; Paolo Morrigia's *La nobiltà di Milano*, 1595. Among the scholarly research on the topic of Ippolita Sforza's letters see M. Serena Castaldo, *Ippolita Maria Sforza: Lettere*. (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004); Veronica Mele, "La creazione di una figura politica: l'entrata in Napoli di Ippolita Maria Sforza

My analysis of Ippolita Sforza's vernacular epistolary correspondence is indebted to such works, as they provide insights into the role that letter writing played in her life as well as put it in dialogue with both classic and contemporary male and female instantiations of it. My work intends to further these studies by foregrounding the existence of a strong relation between Ippolita's epistolary practice and the experience of physical displacement that she suffered due to her marriage, therefore calling attention to and investigating the nature of the link that exists between her letters and her nuptial exile.

In order to investigate and fully understand the nature of the relation between Ippolita's letter writing and her nuptial exile, it is important to start by addressing the circumstances that led to her displacement. Ippolita's experience of physical separation from her family, city, and community of origin is far from representing a *unicum* in the landscape of female instantiations of exile in the Renaissance. Indeed, female spatial mobility at this time was generally driven by a handful of purposes, including financial needs, religion, and marriage. For women of all social classes, marriage represented a "one-way journey" from their father's house to that of their husband, from their natal to their marital family, which could be located as far as in another country. Thus, Ippolita's experience of relocation to another city-state within the Italian peninsula resonates with that of many daughters of noble and elite families in the Renaissance, whose betrothal often came to signify their impending dislocation.

Ippolita's wedding with Alfonso II of Aragon was arranged ten years before its actual celebration, in 1465. The decision was taken by Ippolita's father and Alfonso's grandfather, King Alfonso I of Naples, as a way to consolidate the alliance between the two realms, the latter of

Visconti d'Aragona Duchessa di Calabria." *Quaderni d'Italianistica*. Vol. 33. N. 2. (2012), pp. 27-75; also from Mele, "La corte di Ippolita Sforza, Duchessa di Calabria, nelle corrispondenze diplomatiche tra Napoli e Milano: una enclave lombarda alla corte aragonese di Napoli (1465-1488)." *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*. (2015), pp. 125-141.

which had only recently joined the Italian League.⁵⁶ Ippolita was ten years old when this happened and, expectedly, no reference to her future marriage is to be found in the letters preceding her departure for Naples. Her prenuptial letters represent only a small part of her vast epistolary corpus.⁵⁷ However, a preliminary analysis of its correspondents, themes, and styles is paramount to understand the extent to which her enforced displacement represented a turning point in her epistolary practice.

Ippolita's earliest extant vernacular letter was sent to her father in 1453, at the age of eight. While it would seem safe to assume that letters such as this one were written by Ippolita under the direct supervision of Martorello, Ippolita proudly takes ownership of her penmanship by way of apposing, right after her signature, the words "*manu propria*," to signal the autograph nature of the missive, a practice that appears in several telling places of her epistolary corpus on which I plan to return to later. Francesco is the recipient of most of her prenuptial epistles together with her mother, Bianca Maria. These letters testify to Ippolita's precocious familiarity with and control over the epistolary form as well as to the strong bond that existed between her and her parents. Francesco's prolonged absences due to diplomatic and military travels turned letters into the perfect space for Ippolita to show off her literacy skills while satisfying the practical aim of sharing with him hers and the rest of the family's states of mind, activities, and whereabouts.

Specifically, Letter 1 displays her employment of rhetorical *topoi* proper of the classical epistolary tradition that she was being trained in and that can be found in many humanist

⁵⁶ The Italian League was an international agreement endorsed in Venice on August 1454, between the Papal States, the Republic of Venice, the Duchy of Milan, the Republic of Florence and the Kingdom of Naples.

⁵⁷ Twenty-two of the three-hundred and twelve extant letters were written before her relocation to Naples.

epistolary collections.⁵⁸ After saluting her father using the appropriate honorary titles that even among family members were customary at the time, she begins the letter by explaining to him how, upon her return to Pavia, she dedicated her spare time to learning how to write: “⁵⁹ This statement is followed by Ippolita’s admission that the pleasure she draws from writing is given by the fact that letters allow her to “talk” to her absent father and consequently to bridge the distance that separates them: “which I do with the greatest pleasure so that *I can speak* with your most illustrious Lordship in my frequent letters (*“acciò che io possa per mie continue lettere parlare con la Ill.ma S.V.”*) and receive pleasing letters from you in return. And because I am not able to be there with you as I wish, *I will make up for my absence with letters*” (“Et non posando come desidero esservi appresso, *con le lettere supplirò la mia absentia*”). This last passage proves particularly telling as on the one hand it purposely shows the intended reader, as well as future ones, her knowledge and adoption of the classical paradigm according to which letters represent “*absentis ad absentem colloquium*,” on the other it displays a distinctive engagement with the notion of spatial distance on the part of Ippolita.⁶⁰

Given the fact that Ippolita was writing to her father from the ducal residence in Pavia, where in 1450 she had moved with her mother and siblings, and that Francesco was the one who was away for reasons of state – in fact in mid-July of that year the duchy had remained embroiled in a war against Venice over the control of the territories of Brescia, Bergamo, and

⁵⁸ The numbering of the letters as well the English translation follow Robin and Westwater, *Ippolita Maria Sforza. Duchess and Hostage in Renaissance Naples. Letters and Orations*. (Toronto: Iter Academic Press, 2017).

⁵⁹ Letter 1; Robin and Westwater 62: “Since I have returned to Pavia, having extra time during these long days, I have learned how to write a little.”

⁶⁰ The paradigmatic quote is taken from Pontico Virunio’s Latin translation of Libanio’s *Epistolici characteres*: “Epistola igitur est colloquium cum scriptione *absentis ad absentem facta*.” Evident Ciceronian and Petrarchan echoes can be subread in this letter. See the Introduction for more references to the latter.

Crema – one would expect for Ippolita to adopt the rhetorical *topos* of letters overcoming distance as a way to address her father’s absence. However, Ippolita’s phrasing of the letter leaves no doubt as to how she considered herself to be the one whose absence letters would make up for (“*I will make up for my absence with letters*”). This relevant, though often overlooked, piece of information adds to Ippolita’s endorsement of the classical epistolary trope a layer of meaning that can actually be reconducted to her personal experience of space and mobility and that, ultimately, can shed light on how she perceived her “situatedness” in space.

As Diana Robin and Lynn Westwater indicate in their English edition of her epistolary collection, Ippolita’s early letters portray a young girl who appears to be constantly on the move between the family residencies in Pavia, Cremona, and the neighboring town of Castelleone.⁶¹ If in Letter 1 Ippolita tells her father how she had just returned to Pavia, in Letter 2 she recounts to him her one-day family trip to the Sforza hunting lodge in Castelleone, not sparing any details about the towns that they visited *en route* and what they did in each other them:

After the departure of your most illustrious Lordship, we arrived in Melegnano to dine and from there to supper and sleep at Lodi, during which journey I caught three quails with my own hand. From there after having breakfast we went to the country house of Zoane Francesco da Muzano to have lunch, Then, having passed the Adda to Vinzasca, we arrived at Castelleone, in hearty and hale spirit, and were welcomed so graciously that it’s impossible to describe.⁶²

Among her pre-nuptial correspondences, a suite of seven letters written to her mother at the age of seventeen, in 1462, though intended to be read by both parents, enthusiastically describes the towns, sights, and people she visited during a week-long pilgrimage to Varese.⁶³ While the hospitality that the local people showed her during the trip exceeded her expectations, in one of her letters Ippolita confesses, “And yet although I am close by, I feel I am far away (*me pare*

⁶¹ Robin and Westwater 61.

⁶² Letter 2; Robin and Westwater 63.

⁶³ Refer to Letters 11 to 17.

essere molto de longe”). The period of a few days seems to me to be one of many years,” and longs to be reunited with her parents.⁶⁴ While on the one hand these passages provide textual evidence of Ippolita’s ceaseless mobility during her young age, on the other they witness to her distinctive perception and awareness of space and spatial distance, as well as to how she measured the latter based on her own mobile position in space. Thus, Ippolita’s early letters portray a young girl who betrayed little signs of unsettlement in spite of her constant moves, but, on the contrary, who enjoyed leisurely practicing spatial mobility as long as she returned home to her family.

Ippolita’s experience of mobility changed drastically with her wedding. Her marriage with Alfonso II of Aragon, son of King Ferdinando [Ferrante], duke of Calabria and heir to the Neapolitan throne, caused her to experience a physical translation from familiar surroundings to a foreign city-state located several weeks of travel away from the place she considered home.⁶⁵ This resulted into a completely distinct mode of practicing mobility from what Ippolita was used to, one that was enjoined on her and that will have a profound impact on her letter writing. The marriage was celebrated in Milan in May of 1465, with Alfonso’s brother, Federico, serving as his proxy. In June, Ippolita and her train of attendants, among which there was Baldo Martorello, who followed her to the southern city as her personal secretary, left for Naples stopping on the way in multiple Italian cities.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Letter 17; Robin and Westwater 76.

⁶⁵ King Ferdinando was better known as king Ferrante, the name which will be used throughout the dissertation.

⁶⁶ For details on Ippolita’s entourage see Bryce, “Fa finire uno bello studio,” pp. 55-56; Mele in “La corte di Ippolita Sforza, duchessa di Calabria, nelle corrispondenze diplomatiche tra Milano e Napoli: una enclave lombarda alla corte aragonese di Napoli (1465-1488).” *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez*.” (2015), pp. 125-141, speaks about a retinue of 101 people who followed Ippolita from Milan to Naples and provides more details about their roles and stay at the Aragonese court.

Ippolita's nuptial journey, its predetermined itinerary, and the lavish festivities held in their honor in the different cities, which can all be reconstructed from contemporary letters and chronicles, represent a pivot in the narrative of her displacement.⁶⁷ While, as Serena Castaldo maintains, her journey's itinerary was carefully planned to symbolically chart the web of political alliances among the Italian signori that the wedding intended to cement, such display of allegiance was only possible thanks to the public performance of Ippolita's dislocation.⁶⁸ In other words, her journey can be said to have activated her nuptial exile, thus signaling a turning point in her life.

Significantly, references to Ippolita's arrival in Florence, where she stayed for six days (from June 22 to 27) as a guest of the sixteen-year-old Lorenzo de' Medici, who had represented his family at her wedding in Milan and with whom she developed a close friendship, can be found in both Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi's and her son-in-law Marco Parenti's correspondences to the Strozzi brothers in Naples, where the latter were at the service of King Ferrante.⁶⁹ In her letter of July 5, 1465, Alessandra piercingly comments on Ippolita's stay in Florence, of which Filippo and Lorenzo had previously been informed by Parenti, with the words: "You know of the arrival here in Florence of the duchess [Ippolita Sforza] and Don

⁶⁷ For a reconstruction of Ippolita's nuptial journey and entrance in Naples, as well as a detailed analysis of their symbolic valence see Mele, "La creazione di una figura politica." Specifically, pp. 28-30: "Le tappe previste lungo l'itinerario dovevano toccare il ducato estense di Modena, il reggimento bolognese dei Bentivoglio e dei Malvezzi, la Firenze medicea di Piero, la comunità di Siena e la signoria di Perugia, saltando la sosta a Roma a causa della peste."; also, for a complete chronicle of the twenty days of celebrations organized after Ippolita's arrival in Naples see *Annales Ludovici de Raimo senioris et iunioris et Franzoni et Lancelotti de Raimo equitum hierosolymitanorum* published by Muratori in XXIII vol. of his *Rerum italicarum scriptores*. Milan: 1732.

⁶⁸ Castaldo, *Lettere*, "Introduzione".

⁶⁹ As previously mentioned in the chapter when discussing Alessandra Strozzi, her sons both worked for the Neapolitan King whose court was one of the major clients of the Strozzi's bank. The tie between the Strozzi and the Aragonese court is confirmed by the fact that Filippo named his first son, after his godfather, Alfonso II, duke of Calabria.

Federico [D'Aragona], and of what's been done in their honor. It cost a huge amount of money that could have been spent to better effect. But let those who are in government get on and govern! ("Grande ispesa s'è fatta; ma colla medesima si poteva fare loro maggiore onore. Lasciànsi governare!").⁷⁰ As the passage shows, Alessandra does not seem to be particularly interested in the figure of Ippolita, whose name, in both this letter and the following one to Filippo of July 26, she mentions only in passing, without any actual reference to her persona like those to be found in Parenti's letter.⁷¹ The importance of the reference lies in its critical testimony of the extravaganzas that the Florentine government organized as a way to publicly pay homage to both the Aragonese and the Sforza families and to comply with the tacit rules of the political game represented by the marriage which Ippolita was a pawn of.⁷²

After leaving Florence on their way to Naples, Ippolita and her attendants arrived in Siena on June 29. What was intended to be a short visit turned into a two-months stay when the Milanese duke found out that Jacopo Piccinino, who was married to Ippolita's younger sister, Drusiana, had been the victim of a murder at Ferrante's castle in Naples. Francesco promptly halted Ippolita's cortege and it wasn't until August 26 that he allowed them to leave Siena and continue their journey to Naples without stopping, as the itinerary originally planned, in Perugia.⁷³

⁷⁰ Letter 48; Bryce 167.

⁷¹ Letter 49; Bryce 170: "It's said that Madonna Ippolita will indeed continue south, along with Don Federico. May God be with them."; Detailed references to Ippolita's arrival and sojourn in Florence as well as her appearances and the festivities in her honor can be found in Marco Parenti. *Lettere*. A cura di Maria Marrese. (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1996). Specifically, see Letter 37; 76-85.

⁷² For details on the costs the Signoria sustained for the festivities in honor of Ippolita's wedding see Mele, "La creazione di una figura politica," 30: "La sosta della compagnia di Ippolita, costituita «da trenta nobili donne e molti altri principi e signori e lombardi e del regno più che 300 cavagli», e che durò appena dal 22 al 27 giugno, in tempo per presenziare alla festa di San Giovanni, costò alla Signoria ben 32,995 fiorini."

⁷³ For more details on Piccinino's accidental death and how it affected Ippolita's nuptial journey see Castaldo, *Lettere*, "Introduzione".

Ippolita's triumphal entrance in the city took place on September 14, 1465. This heavily political and symbolic event as well as the festivities that followed are memorialized in many contemporary chronicles and official dispatches, including those that Ippolita's younger brothers, Filippo Maria and Sforza Maria, and the Milanese ambassador to Naples, Antonio da Trezzo, sent to Francesco Sforza in Milan.⁷⁴ The institutionalized nature of this event dictated that the bride would engage in a number of local monarchical rituals to be performed in front of the masses that attended them, as a way to receive their public endorsement.⁷⁵ Among the rituals, she participated in a horse ride that paraded her "*per tutti li segī*" of the city and that ended at Castel Capuano, the residence of the heir to the Neapolitan throne.⁷⁶ This ride, which symbolized her official induction ceremony as duchess of Calabria and future queen of Naples, though she never got the chance to become one because of her premature death, consequently signaled her definitive physical separation from her natal family. Thus, the almost four-months long nuptial journey from Milan to Naples represented a coming-of-age experience for Ippolita, one that entailed a change in her status, responsibilities, as well as in the network of relationships that she was able to forge and maintain thanks to her new position.

⁷⁴ For Filippo Maria's and Sforza Maria's official dispatches see *Dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli, IV: 1 gennaio-26 dicembre 1461*, a cura di F. Storti; V: *1 dicembre 1462-31 dicembre 1463*, a cura di e. Catone, A. Miranda, e. Vittozzi, Salerno, Carlone, 1998, 2009; for Antonio da Trezzo's meticulous account of the Neapolitan festivities and a list of the participants see Emilio Motta, *Nozze principesche nel Quattrocento*. (1894), pp. 85-91. Another chronicle of the Neapolitan festivities can be found in Alessandro Lisini. *Le feste fatte in Napoli nel 1465 per il matrimonio de Ippolita Sforza Visconti con Alfonso, duca di Calabria. Da lettere del tempo*. Siena, 1898.

⁷⁵ An important source of information about monarchic rituals in the Aragonese court is Giuliana Vitale, *Ritualità monarchica. Cerimonie e pratiche devozionali nella Napoli Aragonese*. (Salerno: Laveglia, 2006); Also, see Filippo Maria's and Sforza Maria's letter to Francesco Sforza, Napoli 14.IX.1465: "Incomenzarono a venire de molti zentilhomi et signori al'incontro, quali dismantavano et tochata et basciata la mano ad domina duchessa tutti remontavano et se mettevano inante."

⁷⁶ Antonio da Trezzo in Motta, *Nozze principesche nel Quattrocento*. (1894), p. 87.

Ippolita's Neapolitan letters are the best source from which to reconstruct and assess the possibilities and limits opened up and imposed by her nuptial displacement. The fact that her epistolary collection is made for the most part of letters written after her marriage is indicative of the increased importance that this practice acquired in her life.⁷⁷ While before her relocation to Naples letters were primarily the medium through which she would report on her life and movements to her parents, her enforced displacement brought her to rely on letter writing for a variety of public and diplomatic purposes along with the more familiar ones.

Among the recipients of the letters written after 1465 there are family members such her mother, brother, her nephew and future son-in-law Gian Galeazzo Sforza, her sister-in-law Bona of Savoy, as well as ambassadors and eminent personalities including her long-time friend and ally Lorenzo de' Medici. Indeed, her new status as duchess of Calabria allowed Ippolita to build key relationships with important members of the Aragonese court and other Italian courts which, in return, enabled her to establish her presence and consolidate her role in the Neapolitan political and intellectual landscape.⁷⁸ Ippolita's Neapolitan letters differ from her pre-nuptial ones not only because they comprise a wider network of interlocutors. Her reasons for writing, as well as the tone and content of her missives noticeably change once she moves to Naples. Ippolita starts to use letters as a way to exercise her influence to obtain protection and personal favors, as well as to officially recommend courtiers, merchants and *famigli*. On a more personal

⁷⁷ 292 out 312 letters are written after 1465.

⁷⁸ She became the patron of some of the members of the Neapolitan literary academy such as Il Panormita, Biondo Flavio, Lorenzo Valla, Porcelio Pandoni, and Giovanni Pontano, who dedicated works to her and celebrated her in their verses. For example, Pandoni and Il Panormita engaged in a *tenzone letteraria* during which they composed a couple of epigrams dedicated to Ippolita Sforza, found in *Vat. Lat. 1670*. For an analysis of the *tenzone* and the texts of the poems see Donatella Coppini. "Un'eclisse, una duchessa e due poeti." *Tradizione classica e letteratura umanistica per Alessandro Perosa*, a cura di R. Cardini, E. Garin, L. Cesarini Martinelli, G. Pascucci. (Rome: Bulzoni, 1985), pp. 333-354; in honor of Ippolita's death Pontano wrote the carme *Tumulus Hippolytae Mariae Ducisse Calabriae*.

note, she does not refrain from using missives to voice her discontent with her own marriage nor to bemoan how unsettled and stranded she felt without the support and physical proximity of her family and friends.⁷⁹

Ippolita's first letter from Naples, written to her mother on October 3, 1465, from her new home in Castel Capuano, precludes the sense of loneliness and painful sadness she will experience at the departure of the members of her immediate family you had accompanied her to Naples: "Tomorrow morning at an early hour my illustrious brothers will depart, which seems as strange to me and as painful to my senses, given our fraternal love and our sweet custom of being together, as your most illustrious Ladyship can surely imagine."⁸⁰ In a letter to Galeazzo dated April 1, 1469, Letter 46, Ippolita laments not having received a single reply in return to her letters saying, "God knows the sorrow that I have ("el despiacere che tegno") because of not having ever had a response to the many letters I have sent your Lordship."⁸¹ The sorrow Ippolita feels from the lack of communication with Galeazzo is heightened by the fact that, now that their mother had died, she did not have any other family member in Milan to turn to and to share her

⁷⁹ Robin and Westwater 91: "Early in 1467, Ippolita's own complaints about her husband's infidelities had caused her mother and brother to dispatch the Milanese nobleman Pietro da Landriano to Naples to warn her against conduct that could harm the alliance between the two states."; Welch, "Ippolita Maria Sforza," 128: "letters from Antonio da Trezzo to Bianca Maria Visconti indicate that Ippolita had commissioned faithful servant Donato (whom she brought with her from Milan) to spy on her husband – thus creating even more trouble – and Alfonso eventually had him beaten, to great diplomatic embarrassment."; on this topic see Letter 30; Robin and Westwater 91-92: "And at present it is not necessary to send other people to learn about these things because I hope I will find someone here to understand the duke's nature. Your Ladyship will be told by Pietro [da Landriano] how I comfort myself with his lord the duke [...]. But how is it possible that I would not be saddened as your Ladyship commands and compels me with recourse to the love I have for your Ladyship, since things stand as I wrote to your Ladyship and likewise the situation with Donato, which I will never forget. And then I was struck not only by a wound in my heart but I believe that if your Ladyship understood by half how much pain I suffered and will suffer, you would no longer be able to recognize Ippolita as the person she was, is, and will be for as long as she lives and suffers."

⁸⁰ Letter 23; Robin and Westwater 81

⁸¹ Letter 46; Robin and Westwater 108.

own dire circumstances with.⁸² In fact, later in the letter, Ippolita reports to Galeazzo how King Ferrante and her husband Alfonso had ordered all the members of her household that had followed her to Naples to return to Milan, except for her secretary, her tailor, and her women:

My Lord, dear brother, although I am certain that others will have told your Lordship, in order to do my duty, I will tell you what is happening at the present. My lord the king, and thus my lord the duke, want our Lombard people to leave the house (“voleno che se parta questi nostri lombardi de casa”), with the exception of my secretary, the chaplain, my tailor and my women. And in order to obey their lordships, as I always have done, I have begun to send them away.⁸³

This piece of information opens a window into Ippolita’s life at the Neapolitan court and allows readers to witness the isolation that she experienced as a combined result of her enforced displacement and of the power that her father-in-law and husband had over her. Likewise, these words signal a clear tension between her growing liaison with prominent political, diplomatic, and intellectual citizens and the personal alienation from familial figures that she had to endure to fulfill the duties imposed by her new role.

Other letters of this period testify to Ippolita’s awareness of the fact that her supposedly “private” correspondences were regularly intercepted and parsed by the king and his ambassadors. In this regard it is worth mentioning how, in a missive written to Galeazzo on December 19, 1471, Ippolita did not limit herself to caution her brother to keep her words and the advice she was giving him secret because “these days one cannot trust anyone,” but also instructed him to “burn this [missive] as soon as you’ve read it” (“Di gratia brusatila come l’avite

⁸² Bianca Maria Visconti had died in October 1468. Francesco Sforza in March 1466.

⁸³ Letter 46; Robin and Westwater 109. See also Mele, “La corte di Ippolita Sforza,” for references to the “Lista di quelli della famiglia della duchessa di Calabria che si dice furono congedati dal re Ferdinando di Sicilia” [Napoli, aprile 1469], ASM, Sforzesco, Napoli, 218, cc. 67-68 and for the analysis of further documentary evidence from which she is able to establish the size of the Lombard population that served at the court of Castel Capuano between 1465 and 1469 (made by around 70 *famigli*). Mele avers that the decision to dismiss her Milanese personnel almost entirely was intentionally taken by Ferrante and Alfonso to isolate the Duchess and deprive her of her diplomatic autonomy.

lecta”).⁸⁴ Robin and Westwater acknowledge the importance of taking this factor into account when analyzing Ippolita’s Neapolitan letters, maintaining that such awareness cautioned Ippolita against voicing her opinions, especially those about her marital family in Naples, too unguardedly.⁸⁵ While her use of caution is palpable in Letter 46, Ippolita’s portrayal of her dutiful obedience (“in order to obey their lordships, as I always have done”) cannot help but strike a note of resentment at her own submission, which heightens the urgency of the plea she was addressing to her brother.

Another major difference between her pre- and post-nuptial letters is the fact that now that she is a duchess, she commissions her long-time mentor and personal secretary, Baldo Martorello, and later Giovanni Pontano, the humanist and poet who after Martorello’s death took on this position, to write letters for her.⁸⁶ Commissioning letters to secretaries was a well-established practice among ruling families in the Renaissance. Consequently, the fact that 80% of Ippolita’s epistolary collection is made of letters written by her secretaries should not come as a surprise, nor should hinder the ability to infer important facets of her life from her letters. In all likelihood, she used a scribe to write her missives even before her marriage, though, as previously mentioned, she prided herself on personally writing her very first letter, as well as many of the following ones, to her father.⁸⁷

Sixty-three out of Ippolita’s three-hundred and twelve extant letters are autographed. Eight autograph letters date back to her formative years, while the remaining fifty-five belong to her time in Naples. The fact that the majority of her autograph letters were written after she

⁸⁴ Letter 54; Robin and Westwater 114.

⁸⁵ Robin and Westwater, “Introduction”.

⁸⁶ After Martorello’s death Ippolita had to share her secretaries with her husband. Pontano was one of them, the other was the Catalan Antoni Gaço.

⁸⁷ Castaldo, *Lettere*, “Introduzione”.

became a duchess and had at her disposal personal secretaries who would write letters for her automatically sets autograph letters apart from the others. Interestingly, the major difference between these categories of letters is not to be found in the type of content they deal with, nor in the structure or style of her missives compared to those written by her humanist secretaries, given her mastery of the principles of the *ars dictaminis*. On the contrary, what distinguishes Ippolita's late autograph letters from the other ones is the intentionality with which they were written. As Ippolita starts carving out for herself the diplomatic role of intermediary in the politics between Milan and Naples, the choice to write certain letters in her own hand signals her interlocutors her personal engagement in the subject matter of the letter and, in a way, validates its authenticity.

The first autograph letter authored by Ippolita after her relocation to Naples (Letter 29) is addressed to her brother Galeazzo who, after their father's death in March 1466, had become duke of Milan. The autograph copy of the letter misses the lower left corner and therefore lacks the indication of the month and year in which it was composed. Textual evidence brings scholars working on Ippolita Sforza's epistolary collection to speculate that it has been written either in 1466 or in 1471.⁸⁸ Exact dating aside, this letter is testimony to the diplomatic role that Ippolita dutifully assumed soon after her arrival in Naples. Indeed, Letter 29 is the first missive in which Ippolita, in her attempt to bolster the unsteady relationship between King Ferrante and her brother Galeazzo, who was wary about her father-in-law's good intentions towards him, implicitly takes it upon herself to act as a go-between the two families.

To assure Galeazzo of Ferrante's good will and affection she recounts how, during one of her meetings with the king, "he began to discuss your Lordship with so much love that even our

⁸⁸ Castaldo expands on this debate in her notes to this letter.

lord father (happy his memory) could not have outdone him.”⁸⁹ Similarly, to impress upon her brother how loyal Ferrante was to him, she added how the king said “that was never his intention to do anything that was against your Lordship” and maintained “on his honor, [that] he would act with a pure heart for the benefit of your Lordship as he would for my lord, the duke [Alfonso].”⁹⁰ If Ippolita’s decision to write this letter “*manu propria*” on the one hand was intended to validate the authenticity of the message she was conveying to Galeazzo, on the other it aimed at persuading him to reciprocate the king’s affection with a similar disposition. This is confirmed by what she adds later in the letter when she says: “And so, my dear brother, do conduct yourself in such a way that he [Ferrante] knows that your Lordship considers it absolutely clear that his Majesty loves you more than if you were his son. And do not give him grounds to change his mind from so good an opinion and do take care to live happily and give the rest of us, and especially me, reason to do the same.”⁹¹ Ippolita’s sharp tone and word choice leave no doubt that she considered it her duty, both as sister and as daughter-in-law, to advise Galeazzo as to how he should properly conduct himself for the sake of fortifying the alliance between the two houses.⁹²

Ippolita’s commitment to preserve and solidify the political bond between Milan and Naples is rooted in her sense of belonging to both her natal and marital families, a tie to which

⁸⁹ Letter 29; Robin and Westwater 90.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Other textual instances of the fact that Ippolita gave Galeazzo political advice and instruct him on how to behave with King Ferrante can be found in Letter 59; Robin and Westwater 119: “Regarding the events of Barcelona I can only say that it is not necessary that your Lordship not allow Jean d’Anjou’s ships to leave [Genoa], since if they go the majesty the lord king would damage what you have done. But it is also necessary, in order to oblige this lord king to you, to demonstrate that your Lordship is the cause of the king’s recovering Barcelona, since his majesty says that your Lordship has been the cause of losing it. My dear brother, do this as it will lead to great glory, since on account of everything it will be clear how much we have followed our noble forbears in deepening our family’s alliance.”

she makes explicit references in several letters and that she commits to strengthen by choosing to betroth her daughter Isabella to her nephew, Galeazzo's son and heir to the Milanese throne, Gian Galeazzo Sforza.⁹³ In this regard, particularly telling is the letter that in January 1482 she addresses to her thirteen-year-old nephew and future son-in-law, who had officially become duke of Milan after his father's sudden death in 1477. In this letter, Ippolita leverages her own role as member of both families to reassure the young Milanese duke that the King would support him in case, as it turned out, the city were to be attacked by the Venetians with the words: "And so we [here, as in other letters, Ippolita uses the *pluralis maiestatis* to refer to herself], who are in the middle between this state there and this state here ("che simo medie intra lo stato dellà et de qua"), can and do bear witness in such a way that, to anyone with sound judgement [...] it should be unquestioned because of the many ties and common interests which so clearly bind us together."⁹⁴ The fact that Ippolita represents the "glue" that binds the two families together is made even more explicit by her reference in the letter to the different identities that she embodies "from this side, as a daughter, a wife, and a mother" to Isabella and "from the other side as a mother, aunt, sister, and descendant of the family" ("dal canto de qua como figlia, consorte et matre, et dal canto dellà como matre, cia, sorella et progenie dela casa").⁹⁵

This letter predates a couple of months another important one Ippolita wrote to Lorenzo de' Medici on April 1, 1482 (Letter 94).⁹⁶ The friendship between the two rulers had cemented

⁹³ A first reference to the betrothal appears in Letter 59; Robin and Westwater 119: "I don't know what to say I am so happy, except that I esteem no one more, neither your Lordship nor any other one of us, than out dear son, the count of Pavia, [Gian Galeazzo Sforza] to whom our sweet Isabella sends a thousand greetings and asks your lordship to kiss him a hundred times for her sake."

⁹⁴ Letter 93; Robin and Westwater 155; Castaldo, 100.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Mele underlines how after her father, mother, and brothers, Lorenzo de' Medici is the person to whom Ippolita wrote more letters.

over the years and turned into a strong political alliance.⁹⁷ The two even had the chance to come to each other's rescue in different circumstances. In fact, while Lorenzo had been helping Ippolita financially for many years now, Ippolita's key role in securing the pro-Medici league with Milan and Naples in the aftermath of the Pazzi conspiracy brought the Florentine statesman to entrust her with the role of procurator for his affairs in the Neapolitan kingdom in 1480.⁹⁸ Of the extant letters addressed by Ippolita to Lorenzo, this is by far the most political one. The subject matter of this missive which, by Ippolita's own admission, she decides to write to Lorenzo in her own hand because of the type of favor that was "needed" of him, is the Venetian attack on Milan.⁹⁹ Ippolita has reasons to believe that her younger brother Ascanio, bishop of Pavia and soon to be made cardinal, would defect to Venice and thus, "In [her] role as the duchess of Calabria and not as the sister of the monsignor," she asks Lorenzo for help to bring him back to Lombardy.¹⁰⁰ Ippolita's appeals to Lorenzo stresses the negative consequences that such an event would have on the whole league since it "could bring about the ruin of Milan, then

⁹⁷ On this topic see Mele, "Dietro la politica delle potenze: la ventennale collaborazione tra Ippolita Sforza e Lorenzo de' Medici." *Bullettino dell'Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medioevo*. (2013), pp. 375-423; also Bryce, "Between Friends? Two Letters of Ippolita Sforza to Lorenzo de' Medici." *Renaissance Studies*. (2007), pp. 340-365. Lastly, the strong bond between the two explains why Ippolita chose Lorenzo to be her daughter Isabella's godfather.

⁹⁸ The Duchess' role in the positive outcome of the peace negotiations is attested by notes and the *commento storico* of the edition of Lorenzo's letters of this period. For an analysis of Ippolita's mediating role in the peace negotiations refer to Mele, "Dietro la politica delle potenze." In this article, can also be found references on Ippolita meager finances, which may have been caused both by her poor management, like Martorello denounced in his letters to Bianca Maria Visconti, or by the irregular disbursements of her annual provision that the Aragonese family provided her with.

⁹⁹ Letter 94; Robin and Westwater 157: "Because of what is needed, I decided to write to you this letter in my own hand and to thank you for the work you have done and to encourage you to act firsthand in order to pursue a good means to an even better end. And because you might say that the love I bear the monsignor [Ippolita's brother Ascanio] has moved me to write, I therefore shall speak with your Magnificence in my role as the duchess of Calabria and not as the sister of the monsignor."

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Florence, and subsequently our own here in Naples,” and thus conveys the urgency with which she expects for him to act.¹⁰¹

It is in letters such as this one that Ippolita’s diplomatic skills and influence in state affairs come to the fore. In fact, it can be said that Ippolita’s Neapolitan letters function as a performative space where she can act out the political mission that her father destined her to when he arranged her marriage into the Aragonese family. From that moment on, the education she received would train her to become the strong diplomatic figure that she was expected to be. Once a duchess, Ippolita came to rely heavily on letter writing, a practice capable of revealing both the restraints and the potentials, the alienation and the engagement that she had to sustain. Indeed, the epistolary practice enabled a displaced woman like Ippolita not only to lament her growing estrangement from her natal family despite still allowing her to maintain her presence and standing in the political Milanese landscape, but also to extend her sphere of influence outside her city and country of origin. It was through her letters that Ippolita could carve and perform her identity as intermediary between Milan and Naples, actively engaging in politics at the local and national level and exercising what Castaldo defines as her “oblique power.”¹⁰² Likewise, through her intensive letter writing practice Ippolita managed to establish an epistolary network that cut across barriers of space and class and that ultimately afforded her a different type of mobility than the one she was used to before her marriage, one that was social, cultural, and political.

Ippolita Sforza’s letters, similarly to Alessandra M. Strozzi’s, testify to two instantiations of female exile in the Renaissance that shaped and, to a certain extent, increased the mobility of

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 158: “Knowing then that this concerns the security of the whole league, I encourage and exhort you, out of the love you have for me, to do everything possible so that the affairs of the monsignor may be put in good order and quickly.”

¹⁰² Castaldo, 18.

the women who suffered from it. Contrariwise, other more canonical and acknowledged types of exile, like the political one endured by Niccolò Machiavelli, caused the temporary, or at times permanent, physical and social exclusion from the city and community of origin of those (men) who experienced it. As I will show in the remainder of this chapter, a holistic approach to the investigation of the Florentine Secretary's auto-biographical letter collections will help challenge the notion of exile that he is paradigmatically identified with and propose that, throughout his life, he endured a two-fold form of displacement which his epistolary corpus as a whole accounts for.

III. Machiavelli's Auto-Biographical Letters and the Challenge to the Exile Paradigm

The case of Niccolò Machiavelli represents a distinct and valuable addition to the investigation carried out so far in this chapter into the constitutive link between exile and letter writing in the Renaissance. The first reason why this is so is historical. Indeed, this case study extends the temporal limits of my investigation into the sixteenth century, thus locating two literary figures, Petrarca and Machiavelli, at the opposite end of a linear spectrum that mirrors a range of forms that exile took in Italy over the course of three centuries. The second reason has to do specifically with the mode of exile that Machiavelli experienced. Unlike the female protagonists of this chapter, the Florentine Secretary suffered from a legal restriction to his physical mobility, imposed by the Signoria after he was "dismissed, deprived and totally removed" from the post of Second Chancellor of the Florentine Republic in 1512, that forced him to stay within Florence's territory for a year. As it will be shown in my analysis, his actual instantiations of displacement were much more complex and nuanced than how it has commonly been portrayed, with Machiavelli being subject throughout his life to a two-fold type of

displacement: the one activated by the physical and social mobility his political career accorded him and the constraint to that same mobility that came with the sudden halt to his public engagements.¹⁰³

Lastly, what distinguishes Machiavelli's epistolary oeuvre from those of Strozzi and Sforza is the fact that it consists of two very hybrid letter collections – the first being his *Legazioni, commissarie e scritti di governo*, an impressively large amount of official dispatches and missives that he sent and received as part of his political and diplomatic duties during the fifteen years he served as Florence's Second Chancellor, and the second his *Lettere familiari*, the assemblage of familiar letters he exchanged with family members, colleagues, friends, fellow humanists and politicians – each of which comprises letters written by and to Machiavelli by his multiple and diverse interlocutors. Indeed, the auto-biographical component of these collections is a distinct trait of Machiavelli's epistolary corpus, one that, with few notable exceptions, has been rather overlooked by scholars interested in his epistolary production and thus deserving of a more in-depth analysis.¹⁰⁴

My examination of Niccolò Machiavelli's epistolary correspondences will diachronically and comparatively investigate his letter collections to tease out continuities and discontinuities between the two that problematize the too often selective and ancillary use that has been done of his most famous letters. In doing that, it intends to shed light on Machiavelli's epistolary practice as a whole and particularly to use the latter to infer what his physical experience(s) of displacement must have looked like. To that end, in my analysis I will foreground the importance

¹⁰³ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Opp. P.* vol. 1. p. LXXXIV.

¹⁰⁴ For a treatment of the auto-biographical aspect of Machiavelli's letters, though limited to the epistolary correspondences between him and Francesco Vettori, see John Najemy, *Between Friends: Discourses of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli-Vettori letters of 1513-1515*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

that the auto-biographical element of his letter collections plays in assembling the image of a man that, unlike the complex though crystallized portrait that has come down to us, is not the result of a retrospective reworking of one's life story, but the collaborative writing of one's life in its making.

Before close-reading Machiavelli's letter collections, it is necessary to say a few words about this epistolary corpus and his genesis. A first but rather incomplete and partisan collection of letters saw the light after Machiavelli's death thanks to the enterprise of his grandson Giuliano de' Ricci (1532?-1606) who, as John Najemy recounts in *Between Friends: Discourse of Power and Desire in the Machiavelli-Vettori Letters of 1513-1515*, in the 1570s copied the originals of some of Machiavelli's letters and texts as part of a project, never realized, to publish a censored edition of his grandfather's works under the auspices of the Congregation of the Index.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, in 1549 Pope Paul IV had officially banned the sale of Machiavelli's books and threatened harsh punishments, including excommunication, against those found keeping copies in their homes.¹⁰⁶ Between 1573 and 1594, Ricci gathered these transcriptions into a single volume known as the *Apografo Ricci*, which aimed at retracing his uncle's life, from his political career at the service of the Florentine Republic to his *post res perditas* years, and presenting it for the first time along with a series of never before published dispatches, familiar letters, and documents to the readers.¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, not only was Giuliano de' Ricci's ambitious project never published, but it remained unused and unknown until 1725 when Antonio Rosso Martini, a Florentine

¹⁰⁵ Najemy, 61; The Congregation of the Index was created in 1571 for the purpose of issuing expurgated editions of the works of authors condemned by the original Index of banned books.

¹⁰⁶ Busini, *Lettere al Varchi*, 241: "Qui [a Roma] sono state vietate e proibite a vendersi tutte le opere del nostro Machiavello, e volgion fare una scomunica a chi le tiene in casa; ma sino a qui nessun librario ne può più vendere sotto gravi pene."

¹⁰⁷ See Giuliano de' Ricci, *Apografo Ricci* in Procacci, *Machiavelli nella cultura europea dell'età moderna*, Appendix.

member of the Accademia della Crusca, was able to get hold of a copy of the *Apografo* that belonged to the abbot Corso de' Ricci.¹⁰⁸

While the *Apografo* can certainly not be considered the most comprehensive and unbiased edition of Machiavelli's letters given how, by Ricci's own admission, he omitted to copy letters whose subject matter did not fit his own (and the Index's) agenda, it nonetheless preserves the hybrid unity of Machiavelli's epistolary corpus, incorporating both official dispatches and familiar letters as well as selectively including epistles written by Machiavelli and to him by his various correspondents.¹⁰⁹ This ambitious enterprise was never taken up again thereafter. Contrariwise, the scholarship written over the centuries on the subject of Machiavelli's epistolary writings has established a clear binary opposition between the two types of collections which caused the official correspondences to be overlooked for too long.¹¹⁰ Indeed, it was not until 1971 that an ample though not yet exhaustive selection of Machiavelli's official letters and documents was published, while the seven-volume edition of Machiavelli's *Legazioni, commissarie e scritti di governo*, became available only in the 21st century (2002-2011).¹¹¹

The almost five-century-long wait to see Machiavelli's political and diplomatic dispatches published in its entirety and reunited with his familiar letters and most famous works

¹⁰⁸ For more detailed explanations about the *Apografo* and its recovery in the XVIII century see Giuliano Procacci, *Machiavelli nella cultura europea dell'età moderna*. (1995), pp. 307-317.

¹⁰⁹ Procacci, *Apografo Ricci*, 680: "Passarono infra questi tempi tra il Vettori, et il Machiavello molte lettere appartenenti a loro innamoramenti, et a loro piacevolezze et burle, le quali non mi essendo capitate nelle mani, non sono state da me registrate, come ancora ho lassato di registrare qualche parte delle lettere da me copiate, dove, il Vettori tratta di simili intrattenimenti, et solo ho scritto quella parte, dove si tratta di stati et di maneggi d'importanza."

¹¹⁰ Lucio Biasiori, "Prefazione alle Legazioni," in *Niccolò Machiavelli. Tutte le opere*. Ed. Mario Martelli. (2018), p.1131.

¹¹¹ N. Machiavelli, *Legazioni, commissarie, scritti di governo (1498-1527)*, a cura di F. Chiappelli (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1971); N. Machiavelli, *Legazioni, commissarie, scritti di governo (1498-1527)*, 7 vol. coord. J.-J. Marchand. (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2002-2011). Citations in this chapter are taken from the latter edition.

within the Edizione Nazionale of his corpus is explained by its massive quantity. Indeed, Machiavelli's official correspondence comprises several thousands of legation letters, commissions, and documents that he wrote and received during the tireless "fifteen years" he spent "studying the art of the state," as he himself declares in the letter to Francesco Vettori of December 10, 1513.¹¹² While accounting for the abundance and variety of the official missives Machiavelli wrote and received falls outside the feasible scope of this investigation, it is nonetheless pivotal to analyze some of its actual instantiations so as, on the one hand, to help counter the secular narrative that subordinates them to his familiar letters and political writings and on the other, to see how its content and dialogic style can shed light on the relation that exists between letter writing and his discrete experiences of displacement.

Praises of Machiavelli's official letters can be found as early as in the *Apografo Ricci*, where Machiavelli's nephew recalls his decision to transcribe the drafts of the missives his uncle sent to the Ten of War, the Florentine council responsible for diplomacy and warfare, during his third legation to France in 1510 "so that they can be a testament to his diligence and that the reader can experience at the same time while reading pleasure and utility, since through them one can get a glimpse of the enjoyableness of this author's writing, which brings great delight and not little pleasure."¹¹³ From these words it is possible to begin inferring how some of the traits

¹¹² It seems that only during the first three years since he started working as Florence's Second Chancellor, in 1498, Machiavelli personally wrote over two thousand documents including letters, reports, and decrees, while in the following years, once his diplomatic activities increased and he was in charge of governing the Florentine Militia, the volume lessened, though it overall amounted to some thousands of letters. For more detailed information on the quantity and quality of Machiavelli's official epistolary correspondence see *Legazioni, commissarie e scritti di governo*. Introduction to Vol.1.; Letter 224; Atkinson and Sices, 265.

¹¹³ *Apografo Ricci* in Procacci, 628: "accioche siano un testimonio della diligentia sua, et che il Lettore habbia in un medesimo tempo leggendo a riportarne piacere et utile, poiché anco in essi si scorge una ombra della piacevolezza del dire di questo autore, che arreca diletto grande et giovamento non piccolo." Translation mine.

ascribed to Machiavelli's familiar letters and, in general, to his literary production can be extended to his official missives, such as for example the idea that these epistles make for an informative and enjoyable reading from which it is possible to catch a glimpse of the author's pleasant writing style. The fact that Machiavelli's public letters were "highly commended" by some of Florence's foremost citizens is confirmed by references found in Biagio Buonaccorsi's and Agostino Vespucci's, Machiavelli's trusted friends, fellow humanists, and assistants at the Second Chancellery, familiar letters.¹¹⁴ At the same time, in these letters can be discerned some criticism towards the content and frequency of Machiavelli's official letters, the latter being a sentiment shared by many of his colleagues at the Chancellery, members of the Signoria as well as relatives who, in their public and private epistles, often lamented his tardiness in replying.¹¹⁵

Annoyed by these reproaches, especially those coming from eminent citizens, the Florentine Secretary did not refrain from answering with bold words, as it is the case of an official missive written on November 25, 1503 to the Ten from Rome, where he had been sent to attend Pope Julius II's coronation. Accused with laziness in writing, he says in his defense in this letter: "having written since my arrival one letter per day or at the most every other day, I am

¹¹⁴ An analysis of the relationship between Buonaccorsi and Vespucci and Machiavelli and their shared cultural and intellectual interests can be found in Gerard Gonzalez Germain, "Per lo studio degli ambienti culturali intorno a Machiavelli cancelliere: nuovi dati su Agostino Vespucci." *Aevum*. (2015), pp. 561-583. Letter 13; Atkinson and Sices, 26: "I do not want to fail to let you know how much satisfaction your letters give everyone; [...] when I found myself reading those earlier letters of yours to certain citizens, and some of the foremost, you were most highly commended by them."; Letter 33; Atkinson and Sices, 50: "Yesterday morning, while I was reciting a letter just written to Piero Soderini, and he grumbled at it countless times during the reading, he finally said: 'The writer who wrote this in his own hands has much talent, is endowed with much judgement and also no little wisdom.'"

¹¹⁵ Letter 44; Atkinson and Sices, 60, Buonaccorsi to Machiavelli: "I must remind you to write most often, because the passage of 8 days at a time between the arrival of your letters does not bring you honor, nor much satisfaction to those who sent you. You were criticized about this by the Signoria and the others, because, since these things are of great importance, people here are very anxious to hear often how matters stand."; Letter 83; Atkinson and Sices, 93, one of the few letters Marietta Corsini, Machiavelli's wife, wrote to her husband: "My dearest Niccolò. You make fun of me, but you are not right to, for I would be flourishing more if you were here. You know very well how happy I am when you are not down there [...]. So I pray you to send me letters a little more often than you do, for I only have three of them."

sorry that after much discomfort and danger and extreme diligence, and with expenses far greater than the salary Your Lordships give me, and beyond my own means, I should be told I am slow.”¹¹⁶ The content of this letter is relevant because it sheds light on an aspect of Machiavelli’s experience working for the Florentine Republic that is not often examined, that is to say his frustration. As it is clear from this passage, Machiavelli was upset by the critique he received not only because it undermined his “extreme diligence,” which readers saw being praised by Giuliano de’ Ricci in his *Apografo*, but also because it did not factor in the “discomfort,” “danger,” and great personal “expenses” that he had to endure as part of his profession. Indeed, in numerous of Machiavelli’s dispatches as well as personal letters we see him complain about his low salary and precarious economic conditions, such as at the time of his mission to Cesare Borgia, in 1502, when in a letter to the Ten he vents as follows:

I plead your Lordships and I beg you once again that you send me enough [money] to live by, since having three stable boys and three animals, I cannot live out of promises. I started getting into debt and until now I have spent 70 ducats; ask Niccolò Grillo the magistrates’ servant who has been with me. I could have had and could still have the Court pay for my expenses; but I don’t want to, and even in the past I took little advantage of it, since I consider it your Lordships’ duty and mine. And your Lordships can imagine how happily I go around begging for 4 ducats here and 3 there.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Machiavelli, *Legazioni, commissarie e scritti di governo*. Vol. 3. Letter 266, pp. 407-408. Translation mine.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. 2. Letter 316, p. 507: “Raccomando alle Signorie vostre e di nuovo le riprego mi mandino da poter vivere, che avendo 3 garzoni e 3 bestie alle spalle, io non posso vivere di promesse. Ho cominciato a fare debito e infino a qui ho speso 70 ducati; e domandatene Niccolò Grillo tavolaccino che è stato meco. Arei possuto avere le spese e potre’le avere da la Corte; non le voglio e pel passato me ne sono valuto poco, parendomi onore di vostre Signorie e mio fare così. E andando io lemosinando qua 4 ducati e 3 ducati, pensino vostre Signorie come io lo fo di buona voglia.” Translation mine.

The power of these words lies in the fact that in them it is possible to find not only confirmation of the discomfort Machiavelli felt, but also traces of that same bluntness and sharp irony that are conventionally attributed to some of his satirical works and most famous familiar letters.¹¹⁸

Similarly, in other public and private letters written to Machiavelli by his correspondents can be found both praise and criticism towards the judgement over matters of state that he expressed in his official reports. For example, in a familiar letter written by Buonaccorsi to Machiavelli when the latter was at the court of Duke Valentino in Imola, his dear friend and colleague voices his disagreement about “too bold a conclusion” the Secretary had drawn with regard to the duke in one of his dispatches. This critique deserves to be analyzed within the larger framework of Buonaccorsi’s letter, which includes many elements of praise alongside the aforementioned reproach:

And notwithstanding the fact that you have written at length about the troops there with His Highness [...]; and that you indicated very well both his own forces and those of his enemies, and *set them before people’s eyes*, nevertheless you draw too bold a conclusion when you write that his enemies can no longer do much harm to His Lordship; and it seems to me [...] that you cannot make so absolute a judgement [...]. From a variety of authorities people here have heard that the league’s forces are quite powerful and people do not have a very favorable judgement of the forces of His Lordship; so that since you have done and you have judiciously discussed things, particularly everything that you describe, leave the judgement to others; and stick yourself in the ass.¹¹⁹

The conflation of praise and criticism, higher and lower tones in this letter is an element typical of the epistolary exchange between the two colleagues that has often been highlighted by scholars working on Machiavelli’s familiar letters. However, what instead they failed to emphasize is the dialogic relation between these collections, that is to say how familiar letters

¹¹⁸ Among the most provocative and ironic letters see Letter 176; Atkinson and Sices 188-89 to Luigi Guicciardini; Letter 270; Atkinson and Sices, 336-37 to Francesco Guicciardini. For his literary works see *The Mandrake, Clizia, and Belfagor*.

¹¹⁹ Letter 44; Atkinson and David Sices, 61.

can inform readers of the content, form, and style of the official missives and vice versa. In this letter, for example, readers find not only evidence of the kind of strategic information Machiavelli reported in his dispatches to the Ten and the Signoria, but most importantly a detailed description of the form and style of his reports which, as confirmed by Buonaccorsi's words and similarly to his familiar letters and most famous literary works, stood out for their power to describe the world through the use of language in such visual terms that readers could see before their eyes what Machiavelli personally witnessed.

While Buonaccorsi's advice to limit himself to facts and to abstain from giving his definitive conclusions was motivated by his legitimate concern and fear for his friend, given how throughout the years as Second Chancellor Machiavelli had to face several oppositions from those who wanted to see him removed from his office, from the language of the commission given to Machiavelli by the Florentine Gonfalonier, Pier Soderini, when he was sent to France for his second legation, in January 1504, it is clear how Soderini and the Signoria relied on Machiavelli's judgement to the point that they instructed him to include his own opinion and conclusions in his official dispatches: "The purpose of your journey is to observe the preparations which are being made and to report them immediately to us with your own comments and conjectures."¹²⁰

From this year onwards Machiavelli were to be sent to an increasing number of legations and missions which brought him to constantly be on the move from one city-state and country to

¹²⁰ *Legazioni, commissarie e scritti di governo*. January 19, 1504. Translation mine; The Gonfalonier (Gonfaloniere di Giustizia) was a post in the government of medieval and early Renaissance Florence. He was one of the nine citizens selected by drawing lots every two months (the *Priori*), who formed the government, or Signoria. As Gonfaloniere di Giustizia he was the temporary standard-bearer of the Republic of Florence and custodian of the city's banner. Along with the voting rights of the other Priori, he was also in charge of the internal security forces and the maintenance of public order. John Najemy, *A History of Florence (1200-1575)*. (2008), pp. 84-85.

another. After being sent twice to France and to Rome, in December 1507 the Gonfalonier decided that he should join the Florentine ambassador who later was to become one of his closest friends, Francesco Vettori, at the court of the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I in Germany, where Vettori had arrived in June of the same year with the general commission “to observe and report, not to negotiate and conclude agreements.”¹²¹ The legation to Germany, an immense country of which Machiavelli and Vettori saw only a part of Switzerland and the Tyrol, is representative of the Secretary’s fleeting though repeated encounters with people whose customs, culture, and sometimes even language or dialect were different than his due to the frequency of his travels.¹²² Indeed, these trips brought him to practice so many different public and private spaces, cities, courts, offices, and battlefields and to see from up-close “the actions of men and their ways of doing things” that allowed him to catch the inner spirit of people and places he was able to render so masterfully in his letters and works.¹²³

Machiavelli’s practice of and longing for mobility during his fifteen years as Secretary are confirmed by many textual references in both his auto-biographical epistolary collections. A thumbnail sketch of his greed for travel can be found in the Latin words “*equitandi, evagandi ac cursitandi tam avidus*” used by Agostino Vespucci to describe and friendly reproach Machiavelli

¹²¹ Francesco Guicciardini, *The History of Florence* (1970), p. 297.

¹²² Machiavelli’s reports and detailed impressions of this legation are conveyed in the “Ritratti delle cose della Magna,” in *Tutte le opere*. Ed. Mario Martelli. Florence: Sansoni, 1989. For the English, see “Report on the Affairs of Germany,” in *The Historical, Political and Diplomatic Writings of Niccolò Machiavelli*, Trans. Detmold C. E., Vol. 4. (Boston, MA: James R. Osgood), pp. 384–390: “The reason why the private citizens are rich is that they live as if they were poor; they do not build and spend nothing on dress or costly furniture in their houses. They are satisfied with having plenty of bread and meat and a stove, where they can take refuge from the cold. And those who have no other things, are satisfied to do without them, and do not seek after them. [...] With such habits it is natural that the money does not go out of the country, the people being content with what they country produces.” (384); “The power of Germany certainly resides more in the cities than in the princes. [...] But we now come to the free and imperial cities, which are the real nerve of Empire, and have money as well as good organization. For many reasons they enjoy their liberty with indifference, and have no desire to aggrandize their power.” (387).

¹²³ Letter 121; Atkinson and Sices, 134.

for his own inclination for mobility in a letter he sent him on October 1502.¹²⁴ That same month, Buonaccorsi wrote a familiar letter in which he reported to Machiavelli how his wife, Madonna Marietta, was “making a big fuss,” and she was hurt because he had promised her he would stay away “8 days and no more” and he had not come back yet. In the spirit of their close friendship, he even pressed Machiavelli to “come back, in the name of the devil, so the womb doesn’t suffer.”¹²⁵

That Machiavelli was an absent husband and father who favored traveling for work than staying in Florence is evidenced by his remarks in an official letter he sent to the Ten in April of 1509, a few months before the successful retaking of Pisa by the Florentine Militia which he had masterminded:

I know that being stationed [in Cascina] would be less arduous and dangerous, but if I had not wanted danger and hard work, I should have not left Florence (“ma se io non volessi né pericolo né fatica, io non sarei uscito di Firenze”). So may it please Your Lordships to leave me here in the field to work along with the commissioners on matters that arise, for *here I can be of use* (“dove io posso essere buono a qualcosa”), but there I should not be doing any good and die of despair.¹²⁶

This statement, which revolves entirely around the spatial binary opposition between “here” and “there,” where “here” indicates the center of the military action and “there” its periphery, identified both by Cascina and Florence, highlights simultaneously Machiavelli’s fearlessness and the value that he attributed to physically being present where he could “be of use,” and the sense of powerlessness and distress he would feel had he been forced to stay away from the

¹²⁴ Letter 33; Atkinson and Sices, 50: “So you see where that spirit of yours, so eager for riding, wandering and roaming about, had gotten us.”

¹²⁵ Letter 35; Atkinson and Sices, 52.

¹²⁶ *Legazioni, commissarie e scritti di governo*. Vol. VI, p. 322: “Pare per quelle lettere vostre Signorie disegnino mi fermi in Cascina [...] So che la stanza sarebbe meno pericolosa e meno faticosa; ma se io non volessi né pericolo né fatica, io non sarei uscito di Firenze, sì che lascinmi vostre Signorie stare infra questi campi e travagliare tra questi Commissari delle cose che corrono, dove io posso essere buono a qualcosa, perché io non sarei quivi buono a nulla e morre’vi disperato.” Translation mine.

center of the action. Textual evidence like these make it easier for readers to imagine the depth of the alienation and the sense of reversed displacement Machiavelli must have felt the day that, after the Medici's return to power and the fall of the Florentine Republic, he was first dismissed from his post as Second Chancellor and from his functions of Secretary to the Ten (November 7, 1512) and later sentenced by the Signoria to be restricted within Florentine territory for a year (November 10).¹²⁷ This sentence was followed, on November 17, by another resolution of the Signoria which forbade him to set foot for twelve months in the Palazzo della Signoria, where he had worked since 1498. While this decision was later retreated and he was granted access to the Palazzo on a few occasions in 1513, the exclusion from political life and the physical restrictions enforced on him not only put a definitive end to his official epistolary correspondence, but also translated into a sharp halt to the mobility he relished.¹²⁸

If that wasn't enough, Machiavelli's situation was aggravated by the fact that his name had been found in the list of a group of supposed conspirators against the Medici, which brought the Florentine authorities to issue a ban, in February of 1513, stating that whoever "knew or sheltered, or knew who sheltered Niccolò son of Bernardo Machiavelli" should denounce him within the hour upon pain of being declared rebel.¹²⁹ This was the first step in the process that led to his subsequent incarceration, trial, and torture in Florence's prison, the Bargello, where he stayed until March 11, 1513 when his sentence was entirely remitted as a result of a general pardon granted because of the election of Cardinal Giovanni di Lorenzo de' Medici to Pope as

¹²⁷ Opp. P. Vol. I. p. LXXXIV.

¹²⁸ For references to the Signoria's sentences against Machiavelli and his subsequent ban see Roberto Ridolfi, *The Life of Machiavelli*. Trans. Cecil Greyson. (1963), p. 134.

¹²⁹ For the Machiavelli decree see Pasquale Villari, *Niccolò Machiavelli e i suoi tempi: Illustrati con nuovi documenti*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (Milan, 1895–97); for an analysis of the Florentine early modern practice of civic proclamations, including *bandi*, see Stephen J. Milner, "Fanno bandire, notificare, et espressamente comandare': Town Criers and the Information Economy of Renaissance Florence." *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*. Vol. 6. No. 1.2. (2013), pp. 107-151.

Leo X.¹³⁰ Machiavelli got out of prison “amid the city’s universal rejoicing” only to find himself in the position of being trapped within the Florentine territory as he says in a letter of April 9, 1513 to Vettori who, in the meantime, had become the Florentine Ambassador to the Supreme Pontiff: “If I could disentangle myself from Florentine territory, I, too, would certainly go down there [to Rome] to see if the Pope is at home.”¹³¹ Signed by a disillusioned “*quondam* Secretarius,” these words convey the suffering for the restriction of his mobility that he had been punished to endure and which brought him to withdraw to Sant’Andrea in Percussina, the little village where he owned the family property known by the name of the *Albergaccio*.¹³²

Abundant scholarship has been written on the subject of Machiavelli’s exile in the Tuscan countryside using Machiavelli’s own familiar letters, which in the years following 1512 increased in number and frequency, as a direct source of information to establish how he fared during this alienating period of his life, to locate the genesis of some of the most famous works that he wrote during this time as well as hermeneutical support to their interpretations.¹³³ While Machiavelli’s collection of familiar letters is an undeniably precious aid in answering to these questions, it ought to be used also to interrogate and problematize his physical experience of displacement as the latter can illuminate how he both regarded and chose to portray his “situatedness” in space and ultimately foster a deeper understanding of the relation between his

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Letter 208; Atkinson and Sices, 225.

¹³² Ibid.; Also, see Ridolfi, *The Life of Niccolò Machiavelli*, Ch. 14, for a detailed description of Machiavelli’s time at Sant’Andrea in Percussina.

¹³³ The literature on this topic is extensive and it would not be possible to give even a representative list of such studies. Among the most recent contributions see David Marsh, *The Experience of Exile Described by Italian Writers: From Cicero Through Dante and Machiavelli Down to Carlo Levi*. (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2013); Giulia Ponsiglione, “L’esilio dalla politica, l’amore per la politica: lettere familiari di Niccolò Machiavelli e Francesco Guicciardini.” *La letteratura italiana e l’esilio*. (2011), pp. 95-115.

actual displacement(s) and the literary representation of its effects that can be found in his letters, which in return can lead to rectify some of the interpretations that have been given of his exile.

That Machiavelli employed letters, especially those he exchanged with Vettori between 1513-1515, as a performative space where he would dramatize his exile recurring to some deep-rooted rhetorical and literary *topoi* of the classic as well as Petrarchan tradition has been convincingly argued by many scholars.¹³⁴ In spite of this, others have tended to rather simplistically reduce Machiavelli's exile to the most famous "giornata" he carefully crafts in his letter of December 10, 1513 to Vettori, and to identify in his alienation from Florence's political and public life the main reason behind his sorrow.¹³⁵ On that note, Machiavelli's representation of life at the *Albergaccio* as barbaric, full of *minutiae*, and for the most part poor for the soul succeeds in rhetorically perpetrating the opposition, widely accepted in the Renaissance, between city and countryside, while at the same time defying the ancient tradition that associated country life with solace.¹³⁶

These uncomplicated assumptions find confirmation only if the examination of the familiar correspondence is limited to the famous passages of those few canonical letters that, throughout the years, have been repeatedly used with the result of perpetrating a somewhat

¹³⁴ For some of the most representative examples see Franco Fido, "Appunti sulla memoria letteraria di Machiavelli," *MLN*. Vol. 89. No. 1. (1974), pp. 1-12; Stella Larosa, "Autobiografia e tradizione nella 'giornata' di Machiavelli." *Interpres*, XXIII, (2003), pp. 223-75. An insightful analysis of Machiavelli's knowledge of the classics and use of poetic references taken especially from Ovidio, Dante, and Petrarca in his letters and other literary works can be found in Francesco Bausi, "Politica e poesia: ancora sulla cultura di Machiavelli." *Intersezioni*. (2002), pp. 377-394.

¹³⁵ For instance, both Biasiori and Ridolfi speak of Machiavelli's exile in terms of his "giornata" and focus on his distance from Florence as the main, if not sole, form of alienation.

¹³⁶ For the portrayal of his famous "giornata" at the *Albergaccio* see Letter 224; Atkinson and Sices, 262-265; for a treatment of the city-countryside divide in Italian Renaissance literature see Francesco Petrarca, *De vita solitaria*. ed. Marco Noce. *De vita solitaria*. (Milan: Mondadori, 1992); Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*. Trans. Renée Neu Watkins. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1969).

crystallized image of Machiavelli. Contrariwise, when letters are analyzed in their entirety as well as in their dialogic unity it is possible to find literary evidence that complicates the aforementioned argument. A first thing that it is important to notice when analyzing the letters that Machiavelli wrote *post res perditas* is the fact that the great majority of these epistles were written “in Florence,” as the location found at the bottom of the letters along with his signature would seem to indicate.¹³⁷ Indeed, of the 66 letters he authored after 1512, only 8 are signed by Machiavelli “in the country,” the earliest of which is dated August 10, 1513.¹³⁸ While it is not possible to establish with certainty whether these letters were actually written from Florence or composed partly at his home in Florence and partly at his farm in Sant’Andrea da Percussina, a number of these epistles present references to Machiavelli’s movements back and forth between the two places, to fetch books or on business, both alone or together with his family.¹³⁹

Such movements were, indeed, the only type of motion that he was allowed to practice during the course of the twelve months after the legal restriction of his mobility had been sentenced, in November 1512. In a letter to Vettori dated April 29, 1513, we find unequivocal evidence of how the *quondam* Secretary was deeply suffering from the limitations imposed on his movement in the apology with whom he concludes the letter:

I know this letter is going to seem higgledy-piggledy to you, not of the consistency you might have expected. Excuse me for being alien in spirit to all these political discussions, removed from any human face and ignorant of matters going on around me, as my being restrict to my farm bears witness. Thus I am

¹³⁷ This topographical information can be found at the bottom of the letters, after the signature.

¹³⁸ See Letter 219, 240, 252, 276, 279, 282, 283, 285.

¹³⁹ Letter 229, February 4, 1514; Atkinson and Sices, 276: “Yesterday I returned from the farm”; Letter 236, June 10, 1514; Atkinson and Sices, 290: “I received two of your letters while I was on the farm where I have been staying with my family [...] but when I came back to Florence two days ago...”; the second letter signed “From Percussina” is from December 4, 1514, the third and last one “in the country” was sent by Machiavelli to his nephew Giovanni Vernacci, Letter 253, June 8, 1517; Atkinson and Sices, 316: “since the adversities I have suffered, and still am suffering, have reduced me to living on my farm.”

obliged to discuss in the dark; I've based everything on the information you've given me.¹⁴⁰

As a matter of fact, Machiavelli had to wait until 1516 before being officially commissioned to travel again, even though by the time he wrote the famous letter of December 10, 1513 to Vettori he did not have any legal impediment that prevented him from leaving the Florentine territory.¹⁴¹ However, even after his legal confinement had been lifted, his exile from the more dynamic and engaging political life continued in spite of the fact that he was entitled to more freedom of movement because of the tacit but rigid *conventio ad excludendum* that weighed on him.¹⁴²

What this ultimately points to is the fact that Machiavelli's experience of exile is marked by the sudden halt to a spatial mobility that was conferred on him by his engagement in diplomatic missions on behalf of the Florentine Republic and that brought him not only to witness, but to be at the center of the action of many key events that took place in different city-states and countries during his long career. Thus, at issue here there is not only one linear experience of displacement from Florence's public and political life, as it has been suggested, but rather two: the displacement propelled by the mobility that his career demanded of him and that he so deeply enjoyed, and the sense of alienation from that same mobility that made him feel "centered" in the midst of his physical dislocation. Hence, it can be said that Machiavelli's exile from political life ultimately coincides with the alienation from his true mobile self, a distinctive trait of his personality that is possible to witness and appreciate through the analysis of both his

¹⁴⁰ Letter 212; Atkison and Sices, 236.

¹⁴¹ Among his latest private missions, he was sent to execute some commissions on behalf of Paolo Vettori, Captain of the Papal Galleys, in October 1516, to retrieve credits in Genoa (1518), Lucca (1520) and Venice (1525). A small public one was the legation to the Franciscan friars in Carpi of 1521, where he had been sent as Florentine ambassador to find a friar for the *quaresima* (see Letter 270; Atkison and Sices, 336).

¹⁴² On Giulio de' Medici admonition "di non s'impacciare con Niccolò" found in a letter written by his secretary Piero Ardinghelli in 1515 to Giuliano de' Medici cit. in O. Tommasini. *La vita e gli scritti di Niccolò Machiavelli* (1994), pp. 1064-65, see Biasiori, "Prefazione alle Legazioni," p. 1134.

auto-biographical epistolary collections. Such analysis brings to the fore not only the two-fold nature of his displacement, thus rectifying the paradigmatic narrative of exile with whom he has been historically identified, but also the reciprocity between his two letter collections and the constitutive link that ties them to his experiences of displacement.

Chapter one approaches the study of the epistolary corpora of Alessandra M. Strozzi, Ippolita Sforza, and Niccolò Machiavelli through the critical lens of the exilic condition that they suffered during their lives. By inquiring into the relationship between their exile and letter writing, this chapter factors the discrete forms of displacement that they each endured among the key elements that influenced and simultaneously informed the content, form, language, interlocutors, and functions of their missives. As my analysis of these writers' epistolary collections has shown, their letters do not only provide valuable insight into the numerous typologies of exile that existed in the Renaissance, thus fostering a deeper understanding of this complex and multifaceted phenomenon, but also reveal the ways in which displacement affected their spatial, social, and cultural mobility based on their gender, locale, and socio-economic status. Using exile as a blueprint to investigate their epistolary productions enabled me to reconstruct the spatial practices they engaged with as well as to map the cartography of spaces and patronage networks to which, by virtue of their exile, they were either granted or forbidden access to. No matter what engendered their exile (whether because it was inborn, inherited, or imposed), the estrangement from familiar geographies and/or access to strange landscapes, foreign communities and cities brought all three of these writers to rely on letters as the primary means not only to overcome the spatial distance that separated them from their families, friends,

and colleagues, but also to serve personal, political, and intellectual purposes closely related to their condition as exiles.

Spatial distance, however, is not the only type of anguish that afflicted and prompted a literary reaction among Renaissance writers in exile. In many of their works, they rhetorically lament their ‘temporal displacement’ from a past they feel indebted to and which they strive to reconstruct in their works. Such admiration and feeling of ‘nostalgic distance’ stem from the increased awareness of antiquity’s cultural, linguistic, and artistic remoteness (and, often, superiority over the present) that Petrarca’s own letters and literary works fostered. Through them, in fact, Petrarca exercised an enormous influence over the way the past was viewed, studied, and approached by scholars in the 15th and 16th centuries and over their literary endeavors to memorialize it. Similarly, Petrarca’s self-portrayed anachronism normalized the notion of ‘temporal exile’ that many Renaissance humanists rhetorically subscribed to and that often accompanied additional exilic conditions, as it happened with Biondo Flavio. In chapter two of this dissertation, I examine the archetypal role that Petrarca’s rediscovery of classical antiquity played in the development of two of Biondo’s most innovative historiographical achievements. I close read these texts against the backdrop of the stratified experiences of exile that Biondo bore throughout his life (political, professional, spatial, and temporal), revealing how the latter informed the ingenious historiographical method that he is famous for as well as the spatial and temporal capaciousness of his historiography. Additionally, I foreground the number of oblique resonances and the direct references to Petrarca and his works embedded in these texts, illuminating Biondo’s intentional effort to position himself and his historiography in a direct line from Petrarca.

Chapter Two. Exiled from the Past: How Humanists Textually Reconstructed History

In chapter one of this dissertation, we have seen how the discrete forms of displacement experienced by female and male Renaissance exile writers translated to different degrees of spatial and cultural mobility and/or constraints that influenced the way they practiced and employed letter writing throughout their lives. Furthermore, our textual analysis allowed us to detect a number of continuities that point towards the profound impact that the familiar epistolary tradition Petrarca codified had over these authors and how they partook in it. Among the most significant correspondences to be found is their life-long *commitment* to the letter writing practice. Indeed, Strozzi, Sforza, and Machiavelli dedicated almost their entire lives to letter writing and can be said to have conceived of it very much in Petrarchan terms. As the latter tells his Simonides in the opening letter of the *Seniles*, “nothing but the end of my life will bring an end to my letter writing.”¹ The correspondence between the end of letter writing with the end of life, reiterated in several of Petrarca’s familiar epistles, is meant to draw attention to its positive counterpart, the identification between letter writing and living.² By repeatedly alluding to this correlation, Petrarca is verbalizing his incurable dependence on letter writing and the feeling of fulfillment that he associates with the epistolary labor.³

¹ *Sen.* I 1; *LOA* 2005 1:1: “My book, *Letters on Familiar Matters*, is dedicated to Socrates; vast in its bulk, it would become still more so if I were to allow it. Now I see just what I then guessed: nothing but the end of my life will bring an end to my letter writing.”

² *Fam.* XXIV 13; *LFM* 3: 351: “I began this work as a young man; I am completing it in my old age, or rather I am continuing since it is the only one that death alone can end. What other end can I expect for my conversations with friends than the end of life? Or how could I possibly remain silent with them while still alive if I plan to speak to them with my cold lips from the grave?” As noticed by Eden, 64: “Petrarch concludes the *Familiars* with the admission to his Socrates that living is unimaginable without letter writing and that because of his letters even death will not stifle his efforts to communicate intimately with those he holds dear”. For an analysis of the identification between the end of life and the end of composition in Petrarca see Giulio Ferroni. “Between Petrarch and Boccaccio: Strategies of the End.” *Petrarch and Boccaccio: The Unity of Knowledge in the Pre-Modern World*. Ed. Candido. (2018): pp. 340-366.

³ *Fam.* XIII 7; *LFM* 2:199: “Except when writing, I am always tormented and sluggish, whence (strangely enough) I feel belaboured while at rest and rested while at labour. When my heart, so hard that you may

An additional similarity between Petrarca's and the other exile writers' letters which constitutes a patent indicator of his epistolary legacy is their 'familiarity.' Like their model, Strozzi, Sforza, and Machiavelli employed letters to discuss a variety of familiar matters (pastimes, duties, concerns, debts etc.), voice their feelings (like the discontent they felt because of their distance and isolation), and exercise their maternal and familial authority. The combination of these elements with the varying degree of formality and pleasantness of their individual writing styles enables traits of their personalities to be encapsulated in and shine through their missives. Similarly, another continuity between Petrarca's epistolary collections and those of Sforza and Machiavelli is their resort to literary *topoi* pertaining to the classical epistolary tradition. The literariness combined with the high level of rhetoric found in the latter are a direct expression of the control that they exercised over the epistolary form as a result of the formal letter writing training they received. By the 15th and 16th centuries, the adoption of these *topoi* in letters represented a distinctive humanist convention that writers like Sforza and Machiavelli adhered to, and which in turn openly displayed their belonging to the epistolary tradition initiated by Petrarca.⁴

In light of this transgenerational epistolary solidarity, in the present chapter I go on to illustrate how Petrarca influenced the way generations of Renaissance humanists viewed, studied, and engaged with the past as a whole. The rediscovery of classical antiquity Petrarca is credited with brought about a renewed interest for the textual and material remains of ancient times manifested in the spread of historiographical works and archaeological enterprises in

think it born from the stones of Deucalion, is totally immersed in parchment and wearies my fingers and eyes, it feels no cold or heat; then does it seem covered by the softest blanket, and fearing to be uncovered it clings to my limbs though they refuse to obey." See Rocco Rubini, "From Translation to Allusion: Petrarch's Descent of Mount Ventoux." *MLN*. Vol. 135. (2020), pp. 1021-1034.

⁴ By way of doing this, Quattrocento and Cinquecento humanists transformed the classical practice of letter writing into the legacy of an intellectual élite which came to be identified with this genre.

Quattrocento and Cinquecento Italy. The humanist's novel outlook on antiquity entailed an awareness of the past's cultural remoteness (and, sometimes, superiority over the present) and an admiration for it bordering on nostalgia that modern scholars refer to interchangeably in terms of "nostalgic distance," "antiquarian feeling," or "historical perspective," among others.⁵ In this chapter, I use the term "temporal displacement" to describe this attitude as I believe it better accounts for the Petrarchan origins of a view of antiquity that Renaissance humanists inherited from him as a result of their shared endeavor to rediscover the past through the engagement with its literary and physical manifestations. More to the point, I maintain that temporal displacement can be considered an additional form that exile took in the early modern period that humanists rhetorically subscribed to and that functioned as a marker of Petrarchan legacy. Matter-of-factly, this type of displacement often supplemented preexisting – legal, familial, political etc. – exilic conditions that beset humanists, as it was the case of Petrarca and Biondo Flavio, one of the most inquisitive, sophisticated, and influential early modern scholars of classical antiquities and the main character of this chapter.

Chapter two of this dissertation is devoted to an investigation of two of Biondo's most innovative literary works, *Roma instaurata* and *Italia illustrata*, and the pioneering historiographical method that informed their composition. Specifically, this chapter aims at illuminating how the development of Biondo's novel approach to the study of the past and the writing of history was directly enabled by the different political, professional, and temporal experiences of exile that he endured and how his methodological response constitutes the second

⁵ Peter Burke makes multiple attempts to pinpoint and analyze this phenomenon. For his opinions on the subject, in its different versions, see "The Sense of Historical Perspective in Renaissance Italy," *Journal of World History* 11 (1968), pp. 615-32; "The Renaissance Sense of the Past Revisited," *Culture and History* 13 (1994), pp. 42-56; "The Sense of Anachronism from Petrarch to Poussin," *Time in the Medieval World* (2001), pp. 157-173.

type of literary response to exile that I was able to identify in the works of Renaissance exile writers.

To this day, there is still no full-scale monograph dedicated to the historical works of a seminal figure like Biondo. While a couple of critical editions of *Italia illustrata* have been published since the early 2000s in English, no English edition of *Roma instaurata* and most of his other texts exist. Such dearth of scholarly attention, so far, has undermined our appreciation of both the origin and the ingenuity of Biondo's historiographical practice, thus leaving a gap in our understanding of how new standards of historical writing arose in 15th century Italy.⁶ To close this gap, the investigation that follows starts by retracing the foundational role that Petrarca's 'discovery of history' played in the development of Renaissance humanists' and especially Biondo's interest for, engagement with, and attitude towards antiquity. Surprisingly, the relation between these two figures and their respective works has not been examined in depth by Renaissance historians and scholars.⁷ Thus, one of my chief objectives in what follows, is to put these two writers in dialogue, tracing the exilic fil-rouge that ties their literary practice and drawing a historiographical genealogy that goes from one to the other passing through the late 14th century leading historian Leonardo Bruni (1370 – 1444).

Once I have established this lineage, I move on to analyzing the first of the two historical geographies published by Biondo, *Roma instaurata*. Written after having been a member of Pope Eugenius IV's Curia for over ten years, this work is recognized as the first global reconstruction of the topography and architectural structure of ancient Rome. While the urban, political, and cultural project for which this text was conceived (that is Eugenius IV's "*instauratio Urbis*") and

⁶ Among the scholars whose works aim at furthering this understanding, and to whom this chapter is both indebted to and in dialogue with see Riccardo Fubini, James Hankins, and Gary Ianziti.

⁷ See footnotes 49 and 50 of this same chapter.

the circumstances of its composition are frequently acknowledged and examined in relation to its subject-matter and scope, what is less discussed is the impact that the changes in the humanist's personal life activated by the direct and indirect forms of exile he had to undergo until this point had on the development of the historiographical method that he first employs in *Roma instaurata*.⁸ To rectify this, in this chapter I illustrate how the political and professional experiences of displacement leading up to the writing of this work affected Biondo's life, exposing him to some of the most influential political and intellectual figures of his time and positioning him in the ideal places for the study of antiquity and for his professional development as a historian. Furthermore, I analyze the text of *Roma instaurata*, gathering textual evidence of its Petrarchan influences and of the three pillars that make up Biondo's methodology (comparison of different source material, empirical observation, and pragmatic conjectures), underscoring how they came into being thanks to the opportunities afforded by his past exiles.

Nevertheless, the death of Eugenius IV turned the tide in Biondo's curial career, forcing him to face an additional form of professional exile and a precarious economic condition that led him to travel up and down Italy, scrambling for patronage and work for four years. It was during these uncertain times until he rejoined the Curia that he wrote the majority of *Italia illustrata*. In this chapter, I elucidate how despite the hurdles and limitations imposed by his renewed exile, Biondo capitalized on the mobility that this condition provided him to conduct autoptic archaeological research for the composition of this first-of-its-kind chorographical, historical, and genealogical survey of Renaissance Italy. This led him to refine the method he employed for

⁸ In "A Reconsideration of Renaissance Antiquarianism in Light of Biondo Flavio's *Ars Antiquaria*. With an Unpublished Letter from Paul Oskar Kristeller (1905-1999)." *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome*. Vol. 59-60. (2014-15), p. 130, Mazzocco maintains that Biondo's scholarship "betrays the impact of evolving historical events and changes in the humanist's personal life. This being the case, a study of his antiquarianism must take into consideration his extensive literary production, as well as his scholarly orientations and the sociopolitical forces that molded them."

the composition of *Roma instaurata*, which boasted an even greater variety and amount of textual, cartographic, and material evidence and the direct experience of many of its sites. Close reading the textual evidence of his methodology found in *Italia illustrata* and supplementing it with the analysis of his letters and other biographical sources I illustrate the stratified and meticulous work of revision and rewriting that Biondo put into this text, from its first edition to the day he died. Lastly, I examine the numerous references and praises to the literary works, cartographic image, and antiquarian achievements of Petrarca found in *Italia illustrata*, underscoring Biondo's acknowledgement of and indebtedness to the foundational figure of a humanistic movement of which he openly considers himself a proud representative.

By critically accounting for the possibilities and limitations opened and imposed by Biondo's discrete experiences of exile and the effects that they had on his life, professional, and literary trajectory this chapter reveals how spatial and temporal displacements are among the forces that prompted and molded Biondo's methodological response to exile. Similarly, by retracing the Petrarchan origins of Biondo's approach to the study of the past and the writing of history and highlighting the textual continuities between their works and archaeological practices, chapter two shows how Biondo's historiographical achievements descend in a direct line from Petrarca. What is more, it illuminates the extent of the impact that Petrarca's letters had over other literary genres, including historiography, in the Renaissance, allowing us to come to grips with the foundational role that they played in Italian literature for years to come.

I. Petrarca's and Biondo's Peripatetic Reading of the Roman Ruins

The idea that Petrarca 'discovered' history has a long tradition and it has been espoused throughout the centuries by many Renaissance scholars and literary critics who contributed with

their works to the enduring fascination for this topic.⁹ According to Thomas Greene, to say that Petrarca discovered history means that he was the first to notice the difference between classical antiquity and the medieval world he was living in and to consider the former superior, thus offering his contemporaries and immediate posterity a cultural alternative to the current times.¹⁰ Said discovery was aided by Petrarca's inquisitive spirit and imaginative way of looking at and reading the world around him, which in turn enabled him to perceive beneath the surface of the present decay the latent vestiges of history and actively seek them out. This practice of unearthing history is embodied in his involvement in the discovery, preservation, and transmission of numerous textual monuments of the past and in his effort to revive Latin poetry and eloquence, to which humankind will forever be indebted.

Petrarca's rediscovery of the past is part and parcel of his exilic narrative. In countless works, he portrays himself as suffering from a profound estrangement from his own age and displays a longing for antiquity that makes him repeatedly wish he had been born or could live in a different time. These feelings are crystallized in his famous *Letter to Posterity*, where he declares: "Among the many subjects that interest me, I dwelt especially upon antiquity, for our own age has always repelled me, so that, had it not been for the love of those dear to me, I should have preferred to have been born in any other period than our own."¹¹ Similarly, addressing Livy in one of his epistles to the illustrious ancients Petrarca confesses: "I should wish, if it were permitted from on high, either to have lived in your age or you in ours so that either the age itself

⁹ This idea goes back to Francesco De Sanctis (19th century) and it was developed by 20th and 21st century scholars such as Peter Burke (late 1960s), Thomas Greene (1980s), Ronald Witt (2000s), and more recently Zachary Schiffman (2011), just to name some. See Bibliography.

¹⁰ Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy. Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 90: "Even if anticipations of these attitudes may be found, he was the first to publicize them so effectively as to influence profoundly his immediate posterity."

¹¹ *Sen.* XVIII 1; *LOA* 2:672.

or I as a person would become better through you [...].”¹² Though he does not refer to his alienation and nostalgic distance explicitly in exilic terms, the sustained references to cultural and temporal dislocations scattered throughout his epistolary corpus and oeuvre at large have long since led scholars to endorse the notion of Petrarca’s temporal exile. Greene calls him “a *double exile*, neither Roman nor modern,” attributing the poet’s self-portrayed anachronism to his “discovery of antiquity and simultaneously the remoteness of antiquity.”¹³ Exiled from the past and from his own age, Petrarca finds in history the antidote to his temporal displacements. In the aforementioned letter to Livy, he goes on to say:

I busy myself with these few remains of yours (*ruinae*) whenever I desire to forget these places or times, as well as our present customs, being filled with bitter indignation against the activities of our contemporaries, who find no value in anything but gold and silver and pleasures. [...] Now it is rather the time for me to express my gratitude to you for a number of things, but especially for the fact that you often make me forget present evils by transferring me to happier centuries. As I read, I seem to find myself with the Cornelii, the African Scipios, the Laelii, the Fabii Maximii... and not with these cursed thieves among whom I was born under an evil star.¹⁴

As evidenced in these words, Petrarca’s relentless study of the textual vestiges of antiquity is both a form of escapism from “the prison house of the present” and a conduit to the past he was exiled from.¹⁵ The consumption and production of literary texts by/to the *auctores* has the power of transferring him vicariously “to happier centuries,” into a community of like-minded friends.

The same can be said of his archaeological walks around the Roman ruins, which he witnessed up close during the trips he took in 1340 and 1341, and later dramatized in his

¹² *Fam.* XXIV 8; *LFM* 3:332.

¹³ Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 8: “the discovery of antiquity and simultaneously the remoteness of antiquity made of Petrarch a *double exile*, neither Roman nor modern, so that he became in his own eyes a living anachronism.”

¹⁴ *Fam.* XXIV 8; *LFM* 3:332.

¹⁵ Ronald Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni*. (Leiden, Boston, Cologne: Brill, 2000), p. 277.

Familiars VI, 2. Dedicated to his companion on these peripatetic promenades, the mendicant friar Giovanni Colonna, this epistle recounts how the poet and his friend “used to wander together” the streets of Rome, encountering at each step something that would excite their imagination.¹⁶

Here was the palace of Evander, there the shrine of Carmentis, here the cave of Cacus, there the famous she-wolf and the fig tree of Rumina with the more apt surname of Romulus, there the overpass of Remus, here the circus games and the rape of the Sabines, there the mash of Capri and the place where Romulus vanished, here the conversations of Numa and Egeria, there the battle line of the *trigemini*.¹⁷

Petrarca passionately retraces, one by one, the places they visited on their tours as if he could see them with his mind’s eye, recalling them as much from his memory as from his historical imagination.¹⁸ Monuments, landmarks, pagan and religious spaces, statues, topographical and architectural elements, the list goes on, taking up more than half the length of this letter.¹⁹ What is more, in presenting their procession through the city he connects each site with specific events and heroes of Roman history, seeing in the decadent Roman landscape the signs of his glorious past.

The “remnants of the ruins” (*ruinarum fragmenta*) act as much as a visual reminder of the temporal distance that burdened him as an invitation to engage with the built past.²⁰ Petrarca reads the physical ruins with the same fervor and inquisitorial attitude that he studies Livy. It is not a coincidence that, in the aforementioned letters, he uses the word *ruinae* when referring both to the Roman architectural and material remains (*Fam.* VI, 2) and to the few dozen texts, out of

¹⁶ *Fam.* VI, 2; *LFM* 3:291.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Carlo Tosco, *Petrarca: paesaggi, città, architetture*, 113: “Il ricordo di luoghi visitati e vissuti ritorna spesso nell’opera petrarchesca, come *immagine interiore rivisitata e trasformata in forma letteraria.*”

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 291-293.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 294.

142, of Livy that had “not yet perished through the slot of our age” (*Fam.* XXIV, 8).²¹ This allows us to draw an even closer parallelism between Petrarca’s literary and spatial practices. The act of engaging with the *ruinae* and, later on, creatively rewriting this experience in *Fam.* VI, 2 have the power of transporting him back through time and soothing (even if momentarily) his nostalgia the same way studying the works of and writing letters to the ancients do.²² What is more, by choosing to narrativize his walks in his epistle Petrarca succeeds in turning a spatial practice into a literary artifact that, like the textual and material ruins of antiquity, will survive the test of time and will inspire generations of Renaissance humanists to follow his example.

Petrarca’s letter and his peripatetic and nostalgic scrutiny of the Roman landscape exercised an enormous influence over early modern scholars, who developed a deep fascination for the remains of the classical past. His intuition of the cultural, linguistic, and artistic distance between the present and antiquity led to the rising of “a new sense of the past” among scholars and artists in the 15th and 16th centuries that engendered an awareness of their anachronism and a sense of loss, accompanied by admiration and desire to bridge that gap.²³ Contrary to Petrarca, though the sorrow is unmistakably palpable in their works, as Greene maintains, Renaissance

²¹ Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 108: “the resurrection of buried objects and buildings could not be sharply distinguished from the resurrection of literary texts as they were discovered, copied, edited, disseminated, translated, and imitated by the humanist necromancer-scholar. Petrarch found it natural to use the term *ruinae* for the lost fragmentary literary remains of antiquity.”; *Fam.* XXIV 8; *LFM* 3:332: “But now I am allowed to behold you in your books, not indeed in your entirety but as much as has not yet perished through the slot of our age. We know that you wrote 142 books on Roman affairs. Alas, with what enthusiasm and labor” scarcely thirty of them survive. What a wretched custom it is to deceive ourselves willfully.”

²² Nostalgic tones reverberate throughout the missive, punctuated by the anaphoric use of the past tense (in the original Latin the imperfect tense) in the three, long paragraphs that make up the letter: “We used to walk/*Deambulabamus* [...] We used to wander/*Vagabamur* [...] We used to stop/*Solebamus... subsistere*”; *Fam.* VI, 2; *LFM* 3:291: “Give me back that place, that idle mood, that day, that attention of yours, that particular vein of my talent and I could do what I did then. But all things are changed: the place is not present, the day has passed, the idle mood is gone.”

²³ Here I am paraphrasing an idea whose inception can be found in Burke, “The Sense of Anachronism,” pp. 157-58.

humanists did not “suffer so intimately or so intensely from the knowledge of loss, partly because they devoted so much of their careers to the repossession of this loss.”²⁴ In fact, the feeling of nostalgic distance or, as I prefer to call it, temporal displacement that emerges through their works is often coupled with rhetorical declarations on history and on their longing to ‘return’ that “recycle ancient commonplaces.”²⁵ For instance, the renewed appreciation of the past and, particularly, of the Roman ruins prompted Quattrocento historians to study them, for the first time, in greater detail and to describe them in their literary works so that their memory would not be lost.

Approximately one hundred years after Petrarca’s Roman promenades, around 1444, Biondo Flavio wrote what is considered by many the first topography of the ancient city, *Roma instaurata*. Reading Biondo’s letters and works, we learn that he used to engage in the same walks in and around the city of Rome as Petrarca with Cardinal Prospero Colonna, a descendant of Giovanni and *mecenate* of the arts.²⁶ Unlike Petrarca, who valued the ruins chiefly for their

²⁴ Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 2.

²⁵ Gary Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy: Leonardo Bruni and the Uses of the Past*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012), 3.

²⁶ James Loughlin, “Colonna,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 4. (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1908). 24 Apr. 2023 <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04125c.htm>: “[...] Giovanni was universally esteemed, especially by men of letters. He wrote the ‘Lives of the Roman Pontiffs from St. Peter to Boniface VIII’. At his death, 1348, his intimate friend, Petrarch, wrote the beautiful sonnet, ‘Rotta è l’alta Colonna’. At the beginning of the Great Schism, Urban created two Colonna cardinals, Agapito and Stefano, but they both died shortly after. Then followed Odo Colonna, later Pope Martin V, who, in 1430 bestowed the purple upon his youthful nephew Prospero. The latter, becoming involved in the rebellion of his family against Eugene IV, was deprived of his benefices and sentenced to perpetual exile, but was reinstated by Nicholas V, and died in 1463, lauded by the Humanists as a Mæcenas of arts and letters. In the heated conclave of 1458, it was Prospero Colonna who decided the election of Piccolomini in the famous words, ‘I also vote for the Cardinal of Siena, and make him pope’”. *It. Ill.*, Lazio §47, pp.189-193: “Prospero Colonna, the Roman cardinal and patrician who inherited from his ancestors the town of Nemi and the castle of Genzano, once heard the fishermen of Nemi saying that there were two ships sunk in the lake. [...] Neither could they be hauled out entirely by the main strength of all the inhabitants together. Devoted as he is to the liberal arts, especially history, and being the painstaking antiquarian that he is, the cardinal accordingly applied himself to discovering why those great ships should be found in a small lake completely surrounded by high mountains. My friend Leon Battista Alberti, the great mathematician of our age and author of a graceful work on the art of building, was

emotive and evocative appeal, Biondo treated them as archaeological sources and as a repository of historical evidence from which to access and ‘reconstruct’ the past. Their study becomes part and parcel of the historiographical method which he is properly famous for, a method that, I argue, is enabled by the multiple lived and oblique experiences of exile that he endured. In order to fathom how exile prompted and molded his approach to history writing and how he translated his inherited temporal displacement into ingenious historiographical works it is paramount to reconstruct the familial, spatial, and socio-political exilic matrix in which Biondo’s methodology was developed and his works were conceived.

A native of Forlì, he was born in 1392 into the Biondi family, a family of Florentine magnates who relocated to Romagna after being banned from Florence in the 14th century.²⁷ The son of Antonio Biondi (de Blondis), the humanist was given the first name Biondo and later created his pen name by attaching to the former the Latin word for “blond,” resulting in Blondus Flavius.²⁸ His father was an itinerant chancery notary, a profession Biondo inherited alongside his familial exile. Unlike Petrarca and Alberti (who will be the subject of chapter three of this dissertation), this hereditary form of exile did not affect him in ways that can be tangibly gauged

summoned to help with this task.” Biondo’s letter to Leonello d’Este of November 13, 1444 can be found in Bartolomeo Nogara, *Scritti inedita e rari di Biondo Flavio*. (Rome: Tipografia poliglotta Vaticana, 1927), to this day, one of the most valuable sources on Biondo’s life and scholarship.

²⁷ Domenico Defilippis, “Biondo Flavio,” in *Centuriae Latinae*. (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2006), pp. 87-105: “Sa famille, sans doute d’origine florentine, bannie de Florence et transplantée en Romagne.” Riccardo Fubini, “Biondo Flavio,” in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*. (Roma: Società Grafica Romana, 1968), pp. 536-559: “L’ipotesi della discendenza dalla stirpe magnatizia fiorentina dei Biondi, banditi e trapiantati verso la metà del sec. XIV in Romagna non appare inattendibile.”

²⁸ Besides Defilippis and Fubini, a list of biographical sources on Biondo includes: Eric W. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Catherina J. Castner, *Italia Illustrata: Text, Translation, and Commentary*. 2 vols. (Binghamton, N.Y.: Global Academic Pub., 2005-2010); Angelo Mazzocco and Marc Laureys, *A New Sense of the Past*. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016).

from his works. As it will be evidenced in this chapter, the same cannot be said for the multiple political and professional forms of exiles he endured throughout his life.

Biondo studied grammar, rhetoric, and poetry under Giovanni Balestrieri of Cremona. After becoming a notary, he found employment as a diplomat for the Ordelaffi family, the lords of Forlì, and began to participate in diplomatic missions around different cities in northern Italy (Rimini, Mantova, Milan). During one of these travels, in 1420, he met Guarino da Verona, the scholar of Greek language and literature and founder of the humanist pedagogy who introduced him to the study of Cicero and whose friendship will shape Biondo's intellectual formation and interests. It is from a series of letters written by Guarino to Biondo in 1423 that we learn about Biondo's banishment from Forlì.²⁹ Biondo's two-year *banno* ought to be blamed on the civic upheavals that took place on May 14 against the Ordelaffi government he was working for.³⁰ While evidence of his implication in the upheavals and of the causes of his banishment cannot be found in Guarino's letters, from them it is possible to gather valuable information on how this first direct experience of exile affected Biondo's life, professional, and literary trajectory.

After being banished from Forlì Biondo fled to Ferrara and Imola with his wife, Paola Michelini, whom he had married not long before and who will bear him ten children.³¹ Guarino had received news of his friend's banishment through his letters (unfortunately not extant)

²⁹ Remigio Sabbadini, *Epistolario di Guarino Veronese*. 3 vols. (Venice: A spese della società, 1915-1919), pp. 372-75.

³⁰ For details on Biondo's political exile see Nogara, *Scritti inediti*, pp. XLII-XLV and Fubini, *DBI*, pp. 539-540.

³¹ See Sabbadini, *Epistolario di Guarino*, Ep. I, p. 374: "Most gracious Flavius, who so generously corresponds with me, sending letters now from Ferrara, now from Imola, to the extent that one can imagine you would have written more if you had the opportunity, even taking time away from your meal to write." In the original Latin: "Humanissime Flavi, qui tam liberaliter mecum agis in mittendis litteris nunc ex Ferraria nunc ex Imola, adeo ut aim coniecturam facere liceat tu plura scripturum fuisse, modo nactus esses occasionem, cum etiam eo tempore, qui vix tempus ad comedendum dabatur, spatium subterfureris ad scribendum."

which, according to the pedagogue, betrayed the “troubles” (*calamitates*) and “distress” (*agitationes* and *aegritudinem*) he was experiencing, but also the braveness with whom he bore his misfortunes (*te casus tuos fortiter et ut virum decet ferre sentio*).³² Exile forced Biondo to seek his livelihood by providing his services to various lords in different cities on the Venetian mainland. During this time, he worked as secretary to the Venetian statesman and scholar Francesco Barbaro in Treviso (1423), Venice (1424), and Vicenza (1425), and at the service of the Venetian nobleman and military commander Pietro Loredan in Brescia (1425-27). These experiences allowed him to grow a network of allegiances with other learned men and powerful patrons of the humanities which aided his entrance into a curial career.³³ In October 1425 the Duke of Milan, Filippo Maria Visconti, had officially revoked his ban and Biondo was free to return to Forlì.³⁴ However, he decided to go back to his native city only two years later, once he secured a position working for the ecclesiastical governor Domenico Capranica, a role that will prove to be a stepping-stone to him becoming notary of the apostolic chamber first and later secretary of the Venetian Pope Eugenius IV (1432-34).

Working in the papal Curia provided Biondo with relative professional and financial stability. Nevertheless, this did not mean that his history of displacements was over. The same year he became papal secretary, coming back from a diplomatic embassy to the Veneto he was

³² Biondo’s letter is not extant. See Sabbadini, *Epistolario di Guarino*, Ep. I, pp. 372-373: “Postea vero cum fama primum, tuis deinde litteris tuas calamitates, vel agitationes verius audirem, nec enim de animo tam optime instituto et in utrasque rerum humanarum sorte versato ita dici fas est, magis tuum increpare silentium coepi, qui atua, quasi onere partito, mecum non communicares, cum id amicitiae proprium munus sit res utriusque, communes facere, vel Graecorum proverbio <τα των φιλων χοινα>. Scio praeterea quantum vel consolatore benivolo vel doloris societate tuam aegritudinem lenire posses: quanquam te casus tuos fortiter et ut virum decet ferre sentio.”

³³ Castner, *Italia illuminata*, xvii.

³⁴ As testified in Giovanni di Maestro Pedrino’s *Cronaca del suo tempo*. Ed. Gino Borghezio and Marco Vattasso. 2 vols. (1929-1924), p.139: “che ser Biondo potesse tomare a Forlì e stare andare chomo a lui piacesse.”

forced to follow his employer into exile to Florence. After a revolution fomented by the Pope's enemies had broken out in June 1434 in Rome and exposed Eugenius to physical danger, the pontiff escaped and took refuge in Florence with his train of attendants. Eugenius' exile from Rome lasted a total of nine years, until 1443. During this time the Papal curia moved from city to city (from Florence to Bologna, Ferrara, and then back to Florence) and so did Biondo, who soon became one of Eugenius' most trusted officials. This oblique experience of exile was an especially important force in Biondo's career as a historian. During the papal court's residence in Florence, he was able to cultivate his mastery of the *studia humanitatis* and to establish important friendships with members of the Florentine humanistic circles, among which Leonardo Bruni, Poggio Bracciolini (1380 – 1459), and Leon Battista Alberti (1404 – 1472). The latter two were his colleagues in the papal Curia while Bruni had been Florence's Chancellor since 1427. By then, Bruni had made a name for himself in the field of historiography translating Plutarch's *Life of Mark Anthony* (1404-1405) and writing the *Panegyric to the city of Florence* (c. 1403-04), his own biography of Cicero (*Vita Ciceronis*, 1413), and the *Commentarii de primo bello punico* (1418-1422). But the book that made him the official historiographer of the Florentine state, and which will become "his greatest monument," is the *History of the Florentine People* (1415-1442).³⁵ Bruni's *History* set a whole new standard for the form and the function of history writing in the Renaissance. Among the tenets of Bruni's historiography there are the idea that history is a form of *narratio* whose main function is to be didactic (*magistra vitae*), the rigorously chronological and thematic order in which it needs to be arranged, the dismissal of civic legends and myths, and the critical use of the source materials that go into its composition.

³⁵ In his introduction to Bruni's *History of the Florentine People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), James Hankins says one copy of the first 9 books was already around in the 1430s.

Under Bruni's mentorship Biondo honed his historiographical skills and learned the principles that were to guide him in the writing of all his works belonging to the field of history, broadly defined. Only one year after his arrival in Florence, Biondo composed his first literary text, *De verbis romanae locutionis* (1435). Written in the form of a letter to Bruni, this treatise records a debate that took place among his Florentine and curial friends on the topic of the language spoken in ancient Rome.³⁶ Shortly after the completion of this work, Biondo set about writing an account of contemporary events to which he had been a witness or participant that soon turned into one of the most ambitious and experimental works in Renaissance historiography, the *Historiarum ab inclinatione Romani imperii decades III* (hereafter *Decades*). A survey of Italian history from the fall of Rome (A.D. 412) down to the present (1441), this forty-two books project was completed by Biondo in different stages over the course of twenty years while simultaneously working on his other historiographical works. By the late 1430s, Biondo was one of Bruni's most promising heirs and, according to Gary Ianziti, his "main rival in the field of history writing," threatening to overshadow his mentor with his pioneering historiographical method and with the temporal and spatial capaciousness of his historiography.³⁷ While his method undoubtedly owed a great deal to Bruni, the former applied, elaborated on, and at times even challenged the received wisdom of the older historian. My plan for the remainder of this chapter involves the close reading of two of Biondo's most important historiographical

³⁶ The protagonists of this work are Antonio Loschi, Leonardo Bruni, Cencio Rustici Romano, Poggio Bracciolini and Andrea Fiacchi.

³⁷ Gary Ianziti repeatedly points to a rivalry between the two in *Writing History in Renaissance Italy*, pp. 20-22: "It is hard to avoid the impression of a cleavage between these two major figures in Renaissance history writing."; Nogara, *Scritti inediti*, CVII: "Nessuno prima di lui aveva abbracciato con uno sguardo solo la storia generale dell'Italia e dell'Europa attraverso il medioevo."; Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography*, pp. 34-40: "Biondo's political independence enabled him to conceive of history in terms of a temporal and spatial scope unlike any of his successors."

texts, *Roma instaurata* and *Italia illustrata*. Written in two different stages of the author's life and career, while their analysis betrays the discrete circumstances and stimuli that inspired and motivated their composition, it also confirms their common geographic traits and the originality that makes them stand out from existing historiographical models. Furthermore, in the forthcoming investigation I will showcase Biondo's threefold method and provide evidence of how its development and refinement are directly informed by the several direct and indirect experiences of exile that he was confronted with over the course of his life.

II. Restoring Rome's Evolving Topography: A Guided Walking Tour

There is no better place to start looking for evidence of the method and innovative type of scholarship that Biondo ushered than his first completed historiographical work, *De Roma instaurata libri tres* (hereafter *Roma instaurata*). Written in the arc of two years after the Papal Curia's return to Rome, Biondo's treatise provides a systematic topographical reconstruction of the urban and architectural apparatus of classical Rome. Published in 1446, as its title suggests this work is a product of the political, cultural, and urban renewal project known as "*instauratio Urbis*" started by Pope Eugenius IV after his exile and carried on by his successor, Pope Nicholas V (1447-1455). While not officially commissioned by the former, as we learn from reading the work's preface, dedicated to Eugenius IV, Biondo conceived of and intended for *Roma instaurata* to serve political and ideological purposes that aligned with the Papal agenda. "Our common enterprise" (*nostrum propositum*), as Biondo refers to his and the Pope's initiative, was to restore and rehabilitate both the knowledge and the physical appearance of the

buildings and the remains of ancient Rome.³⁸ Biondo draws an unequivocal parallel between his and the pontiff's efforts when he says:

Therefore, since I owe everything I have to Your Holiness, why wouldn't I also make an effort myself, so that through the literary monuments of my ingenuity, you may continue the restoration of Rome, just as builders and carpenters carry on with their work?³⁹

Literary and architectural labor are linked by the historian in their intellectual and material rehabilitative aims. Restoring Rome's antique topography the way Biondo does in *Roma instaurata* was indeed paramount for the plan of cultural and urban revival of Quattrocento Rome promoted by Eugenius IV. While both *ars* were employed for the same monumentalizing purpose, as Biondo provocatively alludes in the preface it was up to posterity to judge which one of the two stood the test of time and outlasted the other.

Therefore, I shall undertake the task entrusted to me for your glory, confident that posterity will judge whether the restored and greatly renovated structures of the Basilica of the Prince of the Apostles and the Lateran Palace, or the grand doors added in bronze to the renowned Basilica of Saint Peter, or the restoration of the walls of the Vatican suburbs and the paved city streets, whether, I say, such works accomplished with great effort can be imitated by mere craftsmanship, using lime, brick, materials, stone, or bronze, or if the restoration made through the power of letters will endure more solidly and lastingly.⁴⁰

³⁸ All original quotations are taken from Biondo Flavio, "Roma instaurata," in *Visitiamo Roma nel Quattrocento: la città degli umanisti*. Ed. C. D'Onofrio. (Rome: Romano società editrice, 1989), pp. 99-264. All English translations are mine.

³⁹ Ibid., 99: "Quando itaque ego omnia quae mihi adsunt tuae Sanctitati debo, cur et non etiam ipse contendam, ut sic tu Romam per ingenioli mei literarum monumenta, sicuti cementariorum fabrorumque lignariorum opera pergas instaurare."

⁴⁰ Ibid., 100: "Aggrediar itaque assumptum mihi tuam in gloriam munus, futurum confisus ut posterii aliquando dijudicent, utrum ne resarcita et magna ex parte innovata basilicae principis apostolorum et lateranensis palatij tecta, vel additas ex aere aedi celeberrimae Sancti Petri maiores valvas, au palatij moeniumque vaticani suburbiorum restitutionem et stratas urbis vias: utrum ne, inquam, tanto facta impendio opera vel rudi stilo potuerim imitari, et calce, latericio, materia, lapide aut aere an literis facta solidior diuturniorve maneat instauratio."

On this note, the author ends the prologue, rhetorically hurrying up to begin his “immense endeavor” (*immenso operi*).⁴¹

Roma instaurata is indeed a boundless scholarly undertaking. This three-volume treatise sophisticatedly brings together elements of philology, etymology, archaeology, topography, architecture, and cartography. Rooted in the popular Medieval genre of the “descriptions of cities,” it borrows its form, while decidedly revising and surpassing it, from the *Mirabilia urbis Romae*, a twelfth century collection of legends and myths about the sites and ancient monuments of Rome that served as a guidebook for religious pilgrims.⁴² Its three books are divided into an uneven number of chapters of varying length, each dedicated to a specific area, place, architectural feature, or monument of the city. Book I opens with a survey of the city’s geographic location, name, and old gates. Biondo chooses as a starting point for his description the Vatican, with its pagan and Christian monuments, and from there he makes a course over the seven hills of Rome.⁴³ In Book II he goes on describing the baths, religious temples, monuments dealing with public administration, and theatres. In Book III he covers amphitheatres, circuses, and other important sites around Rome easily identifiable because of their richness in ruins.

⁴¹ Ibid.: “Sed iam immenso operi manum apponamus.”

⁴² Jessica Maier, *Rome Measured and Imagined: Early Modern Maps of The Eternal City*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), p. 24; Catherine Castner, *Italia Illustrata: Text, Translation, and Commentary*. (Binghamton, N.Y.: Global Academic Pub., 2005-2010), p. 24: “an innovative departure from the tradition of medieval description of cities.”

⁴³ On this regard, Biondo’s scholars make a point to stress how the historian makes a statement with the textual order he imposes to Rome’s streets. See Della Schiava, *Roma instaurata*, LVIII: “in *Roma instaurata* [...] invertendo le coordinate storico-topografiche dello sviluppo di Roma, Biondo ne colloca l’epicentro nella Roma cristiana dei papi, con una manovra di posizionamento rispetto alla sua fonte che ideologica e del tutto in linea con gli obiettivi propagandistici dell’opera.” Ryan G. Warwick, *Viget Certe Viget Adhuc: The Invention of the Eternal City in Flavio Biondo’s Roma instaurata*. (2016). Senior Project Spring 2016. 168. https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2016/168 p. 27: “For Flavio Biondo, *Roma instaurata* is more than a guidebook. It is an argument, one that uses Rome’s physical space to tell a politically coded story.”

Contrary to the *Mirabilia* model, *Roma instaurata* is a scholarly treatise meant for an erudite and highly specialized audience of intellectuals. Criticized by some for lacking literary merit, undoubtedly Biondo privileged the accuracy and extensiveness of the information he provided over the style of his prose.⁴⁴ A key preoccupation and objective of his that we become aware of from his son Gaspare, who curated the *editio princeps* of his father's works, was the accessibility of his writings, which he intended to be used and consulted for research purposes.⁴⁵ Matter-of-factly, *Roma instaurata* attracted an almost immediate scholarly interest and became a reference text for humanists working on Roman topography for over one hundred years.⁴⁶ Among the humanists who engaged with this genre and whose works are informed by *Roma instaurata* there are Poggio Bracciolini's *Ruinarum urbis Romae descriptio*, included in his 1448 *De varietate fortunae*, Giovanni Tortelli's *Rhoma*, an entry in his alphabetical lexicon *De orthographia* that he began working on between 1441-1445, Leon Battista Alberti's plan of the city of Rome *Descriptio urbis Romae* (1450 c.), and Maffeo Vegio's *De rebus antiquis memorabilibus basilicae S. Petri Romae* (1455-57 c.), the last description of the St. Peter's basilica before Pope Nicholas V commissioned its radical remodeling.

A trademark of Biondo's historiographical method is the analysis of different source materials. Biondo himself relied on a massive number of literary and textual sources for the composition of *Roma instaurata*.⁴⁷ The dozens of citations – some of which *verbatim* – included in this work help us get a sense of the wealth of texts he had access to through the intercession of

⁴⁴ Among the critiques addressed to Biondo's style see White, *Italia illustrata*, xix: "Biondo's Latin is not gorgeous. [...] The encyclopedic format does not encourage elegance, not the author's practice of interweaving bits of ancient authors with his own exposition. [...] Technical passages can create difficulties for him (and us)."

⁴⁵ Della Schiava, *Roma instaurata*, LX.

⁴⁶ Marc Laureys, "Johannes Hinderbach's Notes on Biondo Flavio's *Roma instaurata*," in *A New Sense of the Past*, (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016), pp. 133-34.

⁴⁷ For a detailed analysis of the sources of this work see Della Schiava, *Roma instaurata*, XLVII- LVIII.

his patrons and humanist friends. *Roma instaurata* is filled with references to and direct quotations taken from Pliny and Livy (the two most cited Latin authors) as well as from manifold ancient texts written by grammarians (Festus Pompeius, Aulus Gellius etc.), poets (Iuvenalis etc.), civic engineers (Frontinus), and soldiers (Ammianus Marcellinus). Among the Greek writers he consulted in translation there are Herodotus and Apollodoro.⁴⁸ Biondo also turned to papal biographies, religious texts, Medieval regional catalogs and documents. Another notable source of inspiration of *Roma instaurata*, which to this day only few scholars have brought to the fore and adequately analyzed, are Petrarca's letters.⁴⁹ With the exception of Massimo Miglio who, in 1998, wrote an essay on the strong resonance between *Roma instaurata* III, 92-100 and Petrarca's *Fam.* IX, 13 (addressed to Philippe de Vitry, chaplain of Cardinal of Boulogne, whose future pilgrimage to Rome and visit around Italy Petrarca evokes in this letter), most scholarship on this text does not discuss Petrarca among its *auctores*.⁵⁰ Unlike we will see in *Italia illustrata*, Biondo does not mention Petrarca nor directly quote his works in *Roma instaurata*. Despite the lack of explicit references, the inspiration that he drew from Petrarca's *Familiares*, and in particular from *Fam.* VI, 2 and *Fam.* IX, 13, is evidenced not only in the sites that he chooses to describe but especially in his peripatetic account of them.

⁴⁸ Biondo could not read Greek, so he consulted these sources in their Latin translation. See Della Schiava, LIV-LV.

⁴⁹ Massimo Miglio, "Petrarca. Una fonte della Roma instaurata di Biondo Flavio." *Roma, magistra mundi. Itineraria culturae medievalis. Mélanges offerts au père L.E. Boyle à l'occasion de son 75^e anniversaire.* II, Louvain-la-Neuve (1998), pp. 615-625.

⁵⁰ Angelo Mazzocco, "Petrarca, Poggio, and Biondo: Humanism's Foremost Interpreters of Roman Ruins," in *Francis Petrarch, Six Centuries Later: A Symposium*. (Durham: The Seeman Printery, 1975), pp. 353-363; Maria Grazia Blasio, "Memoria filologica e memoria politica in Biondo Flavio," in *La memoria e la città. Scritture storiche tra Medioevo ed Età Moderna*. (Bologna: Il nove, 1995), p. 313: "Per la vicenda di Cola di Rienzo, la più emblematica per connotati politici e culturali, Biondo attinge ad una fonte spesso prediletta, all'*auctoritas* delle epistole petrarchesche."; *Fam.* IX 13; *LFM* 2:35.

Biondo takes the readers of *Roma instaurata* on a guided walking tour reminiscent of Petrarca's and Colonna's archaeological wanderings around the old city. His site-based examination and description of Rome's topography and architectural monuments is punctuated by the frequent use of verbs of movement and visual cues: "And as we move along that road with the carriage (*eam viam ituro cum rheda ad portam*), we see that it is the most efficient route to the Appian Gate" (I, 18), "But now let us cross (*transeamus*) the River Tiber" (I, 22), "This is the route that leads to the Pertusa Gate, where we just saw (*nuper vidimus*) some gardens being started after the mud was cleared away" (I, 44), "We have arrived (*Ventum est*) at the venerable Lateran Church, the Cathedral of the Apostles" (I, 84).⁵¹ Expressions like these accentuate the feeling of physically walking down the streets of Rome that one experiences reading *Roma instaurata*. Also, they help convey the notion that writing is a spatial practice that Biondo did as much with his body as with his intellect. Similarly, the use of the first-person plural (in the original Latin as well as in the English translation that I provided) ascertains the readers' role as Biondo's companions on this journey, engaging them in the discovery and recovery of Rome's past. Contrary to Petrarca's narrativized walks, Biondo pays special attention to the spatial relation among places. Contravening one of Bruni's historiographical tenets, he does not arrange the historical material chronologically, but spatially. While he "imposes a textual order on Rome's streets," the sequence of the sites described reflects the proximity of their location in the city.⁵² This allows readers to orient themselves as they navigate the interwoven urban fabric that he is textually restoring.

⁵¹ Biondo, "Roma instaurata," 111: "et eam viam ituro cum rheda ad portam Appiam esse expeditissima videmus"; Ibid., 124: "qua ad portam Pertusam itur, et ubi nuper hortos exicato limo vidimus inchoatos"; Ibid.: "sed iam Tyberim transeamus"; Ibid., 152: "Ventum est ad venerabilem ecclesiam Lateranensem capitum apostolorum."

⁵² Warwick, *The Invention of the Eternal City*, 42.

In addition to textual sources, to achieve his reconstructive aim Biondo relies on the whole gamut of material evidence that Rome had to offer. This includes physical ruins, inscriptions, marble carved figures, statues, gardens, archaeological works and many more. A clear example of his use of inscriptions to restore the past is evidenced in this passage:

two aqueducts of the most magnificent and extravagant construction are still extant. One, bearing the monumental inscriptions of Caracalla, stretches towards the Capitoline Hill, while the other, commissioned by Claudius, reaches the Aventine Hill. The marble tablet with the inscription of that emperor, which can be seen near the Lateran Hospital, attests to their existence (*fuisse ostendunt*). (I, 79)⁵³

The whole reconstruction of the topographical and architectural apparatus of classical Rome is achieved by Biondo through the use of language. The excerpts below illustrate Biondo's reconstructive technique.⁵⁴

We must begin with the Porta Flaminia, which is located on the left bank of the Tiber. Once called the Flaminian Gate, more recently it is known as Porta del Popolo. It is indeed the same gate that the ancients referred to as the "Flumentana," as defined by Festus Pompeius. The very position itself indicates it, as there is no other gate that is positioned in such close proximity to the Tiber. (I, 7)

[...]

Regarding the Sublician Bridge, Pliny mentions that it was made entirely of wood. As we showed earlier from Livy (*ex Livio ostendimus*), this bridge, originally built by King Ancus Marcius, was reconstructed in marble by Emperor Antoninus Pius. We believe that its remnants can be found from here to the base of the Aventine Hill, continuing onward to the shipyards that exist in our present time. (I, 29)

[...]

⁵³ Biondo, "Roma instaurata," 151: "binae aquaeductus formae superbissimi sumptuosissimique operis etiam nunc extant, quarum unam cubitales literae Caracalae Antonini, quam in Capitolium perduxit, alteram a Claudio in Aventinum perductam, tituli eius imperatoris marmorea incisi tabula, quae iuxta Lateranense xenodochium cernitur, fuisse ostendarunt."

⁵⁴ This sample constitutes an example of what scholars like McCahill refer to as Biondo's "textual archaeology." See "Rewriting Vergil, Rereading Rome: Maffeo Vegio, Poggio Bracciolini, Flavio Biondo, and Early Quattrocento Antiquarianism," in *Memoirs of The American Academy in Rome*. (2009), p.187.

After we have described the gates of the city that still exist in our time to the best of our ability, we indicate a place that Rome had which was the most famous of all. That place is the Triumphal Gate, along which all triumphs were held. And just as any solid work of mankind should shine with eternal brilliance, we should now bring it out of the darkness in which it has completely disappeared and provide a more certain account of what it was and where it was. First, we will describe it, and then we will present the evidence that supports our claim. (I, 41)⁵⁵

As we can see from the sample, for each ruin, monument, or landmark Biondo chronicles the origin of their old and current names, their location, function, and the different restorations and historical evolutions that they underwent over the course of the centuries. He presents the information in an orderly and didactic manner, providing first their description and then different pieces of evidence to support his claims. This technique aims at combatting contemporaries' ignorance of the past, a theme that recurs frequently in his historiography and that I will return to in my analysis of *Italia illustrata*, rectifying the incorrect information that was circulating as well as dispelling legends.

As seen above, a verb that Biondo employs often in his textual reconstructions is the Latin *ostendere*. It translates to the English 'to show,' 'to reveal,' 'to make clear' (in Italian it is rendered by the verbs *mostrare* or *dimostrare*) and it is used by Biondo in close proximity to his sources, both textual, as in the case of "As we *showed* earlier from Livy" (I, 29), and material, for instance "The marble tablet with the inscription of that emperor [...] attests to their

⁵⁵ Biondo, "Roma instaurata," 105: "Incipiendum est autem a Flaminiae viae porta quae sinistrae Tyberis ripae apposita aliquando Flaminea, et novissime porta populi est dicta. Eam vero esse quam prisca Flumentanam dixerunt, et Festus Pompeius diffinit: ipsa indicat positio, quod nulla in ter omnes urbis portas ita Tyberis est apposite."; Ibid., 115: "Eum vero pontem prius ab Anco Marcio sicut ex Livio *ostendimus* factum, Antoninus Pius imperator marmoreum fecit cuius vestigia esse tenemus quae hinc ad primas Aventini radices"; Ibid., 121: "Libet autem postquam portas urbis quae aetate nostra extant pro posse descriperimus, locum indicare unius quam omnium celeberrimam Roma habuit: ea est Triumphalis per quam et nullam aliam triumphum agebatur. Et ut rem, quasi hominum opera quicquid solidi haberent oportuerit aeterna claritate fulgere, tenebris in quibus omnino perierat, certiore abstrahamus modo, quid et ubi fuerit primo dicemus, deinde testimonia quibus assertio nostra constet asseremus."

existence” (I, 79), whose literal translation would be “it *shows* that they have existed.” The occurrence of this verb throughout *Roma instaurata* draws attention to the method employed by Biondo to ‘show’ his findings. Examining the language and the wording of *Roma instaurata* we can identify three pillars of Biondo’s methodology, that is to say three ways in which the historian ‘makes clear’ the information that he is presenting. The first one is by collating his different sources and checking their accuracy against one another. An example of this can be found when, dating the construction of the Milvian Bridge, Biondo says: “While Livy provides us with sufficient evidence on this, we find additional confirmation in Ammianus Marcellinus’ Book XXVI of his *Res Gestae*, where he states that the bridge was built by Aemilius Scaurus” (I, 11).⁵⁶ This passage illustrates how, despite Livy was among the *auctores* Biondo referred to and relied on the most for the composition of *Roma instaurata*, this did not prevent him from scrupulously seeking and offering his readers another piece of evidence to validate his conclusion. The second is by drawing hypotheses based on pragmatic deductions or a type of evidence. For instance, trying to pinpoint which of the old Roman gates led to the Vatican fields, Biondo drew the following conclusion:

Indeed, we are certain that only the Fontinalis Gate could lead to the Vatican Fields as there is no other gate that could provide access to that area. This is especially true considering that at that time, Rome did not have any other bridge across the Tiber River besides the Sublician Bridge. (I, 27)⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Biondo, “*Roma instaurata*,” 108: “Quod et si Livius satis indicat nos alia ratione certum habemus quod Ammianus Marcellinus in rerum gestarum lib. XXVI illum dicit ab Aemylio Scauro fuisse aedificatum.”

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 114: “Quod vero haec sola possit esse Fontinalis inde certum habemus, quia nulla est porta alia quae in campos Vaticani ier posset, praesertim cum nullum tunc temporis alium ad Tyberim pontem quod Sublicium Roma haberet.”

Similarly, when theorizing the position of the old Temple of Isis he postulates that “based on Sextus Rufus’ description of the city of Rome, we gather that the temple was located between the Temple of Minerva, which still retains its name, and the Chalcidian Way.” (I, 41)⁵⁸

The third and final way in which he corroborates his information is through empirical observation and direct experience. We know from reading book three of *Roma instaurata* that Biondo used to “dwell in the same city of Rome along the via Flaminia, close to Montecitorio” (III, 37).⁵⁹ Thus, applying his same method we infer he would walk daily by the Roman ruins on his way to the Vatican as well as during the various papal processions around the city.⁶⁰ Likewise, the archaeological strolls he took with Prospero Colonna afforded him additional opportunities to survey the landscape and closely examine the ruins. By way of example, inspecting the Palatine Hill he noticed that:

[it] has much fewer intact structures compared to the Capitoline or the Aventine Hill. Besides the Church of St. Nicholas, built by Pope Sixtus, which is also in a poor state of preservation, this renowned hill does not have any prominent buildings. Nevertheless, the ruins that can be observed among the others in the city bear witness to the grandeur and magnitude of those that once existed there. (I, 76)⁶¹

This passage exemplifies the contemporary relevance that Biondo ascribed to the ruins.⁶² While he lamented the paucity of the surviving remnants, he stressed how the extant ones testified to the size and grandness of the old Roman buildings that stood in their place, implicitly inviting

⁵⁸ Ibid., 122: “Isidis vero templum in Sexti Ruffi descriptione urbis Romae conijeimus fuisse Minervam inter cuius adhuc durat vocabulum, tunc cognomine Chalcidicam et viam Latam.”

⁵⁹ Biondo, “*Roma instaurata*,” 239: “forte nunc ab eadem in urbe Roma sub Citatorum monte Flaminiam incolimus via.”

⁶⁰ Nogara, *Scritti inediti*, XCVII.

⁶¹ Biondo, “*Roma instaurata*,” 143: “Multo autem pauciora habet integra Pallatinus mons, quam Capitolinus aut Aventinus. Nam praeter S. Nicolai ecclesiam a Calixto papa aedificatam, quae etiam male integra cernitur, nullum is celeberrimus mons habet aedificium. Qualis autem et quanta olim fuerit ea aedificiorum moles indicant ruinae inter caeteras urbis conspiciendae.”

⁶² McCahill, “*Rewriting Vergil, Rereading Rome*,” 191.

contemporaries to imagine how they looked like, what they were used for, and inspiring them to imitate and attain that same greatness in the present. Echoing sentiments similar to those found in Petrarca's letter (*Fam.* VI, 2), one might say that the sight of the city's currently dilapidated state was as much a source of sorrow for Biondo as a visual reminder of the need to reconstruct it.⁶³

Throughout *Roma instaurata* Biondo praises repeatedly the progress made by Pope Eugenius IV and his predecessors in the preservation and revival of Rome.⁶⁴ Textually reconstructing Rome's evolving topography represents Biondo's testament to the mission of reviving the city's glorious past so as to actualize it in the present. Such an original spatial reconstruction was achieved through the painstaking application of Biondo's historiographical method, which his exilic experiences were instrumental in molding. The biographical information examined so far reveals how while the political and professional forms of exile that he experienced up to this point in his life uprooted him, they also enlarged the network of spaces he was able to practice (Venice, Florence, Rome) and the type of allegiances he could forge. This accelerated his career and positioned him in the most prolific places for the study of antiquity, affording him opportunities to conduct research in some of Italy's richest libraries as well as firsthand investigations of actual sites and ruins.⁶⁵ *Roma instaurata* stems from the affordances that this conducive stage of Biondo's life and career enabled and represents his first completed attempt to investigate and reveal to us the whole of antiquity.⁶⁶

⁶³ Instances of Biondo's affliction for the state of the ruins are scattered throughout the *Roma instaurata*. For instance, "Roma instaurata," 113: "The hill slopes towards the bridges, where we sadly witnessed the complete demolition of the ancient marble arches, reduced to mere rubble from their foundations." (I, 20).

⁶⁴ I, 56-58.

⁶⁵ Among the libraries we count the papal library and the library of Prospero Colonna, where we know he wrote most of the *Decades*. Later in his life he possibly had access to Alfonso I of Aragon's library in Naples and to the Biblioteca Malatestiana in Cesena, which was completed in 1452 by Malatesta Novello.

⁶⁶ A similar praise of Biondo's antiquarian work can be found in Pope Pius II, Enea Silvio Piccolomini's *Cosmographia*.

III. Mapping Italy's Cultural and Historical Geography

Another seminal text of Biondo in which we find evidence of his perfected methodology and the innovativeness of his scholarship is *Italia illustrata*. Commissioned to him in 1447 by Alfonso I of Aragon, King of Naples, this work was conceived and developed at a time when Biondo's life and career suffered a sudden turn. While during his many years working in the Papal Curia Biondo had expanded his network of alliances to include wealthy patrons, noblemen, and Kings, he had also made himself some enemies both inside and outside the Curia. His close relationship with Pope Eugenius IV was especially frowned upon by political opponents like the Lord of Forlì Antonio Ordelaffi who, after Biondo was appointed Pope's secretary and followed him into exile to Florence, ordered the seizure of all of the humanist's properties and denied his wife and children the license to leave the city, forcing them to flee to Florence.⁶⁷ When Pope Eugenius IV died in 1447, Biondo fell from favor under his successor Nicholas V, who did not view him kindly because of his loyalty to the previous pontiff.⁶⁸ As a result of this rift with the newly elected Pope, in 1449 Biondo was estranged from the Curia and forced to uproot his large family from the city that had been their home for the past six years.⁶⁹

This umpteenth and sudden exile renewed Biondo's mobility. Once he settled his family in his farm in San Biagio in the province of Ferrara, he "began to travel through and explore Italy" (*peragrarere ac lustrare Italiam coepi*), visiting the courts of Milan (1450), Venice, Ravenna, (1451) and Naples (1452) to seek employment and patronage.⁷⁰ This prolonged period

⁶⁷ News of Ordelaffi's retaliation against Biondo and his family are found in Giovanni di Maestro Pedrino depintore, *Cronaca del suo tempo*, pp. 485-90.

⁶⁸ Enea Silvio Piccolomini, *De Europa*, cap. LVIII

⁶⁹ In his introduction to the edizionale nazionale of *Roma instaurata*, Della Schiava (LXIII) refers to this period as a "brief exile from the curia," *Roma instaurata* (2010), p. LXIII. Castner speaks of an "alienation from the curia," *Italia illustrata* (2005-2010), p.21.

⁷⁰ Nogara, *Scritti inediti*, pp. CXX-CXXI; Biondo references to this property in *It. Ill.*, Romagna §67, 343.

of displacement also afforded him the possibility to conduct archaeological and scholarly research for the composition of *Italia illustrata* which, though originally intended to be a catalog of famous contemporary men arranged according to the eighteen regions of antiquity, soon turned into a chorographical and historical survey of the Italian peninsula from the fall of Rome to Biondo's time.⁷¹

The greater part of the composition of this work was completed during his four-year alienation from the Curia which came to an end in 1453, when he was reinstated to his curial duties thanks to the intercession of powerful associates. By this time, copies of *Italia illustrata* had already been circulating among humanists and in Italy's intellectual milieu. Thus, Biondo decided to publish the first edition of this text with a formal dedication to Nicholas V instead of Alfonso I. Yet soon after the Pope's death, in 1455, Biondo released a revised edition of *Italia illustrata* where he excised the dedication and all associations with Nicholas V in retaliation for the mistreatment he had to endure. In the following years and until his death, in 1463, he kept tirelessly reviewing and rewriting his work, appending long *supplementa* and new material as referenced in the prefatory letter to the *Additiones correctionesque Italiae illustratae* (1462) that Biondo addressed to Pope Pius II, who had been elected pontiff in 1458.

Defined by Jeffrey White "a peninsular expansion" of *Roma instaurata*, *Italia illustrata* spatially and chronologically amplifies and complements the reconstructive work the humanist had started in his previous text and that he was concurrently carrying out in the historiographical enterprise of *Decades*. The countless references to both these texts found in *Italia illustrata* signal that these literary works are in dialogue with one another and that they ought to be

⁷¹ See Introduction of Biondo Flavio, *Italy Illuminated*. The I Tatti Renaissance Library. Trans. Jeffrey White. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2005-2016).

ascribed to a unified project.⁷² A recurring theme that reverberates in their pages (as in those of many humanists' texts, including Petrarca's *Fam.* VI, 2) is that of the extinction of Italy's historical and geographical memory.⁷³ In the Preface to this work, Biondo condemns it as follows:

For with the inundation of the City of Rome by a succession of different people (as I recounted in considerable details in my *Histories*), [...] the art of writing history alone failed utterly and was snuffed out. And because the barbarians confounded everything and because no one, meanwhile, sought to transmit to posterity via the literary record what was being done, we as a result are in great part ignorant of the very location of the regions of Italy [...], to say nothing of the historical events of the millennium that has elapsed; and what causes me the greatest astonishment, the dates of the establishment of many towns [...] are hidden from us, as are the names of their founders.⁷⁴

As evidenced in the passage, Biondo blamed contemporaries' ignorance as much on the barbaric incursions of the 5th century as on the lack of accurate historical records thereafter. While "error and obscurity" threatened to erase contemporaries' knowledge of Italy's past and present, his objective was to recover it so as to illuminate it.⁷⁵ As the title *Italia illustrata* suggests and as he programmatically states in the opening chapter of this book, dedicated to the region of Liguria, his aim was "to bring some light to bear upon the murkiness of Italian history" (in the original Latin "*rerum Italiae obscuritatem illustrare potero*").⁷⁶ Furthermore, this title conveys the text's visual nature and how it could be used, among its different functions, as a cognitive map for readers to mentally travel to and visualize the singularities of the different regions of Italy.

⁷² *It. Ill.*, Tuscany §6, 49: "As I mentioned in Book VIII of my *Histories*"; Tuscany §22, 63: "I said something about them in my *Roma instaurata*."; Lazio §1, 119: "in normal course of things Rome would be the next to be described. But this I did four years ago in my three books of *Rome Restored* and so I shall omit Rome."

⁷³ Pontari, *Italia illustrata*, (2011): p. 66: "denuncia l'estinzione della memoria storica italiana."

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Preface §2, 3-5.

⁷⁵ *It. Ill.*, Romagna §53, 327-329: "since by *Restoring Rome* in the meantime, I have been able to *Illustrate Italy* by scraping away the rusty accretions of error and obscurity."

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Another key trait that *Italia illustrata* shares with Biondo's *Roma instaurata* and his oeuvre as a whole is its ingenuity. According to the humanist's program, he intended for this work to be "not just a description of Italy, but also a catalogue of her famous and outstanding men, as well as a summary of no small part of Italian history."⁷⁷ To achieve this ambitious goal, Biondo combined his expertise of antiquity and topography with the study of past and contemporary biographies, creating a hybrid work that cleverly marries together geographical features, architectural and agricultural elements, local histories, and genealogies. While remaining a hyper-learned text, the wealth and variety of content encapsulated in *Italia illustrata* attracted a larger and more diverse readership than his other historiographical works, which explains the considerable influence that it exercised on both contemporary and later historians and geographers.⁷⁸

Structurally speaking, this work is organized into fourteen chapters which correspond to the number of *regiones* that Biondo was able to complete out of the eighteen that Pliny described in Book III of his *Natural History*.⁷⁹ These divisions do not coincide with the political sovereignties of Biondo's days, but rather offer a vision of Italy as a transcendent and unified geographical entity which "gives way to an intimately political sense of Italian identity."⁸⁰ Left

⁷⁷ Ibid., *It. Ill.*, Liguria §10, 19.

⁷⁸ Castner, *Italia illustrata*, xxxi: "Despite its stylistic shortcomings, the influence of *Italia illustrata* was both immediate and far-reaching. Biondo's heirs include the Bolognese Dominican Leandro Alberti, who wrote his *Descrittione di tutta Italia*, heavily dependent upon Biondo's work, a hundred year after his publication. *Italia illustrata* influenced historical topographies even outside of Italy, including the *Germania illustrata* of Konrad Celtis."

⁷⁹ List of regions: (1) Liguria, (2) *Etruria* or Tuscany, (3) Latina (modern Lazio), (4) Umbria, (5) *Picenum* (of the March of Ancona), (6) *Romandiola* or Romagna, (7) *Gallia Cisalpina* (or Lombardy), (8) *Venetiae* (or Veneto), (9) *Italia Transpadana* (or the March of Treviso), (10) *Aquileia* (or Friuli), (11) Histria, (12) *Samnium* (modern Abruzzo), (13) Campania, and (14) Apulia (the northern part of modern Puglia). The remaining four which he did not get to write were (15) Lucania, (16) Salentini (the southern part of modern Puglia), (17) Calabria, and (18) the land of the ancient Brutii (now southern Calabria).

⁸⁰ Castner, *Italia illustrata*, 23.

out are the southern regions of Lucania, Calabria, and the two islands, which Biondo never visited in his travels and on which he, regrettably, could not gather sufficient material to knowledgeably write about them. The depth and length of the chapters vary considerably based on the amount of information he chose to include and the prominence he gave to each area based on his personal cultural perspective. Some regions were originally written as free standing chapters that Biondo dedicated to notable local personalities and patrons of the arts to gain their favors, like for instance Tuscany to Piero de' Medici, Lazio to Prospero Colonna, and Romagna to Malatesta Novello. Similar to *Roma instaurata*, the material is arranged spatially, following a methodical and illustrative order oriented from the coast towards the interior, from which he departs only on a handful of occasions which he makes sure to justify.⁸¹

Overlooking Monaco, about two miles distant from the sea, is a now-humble stronghold called La Turbie, well-known for its inaccessibility; my friend Giacomo Bracelli, an eloquent and learned man, maintains with certainty that it was called Tropaea Augusti by the ancients. For my part I believe it was the birthplace of Helvius Pertinax, the Roman emperor, of whom Julius Capitolinus writes as follows: "Pertinax was born in the Apennines, in his mother's country home."⁸²

As seen in the above excerpt, for each regional survey Biondo first remarks the name, location, and interesting topographical features of the most prominent cities and towns, then recounts facts, present and past, and the names of those citizens (*literati*, statesmen, churchmen, artists, jurists, philosophers, doctors etc.) who "added lust" to their birthplaces.

⁸¹ *It. Ill.*, Lazio §3, 121: "To begin with the coast, Ancus Marcius founded the city of Ostia between the sea and the Tiber."; Tuscany §7, 49: "But let us return to our customary arrangement of the material"; Lazio §19, 149: "In describing this inland region, we shall not be able to adhere to the plan used in other regions, orienting ourselves by the mouths, sources and courses of rivers. We shall adopt another method (one suited to this region alone) which will meet our needs better, by proceeding along three roads, the Appian, Latin, and Tiburtine, which lead in different ways to the river Liri and to Sinuessa and Gaeta."

⁸² *It. Ill.*, Liguria §29, 27.

This passage illustrates the primacy that Biondo conferred to geographical information as well as his use of source material. Alongside the authoritative works of Vergil, Pliny, and Livy, to aid in his chorographical and historical reconstructions Biondo turned as much to contemporary texts like his friend and fellow historian Giacomo Bracelli's *Descriptio orae ligusticae* as to late Roman ones such as Julius Capitolinus's *Historia Augusta*, a collection of biographies of the Roman emperors. He also referenced medieval and humanist textbooks, religious documents, catalogs, and chronicles like the *Liber Cancellariae Apostolicae*, Andrea Dandolo's *Chronica*, Leonardo Bruni's *History*, and the *Travels* of Cyriac of Ancona, just to name a few.⁸³ Furthermore, to write *Italia illustrata* Biondo consulted numerous ancient geographical texts like Ptolemy's *Geography*, Strabo's *Geographia*, Pomponius Mele's *De chorographia*, Petrarca's *Itinerarium Syriacum*, whose echoes can be distinctively heard in Biondo's text even though he fails to include it among its sources, as well as maps and cartographical images.⁸⁴

The most notable references to maps in *Italia illustrata* are of the map of Italy (*pictura Italiae*) assembled by King Robert of Anjou and Petrarca.⁸⁵ Mentioned twice in the chapter dedicated to Romagna, Biondo used this map as supporting evidence to track and register changes in natural elements (e.g. rivers) as shown in the passage below:

The map of Italy on which I chiefly rely, the work of King Robert of Sicily and his friend Petrarch, has the villages of Voghenza, Voghiera and Cona set alongside the free-flowing Po; and so I can say with confidence that those stretches of the

⁸³ For detailed information on the sources of the *Italia illustrata* see Castner, *Italia illustrata*, pp. xxvii-xxx and White, *Italy Illuminated*, pp. xiv-xvii.

⁸⁴ Castner, *Italia illustrata*, pp. xxviii-xxix: "Although Clavuot embraces a wide range of possible medieval and late-medieval models or antecedents for *Italia Illustrata*, Cappelletto disagrees with the extent of these attributions as she finds Clavuot overly inclusive in listing as possible sources works that Biondo does not cite. For example, Petrarch's *Itinerarium Syriacum* (1358) presages the fifteenth-century interest in geographical description. It gives vital information on the state of geographical knowledge in Petrarch's time and presents a description of the Ligurian coast similar to Biondo's in "Liguria," including many of the same cities and towns; however, because he fails to cite it we cannot be certain that Biondo used this work of Petrarch as a source for *Italia illustrata*."

⁸⁵ Not extant.

Po that now extend from Ferrara down to Consandolo and from Codrea to the sea originated within the last hundred years.⁸⁶

Besides serving as evidence of his method and employment of cartographical material, these references constitute two of the several mentions that Biondo makes of Petrarca throughout *Italia illustrata*.⁸⁷ The first one appears in the opening paragraph of the first chapter:

Having undertaken to write a description of Italy, the foremost of the provinces of the world, I ought to begin with her praises, and given the wealth of material at hand I should have done so with ease and good will did there not exist already most splendid encomia (*laudationes*) in her honor by the excellent poet Vergil, and later by Pliny of Verona, and finally by the distinguished poet Francesco Petrarca.⁸⁸

The fact that Biondo mentions Petrarca in this prominent position, alongside two of the most renown and well-regarded ancient Roman authors of Latin literature, testifies to the high esteem that he felt for the poet laureate. Likewise, his inclusion of Petrarca's texts among those upon which Italy's national identity was founded, namely Virgil's *Georgiche* and Pliny's *Natural History*, proves his deep familiarity with and appreciation for his vast literary production including his patriotic song *Italia mia, benché 'l parlar sia indarno* (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, CXXVIII), his eclogue *Laurea occidens* (*Bucolicum carmen* X), his metrical epistles (II, 11 and III, 24), and the invective *Contra eum qui maledixit Italie*.⁸⁹ What is more, in prefacing *Italia illustrata* with a reference to these authors' "encomia" and rhetorically proclaiming his inability to equal the level of their praise of Italy Biondo is consciously

⁸⁶ *It. Ill.*, Romagna §68, 343. The second mention appears in Romagna §77, 355: "I am sure that this branch of the Po at Ficarolo was formed in the last hundred years, because the map of Italy of King Robert of Sicily and Petrarch (which I said I am following) does not have it."

⁸⁷ The second mention is found in Petrarca's birth region, Tuscany §28, 71: "At this time Florence was graced by two poets, Dante Alighieri and Francesco Petrarca. Petrarca was born at Arezzo of a Florentine father in exile, died and was buried at Arquà in the Euganean hills."

⁸⁸ *It. Ill.*, Liguria §1, 11.

⁸⁹ Among the other Petrarchan texts Biondo must have known and taken inspiration from, even though he does not refer nor quotes them directly, there are *De viris illustribus* and *Itinerarium Syriacum*.

positioning himself and his work within a literary tradition that descends in a direct line from them.

Biondo voices his admiration and indebtedness to Petrarca in yet another key moment of the text, that is his tribute to the rebirth of classical studies and eloquence in the Renaissance. Deemed by Biondo “a subject that merits discussion here in my illustration of Italy,” this long digression on the many and most important discoveries of old books, their teaching and transmission by illustrious humanists is found in the chapter dedicated to his birth region (Romagna §25-30).⁹⁰ Biondo’s rationale behind its inclusion in this chapter is that “eloquence has begun to revive thanks to the talent of a Romagnolo born at Ravenna,” the pedagogue and grammarian Giovanni Malpaghini, who brought back to Italy the study of eloquence “after its long exile” and kindled in his students a passion for good letters.⁹¹ Knowing the care Biondo used in structurally organizing his works and reading the rest of the eulogy it becomes clear how, by choosing this particular position within the architecture of his book Biondo did not only intend to patriotically reclaim the centrality of Romagna in Italy’s cultural landscape, but also underscore that he was one of its proud and most talented representatives.⁹² Before moving on to Malpaghini’s pupils though, Biondo takes a step back and declares: “The very first (*Primus vero omnium*) to revive Latin poetry and eloquence was Francesco Petrarca, a man of great talent and

⁹⁰ The citation is taken from *It. Ill.*, Romagna §25, 301; the tributes can be found in *It. Ill.*, Romagna §25-30.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*, Romagna §53, 327: “Following these [Malpaghini and Alberigo], I hope that the same Romagna has given Italy a third glory in a great enterprise through this work of mine. I am putting my hand to a history that has been hidden for more than a thousand years with such care that I have revealed the whole situation, not just of Italy, but of all the provinces and regions of the former Roman Empire as it passed into the control of various kings, princes or nations; and this with greater clarity that seemed possible, since by *Restoring Rome* in the meantime, I have been able to *Illustrate Italy* by scraping away the rusty accretions of error and obscurity.”

even greater industry.”⁹³ With these words, Biondo unequivocally ascribes to Petrarca the role of initiator of the humanist movement, tracing back to him an invisible line of descent that unifies all the humanists he praises in this tribute, himself included. These words are followed by a reference to Petrarca’s discovery of “Cicero’s *Letters to Lentulus* at Vercelli.”⁹⁴ While for unintelligible reasons Biondo mixes up the name of the epistolary collection Petrarca actually found at Verona in 1345, it is befitting that Petrarca’s is the first in a series of discoveries of manuscripts that he mentions throughout his excursus, culminating with his.⁹⁵ A couple of paragraphs later, in fact, Biondo recounts his 1422 involvement in the transmission of Cicero’s *Brutus* as follows:

When I myself was in Milan as a young man, carrying out official business on behalf of Forlì, I was the very first (*primi omnium*) to copy the *Brutus*, which I did with extraordinary excitement and speed (*mirabili ardore ac celeritate*), and from my transcription (sent first to Guarino in Verona, then to Leonardo Gustiniani in Venice) the whole of Italy was similarly filled with copies of the book.⁹⁶

This autobiographical passage offers readers a glimpse inside Biondo’s life before the different disruptions and affordances engendered by the series of exiles he underwent. It portrays a hustling Biondo who since his young age demonstrated an ardent devotion to preserving and transmitting the textual monuments of antiquity. Furthermore, the language that he employs to talk about himself and his antiquarian role (*primi omnium*) mirrors the one he used speaking about Petrarca (*Primus vero omnium*), drawing a parallelism between the two which is heightened by the close proximity between these passages and their respective Ciceronian discoveries. All these elements contribute to crafting an image of Biondo as a Petrarchan

⁹³ Ibid., Romagna §26, 301-03.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ On this mistake see endnote 64 of Romagna §26, 303.

⁹⁶ *It. Ill.*, Romagna §29, 307.

intellectual and confirm the pivotal influence that Petrarca's figure had on his historiographical endeavors.

In *Italia illustrata* we find evidence of how Biondo applied his three-part historiographical method into his chorography and refined it to a greater degree of precision and perfectionism. Similar to *Roma instaurata*, he judiciously sifted through countless textual, cartographic, and material sources on each given region, comparing and interpreting them in order to formulate exact theories and/or draw the right conclusions. One example of the combined employment of different types of evidence and their cross-examination to validate his theories is the dating of the branch of the river Po at Ficarolo, south of Rovigo. Biondo says he is certain this branch of the Po was formed in the last century because no record of it appeared in King Robert's and Petrarca's map of Italy which, as previously mentioned, he was relying on.⁹⁷ Nonetheless, to corroborate his thesis he brings as additional proof the four hundred years old legal records found in the monastery of San Salvatore, on which the fortress of Ficarolo was built, which testify to there being fields where the Po branch now was.⁹⁸ However, not entirely content with the evidence provided so far, Biondo finally adduces physical boundaries (*fines*) in support of his theory: "In support of my belief in the recent origin of this branch of the Po are the boundaries set to the individual properties and titles of the monastery as they exist today, on both sides of the Po, in defining which no mention is ever made of this branch."⁹⁹

Biondo's research, compilation, and analysis of data drawn from different sources allows him to verify, update, and at times even question the validity of the information that had come down to him from ancient texts. For instance, considering Pliny's observation (*Natural History*

⁹⁷ *It. Ill.*, Romagna §77, 355.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

2.224) that river water floats over the surface of the Fucine Lake, in the Lazio region, Biondo declares:

It may be that Pliny's text has been corrupted at this point (as is often the case) or is otherwise faulty or mutilated, but I was not able to determine where he maintains that this river arises. But I do know a spring at Anagni called the Tufano, which is dry in winter when the Fucine Lake is frozen over, but later in the spring, summer, and autumn discharges a great quantity of water to swell the river Liri (which itself rises at San Vito).¹⁰⁰

Besides providing evidence of Biondo's critical methodology, this excerpt illuminates how he used to draw conclusions based on pragmatic deductions as it is the case with the water source of the Fucine Lake, which he correctly attributes to the river Liri. Moreover, it offers insights on the quality of the copies of ancient texts that were circulating during his time (often corrupted, faulty, or mutilated) and, accordingly, on the constraints of his research and of the data at his disposal. Biondo's awareness of these limitations is openly manifested in many instances of the text. For instance, surveying the city of Genoa in Liguria, he acknowledges he was "unsure" about who founded the city and when, and firmly rejects "the tale about Phaethon and his companion Genuus (which my friend Bracelli does not dismiss), as it relies on the authority of no identifiable writer."¹⁰¹ Statements like these confirm Biondo's critical attitude towards myths and legends about the foundation of cities and his analytical approach to history writing, which he inherited from Bruni.

Another pillar of his methodology that Biondo drew heavily on for the composition of *Italia illustrata* was the "practical experience of the history of Italy" that he developed through his direct observation of cities, topographical, and natural elements.¹⁰² Reading *Italia illustrata*

¹⁰⁰ *It. Ill.*, Lazio §28, 161.

¹⁰¹ *It. Ill.*, Liguria §24, 31.

¹⁰² *It. Ill.*, Preface §3, 5: "I wanted to discover if, through the practical experience of the history of Italy I have gained, I shall be able to apply the names of current coinage to the appropriate places and peoples of

we find remarks that prove Biondo personally surveyed many of the sites to be included in this work in the patronage-hunting travels around Italy that he took during his exile from the Curia. Direct experience of these places equipped him with empirical knowledge that he incorporated in his work as the premise of theories and personal remarks. For instance, we know that Biondo visited the region of Campania during his trip to King Alfonso I of Aragon's court in Naples, in 1452. Writing about a spring of mineral water found at the ancient coastal town of Litemum, in Campania, which Pliny maintained "made men tipsy like wine" and shepherds said "cure[d] all kinds of headaches," Biondo shares how when he curiously tried it he could not corroborate its effects: "I carefully tasted it and realized that its flavor, as of other such waters that people drink, was indeed good. But though I inhaled its not unpleasant vapors into the nostrils, as one does with wine, I could not detect any effect that drinking it had, perhaps because I took only a moderate draft."¹⁰³

Similarly, commenting on another spring located on the ancient Mount Soracte in Tuscany, whose waters, according to Pliny, killed the birds who tasted it, Biondo declares:

I find this all the more credible for something that happened when his eminence Prospero Cardinal Colonna and I were surveying the ruins of the city of Antium together. Entering a nearby wood where there were extensive ruins, we found a little spring and at its edge two small birds which had apparently died from drinking the water.¹⁰⁴

This anecdote stands out for two reasons. First, it shows how Biondo's personal experience acts as validation for this otherwise legendary-sounding account. Second, it serves as additional

Italian antiquity, to settle the authenticity of the new nomenclature, to revive and record the names that have been obliterated, and in a word to bring some light to bear upon the murkiness of Italian history."

¹⁰³ *It. Ill.*, Campania §25, 307.

¹⁰⁴ *It. Ill.*, Tuscany §57, 109: "Following Civita Castellana on the Tiber is the mountain the ancients called Soracte, on which Vergil says: 'These men hold the heights of Soracte,' and Pliny: 'Varro says there is a spring on Soracte, four feet wide. When the sun comes up, the spring bubbles up as if it were boiling, and birds that have tasted of it lie dead nearby.'"

testament to the archaeological trips that he used to take with his friend around the extensive estates that he and his family owned in the Papal State and in the Kingdom of Naples. To this point, we know that Biondo participated in numerous archaeological undertakings promoted by Prospero Colonna. As he recounts in the chapter on Lazio, in 1446 he eye-witnessed the attempt at recovering the rests of the two Roman ships sunk in Lake Nemi, an enterprise that Prospero, who had inherited from his ancestors the town by the homonymous lake, devoted himself to and for which he hired the services of Biondo's colleague and friend Leon Battista Alberti.¹⁰⁵ Despite the failed outcome, Biondo's description of this archaeological endeavor not only allows to gauge what a noteworthy event this was for the Quattrocento antiquarian community who attended it, but it also serves as evidence of the collaboration and esteem that he nurtured for Alberti.¹⁰⁶

When it comes to collaboration, to compose *Italia illustrata* Biondo gathered information about Italy's history, chorography, and outstanding men also through his local collaborators and patrons. His letters of this period to Prospero Colonna, Bartolomeo Facio, and Giacomo Bracelli among others, testify to his efforts to acquire sources (literary texts and maps) for redacting *Italia illustrata* (and *Decades*) as well as to the arrangements that he made with his patrons and friends

¹⁰⁵ *It. Ill.*, Lazio §47, 189-191: "Prospero Colonna, the Roman cardinal and patrician who inherited from his ancestors the town of Nemi and the castle of Genzano, once heard the fishermen of Nemi saying that there were two ships sunk in the lake. [...] Devoted as he is to the liberal arts, especially history, and being the painstaking antiquarian that he is, the cardinal accordingly applied himself to discovering why those great ships should be found in a small lake completely surrounded by high mountains. My friend Leon Battista Alberti, the great mathematician of our age and author of a graceful work on the art of building, was summoned to help with this task."

¹⁰⁶ For a detailed analysis of this event and its literary renderings see Paolo Pontari, "Alberti e Biondo: archeologia a Nemi," in *Alberti e la cultura del Quattrocento: Atti del convegno internazionale del Comitato Nazionale VI centenario della nascita di Leon Battista Alberti. Firenze, 16-17 dicembre 2004*. A cura di Roberto Cardini e Mariangela Rigoliosi. (2007): pp. 495-540.; *It. Ill.*, Lazio §48-50, 191-193: "This fragment greatly diverted all the find minds of the Roman Curia gathered there. [...] A great throng poured in from all about to watch the ship being fished out of the water."

to review and correct his accounts.¹⁰⁷ The dedication of the chapter on Tuscany to Piero de' Medici and that on Romagna to Malatesta Novello are a case in point.¹⁰⁸ With these dedications, Biondo is appealing to Piero's and Malatesta's historical and local expertise to find flaws in his descriptions of these regions and provide advice as to how he could amend them. They also attest to Biondo's painstaking work of revision and the steadfast scholarly labor that went into the composition of this text. Similarly, given how these dedications were removed when the manuscripts of all the regions were combined together for publication in 153, they are witnesses to this work's earliest redactions and to the complex editorial process that it underwent throughout the years.¹⁰⁹

Lastly, one element of *Italia illustrata* that stands out and differs from *Roma instaurata* is the presence throughout the text of qualitative reflections which embody the "voice" of the author, his personal opinions, and beliefs. For instance, surveying the coastal city of Ostia, in the Tyrrhenian Sea, Biondo mentions how Strabo described it as having no harbor because of the silting up of the Tiber, and adds that even though in Strabo's days Rome and Anzio did not have

¹⁰⁷ These letters can be found in Nogara, *Scritti inediti*, pp. 163-169.

¹⁰⁸ *It. Ill.*, Tuscany §1, 45: "To complete and embellish this region, I decided it should be dedicated to you, Piero de' Medici, primarily because, though you are yourself sufficiently learned and knowledgeable about history, you have as your father Cosimo, a most distinguished man who takes the greatest pleasure in history. With his help, you will easily bring to our notice anything that we have left out or described inaccurately in the Tuscan region and will advise us concerning what should be added or corrected, which is our principal request."; Romagna §1, 279: "Since in accordance with our plan we are to dedicate this region to a man whose expertise may emend and correct our errors, we are compelled to take someone who may simultaneously protect us and this region from the envious. [...] So Romagna shall be dedicated to you, the famous Malatesta Novello, since, as someone who delights equally in the study of the liberal arts and military affairs, you have an excellent grasp of the history of all ages, equal to best of our time, and so can make free of errors this Province, in which your most famous Malatesta clan has flourished for so long."

¹⁰⁹ This dedication, as the others written to the aforementioned patrons in the earlier stages of the redaction of *Italia illustrata*, were removed once the texts of all the regions were combined together and published for the first time in 1453. On this topic see White's Introduction, xx.

harbors either, Emperor Tiberius and later Claudius will have one built in each of the two cities.¹¹⁰ At this point, Biondo suddenly interrupts his description of Ostia to say:

Reading and writing this provokes in me the reflection – and it is something that should make every person of good sense wary of trusting too much in human capacities – that lavish expense and considerable effort on the part of the emperors were not enough to keep the structures of the city of Ostia, the city and port of Anzio, or the harbor of Rome intact for as much as a thousand years.¹¹¹

This metadiscursive commentary displays a more colloquial and subjective tone than the technical one Biondo has accustomed readers of this work to. It portrays Biondo as an inquisitive reader and outspoken writer, capable of making value judgments and expressing strong views. Furthermore, his reflection on the “mutable and transient nature” of human enterprises, which the paradigm of the harbors finely illustrates, is particularly striking as it echoes the provocative question Biondo raised in the Preface of *Roma instaurata* about whether material and architectural renewal would outlast literature.¹¹² While in *Roma instaurata* he leaves this judgement to posterity, based on the sentiment voiced in this passage and in other places of *Italia illustrata*, by the time Biondo writes, edits, and completes his latest edition of this work his answer is settled on ‘no’.¹¹³ What this reflection ultimately does is illuminating “the power of letters” to recover and monumentalize a past at risk of being forgotten, making even more urgent

¹¹⁰ *It. Ill.*, Lazio §3, 121.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Refer back to footnote 40 of this chapter.

¹¹³ *It. Ill.*, Romagna §19, 295: “Just after the mouth of the Savio on the Adriatic coast is a small area worth describing, Candiano, the name of the valley and the lagoon: for the wise and informed student of history it provides a lesson on the mutable and transient nature of all human enterprises. [...] Some 600 years ago, more or less, the river Savio used to flow into the valley of Candiano and formed a harbor, among the most celebrated in Italy. [...] Shortly after the harbor was brought into service, it happened that a town (Classe) was built by naval units for the merchants that descended upon the place from all sides. This city [...] was captured by the Lombard King Liutprand, however, and destroyed. And so we see that this city’s destruction and the diversion of the Savio further away brought it about that none but the slightest trace is now visible of the city wall, the lighthouse, or the harbor, except only the Basilica of Sant’Apollinare in Classe.”

the type of textual archaeology and reconstructive labor he had been carrying out in his historiographies.

As my analysis of *Italia illustrata* has shown, the sudden change of circumstances in Biondo's career and his exile from the Curia at the age of fifty-seven and with ten children unsettled the precarious equilibrium that he had managed to reach in his life. This triggered his mobility and forced him to scramble for work to maintain his family during these uncertain times. Despite its downsides, this position also permitted him to personally visit and perform autoptic research into the chorographic, historical, and genealogical features of the regions that he was describing in *Italia illustrata*, which in turn enabled him to further develop and perfect the method of archaeological investigation practiced in *Roma instaurata*. Ultimately, by the time Biondo was reinstated in his curial job he had completed and was ready to publish the earliest edition of *Italia illustrata*, the first cultural and intellectual history of Italy to be narrated from a geographic standpoint in the Renaissance using a method shaped after his author's exilic peregrinations.

The direct and indirect, political and professional exposure to exile that Biondo experienced throughout his life was responsible for shifting the humanist's personal geographies and for affording him opportunities for research and firsthand observation of actual sites during his many political, diplomatic, and patronage-hunting travels as well as involvement with some of the leading political and intellectual figures of his time. As this chapter makes clear, exile was a critical agent behind Biondo's social and physical mobility and ought to be deemed as one among the range of forces enabling his ingenious historiographical method, which consisted in

accepting as certain only what he could himself demonstrate through the study and comparison of dozens of textual and material evidence, empirical observation, or pragmatic deductions. The texts analyzed in this chapter record how Biondo channeled his inherited temporal displacement into a series of literary experiments in historical writing that, by engaging with the past's contemporary spatial and physical manifestations managed to challenge its perceived remoteness and prompt its revival. Lastly, Biondo's case epitomizes both the possibilities and the restraints inherent in the exilic condition suffered by Renaissance exiles writers like the ones studied in this dissertation, capturing how a series of (un)fortunate events, actions, and reactions placed him at the fertile imaginative confluence of ideas and people from which his artistic power was born.

With regard to literary imagination, in the third and final chapter of this dissertation I delve into the creative strategies employed by two characters we have already encountered in this study, that is Leon Battista Alberti and Niccolò Machiavelli, to translate and incorporate facets of their familial, spatial, social, and emotional forms of alienation into the storyline of their narrative works. As shown in the Introduction, Petrarca capitalized on the familiar content and style of his books of letters to create, validate, and memorialize for posterity his exilic narrative, paving the way for the dramatization of writers' displaced selves in their literary works. Chapter three illustrates how Alberti and Machiavelli assimilated Petrarca's teachings into two of their most brilliant fictional texts, *Momus* and *Favola*, as a way of making sense of and cathartically overcoming their displacement by way of its narrative enactment. Indeed, the portrayal of exile in these works is achieved by featuring displaced characters as protagonists and plots that revolve around their movements across physical and metaphysical worlds. By examining how the settings, the protagonists, and their mobility across the different spaces are represented against the backdrop of the authors' lives and contexts of production, this chapter sheds light on

the different ways in which their personal experiences of exile fueled their literary creativity and illuminates the process of translating them in narrative form, promoting an understanding of this early modern phenomenon that other literary genres do not afford.

Chapter Three. Narrativizing Exile in Alberti's *Momus* and Machiavelli's *Favola*

As shown so far in this dissertation, the different forms of displacement that writers in exile endured in the Renaissance prompted them to develop ways to translate and respond to their alienation in literary form. This resulted in epistolary, historiographical, and topographical works that are directly informed by the shifting personal geographies (and time zones) in which their writing took place. Precisely, we have seen the far-reaching influence that Petrarca's epistolary collections and his 'discovery of the past' exercised over the way Renaissance exile writers employed letters to portray their displaced selves and wrote historical texts that take inspiration from and are in dialogue with Petrarca's epistles. Although the timeless interest in Machiavelli's 'giornata' and exile has led several scholars to study the Petrarchan echoes to be found in his most famous letter and literary works, such as *Il Principe*, the same cannot be said about Strozzi's and Sforza's missives, nor about Biondo's historical geographies. In examining these works through the lens of exile this dissertation does more than exploring the complex dynamics between space and writing and the creative tension born out of the possibilities and constraints opened and imposed by this rather pervasive condition among early modern writers, but it also sheds light on their assimilation of Petrarca's historicized model and awareness of belonging to his humanistic legacy.

The last chapter of this dissertation focuses on the application of Petrarca's teachings to works belonging to the realm of literary imagination. Specifically, it is dedicated to analyzing the narrative-creative response to exile, that is to say how these writers incorporated and represented physical, social, and emotional forms of displacement in works of fictional prose as a way to cope with and give meaning to their own exilic experience. Chapter three delves into two texts, Leon Battista Alberti's four-book satirical novel *Momus*, his most eccentric and most studied

Latin work after his technical treatises, and Niccolò Machiavelli's allegorical tale *Favola* which, on the contrary, has perhaps received the least amount of scholarly attention within its author's literary corpus. Although separated by seventy years, these Renaissance texts have not been put into dialogue with one another despite sharing similar narrative elements and techniques rooted in their authors' multilayered experiences of exile. By investigating the creative strategies employed by Alberti and Machiavelli to engage with displacement in their storylines as well as examining how exile is represented and the function that it plays in the texts, this chapter aims at illustrating how these authors deployed their powerful literary imagination as a weapon to fight against and find relief from the alienation that defined their lives.

The enactment of displacement in the *Momus* and the *Favola* is manifested in the writers' decision to feature two outcasts as protagonists. Indeed, both works foreground non-human, anti-heroic, and decidedly displaced characters whose enforced movements across real and metaphysical axes between Heaven, Earth – most notably the city of Florence – and Hell act as a catalyst for developing the narrative arc of both works.¹ Another feature that the protagonists share is the multiple transformations they endure in conjunction with and caused by their movement across spatial dimensions. For instance, the god of embittered mockery, Momus, the main character in Alberti's homonymous work, during his earthly exiles first poses as a poet, then as a philosopher, and lastly as a woman, equally succeeding in causing the gods endless torments regardless of the gender he inhabited. Similarly, the arch-devil of Machiavelli's *Favola*, Belfagor, is sent on a mission to Earth where he assumes human form in order to find out why so many male souls in Hell blame their wives for their unhappy fate. Once there, however, he

¹ George McClure, *Doubting the Divine in Early Modern Europe: The Revival of Momus, the Agnostic God*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 73, maintains that Alberti “constructed the prototype of the anti-hero.”

devises a scheme to reward the peasant who saved him from his creditors by demonically possessing the daughters of rich families and allowing his rescuer to exorcise him out of their bodies in exchange for money. By exploring each author's indebtedness to key classical Greek and Latin sources and medieval models, chapter three will show how Alberti and Machiavelli succeed in creating their distinctive humanist imitations of these models by narrativizing elements drawn from their personal experiences and oblique exposure to exile.

Accordingly, the two sections that make up this chapter begin with an exploration of each writer's personal geography at the time of writing, that is a detailed reconstruction of the familial, spatial, and socio-political circumstances leading up to and surrounding the composition of these works in order to evaluate the influence that these factors had on their choice of content, spatial contextualization, and representation of displacement. Each section then delves into close readings aimed at articulating the complex relationships between work and life, fiction and biography, and the literary and rhetorical devices used to narrativize displacement.

The first text I examine in this chapter is Alberti's *Momus*. Despite the autobiographical connections that scholars have attributed to this intricate work, they have not, for the most part, interpreted this text vis-à-vis the familial, political, and legal roots of the two-fold type of displacement Alberti inherited and suffered from, that is to say, his illegitimacy and legal exile. This has prevented us from fully comprehending the creative influence that his lived experiences of exile had on this work. To remedy this, I first reconstruct the setting, events, and protagonists that led to the double displacement Alberti personally endured in order to illuminate his process of translating it into narrative form by turning the theory and praxis of Momus' exile into the structuring framework for the development of the story. Then, I focus specifically on the three-dimensionality of this narrative, examining on the one hand the language used to describe the

characters' movements across Heaven, Earth, and Hell as well as the particular role that mobility plays and, on the other, how these spaces are represented and from what literary and urban sources they are drawn. Lastly, as I uncover the sources and compare the descriptions of these settings with their original referents, I reveal the implications that adopting such intertextual spatial references have on the overall narrativization of displacement and how these intertextualities aid in reconstructing and visualizing the actions around which the plot revolves.

Similarly, the narrativization of exile helps us navigate and reconcile the structural partitions of Machiavelli's *Favola*. What scholarship exists on this work is divided between those who see this tale as lacking structural cohesiveness and those who maintain precisely the opposite view.² My reading of the *Favola* aligns with the latter in that it shows how the three narrative units that make up the story are woven together by one element that is directly informed by Machiavelli's experience of exile, whose meaning is bound up in the terms of Belfagor's mission.

After recasting the *Favola*'s context of production, I gauge the extent to which such a defining experience in Machiavelli's life affected the content of this work through textual evidence, such as the many legal elements and spatial references, which are imbued with deep personal resonance. In addition, I deconstruct the enabling and constraining nature of Belfagor's conditions, interrogating their repeated occurrence in the text as well as their correlation with the characters' spatial and social mobility to show the link that exists between these terms and the way the *Favola*'s storyline unfolds. To conclude, I gesture towards an overlay between the main characters' respective returns to the spaces where we found them at the beginning of the tale and

² See footnote 107 in this chapter for more detailed bibliographical references.

Machiavelli's political comeback to underscore an additional layer of complexity and depth in the story's portrayal of displacement.

In conclusion, by raising awareness of the exilic matrix in which these texts were conceived and developed this chapter advances the interpretation, understanding, and appreciation of two iconic narrative pieces of the Italian Renaissance. Furthermore, it reveals how Alberti and Machiavelli not only adopted similar narrative elements and techniques directly inspired by their own lived experiences of displacement in the *Momus* and the *Favola*, but also resorted to storytelling as a means to creatively illustrate, validate, and take control of their own exilic narratives in ways that closely remind Petrarca's epistolary dramatization of his life story. In this regard, the *Momus* exemplifies the labor of translation that went into the writing of these works, and for this reason it lends itself particularly well as the starting point for this investigation.

I. Translating Familial and Spatial Displacement in Alberti's Momus

Throughout the centuries the multifaceted aspects of Leon Battista Alberti's life, artistic and literary production have attracted the attention of specialists who profusely wrote on these subjects from the perspective of art history, architecture, Renaissance studies, literary criticism, and intellectual history, among others. Scholars across disciplines have tended to agree upon the fact that uprootedness and alienation were pivotal features of Alberti's life and have maintained that his exile and illegitimacy were two factors that profoundly influenced his personality and literary works.³ However, to this day there has not been a systematic critical attempt to interpret

³ Among the scholars who factored alienation and uprootedness in their analysis of Alberti's life and work see Carlo Dionisotti, "Chierici e laici." *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana*, (1999), p. 64: "l'Alberti si trovò a dover costruire la sua vita da solo, con scarsi appoggi esterni, senza una sede

Alberti's literary corpus specifically from the vantage point of these very different forms of displacement.⁴ Indeed, displacement has been typically mentioned to account for the autobiographical features of his written works, a subject on which extensive literature has been produced. It is a well-known fact that Alberti delighted in representing himself in his writings.⁵ The list of texts that feature him as protagonist or hiding behind other characters and masks is long and includes among the most evident and significant cases his forged "classical" comedy *Philodoxeos* (1424), his early Latin invective *De Commodis Literarum atque Incommodis* (1428-32), his masterpiece *On the Family* (1435-44), the dialogue *Sofrona* (1437), and the two mock-encomia of his dog, *Canis* (1438), and of the fly, *Musca* (1443). Alberti's quest for identity even brought him to write his own biography in the third person, *Vita* (ca. 1438-43), whose authorship

prestabilita, ma non senza il peso e lo stimolo della sua origine fiorentina e dell'antica prosperità e grandezza della sua famiglia." Also, Eugenio Garin, "Il pensiero di Leon Battista Alberti e la cultura del '400." *Belfagor*. Vol. 27. No. 30. 1972, pp. 501-521; Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance*. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Thomas Kuehn, "Reading Between the Patriline: Leon Battista Alberti's 'Della Famiglia' in Light of His Illegitimacy." *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, (1985), pp. 161-187: "As an outsider to his family, his lineage, and his city, however, Alberti enjoyed a unique perspective to bring these themes together in a coherent manner."; McClure, *Doubting the Divine in Early Modern Europe*, p. 37: "This enormous productivity issued from a figure beset with misfortune, including his family's exile from Florence, his illegitimate birth, illness, his father's death during his first year at university, mistreatments by relatives, and a bleakness concerning his circumstances. [...] An intense sense of isolation and alienation may have been the engine of productivity as well as the reason for his eventual invocation of the troublesome god Momus."

⁴ In "Reading Between the Patriline," Kuehn paves the way to this approach by using illegitimacy as a critical lens to analyze Alberti's *On Family*. Similarly, in *Doubting the Divine in Early Modern Europe*, 44, McClure advocates: "*Momus* needs to be read in the context of earlier circumstances in Alberti's life and related currents in his thought."

⁵ Scholars unanimously agree on the strong autobiographical nature of Alberti's literary production. On this topic, see Garin, "Il pensiero di Leon Battista Alberti," pp. 501-521: "autobiografismo pronunciato che attraversa tutta la produzione letteraria albertiana."; Riccardo Fubini and A. Menci Gallorini. "Autobiografia", *Rinascimento*, 12, 1972, p. 46: "Si sa del resto che l'autobiografismo è una vocazione costante dell'opera letteraria dell'Alberti, così come lo è la tendenza a fare di se stessi un personaggio nelle più varie e immaginose vesti." Roberto Cardini. "Alberti o della nascita dell'umorismo moderno," *Schede umanistiche: rivista semestrale dell'Archivio umanistico rinascimentale bolognese*, (1993), pp. 31-85: "Alberti è tra gli scrittori più scopertamente e insistentemente autobiografici."

has now been confirmed after having long been the object of contention among scholars.⁶ This text was the main source for Jacob Burckhardt's (1818-1897) famous portrayal of Alberti as a "universal man" of the Renaissance, a text that has shaped much of the subsequent studies on his character until the 1970s, when a new school of interpretation, led by the Italian intellectual historian Eugenio Garin (1909 – 2004), came to dominate our understanding.⁷ This school "found," as Anthony Grafton writes, "a dark mysterious world of irony and self-torment under the smooth classical surface of Alberti's built and written work," whose origins can ultimately be traced back to the multiple forms of displacement that beset him.⁸

To make sense of the ways in which these forms affected and informed the content of his literary works, it behooves us to retrace the settings, events, and protagonists that together contributed to unfolding the displacements Alberti inherited and endured throughout his life. To this end, it is necessary to begin by addressing the circumstances under which he was born in 1404. Leon Battista was the second son of a concubinage established by his father Lorenzo di Benedetto Alberti with Bianca di Carlo Fieschi, the widow of a powerful Genoese patrician clan, when the former was in exile from Florence in Genoa. Lorenzo and the rest of the Alberti men over the age of sixteen had been banished from Florence for a supposed conspiracy against the

⁶ Leon Battista Alberti, *Vita anonyma*. Ed. Laurentius Mehus. *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores XXV*, Milan, (1751), pp. 295-303. On the *Vita*'s paternity see Renée Watkins, "The Authorship of the Vita Anonyma of Leon Battista Alberti," *Studies in the Renaissance*, Vol. 4, 1957, pp. 101-112; Riccardo Fubini and A. Menci Gallorini. "Autobiografia," pp. 21-78.

⁷ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*. (London, England; New York, N.Y., USA: Penguin Books, 1990), pp.101-4.

⁸ Anthony Grafton's *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance*, (2000), p. 14; Garin's criticism towards Burckhart's profile of Alberti is manifested in the following lines from "Il pensiero di Leon Battista Alberti," (1972), p. 505: "La storiografia più recente, innalzandolo a esemplare di un'età – l'uomo universale del primo Rinascimento – lo ha via via mutilato di quanto sembrava esorbitare dallo schema fissato a priori per caratterizzare un periodo storico"; Among the scholars enlisted in this school and their contributions see Massimo Marassi. *Metamorfosi della storia: Momus e Alberti*. (Milan: Mimesis, 2004), Luca Boschetto, *Leon Battista Alberti e Firenze: biografia, storia e letteratura*. (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 2000), Roberto Cardini, "Alberti o della nascita dell'umorismo moderno."

state in 1401, a punishment that affected the whole “famiglia Alberta” until the sentence was lifted over two decades later in 1428. The Alberti, a merchant-banking family with venerable feudal origins and great wealth, were regarded among the most prominent citizens of 14th century Florence, where they held active roles in the communal government of the city. By mid-Trecento, Florentine political life was dominated by factional politics that revolved around two rival clans, the Albizzi and the Ricci, who incarnated respectively oligarchic and anti-oligarchic ideals. The Alberti affiliation with the Ricci family made them the target of a series of political persecutions conducted by their political enemies to get rid of perceived threats to their power that resulted in the mass banishment of the Alberti clan at the turn of the century.⁹

Leon Battista inherited his exile in the legal language of the ban of January 1401.¹⁰ In an attempt to disperse and weaken the domestic enemy, the text of the ban established different degrees of punishment in terms of duration, distance from Florence, and level of taxation for the Alberti men. For instance, Messer Antonio di Messer Niccolao degli Alberti, the patriarch of the Alberti clan, along with his half-brother Altobianco, were banished for thirty years at a minimum distance of three hundred miles from Florence, while Leon Battista’s father, Lorenzo, and seven of his kin for twenty years at one hundred and eighty miles.¹¹ The other Alberti men over the age of sixteen were banished for ten years at a distance of one hundred miles and all their male progeny, regardless of whether they were legitimate or not, were to be banished for ten years from the day they turned sixteen.¹² Unlike the types of exile encountered so far in this study,

⁹ For a detailed reconstruction of Florentine political life in mid-Trecento, the Albizzi and Ricci faction and the political persecutions the Alberti suffered since 1387 see Susannah Foster Baxendale. “Exile in Practice”.

¹⁰ The original Latin text of the ban is found in Luigi Passerini, *Gli Alberti di Firenze: genealogia, storia, e documenti*. Pte. 2, (1869), pp. 294-308.

¹¹ This information is found in Baxendale, “Exile in Practice,” pp. 727-729.

¹² Passerini. *Gli Alberti di Firenze*, p. 302: “Item, quod omnes et singuli alii masculi de domo et progenie de Albertis, etiam spurei, seu non legitime nati, ad presens existentes etatis a sexdecim annis supra, et

Leon Battista, who fell under the last of these categories, legally inherited his exile from his family. However, what makes his case even more singular and fascinating is the fact that he was also an illegitimate child, which adds a second-order layer of displacement to his experience. In fact, despite having grown up with a name and being recognized and raised within the lineage to which his father belonged, since he was never made legitimate by Lorenzo, Leon Battista was, therefore, never considered a full member of his father's family.¹³

As a consequence, he faced legal disabilities and diminished rights to familial wealth and property, which aggravated his already problematic relation with the Alberti clan. Indeed, when his father died in 1420, Leon Battista's relatives used his and his brother Carlo's illegitimacy as a reason to delay the inheritance Lorenzo had bequeathed them.¹⁴ This caused Leon Battista to suffer from economic distress while studying canon and civil law at the University of Bologna, which engendered in him a deep resentment of familial rejection and hostility.¹⁵ Despite the sorrow and pain this caused him, for most of his life he strived to win acceptance into the family with which he proudly identified and to whom he owed his strong sense of Florentine identity.¹⁶ In fact, Leon Battista's personal, social, and spatial identity is so closely intertwined with that of

quilibet ipsorum, intelligantur esse et sint confinati et relegati, et stare debeant et morari per tempus decem annorum, initiandorum die primo mensis aprilis proxime secuturi, in quocumque et seu quibuscumque locis voluerint, semel, pluries et quotiens voluerint, distante et seu distantibus a civitate Florentie per centum miliaria vel ultra."

¹³ Kuehn, 165: "In a sense he was of, but not in, the family. In one important respect, then, Battista remained unfortunate: he was never made legitimate – though he could have been. Legitimation would have made him a full member of the family, subject to his father's *patria potestas*. Lorenzo could have married Bianca Fieschi before her death – that would have legitimated Battista. Perhaps, however, he had no intention of marrying a Genoese but wanted to do eventually what he did in 1408 – marry a Florentine. This marriage at least explains why Lorenzo did not legitimate his sons as long as he was married and had the hope of fathering legitimate, fully Florentine, sons."

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 165-166.

¹⁵ The situation culminated in an attempt on his life ascribed by Leon Battista to some of his kin. References on this topic can be found in Kuehn, "Reading Between the Patriline," p. 175; See also Laurie Schneider, "Leon Battista Alberti: Some Biographical Implications of the Winged Eye." *The Art Bulletin*. Vol. 72. (1990), p. 261.

¹⁶ Boschetto, *Leon Battista Alberti e Firenze*.

the “Alberti of Florence,” even though he was neither a Florentine citizen through birth nor Florentine through his matrilineal line, that he was praised by contemporaries and is still largely celebrated as one of the greatest Florentine artists and writers of his time.¹⁷ To this point, it can be said that Leon Battista’s ties to the city of Florence are inscribed in his names, both his given name, which identifies him with the city’s most important patron saint, John the Baptist, and the one he later adopted for himself, Leone, which referenced to the city’s political and military identity as a lion. Therefore, while his jural membership to the Alberti family was open to doubt, the fact that Leon Battista inherited both the possibilities and the restraints opened and imposed by his affiliation with the Alberti family attests to the unbreakable link that tied an individual’s identity to that of their family, city, and community of origin in the Renaissance.

While in exile, the Alberti had been able to preserve their wealth, status, and Florentine identity thanks on the one hand to their profession as international merchants and bankers and on the other to the women of the family, who remained in Florence specifically to raise new generations of Alberti sons and daughters. This allowed the clan to maintain its network of familial, political, and economic connections disrupted by the departure of its male members.¹⁸ That explains how, despite his geographic remoteness from Florence, he inherited the memory and connections to the city from his family, which, along with the humanistic education that defined his class, allowed Leon Battista to understand the city and its cultural landscape long before he ever set foot within its walls in 1434. By that time, Leon Battista had been serving as an abbreviator at the Papal chancery in Rome for over five years, a role that enabled him to diminish even further the distance that separated him from the Florentine world of his ancestors,

¹⁷ Ibid., 165: “Intorno alla metà di questo decennio (1450-60) si collocano gli elogi umanistici tributati ad Alberti in quanto ‘orator Florentinus’ da Bartolomeo Facio (nel *De viris illustribus*) e Biondo Flavio (nell’*Italia illustrata*).”

¹⁸ Baxendale, “Exile in Practice,” 729.

given the close economic, political, and cultural ties that bound the Roman curia with the Tuscan city in the first half of the Quattrocento.¹⁹

Leon Battista's first sojourn in the city after the reinstatement of its members several years earlier coincided with the exile of Pope Eugenius IV (1434-1443). The irony of such a first encounter "under the sign of exile" cannot be ignored and makes even more apparent how exile constituted a precondition to Leon Battista's identity and life as a whole. Therefore, what follows is an investigation of how his direct and indirect experiences of displacement actually fueled his literary creativity and prompted him to engage with exile in narrative form in one of the most hybrid, enigmatic, and polysemic Latin works he ever wrote, *Momus*.

i. *"I must first of all trace the cause and manner of Momus' banishment"*

Part mythic narrative and part dark satire, part political allegory and part witty fable, *Momus* is a four-book prose work that defies genre classification and subverts Renaissance literary conventions.²⁰ This work takes its name from its homonymous character, the god of fault-finding and personification of embittered mockery Momus, whose ill-doings "drag all the gods, all heaven and finally the whole machinery of the world to the point of ultimate

¹⁹ Alberti embarked on an ecclesiastical career after Pope Martin V revoked the exile of the Alberti family from Florence in 1428 and joined the papal curia in 1431 as Latin secretary to Biagio Molin, the director of the Curia. McClure, *Doubting the Divine in Early Modern Europe*, p. 39, Alberti's time in the Papal Curia "brought him in contact with like-minded humanists such as Poggio Bracciolini, Lapo da Castiglionchio, and others with whom he shared an interest in the classical world and the study of ancient texts circulating in the Curia and in Florence."

²⁰ *Momus*, vii: "Indeed, *Momus* subverts the conventions of the *speculum principis* ('mirror for princes') tradition."; Cardini. "Alberti o della nascita dell'umorismo moderno," 70, defines *Momus* as "un racconto programmaticamente simbolico e polisemico." Marsh defines Momus as "the first Latin novel of the Renaissance," *Lucian and the Latins*, p. 123. For a general appraisal of the work see McClure. *Doubting the Divine in Early Modern Europe*, p. 52.

catastrophe.”²¹ The exact dating of *Momus* is uncertain, though scholars tend to place its composition between 1443, around the time of Alberti’s return to Rome with Pope Eugenius IV (1431-1447), and 1452-53, during the pontificate of Nicholas V (1447-1455).²² What is certain is that, for over seventy years, the text of this work circulated only in a handful of manuscript copies until it was published posthumously by two different Roman editors in 1520.²³ After that, in the second half of the sixteenth century it was translated first in Spanish by Agustin de Almazan and then into the Italian vernacular respectively by the Florentine humanist and philologist Cosimo Bartoli, who had undertaken the project of translating and publishing a collection of Alberti’s Latin works, as well as by Niccolò Machiavelli’s son, Guido, whose translation remained incomplete.²⁴ While knowledge of Guido’s incomplete enterprise per se does not prove that his father had read *Momus*, it is hard to imagine that the Florentine Secretary was not at least familiar with one of Alberti’s most circulated Latin works.²⁵

²¹ Momus’ earliest recorded appearances are in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (ca. 700 BCE) and in the Homeric epic cycle *Cypria* (sixth and seventh centuries BCE). However, Alberti’s representation takes more immediate inspiration from Lucian’s dialogues *Nigrinus*, *The Parliament of the Gods*, and *Zeus the Tragic Actor* (second century BCE). On Lucian’s influence on Alberti see David Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins: Humor and Humanism in the Early Renaissance*. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); For a summary of *Momus*’ intricate plot see Sarah Knight, *Leon Battista Alberti: Momus*. The I Tatti Renaissance Library. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. vii-xv. All citations, both in English and Latin, from *Momus* are taken from this text.

²² The exact dating of *Momus* is a much-debated issue among scholars of Alberti. For a detailed reconstruction of the state of the matter see Vittorio Fraseje, “Leon Battista Alberti e la *renovatio urbis* di Niccolò V. Congetture per l’interpretazione del *Momus*.” *La cultura*, (1998), pp. 240-266.

²³ Boschetto, *Leon Battista Alberti e Firenze*, 181.

²⁴ In his *Studies on Alberti and Petrarch* (2012), David Marsh speaks at length about Agustin de Almazan’s Spanish translation of *Momus* in 1553 and about the association of the Lucian tradition with the rise of the picaresque novel; Boschetto, *Leon Battista Alberti e Firenze*, pp. 180-181: “All’interno della produzione satirica in latino ebbe destino meno infelice il *Momus*, pubblicato a Roma in due diverse edizioni nel corso del 1520, e poi tradotto a Firenze in volgare non solo da Cosimo Bartoli ma anche, sia pure parzialmente, da Guido Machiavelli, figlio di Niccolò.” In footnote 109, p. 181, Boschetto adds: “Al lavoro di traduzione dell’inizio del libro I del *Momus* [...] partecipò forse anche Giulino de’ Ricci, che di Niccolò Machiavelli era nipote.”

²⁵ Gian Mario Anselmi, *Machiavelli, l’asino e le bestie*. (1984), p. 33: “Senza uscire dall’umanesimo fiorentino, vi è un’altra figura di maldicente che potrebbe aver attirato l’attenzione di Machiavelli. Si tratta di Momo, protagonista dell’operetta omonima, forse la più diffusa dell’Alberti latino e pare sia

Starting from the premise that Alberti's literary production is highly autobiographical in nature, *Momus* has been variously read by critics as a "humanist *roman-à-clef*" and a "disguised autobiography."²⁶ Specifically, throughout the years scholars have focused their detective efforts on mapping its characters and situations onto the different environments and communities Alberti engaged with during the time he was presumably writing it.²⁷ Following this line of inquiry, I pursue an auto-biographical reading of *Momus* that identifies and interrogates the continuities between the written text of the work and Alberti's life. In this regard, a first worthwhile element to analyze is the correspondence between the role that juridical and familial forms of displacement played in both Alberti's life and in the *Momus*. Just as exile from the city and his family of origin constitutes the precondition to Alberti's identity and life story, it also serves as the precondition to *Momus*' storyline. This is evidenced at the very beginning of Book I where Alberti declares: "I have decided to write this story down so that it might cause us to lead a rational life. In order to do this more conveniently, I must first of all trace the cause and manner of Momus' banishment."²⁸ With these words, Alberti is identifying with the theory and praxis of Momus' exile, that is to say, with the reasons and ways in which his exclusion was enforced, the structuring framework for the development of his story. Therefore, examining Alberti's description of the "whys" and "hows" of his main character's banishment is an effective way to start measuring the extent to which his direct familiarity with displacement influenced its literary representation.

difficile non fosse conosciuta dal Machiavelli, tanto più che circolava sotto il titolo di *De principe*. [...] Non sappiamo se e fino a che punto il *Momo* possa essere stato presente al Machiavelli al momento della creazione..."

²⁶ Knight, *Momus*, xxii.

²⁷ Knight, *Momus*; Frajese, "Leon Battista Alberti e la *renovatio urbis* di Niccolò V"; Marsh, *Studies on Alberti and Petrarch*.

²⁸ *Momus*, 15.

As the protagonist around which the main plot revolves, Momus is the first character to be introduced in Book I. According to the narrator, readers would “not find amongst either men or gods anyone so extraordinary, so naturally perverse, so multifariously unlike anyone else as one of the gods whose name is Momus.”²⁹ Momus owed his unique reputation among all beings to the “outrageous insolence of his tongue” which, combined with his “incredible bloody-mindedness” and “the unheard-of wickedness of his disposition,” led to his expulsion from Heaven.³⁰ Precisely, his lover, the goddess Mischief, plotted to have him exiled as a payback for the unfair accusations he had made against her in a fit of jealousy.³¹ To wreak her revenge on him, the deceitful goddess “stir[red] up the hatred and ill-will of many gods against the *isolated* Momus” and tricked the latter into making treacherous statements about Jupiter’s regime that ultimately made “the father of the gods” fear he might lose his kingdom.³² Thus, the perceived private vengeance mixed with fear of being overthrown are the core reasons behind Momus’ exile, two motives that mirror closely the way banishment was used by local governments and ruling factions to dispose of rivals in the early modern period, as it happened to the Alberti family.³³

At this point the narrator describes how a packed senate of the gods assembled, witnesses were commanded to testify, and Jupiter “ordained a day to be set for the trial, and appointed judges to hear the case and render judgement in accordance with the law.”³⁴ However, Momus’

²⁹ Ibid., 13.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 19; In the original the name of the goddess is Fraus (Latin for *Fraud*).

³² Ibid., 31: Jupiter “saw [in Momus] an enemy prepared to stand against him.”

³³ Fabrizio Ricciardelli, *The Politics of Exclusion in Early Renaissance Florence*. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007).

³⁴ *Momus*, 31.

banishment was never legally adjudicated and, shortly thereafter, something happened that turned the aforementioned scene into complete chaos:

from all the seats a unanimous cry suddenly arose denouncing Momus as a public enemy, guilty of treason: ‘Hey, catch the criminal! Hey, chain him to the spot that held Prometheus!’ So great a combination of enemies and such a storm of hatred and animosity dashing against him *alone* floored Momus. Trembling, he decided to escape.³⁵

Using vivid visual language, Alberti paints a spectacle that disrupts the composed legal apparatus he had just described. Because of the gods’ abrupt upheaval Momus was not legally tried in a court of law. Rather, he was cast out from his extended Olympian family by his fellow sky-dwellers who believed he represented a danger to the divine order and wanted to banish him from the community.³⁶ Yet, despite being born a god, Momus’ unique traits had granted him the status of an outcast within the family of the gods long before he was formally expelled from it. This is testified by the language Alberti uses to describe Momus’ position in relation to the Olympian community in the passages cited earlier. The expressions “against the *isolated* Momus” and “against him *alone*,” used to translate respectively the Latin “*in unum Momum*” and “*in se unum*,” convey both the hostility and the alienation that he bore as a direct result of his idiosyncratic nature, thus suggesting his initial social displacement from within it.

Momus’ case of judicial and familial exile bears close resemblance to Leon Battista’s two-fold type of hereditary displacement. Similarly to Alberti, Momus was an outsider to his family and community of origin. Nevertheless, his identity was strictly linked to them and this affiliation granted him a privileged status in the divine hierarchy that as an exile he would be deprived of.³⁷ In seeing the vehemence with which he was unanimously rejected, he fled.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 39; In this case Momus also represents the generation of Alberti who were legally ousted.

³⁷ This is confirmed by what the character says when he is in exile and by his consideration about life on earth. See *Momus*, 61: “I would certainly never have acquired these handy and indispensable skills when I

Running as fast as he could, he made for Eridanus, the heavenly river, hoping to catch a ship and use favorable currents to head for our lands, those of mankind. But while he sped along, avoiding the hue and cry of the pursuers, he carelessly fell into the steep, gaping chasm known as the pit of heaven. Losing the sacred flame that identifies all gods (*flamine deorum insigni*), he forced his way onto Etruscan soil.³⁸

Momus' fall to Earth represents a pivot in the storyline as it activates the single physical displacement responsible for triggering the chain reaction of movements performed by the protagonists around whom the plot revolves.

ii. An Olympus of Displaced Characters

Momus is not the only displaced character in this story. Several other divine and human protagonists, including Jupiter and the infernal ferryman Charon, move across the tripartite settings where the story takes place (Heaven, Earth, and Hell). The characters' mobility throughout the work can be broadly categorized within the vertical or lateral axes. The former is associated with movements from one (meta)physical world to another. This type of displacement can be additionally divided into two subcategories depending on the direction of the movement: downward (from Heaven to Earth) or upward (from Earth to Heaven or from Hell to Earth). Lateral mobility, instead, occurs within the same world, across sites, cities, and regions. Interestingly, all characters are portrayed in the act of moving vertically while only the main protagonists move horizontally on Earth.

lounged at ease in besotted luxury among the gods;" Also, "Who would ever have suspected that such a radical change and reversal of my fortunes would take place? Just now I was in exile, buried among wretches, an object of hatred to both gods and men, a laughingstock! Now I've suddenly been pulled out of my stricken and doomed state, and amid such happiness it's no wonder that I am skipping with delight."

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 31.

Let us leave this point aside for the moment and focus on analyzing the main instances of vertical mobility that can be found in *Momus* and their representation. As seen in the quote above, Momus' exile from Heaven is portrayed using a biblical language reminiscent of Lucifer's fall from grace coupled with the tragi-comic tone that distinguishes this work.³⁹ Momus' careless slip resulted in the loss of the "sacred flame that identifies all gods," which prevented him from being recognized by humans on Earth.⁴⁰ However, both the loss of such an identifying feature and his displaced condition are far from disempowering him the way the other gods may have anticipated and hoped for. Contrariwise, they are key factors that enable both the development of the story and that of its main character's multifaceted identity.

Disguised as a poet (*desumpta poetarum persona*), he recited to the crowd every scandalous tale of the gods, both seriously and in a jest. In the schools, in the theatres, and on street corners tales were told of Jupiter's rape, his disgraceful behavior and his amorous abductions. Next the wicked crimes of Phoebus and Mars and many other gods were retailed everywhere. Truth became mixed with falsehood, and the number and infamy of these crimes grew daily in the telling, so that the person of every god and goddess was considered unclean and lost to debauchery.

After that, having assumed the persona of a philosopher (*philosophantis persona sumpta*), with a long beard, sidelong look, shaggy eyebrows, and a truculent haughty demeanor, he demagogued his way through the gymnasias, surrounded by large groups, arguing that the gods' power was nothing other than a vain, useless, and trifling fabrication of superstitious minds.⁴¹

As seen in the quotation, Momus' ability to move undetected around "the Etruscan soil" and to spread slander against the gods in spaces designated to learning (schools and gymnasias), sociability (theatres), and intersection (street corners) by posing as many different human figures,

³⁹ Reminiscent of Lucifer's, see the *Book of Isaiah* in the Bible which says, "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations."

⁴⁰ *Momus*, 39: "The gods thought that divine majesty was not clearly upheld by the fact that mere mortals had learned to hit a god, even if the god was utterly wicked and virtually unknown."

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

among which a poet and a philosopher, grants him an agency over mortals that threatens the divine hierarchy and triggers the chain of events that will bring the whole machinery of the world to its demise.⁴² To remedy the dire situation he had put the Olympian community in, the gods devised two proposals:

One, which most of them favored, was that some popular gods should be sent down to earth to re-establish divine dignity and authority. [...] The other proposal, on which they were divided, but which had powerful backers, was that Momus should be recalled from exile (*revocaretur*), since all the sky-dwellers knew his character. He would cause more damage to the divine order in exile than he would if the talkative windbag were kept at home, where no one believed him anymore. If they would really like to punish him, it would be the worst form of exile (*exilii deterrimum*) to live among his own kind (*inter suos*) where he was a universal object of scorn and hatred.⁴³

Both solutions inherently deal with and consequently prompt the gods' downward and upward mobility. While the first proposal entailed the displacement of some representatives on Earth to handle the crisis, the second advocated Momus' restoration from exile and his return to Heaven.⁴⁴ Those members of the divine senate who backed the latter option clearly did not think that physical displacement from Heaven and the divine community was an effective form of punishment for the wicked deity. Accordingly, in suggesting that "the worst form of exile [was] to live among his own kind where he was a universal object of scorn and hatred" they expressed their belief that physical proximity and internal segregation were the best ways for the gods to exercise control over and punish Momus.⁴⁵ Interestingly, the idea that exiles could cause more damage when sent away from their homeland than if they were kept at a close distance resonates with a series of considerations about the advantages and disadvantages of adjudicating a

⁴² Ibid., 31-33.

⁴³ Ibid., 39.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Christine Shaw, *Politics of Exile in Renaissance Italy*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), "Those making the decision had to take into account what element of punishment (other than being banished from home) it was intended to inflict."

particular place of exile made by those executing such punishment in the Renaissance. While in cases such as that of the Alberti family the reason behind their members' banishment at different degrees of distance from Florence may be explained by the opposing faction's desire to disperse their domestic enemy, other circumstances demanded that exiles would be kept within the jurisdiction of the city-state so that they could be better monitored. In this regard, the quoted passage not only testifies to the universal degree of hostility and isolation that Momus experienced within the Olympian family, but it also illuminates how the space where his first and utmost form of displacement would be enforced is his "home" (*domi*) in Heaven.⁴⁶

Ultimately, Jupiter and the council endorsed the first proposal and decreed that the goddess Virtue was to be "dispatched" to the inhabitants of the Earth to restore their veneration of the gods.⁴⁷ Her descent to Earth is portrayed in terms antithetical to Momus'. While he was literally chased down by his fellow sky-dwellers, the latter turned out *en masse* to give advice and encouragement to the departing goddess who was escorted by her four adolescent children, Triumph, Trophy, Praise, and Posterity.⁴⁸ Similarly, whereas Momus carelessly fell into the pit of Heaven, Virtue and her children "climb[ed] onto the very whitest cloud in the sky, which slips through the empyrean and bears them down to the Earth."⁴⁹ Despite the differences in their movement, Virtue's displacement and earthly encounter with Momus propels the actions directly

⁴⁶ Ibid., 38-39; Hostility and isolation are manifested by the use of exclusionary language: "all sky-dwellers knew his character," "no one believed him anymore," "he was a universal object of scorn and hatred."

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.: "As the goddess set out, all the divine orders turned out *en masse* to accompany her. Then, as necessity or familiarity with the departing goddess gave them leave, individual members of the divine Senate advised her of their concerns and encouraged her."

⁴⁹ Ibid., 41.

responsible for Momus' illusory redemption and temporary reinstatement in Heaven which, in return, provokes the rest of the gods' downward mobility.⁵⁰

In representing the gods' vertical movement, Alberti makes full use of the vocabulary associated with practices of spatial mobility in the early modern period. For instance, Jupiter's stay on Earth is characterized as a "sort of pilgrimage" (*peregrinationem*) that takes him along several different urban and suburban sites in his effort to consult the philosophers on the matter of building a new world.⁵¹ Mercury's, instead, is described in terms of an "embassy" to bring back the goddess Virtue, whose dispatch he equates to an "exile from Heaven."⁵² Similarly, Pallas' and Minerva's mission as "ambassadors" was to escort Momus home.⁵³ Notably, the most significant case of upward mobility among the three that can be found in the work is characterized, in perfectly Renaissance fashion, as a "journey" (*iter*).⁵⁴ I am referring to the

⁵⁰ I am referring to the increase of the practice of prayers on Earth secretly caused by Momus to overwhelm the gods to the point that Jupiter considers destroying the world and build a new one.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 221.

⁵³ Alberti makes Pallas (or Athena) and Minerva two separate goddesses, contrary to ancient mythology which identified Pallas Athena with Minerva; *Ibid.*, pp. 217-19: "[Jupiter] summoned Mercury and told him to bring him back the goddess Virtue from the lower world. [...] In this situation Jupiter was relying chiefly on Mercury's embassy to shut off this annoying and odious stream of overwrought gods. He persuaded himself that as a result of the embassy, he would win great glory and gratitude from the ignorant mob of gods."; p. 95: "Hence, they unanimously and in gracious language passed a law recalling Momus, and appointed as their ambassadors two goddesses, Pallas and Minerva, to escort Momus home in the most honorable fashion and restore him, as one well deserving of the race of gods, to his former place in the divine hierarchy."

⁵⁴ The other two cases of upward mobility are Momus' temporary return to Heaven and Hercules' ascent. He is the only other human character, together with Gelastus, who is portrayed performing a vertical movement, though his is not actually described in the work but it is something that is reported by the narrator; *Momus*, 295: "While this was taking place in the theatre, a new and delightful adventure, and one particularly worth telling, was beginning in the underworld. Charon had heard frequent rumors from the underworld that the whole world would soon be destroyed. [...] So Charon decided to see the world before such a great and exquisitely beautiful work was destroyed, for he had never seen it and would never be able to do it afterwards."; Charon's ascent is presented as a journey in several instances in the text, 297-307: "While preparing for the journey," "Gelastus warned that they had too long a journey ahead of them," "Gelastus laughed and said, 'Don't be surprised, Charon - I've only made the journey here now, after all.'"

ascent of the ferryman of the condemned souls, Charon, who, having heard that the world may soon be destroyed, resolves to visit it and finds in the soul of the philosopher Gelastus his guide on this journey.⁵⁵ Charon's and Gelastus' long expedition "from the underworld to the mortals above" is described with a wealth of details and so is their "guided tour" of Earth which positions them at the center of the main actions that take place in Book IV.⁵⁶

While I will delve into the analysis of the spaces they transit through later in this chapter, to conclude my examination of the characters' mobility I want to draw attention to an additional correspondence between Alberti's life and the text of this work as well as illuminate the function that displacement plays in the narrative. When reading *Momus* against the backdrop of Alberti's life and the historical, political, and cultural context that he lived in, one cannot fail to notice how the inclusion and enactment of different forms of displacement in this work is the result of the distillation of Alberti's personal experiences with and oblique exposure to its many facets.⁵⁷ Not only did Alberti inherit political and familial displacement by birth, but from a young age he also travelled for educational purposes and once he joined the Papal Curia he participated in ecclesiastic and diplomatic missions around Italy's northern and central city-states. Accordingly, *Momus*' story is imbued with characters whose mobility closely mirrors the reasons behind not just Alberti's, but many early modern individuals' chosen and enforced types of displacement.⁵⁸

More to the point, mobility has a direct influence over the way *Momus*' storyline develops. As my analysis has shown, *Momus*' exile precipitates all the other characters' displacement and ultimately functions as the literary device that sets off key narrative developments responsible for

⁵⁵ *Momus*, 297.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 295; The idea of the "guided tour" is taken from Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins*, 106.

⁵⁷ I am referring to political, familial, religious, diplomatic, and educational reasons.

⁵⁸ See Romedio Schmitz-Esser, "Travel and Exploration in the Middle Ages." *Handbook of Medieval Culture*, Vol. 3. (2015), pp. 1680-1704.

propelling the plot, enabling its many twists and turns, and ensuring that it reaches its climax in Book IV when they all convene on Earth. In other words, mobility is the driving force behind *Momus*' narrative canvas and one of the elements that confers the story the quickness, visibility, and complexity for which it stands out. In choosing to narrativize displacement and assigning it a structuring function to his narrative, Alberti is not only acknowledging the decisive role that such an experience has on individuals, but also pointing towards the spiraling chain of events that it triggers and the unpredictable directions in which it can take one's life.

iii. The Momus' Three-dimensionality

As it has been previously noted, *Momus*' storyline takes place across three dimensions: Heaven, Earth, and Hell. Within each dimension a varying number of spaces are described by Alberti with different degrees of detail. To determine why certain places receive more attention than others, it is critical to identify the spaces that the characters occupy within each of them and analyze how they are portrayed. The story begins and ends in Heaven, a realm inhabited primarily by the Olympians. In *Momus*, Alberti does not dwell on describing its topography. Consequently, the only way it is possible to gauge some of its spatial features is by looking at the actions characters perform in this dimension. For instance, knowledge of the heavenly river Eridanus and of Momus' wish to use its "favorable currents to head for our land, that of mankind" is learned when reading about his fall.⁵⁹ Similarly, at the end of Book IV Jupiter's palace in the "royal citadel" is featured as the location where he is retrieving the notebooks

⁵⁹ Knight, 383: "Hesiod first names the mythical river Eridanus in *Theog.* 338. According to earliest traditions, the Eridanus was situated in northernmost Europe, or in Western Europe, flowing into the Northern Ocean. Later Greek writers, followed by Roman authors, identified the Eridanus with the River Po."

Momus had gifted him, which he finds among the dust-covered books scattered around.⁶⁰

Moreover, the existence of a designated space to make legal decisions as well as view points to watch what is happening on Earth is assumed by how the gods periodically gather in them.⁶¹

Other than that, Alberti leaves his contemporary readers to imagine this metaphysical world, possibly counting on them to rely on their humanistic training and knowledge of medieval works that describe this space in more detail to both populate and visualize it.⁶²

The same can be said of Hell. As for its representation, no reference other than the one of the river across which Charon ferries the mortal souls helps the reader to envision this dimension.⁶³ In contrast, Alberti offers a detailed description of Charon's and Gelastus' ascent to Earth:

They talked as they went along, until they came to the farthest margin of the world, which people call the horizon. In this place there stand opposite each other, separated by a large isolated expanse, two gates opening onto ways out of the underworld. One gate leads to Ocean, the other leads towards the dry portions of the Earth. One of them was inlaid and encrusted with ivory, but the other was decorated with horn and led to the underground passage.⁶⁴

The anabasis the two characters undergo is a rewriting of the ascent from the underworld found in many classic epic journeys such as those of Odysseus and Aeneas, from which Alberti directly

⁶⁰ *Momus*, 351. "While this was happening in the underworld, Jupiter, hidden away in his palace, thought over in solitude his ill fortune and the failure of his plans. [...] Jupiter threw off the bedclothes and started to put the furniture in order. He put a number of dust-covered books that were strewn about negligently in their proper places. While he was arranging them, his hands fell upon the notebooks Momus had given him (as we recounted above)."

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 37: "The gods "rushed to a part of the sky where they could hear the voices and watch what was happening" on earth"; *Ibid.*, 275-7: "They [the gods] were lingering in every place from which they could get a wide view of the earth. [...] The gods, watching these extraordinary events from their several coigns of vantage, had fallen silent, utterly absorbed, utterly dumbfounded."

⁶² I am thinking specifically of Dante's *Inferno* in the *Commedia*.

⁶³ The only time the name of the infernal river is mentioned in the text is when Charon, on Earth, mistakes a river for the Styx. *Momus*, 307: "For in fact, if I'm not out of my reckoning, thanks to your guidance we've retraced our steps the long way around to the shores of Tartarus! Look – there's the black murk of the Styx, and can't you hear the groans and wails of the guilty being tortured?"

⁶⁴ *Momus*, 303.

draws inspiration.⁶⁵ Specifically, Alberti faithfully borrows from these works the description of the liminal space between the underworld and Earth, which features the two gates leading respectively to the wet and to the dry portions of the terrestrial planet.⁶⁶ Similarly, another work that exercised a profound influence over the portrayal of this enterprise is Lucian's dialogue *Charon*, which depicts the first visit of the ferryman to the upper world with Hermes as his guide.⁶⁷ The Greek prose satirist and his work represented an important source of inspiration for Alberti who, as he allusively points out in *Momus*' Prologue, found in them a paradigmatic model for the comic treatment of serious topics.⁶⁸ In fact, the satirical tone that permeates Charon's and Gelastus' voyage is directly borrowed from Lucian's dialogue and it is the element that most distinguishes it from its epic referents. Given how *Charon* was one of Lucian's most famous works in the Renaissance, chances that Alberti's audience had read it and could identify the continuities between this work and its Greek source were high.⁶⁹

Unlike Heaven and Hell, Alberti's portrayal of Earth is more composite and dynamic.

Though the physical area on which the author focuses is mainly limited to Etruria, many

⁶⁵ Odysseus' and Aeneas' journeys to the underworld are described respectively in Book X, line 560 through Book XI, line 62 of *The Odyssey* and Book VI, lines 335-489 of *The Aeneid*.

⁶⁶ Penelope describes the gates in Homer, *Od.*, 19.562-9: "there are two gates of insubstantial dreams: one is made of horn, the other of ivory. The dreams that come through the ivory gates are vain, bringing messages that are unfulfilled. But the dreams that come through the horn gates are fulfilled." Vergil also describes the two gates in *Aen.*, 6.893-6: "There are two gates of Sleep: one is made of horn, and through this, true shadows can leave easily. The other shines with white ivory, but the ghosts send false dreams to heaven." This information can be found in the endnotes of Knight, *Momus*, pp. 395-396.

⁶⁷ Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins*, pp. 105-147.

⁶⁸ *Momus*, Prologue, 5-7. In the prologue, a programmatic text where the author explains the rationale behind his undertaking, Alberti laments the lack of a precedent in Latin prose of writers like Lucian who equip readers to "enjoy a better life [...], while at the same time charming them with laughter, pleasing them with jokes, and diverting them with pleasure." Thus, his decision to be that writer and render serious and important subjects "more amusing and pleasant" by seasoning them "with this elegant and playful style of mine."

⁶⁹ See Marsh, *Lucian and the Latins* for a detailed analysis of the continuities and discontinuities between *Momus* and *Charon* as well as other Lucian works. Similarly, contemporary readers who were familiar with Dante's *Commedia* would unmistakably detect the differences between Dante's representation of the fierce boatman and Alberti's who, like Lucian's *Charon*, finds ample space for laughter.

elements contribute to its written rendering. The first spaces encountered are those where Momus stages his atheistic propaganda, meaning schools, theatres, street corners, and gymnasias.⁷⁰ These spaces, together with those activated by Virtue's glorious entrance and procession, make up the fabric of the city where these actions take place functioning simultaneously as realistic settings as well as symbols of the different institutions they embody.⁷¹

Many people abandoned their shops and followed them, just to gaze longer, again and again, on the outward form of the newcomers. [...] Matrons, young women, old men, people of every age, rushed together from their neighborhoods and alleys. [...] But the goddess Virtue, with serene face and step, demonstrates to all a fine mixture of dignity and ease, greeting everyone with a glad expression in her measured progress. She made her way along the military road leading to the gymnasium, went thence to the theatre, and finally stopped at the courthouse.⁷²

Alberti describes, in broad brushstrokes, the goddess' parade across the main urban landmarks, her regal demeanor, and the festive response of the people who witnessed the event.

Furthermore, the written portrayal of this public spectacle of power unmistakably gestures towards the early modern practice of the *entrata* of notable figures (such Popes, emperors, kings, and queens) into the city that was hosting them.⁷³ In featuring the goddess' and the humans' behavior in these ceremonial urban spaces Alberti expects his contemporary readers to be familiar with this scenario and thus to be able to reconstruct it in their minds.

Another space that is featured on Earth is the Academy. Several characters are portrayed in the act of entering Plato's school of philosophy including Jupiter and Mercury, who make it their first stop during their earthly trips. Alberti does not provide any information regarding

⁷⁰ *Momus*, 33.

⁷¹ I am thinking about the educational, cultural, and social institutions that they represent and house.

⁷² *Momus*, 43.

⁷³ On the topic of the early modern practice of the *entrata* see section of Chap. 1 on Ippolita Sforza.

where in the “Etruscan soil” the Academy is located.⁷⁴ Similarly to other spaces, this archetypal *locus*’ description is limited to the people who inhabit them and to those who transit through them whose experiences are recounted.⁷⁵ The same happens with the series of outer spaces Jupiter traverses during his pilgrimage which include a “secluded piazza of a small town” where he sees the philosopher Diogenes dwelling in a tub, the “bottom of a ditch running along the boundaries of the city” where he happens to meet Democritus, and lastly a garden inside of which he “glimpsed people who were discussing the gods and arguing vehemently.”⁷⁶ Altogether, these descriptions signal that Alberti understands how spaces are fundamentally constituted by people’s presence and activated by their actions in them.

Towards the end of Book III the focal point shifts towards the city, where “an entire river of humanity flow[ed] to enjoy the games” organized to ingratiate the gods.⁷⁷ While the name of “the city” is not explicitly mentioned, the reference to the Circus Maximus suggests that the celebrations take place in Rome.⁷⁸ This detail is notable, given how, thus far, Alberti hasn’t provided any specific reference in the text as to where in the “Etruscan soil” the story is allegedly set. The lack of precise geographical coordinates has led literary scholars to identify this area with Tuscany and specifically with the city of Florence, reclaiming the decisive role that

⁷⁴ At the time Alberti wrote *Momus* (1443-1453) the Florentine Accademia Neoplatonica founded by Marsilio Ficino had not been built yet (1462), so this piece of information cannot be used to validate theories of *Momus*’ plot taking place in Florence.

⁷⁵ *Momus*, 209: “For as soon as he came down to earth, he happened to go into the Academy, where he came across a large assortment of mortals wandering here and there and in every corner, searching as though they were trying to find a thief who had hidden there during the night. Jupiter was astonished to see what they were doing, and he hesitated on the very threshold of the school.”; *Ibid.*, 219: “For when Mercury reached earth, he took off his winged sandals and made his way to the Academy, the philosophers’ workshop. There at the side-gate he happened to encounter Socrates the philosopher, who was all by himself.”

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 211-215.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*: “I won’t mention the rest, but I cannot pass over the vast project of swathing the top and the sides of the theatre and the Circus Maximus in enormous gold-embroidered veils, an unbelievable massive job.”

Alberti's inherited Florentine-ness played in this work.⁷⁹ Contrariwise, literary historians and historians of architecture, who have long been debating the extent of Alberti's involvement in the grandiose urban planning project that Pope Nicholas V commissioned for the city of Rome after the 1450 Jubilee, have seen a correspondence between "the city" of Book III and IV and Nicholas' "urbem."⁸⁰ Nevertheless, no scholar has considered the effect that such information has on the overall textual architecture of *Momus* nor attempted to critically interpret the function(s) that the three dimensions and their spaces play in the narrative.⁸¹

My hypothesis is that the inclusion of this topographical element contributes to making more apparent the difference between the notional character of the two metaphysical worlds, Heaven and Hell, and Earth's verisimilitude. While Alberti may not provide enough details to firmly situate the plot within a single location in the Etruscan soil, the many references to the urban environments that make up the fabric of the Etruscan landscape surpass by far those used to describe Heaven and Hell, whose portrayal is essentially abstract. I maintain that this is the case because the latter function mainly as springboards for the characters' vertical mobility,

⁷⁹ Scholars like Cardini synecdochically take it to stand for Florence. See Cardini, "Alberti e l'umorismo moderno," 42: "Nessuno l'ha osservato, ma nella geografia e nella struttura del romanzo il ruolo della Toscana (ossia di Firenze) non è da comparsa, è di stella di prima grandezza."; Marsh equates "the Etruscan soil" to Tuscany in "Alberti's Momus: Sources and Contexts." *Studies on Alberti and Petrarch*, 620.

⁸⁰ For a detailed examination of the relation between *Momus* and Nicholas V's urban planning project known as *renovatio urbis* see Frajese, "Leon Battista Alberti e la *renovatio urbis* di Niccolò V"; also, Boschetto, *Leon Battista Alberti e Firenze*, 147: "è un fatto che le due maggiori opere di questa stagione (1445-1472), il *Momus* e il *De re aedificatoria*, la cui composizione si spinge ben addentro agli anni '50, sono davvero comprensibili soltanto a partire dal soggiorno dell'autore in questa città [Roma]."

⁸¹ The closest effort to do that I was able to identify is the one-page analysis Cardini dedicates in his essay "Alberti o della nascita dell'umorismo moderno" to underscore the structuring role that the space he identifies as Tuscany plays in the narrative, 42: "Talché questa così negative (ma dunque anche positive) Toscana, non soltanto è uno "spazio" ben congeniale al protagonista e alle sue imprese terrestri, ma è il filo che lega a cima a fondo l'intero romanzo, il filo che più di ogni altro garantisce, saldando l'epilogo al prologo, l'intima coerenza e unità di un'opera a prima vista caotica, e ne è al tempo stesso una delle strutture ideologiche e narrative fondamentali." Also, Lucia Cesarini Martinelli, "Metafore teatrali in Leon Battista Alberti". *Rinascimento*, (1988), pp. 3-51, focuses on the role that the "theatre" plays in several of Alberti's literary works, including *Momus*, *Della Famiglia*, *De re aedificatoria* etc.

while Earth is the central stage where *Momus*' more salient events unfold and, accordingly, where displacement is enacted. This is confirmed by the fact that Earth is the only setting where the main protagonists are represented in the act of moving horizontally, from one site or region to another, while Heaven and Hell are primarily described as places of departure/arrival. By virtue of including these two metaphysical dimensions and portraying the characters' vertical mobility from and to them, Alberti is making Earth the epicenter of the story, the realm that all characters are drawn to and where their subplots merge into the main storyline.

Additionally, Alberti is implicitly drawing a connection between the urban and architectural backdrop where the earthly events occur and the characters' performative actions. After all, it is during his earthly exile that Momus learns from men how to become "a clever and careful skin-changer and dodger."⁸² Indeed, the Etruscan streets, theatres, and gymnasias represent the perfect place for his apprenticeship of the art of "simulation and dissimulation" which allows him to trick the gods on multiple occasions to get his revenge.⁸³ It is on Earth that Jupiter's, Mercury's, and Apollo's undercover reconnaissance missions take place.⁸⁴ It is always on Earth, specifically at sea, that Momus is banned for the second time and where he orchestrates the evil plan that drives the whole pantheon of the gods to "slip down from Heaven" and gather

⁸² Ibid., 61: "But if there is one agreeable thing I've learnt from bitter exile is this: I've come out of this experience a clever and careful skin-changer and dodger; I've become an expert in simulation and dissimulation."

⁸³ Ibid., "I would certainly never have acquired these handy and indispensable skills when I lounged at ease in besotted luxury among the gods."

⁸⁴ Ibid., 211: "These words made Jupiter suspicious, and he feared that these men, who (as he had convinced himself) knew everything, even the greatest secrets, would embarrass him about his silly bit of play-acting, and would reproach him for having hidden the sacred token of the gods in such a way that up close you would see he was a god, but you couldn't tell who he was."; 225: "With these words Mercury returned to the gods. He greeted Jupiter, smiled, and said, 'I went to investigate the feelings and intentions of others, and I met a man who found out all my secrets.'"

in the theatre.⁸⁵ Here is where Gelastus and Charon arrive after their ascent from the underworld and where the laughter of the gods, disguised as their own statues, unsettles not only the two visitors who immediately decide to leave but also the winds that ultimately wreck the theatre and batter the gods still hiding there.⁸⁶ Finally, it is at sea that Charon and Gelastus, on their way back to the underworld, come upon Momus bound with chains on a rock and where the three of them share their personal stories of misfortunes and displacement.⁸⁷

The three defined spaces that make up *Momus*' story play a key role in narrativizing displacement and so do the many spatial intertextualities Alberti disseminates throughout the work. The latter allow early modern readers to easily identify the classical and urban referents behind the story which, in turn, facilitate the reconstruction and visualization of the actions around which the plot revolves. Yet, by way of incorporating, combining, and translating such disparate intertextualities in the narrative canvas of the story Alberti is also adhering to the principles of a central notion in Renaissance humanism, that is to say *imitatio*.⁸⁸ According to

⁸⁵ The episode of the theatre in Book IV can be said to function as a *mise-en-abyme*, that is to say a representation of *Momus*' story within the story.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 329: "For when Charon had fled the theatre, the laughter of the gods had caused the whole earth to tremble and shake. Aeolus, awakened by the laughter, flew out of his cave to find out what was going on. Though shut in their cave, the winds were on high alert [...]. As a result, the winds were seized with a great desire to watch the gods and the games. They broke out of their prison, bent back the bars, tore out the bolts, and burst together into the theatre in a heedless rush. They were so out of control that they tore the fastenings from the veils stretched over the theatre and destroyed part of the wall. The statues some of the gods had placed on top of the walls fell with it. The collapse of the veils and the statues was a grave affliction for the gods. Some were shaken, others buried in the wreckage, and all of them were battered to some extent."

⁸⁷ Ibid., 335-341; Gelastus recounts how during his life he was exiled from his country and how he "wasted the flower of his youth in continual wandering and constant hardship" fleeing the hostile blows of fortunes. (339) This passage led some scholars to see Gelastus' character as another one of Alberti's alter-ego.

⁸⁸ For a definition of humanist imitation see Reed Way Dasenbrock, "Wyatt's Transformation of Petrarch," *Comparative Literature*. (1988), pp. 122-133: "Imitation is the transformation of a model which establishes a relation to the past model yet allows the later writer creative freedom." See also Martin McLaughlin, *Literary Imitation in the Italian Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Literary Imitation in Italy from Dante to Bembo*. (New York: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 5: "rhetorical imitation,

Petrarca, writers form their literary voice precisely through the creative imitation of models.⁸⁹ Thus, interspersing *Momus* with references to original models that he (re)semanticizes Alberti succeeds not only in creating his distinctive literary voice, but also in orienting this story toward his contemporary readers, making them feel familiar with elements that allow them to navigate this otherwise frenzied and enigmatic piece of literature.⁹⁰

Alberti's *Momus* constitutes an ingenious example of how Renaissance writers in exile responded to the personal and spatial displacements that marked their lives by way of featuring decidedly displaced characters and plots that revolve around their movements across different dimensions in their narrative works. The textual evidence that my analysis has brought to the fore underscores not just the autobiographical correspondence between Alberti's legal and familial exile and that of its main character, but also how the story's narrativization of displacement is informed by his direct and indirect exposure to the many forms that it took in the Renaissance. This type of narrative-creative response to exile does not constitute an isolated case in the early modern period. Machiavelli adopted a similar copying strategy when writing his *Favola*. Like Alberti, the Florentine Secretary channeled his lived experiences of disenfranchisement from the center of political and social power into the *Favola*'s storyline, incorporating legal and spatial references imbued with personal resonance. As my analysis of his

that is to say, the process whereby one writer consciously or unconsciously borrows from another text, and that borrowing effects a significant intertextual echo."

⁸⁹ Petrarca discusses imitation in several letters, the most important being the one to Giovanni Boccaccio, *Fam.* XXIII 19; *LFM* 3:300-302.

⁹⁰ In *Momus*' Preface, 5, Alberti states: "it still does not escape me just how difficult and almost impossible it is to introduce an idea that has not already been discovered and handled by a good many out of so infinite a swarm of writers. Think of the old proverb: nothing is said which has not previously been said. For this reason, it is my considered opinion that the man who introduces new, unheard-of, and unorthodox material, whoever he happens to be, should be considered a member of this rare genius of humankind. Next to this sort of writer will rank the one who uses an original and surprising literary genre to treat known and common ideas." The model he has in mind is Lucian and with *Momus* he programmatically follows in his footsteps and positions himself as his Latin counterpart.

novella will show, akin to the *Momus*, while exile per se is not the subject matter of this work, it is nonetheless the underlying condition structuring Machiavelli's literary response to an experience that marked his life and literary imagination in ways that are yet to be fully grasped.

II. Machiavelli's *Favola* and the Cathartic Power of Storytelling

Machiavelli's *Favola* is a short and fast-moving tale traditionally understood as a misogynistic satire of conjugal life, Renaissance secular and religious customs, and more broadly the human condition. In it, Machiavelli retells the oriental *topos* of the devil-who-marries artfully combining elements from different Latin *exempla* and their French medieval rewritings, like the pact-with-the-devil motif, with humorous situations (*beffe*) and characters of decameronian inspiration.⁹¹ Adaptation of material from Boccaccio's *Decameron* was a standard practice among Cinquecento writers, who found in it a repository of plot elements from which to draw on combined with a light and playful style that soon became the paradigm for Italian vernacular prose writing in the Renaissance.⁹² That the Florentine Secretary assimilated thematic, stylistic, and even linguistic material from Boccaccio's novelle in his *Mandragola* and in some of his

⁹¹ For a detailed analysis of the *Favola*'s intertextualities see Michelangelo Picone, "La Favola di Machiavelli: una lettura intertestuale," *Dal primato allo scacco. I modelli narrativi italiani tra Trecento e Seicento*. (1998), pp. 171-190, where he compares the *Favola*'s text with Jehan Le Fèvre's *Lamentations de Matheolus*, a 14th century French vernacularization of a medieval Latin text. Among the Latin sources of inspiration behind the novella can be counted the *exempla* of Jacques of Vitry (1170 circa - 1240) and of Pietro of Limoges (13 sec.). Scholarship on the *Favola* tends to reference only in passing to Machiavelli's debt towards Boccaccio's narrative tradition. In *Machiavelli narratore. Morfologia e ideologia della novella di Belfagor con il testo della 'Favola.'* (Rome: Laterza, 1990), Filippo Grazzini argues for the importance of Machiavelli's only extant novella among other reasons as "marking a moment in the evolution of the novella genre between Boccaccio and Cinquecento novellieri such as Fiorenzuola." Interestingly, to this day the presence of decameronian and other Boccacesque elements in the *Favola* has never been systematically and critically analyzed.

⁹² Here I am referring to Pietro Bembo's 1525 *Prose della volgar lingua*, which codified Italian orthography and grammar and recommended Petrarca as model for Italian literary poetry and Boccaccio for literary prose.

most amusing familiar letters has been established by several scholars who have brought to the fore and analyzed these similarities in detail.⁹³ These works, together with the *Favola*, testify to Machiavelli's natural disposition for storytelling and to his genius for representation.⁹⁴ As his only extant novella, the *Favola* weds Machiavelli's narrative talent with the spirited satirical look that his plays distinctively cast on the world, packing in less than ten pages a unique combination of biting humor, ingenious plot twists, and eccentric characters.

Commonly known in the English-speaking world as *Belfagor*, many interpretations have been given as to why his author named this work *Favola*.⁹⁵ According to Martinez, this title

⁹³ Daria Perocco, "Boccaccio (comico) nel teatro (comico) di Machiavelli," *Quaderns d'Italia. Boccaccio e il teatro*. Vol. 14. (2009), p. 25: "Non sono stati pochi nel corso dei secoli gli studiosi che hanno posto in parallelo i due autori, notando la presenza di situazioni comiche di derivazione decameroniana nella *Mandragola*. Del resto, anche se siamo cronologicamente in tempi sicuramente anteriori all'imposizione bembesca del dettato boccacciano, non poche altre sue opere attestano come Machiavelli fosse penetrato della conoscenza del *Decameron* al punto che le situazioni e le citazioni prese da Boccaccio sono diventate parte pregnante e totalmente integra della sua memoria letteraria"; Grazzini. "Teatralità indiretta di Machiavelli: le *Lettere* e la novella di *Belfagor*." *Il teatro di Machiavelli*. (2005), p. 73: "è storicamente assodato negli studi letterari che amore, fortuna, umana industria (o stoltezza), parti semplici della materia dell'esistenza, sono trasmessi all'intera produzione narrativa e teatrale del primo Cinquecento – dove certo si danno modifiche e ulteriori elaborazioni – dal *Decameron*. [...] Anche le novelle machiavelliane in forma di lettera rientrano in questo perimetro tematico."

⁹⁴ Among Machiavelli's epistolary novelle see the one where he vividly recounts his encounter with an old lady in Verona (Letter 178; Atkinson and Sices, 190) and the letter he wrote to Francesco Guicciardini during his legation to the Franciscan friars in Carpi (Letter 300; Atkinson and Sices, 369); Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore*, 6: "ci troviamo di fronte ad alcune lettere familiari, alle quali analisi esaurienti compiute da più parti hanno riconosciuto uno statuto novellistico." Giorgio Inglese. *Per Machiavelli: l'arte dello stato, la cognizione delle storie*. (Rome: Carocci editore, 2006), p. 168: "Machiavelli aveva praticato nelle sue lettere familiari quella speciale zona della fantasia in cui la novella si fa commedia."; Grazzini, "Teatralità indiretta di Machiavelli: le *Lettere* e la novella di *Belfagor*." *Il teatro di Machiavelli*. (2005), p. 68: "L'attrattività della scrittura machiavelliana si deve, nel grande saggismo, soprattutto alla sua forte visività. [...] Intensamente ragionata, la prosa è sempre anche prosa rappresentativa."

⁹⁵ For a sample of interpretations on the title see Picone, "La Favola di Machiavelli," pp. 171-2: "Qual è la ragione di questa scelta di un titolo generico, piuttosto che di un titolo tematico? La questione rimane tuttora aperta. In un mio recente contributo ho tentato di scoprire tale ragione, individuandola nell'esigenza machiavelliana di differenziarsi sia rispetto alla tradizione novellistica, sia rispetto a quella esemplaristica. Se la novella boccacciana è sinonimo del puro piacere artistico del raccontare, e se l'*exemplum* strumentalizza il racconto ai fini dell'insegnamento morale cristiano, la *Favola* di Machiavelli invece funzionalizza il piacere della *factio* alla trasmissione di una morale, non più religiosa e astratta, ma politica e pratica. Il termine "favola" permette dunque all'autore di definire il suo racconto come divertente sì, ma anche utile, passabile cioè di un'interpretazione allegorica."; Marco Menon. "An Interpretation of Machiavelli's *Favola*," *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy*. Vol. 46. No. 1

evokes the generic affiliation with Machiavelli's theatrical works signaled by the fact that the word *favola*, which comes from the conventional Latin term for play (*fabula*), is used in the prologue of the *Mandragola* and the *Clizia* to describe the plays ("La favola Mandragola si chiama" and "Questa favola si chiama Clizia").⁹⁶ However, contrary to his comedies and to his most famous political works, scholarship on the *Favola* is scant and fairly unoriginal. As of today, no critical edition of this work has been published and most secondary literature dates to the second half of the XX century.⁹⁷ While this scholarship has sought to analyze elements such as the *Favola*'s tripartite structure, textual incongruities, and the representation of Hell and Earth, it has neglected to employ Machiavelli's experience of displacement as interpretative tool for their analysis. This neglect may have something to do with the tendency to associate his exile with the episode that marked a change in Machiavelli's political fortune and initiated the chain of events that led to the writing of *Il principe*. Nonetheless, as I maintain throughout this chapter, failure to use exile as a critical lens to examine his political and literary works has prevented us from understanding the multiple ways in which such a defining experience of his life affected and informed the content and form of his writings. Chapter three reclaims the centrality of this

(2019), p. 30: "thanks to the title we know we are reading a fable, and a fable does not claim to be true. But we expect that a fable contains a moral lesson; at least, we can enjoy the wit of the storyteller and meditate on his intended teaching."

⁹⁶ See Ronald L. Martinez, "Comedian, Tragedian: Machiavelli and Traditions of Renaissance Theatre," *The Cambridge Companion to Machiavelli*. (2010), p. 209.

⁹⁷ Among the most important studies on Machiavelli's *Favola* of the last century see Giorgio Barberi Squarotti, "L'aspirazione al tragico nelle 'Lettere' e nella 'Favola,'" *La forma tragica del Principe e altri saggi su Machiavelli*. (1966), pp. 1-41; Luigi Blasucci, "Machiavelli novelliere e verseggiatore," *Cultura e scuola*. (1970), pp. 174-191; Marziano Guglielminetti, "Le simultanee mutazioni di Belfagor arcidiavolo," *La cornice e il furto: studi sulla novella del '500*. (1984), pp. 52-69; Filippo Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore*. 1990; Antonio D'Andrea, "Strutture e significato della Favola di Machiavelli," *Strutture inquiete. Premesse teoriche e verifiche storico-letterarie*. (1993), pp. 129-152; Picone, "La Favola di Machiavelli," (1998), pp. 171-190; Sante Matteo, "To Hell with Men and Meaning! Vesting Authority in Machiavelli's Belfagor," *Italica*, Vol. 79, No. 1 (2002), pp. 1-22; Paolo Chirumbolo, "Belfagor e il mondo rovesciato di Machiavelli," *Protagonisti e testi*. (2003), pp. 29-35; Pasquale Stoppelli, *Machiavelli e la novella di Belfagor. Saggio di filosofia attributiva*. (Rome: Salerno Editore, 2007); Marco Menon, "An Interpretation of Machiavelli's Favola," (2019), pp. 27-43.

occasion and redresses this neglect by providing a critical reading of the *Favola* through the lens of exile. In so doing, it reinforces the idea at the core of this chapter that the experience of displacement afforded Renaissance exile writers like Machiavelli a creative outlet that distinctively comes to the fore in their narrative works. In what follows, I investigate the ways in which displacement is embedded and represented in the storyline vis-à-vis Machiavelli's lived experience of it.

Before proceeding, however, we must reconstruct Machiavelli's personal geography at the time of writing this work. With regard to the *Favola*'s dating, two main theories have been advanced by the scholars who authored the only two monographs available on this work. Based on the stylistic, thematic, and theatrical parallels that Filippo Grazzini identified between the *Favola* and the *Mandragola*, he argued that they evolved in Machiavelli's artistic imagination in the same arc of years and thus placed its composition between 1519-20.⁹⁸ Since then, most interpreters followed suit, until more recently, an analysis of the autograph material and of the language, syntax, and writing techniques of the novella led Pasquale Stoppelli to push forward the dating to the mid-1520s, specifically after the composition of Machiavelli's *Istorie Fiorentine* (1520-25), with which he thinks the *Favola* shares some similarities.⁹⁹ The impossibility of establishing with certainty the exact dating of this work, however, does not prevent us from placing its composition several years into Machiavelli's *post res perdit*a, following the fall of the Florentine Republic in 1512.¹⁰⁰ This means that by the time Machiavelli wrote the *Favola* he had

⁹⁸ In *Machiavelli narratore* Grazzini argues for a "chronologic continuity" between the two works and claims they stem from an epoch of "creative fervor" (4-5).

⁹⁹ Among those who followed Grazzini's theory see Chirumbolo, "Belfagor e il mondo rovesciato di Machiavelli"; Pasquale Stoppelli, *Machiavelli e la novella di Belfagor*, 2007.

¹⁰⁰ Regarding the personal and socio-political circumstances under which this work was written, Sante Matteo says: "this is a critical text, a discourse in crisis and about crisis, produced in a moment of personal, social, political, and cultural rupture, and meant both to reflect and critique the conditions which

already endured the pains associated with imprisonment, torture, and exclusion from Florence's political life and redirected his efforts to writing some of his most influential political and literary works.¹⁰¹

This productive period of writing coincided with him joining and becoming one of the habitués of the *Orti Oricellari*, a Florentine group who met in the gardens of the Rucellai family to engage in literary, philosophical, and political discussions.¹⁰² This opportunity provided a strong stimulus for Machiavelli and allowed him to establish intellectual friendships that bore literary and political fruit. In fact, soon thereafter his political services began to be commissioned again and with it came a faint resemblance of the mobility that he experienced at the height of his career.¹⁰³ Between 1516 and 1525, he participated in a small number of private missions which allowed him to travel beyond the Florentine territory to Genoa, Lucca, Carpi, and Venice.¹⁰⁴ However, despite the greater freedom of movement and his many efforts in the years leading to his death, in 1527, Machiavelli never fully managed to regain the socio-spatial position that he once occupied in the political arena. In other words, his political comeback did not end his deeper personal and spatial displacement, nor did it translate into a return to his former status. It is with these contextual details in mind that we must approach and interpret the echoes that it is possible to identify between the text of the *Favola* and Machiavelli's life. Hence, to assess the

brought the author and his society to such a turning point" (Matteo, "To Hell with Men and Meaning!", 15).

¹⁰¹ *The Prince* (1513), *Mandragola* (written according to Stoppelli 1514-1515), *The Discourses* (1513-1519).

¹⁰² Machiavelli joined the *Orti Oricellari* around 1516-17. Among the participants of the *Orti* there were the playwrights Jacopo Nardi, Lorenzo Strozzi, and Luigi Alamanni and important political figures such as Zanobi Buondelmonti and Cosimo Rucellai, who are the dedicatees of Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*.

¹⁰³ For more information see the section dedicated to Machiavelli in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁴ Among his latest private missions, he was sent to execute some commissions on behalf of Paolo Vettori, Captain of the Papal Galleys, in October 1516, to retrieve credits in Genoa (1518), Lucca (1520) and Venice (1525).

extent to which Machiavelli's creative process in writing the *Favola* has been shaped by his lived experiences of displacement, we will now take a step back and examine how the story develops.

i. The Favola or Belfagor

Machiavelli's *Favola* is commonly referred to by the name of its main protagonist, the archdevil Belfagor, whose earthly experience of the marital condition and mystic ventures together with the peasant Gianmatteo constitute the main storyline. The *Favola*'s plot can be broken down into three main narrative units.¹⁰⁵ The prologue is usually seen as freestanding from the rest of the plot.¹⁰⁶ The second narrative unit is associated with the devil's experience of marriage and the third with his endeavors with Gianmatteo. While scholars tend to agree on the structural elements that make up the story, when it comes to the overall perception of this literary work some go so far as to consider it a "textual Frankenstein monster, coarsely stitched together from disparate elements," while others strongly argue for its narrative cohesiveness.¹⁰⁷ My

¹⁰⁵ Blasucci, "Machiavelli novelliere e verseggiatore," 177: "Dal punto di vista tematico il racconto sembra comporsi di tre parti, corrispondenti a loro volta a tre tempi narrativi ben individuati: il prologo in inferno, le avventure di Belfagor-Roderigo, le vicende finali degli invasamenti e degli esorcismi."; Barberi Squarotti. "L'aspirazione al tragico," 28: "Di qui deriva, appunto, la tripartizione volutamente e dichiaratamente discontinua della *Favola*"; Menon. "An Interpretation of Machiavelli's *Favola*," 29: "In the *Favola*, three narrative moments can be clearly distinguished: a prelude in Hell, a part centered on Roderigo's marriage; and a part centered on the common venture of the devil and Gianmatteo."

¹⁰⁶ Chirumbolo, "Belfagor e il mondo rovesciato di Machiavelli," 30: "la maggior parte dei critici appare concorde nel dare al prologo infernale uno spazio narrativo a sé stante (in virtù della sua importanza ideologica), più disparate sono le opinioni riguardanti il resto della novella. Per esempio, alla scansione di Franco Manai, che individua nell'organizzazione del testo tre movimenti narrativi distinti (vicende terrene di Belfagor-Roderigo e sua vita coniugale, rovina finanziaria, fuga e incontro con il contadino Gianmatteo, esorcismi e ritorno all'inferno) si oppone quella di Filippo Grazzini, il quale isola quattro macrosequenze appartenenti a due cicli narrativi ben distinti (Belfagor e la moglie, Belfagor e Gianmatteo)."

¹⁰⁷ Matteo, "To Hell with Men and Meaning!," 2: "Machiavelli's little 'favola' [...] is a strange literary hodgepodge, a textual Frankenstein monster, coarsely stitched together from disparate elements. Its plot consists mainly of two separate stories that have little to do with each other."; D'Andrea speaks of "certe difficoltà strutturali, che pure rimangono," (*Strutture e significato*, 130). Contrariwise, among those who advocated for the *Favola*'s strong narrative unity see Mario Martelli. "Il buon geometra di questo mondo," *Machiavelli. Tutte le opere*. (1989), xiii: "I tre tempi, con i loro rispettivi tre momenti,

reading of the *Favola* aligns with the latter as it proves how the narrativization of displacement actually contributes to the organic and ingenious unfolding of its plot.

Despite his leading role in the story, Belfagor is not the first character to be introduced in the *Favola*. Early in the prologue, we learn that this tale retells the story originally contained in the annals of Florence of a holy man who learned in a vision that “as countless numbers of wretched souls who died under God’s displeasure went to Hell, all or most of them complained that they were brought to such great misfortunes by nothing else than by getting married.”¹⁰⁸ No description of the holy man is given other than the fact that he was highly praised “by everybody who lived in those times,” nor mention of him is made later in the *Favola*.¹⁰⁹ Yet, the inclusion of this human character in the first lines of the prologue proves to be instrumental in the development of the story and its enactment of displacement. In fact, the downward movement of the souls from this life to the afterlife inferred from the holy man’s vision swiftly shifts the plot’s setting from Earth to Hell, where the most critical part of the prologue takes place.¹¹⁰

inquadrano gli avvenimenti in un reticolo estremamente regolare, che allo scioglimento finale toglie l’aspetto di un risultato conseguito attraverso il montare casuale dei fatti e delle combinazioni, per conferirgli quello di un gioco ad incastro risolto con la messa in scena dell’ultimo pezzo. Anche nella *Favola*, come nella *Mandragola*, tutto è preordinato e stabilito a priori.”; Grazzini defines the *Favola* “un’opera sorvegliatissima” (*Machiavelli narratore*, 4); In “An Interpretation of Machiavelli’s *Favola*,” Marco Menon argues: “The present reading [...] contrasts those which see this piece merely as a clumsy satirical intervention lacking coherence and structural cohesiveness. In fact, much of this paper is dedicated to showing that this is not really the case” (29).

¹⁰⁸ All English quotes are taken from Niccolò Machiavelli. “Belfagor: The Devil Who Married” in *Machiavelli: The Chief Works and Others*. Vol. 2. trans. Allan Gilbert. (1965), p. 869.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, “One can read in the ancient records of Florentine affairs, just as one can also hear the story, about a very holy man whose life was praised by everybody who lived in those times.”

¹¹⁰ The prologue outlines the theory and praxis of Belfagor’s displacement; On the topic of the story’s settings and narrative movements between them see Matteo, (“To Hell with Men and Meaning!,” 6: “the discourse moves chiasmatically in two opposite directions at once: both toward and away from conflicting destinations: life and afterlife, the physical world and the metaphysical. The ensuing story results from superimposing chiasmal vectors on each other: men going from this life to the afterlife and a devil going from hell to this life.

Here a group of infernal “princes” and “judges of Hell,” including Minos and Rhadamanthus, presided by their king Pluto, assembles in a council to examine the cause of the souls’ disgraced condition and “decide on the method judged best for revealing its falsehood or completely finding out its truth.”¹¹¹ The inclusion of the infernal council in the story represents a novelty with respect to the *topos* of the devil-who-marries and its medieval rewritings worthy of being examined more closely.¹¹² In some respects, its description is reminiscent of the senate of the gods summoned by Jupiter at the beginning of *Momus* for the purpose of trying the mischievous god.¹¹³ While the reasons why the two rulers convene the councils are different in nature (Jupiter does it out of fear of losing his kingdom, while Pluto seeks counsel from his advisors because he is preoccupied with its honor and reputation), both assemblies are represented as well-established legal and governmental apparatuses mirroring an ideal Renaissance court.¹¹⁴ Contrary to what happens in *Momus*, the majority of the princes agree that somebody be sent into the world to confirm whether the claims are true.¹¹⁵ Since none of the souls volunteer for this mission, the choice of emissary is left to the *sorte* which falls on

¹¹¹ Machiavelli, *Belfagor*, 869.

¹¹² Picone, “La *Favola* di Machiavelli,” 176: “è così che inizia il secondo segmento narrativo della *Favola* [...] in cui viene svolto un *topos* della tradizione esemplaristica (il diavolo che viene sulla terra per prendere moglie), al quale però Machiavelli attribuisce una giustificazione del tutto nuova (quella dettata dalla ‘condizione’ del concilio infernale, di accertare ‘quali sieno i carichi e le incomodità del matrimonio)’.”

¹¹³ *Momus*, 31.

¹¹⁴ Machiavelli, *Belfagor*, 870: “We have summoned you that you might aid us with your counsel and be the reason why this kingdom, as in the past it has been without infamy, may continue in the same way in the future.” Among the interpreters who maintained that the representation of Hell reminds a Renaissance court see Matteo’s “To Hell with Men and Meaning!,” 7: “[Hell] is very much like a Renaissance court or city-state. The devils are called infernal judges and infernal princes. Their concerns are bureaucratic and ethical.”

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Belfagor.¹¹⁶ Thus explained is the reason behind the archdevil's displacement on Earth and how he gets to unwillingly become the *Favola's* main protagonist.

Another aspect on which the infernal council agrees upon are the conditions under which Belfagor is sent into the world. After the archdevil is chosen by lot as Hell's envoy, he "pledged himself" to the council's solemnly formulated demands.¹¹⁷

These were that the devil appointed for this business should at once receive a hundred thousand ducats, with which he was to go into the world, and in a human form to take a wife and live with her ten years; then, pretending to die, he was to return and as a result of his experience testify to his superiors on the burdens and annoyances of marriage. The council also settled that during the said time he should be subject to all the troubles and evils to which men are subject, and which result in poverty, imprisonment, sickness and all the other misfortunes that men incur, unless he could free himself from them with fraud or with cleverness.¹¹⁸

What is most striking about these conditions is the formality and precision with which they enforce the scope, duration, and quality of Belfagor's stay on Earth. In fact, not only is Belfagor expected to take human form, but he is provided with an amount of money (*a hundred thousand ducats*) the princes consider appropriate to take a wife, live with her for the time they deem necessary to assess the pros and cons of marital life (*ten years*), and return to Hell to report on his findings.¹¹⁹ Moreover, under the provisions of the council, during his time on Earth the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., "So, finding nobody who would volunteer for this mission, they determined to make their selection by lot. This fell on Belfagor." As noticed both by Grazzini and Menon, in the original Italian the word "sorte" appears three times: "fatal sorte" gave Pluto his dominion, "sorte" elected Belfagor as hell's envoy, and Roderigo found Gianmatteo "a sorte", that is by chance. Here is another parallelism with Alberti's *Momus*, where none of the damned souls wanted to accompany Charon in his expedition on Earth, 295: "out of the entire crowd of dead souls he found no one he could convince on any account to travel with him. They all refused to go back to the place whence they had fled so happily and freely, released from the foul prison of their bodies."

¹¹⁷ Ibid., "Though he undertook this duty very unwillingly, nevertheless, under the compulsion of Pluto's authority, he consented to carry out all that was decided in the council, and pledged himself to those conditions that were solemnly resolved on among them."

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ The word "princes" recurs twice in the prologue, the second time on p. 870: "To each of those princes the matter seemed very significant and of great consequence."

archdevil is also expected to suffer from all the troubles and ills associated with his human identity, unless he can liberate himself from them by deceit or ingenuity.

In the ceremonious and highly prescriptive language used by the narrator to frame these conditions one cannot but hear an echo of the sentences of exile found in Renaissance criminal registers like the one where Machiavelli's ban was recorded.¹²⁰ While no exact correspondence between the archdevil and Machiavelli's case is to be found, the legal twist that he confers to the infernal subplot attests to the lasting mark that his personal experience of exile and knowledge of the *bandi* had a on him and suggests that he channeled them into his literary creativity by informing his representation of displacement in the storyline. As I will go on to demonstrate by analyzing the enabling and constraining functions of Belfagor's terms of displacement, these terms do not only regulate the possibilities and limitations of his sojourn on Earth, but they are also implicitly responsible for triggering the chain of movements and events that make up the *Favola*'s plot. This ensures that the storyline develops according to the author's plan.¹²¹ Thus, investigating the term's functions allows to gauge the relation that exists between them and the characters' different forms of mobility, and ultimately to illuminate the structuring role that they play in the narrative.¹²²

¹²⁰ The *Favola* is told essentially in the third person, aside from a moment toward the middle of the tale where the narrator inserts himself into the narration with a first-person self-reference and then with a first-person plural that highlights his Florentine-ness. *Belfagor*, 872: "I shall pass over the great expense that, in order to satisfy her, he incurred in dressing her in the latest fashions and in satisfying her with the latest designs – which our city, following the habits natural to it, incessantly varies."

¹²¹ D'Andrea, "Strutture e significato della *Favola* di Machiavelli," 135: "Come è stato osservato da Barberi Squarotti, la *Favola* potrebbe concludersi con la rovina economica e la fuga di Roderigo. A questo punto il diavolo potrebbe tornarsene senz'altro all'inferno [...]. L'esperienza è già stata fatta e gli elementi per la risposta al quesito che gli è stato posto sono ormai stati raccolti. [...] Certo la questione non sorgerebbe nemmeno se non ci fossero di mezzo quelle benedette condizioni, escogitate dai diavoli – e cioè da Machiavelli, proprio per ritardare il ritorno in inferno del protagonista e assicurare così lo sviluppo del racconto, che altrimenti avrebbe l'aria di finire."

¹²² The first and only scholar who, to this day, has observed the structuring function the conditions play in the story is D'Andrea, "Strutture e significato della *Favola* di Machiavelli," 131: "Procedendo per ordine,

ii. *The Terms of Belfagor's Exile*

The terms of Belfagor's displacement can be broadly divided into two categories: enabling and constraining. This distinction is based on the possibilities and restraints that such conditions open and impose on the protagonist and, in turn, the other characters in the story. For instance, the money Belfagor was given to go into the world falls into the first category. The one hundred thousand ducats Belfagor received from the council enabled him to create his human identity as Roderigo of Castile. With this money, he was able to provide himself abundantly with horses and other devils serving as his attendants and make a grandiose entrance into Florence, the city that "before all others he chose as his home, because it seemed to him most fit to support one who employed his funds in money lending."¹²³ Settling into Florence was thus a strategic decision, based on the city's reputation for attracting and favoring someone with his profile. Additionally, his great wealth played a key role into the backstory the archdevil carefully crafted to corroborate his human identity. As the narrator recounts,

Taking the name of Roderigo of Castile, he rented a house in the Street of All Saints, and so that his situation would not be found out, he said that when he was a child he had left Spain and gone to Syria, and in Aleppo had gained all his property; that he had left that place to come to Italy so he could take a wife in regions more civilized and more suited to a well-ordered life and to his own taste.¹²⁴

Several interpretations have been given as to why Machiavelli created this particular backstory for Roderigo's character. For instance, Grazzini suggests that Machiavelli might have meant for

e ritornando alla distinzione di tre o quattro fasi [...], quel che per il momento importa rilevare è che il passaggio dall'una all'altra di queste varie fasi è strettamente connesso alla questione delle condizioni prese da Belfagor nell'intraprendere, malvolentieri, 'costretto da lo imperio di Plutone', la missione che gli tocca in sorte."

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid. The original Italian for "and so that his situation would not be found out" actually references the conditions: "e perché non si potessino rinvenire le sue condizioni." All Italian quotes are taken from Niccolò Machiavelli, *Novella di Belfagor; L'asino*. (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2010).

Roderigo to be taken as a Sephardic Jew, persecuted or self-exiled from Spain, and now hiding his identity.¹²⁵ Michelangelo Picone sees in Roderigo's success story an echo of the *topos* of the Western man who goes East to seek his fortune found in several of Boccaccio's novelle, while Marco Menon sees an allusive reference to Belfagor's effectual truth.¹²⁶ Certainly, the correspondence between Roderigo's and Belfagor's displacements evidenced in this passage cannot be ascribed to a mere coincidence. In retracing the movements of the former from Spain (the country he left as a child) to Syria (the place where he gained all his property) to Italy, it is impossible not to notice how they closely mirror Belfagor's own journey from Heaven (where, as we find out in the prologue, he was born an archangel) to Hell (where he received the money from the council) to Earth.¹²⁷ This equivalence points to how both characters' identities are predicated on displacement and is an incipient sign of the correlation that exists between the terms of exile and the characters' mobility in story.

Additionally, the sum at his disposal allowed Roderigo to establish a reputation as an affluent man in Florence. His display of wealth and liberality made an impression among "many noble citizens who had plenty of daughters but little money."¹²⁸ Among all these women, he chose to marry the beautiful but haughty Onesta Donati, daughter of an impoverished though

¹²⁵ Grazzini, *Machiavelli narratore*, pp. 37-38, pp. 120-121.

¹²⁶ Picone, "La Favola" 177: "Viene così schizzata una *success story*, simile a quella descritta tante volte nel *Decameron*: la storia di un uomo che dall'Occidente si reca in Oriente per trovare se stesso, e per potersi affermare finanziariamente e socialmente."; For example, see Boccaccio. *Decameron*. II. 4 and II.9; Menon in "An Interpretation of Machiavelli's *Favola*," 33: "It does not seem amiss to translate this lie into its effectual truth: 'Spain' stands for heaven (where he was created as an archangel), 'Syria' stands for hell (where he moved and received a fortune, namely, one hundred thousand ducats), and 'Italy' stands for earth (a place more humane and more apt to civil life and his *animo*, his spirit or disposition)."

¹²⁷ Right after reading about the archdevil being chosen by lot as Hell's emissary on Earth, we learn that before his fall from Heaven, he was an archangel. This critical piece of identification, the only one the narrator shares about his protagonist, allows to infer that Belfagor was not born a devil, but became one as a result of his exile from Heaven in the same way in which he took human form when he was displaced from Hell.

¹²⁸ *Belfagor*, 871.

“very important and greatly respected family in Florence,” and with the money he had reserved he was able to provide a “magnificent and spectacular wedding, omitting nothing expected in such festivities.”¹²⁹ Hence, at least in the beginning, money proves to be an empowering condition that affords Roderigo the means to comply with another one of the stipulations decided by the council, that of taking a wife, while at the same time enabling his character’s social mobility and acceptance into the Florentine upper class.¹³⁰

In contrast, being married for ten years and subjected to all the passions and emotions that go hand in hand with having a human body are constraining conditions.¹³¹ Marrying Onesta caused Roderigo “unimaginable distress” and bound him to lead a “vexatious and unquiet life.”¹³² For instance, his excessive love for her made him unable to resist her slightest desire, from dressing in Florence’s latest fashions to outdoing all the other noble citizens with festive banquets “so that she would not be inferior to other wives.”¹³³ Similarly, to remain at peace with her he felt compelled to spend the greater part of his fortune to help her family and went to the extent to borrow money only to become insolvent when one of Onesta’s brothers gambled away all that he had given him. At this point Roderigo, seeing that he could not pay back his creditors

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Money is a social capital that enables his movement from one social class (moneylender) to another (nobility).

¹³¹ *Belfagor*, 871.

¹³² Ibid., 872: “I shall pass over the great expense that, in order to satisfy her, he incurred in dressing her in the latest fashions and in satisfying her with the latest designs [...] because he was forced, if he was to remain at peace with her, to help his father-in-law marry off his other daughters, on which he spent a huge sum of money. After that, if he wanted to get on well with her, he had to send one of her brothers into the Levant with woolen, another to the West with silks, and the third to open a goldbeater’s shop in Florence.”; “Besides this, at Carnival time and Saint John’s day, when all the city was celebrating according to its ancient customs and many noble and rich citizens were getting reputation with splendid banquets, Madam Onesta, so that she would not be inferior to other wives, wanted her Roderigo to outdo all the others in such feasts. He submitted to all these things for the reasons given above, and though they were very expensive, they would have not seemed expensive to him if they had produced tranquility in his house.”

¹³³ Ibid.

and “knowing all that *the laws of Hell* required of him, determined to run away. So one morning he mounted his horse and, since he lived near the Prato Gate, went through it.”¹³⁴ This sentence signals the end of the devil’s experience of marriage and of the second narrative unit of the *Favola*, visually represented by his going through the architectural element of the *Prato Gate* which marks the boundary of the city. What is more, the fact that the narrator references the “laws of Hell” in such a key narrative moment of the story is noteworthy for two orders of reasons. On the one hand, it clearly confirms the constraining nature of the above stipulations, which condemned Roderigo to being married and suffering from all human misfortunes for ten years before being able to return to Hell. On the other hand, it underscores how these conditions were ultimately responsible for causing his and the rest of the characters’ displacements in the story.¹³⁵

Relatedly, when knowledge of Roderigo’s escape reached his creditors the latter “set out in pursuit not merely with the police but with a crowd.”¹³⁶ In other words, his dislocation activated the displacement of the whole city personified by the people embodying its institutions that went after him.¹³⁷ All the while, to get away from his pursuers more secretly, Roderigo

determined to leave the road and try his fortune across the fields. But since he was impeded in doing this by the many ditches that cross the country and kept him from going horseback, he tried to get away on foot, leaving his horse in the road and moving from field to field, concealed by the vines and canebrakes with which that country is covered.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 873.

¹³⁵ Picone, “La *Favola*,” 181: “Fuggendo dai suoi creditori Roderigo si attiene alle regole del gioco. Anzi la fuga è l’ultima carta che gli rimane di giocare, se vuole ottemperare alle ‘condizioni’ impostegli dal concilio infernale; più in particolare, se vuole rispettare la clausola relativa alla durata della sua permanenza sulla terra (fissata a dieci anni).

¹³⁶ *Belfagor*, 873.

¹³⁷ Menon suggests this idea in “An Interpretation of Machiavelli’s *Favola*,” 36.

¹³⁸ *Belfagor*, 873.

This passage constitutes the first detailed spatial description to be found in the *Favola*. Besides the topographical references the narrator provides to pinpoint Roderigo's location in Florence (namely "the Street of All Saints" and the "Prato Gate"), no description of the city's urban spaces can be found in the text.¹³⁹ Consequently, the fact that Machiavelli indulges in detailing Roderigo's progressive estrangement from civilization using a language imbued with references to the Florentine countryside (ditches, fields, vines, and canebrakes) strikes as peculiar.¹⁴⁰ Crucially however, when read through the critical lens of Machiavelli's own exile a case can be made that this description reflects the creative influence that the author's place of exile (his country residence of Sant'Andrea in Percussina) and his experience of disenfranchisement from the center of political and social power have on the story and its narrativization of displacement.¹⁴¹

Near Peretola, Roderigo reached the house of Gianmatteo, whom the narrator describes as "a man of resolution" leading an apolitical life at the outskirts of the city.¹⁴² Promising he would make the farmer rich in exchange for his help, Roderigo hid under a pile of manure stacked in front of the house and stayed there until his pursuers left.¹⁴³ When the outcry was over, Gianmatteo asked him to fulfill his promise, to which Roderigo answered:

"My brother, I am under a great obligation to you, and I fully intend to satisfy it, and that you may believe I can do so, I shall tell you who I am." Then he told him

¹³⁹ Ibid., 871 and 873.

¹⁴⁰ Menon speaks of his "progressive return to nature from civilization," 36.

¹⁴¹ This example illustrates Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of the *chronotope*. Defined as the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84), this notion helps readers understand how Machiavelli's inclusion of this spatially-charged description in the *Favola* serves not merely as background to the events of the plot, but as a way to disclose information about the writing subject. See M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes towards a Historical Poetics," in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (1981).

¹⁴² *Belfagor*, 873. Menon. "An Interpretation of Machiavelli's *Favola*," 43.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

who he was, and the conditions laid upon him when he left Hell and about the wife he took; and besides he told him how he intended to make him rich.¹⁴⁴

It is worth noticing in passing how this is the first time we hear the character of Roderigo speak in the *Favola*.¹⁴⁵ However, for the purpose of our analysis the key to this passage is contained in the narrator's explicit reference, the fifth to be found in the story, to the conditions imposed by the council.¹⁴⁶ The inclusion of this information in the passage confirms how these terms are an integral part of Roderigo's identity as well as reclaims the decisive role that they play in his encounter with Gianmatteo. Likewise, the fact that the narrator references them in yet another pivotal moment of the *Favola*, that is right before the beginning of the third narrative unit and of Roderigo's and Gianmatteo's mystic ventures, points to the ripple effect that these provisions have on the story and its protagonists.¹⁴⁷

To keep his promise and reward the peasant Roderigo devised a scheme: he will possess the daughters of rich families and will not leave their bodies until Gianmatteo comes to drive him out of them in exchange for money. Hence Roderigo and Gianmatteo become co-conspirators. The first case of possession takes place in Florence where the evil spirit enters the body of a married daughter of Messer Ambruogio Amidei, a noble who pays Gianmatteo five hundred florins to cure her. Nevertheless, Roderigo does not consider this money enough to make the peasant rich and decides to possess the daughter of King Charles of Naples so that Gianmatteo

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 874.

¹⁴⁵ Contrary to the character of Roderigo, we never hear Belfagor speak in the story.

¹⁴⁶ The terms of Belfagor's exile are referenced, under different names, five times in the text: "he pledged himself to those conditions that were solemnly resolved on among them" (870), "So Belfagor accepted the conditions and the money and came to the world" (871), "since the rules established for him when he left Hell" (871), "knowing all that the laws of Hell required of him" (873), and lastly "he told him who he was and the conditions laid upon him" (874).

¹⁴⁷ Blasucci places the end of the second narrative unit and beginning of the third after this quote (*Machiavelli novelliere e verseggiatore*, 178).

could get a proper reward.¹⁴⁸ After the duo successfully effects the second staged exorcism, Roderigo considers his promise fulfilled and menaces Gianmatteo with harm in case he bothers him again.¹⁴⁹ However, instead of returning home like the farmer does, he goes and possesses the daughter of King Louis VII of France.¹⁵⁰ This puzzling but critical decision is what allows the story to reach its climax. When Gianmatteo is summoned to Paris by the king and threatened with his life if he does not rid the king's daughter of the evil spirit, the ingenious peasant instructs the ruler to

set up in the square of Notre Dame a platform (*palco*) big enough to hold all your barons and all the clergy of the city; have the platform decorated with cloth of silk and of gold; set up in the middle of it an altar, and Sunday morning I want you and the clergy and all your princes and barons, with regal splendor, with gorgeous and rich costumes, to assemble there; after celebrating the solemn mass, have the possessed princess come to the place. Besides this, I need you to have ready on one side of the square at least twenty persons with drums, horns, kettledrums, bagpipes, shawms, cymbals and noisemakers of every sort; these men, when I lift my hat, will strike up on their instruments and as they play will come toward the platform.¹⁵¹

The curated description and staging of the *palco* and of the performance of civic pageantry underscore not only the theatricality of this tale, but also the formal control exercised by Machiavelli in directing the movements of the narrative to his intended grand finale.¹⁵² The

¹⁴⁸ *Belfagor*, 875: "I am well pleased. But this is not enough to make you rich. And for that reason, when I leave here I shall enter into the daughter of Charles, King of Naples, and I shall never leave except for your means. He will then see that you get a proper reward. After that you will give me no more trouble."

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, "You see, Gianmatteo, I have kept the promise to make you rich. And since I have no further obligation, I am no longer liable to you for anything. So be so kind as not to bother me anymore, because if up to now I have done you good, in the future I shall do you harm."

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, "Returning to Florence very rich (for he had received from the King above fifty thousand ducats), Gianmatteo planned to enjoy his riches in peace, not at all expecting that Roderigo would plan to molest him,"

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 876.

¹⁵² Grazzini, "Teatralità indiretta di Machiavelli," 82: "Tuttavia è nelle sequenze degli esorcismi praticati dal contadino, sulle quali si articola la seconda parte (quando l'arcidiavolo fuggito da Firenze prova a restare in terra, ma come Belfagor), che va colto il maggior potenziale di teatralità della *Favola*. [...] La recita dell'esorcismo è tuttavia assai più complessa a Parigi. Il Machiavelli assegna a Gianmatteo il duplice ruolo di attore e di regista di un allestimento nel quale la polisemia della comunicazione teatrale appare abilmente valorizzata."

performative elements employed by the peasant function as instruments of deception (*beffa*) on a double level. Relying on the sumptuousness of the public spectacle, Gianmatteo tricks the king and the bystanders into thinking that he is going to perform the exorcism and when the devil refuses to help him, after signaling the noisy orchestra to approach the platform, he leads Roderigo to believe his wife is coming to Paris, causing him a shock so great that he immediately flees full of terror, leaving the girl free.¹⁵³

The closing scene of the tale shows the outsmarted devil going back to Hell where he “give[s] an accounting for his deeds” (another implicit reference to the conditions he contravened) and complies with the last of the terms of his mission, that is reporting on his experience of conjugal life to his superiors.¹⁵⁴ However, it should be noted that Belfagor is not the last character to be mentioned in the *Favola*. Actually, the tale ends with an image of Gianmatteo returning home “in complete happiness.”¹⁵⁵ At this point, two considerations can be made about the ending of Machiavelli’s novella. The first has to do with the circular pattern identifiable between the opening and the conclusion of this tale. I am referring to the fact that Machiavelli begins and ends his *Favola* by mentioning two Florentine human figures, the “holy man” and Gianmatteo. This decision does not only confirm the primacy that the human and earthly dimensions of this story play over the non-human and metaphysical ones, but it also

¹⁵³ *Belfagor*, 877: “Gianmatteo decided he could lose no more time. When he gave the signal with his hat, all those assigned to making noise struck up on their sound-makers, and with noises that rose to the sky came towards the platform. At the noise Roderigo pricked up his ears; not knowing what it could be and feeling greatly astonished, in a complete daze he asked Gianmatteo what it was. Gianmatteo in great excitement replied: ‘Alas, my Roderigo! That is your wife who is coming to get you.’ It was wonderful to observe what change of spirit came on to Roderigo when he heard the word *wife* spoken. It was so great that, “not thinking whether it were possible or reasonable that she was there, without answering further, full of terror, he fled, leaving the girl free.”

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, “Thus Belfagor, returning to Hell, gave assurance about the ills that a wife can bring into a house.”

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, “And Gianmatteo, who was shrewder than the devil, in complete happiness returned home.”

suggests a possible answer as to why Machiavelli did not name this novella Belfagor after all. Second, given how the story ends, one can say that the *Favola* is a story about returns. In this respect, it is critical to point out that whilst Belfagor and Gianmatteo do come back to the same spaces where we encounter them at the beginning of their peripatetic ventures the conditions imposed by the council affect the evolution of their characters so much so that they don't return the same as when they left. Belfagor goes back to Hell as a "diavolo gabbato" and Gianmatteo to Florence as a rich man. In this, it is possible to identify an additional overlay between the characters' and Machiavelli's homecomings from the displacements they experienced which problematizes the notion and goes so far as to question the possibility of a return for exiles.

By way of conclusion, my analysis has shown how the terms of Belfagor's exile have a direct influence over the way the *Favola's* storyline unfolds and ends. The enabling and constraining nature of these conditions are directly responsible for activating the characters' spatial and social mobility which, in turn, functions as a narrative device to stage their metamorphoses. Furthermore, the recurring references to the conditions in critical moments of the text underscore the correlation between narrative units, demonstrating Machiavelli's talent for plotting and directing the movements of the narrative. In fact, Belfagor's terms of exile can be said to provide a structuring framework for the development of the plot that aids navigating and reconciling the parts of the *Favola* that many scholars considered disjointed. Lastly, Machiavelli's adaptation of elements taken from his own experiences of displacement in the storyline is telling of the stimuli that the spatial, political, social position he occupied at the time

of writing the *Favola* offered to his plastic imagination and of the cathartic power that storytelling exercised on him.¹⁵⁶

This chapter complements the work done throughout this dissertation to account for the different levels of literary response to exile that can be identified in the works of the Renaissance writers analyzed in this dissertation. While exile permeates, more or less opaquely, throughout their entire literary corpora, this chapter illustrates how the narrative genre lends itself to a more rounded enactment and visualization of the physical, social, and emotional forms of alienation these writers in exile endured than the other types of writings addressed so far do. In these works, narrative becomes the filter through which these writers view, analyze, and process their exilic experiences. Showcasing the similar strategies used by Alberti and Machiavelli to incorporate and narrativize displacement in the storylines of the *Momus* and the *Favola* confirms both the weight and creative stimulus that their direct and indirect exposure to exile carried in their literary imagination. Similarly, seeing these plots and characters against their authors' lived experiences and autobiographical context of production allows readers to appreciate the cathartic effect that the act of "emplotting" these narratives had on them and how it empowered them to profoundly refigure the meaning of their experiences.¹⁵⁷

Lastly, while no textual reference openly displays the direct influence that Petrarca's letters exercised over these fictional texts, these writers' doubtless familiarity with his epistolary

¹⁵⁶ John Bernard repeatedly uses the term "plasticity" in regard to Machiavelli's imagination in "Writing and the Paradox of the Self: Machiavelli's Literary Vocation". *Renaissance Quarterly*. Vol. 59. No. 1. (2006), pp. 59-89.

¹⁵⁷ The concept of "emplotment" is developed by French philosopher Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) in Vol. 1 of his *Time and Narrative*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984-88).

production and self-portrayed exilic identity affected Alberti's and Machiavelli's narrativization of their displaced selves in the *Momus* and the *Favola* in subtle but no less certain ways. Chapter three has confirmed how the impact that Petrarca's creation and memorialization of his exilic persona through letter writing had on the characters under investigation in this dissertation extends to a variety of genres including, but not limited to, the epistolary one. *Landscapes of Exile* has shown how each of the genres and works analyzed in its chapters, that is to say letters, historiographies, and fictional narratives, either moved from, assimilated, or *imitated* modes, views, and teachings that Petrarca made sure would survive the test of time and would inspire his posterity.

Epilogue. Exile Vantage Points and Legacies

This dissertation has brought to the forefront the creative influence that the experience of exile had on the literary production of six Italian Renaissance writers who were displaced from their home, city, and/or county of origin. Contrary to the modern acceptance of the word, in the Renaissance the term ‘exile’ was used to refer to different forms of displacement, whether figurative, spatial, religious, political, or emotional. This dissertation’s focus on six case studies of ‘literary exile’ points to the existence of several typologies of exile in the early modern period and to the multiple forces (familial, social, intellectual, temporal, economic etc.) that engendered them, problematizing an historical phenomenon that has been mainly studied from a legal and political standpoint. While not claiming to assemble a complete picture of the plurality of shapes that existed at the time, this dissertation has brought to light the breadth of internal and external, visible and invisible, direct and indirect manifestations of a condition that was pervasive in the Renaissance, in Italy and beyond.

Accordingly, the present dissertation constitutes the first full-length investigation of the effects that this idiosyncratic mode of transregional and cultural mobility had over a group of female and male writers whose diverse body of literature had never before been analyzed through the lens of exile. It has underscored how the mobile perspectives from which these authors looked at and read the world informed and structured the form, approach, and content of their literary production to reveal how exile permeated their writings at different levels. In doing that, it has looked beyond texts *about* exile and reframed the meaning of ‘exile literature’ to stand for a mode of writing informed by but not always literally concerned with exile as a subject. Shifting away from the narrow focus of earlier definitions widened the scope of this inquiry into

the literary corpuses of each writer, examining canonical works alongside other critical texts that equally testify to the influence exercised by displacement.

Landscapes of Exile has reframed the scholarly approach to the study of these writers' literary oeuvre by employing an interdisciplinary method that integrated the close reading of primary sources with spatial studies, historiographical, and biographical elements that allowed to situate each work into its personal, historical, and socio-political context of production. Moreover, my methodology integrated textual analysis with a study of the interactions between writers and the cultural milieu around which they gravitated. Though the characters of this dissertation come from geographically different areas in Italy, their uprootedness, scholarly and diplomatic careers, as well as their marital and maternal commitments led them to travel far and wide across Italy and beyond, cross paths, and sometimes even join the same intellectual circles.

One of the most evident benefits of the aforementioned approach to this inquiry is its geographical breadth, which encompasses the multiplicity of sites that each writer activated by virtue of their movement through them, resulting in a remapping of the spaces and networks to which, by virtue of their exile, they were either granted or forbidden access to. By adopting a geographically inclusive approach to the study of early modern exile in the Italian peninsula, this dissertation has painted a vivid picture of the interrelated landscapes of exile that coexisted at this time in Italy, while still upholding their spatial specificity.

While the scholarly contributions that address the phenomenon of exile in Italy from a literary standpoint diachronically span all centuries of Italian literary culture stressing how, from Dante to the writers of the 21st century, Italians can be considered to be 'genetically exiled,' this dissertation's sole focus on the Renaissance is driven by the belief that periodization is desirable when delving into such a multilayered and volatile phenomenon. More specifically, the

chronological limits of this investigation into Renaissance exile could not be easily bracketed between two historically defining events, as the beginning and ending of this historical period are still the object of critical debates with which this dissertation does not engage. Rather than taking two chronological moments as its poles, *Landscapes of Exile* has located two key Renaissance figures, Francesco Petrarca and Niccolò Machiavelli, at the opposite ends of a linear spectrum that mirrored a gamut of typologies of ‘literary exile’ existing at this time.

Similarly, analyzing one range among the many nuanced forms that exile took in the Renaissance, this dissertation has refrained from drawing general conclusions that risked oversimplifying this phenomenon, but rather it has opened an avenue of research into the study of exile that can be applied to other times and places. In this regard, my hope is that further research will be performed to identify additional typologies of exile in the centuries under investigation in this dissertation and the ones immediately following. For instance, the effects of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation on the intellectual wanderer and on the many Italian religious exiles of Machiavelli’s generation and the next, on which abundant literature exists, expanded even more the notion of exile to include confessional and profoundly faith-based forms of alienation that are deserving of in-depth analysis. Likewise, delving into other forms of literary response to exile such as poetry and cartography, just to name a few, would present supplemental insights into the creative outlets afforded by a condition whose dimensions the chapters in this dissertation do not pretend to cover exhaustively.

The three chapters that make up *Landscapes of Exile* were organized according to a chronological order that underlined the foundational influence played by Petrarca and his books of letters on the other female and male characters and the different levels of literary response to exile being studied. Each chapter has presented textual evidence of the crosspollination between

these writers' epistolary, historiographical, and narrative works and Petrarca's letters, accounting for the existence in Renaissance Italy of a Petrarchan humanistic legacy rooted in displacement.

Reading these texts dialogically has allowed for understudied relationships between authors and their literary texts to appear. Such is the case of Biondo Flavio, whose works are imbued with both explicit and implicit Petrarchan references, tributes, and influences that, when brought to the fore, underscore his scholarship's indebtedness to such a foundational figure. Similarly, putting Machiavelli's and Alberti's fictional texts in conversation, this dissertation was able to identify parallels between the creative strategies employed, over seventy years apart, by these writers to overcome their experiences of displacement, while advancing readers' comprehension and enjoyment of the exilic subtleties of these works. Lastly, reading Alessandra M. Strozzi's and Ippolita Sforza's letters in light of our introductory analysis of Petrarca's founding of the familiar epistolary tradition has generated a more refined understanding of the level of elasticity this new genre afforded, while exploring two distinct female instantiations of it. This dissertation has shown how each of these authors incorporated different elements of the experience of exile in their works, translating and coping with their alienation, inner feelings, and implications of displacement within their pages.

Landscapes of Exile has yielded a deepened understanding of an historical phenomenon that resonates with a particular urgency in our contemporary context. As a matter of fact, constant headlines about migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers crossing land and water borders to find safety in other countries drive ongoing scholarly conversations about what it means to be displaced and to live in exile in the 21st century. Using literature as an entry point into the study of exile has proven to generate an improved appreciation of the implications that exile had on the social, spatial, and literary practices of those who suffered from it in the Renaissance, that is to

say, on the places and patterns of their social activities, including their literary production. By analyzing this phenomenon from the vantage point of history, this dissertation revealed how these implications were akin to ours, thus challenging their remoteness from our present experiences and underscoring the instability of the human condition throughout the centuries.

Lastly, this dissertation has contributed to furthering the investigation into the relationship between space and writing in Italian Renaissance literature, promoting a new line of inquiry into the study of one of the richest, most captivating, and heavily examined periods in the history of this country. By way of doing that, it has also succeeded at widening the scope of the investigation into early modern mobility to include exile as one of the major forces behind people's movement at this time, one that ought to be taken into account when analyzing the socio-political, cultural, and literary history of the Italian Renaissance.

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