

# THE *HISTORIAE FLORENTINI POPULI* BY POGGIO BRACCIOLINI. GENESIS AND FORTUNE OF AN ALTERNATIVE HISTORY OF FLORENCE

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**ABSTRACT:** During the last years of his life, Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), former Apostolic Secretary and Chancellor of Florence, was working on a long text that he characterized, in a letter written in 1458, as lacking a well-defined structure. This was most probably his history of the people of Florence (*Historiae Florentini populi*, the title given in Jacopo's dedication copy to Frederick of Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino), revised and published posthumously by Poggio's son, Jacopo Bracciolini (1442–1478). Contrary to what is often assumed, Poggio's treatise was not a continuation, nor even a complement, to Leonardo Bruni's (1370–1444) official history of Florence. It concentrates on the most recent history of Florence from the fourteenth-century conflicts between Florence and Milan through Florentine expansion in Tuscany and finally reaching the mid-fifteenth century. This article will study the genesis and fortune of the work in the context of Poggio's literary output and the manuscript evidence from the mid-fifteenth century until the first printed edition of the Latin-language text by G.B. Recanati in 1715.

**KEYWORDS:** Florence, Italian humanism, manuscript tradition, historiography, Medici

## 1. *The Genesis of the Historiae Florentini populi*

The last years of Poggio Bracciolini's long life were marked by a reversal of fortune that left him at odds with the Medici regime. After decades of faithful service to Cosimo the Elder (1389–1464), he had been appointed Chancellor of the Republic, a successor to his friend Carlo Marsuppini (1399–1453). Only three years later, in 1456, he was relieved of his duties due to the chaotic state of the Chancellery, the direction of which had proved to exceed his interest and capacities<sup>1</sup>.

In the summer of 1458, Poggio alluded to a work he was preparing:

But while many things may be listed as having delayed my writing, one thing has been left unsaid. It has rather long kept me particularly busy, as, the end approaching, I willingly and industriously set out to finish the work that I had begun and for which, as it happens with weaving a web, I had only put the threads in place. It is still lacking a well-defined structure, but I hope to complete it soon. Of course, we are told to revise our text several times before publication in order not to expose ourselves to slanderers. This reason has kept me from attending to other business<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For Poggio and the Medici, see Field, 2017: 284ff; Black, 1985: 170; also see Fubini, 1990: 298.

<sup>2</sup> All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated. Original Latin text: «Sed cum multa recenseantur, a quibus profici sci potuerit scribendi tarditas, una omissa res

While Poggio is conscious of his time rapidly coming to an end («cum finis iam adesset»), he is doing his utmost to finish the work he had started on. This work is far from complete: he has started weaving («tantummodo sum orsus») a web («tela»), but this work lacks «textura»<sup>3</sup>. The word «textura» is rare in ancient texts. It occurs seven times in Lucretius and a few times in Plautus, Propertius, Lucan, Seneca minor, Ammianus Marcellinus and Martianus Capella. Its sense ranges from ‘spider’s web’ (Plautus and Seneca) to ‘structure’ (Lucan and Ammianus). Lucretius uses this term for the structure of the universe<sup>4</sup>. In the sense ‘construction, structure’, it may also be found in the Vulgate<sup>5</sup>. Consequently, it seems to refer here to a well-defined, finished structure. Poggio is preoccupied with the reception of the text, throwing in a possible reference to Horace<sup>6</sup>, then mentions his fear of «detractores», no doubt in reference to his recent skirmishes with Valla and his disciples<sup>7</sup>, which stimulates him to refine his text with particular care. He expresses his confidence in managing to finish his task in near future («sed ea brevi, ut spero, perficietur»).

As far as we know, Poggio was not busy with anything else of this importance in the period preceding his death. Consequently, the «opus absolvendum» is most probably the *Historiae Florentini populi*, a history of the Florentine people from the middle of the fourteenth century, with a brief treatment of Antiquity and the Middle Ages<sup>8</sup>.

est, que precipua me occupatum tenuit diutius in scribendo, ut cum finis iam adesset, cupidus ac studiosus incubui ad absolvendum incepturn opus, quod, tanquam in tela accidit, tantummodo sum orsus. Textura adhuc caret; sed ea brevi, ut spero, perficietur. Sepius enim repetere iubemur que scribimus antequam edantur, ne qua detur detractribus obloquendi occasio. Hec causa exitit que me ab reliquis distraheret curis», Letter to Domenico Capranica, *Ep.* 9.45.7-19, Bracciolini, 1984

<sup>3</sup> For metaphorical uses of the more common derivates of *texere*, see Viljamaa, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> E.g. Lewis & Short 1879: «s.v. *textura*»: «A web, texture»: *aranearum*, Plt. *Stich.* 2, 2, 24; *Minervae*, Prop. 4 (5), 5, 23; *Sen. Ep.* 20.121.22 («Non vides quam nulli mortalium imitabilis illa aranei *textura*»); figuratively, ‘a construction, structure’: «quam tenui constet *textura* (*i.e.* animi natura)», *Lucr.* 3.209; *Luc.* 9.777 («uincula neruorum et laterum *textura*»); Amm. 23.4.1 («contegitur coriis bubulis virgarumque recenti *textura* atque limo asperguntur»).

<sup>5</sup> Jerome, *Vulg. Ex.* 28.8, «ipsaque *textura* et cuncta operis varietas erit ex auro et hyacinthro et purpura coccoque bis tincto et byssو retorta», and 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ars poetica* (1863), 386-90: «Siquid tamen olim / scripseris, in Maeci descendat iudicis auris / et patris et nostras, nonumque prematur in annum / membranis intus positis; delere licebit / quod non edideris; nescit uox missa reuerti»; translated by Smart & Buckley: «But if ever you shall write any thing, let it be submitted to the ears of Metius [Tarpal], who is a judge, and your father’s, and mine; and let it be suppressed till the ninth year, your papers being laid up within your own custody. You will have it in your power to blot out what you have not made public: a word once sent abroad can never return».

<sup>7</sup> For the famous exchange of invectives, see Merisalo, 2006: 67-76.

<sup>8</sup> Contrary to what is often assumed, Poggio’s treatise was not a continuation, nor even a complement, to Leonardo Bruni’s (1370-1444) official history of Florence. For Poggio’s friendship and somewhat ambivalent attitude to Bruni, see now Field, 2017: 293.

## 2. Jacopo di Poggio's Edition: The Manuscript Tradition

Poggio's last work has been transmitted in five manuscripts, three of which are datable to the fifteenth century and two to the sixteenth century. Two of the fifteenth-century copies are Florentine luxury manuscripts, and one, maybe the most interesting, is a modest paper manuscript also originating in Florence. Four manuscripts transmit a text which is quite obviously an edition of Poggio's work by his son Jacopo (1442–1478), a talented Latin author, an exquisite humanist scribe and one of the unfortunate members of the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478<sup>9</sup>.

In 1472<sup>10</sup> Jacopo published Poggio's text, entitled *Historiae Florentini populū*<sup>11</sup>, with a dedicatory letter to his father's old friend, Frederick of Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino. In the dedicatory letter, Jacopo gives the following information on the genesis of the text:

Poggio, getting on in years, retiring, as it were, from business, was given leave by the Pope to return from Rome to his native country. In order to enhance the memory of such an eminent city he wrote the first draft of a history of Florence from the first war with John, Archbishop of Milan, until the peace made with Alfonso through the mediation of Pope Nicholas. He left this work incomplete at his death<sup>12</sup>.

Jacopo here uses the term «commentarium», emphasizing the incomplete character<sup>13</sup> of the text left behind by Poggio, «morte preventus».

<sup>9</sup> For Jacopo's biography, see Merisalo, 2013b: 57–64, and Merisalo, 2013a: 131–36 with inclusive bibliography (in particular Bausi, 2011: 131–32).

<sup>10</sup> The edition may be dated on the basis of the following passage of the dedicatory letter: «And since this year, thanks to your valour, the Volaterrans, a most ancient people of Etruria, who, trusting the difficult mountain ground and the very nature of the site, had rebelled against us, were subjected to our power»; «Cumque hoc anno tua uirtute Volaterrani, antiquissima Etrurie ciuitas, montis asperitate et loci natura freti imperio nostro rebellis sub iugum uenerint», quoted according to Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, ms. lat. Z.392 (=1684), f. 4 (see below). Frederick's siege of Volterra took place in 1472.

<sup>11</sup> This is the title in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Urb. lat. 491, folio 5r as well as ms. lat. Z. 392 (=1684), folio 4r. In Urb. lat. 491, the title of the preface, however, has the variant «Iacobi Poggii Florentini in historias Florentinas Poggii patris. prohemium» on folio 1r. The title is always in the plural.

<sup>12</sup> «Poggius enim ingrauescente etate tamquam emeritis stipendiis, cum Roma, ubi magna cum laude uixerat, uenia a Pontifice impetrata in patriam reuertisset, ut memorie tante urbis consuleret, inter priuata publicaque negocia commentaria rerum Florentinarum, a primo bello cum Iohanne Mediolanensi Archiepiscopo usque ad pacem cum Alfonso per Nicolaum pontificem factam, morte preventus reliquit», ms. lat. Z.392 (=1684), f. 3v.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis & Short, 1879: «s.v. *commentarius*», «As the title of a book on any subject, but esp. historical, which is only sketched down or written without care», the best-known examples being no doubt Caesar's *Gallic War* (*Commentarii de bello Gallico*). The neuter plural «*commentaria*» may be interpreted as «commentary-type account»; for a parallel, see e.g. Cicero, *Brutus* 44.164.

Despite his hopes of finishing the *Historiae*, Poggio quite obviously had not succeeded in perfecting his «textura»<sup>14</sup>. The same information is provided by the dedicatory letter in Jacopo's vernacular translation of this edition (see below).

Since our father had written in his old age, to the glory and honour of his native country, a history of Florence from the first war with Archbishop John Visconti in 1350 until the peace made with Naples and King Alfonso, and he had left that work incomplete at his death<sup>15</sup>.

Frederick's dedication copy, Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Urb. lat. 491<sup>16</sup>, is a luxury manuscript copied by Gundisalvus Hispanus, who identified himself on f. 163v by the colophon «Deo gratias. G. Hispanus». This was the apostolic protonotary Gundissalvus Fernandez de Heredia (d. 1511). After studies of Canon Law at Pisa in 1473–1474, he was ordained bishop of Barcelona in 1478 and of Tarragona in 1490. He is known to have worked as a member of the team of scribes used by Vespasiano da Bisticci, responsible for producing one manuscript for Frederick of Montefeltro between 1469 and 1474, and two between 1475 and 1482. He was also the scribe for three manuscripts for Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, for four manuscripts for Lorenzo de' Medici, two for Pierfrancesco de' Medici and two for Alfonso, Duke of Calabria, son of King Ferdinand (de la Mare, 1985: 503n31). Jacopo's stylish humanistic hand is also present in the margins of almost every leaf<sup>17</sup>. The volume is richly decorated by the Master of the Hamilton Xenophon, who was active between 1460 and 1480, and worked in the workshop of Francesco d'Antonio del Chierico in Florence at least until 1478. The Master also collaborated in the decoration of the celebrated Urbino Bible (Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, ms. Urb. lat. 1)<sup>18</sup>.

The version of the *Historiae Florentini populi* consists of eight books, preceded by Jacopo's dedicatory letter. Jacopo presents remarks on the usefulness of history:

<sup>14</sup> This does not exclude Poggio making his materials available to other scholars, cf. Rubinstein, 1958–1964: 20 and note.

<sup>15</sup> «Auendo adumque nostro padre nella ultima eta, per gloria et honore della patria, scripta una hystoria fiorentina dalla prima guerra auuta collo arcivescou Gioanni de Bisconti nel McccL.ta : fino alla pace facta a Napoli appresso al Re Alfonso, et quella preuenuto dalla morte lasciata imperfecta», Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Palatino Baldovinetti 62, f. 2v.

<sup>16</sup> Digitized at [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/ms.S\\_Urb.lat.491](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/ms.S_Urb.lat.491).

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Michelini Tocci, 1981: 527 and n74 as well as de la Mare, 1985: 503n31.

<sup>18</sup> Garzelli, 1985: 1.157ff. See also Ferretti (2003), who identifies Francesco Rosselli as a collaborator for the decoration of the manuscript.

From this, the great usefulness to mankind of history, [that] most faithful guardian of things, may be gauged, as well as the degree to which those having led most famous lives, are in her debt, since she alone keeps them constantly in our minds. Through the knowledge of history, let us be inspired by the memory of famous deeds to strive after immortality and learn from other people's deeds and individuals' lives the[ir] plans, manners, fortune's changes and uncertain outcomes of wars<sup>19</sup>.

The text brings to mind Poggio's preface to *De varietate fortunae*. In fact, it parallels Poggio's observations on the function of history.

[History] alone brings into our view the deeds and virtues of famous men so that we may imitate them. Through history, things past are brought again before our eyes and those habitually destroyed by antiquity are brought back as if they were new. It may well be said that nobody would know anything about ancient deeds of excellent men far removed from our own time, if they were not brought to people's attention by works of literature and history<sup>20</sup>.

Poggio's statement, «Consequently, history must be considered to be of great utility to humans»<sup>21</sup>, corresponds to Jacopo's «the great usefulness to mankind of history»<sup>22</sup>, whereas «This diligent guardian and faithful memory of things past»<sup>23</sup> corresponds to Jacopo's «[that] most faithful guardian of things»<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> «Hinc quantum utilitatis generi humano historia fidissima rerum custos afferat, quantumque omnes, qui haud in obscuro aetatem egere illi debeant, cum ea sola presentes nobis illos semper faciat, intelligi potest. Cuius e cognitione clarissimorum facinorum memoria ad immortalitatis studium excitemur, atque ex aliorum operibus et uniuscuiusque uita, consilia, mores, fortunae uarietates, et incertos bellorum euentus cognoscamus», ms. lat. Z.392 (=1684), f. 1v.

<sup>20</sup> «hec sola illustrium uirorum facta uirtutesque nostro in conspectu ad imitandum proponit [...] cuius ope preterita representantur nobis et que uetus solet delere, reddit tanquam recentia. Nullus quippe priscas et ab estate nostra remotas excellentium uirorum gestas res nosset, nisi litterarum monumentis et historie munere in luce hominum uersarentur», Bracciolini, 1993, Proemium 8-13.

<sup>21</sup> «Magnam igitur utilitatem afferre mortalibus historia censeri debet», Bracciolini, 1993, Proemium 4-5.

<sup>22</sup> «quantum utilitatis generi humano», see n19 above.

<sup>23</sup> «Hec diligens custos et fida preteritorum memoria», Bracciolini, 1993, Proemium 7-8.

<sup>24</sup> «historia fidissima rerum custos», see n19 above. History as «magistra vitae» (life's teacher) is of course one of the central humanist «topoi» going back to Cicero, 1860, *De oratore* 2.36 «Historia vero testis temporum, lux veritatis, vita memoriae, magistra vitae, nuntia vetustatis, qua voce alia nisi oratoris immortalitati commendatur?», trans. by Watson, p. 92: «By what other voice, too, than that of the orator, is history, the witness of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the directress of life, the herald of antiquity, committed to immortality?». For the reality of humanist historiography, see Ianziti, 2011: 10.

The expression «fortune's changes»<sup>25</sup> is of course a direct reference to Poggio's treatise. Jacopo, after lamenting the disappearance of great patrons, such as Alfonso of Aragon and Pope Nicholas V, proceeds to a tribute to Frederick as a new great patron of learning and an appropriate dedicatee for the book since he had been a friend of Poggio's<sup>26</sup>. In view of Jacopo's subsequent anti-Medicean activities and Frederick's role in the Pazzi conspiracy, the dedicatory letter is quite an early sign of Jacopo's political positioning<sup>27</sup>.

Jacopo outlines his own contribution to Poggio's text as follows: «My main occupation, as soon as my age would permit it, has been to preserve the memory of our state and the memory of many famous men. Thus, I have built up a text out of one divided into eight books and handed it over to posterity to read»<sup>28</sup>.

In the phrase «omnia in octo digesta libros [...] in unum corpus redigere», the participle «digesta» may be interpreted as referring either to

<sup>25</sup> «fortunae uarietates», see n19 above.

<sup>26</sup> «I would not doubt that with the passing of this very holy and wise man [Nicholas V] both Latin and Greek letters could with good reason be said to have perished, unless, after the death of this man, deplored, by all the good people, you had not set out, alone among your contemporaries, to support gifted men with your wealth and tell them, by word and encouragement, to keep faith and not be demoralized. Thus, glorious Prince Frederick, since you are the only one of our age not merely encouraging intellects but also combining military science with eloquence and rhetoric, having progressed in philosophy to a point that it is almost impossible to reach for a man employed in other business, regularly writing texts both at home and at war, so that you seem to ignore nothing, nor should anything be totally new to your mind, I have decided to send you the work of my most excellent father, which contains the recent history of Italy. To whom should I dedicate it rather than a person who was his friend and, being himself a learned man, supports and follows up learned men?»; «Cum quo sanctissimo ac sapientissimo homine [Nicholas V] Latinas simul et Grecas litteras periisse merito dicere non dubitarem, nisi tu post supremum illius diem bonis omnibus deflendum unus exitisses, qui prestanti ingenio uiros tuis opibus sustentares dispersosque ac tanti uiiri morte pene attonitos tuis uerbis et cohortationibus bene sperare ac bono esse animo iuberes. Itaque, Illustrissime Princeps Federice, cum solus hac nostra etate sis, qui non modo ingenii faueas, uerum etiam ad rei militaris scientiam, eloquentiam, et dicendi copiam addideris, in philosophia tantum profeceris, quantum ocioso homini uix conceditur, assidueque domi, ac militie aliquid scribas, aut legas, historias uero preteritorum temporum ita teneas, ut nihil tibi incognitum esse constet, ne quid omnino nouum animo tuo sit, optimi parentis uigilias quibus proxime etatis per Italiam res geste continentur, ad te mittere decreui. Cui enim illa potius dedicarem, quam ei qui et familiaritate secum iunctus fuit, et doctus ipse doctos colit et obseruat?», ms. lat. Z. 392 (=1684), folios 3-3v. For Frederick's authentic interest in learning, cf. e.g. Rinaldi, 2013: 341-55.

<sup>27</sup> For the political implications of Jacopo's literary activities, see Merisalo, 2013b.

<sup>28</sup> «Mihi uero, ut primum per etatem licuit, ne nostre rei publice plurimorumque clarorum uirorum memoria deperiret, nihil fuit potius quam omnia in octo digesta libros summa cum diligentia in unum corpus redigere ac legenda posteris tradere», ms. lat. Z. 392 (=1684), folio 3v.

Poggio's original revision or to Jacopo's editorial work. Jacopo's vernacular translation (see below) puts it in clearer terms that Jacopo had not only transformed Poggio' «commentaria» into a homogenous text, but had also been the one to divide the text into eight books:

as soon as [my] age and many occupations would permit me, in order to preserve the memory of our city and the deeds of many excellent men in Italy, I have concentrated on making a continuous narrative of [the text], and after having divided it into eight books with the greatest care, publishing it and giving a copy of it to whomever would wish to be informed<sup>29</sup>.

Jacopo's edition, including the preface to Frederick, was soon reproduced in a Florentine luxury parchment manuscript, now Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, ms. lat. Z.392 (=1684). The textual hand is an elegant Italic. In the margins and sometimes in the text a near-contemporary hand added corrections, and a reader in the seventeenth or eighteenth century provided some annotations in the margins. Images of *putti* on the first folio are reminiscent of those by Mariano del Buono and his workshop. Mariano worked for Vespasiano da Bisticci between 1470 and 1480<sup>30</sup>. The coat of arms that is also on the first folio has not yet been identified<sup>31</sup>. The manuscript later belonged to G.B. Recanati (1687-1734), who used it for his 1715 edition (see below). The text of the Marciana manuscript is an exact copy of the Urbino text apart from occasional spelling variants and especially the presence or absence of diphthongs.

The treatise is absent from fifteenth-century Medici collections, which is easily explained by Jacopo's anti-Medicean stance. However, an early sixteenth-century manuscript of the *Historiae* entered the Medici private library in 1568. The manuscript, Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. LXV, 40, is on paper, and it was part of the extensive book collection owned by Canon Antonio Petrei (d. 1570)<sup>32</sup> that became part of the Medici library in that year. Petrei was a teacher and noted bibliophile who collected autographs of Boccaccio and Petrarch (Morandini,

<sup>29</sup> «come prima et per l'eta et per molte occupationi m'e stato licito, achioche la memoria della cicta nostra et le opere di molti prestantissimi huomini per Ytalia non manchassi, a nessuna altra cosa o piu dato opera che a ridurla insieme, et diuisola con somma diligentia in octo libri, mandarla in luce et farne copia a ciascuno desideroso d'intendere», Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Palatino Baldovinetti 62, folio 2v.

<sup>30</sup> For Mariano, see Garzelli, 1985, vol. 2, plate 689 (Garzelli, 1985: 1.193); a *Corvinianus*, New York Library, Spencer Collection 27, posterior to 1464.

<sup>31</sup> They are not Recanati arms, contrary to Valentinelli's supposition (Valentinelli, 1873: 280, *ad Cod. 314* «membr., saec. XV, a. 293, l. 200 [Z.L., CCCXCII]. P.»).

<sup>32</sup> Ex-libris on folio 1: «A[n]t(onii) petrej can(onici) floren(tini)».

1986: 23). The version transmitted in his copy descends from the Urbino version. The volume is characterized by numerous hands, some of them rather inexperienced; in fact, this volume might have been produced as a series of writing exercises.

The fourth manuscript, now Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, ms. V.G. 34, was written on Italian paper dating from the 1520s–1530s. The writing is in several hands, both Transalpine (one definitely Germanic) and Italian, most of them essentially Gothic hybridae, some *all'antica* cursives. All the marginal hands are Italian (Merisalo, 2013b: 60n18; Merisalo, 2016: 203–04). Just like the Petrei manuscript, this volume might be a school exercise. It belonged to the Farnese library and seems to have been used by cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520–1589), grandson of Pope Paul III and one of the most powerful political and ecclesiastical figures of the Counter-Reformation<sup>33</sup>. In the inventory made at the death of the cardinal in 1589, it figures as number 13 of the books listed for the «Guardarobba del sig. cardinale» in the Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome. It was number 27 in the inventory of Latin-language manuscripts compiled after the transfer of the Farnese library to Parma in 1653, and it was number 167 in the Rutinelli inventory of 1737 following the final move of the possessions of the extinct Farnese dynasty to Bourbon Naples in 1736<sup>34</sup>.

While these four manuscripts do not provide substantive information on Jacopo's editorial work, there is a modest, late-fifteenth-century paper manuscript which does. The manuscript, the Palatino Capponiano 64, is now at the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence. The library of Marquis Vincenzo Capponi, including an extensive collection of manuscripts collection put together in the eighteenth century by Canon Giovan Vincenzo Capponi, was incorporated into the Palatine library in 1854 (Fava, 1939: 123). Folios 1–88 of the Capponi manuscript contain books 1–4 of the *Historiae Florentini populi*, written in elegant italics. The codicological unit in question is datable to the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, it was not produced in Poggio's or Jacopo's lifetime, but was copied from an earlier volume that has not yet been found. The unit is bound together with parts of Leonardo Bruni's *corpus Demosthenicum* and excerpts of a translation into Italian of Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque fortune*.

Poggio's text, devoid of title and Jacopo's preface, is preceded by a very short preface in the first person:

<sup>33</sup> For a concise biography, see Merisalo, 2016: 195–196.

<sup>34</sup> For the history, including subsequent inventories, of the Farnese library, see Fossier, 1982: 2.

<sup>35</sup> The watermarks most resemble Briquet 3393, Florence 1503–1505.

Following the industrious example of some writers who have described in historical works certain wars or a certain period of time, I have set out to compose a work which would seem to enhance the reputation of our city and the glory of the [present] author [in the eyes of] posterity. I have decided to describe, in eight books, the wars of the Florentine people, both those of defense and those of aggression, over a period of a little more than one hundred years. It is not a history of deeds of little significance, but of such as are fresh in memory and, among events befallen the Italians during the past few centuries, worthy of being preserved in the memory of posterity<sup>36</sup>.

While the Capponi manuscript only contains books 1–4, the preface explicitly states, 1) that the whole of the text covers the same time period, i.e. 1350–1454, as the text edited by Jacopo, and 2) that the work is divided into eight books. This makes it possible to give another interpretation of Jacopo's formulations «omnia in octo digesta libros summa cum diligentia in unum corpus redigere / diuisola con somma diligentia in octo libri» (see above): «digesta» and «diuiso» would seem to have been the work of Poggio himself.

A detailed comparison of the text of the Capponi manuscript with Jacopo's edition reveals a significant number of differences, including changes in word order, more concision, a different organization of text units, more synthetical and classicizing constructions at sentence and discourse level, and differences in terminology, particularly in the use of more classicizing politico-geographical terms<sup>37</sup>.

The linguistic and discursive features of the Capponi text make a strong case for identifying Poggio as the author and the folios 1–88v as the copy of an early version of books 1–4 of the *Historiae*. The following passage containing explicit statements in the first person is a particularly important one:

They fought a hard battle laying in vain siege to Terranuova, the village of my birth, and many were wounded, many killed. When going away they passed first to the Aretine, then to the area of Cortona, and afterwards to that of Siena, intending to pillage the country. Then they returned to Pisan territory through the Valdinievole<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> «Imitatus quorundam scriptorum industriam qui certa bella aut tempora suis historiis sunt complexi, opus mihi desumpsi quod et urbi nostre nomen, et auctori laudem aliquam uideretur apud posteros allaturum. Paulo namque supra centesimum annum Florentini bella populi tum repulsa tum illata recensere institui quæ sunt in octo libros digesta, neque uero hystoriam rerum gestarum pondere leuem, sed quae recenti fere memoria constet et digna profecto res si qua apud Ytalos aliqua his seculis fuere quæ merito posteritatis memorie mandetur», ms. Pal. Capp. 64, f. 1.

<sup>37</sup> For details on Jacopo's editorial work, see Merisalo (2007).

<sup>38</sup> «Terranouam, natale meum solum, acri certamine frustra oppugnarunt pluribus sauciis, multis interfectis. Abeuntes in Aretinum primo, tum in Cortonensem, postea

In Jacopo's text, this passage has been de-personalized through a complete omission of the reference to Terranuova, and the whole passage is characterized by considerable syntactical concision: «After pillaging the areas of Arezzo, Cortona and Siena they returned to the lands of the Pisans the same way that they had come»<sup>39</sup>.

### 3. Jacopo's Vernacular Translation

Jacopo was not content to edit his father's Latin text; he also translated his own edition into the vernacular, complete with the dedication to Frederick of Montefeltro, thus considerably increasing the translation's visibility. While Poggio had been an exclusively Latin-language author, Jacopo had a record of both Latin and vernacular works including a commentary on the *Trionfi* by Petrarch, dedicated to Lorenzo il Magnifico<sup>40</sup>; some of the lives of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*; and Poggio's Latin translation of the *Cyropaedia* of Xenophon<sup>41</sup>. Bruni's *Historiae Florentini populi* had already been translated into the vernacular by Donato Acciaiuoli, which shows the newly regained importance of the vernacular in the Florentine municipal context<sup>42</sup>. Jacopo might well have started on the vernacular translation while preparing the edition of the Latin text, since it was already available in 1474. The translation, entitled *Historia/historia fiorentina*, was transmitted in Florentine luxury manuscripts such as Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Palatino Baldovinetti 62; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. II.III.86; and Yale University, Beinecke Library ms. 321, all from the 1470s. In the translation, Jacopo closely follows his own Latin text (Merisalo, 1994). The manuscript Palatino Baldovinetti 62 was written on parchment in 1474 by Francesco di Niccolò di Berto de' Gentiluzzi of San Gimignano<sup>43</sup> (active 1460–1503), a specialist of vernacular texts (de la Mare, 1985: 425, 494, and Appendix I, n19). Jacopo seems to have overseen the production of this manuscript, since his hand is present throughout, but particularly in the margins of quires I–XVI containing the *Historia fiorentina*. On folio 1, decorated with the typical Florentine vinestem (*bianchi girari*), flow-

in Senensem agros populabundi transiere. Deinde in territorium Pisanum per uallem Nebule reuersi sunt», ms. Pal. Capp. 64, folio 14.

<sup>39</sup> «Aretino, Cortonensi Senensique agro populato in Pisanorum fines qua uenerant uia reuertuntur», ms. lat. Z.392 (=1684).

<sup>40</sup> For the contents and political context of the commentary, see Bausi, 2011: 105–193, and Merisalo, 2013a.

<sup>41</sup> For Jacopo's translation programme, see Merisalo (2004).

<sup>42</sup> For Acciaiuoli's translation, see Bessi, 1990: 322ff.

<sup>43</sup> «MCCCLXXIII Franciscus me scripsit», f. 150r.

ers, canthara and *putti*, there is a portrait of Jacopo, possibly by Francesco d'Antonio del Chierico, and the arms of the Capponi, at the time still followers of the Medici dynasty<sup>44</sup>. The other two manuscripts mentioned were copied for members of the Strozzi family, who had a long history of conflicts with the Medici<sup>45</sup>. Ms. II.III.86, a luxury parchment manuscript with the Strozzi arms on folio 1, was written by no lesser a scribe than Niccolò di Giampiero Fonzio<sup>46</sup>. The manuscript Beinecke Library 321 was written in Florence in 1475 by the same Niccolò Fonzio, presumably for Girolamo di Carlo Strozzi<sup>47</sup>.

The Beinecke manuscript is very probably the model used for the «editio princeps», Jacopo's translation. The work, entitled *Historia fiorentina*, was printed in Venice by Jacobus Rubeus (Jacques le Rouge) in 1476<sup>48</sup>. As to the patronage of the incunable, Jacopo's anti-Medicean stance, well-developed in 1476, Girolamo di Carlo Strozzi's probable ownership of the manuscript, as well as his record as the sponsor of the edition printed by the very same Rubeus of Bruni's *Historiae Florentini populi* in vernacular translation, would suggest Strozzi as a strong candidate (Michelini Tocci, 1981: 527n72; de la Mare, 1985: 458). The incunable, which is still present in libraries over the world in a great number of copies<sup>49</sup>, is

<sup>44</sup> The other texts of the volume are one on the Ciompi rebellion and two 1446 letters by Neri di Gino Capponi. The manuscript might have belonged to Pier Capponi (1447–1496), who was to lead the 1494 rebellion against the Medici. The Capponi connection (cf. the Capponi manuscript above) needs further investigation.

<sup>45</sup> On the Strozzi-Medici animosity, see e.g. Martines, 2003: 29–35 and *passim*.

<sup>46</sup> For Fonzio, see de la Mare, 1985: 458 and Appendix I, n19. The manuscript entered the library of the celebrated Florentine scholar Jacopo Gaddi in the seventeenth century, was acquired by Francis Stephen of Lorraine, Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1755, and was subsequently donated by him to the Biblioteca Magliabechiana, now the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence, see Fava, 1939: 37–38.

<sup>47</sup> For the identification of the scribe, see de la Mare, 1985: 458 and n295; for the patron, de la Mare, 1985: 516, Appendix I, n40A. The manuscript was part of the Strozzi library until at least the nineteenth century and then passed on to Prince Piero Ginori-Conti (1865–1939). For a detailed description, see Shailor (s.d.). A digital copy is at <<https://brbl-dl.library.yale.edu/vufind/Record/3592316>> (09/2019). For Strozzi's business dealings with scribes, see Edler De Roover (1952). Meyers (1983) presented a strong case for Beinecke 321 being the model for the incunable. On the one hand, the manuscript presents lengthy discursive marginal notes summarizing the contents (e.g. f. 14v–15) and short marginal titles such as «Alexandro magno» and «Iulio Cesare» on folio 1, of which there is, however, no trace in the incunable. On the other, there are signs in the margins throughout the volume that would seem to correspond to page-breaks of the print (e.g. f. 4). The latter do support Meyers' interpretation (for more details, see Shailor). I have the pleasure of thanking Barbara S. Shailor and the staff of Beinecke Library for letting me examine the original in excellent working conditions in September 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Hain \*13172, Gesamtkatalog der Wiegendrucke (= GW) M34604; revised edition in 1492, Hain 13173; digitized at <<http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0004/bsb00048963/images/>> (09/2019).

<sup>49</sup> See GW M34604, which lists 164 copies in public institutions.

thus another monument to Jacopo's political contacts shortly before the Pazzi conspiracy.

#### *4. Recanati's Edition of the Latin Text and the Poggio Renaissance*

Whereas the vernacular translation was widely available in print by the late fifteenth century, Jacopo's Latin edition was only printed at the beginning of the eighteenth century, in a period that saw a new increase of interest in Poggio Bracciolini's works (Kajanto & Merisalo, 1987: 71). The Poggio renaissance was started by the learned Venetian bibliophile G.B. Recanati (1687–1743), a friend of Apostolo Zeno<sup>50</sup>. He published a printed edition in 1715 based on a manuscript in his own library, now the manuscript Venice, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, lat. Z.392 (=1684). Contrary to the manuscript reading on folio 1, «[...] libros Historiarum populi Florentini», he entitled the edition *Historia Florentina* (Bracciolini, 1715), perhaps inspired by the title of Jacopo's vernacular version. In his 1734 testament Recanati bequeathed his manuscripts to the Marciana. The *Historiae Florentini populi* entered this library in 1735 (Lugato, 1993: 88).

In his preface, Recanati underlines Poggio's considerable merits in discovering Ancient texts: «Thanks to Poggio's diligence, we have approximately 16 Latin authors who would for ever have been covered in dust and dirt, or would have come to light much later»<sup>51</sup>. This inspires him to show his gratitude to this «vir meritissimus». He notes that his plans to publish the Florentine history were almost thwarted by unnamed people who argued that Jacopo's vernacular version was quite sufficient: «And I had already been about to edit Poggio's Historia when some people started thrusting his son Jacopo's Italian translation at me and dissuading me from my plan»<sup>52</sup>.

However, Recanati persisted in his plan, pointing out that there were very few Florentine histories in Latin and that Jacopo's vernacular version was neither as reliable as the Latin original nor had its gravitas: «nor does Jacopo's Italian version exhibit the same reliability and seriousness

<sup>50</sup> For Recanati, see Lugato, 1993: 88–96. Recanati's last autograph catalogue contains 319 mss. 103 were sold to another celebrated Venetian bibliophile, Senator Jacopo Soranzo, and the rest went to the Marciana in 1735, see Lugato, 1993: 88. Thanks to Elisabetta Lugato and the rest of the Marciana staff for excellent working conditions in January 2007 and April 2018.

<sup>51</sup> «Poggii diligentia factum esse, ut sexdecim ferme latinos Scriptores haberemus, qui ceteroquin pulvere situque obsiti perpetuo latuissent, vel tardius multo in lucem venissent», Bracciolini, 1715: 1.

<sup>52</sup> «jamque voti damnatus inibi eram ut Poggianam Historiam ederem, cum Italican Jacobi filii versionem obtrudere mihi quidam caeperunt (et) a proposito deterrere», Bracciolini, 1715: 1.

as this [original Latin version] of ours . [...] Nevertheless, the nature of this kind of lucubrations is such that [...] they are always very much inferior to Latin ones»<sup>53</sup>.

Next, Recanati gives a well-documented life of Poggio (Bracciolini, 1715: I-XXXIX) which paints a very favourable picture of his merits and appreciation by contemporaries. He concludes by stating that he was motivated to publish this edition as an homage to this «eruditissimus vir» (XXXIX).

Recanati's edition soon inspired the *Poggiana* by Jacques Lenfant, published in Amsterdam in 1720. Lenfant relied heavily on Recanati, which Recanati countered with a volume of extremely polemical corrections entitled *Osservazioni critiche* (Recanati, 1721). The first ever printed edition of all of Poggio's *De varietate fortunae*, published in Paris in 1723 by Oliva and Giorgi<sup>54</sup>, represented another important element in rekindling interest in Poggio's works.

### 5. Conclusion

The history of the transmission of Poggio Bracciolini's last treatise shows the importance of the book historical approach, i.e. a close study of manuscript and printed transmission in their historical and cultural context, for the understanding of the genesis, dissemination and reception of a text. Poggio, set aside by and embittered against the Medici regime, was busy working on a new history of Florence in his last years, but did not manage to complete this extensive text. His text has been partially preserved in one single manuscript. *Historiae Florentini populi* was edited and translated into the vernacular by Poggio's ambitious son Jacopo, who dedicated the Latin treatise to Frederick of Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, one of the background figures of the Pazzi conspiracy of 1478. The manuscript and print transmission of Jacopo's vernacular translation, *Historia fiorentina*, shows connection to the Strozzi family, an anti-Medicean Florentine dynasty. Consequently, the early history of Poggio's last treatise can only be understood in the context of the material transmission of the work. While the vernacular print had two runs in the fifteenth century, the Latin version remained in manuscripts until the early eighteenth century, when G.B. Recanati published Jacopo's edition. Recanati's publication seems to have re-kindled interest in and

<sup>53</sup> «nec ea ipsa quam Jacobus Italicam edidit, hujus nostrae fidem, (et) gravitatem assequatur [...] veruntamen ea est hujusmodi lucubrationum natura, ut [...] multo tamen infra latina exempla semper consistant», Bracciolini, 1715: 2-3.

<sup>54</sup> See Kajanto & Merisalo (1987) for the background and philological characteristics of this edition.

appreciation of Poggio's works, since it was soon followed by *Poggiana*, a rather anecdotal biographical work by Lenfant (1720), severely criticized by Recanati, and, more importantly, the first printed edition of Poggio's *De varietate fortunae*, by Oliva and Giorgi, in 1723.

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