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Dante and the Name of the Vernacular: On "De Vulgari Eloquentia" and 'Vulgare Latium'

Placidi, Andrea

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DANTE AND THE NAME OF THE VERNACULAR:
ON *DE VULGARI ELOQUENTIA* AND 'VULGARE LATIUM'

Andrea Placidi

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ABSTRACT:

This dissertation, titled *Dante and the name of the vernacular: on* De Vulgari Eloquentia *and 'Vulgare Latium'*, studies how the meaning of the word 'vernacular' changed from the medieval to the early modern period by focusing on the text of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* and the history of its reception, especially in the culture of the Renaissance. It begins by providing a definition of the 'vernacular' according to the text of *De vulgari eloquentia* and dwells at length on Dante's terminology, which is varied, rich, and problematic: from 'vulgare' and 'locutio', to 'lingua', 'loquela', 'ydioma', and 'sermo'. The dissertation then turns to how *De vulgari eloquentia* was read by the humanists and how the rediscovery of the text in the first quarter of the sixteenth century acted as a catalyst for the emergence of new identities for the 'vernacular' in the Renaissance: among these are the 'lingua toscana', the 'lingua cortigiana', and the 'lingua italiana'. The new identities of the 'vernacular' that emerged in the Renaissance helped shape the interpretation of the earliest vernacular texts written in Italy in the medieval period, i.e. the lyrics of the poets of the 'Sicilian School'. In regards to the texts of this latter tradition, I depart from the dominant theory of 'toscaneggiamento' or 'toscanizzazione' and look at ways that can justify the peculiar linguistic traits of their manuscript tradition without dismissing the extant lyrics as rewritings and translations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgments	v
INTRODUCTION: On Vernacular Beginnings	1
CHAPTER 1: The Sicilian Poets and the Identity of the Medieval 'Vernacular'	26
CHAPTER 2: The 'Sicilianum' Vernacular and its Providential Mission in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*	74
CHAPTER 3: On the Identity of the Renaissance 'Vernacular': the 'Lingua Toscana' and the Reception of *De Vulgari Eloquentia* in the Cinquecento	110
CHAPTER 4: Trissino's *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and the Notion of a 'Lingua Italiana'	143
Bibliography	170

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INTRODUCTION

On Vernacular Beginnings

The research I did for this dissertation began in the Department of European, American and Intercultural Studies at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza'.[1] In educating their students, who were very few, about the literatures of the medieval period, the faculty followed the model established several decades earlier by Aurelio Roncaglia: a solid foundation in the grammars of the medieval vernaculars (Occitan, Old French, Italian, and, for some, Galician, Catalan, and Spanish) and the principles of ecdotics required for the preparation of the critical edition of the ancient texts based on their manuscript tradition. The focus on philology and linguistics typical of that tradition of learning can be recognized in the themes of this dissertation, centered on the earliest literary records in the vernaculars of Italy (commonly referred to as 'Sicilian lyrics') and the multiple ways in which later generations made sense of their manuscript evidence during the period from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century. The early vernacular

[1] The faculty at La Sapienza offered a rich array of Romance philology courses taught by exceptional philologists. To give an idea of the serendipity of that environment: in a single day, I could read the lyrics of the early Italian poets with Roberto Antonelli, those of the Catalan troubadours with Giuseppe Tavani, discuss *De vulgari eloquentia* with Giorgio Inglese, and read the *Cortegiano* with Amedeo Quondam.

tradition in Italy and its reception also offered a privileged vantage point to observe how the meaning of the word 'vernacular' ('vulgaris') and the objects to which it referred (as Dante had formulated them in *De vulgari eloquentia* in 1304-1305) changed significantly from the medieval to the early modern period; and to suggest that the meanings we assign to the word 'vernacular' today may be very different from the one Dante, and later the humanists, assigned to it.

A significant challenge I faced was to make the topics I had specialized in in Italy, i.e. the linguistics and the philology of the medieval European vernacular literatures, relevant to a department of comparative literature. Two early mentors, Alessandro Schiesaro and Peter Godman, had helped me move my research to Princeton and brought to my attention the differences between the Italian and the American academic systems. Both had spent time teaching and researching on the Princeton campus and placed great importance on the fact that I should communicate my research to a public that went beyond my own department of study. They explain how the sense of a larger audience, along with a more pervasive use of cultural history than I had envisioned at first, made their way into this project.

The challenge I faced due to the new American audience led me to focus in this dissertation on the features of the medieval vernacular literatures that were common to all vernacular literary traditions, no matter their period and provenance. Among these, in particular, were the cultural mechanisms that make possible the emergence of the earliest written literary records in a vernacular. These mechanisms, often taken for granted, have to account for the emergence of a script, the forms and structures in which the texts are exchanged, and their practices of linguistic and cultural appropriation. Reconstructing

these cultural mechanisms for the medieval vernaculars can seem especially challenging given the relative scarcity of primary sources.[2] Yet, even though what we don't know about literary beginnings is greater than what we know, I thought that our current understanding could benefit from a more precise definition of some of the mechanisms that brought forth these literary traditions, even if these could be at best simplifications of a more complex historical reality.[3]

In order to discuss the cultural mechanisms that brought forth a literary vernacular in the medieval period I first had to define the meaning of 'vernacular'. This task proved to be difficult from early on because the meaning of the word 'vernacular' as I derived it from the contemporary scholarship was anachronistic, i.e. it is often used as a synonym for the modern notion of 'national language', which ought not to be applied retroactively to the medieval period.[4] Furthermore, the meaning of 'vernacular', even when looking exclusively at Italy, had changed significantly throughout the two-and-a-half centuries I was considering, i.e. the late thirteenth to early sixteenth centuries. This led me to tracing the transformation of the meaning of 'vernacular' from its early formulation in Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* ('vulgaris locutio', or simply 'vulgaris') to the first publication of this treatise in Italian translation in 1529.[5] I thus situated the meaning of 'vernacular' in the period in which Dante wrote *De vulgari eloquentia*, and then again in the print culture

[2] Leonardi, Lino, and Comitato nazionale per le celebrazioni dell'VIII centenario della nascita di Federico II (eds.). *I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini*. SISMEL-Ed. del Galluzzo, 2000 and Avalle, D'Arco Silvio, and Leonardi, Lino (ed.). *I manoscritti della letteratura in lingua d'oc*. Einaudi, 1993.
[3] See chapter 1, 34 and ff.
[4] See, for example, the notion of 'volgari nazionali' in: Casadei, Alberto, and Santagata, Marco, *Manuale di letteratura italiana medievale e moderna*, Laterza 2007.
[5] See chapter 4, 152 and ff.

of the Renaissance when the 'Questione della lingua' was in full swing. I then compared the two in this dissertation.

The meanings of the word 'vernacular' that I elicited in my analysis problematize the use of modern categories such as 'language' and 'dialect' by which we commonly refer to the medieval and early modern vernaculars.[6] They also help redefine the role played by oral phenomena in the period of emergence of the literary vernaculars: for example, when in chapter one I reflect on the linguistic fragmentation of the society of the early Sicilian poets and the traces it left in their literary writings, which leads to a reevaluation of our current interpretation of the linguistic features of the manuscript sources; or when in chapters three and four I look at how during the Renaissance the experience of the vernacular as it was spoken in the courts and chanceries outside Tuscany resulted in the forging of new identities for the 'vernacular', e.g. the 'lingua cortigiana' and the 'lingua italiana' (which I contend ought to be kept separate from the later, modern emergence of a national identity).

Throughout the dissertation, I reflect on the notion of 'vulgare latium' as is formulated in *De vulgari eloquentia*, to which I restituted a cultural identity fully situated in the medieval period and independent from the nuances of meaning that contemporary studies have attached to it.[7] None of the categories that I problematize ('vulgare latium', lingua cortigiana', and 'lingua italiana') have a basis in ethnic or racial considerations. The connotations we read into them today do not apply to the times in which they were conceived, although this often proves counterintuitive; Dante's 'vulgare latium' was

[6] See note 4.
[7] See pp. 20 and ff. in this introduction for a summary.

conceived as the vernacular of a community with a historical and providential mission, whose contours were drafted, yet never completed, in *De vulgari eloquentia*. The model to which Dante looked for this community, i.e. the speakers of the 'vulgare latium', was that of Frederick II's court, a German emperor that had established the seat of the Holy Roman Empire in the kingdom of Sicily in the first half of the thirteenth century, and had surrounded himself of ministers and chancellors drawn from every corner of Europe and the Mediterranean.[8] Among these were the poets of the Sicilian school to which Dante attributed the beginnings of the literary vernacular in which he wrote. As moderns we tend to impose our interpretation of this type of communities: we fashion them in the guise of proto-national entities. Yet this is not a correct assessment of reality, and understanding the special meaning of the word 'vernacular' in the medieval period can assist us in discerning such differences.

The historical identities of some of the Sicilian lyric poets have been reconstructed; these were those of key players in the Frederician administration in Italy. Their names signal the supra-municipal nature of the Italian court of the Emperor, spread between the Norman Palermo, the official capital of the kingdom, and the central Abruzzi, from which the Emperor administered the interests of the northern Italian 'comuni'. Dante is the first to refer to the vernacular of these poets tradition as 'sicilianum'.[9] He argued he called it thus because it was recorded when the seat of the

[8] Antonelli, Roberto, Di Girolamo, Costanzo and Coluccia, Rosario (eds.). *I poeti della scuola siciliana.* I: *Giacomo da Lentini*. Edizione critica con commento a cura di Roberto Antonelli. II: *Poeti della corte di Federico II*. Edizione critica con commento diretta da Costanzo Di Girolamo. III: *Poeti siculo-toscani*. Edizione critica con commento diretta da Rosario Coluccia. Mondadori, 2008.
[9] Cf. *De vulgari eloquentia*, 1 12 4.

Emperor was in Sicily by the members of the imperial court and chancery. But Dante never argued that these poets were Sicilian or wrote in the Sicilian vernacular. In fact, instead of using the correct Latin term to refer to their language, i.e. 'siculum', he uses the neologisms or loanword from the Romance 'sicilianum', unattested in other texts of the period, perhaps in an attempt to distinguish the meanings of these words. Later readers, with very few exceptions, misunderstood the meaning of 'sicilianum', which was used by Dante as a synonym of 'vulgare latium'. Because most of the texts of this tradition are anonymous, or too little is known about the identity of the authors of those with an attribution, a lyric tradition with hundreds of anonymous sonnets has been attributed without exception to speakers of a southern Italian vernacular.[10]

This has resulted in debatable conclusions among the scholars from the previous centuries, e.g. an attempt to explain the non-southern features of the literary vernacular of the Sicilian poets as preserved in the oldest manuscripts with the hypothesis of their re-writing into a central Italian vernacular by later Tuscan copyists. This treatment applied even to those texts that featured the names of authors with a probable central Italian origin, a fact which was obfuscated for many years in the scholarship. Yet, by 'sicilianum' vernacular, Dante referred to all the writings in the vernacular that had been written at the court of emperor Frederick II, no matter the provenance of the writers.

Similarly to 'sicilianum', the notions of 'lingua cortegiana' and 'lingua italiana' matured during the Renaissance did not arise from the attempt to realize the intellectual community that had characterized the Frederician age, or before it, that of the ancient

[10] For an introduction to the problems discussed, see*:* Sanga, Glauco. *La rima trivocalica. La rima nell'antica poesia italiana e la lingua della Scuola poetica siciliana*, Il Cardo, 1992.

Roman empire, nor from a political project of cultural unification of the peninsula. They were the result of a close observation of the linguistic reality experienced by the humanists, especially as this was seen from the periphery, from the courts that were distant from the Florentine chancery, and from their delegations abroad. The vernacular spoken in the major courts of the time, e.g. Milan and Ferrara, was perceived as different from the one spoken in Florence and in Tuscany, which led to the notion of a 'lingua cortegiana' slowly imposing itself on the humanist communities, while the literary Tuscan models came to be increasingly perceived as dictating unnecessary archaic tendencies on the writings and the speech of contemporary authors.[11] The other important case study, on which I dwell in chapter four, regards the notion of 'lingua italiana', which came to Trissino upon hearing intellectuals who did not inhabit the Italian peninsula referring to literary writings in the vernacular as written in the 'Italian' vernacular when they came from the territory that had been commonly called 'Italy' since Roman times.[12] At this point in time, on the other hand, most humanists who were active in the peninsula referred to the vernacular predominantly as 'lingua toscana', and some as 'lingua cortigiana'; the idea of a 'lingua italiana' was new.[13]

Having assumed already during the medieval period a vantage point analogous to the one from which the theorists of the 'lingua cortigiana' and 'italiana' observed the linguistic reality of the peninsula in the Renaissance (i.e. the periphery of the courts and

[11] On the 'lingua cortigiana', see: Giovanardi, Claudio. *La teoria cortigiana e il dibattito linguistico nel primo Cinquecento*, Roma, Bulzoni 1998.
[12] See chapter 4, pp. 145 ff.
[13] See Manni, Paola. *Dal toscano all'italiano letterario*, in Serianni-Trifone. *Storia della lingua italiana*, Torino, Einaudi, 3 voll. (vol. 1º, *I luoghi della codificazione*; vol. 2°, *Scritto e parlato*; vol. 3°, *Le altre lingue*), vol. 2º, pp. 321-342.

chanceries outside Tuscany and Italy), Dante, who had been living as an exile in Italy for years, had a unique outlook on the linguistic reality of the Italian peninsula in the pre-modern period, culminating in the remarkable bird's-eye view of the vernaculars spoken in 'Ytalia' documented in the first book of *De vulgari eloquentia*. This more inclusive perspective of the phenomena that the word 'vernacular' referred to, which we can trace back to Dante, was leveraged by the emerging printing industry in the Renaissance to create a unified domestic vernacular audience that was in practice remarkably similar to that of a modern nation's, but was founded upon mechanisms of reciprocity and consent among authors, publishers, and readers, and on a literary model in flux, rather than the institutionalization and grammaticalization of a select canon (which happened much later).

The standardization of the vernacular upon the introduction of the printing press is a topic that I consider at length in chapters three and four. In the same way as it had been important in chapter one to bring attention to the linguistic fragmentation behind the normalized aspect of the early Italian literary writings, i.e. the lyrics of the Sicilian school, it was necessary to paint in some detail the linguistic diversity behind the streamlined façade of the print culture of the Renaissance. It took at least two decades (i.e. 1510s to 1530s, which are traced in detail in the last chapters of this dissertation) for the humanists to converge onto a linguistic model, mostly dictated by Bembo's *Prose*.[14] But on the journey toward this more coherent linguistic model, a wide variety of

[14] See chapter 4, 154 and following. See also: Dionisotti, Carlo. *Scritti sul Bembo*. Edited by Claudio Vela. Turin: Einaudi, 2002.

proposals and solutions were advanced by the humanists, as the pages devoted here to Trissino's linguistic writings and his attempts at orthographic reform can begin to show.

The emergence of the literary vernacular among the early Sicilian poets was particularly important to my project because it put to the test some of the hypotheses I had about the emergence of scripts and specific metrical forms in the medieval period, i.e. the 'sonnet' and the 'tenzone', and promised to cast some light on the processes of codification in writing of the vernacular, e.g. the emergence of script and written sources in a vernacular that may have existed prior exclusively in oral form. The results of the study of the emergence of the medieval Sicilian vernacular are applied later in the dissertation to the emergence of the Renaissance vernacular from the print culture of the period. This dissertation thus identifies the two most important phases of codification of the vernacular in Italy, i.e. the production of the lyrics of the Sicilians and their recording in the songbooks, and the passage from the manuscript culture of the songbooks to the print culture of the Renaissance. A third one may be identified in the middle of the nineteenth century before and during the Unification of the 1860s, but this one remained outside the immediate scope of my project (more on this below). The first chapter in particular offers some insight into the mechanisms that guide the codification of the vernacular and how these are simple enough that they may be successfully applied to other literary traditions inside and outside Europe.

The mechanisms that inform the codification of the vernacular led me to pay attention to socio-economic factors in society, especially the forms these took in the medieval period, and how they contributed to shape the literary vernacular. This happened with some risk because part of my general argument was to go against the

simplifications and especially the instrumentalizations that are often evident in studies of the socio-economic kind.[15] Accordingly, my theory of the mechanisms of 'reciprocity and consent' that shape the recording of the first vernacular writings and inform the codification of their forms references some studies on feudal society and culture and their findings.[16] However, I saw these mechanisms emerge from the texts and I do not feel having imposed them on the lyrics based on the affiliation of my thought to one school of literary studies vs. another. As my later chapters suggest, the emergence of the vernacular is not specially tied to the characters of the feudal societies, and mechanisms similar to the ones at work in a feudal society can be detected in the early modern period as well, suggesting that the identity of the literary vernacular evolves quickly but also obeys some general laws.

The interaction of the texts of the Sicilian poets with the multilingual oral reality of thirteenth century Italy, for example, was obfuscated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by the hypothesis of a translation or rewriting in Tuscan, which promised to do away with the resistance that these early texts otherwise posed to their assimilation to the national canon. But the features of the oral vernacular of the medieval Sicilian poets still emerge from the texts and take the form of the doublets that I contend were common among the lyric poets of the Sicilian School, i.e. the arbitrary different phonetic realization of some accented and non-accented vowels whose traces are left in the 'rime siciliane' and at other points in the manuscript tradition. These point to a reality more on the par with that of the 'lingua cortegiana' of the Renaissance, i.e. of a linguistic model

[15] For example the seminal volume by Köhler, Erich, and Mario Mancini. *Sociologia della fin'amor: saggi trobadorici*. Vol. 14. Liviana, 1976.
[16] See chapter one, 36 and ff.

established from the periphery and rich of inconsistencies and idiosyncrasies that sometimes remain opaque in the writings, rather than that of the nineteenth and twentieth century's 'national' languages. The danger of superimposing modern notions like those of 'national' language onto these texts became clear to me when I witnessed scholars attempt to trace the origins and early formulation of the idea of 'nation' in the very texts that I read in the opposite direction, especially *De vulgari eloquentia*.[17]

My approach meant rejecting the results of several decades of scholarship, and the authority of many teachers, a fact on which I have not dwelled at length in the corpus of my chapters and discussed only partially in the notes.[18] As a consequence, it might escape those who are not familiar with the field of early Italian literature. I preferred to go about it this way because I consider the theories I ultimately rejected to have been very useful to advance the understanding of the field. The story they provided was not as close an approximation to reality as I believe to be the one that that does not assume a rewriting in Tuscan; yet, I do not think they are 'wrong' in any sense of the word, but rather that they simply subscribe to a different identity of the 'vernacular', which ought to be situated in its own historical context. The evidence of the manuscript sources has luckily always counted more than the name or the identity assigned to the Sicilian 'vernacular' by scholars at different times, so that my hypothesis does not have drastic consequences for the texts as they were established most recently in the late 2000s in the national critical edition.[19] My hypothesis just adds to the tools at the philologist's disposal the option of

[17] An entry point in Bruni, Francesco. *Italia: vita e avventure di un'idea.* Bologna: Il mulino, 2010.
[18] See chapter 1, 64 and ff.
[19] Antonelli, Di Girolamo, Coluccia, (eds.) *I poeti della scuola siciliana.* 2008.

phonetic variants with different stylistic value, the intratextualities they may suggest between the texts of different authors, and the different interpretations of individual verses (especially in the forms characterized by answer and reply, i.e. 'sonnet' and 'tenzone') they may bring forth. I am still learning how to best apply these tools to the critical edition and commentary of the Sicilians, so I don't explore them and their applications in the dissertation. Their use in the exegesis of the early texts remained outside the scope of this project, which is focused on the identities and names of the 'vernacular'. A close reading of some of the texts of the Sicilians and a new commentary would however be the natural continuation of the project I started here, but best undertaken somewhere else.

The quest for the name of the vernacular had the advantage of being of relevance not only to Italianists but to all those that studied the beginnings of vernacular literatures, no matter the linguistic tradition to which these belonged. Trained as we all are in the context of national literary studies, we experience most of the vernacular literatures, and especially the medieval ones, according to what the notion of 'vernacular' means to us, and we forget that that notion has been subject to a series of evolutions, which are visible even if we only look at the historical examples I have drawn from the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries in Italy. Some of these evolutions, e.g. the passage from 'sicilianum' to 'lingua italiana', or how the latter transformed into the modern notion of an 'Italian language', happen over several lifetimes and it proves challenging to maintain the higher perspective encompassing several centuries without abandoning the solid ground of close textual interpretation, from the height of which, however, it is harder to see beyond the confines of individual disciplines. The use I made of the text of *De vulgari eloquentia* to

anchor myself both in the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, when the text was respectively written and rediscovered / published, situated my analysis on this higher perspective, which proved harder to manage than I expected because it meant leaving behind the close relationship with the text and the manuscript with which I was, and am, more familiar. This can be perceived by the reader, even the one writing, for whom my higher perspective, focused on trends and shifts happening across several centuries, can generate some doubts as to whether I devoted excessive attention to large sweeping trends and the fates of a text, *De vulgari eloquentia*, anchored in two drastically different centuries, at the cost of losing some of the philological detail that a more restricted scope for the project would have offered in terms of close readings of the lyric texts. To these I refer throughout, but they ultimately remain in the background of my analysis, even though the entire project was conceived among their verses.

The advantage of my perspective, however, was that of providing some models, or archetypes, for how vernacular beginnings happen that could perhaps be applied beyond Italy and Europe. I operated under the assumption that the events that led to the development of a 'sicilianum' vernacular in the thirteenth century and to the emergence of a Renaissance vernacular from the vernacular print culture in the sixteenth century obeyed the same laws that led to the development of other vernacular traditions, and that they could help understand them. This was another of the directions that I thought my project could take after the dissertation, and I started investigating how in other parts of the world vernacular identities had emerged. Because of my training in the Romance languages, I thought the case of Spanish in Latin America to be particularly relevant, and found in the 'Academia Antártica' active in Lima in the sixteenth century an example of

how competing identities for the vernacular, in conflict with those of mainland Iberia, were emerging in the cultural history of the colonial Spanish empire.[20] It was notably in the context of those debates in Latin America that the first translation of Petrarch in a Spanish vernacular was prepared by one of the intellectuals operating within the 'Academia', Enrique Garcés.[21] The features of its vernacular, and the identities they convey, could have found their place in these pages, but I had to keep the scope of the project manageable for me, which led to archiving that research for later.

***

It is useful to provide at this point a detailed breakdown of my chapters. In chapter one, I begin by providing a definition of 'vernacular' according to the text of *De vulgari eloquentia*. I reflect at length on Dante's terminology to refer to the vernacular, which is varied, rich, and problematic: from 'vulgaris' and 'locutio', to 'lingua', 'loquela', 'ydioma', and 'sermo'. As it emerges from the close reading of the text, the nuances of vernacular ('vulgaris locutio') are very different from those that are commonly attributed to a modern language. Dante's attention is focused more on what we might call the 'human language faculty' than on the features of any individual vernacular. From there, I proceed to consider the role played by the biblical myth of the tower of Babel in Dante's hypothesis on the origins of the vernacular. To do this, I focus on the meaning of 'forma locutionis' in *De vulgari eloquentia* and its translations. A large section of chapter one is

[20] For an introduction to the poetic culture of the Spanish colonies in the Americas, see: González Echevarria, Roberto, and Enrique Pupo-Walker, eds. *The Cambridge History of Latin American Literature: Discovery to Modernism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 191-230.

[21] A good entry point in: Masiá, Maria José Bertomeu. "Los sonetos y canciones del poeta Francisco Petrarcha de Enrique Garcés. Notas sobre el Canzoniere de Francesco Petrarca en la América del siglo XVI." *Revista de literatura* 69, no. 138 (2007): 449-465.

devoted to a discussion of the vernacular used by the poets of the Sicilian school, i.e. the 'sicilianum', which is one of the main objects of Dante's treatise. Departing from the theory of 'toscaneggiamento' or 'toscanizzazione', I look at ways that can justify the peculiar linguistic traits of the manuscript tradition without dismissing the writings that it preserves as rewritings and translations.

Using the medieval Sicilian vernacular as an entry point, I advance an hypothesis on the socio-economic and cultural mechanisms that enabled the beginnings of this medieval literary vernacular, and argue that these mechanisms can be applied to any medieval vernacular with an early lyric tradition. I introduce, and redefine, the concepts of 'reciprocity' and 'consent' among lyric poets, and use them to describe the set of customs and cultural norms that produced the linguistically-coherent lyric traditions recorded in the medieval songbooks. The mechanisms of 'reciprocity' and 'consent' explain the emergence of common vocabularies, syntax, and metrical structures among early vernacular poets. They also help explain the special attention given by vernacular poets to the institution of the rhyme; reflecting on the cases of imperfect rhymes typical of the early Italian tradition, known as 'rime siciliane', I argue for the existence of stylistic allophones in the poetry of the Sicilian school, that is of alternative phonetic realizations of some vowels, a feature that by definition remains opaque in the sources, but allows to dismiss the theory of their linguistic normalization at the hands of the Tuscan copyists who authored the early manuscript sources.

The chapter reflects on how medieval lyric texts also often challenge more recent notions of 'translation' and 'multilingualism'. Many texts, e.g. the famous poem of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras 'Eras quan vey verdeyar', appear to the modern reader to be

written in multiple vernaculars, but it is unclear whether this perception was shared by medieval readers, given the thematic, stylistic, and metrical continuity that otherwise characterizes texts of this kind. I reflect on the role played by northern and central Italian copyists in preserving the earliest literary records in the Occitan and Italian vernaculars, and on the cultural and historical trends that help explain the unprecedented production of songbooks in the peninsula from the aftermath of the Albi crusade to the end of Frederick II's kingdom in southern Italy. I also dwell on the role that later findings regarding the early Italian tradition, from the humanist Barbieri's lost fragments in a pseudo-southern vernacular to the Zurich fragment exhibiting a Lombard patina unearthed in the early 2000s should play in the reconstruction of the identity of the medieval Sicilian vernacular. The chapter ends with some recommendations on how to read the texts of the Sicilian poets in light of my hypotheses.

In chapter two, I reconstruct the historical context in which Dante wrote *De vulgari eloquentia* to elicit from the text a meaning that is more independent from modern and contemporary interpretations and remains situated in the period of composition of the treatise, i.e. 1304-1305. The chapter dwells on the meanings that Dante assigned to the vernacular called 'sicilianum' and the implications behind its largely synonymous term 'vulgare latium'. It summarizes much of the most recent scholarship on the treatise and on Dante, detecting large-sweeping trends in Dante scholarship of which we have not yet seen the peak. First among these are attempts to re-read Dante's work in the light of recent fictional and semi-fictional accounts of the author's life, and simplifications and distortions of the more political material present in his writings based on proposed modifications of the traditional chronology of the composition of his works. These trends

are so ingrained in the scholarship of the past decade that the author of this dissertation has also participated, perhaps not cautiously enough, in some of the debates they generated in a separate publication.

Chapter two reflects on the role that Dante envisioned for the supra-municipal vernacular he was describing for the first time. It presents the main attributes that this vernacular possesses according to *De vulgari eloquentia*, and how these are connected to the political ideal of an Italian 'curia' that exists without an overarching authority, or, rather, in the absence of the overarching authority. The chapter ends with a reflection on the imagery used by Dante to refer to the supra-municipal vernacular, especially the allegory of the panther, and how the latter goes hand in hand with the providential role that Dante envisioned for the historical community that had inherited the 'vulgare latium' from the Sicilian poets, i.e. that of effectively guiding the inhabitants of Italy out of the political and social crisis of the fourteenth century, whose main determinant was a lack of political authority.

In chapter three, I look at the rediscovery of *De vulgari eloquentia* in the sixteenth century, and the debates that it generated in the context of the 'Questione della lingua'. I show how the passage from medieval manuscript culture to the print culture of the Renaissance acts as a catalyst for important developments in the identity of the vernacular. Among these are the new identities assigned by different humanist groups to the vernacular, e.g. 'lingua toscana', 'lingua cortigiana', and 'lingua italiana'. The chapter reconstructs the cultural context of the early reception of *De vulgari eloquentia* and the resistance of many humanists to the theories contained in the treatise. This resistance resulted even in the rejection of Dante's authorship of the text, e.g. by

Machiavelli. The reasons of this resistance are explored in detail. The chapter also shows how Gian Giorgio Trissino, the rediscoverer of the treatise, leveraged the reaction of his peers to create a new audience for his printed works on the 'Questione della lingua'. Trissino initiated a collaboration with the Roman printer Ludovico Arrighi whose success pushed many humanists, who had otherwise refused to publish their works using the new technology of the printing press, to make the transition from manuscript to print culture. The introduction of the printing press and the role it played in the linguistic standardization of the Renaissance vernacular are explored through the writings of several authors, e.g. Equicola, Tolomei, and Castiglione. The chapter offers an introduction to how *De vulgari eloquentia* and its theory on the vernacular influenced the larger 'Questione della lingua' in the Renaissance. If chapter one situated the meaning of 'vulgaris' in the period of composition of *De vulgari eloquentia*, chapter three situated that of 'lingua toscana' in the culture of the Renaissance, resisting anachronistic interpretations.

In chapter four, I trace the development of the notion of 'lingua italiana' in the work of Trissino. I situate the meaning of 'lingua italiana' in the first quarter of the sixteenth century and isolate it from later attempts to interpret it as an early manifestation of the emergence of a national conscience. I look at Trissino's linguistic works and to his translation of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*. 'Lingua italiana' is the translation that Trissino used for Dante's 'vulgare latium', which I discussed in chapter one; yet, Trissino's understanding of Dante's term is different from the one I reconstructed there as situated in 1304-1305. I thus focus on the differences between Dante's and Trissino's theory of the vernacular and what they tell us about the differences between the identity

of the vernacular in the medieval period vs. in the Italian Renaissance. The chapter also reconstructs in detail the orthographic reform that Trissino advanced and the reason why this encountered as much if not more resistance among his peers as his claim for Dante's paternity of *De vulgari eloquentia*.

A close reading of the *Castellano* and of the *Epistola de le lettere nuωvamente aggiunte ne la lingua Italiana* shows how much Trissino's thought on language was indebted to Dante's treatise. Trissino's understanding of the vernacular also created new identities for the Renaissance vernacular writer, based on the rejection of the idea that a modern author should exclusively emulate the texts of the Trecento, which was prevalent among his peers. The chapter also reflects on the meaning of 'Italy' for Dante and Trissino and how this notion is connected to that of 'vulgare latium' and 'lingua italiana'. The chapter ends with a brief consideration of the poem that represented for Trissino the culmination of his linguistic project, the *Italia liberata dai Goti* and the identity of the vernacular that emerges from it.

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A central theme of this work was the paradoxical nature of a vernacular, the 'vulgare latium', that was embodied in a myriad different forms, i.e. the vernaculars of the medieval Italian lyrics, but was also common to all the inhabitants of the peninsula. How could a vernacular be multiple and one at the same time? And how did this affect the meaning and the nuances that we assign to the word 'vernacular' in considering a medieval text? Toward the end of this project I found myself pondering whether the vernacular formulated by Dante was 'one' and 'multiple' merely by definition, i.e. belonged exclusively to an abstract interpretation of reality, or if its qualities had an

actual referent in the primary sources and in the world from which they came to us, i.e. it actually existed. The question lies beyond the scope of my dissertation, and perhaps of my field, as it requires the same breadth of learning that Dante had shown in *De vulgari eloquentia*, ranging from biblical exegesis, to logic and philosophy, and has consequently been left outside the pages that follow (even though some notes remark on the work that other scholars have attempted in that direction).

There are, however, ways to resolve this paradox and give at least a sense of its stakes. The first obstacle to overcome in reconciling the paradox of a vernacular that is simultaneously one and multiple is the perception that the more something is divided into smaller parts, the less it can aspire to being a unified whole. For example, when we look at the varieties and differences exhibited by the vernaculars of the medieval period – even when focusing exclusively on Italy – it becomes very hard to understand how these could be considered the manifestation of a larger whole, i.e. a supra-municipal vernacular, which fails to appear to our senses. The second obstacle is the perception that something that is whole, or 'one', could not manifest as being composed of many discrete parts, i.e. that there could not be a whole where there are many parts. Yet, I suspect that Dante saw these matters differently: i.e. every whole is merely a collection of parts, and no matter how many or different the parts, these together make up a larger whole. The more parts, the larger the whole; the larger the whole, the more the parts.

Dante understood that all the vernaculars of Italy (all human vernaculars, in fact, as emerges from book 1 of *De vulgari eloquentia*) were manifestations of a single phenomenon, i.e. the actualization of one of the fundamental traits of human nature, which he called 'vulgaris locutio' or simply 'vulgaris': no matter how different two

vernaculars were, these remained parts and manifestations of this fundamental reality, i.e. the human ability to communicate in order to advance the good of their species (more on the meaning of 'vulgaris locutio' in chapter one). Now, of course, each and every part, i.e. each vernacular, of the larger whole, i.e. the 'vulgaris locutio' or general ability to communicate in the vernacular, can be divided into smaller parts. A part of the larger whole is also a whole of parts; for example, the vernacular spoken by the inhabitants of the peninsula called 'Ytalia' could be divided in the Florentine, the Bolognese, the Apulian, the Calabrian, etc., vernaculars; and these could be divided further, all the way down to the vernaculars of single individuals. Yet, these continued to be part of larger wholes, i.e. the 'vulgare latium', and higher up, the 'vulgaris locutio' (cf. *De vulgari eloquentia,* 1 16).

Accordingly, a change at any level of complexity, be it the language of the individual or that of the community of an entire city, affected all the other levels, up and down the ladder of the vernaculars, because if a part of a whole changes, the whole is changed, too. Similarly, if something were to change at the higher level of the 'vulgaris locutio', like according to Dante happened during the construction of the tower of Babel when God cursed humankind, all human vernaculars would change affected by it. At the lower levels of complexity, the level of interaction with the other parts is low, so what happens on the low levels of the ladder of the vernaculars has limited effects on the wholes higher up, i.e. the 'vulgare latium' or the 'vulgaris locutio'. On the other hand, the more high up on this ladder, the more drastically the changes are reflected down, given the higher level of interaction possessed by the larger wholes, characterized by more numerous parts. This is why the 'vulgare latium' is said by Dante to function as the

'hinge' (Lat. 'cardo') of the vernaculars spoken in Italy, which revolve around it as if the wooden planks of a door. It also explains why every vernacular has something of the 'vulgare latium', i.e. is one of its component parts, but is not 'the' 'vulgare latium', i.e., in Dante's words, why the scent of the panther (the allegory for 'vulgare latium') can be smelled everywhere, but the whole animal or its home can't be found anywhere.

It then remains to determine why the 'vulgare latium' should be more excellent than the Tuscan, Apulian, or Bolognese vernaculars, if these are also parts of the former and can manifest its qualities. Why did Dante assign different values to different vernaculars? While the latter vernaculars can manifest some of the qualities of the 'vulgare latium', i.e. the larger whole of which they are parts, they cannot manifest them all. Only the higher whole can manifest all the qualities of its parts. Yet, the higher whole is not just a sum of its parts (an interpretation toward which Trissino leaned, as I show in chapter four) but is the whole made by the sum of its parts, i.e. the qualities of every vernacular, *and* the interactions of these qualities with each other. Hence, the 'vulgare latium' is, literally, an entirely different beast than all the other vernaculars, by being more than the mere sum of its parts. This also explains why Dante can affirm that an author in the highest style can use lower vernaculars, e.g. for realistic effects, without marring the qualities of his work as a whole, a concept that was put to the test in the *Commedia*: as long as the whole poem manifests or has the potential to manifest the qualities of all its parts, and all these parts are organized into a coherent whole, i.e. they interact with each other, individual parts can manifest any of the vernaculars on the ladder, from those of an individual like Brunetto Latini, those of the inhabitants of an ancient town, to those of a devil.

The highest themes, like epic, love, or virtue naturally gravitate toward the higher vernaculars like the 'vulgare latium' because these are universal human experiences and as such do not exclusively require the situated vernaculars of daily, finite life, or even negate them. From this derives that a 'canzone', the highest medieval vernacular genre according to Dante, which elects epic, love, or virtue as its theme, cannot descend into the lower vernaculars without descending to lower arguments.[22] Of course, what applied to the 'canzone' did not apply to the *Commedia*, where Dante released himself from limitations of genre and expressed the maximum freedom allowed to a vernacular author. A high level of interaction and the cohesiveness of the vernacular(s) of the *Commedia* was guaranteed by the metrical structure, i.e. the triplets and the rhymes, and the numerology behind the organization and intra-textual correspondences of the hundred cantos.

The 'vulgare latium' is not an abstract entity given once and for all. It changes simultaneously with all of its parts, the thousand vernaculars of Italy, due to the passing of time. This is why Dante distinguished 'sicilianum' from 'vulgare latium', even though these are largely synonymous: 'sicilianum' is the name given to the form that the 'vulgare latium' had taken in the thirteenth century during the imperial rule of Frederick II. Dante was aware that this form had to be different from the 'vulgare latium' of his time, even though this was not perhaps easily quantifiable by him given the distance from the Sicilian tradition of only half a century. I hope to have proved in this dissertation that in book 1 of *De vulgari eloquentia* Dante did not attribute any special distinction to the 'vulgare latium' vs. the higher vernacular 'wholes' of the other territories in the

[22] *De vulgari eloquentia,* 1 2 3.

Mediterranean (e.g. the lingua oc or Occitan, the lingua oil, or French, etc.); he assumed the perspective of 'Ytalia' and its 'vulgare latium' ('Latium' merely being a synonym of 'Ytalia' in classical Latin literature and originally indicating the region of Rome and its first inhabitants, the Latins) because this geographical entity had existed for enough time in the history of European culture for it to spill over into other manifestations, which were political, economic, cultural, and linguistic. One of these manifestations had been the supra-municipal court of Frederick II: because this court brought together all the parts of 'Ytalia' in this enlarged sense, its vernacular could lay a claim to the 'vulgare latium', i.e. a higher manifestation of the 'vulgaris locutio', in the form of what Dante called 'sicilianum' vernacular. The perspective chosen by Dante was arbitrarily restricted to 'Ytalia', yet it was general enough to remain relevant for all of the vernacular traditions.

A better understanding of *De vulgari eloquentia* can cast light on some of the most paradoxical aspects of the cultural history of Italy, for example the statistics that emerged from the early census completed at the Unification of the peninsula in 1861, according to which the 'lingua italiana' (still often referred to as 'toscano', and mostly viewed as a primarily written language learned at school) was the language of only the 0.89% of the inhabitants of Italy, and these were mostly in the north.[23] The meanings that 'lingua italiana' had taken on in the modern period could not have been farther from those of Dante's 'vulgare latium', which Trissino had for the first time translated as 'lingua italiana' in the sixteenth century. The perspective that saw the 'lingua toscana' or 'italiana' as the only 'language' of the newly formed Italian nation and relegated the rest of the peninsula to speaking something that was not 'Italian' should appear to the reader

[23] De Mauro, Tullio. *Storia linguistica dell'Italia unita*. Laterza, 1986, 42.

of this dissertation as a deeply problematic idea. In truth, there was no vernacular spoken in Italy that was not a part, and an indispensable component, of the 'vulgare latium' formulated for the first time by Dante. A 'lingua italiana' could only exist because of the many vernaculars that were parts of it, i.e. because of the remaining 99.11% of the vernaculars spoken in Italy that remained outside the statistics. These numbers, and the policies they justified, produced endless downward spiraling trends for those that were most impacted by the verdict, i.e. the southern populace of the peninsula and their cultures. My hope is that restituting to the early Italian tradition some of its multiplicities and problematizing what we mean by 'vernacular' in medieval and Renaissance studies can give a better, more informed picture of vernacular beginnings, and be applied to other vernacular traditions.

Chapter 1

The Sicilian Poets and the Identity of the Medieval 'Vernacular'

| The meaning of 'vernacular' according to *De vulgari eloquentia*

The identity of the 'vernacular' is a question that characterizes the study of medieval European lyric. As we explore in the course of this dissertation, the quest for identity of the 'vernacular' in the medieval Italian period anticipates the development of the idea of a 'lingua italiana' in the Renaissance.[1] In this chapter, we look at the earliest manifestations of this question and determine the meaning of 'vernacular' according to Dante's seminal treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*. It would be impossible to perfectly reconstruct the identity of the 'vernacular' for Dante and to situate it historically in the fourteenth century without letting our vantage point of twenty-first century observers affect us. The treatise is incomplete and presents serious problems to its interpretation, to which the exegesis presented in the following paragraphs can only do partial justice. Yet, it is necessary to attempt to situate the identity of the 'vernacular' in *De vulgari eloquentia* before exploring the reception and evolution of this concept throughout the

[1] See chapter 4.

medieval and early modern period because it informs scholarly trends in the fields of Italian philology and Dante Studies that continue to be relevant today.[2]

The identity of the 'vernacular' according to Dante is an object of scholarly disagreement.[3] In the treatise, Dante defines the 'vernacular' ('vulgaris locutio', or simply 'vulgare'), as the 'locutio' that is the natural necessity of humankind: here we inquire what is this 'locutio'.[4] Dante argued that the ability to speak the 'vernacular' ('eloquentia vulgaris') is a necessity ('necessariam') because man does not only act brutally by natural instinct ('instinctu nature') but is also guided by reason ('ratio'): the reason of individuals varies according to capacity and inclination ('discretionem', 'iudicium', 'electionem'); hence the need for each of them to be able to communicate the particular mix of capacity and inclinations that determines their intention to another person. [5] According to Dante, communication, enacted through the 'vernacular', is aimed

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[2] See chapter 2.

[3] See at least: Rosier-Catach, Irène. "Solo all'uomo fu dato di parlare". Dante, gli angeli e gli animali." *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica* 98, no. 3 (2006): 435-465; Imbach, Ruedi, and Rosier-Catach, Irène. "De l'un au multiple, du multiple à l'un: une clef d'interprétation pour le De vulgari eloquentia." *Mélanges de l'école française de Rome* 117, no. 2 (2005): 509-529; Alessio, Gian Carlo. "A Few Remarks on the" Vulgare Illustre". *Dante Studies, with the Annual Report of the Dante Society* 113 (1995): 57-67; Ascoli, Albert Russell. "Neminem ante nos": Historicity and Authority in the" De vulgari eloquentia." *Annali d'italianistica* 8 (1990): 186-231; Mengaldo, Pier Vincenzo. *Linguistica e retorica di Dante*. Vol. 21. Nistri-Lischi, 1978; Dragonetti, Roger. "La conception du langage poétique dans le De vulgari eloquentia de Dante." in Dragonetti, Roger*, Aux frontières du langage poétique (Études sur Dante, Mallarmé, Valéry), Romanica Gandensia, IX* (1961): 9-77.

[4] *De vulgari eloquentia* 1 1, (*DVE* henceforth) according to the text of Rajna, Pio (ed.), *De vulgari eloquentia*, in *Le opera di Dante*, vol. 1, Società Dantesca Italiana, Firenze, 1960: "Cum neminem ante nos de vulgaris eloquentie doctrina quicquam inveniamus tractasse, atque talem scilicet eloquentiam penitus omnibus *necessariam videamus*, cum ad eam non tantum viri, sed etiam mulieres et parvuli nitantur, in quantum natura permittit" [italics mine].

[5] *DVE* 1 3 1: "Cum igitur homo, non nature instinctu, sed ratione moveatur, et ipsa ratio vel circa discretionem vel circa iudicium vel circa electionem diversificetur in singulis".

at the good of the human species, because men, although endowed with individual 'ratio', need each other to survive. The 'vulgare' is thus in service of what Dante calls the social dealings, or more precisely, the business of human friendships ('amicabile commercium'), which is the highest achievement for the human species, although not for animals.[6] The first example of 'amicabile commercium' in which the use of the 'vernacular' is required is the relationship between the infant and its mother, or the nurse: the latter provides the infant everything it needs to grow into an adult human, that is food, affection, and the 'vulgaris locutio'.[7]

The text requires a detailed commentary because the 'vulgaris locutio' is not the only 'locutio' available to man; Dante records the existence of a secondary 'locutio', known to the ancient Romans as 'grammatica', a term borrowed from ancient Greek ('γραμματική'). In order to be learned, the latter requires the primary 'locutio', the 'vulgare' (i.e. its learners had to receive the first rudiments of the secondary 'locutio' in the 'vernacular'), but could then be used independently from it, if only by a select few.[8] Notably, Dante did not necessarily identify the secondary 'locutio' with ancient Greek, despite the fact that the word 'grammatica' was a loanword from that language. This suggests that the notion of 'grammatica' in Dante is as layered as those of 'locutio' and

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[6] *DVE* 1 2 5: "Inter ea [animalia] vero que diversarum sunt specierum, non solum non necessaria fuit locutio, sed prorsus dampnosa fuisset, cum nullum *amicabile commertium* fuisset in illis" [italics mine].
[7] *DVE* 1 1 2: "dicimus celeriter attendentes quod vulgarem locutionem appellamus eam quam infantes adsuefiunt ab adsistentibus, cum primitus distinguere voces incipiunt; vel quod brevius dici potest, vulgarem locutionem asserimus, quam sine omni regula, nutricem imitantes, accipimus".
[8] *DVE* 1 1 3: "Est et inde alia locutio secundaria nobis, quam Romani gramaticam vocaverunt. Hanc quidem secundariam Greci habent et alii, sed non omnes. Ad habitum vero huius pauci perveniunt, quia non nisi per spatium temporis et studii assiduitatem regulamur et doctrinamur in illa".

‘vulgare’, but because we are interested in the primary ‘locutio’ here, and the issue has been recently addressed by Raffaele Pinto, we leave it aside.[9]

The existence of a secondary ‘locutio’ further problematizes the meaning of the term ‘locutio’ in Dante. If there are two ‘locutiones’, then the nouns ‘vulgaris’ and ‘locutio’ can mean different things, and we cannot readily translate ‘vulgaris locutio’ as ‘vernacular’ without first resolving this difficulty. As we just saw, artifice and effort are what truly distinguishes the secondary ‘locutio’ from the ‘vulgaris locutio’. The meaning of ‘locutio’ must thus be given by the overlap of the identities of ‘vulgare’, or primary, ‘locutio’ and secondary ‘locutio’. According to Dante, the ‘vulgaris locutio’ is used by the entire human species, hence it is one and the same for everybody.[10] However, individual speakers and communities use it according to different ‘prolationes’ and ‘vocabula’. The meaning of ‘locutio’ depends on the translation of this pair, which most commentaries translate literally as ‘pronunciation’ and ‘vocabulary’. Giorgio Inglese, on the other hand, interprets them as the phonetic and morphologic aspects of a language.[11] I follow Inglese and translate the pair as both the semantic and conceptual units and the way these are realized phonetically by the speaker, but also as the rules of syntax specific to every language through which the semantic and conceptual units and the phonetic sense objects convey the intended meaning. I dwell on ‘vocabula’ and ‘prolationes’ and define them in the context of *De vulgari eloquentia* because I return to the pair in chapter 4 when I look

[9] Pinto, Raffaele. "La grammatica in Dante." *Quaderns d'italià* 18 (2013): 15-44.
[10] *DVE* 1 1 4: “Harum quoque duarum nobilior est vulgaris: tum quia prima fuit humano generi usitata; tum quia totus orbis ipsa perfruitur, licet in diversas prolationes et vocabula sit divisa”.
[11] Cf. Alighieri, Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia*, a cura di Giorgio Inglese, Rizzoli, Milano 1998, 42-43.

at the *Castellano*, where Trissino paraphrases them as 'parole', 'pronuncia', and 'modi di dire', which is different from Dante's argument as I am reconstructing it here.[12]

According to Dante, 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' are what distinguishes the different 'idioms' ('ydiomata') under the single umbrella of 'vulgaris locutio', in other words what distinguishes different 'vernaculars', e.g. Occitan, Old French, and Italian, but also Tuscan, Sicilian, and Apulian.[13] Dante argues that all vernaculars are idioms of a single 'vulgaris locutio' or 'vulgare', henceforth he can also argue that the first use of the 'vulgaris locutio' was (either inside Eden or after the expulsion from the garden) by Adam, the first man, regardless of the 'ydioma' in which the first man spoke.[14] A couple paragraphs later, Dante introduces another word as a synonym for 'ydioma': 'loquela', which he uses to refer to the 'vernaculars' spoken in Babel during the construction of the Tower.[15] He uses 'sermo' and 'lingua' in a similar fashion to refer to different 'vernaculars' or varieties of the 'vulgaris locutio'; however, 'lingua' is preferred when referring to 'vernaculars' of special importance, such as the 'lingua confusionis'; the

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[12] See chapter 4.

[13] *DVE* 1 6 1: "Quoniam permultis ac diversis ydiomatibus negotium exercitatur humanum, ita quod multi multis non aliter intelligantur per verba quam sine verbis".

[14] *DVE* 1 5 3: "Et hinc penitus elicere possumus locum illum ubi effutita est prima locutio: quoniam, si extra paradisum afflatus est homo, extra; si vero intra, intra fuisse locum prime locutionis convicimus".

[15] *DVE* 1 7 6: "Siquidem pene totum humanum genus ad opus iniquitatis coierat. Pars imperabant, pars architectabantur, pars muros moliebantur, pars amysibus regulabant, pars trullis linebant, pars scindere rupes, pars mari, pars terra vehere intendebant, partesque diverse diversis aliis operibus indulgebant, cum celitus tanta confusione percussi sunt, ut qui omnes una eademque loquela deserviebant ad opus, ab opere, multis diversificati loquelis, desinerent, et nunquam ad idem commertium convenirent". See *Genesis* 11:1-9 for the biblical version. On the role of Babel in the European linguistic imaginary, see: Steiner, George. *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Oxford 1975 and Eco, Umberto. *La ricerca della lingua perfetta nella cultura europea*. Laterza, 1996.

'lingua oil'; 'lingua oc'; and 'lingua si'; the fourteen main Italian vernaculars, and the single instance of 'lingua vulgari' in the last paragraph of book 1, which refers to the literary vernacular in which the best Italian poets have written.[16] In the last paragraphs of book 1, Dante uses 'lingua vulgaris' as a synonym of 'vulgare latium', which is defined as the 'vulgaris locutio' of all those living in the territory that Dante identifies as 'Ytalia' a notion that is at least as problematic as that of 'vernacular'.[17] The inflation of nomenclature used by Dante in the last paragraphs of the first book is problematic and even the rich commentary by Fenzi does not dwell on the differences of meaning I have addressed.[18]

The episode of the tower of Babel, which Dante treats as history, complicates the meaning of 'vulgare', but also offers a gateway to determining the meaning of 'locutio', from which we can derive a better definition of 'vernacular' according to Dante. All the inhabitants of the world who gathered in Babel at the time of the construction of the

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[16] *DVE* 1 6 6:" Hiis solis post confusionem remansit, ut Redemptor noster, qui ex illis oriturus erat secundum humanitatem, non lingua confusionis, sed gratie, frueretur"; 1 10 2: "Allegat ergo pro se lingua *oïl* quod propter sui faciliorem ac delectabiliorem vulgaritatem quicquid redactum sive inventum est ad vulgare prosaicum, suum est: videlicet Biblia cum Troyanorum Romanorumque gestibus compilata et Arturi regis ambages pulcerrime et quamplures alie ystorie ac doctrine". And *DVE* 1 19 1: "Hoc enim usi sunt doctores illustres qui lingua vulgari poetati sunt in Ytalia, ut Siculi, Apuli, Tusci, Romandioli, Lombardi, et utriusque Marchie viri"..

[17] DVE 1 19 1: "Nam, sicut quoddam vulgare est invenire quod proprium est Cremone, sic quoddam est invenire quod proprium est Lombardie; et sicut est invenire aliquod quod sit proprium Lombardie, est invenire aliquod quod sit totius sinistre Ytalie proprium; et sicut omnia hec est invenire, sic et illud quod totius Ytalie est. Et sicut illud cremonense, ac illud lombardum, et tertium semilatium dicitur, sic istud quod totius Ytalie est latium vulgare vocatur". The best book on the notion of 'Italy' from its medieval (Dante) to its modern incarnations is: Bruni, Francesco. *Italia: vita e avventure di un'idea.* Bologna: Il mulino, 2010. A discussion on 'Ytalia' in chapter 4.

[18] For a summary, see the introduction to Alighieri, Dante, Fenzi Enrico (ed.), *De vulgari eloquentia*, in *Le opere: Dante Alighieri*, vol. 3, Salerno, 2012, and the titles cited in note 1.

tower spoke the ‘vulgare’: whether this means that they all spoke the same variety of the ‘vulgare’, i.e. the same ‘idioma’ or ‘sermo’, or different varieties, is neither of relevance to Dante nor to us. In fact, regardless of this, all the inhabitants of Babel spoke in the same ‘vulgaris locutio’ of the first man, Adam. To explain this, Dante introduces a new concept: the ‘forma locutionis’. Each inhabitant of Babel had the same ‘forma locutionis’ of the first man, Adam. “Dico autem formam”, writes Dante, “et quantum ad rerum vocabula et quantum ad vocabulorum constructionem et quantum ad constructionis prolationem”.[19] To Dante, the ‘forma’ is not just the ‘vocabula and prolationes’, i.e. the phono-morphological aspects that differentiate the varieties of the one ‘vulgaris locutio’ vs. another: but also everything that pertains to the way that ‘vocabula and prolationes’ interact with each other and are ‘generated by the intellect’, which is my translation of ‘constructum’ / ‘constructionem’. This way of generating the ‘vulgaris locutio’ was one before the Tower, but became multiple after. Dante argues that the original ‘forma’ was ‘dissipata’, annihilated as a divine punishment. Only the Hebrews, according to Dante, retain the original ‘forma’, so that Jesus could be born with it. If we follow Dante’s reasoning, the ‘lingua confusionis’ is constructed or generated by the intellect in a way that is different from prior to the construction of the Tower. As a result of this, the guilds working on the tower generated new ‘loquele’, i.e. new varieties of the ‘vulgaris locutio’, which itself had been dissipated and had been ‘re-formed’ as a consequence of the punishment.[20] The ‘lingua confusionis’ remains a ‘vulgaris locutio’, but because its ‘forma’ is not singular anymore, it can give rise to ‘vulgaria’ that are as different as their

[19] Cf. *DVE* 1 6 4.
[20] Cf. *DVE* 1 7 7.

'formae' are different, despite the fact that these all remain the necessary attribute of man as a social being, the one and only 'vulgaris locutio'.[21]

It is difficult to translate 'forma' accurately, especially given that we ignore Dante's sources, if he had any, and I am wary of using terminology borrowed from contemporary linguistics. It is futile to attempt to understand the objects of Dante's inquiry by using our contemporary vantage point, for example the advancements of modern linguistics or the idea of universal grammar, even when the latter offer parallels that are at least fascinating.[22] What we can gather from *De vulgari eloquentia* is that 'locutio' must exist independently from the 'forma' because even when the latter is 'dissipated', as it happens during the construction of the tower of Babel, the 'locutio' remains and is re-formed according to new 'formae'. Hence the 'locutio' is something we are endowed with as members of the human species, while 'forma' is the way this 'locutio' is constructed or generated by the intellect. The 'forma' is thus embodied in a 'vulgaris locutio'. There are at least as many 'vulgares locutiones' as there are 'formae', but all of them are the

[21] Yet another synonym of the *vulgaris locutio* used by Dante is 'signum'. According to his definition, 'signum' is the same as the *vulgaris locutio* (*DVE* 1 3 2): "hoc equidem signum est ipsum subiectum nobile de quo loquimur". He defines it as composed of two parts, one rational, one sensible, i.e. available to the senses. In other words, the joint entity of the concept and its linguistic label, i.e. the phonetic or graphic representation. The 'signum' is the sum of concept and label and their interactions.

[22] Rosier-Catach and Corti have applied a syncretic mix of medieval philosophy of language (esp. the writings of the "modistae") and modern linguistics to the text with mixed results: Rosier-Catach, Irène. "Man as a speaking and political animal: a political reading of Dante's De Vulgari Eloquentia." In *Dante's Plurilingualism*, pp. 34-51. Routledge, 2017; Corti, Maria. "Lingua universale e lingua poetica in Dante". In *Dante a un nuovo crocevia. Firenze:* Le Lettere, 1982. pp. 33-76. According to my reading, the 'locutio' may resemble the contemporary idea of a 'language faculty' as it emerged from the developments in the field of linguistics in the second half of the twentieth century, but comparisons of these sorts do not advance our attempt to situate the text in its medieval context.

'(vulgaris) locutio' with which we are endowed since our creation. This discussion aimed at problematizing the translation of the term 'vernacular' ('vulgare') in *De vulgari eloquentia*. I hope to have shown that merely translating the numerous terms that Dante uses to refer to the 'vernacular' and its peripheral phenomena as 'languages' may help to put *De vulgari eloquentia* in dialogue with the present but does not ultimately advance our understanding of the treatise's object as situated in 1304.

Now I turn to the way that I understand the unique mechanisms that inform the birth of a special kind of 'vulgaris locutio', the vernacular of the poets of the Sicilian school. I return to the text of *De vulgari eloquentia* throughout the dissertation to test the cultural history I reconstruct against this important medieval referent.

| The function of the 'vernacular' in medieval Europe

De Vulgari Eloquentia argued that every community, no matter how small, had its own vernacular, different from all others, and displayed a keen sense of linguistic phenomena built on personal observation. According to Dante, each division of human society has a claim to a 'vernacular', all the way from the geographical region, to the city and district, down to the family and the single individual - conceived as a community of one person.[23] The existence of multiple 'vernaculars' was explained by medieval

[23] *DVE* 1 19 3 :"Quibus illuminatis, inferiora vulgaria illuminare curabimus, gradatim descendentes ad illud, quod unius solius familie proprium est". In the late Botterill's English translation, the text of Dante reads thus: "I shall attempt to throw some light on the question of the less important vernaculars, descending step by step until I reach the language that belongs to a single family." (Botterill Stephen (ed.). *Dante: De vulgari eloquentia*. No. 5. Cambridge University Press, 1996). Such was the plan for the treatise as Dante had formulated at the end of book 1 but the author left the project halfway. For a discussion of the bibliography on *De vulgari eloquentia*, see the latest national edition, Fenzi Enrico (ed.), *De vulgari eloquentia*, in *Le opere: Dante Alighieri*, vol. 3, Salerno,

observers as a result of the events related to the construction of the Tower of Babel, a tradition that as we have seen above Dante also followed.[24] The awareness of a fundamental diversity between the 'vernaculars' of the various communities of 'Ytalia' was drawn from his experience as an exile traveling throughout the peninsula, and perhaps beyond, in the aftermath of his banishment from Florence at the beginning of the fourteenth century.[25] As we know from contemporary linguistic scholarship, the map of medieval Europe consisted of a thick labyrinth of linguistic communities whose isoglosses largely overlapped with the geographical borders of the time, marked by rivers, forests, mountains, swamps, roads that had not been maintained after the fall of the Roman empire, and the uninhabited lands that happened to be more than a single day of travel from the nearest town in every direction; however, how medieval people thought about different 'vernaculars' is unclear and *De vulgari eloquentia* offers a unique insight

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2012, and the notes to my second chapter, which dwells at greater length on the Latin treatise.

[24] Recent explorations of the topic in: Somerset, Fiona, and Nicholas Watson, eds. *Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity*. Penn State Press, 2010. Scholarly work on multilingualism in medieval Europe has been intensifying in the past two decades, especially in English: see Léglu, Catherine. *Multilingualism and mother tongue in medieval French, Occitan, and Catalan narratives*. Vol. 11. Penn State Press, 2010; Tyler, Elizabeth. *Conceptualizing Multilingualism in England, c. 800-c. 1250*. Brepols Publishers, 2011; Hsy, Jonathan Horng. *Trading tongues: Merchants, multilingualism, and medieval literature*. The Ohio State University Press, 2013. On multilingualism in the ancient world, see Adams, James Noel. *Bilingualism and the Latin Language.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003; and Kaimio, Jorma. *The Romans and the Greek Language*. Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica (Comm. Hum. Litt. 64), 1979. See note 14.

[25] See Migliorini, Bruno, *Storia della lingua italiana*, Vol. 1. Sansoni, 1988. Cf. Manni, Paola. "Storia della lingua italiana. Il Trecento toscano.", Il Mulino, 2003, and Serianni, Luca, and Pietro Trifone, *Storia della lingua italiana: Le altre lingue*, Vol. 3. G. Einaudi, 1994.

into it.[26] In a world where most commoners never left their home villages (the exception being religious pilgrimages, attendance of markets and fairs, war, and running away from local justice), traveling more than sixty miles in every direction (that is roughly the distance that a horse can cover if riding for an entire day from sunrise to sunset) meant entering a foreign linguistic universe where often a language was spoken that was not mutually comprehensible to ears of the traveler who had begun his adventure by foot the same morning. One did not have to spend the day riding to find that the language of his neighbors was different than his own. Cities like Bologna, as Dante reports in his excursus of Italian vernaculars in book 1 of *De vulgari eloquentia*, had districts within the city walls that exhibited different 'vernaculars'. Here I am interested in particular in those vernaculars that get codified into writing, e.g. those of the Sicilian and the Tuscan poets. These originate when individuals attempt to mediate the linguistic diversity intrinsic to their historical community, and the favored vehicle of this mediation in the medieval period is the exchange of lyrics. The exchange of lyrics produces the literary vernacular through mechanisms that I define below as 'reciprocity' and 'consent'.

The medieval literary 'vernaculars' cannot be identified with any of the vernaculars spoken by the populaces of any territory at any time, as Dante argued as early as 1304.[27]

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[26] On the origins of the medieval vernaculars, see Meneghetti, Maria Luisa. *Le Origini Delle Letterature Medievali Romanze.* 1. ed. Roma: Laterza, 1997; Carlo Tagliavini, *Le origini delle lingue neolatine*, Bologna, Patron, 1979. In English, see: Ti Alkire & Carol Rosen, *Romance Languages: A Historical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010. For the diversity of the texts in Italian, see: Contini, Gianfranco, *Letteratura Italiana Delle Origini.* Firenze: Sansoni, 1970. The university manual of reference in Italian universities is: Lausberg, Heinrich, and Nicolò Pasero. *Linguistica romanza*. Feltrinelli, 1971.

[27] Cf. *DVE* 1 16: "vulgare in Latio, quod omnis latie civitatis est et nullius esse videtur, et quo municipalia vulgaria omnia Latinorum mensurantur, ponderantur, et comparantur".

How do these come about then? I am especially interested in the mechanisms that enabled one of the medieval literary vernaculars, known as 'sicilianum' because Dante called it thus in *De vulgari eloquentia*, to go from the vernacular of a small community revolving around Emperor Frederick II to that of all the major literary communities in the peninsula.[28] This vernacular was recorded in the Tuscan codices known as 'canzonieri delle origini'. In this study, I reject the theory on the vernacular 'sicilianum' according to which the texts of the 'canzonieri' were rewritten into the vernacular of the central Italian copyists that assembled them, obfuscating the vernacular of the Sicilian poets.[29] My alternative theory on the text of the 'canzonieri' stems from the reconnaissance of their linguistic features as they are preserved, and from the dissatisfaction with the superimposition of the anachronistic notion of 'lingua toscana' or 'toscaneggiata' / 'toscanizzata' on the vernacular of the Sicilian poets.[30]

The study of the processes through which a medieval vernacular was first recorded in writing was central to the field of Romance philology in the last two centuries, but was

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[28] To trace the journey from the poetic language of the Sicilian poets to Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and beyond, to becoming a national language, see: Di Girolamo, Costanzo, *Poeti della corte di Federico II*, in *I poeti della scuola siciliana*, edizione promossa dal Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, Milano, Mondadori, 3 voll., vol. 2º, 2008; Sabatini, Francesco *L'italiano: dalla letteratura alla nazione. Linee di storia linguistica italiana*, Firenze, Accademia della Crusca, 1997; Manni, Paola, "Il Trecento toscano. La lingua di Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio", in *Storia della lingua italiana*, a cura di F. Bruni, Bologna, il Mulino, 2003; Schiaffini, Alfredo, "La lingua dei rimatori siciliani del Duecento". In *Lezioni dell'anno accademico 1956-57*, a cura di F. Sabatini, Roma, Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 1957.

[29] Leonardi, Lino, and Comitato nazionale per le celebrazioni dell'VIII centenario della nascita di Federico II. *I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini*. SISMEL-Ed. del Galluzzo, 2000;
Antonelli, Roberto. "Canzoniere vaticano latino 3793." In Asor Rosa, Alberto. *Letteratura italiana: Le opere* 1 (1992): 27-44.

[30] See chapter 4.

characterized by a nationalistic bias: in the case of the vernacular texts preserved in the 'canzonieri', for example, scholarly interest consisted in superimposing the categories and the mechanisms of a modern 'national literature' onto the texts of the medieval Sicilian poets and their central Italian imitators.[31] I want to reflect on the 'vernacular' as much as possible in its medieval meaning, so that I can trace in my later chapters its development into a 'lingua toscana' and a 'lingua italiana', which should bridge the gap between the medieval discourse on the 'vernacular' and the modern one. The main factor for the recording of a vernacular in a literary document seems to be the existence of a community providing the audience for such document. For an audience to a literary document to exist, two things must be in place: a socio-economic structure binding its members, and the availability of a vernacular in which the members of this community can interact. The peculiarity of the medieval period is that these literary documents were almost always lyrics. The underlying social structure and the vernacular are the primary ingredient for the first textual exchanges between poets to happen, as both the Italian and the Occitan cases can confirm: the historical information we possess over the identity of the first poets and their addressees tells us that they were bound by ties that were of the feudal, socio-economic, and hierarchical type, meaning that these ties were prior to the

[31] On the origins of vernacular literatures in general, see note 11. Among the special theories that have contributed to my arguments: Köhler, Erich, and Mario Mancini. *Sociologia della fin'amor: saggi trobadorici*. Vol. 14. Liviana, 1976; Spanke, Hans. *Beziehungen zwischen romanischer und mittellateinischer Lyrik: mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Metrik und Musik*. Kraus-Thomson, 1972; Spanke, Hans. "St. Martial-Studien. Ein Beitrag zur frühromanischen Metrik." *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* H. 5/6 (1931): 282-317; Corriente, Federico. "The kharjas: an updated survey of theories, texts, and their interpretation." *Romance Philology* 63, no. 1 (2009): 109-129.

exchange of texts.[32] Finally, conditions need to be in place for this exchange to continue in time, even after the end of the feudal or socio-economic ties between the original parties.

According to this viewpoint, the processes behind the recording of a medieval vernacular consist in the perpetuation of a series of codes and customs regulating the exchange of information between two or more parties across time, rooted at first in the codes and customs regulating the social contacts between two parties belonging to a feudal society, but eventually independent of them, so that these can be inherited by parties who had not been taken into account when the first exchange took place. For example, 12th-century Occitan and 13thand early 14th-century Italian lyrics thrived in starkly different socio-economic contexts but the latter inherited the codes and customs of the former, which manifest in some traits of their vernaculars ('vocabula' and 'prolationes'), metrical form, etiquette among poets, and subject, largely shared among the two traditions.[33] Some lyrics within these traditions are characterized by texts apparently written in a mix of vernaculars, or at least so to the contemporary reader.[34]

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[32] Duby, Georges. *The three orders: feudal society imagined*. University of Chicago Press, 1982; Köhler, Erich, and Vittorio Marmo. *Per una teoria materialistica della letteratura: saggi francesi*. Liguori ed., 1980; Bloch, Marc. *La societé féodale*. 2 vols. Paris, 1940.

[33] Di Girolamo, Costanzo, ed. *La letteratura romanza medievale: una storia per generi*. Il Mulino, 1994.

[34] In book 1 of *De vulgari eloquentia* (*DVE* 1 8 7), Dante estimated that Italy had more than a thousand languages when he was alive. On the modern inheritance of medieval multilingualism, see: De Mauro, Tullio. *Storia linguistica dell'Italia repubblicana: dal 1946 ai nostri giorni*. Gius. Laterza & Figli Spa, 2014. On medieval multilingualism in the South, see: Varvaro, Alberto, and Sornicola, Rosanna. "Considerazioni sul multilinguismo in Sicilia e a Napoli nel primo Medio Evo." *Bollettino linguistico campano* 13, no. 14 (2008): 49-66. On how medieval multilingualism was stylized in the literary tradition of the peninsula, see Contini's seminal study: Contini, Gianfranco. "Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca." *Varianti e altra linguistica* (1970): 169-192.

This definition of the processes behind the first literary recording of a medieval vernacular allows those initial conditions rooted in medieval society (the set of norms, codes, and customs that characterize them) to be kept alive and repurposed by later writers, and thus extend into a future that reaches beyond the original audience. A poet, for example, vouches obedience to a set of medieval norms and customs whenever they write a sonnet, which was invented by the poets of the Sicilian school.[35]

Once these initial conditions, a set of cultural norms and an audience, are shaped, the mechanisms to which I refer to as 'reciprocity' and 'consent', which I introduce below, make possible the reproduction in time and space of the initial conditions. It is true that the vernacular in which early medieval records are written is contingent upon the languages known and shared by those who take part in the initial exchange, i.e. are specific to a historical community and to its 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' at a specific point in time. Yet, this does not mean that they are written in the vernacular of a specific town or region.[36] To record a vernacular in writing, the writer is forced to come up with their own original solutions to issues such as which script to use, what meter and syntax allow them the most freedom, and where to draw their 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' from. The writer decides among various possibilities based on the knowledge that they have of the audience and of the causes behind their intention to put something in writing; examples of contexts that demand different decisions in terms of script, meter, and

[35] On the history of the sonnet, an invention of the Sicilian poets, see: Kleinhenz, Christopher. *The early Italian sonnet: the first century (1220-1321)*. Vol. 2. Milella, 1986; and under 'Sonnet' in Greene, Roland, Stephen Cushman, Clare Cavanagh, Jahan Ramazani, Paul Rouzer, Harris Feinsod, David Marno, and Alexandra Slessarev, eds. *The Princeton encyclopedia of poetry and poetics*. Princeton University Press, 2012; and Spiller, Michael. *The development of the sonnet: An introduction*. Routledge, 2003.
[36] See chapter 4.

‘vocabula’ and ‘prolationes’ may be to secretly communicate with an individual, or to broadcast a message to a large group of people, but the variations are infinite. Once these issues are resolved and an exchange begins, the solutions adopted by the first writers tend to have a long-lasting life. As I mentioned above in the case of the sonnet, decisions made by writers in the thirteenth century continue to affect writers writing today. Because the audience of these lyrics belonged to a feudal society, and the norms of that society were respected in writing, lyrics continue to be characterized by aspects of that medieval universe; e.g. the modern lyric *topoi* remain rooted in those of our medieval ancestors: the loved woman as a superior being in which the authority of the feudal overlord and the religious authority are syncretized to produce idealized and romanticized theories of femininity; the lyric genre as the expression of a nobility of the spirit, a group of enlightened individuals transcending their belonging to a particular social class; nature as a reflection of one’s innermost states, and a force competing with societal rules in the soul of the poet, whose heart is torn between what nature calls him to, realizing his love for a noble woman, and what society has prescribed him, i.e. to serve and respect the lady’s husband, their feudal overlord.

‘Reciprocating’ and ‘consenting’ to the set of cultural norms used by a specific audience is necessary to enter a lyric exchange in the vernacular with a member of that audience. When a poet replied to a lyric sent by another party, which was the standard exchange in the medieval period, they had to use the same meter as the sender, often the same rhymes, a regular script, and reply to the topic at hand, which meant repeating parts of the lyric of the sender. Any medieval lyric, especially when we preserve its response (e.g. the case of Giacomo da Lentini and the Abbate di Tivoli discussed below), provides

evidence of these basic practices of 'reciprocity' and 'consent' among the poets. Not replying in the reciprocal fashion meant not being persuasive, and probably frowned upon. Mechanisms as simple as these are what I argue explains the linguistic features of the early lyrics: a vernacular that does not present 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' recognizable as those of any specific geographical entity, a set of repetitive meters, a set of common subjects, a common syntax. These mechanisms eventually produce a linguistic code that can be appropriated by those who did not inherit the set of norms or the 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' of the early lyrics. So far, it should appear easy to see how the practices of 'reciprocity' and 'consent' determine the decisions made by the poet when he responds to a lyric; but the opposite is also true, the poet plays a role in shaping the tradition that he reciprocates and consent to. In fact, every time they write, they are establishing new initial conditions, and subtly affecting the set of norms and the audiences they inherited. 'Reciprocity' and 'consent' are not restrictive; the poet has great freedom in how he reciprocates or consents. The reply of Giacomo da Lentini to the Abbate di Tivoli that I quote later in this chapter, for example, is a direct reply to the text of the abbot, but entirely subverts its references and meaning.[37]

'Reciprocity' has its roots in the custom of reciprocating an act performed by a party with whom one is in a socio-economic relationship; 'consent' in the acknowledgment of and adaptation required to the conditions that are prior to the interaction of two individuals, such as could be differences of gender or social class. It was possible to enter into a poetic exchange with someone who wasn't bound to the addresser by any socio-economic relationship, but the exchange would have been

[37] See page 63.

regulated in such a manner as to mimic or create a socio-economic relationship, as was the case with the Occitan poets who addressed a woman they did not know, about whom they had only heard about, a phenomenon known as *amor de loinh*: this woman was addressed as if she was a feudal lord or an Occitan noble lady.[38]

Any vernacular, no matter its 'vocabula' or 'prolationes' could be used to build a literary tradition, granted that the initial conditions we discussed above be given; any vernacular group can thus create through exchanges regulated by 'reciprocity' and 'consent' a grammar, syntax, and a script analogous to those of the medieval vernacular lyric tradition. Some vernaculars, however, are never written but produce literary texts orally, and even the exchanges of these can result in a vernacular that does not belong to any geographical entity. An oral canon may not possess a script, yet it uses prosody and music to enable a repetition without major losses by different members of a community across time. Most literary vernaculars traverse a phase as oral literatures. The *Spagat* between oral literary vernaculars and written ones is not very wide, at least in the mechanisms that bring them about.[39]

When a vernacular is paired with a set of social and literary codes that are appealing to communities beyond the one where they arose (e.g. those of courtly love, or those regulating the exchange of sonnets between Sicilian poets), the conditions present themselves for the vernacular to be appropriated by new communities along with the cultural ideas it conveys. Europe offered a particularly suitable context for these developments: the existence of a unified religious and economic background in

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[38] Rosenstein, Roy. "New Perspectives on Distant Love: Jaufre Rudel, Uc Bru, and Sarrazina." *Modern philology* 87, no. 3 (1990): 225-238.
[39] Lord, B. Albert. *The Singer of Tales*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960.

continental Europe in Late Antiquity and throughout the medieval period proved fundamental for the circulation of cultural practices, along with the fact that many southern European vernaculars descended from Latin and presented many similarities. The medieval vernacular lyrics are sometimes conflated with early medieval legal documents and inscriptions as early manifestation of a literary tradition.[40] Yet, this is a unsatisfying approximation because literary vernaculars of the oral type may have existed for centuries before a legal document or a lyric was written. In this dissertation I keep the lyric vernacular distinct from all others as the optimal vantage point to consider what Dante meant by 'vernacular' and what this can teach us about vernacular texts. Moreover, a property record or a legal agreement do not allow for a written reply by the parties to which they are addressed; the difference between this sort of written document and the vernacular lyrics could come down to the fact that the latter does not use a vernacular specific to a geographical place; and expects an act of reciprocation, e.g. a reply, from the receiving party (vs. merely recording an event).

Phenomena of 'reciprocity' and 'consent' are built upon social structures that exist prior to the composition of a written text, for example ties of friendship between an author and a friend or a subordinate. The terms of the reply are thus established by the rules governing the social relationship of the two individuals along with the etiquette established in the first text by means of the tone, the style (often connected to the meter), or the subject. Consent is given by replying according to the initial conditions established by the sender, by prevalently using, at least for medieval lyrics, their rhymes. Script is also established by these mechanisms because however pliable, the Latin script was not

[40] Lazzeri, Gerolamo, *Antologia dei prima secoli della letteratura italiana*. Hoepli 1954.

originally meant to represent phonetically the sounds of the Romance vernaculars. For sounds such as [ñ], to give just one example, common in both 'lingua oc' and 'sicilianum', scribes use many different representations –gn-, -gng-, -ngn-, -ng-, a fact of which modern readers are less aware because they read the texts in standardized critical editions.[41]

What applies to the 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' of 'sicilianum', i.e. that they do not match those of the vernaculars of any particular territory (which is Dante's argument), also applies to the set of norms regulating the relationship between the poets in the written universe of the lyrics: these norms are not those of any particular territory, except perhaps of the only place that Dante admits may have embodied the 'sicilianum' vernacular, the 'curia' of Frederick II, a fact which signals a tension in Dante's thought, which Marchesi has referred to as 'vertical utopia'.[42] The Sicilian poets of the Sicilian School form both a historical community that existed between 1230 and 1266, i.e. the lay and clerical legal professionals working in the itinerant court of Emperor Frederick II, and an ideal one regulated by its own set of norms coming to life in the lyrics.[43]

The mechanisms of 'reciprocity' and 'consent' allow medieval vernacular writers to produce an exchange that can be continued *ad infinitum;* the first exchange, the establishment of the initial conditions, acts as a contract that can be renewed, and revised, at any point in time and place by other parties. The use of the rhyme was the most

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[41] Barbato, Marcello. "Dal latino alle scriptae italoromanze." *Manuale di linguistica italiana* 13 2016.
[42] Marchesi, Simone. "Dante's Vertical Utopia: *Aulicum* and *Curiale* in the *De vulgari eloquentia,*" in *Utopianism/Literary Utopias and National Cultural Identities: A Comparative Perspective*, Paola Spinozzi ed. (Bologna: Cotepra, 2001): 311-316.
[43] Antonelli, Roberto, Costanzo Di Girolamo, and Rosario Coluccia, eds. *I poeti della scuola siciliana: Poeti della corte di Federico II*. Vol. 2. Mondadori, 2008.

important mechanism available to the writer of a medieval vernacular: rhymes within a stable metrical structure allowed for an expedited reply because they limited the amount of preparation and creative input required to respond; the poet already had many 'vocabula' situated at key junctures of the verse (middle and end) and it was only a matter of filling the remainder of the verse. The filling of these blanks was facilitated by the fact that the rhymes often only allowed certain syntactical constructions in order to respect the syllabic count, and the poet often merely repurposed common constructions to convey their intended meaning. In other words, once the end of a verse is established the number of possible permutations of the free syllables remaining in the verse are limited.[44]

The 'tenso' and the sonnet, for example, are built on these practice. This experience can be made experimentally, by attempting to reply to a lyric according to the norms I have explicated. In the medieval period, lyric poems sometimes had addressees whose names were spelled out, while in other cases, the names were hidden or not mentioned: yet, every aspect of a lyric was devised specifically for enabling a response from the addressee.[45] The forms which these replies took were varied: the original text could have been set to a new music, adapted to reflect the linguistic preferences of a wider audience, or entirely rewritten, using the same scheme and metrical patterns of the original. Since most medieval lyrics were performed, performances could serve as occasions for instantaneous rewritings. It was sufficient to change a few words while keeping the rhymes intact to alter dramatically their meaning. The earliest examples of these practices

[44] See Zumthor, Paul. *Toward a medieval poetics*. University of Minnesota Press, 1992 and Zumthor, Paul. *Langue et techniques poétiques à l'époque romane: XIe-XIIIe siècles*. LC Klincksieck, 1963.

[45] Giunta, Claudio. *Versi a un destinatario: saggio sulla poesia italiana del Medioevo*. Il mulino, 2002.

can be found in religious songs originally written in Latin which were transformed into mixtures of vernacular and Latin to reflect the needs of an increasingly non-Latinate audience.[46] This custom was used sparingly with religious material but many examples are preserved by the *Carmina Burana*, where Latin poems with a parallel manuscript tradition outside the 'Codex Buranus' are altered, almost imperceptibly, for satiric purposes.[47]

Paul Zumthor had observed already in the 1960s how the inclusion of a few syllables from another lyric (which could be the result of a citation, or the reuse of a rhyme or caesura) gave rise to a dialectic structure between a lyric and its reply, or its imitation, and shaped the language of the respondent: syntax, script, and what Dante calls 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' were shaped by the 'reciprocity' and 'consent' between poets, mechanisms that are often simplified as being merely of imitation and quotation.[48] As the exchange was repeated over time, the poets internalized a language that was neither their own nor that of the other party; the literary vernacular was not that of their territory nor their own personal vernacular, but a synthesis. Once a certain number of poets engages in this practice (however small, perhaps a few friends or the members of a

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[46] Hughes, Anselm. "In hoc anni circulo." *The Musical Quarterly* 60, no. 1 (1974): 37-45 and Roncaglia Aurelio. "'Laizat estar lo gazel", *Cultura Neolatina*, 9, 1949, pp. 67-99.
[47] Godman, Peter. "Rethinking the Carmina Burana (I): The Medieval Context and Modern Reception of the Codex Buranus." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 45, no. 2 (2015): 245-286; Godman, Peter. "Re-thinking the Carmina Burana II: The Child, the Jew, and the Drama." *Viator* 47, no. 1 (2016): 107-122.
[48] Cf. Zumthor, Paul. *Langue et techniques poétiques à l'époque romane: XIe-XIIIe siècles*. Vol. 4. LC Klincksieck, 1963. On the mechanisms behind the emergence of early medieval scripts: Kabatek, Johannes. Koinés and Scriptae. In: Ledgeway, Adam; Smith, John C; Maiden, Martin. The Cambridge History of the Romance Languages. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013, 143-186.

provincial court), their poems take on linguistic features that defy a territory and a historical community. The vernacular lyrics are 'performative' in a technical sense: they "exert an influence on a listener, or a group of listeners, by making him, or her or them perceive, understand, feel or do something particular. After that, participants may switch roles."[49] A performative model of early vernacular lyric is at home in the scholarship on the troubadours but not as much in that on the Sicilian poets. The model seemed less convincing because many Italian philologists rejected the hypothesis that the texts of the Sicilians could have originally been set to music, like virtually any other medieval vernacular lyric; hence they were more cautious about using the scholarship on the Occitan lyrics, because music seemed to play such an important role in how similar meters, 'vocabula', and 'prolationes' were adapted by different poets. [50] The Occitan poets were known as 'tropatores' referring to the middle Latin 'tropus', which originally indicated the segment of a liturgical music piece that was improvised for a particular occasion; the 'tropus' then became a synonym in the vernacular for the middle Latin 'contrafactum' i.e. an original verse set to the music borrowed from another composition. Spanke even argued that the first vernacular lyrics were 'tropi' set to the music of famous Latin liturgical compositions like those of the major Catholic holidays.[51] The practice of

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[49] Linell, Per, *The Written Language Bias In Linguistics: Its Nature, Origins and Transformations.* [2nd ed.]. London: Routledge, 2005, 17-18.
[50] Schulze, Joachim, *Sizilianische Kontrafakturen: Versuch Zur Frage Der Einheit Von Musik Und Dichtung In Der Sizilianischen Und Sikulo-Toskanischen Lyrik Des 13. Jahrhunderts.* Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1989; Roncaglia, Aurelio. "Sul "divorzio tra musica e poesia" nel Duecento italiano." *L'ars nova italiana del Trecento* (1978): 365-397.
[51] Spanke, Hans. "St. Martial-Studien. Ein Beitrag zur frühromanischen Metrik." *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* H. 5/6 (1931): 282-317. A more recent discussion of the issue in Chambers, Frank M. *An Introduction to Old Provençal Versification*. Vol. 167. American Philosophical Society, 1985.

the ‘tropum’ and that of the ‘contrafactum’ were rather common in the medieval period; it is possible that the first attempts to record in writing vernacular texts may have to do with the attempts of musicians to record a particularly successful improvised section in the vernacular of a liturgical chant originally written in Latin; yet, these early texts would presuppose the same mechanisms of ‘reciprocity’ and ‘consent’ typical of the Occitan and Sicilian lyrics and do not need to be distinguished from them.[52]

Vernacular lyrics have a few features that tend not to be immediately transparent unless we read multiple texts together, underscoring the practices of ‘reciprocity’ and ‘consent’ in the different poets: to write a lyric, a metrical pattern and a tune had to be selected to carry the message and convey its tone. Naming had to be used sparingly, and the respect of the chivalric codes regulating the life of men at court remained valid in the literary universe established by the poem. The overseeing authority of the literary exchange, as in real life, was the feudal overlord. The early writers unwittingly created a system that could enforce these mechanisms continuously into the future.

| A birth in translation and the role of Italy in the reception of early vernacular lyrics

Early medieval lyrics are born in translation: it’s common for them to use ‘vocabula’ and ‘prolationes’ belonging to the vernaculars of various territories as a result

[52] For an opposite view: Galvez, Marisa. *Songbook: How Lyrics Became Poetry In Medieval Europe.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012; Dronke, Peter. *The Medieval Poet and His World.* Rome, 1984.

of the processes of ‘reciprocity’ and ‘consent’ among writers. There are lyrics that test the mechanisms explained above to their limits, like the poem *Eras quan vey verdeyar* by Raimbaut de Vaqueiras, in which the strophes are written in what appears as different vernaculars, but are bound together by a common metric structure and thematic continuity.[53]

1 Eras quan vey verdeyar
2 pratz e vergiers e boscatges,
3 vuelh un descort comensar
4 d’amor, per qu’ieu vauc aratges;
5 q’una dona·m sol amar,
6 mas camjatz l’es sos coratges,
7 per qu’ieu fauc dezacordar
8 los motz e·ls sos e·ls lenguatges.
9 Ieu so selh que ben non aio
10 ni enqueras non l’avero,
11 ni per abril ni per maio,
12 si per ma donna non l’o;
13 certo que en so lengaio
14 sa gran beutat dir non so,
15 plus fresques qe flor de glaio,
16 per que no m’en partiro.
17 Belha dousa dama chera,
18 a vos mi don e m’autroy;
19 je non aurai mes joi’ entiera
20 si no vos ai e vos moi.
21 Molt estes mala guerreya
22 si je muer per bona foi;
23 e ja per nulha maneira
24 no·m partrai de vostre loi.
25 Dauna, io mi rent a bos,
26 quar es la mes bon’ e bera
27 ancse es, e gaillard’ e pros,
28 ab que no·m fossetz tan fera.
29 Mout abetz beras faissos
30 e color hresc’ e nouera.

[53] The vernaculars appear to be the Occitan, Old French, northern Italian, Gascon, and Portuguese one. See Linskill, Joseph, ed. The Poems of the Troubadour Raimbaut de Vaqueiras. The Hague: Mouton, 1964; Hagman, Roy. "The Multilingual Descort of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras: A Sociophilological Analysis." *Tenso* 21, no. 1 (2006): 16-35.

31 Bostre son, e si·bs agos
32 no·m sofraisiera/destrengora fiera.
33 Mas tan temo uostre pleito,
34 todo·n soy escarmentado.
35 Per vos ai pen' e maltreito
36 e mei corpo lazerado:
37 la neuyt, can jatz en meu leito,
38 soy mochas vetz resperado;
39 por uos era profeito/e car nonca mi profeito
40 falhit soy en mon cuidado
40a mais que falhir non cuide io.
41 Belhs Cavaliers, tant es cars
42 lo uostr' onratz senhoratges
43 que cada jorno m'esglaio.
44 Oi me lasso! Que faro
45 si sele que g'ey plus chera
46 me tua, no sai por quoi?
47 Ma dauna, fe que dey a bos
48 ni peu cap santa Quitera,
49 mon corasso m'avetz trayto.

Scholars tried to infer from the text the existence of literary traditions in the vernaculars represented in the poem during Raimbaut's lifetimes (d. 1207), a very early date for the Iberic and Italian traditions; thus, according to Crescini, the text would be the first literary text in Italian because it predates all Sicilian poetry.[54] If lyrics are less prone to corruption or the insertion of new apocryphal materials than prose because of the metrical patterns they need to respect, Raimbaut's text shows how much linguistic freedom a writer has when writing them, despite the large number of things that are determined by 'reciprocity' and 'consent'.

[54] See Tavani, Giuseppe. *Il mistilinguismo letterario romanzo tra XII e XVI secolo*. Japadre, 1981; Crescini, Vincenzo. *Il discordo plurilingue di Rambaldo di Vaqueiras*. Nuovi studi medievali. Bologna: Zanichelli 1923. For a different approach, see Heller-Roazen, Daniel. "Des Altérités de la langue. Plurilinguismes poétiques au Moyen Âge." *Littérature* (2003): 75-96.

The period between the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, i.e. when the most famous songbooks of Occitan and early Italian lyrics are assembled in northern and central Italy, marks a significant shift in the way lyrics are recorded.[55] It is plausible that primitive scripts had been used from the literary beginnings of the early twelfth century by authors as a physical aid to the demanding composition of increasingly longer songs with complex metrical patterns; the earliest literary records that survive from this golden age of medieval poetry date to the end of the fourteenth century, i.e. a century and a half after the earliest European lyrics were written. To complicate the issue, the earliest songbooks in both Occitan and Italian vernaculars are produced in northern and central Italy, thus far from those that supposedly were the poetic centers of both the Occitan and Sicilian tradition. If the belatedness of the first literary records is a difficult object of inquiry, the central role of Italy in the production of the earliest songbooks is more easily explained. The courts of medieval Italy were the richest of the time and had soon started to act like cultural centers capable of attracting foreign talent. Many itinerant poets from the south of France, from where the earliest troubadours originated, had found in Italy an audience keen to listen to the songs of their transalpine cousins in their original language.[56] The captivating music and vocal talents of the minstrels made up for what could be lost in listening to the lyrics. Furthermore, a look at the family trees of Occitan and northern Italian families shows that the ties between

[55] Leonardi, Lino, and Comitato nazionale per le celebrazioni dell'VIII centenario della nascita di Federico II. *I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini*. SISMEL-Ed. del Galluzzo, 2000; Leonardi, Lino, ed. *I manoscritti della letteratura in lingua d'oc*. Vol. 572. Einaudi, 1993.
[56] Di Luca, Paolo, and Grimaldi, Marco. *L'Italia dei trovatori*. Viella. Roma 2017.

northern Italian courts and the Occitan nobility were tighter in the twelfth century than those between the Occitan nobility and the northern French nobility.[57]

The courts of the time were with all probability inhabited by speakers of many vernaculars and the Latin culture preserved by the religious class mixed incessantly with emerging vernacular cultures. Speakers of the same vernacular would have formed groups and guilds of sort within the larger court. Trade and religious routes like those going to Rome or to Santiago de Compostela passed though the territories of many Occitan and Italian feudal courts. The latter also often partnered in each other's crusading efforts and came together within the alliance networks that gathered around the emperor, the pope, and the kings of France, England, and Spain. By the beginning of the thirteenth century there were many troubadours writing in Old Occitan who were either non-natives of the south of France, e.g. from Galicia, Catalonia, and Italy, or had spent most of their poetic careers away from the courts of the Languedoc.[58] The presence of the troubadours intensified in Italy in the aftermath of the Albigensian Crusade (1209-1229), a military campaign spearheaded by Pope Innocent III with the support of the French crown and the northern French nobility, who became responsible of the genocide of the Languedoc population in the attempt to eradicate the heresy known as Catharism.[59] This crusade

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[57] Zeus, Marlis. *Provence Und Okzitanien Im Mittelalter: Ein Historischer Streifzug.* 1. Aufl. Berlin: Dr. Köster, 1998.

[58] About 30 are the troubadours active in Italy whose historical and literary sources we preserve, e.g. Peire de la Caravana, Lambertin Buvalel, and Sordel. Many more those that left no trace. See note 58 and the imposing volume Bertoni, Giulio. *I trovatori d'Italia (Biografia, testi, traduzioni, not*e). Orlandini. Modena 1915. For a critique of this line of research and its nationalistic tendencies: Lachin, Giosuè. "La tradizione manoscritta dei trovatori italiani." *Romance Philology* 70, no. 1 (2016): 103-142.

[59] Pegg, Mark Gregory. *A most holy war: the Albigensian Crusade and the battle for Christendom*. Oxford University Press, 2008.

effectively destroyed the courts and the culture that had produced and supported the troubadours for a century, a culture that soon came to be associated with the heresies that the crusade was keen to eradicate from the territory. Northern noblemen swiftly replaced the Occitan nobility, followed by their retinues of northern French minstrels, and many of the troubadours left for the courts of Italy and Spain. According to a study published by Bertoni, the presence in Italy of about 60 troubadours can be inferred from historical data shortly after the beginning of the crusade.[60]

The Italian courts, where the cultural ideals sung by the troubadours in the Occitan language continued to exert great fascination for another century up to the Petrarchan age, offered asylum to a culture that otherwise risked complete annihilation. It is plausible that the first Occitan songbooks were produced in Italy in the attempt to preserve a cultural patrimony that faced complete destruction in the aftermath of the crusade. Similarly, the Italian songbooks like the *Canzoniere Vaticano* 3793, which preserve most of the Sicilian poets, may have been assembled in central Italy to preserve the culture of the Sicilian court of Frederick II (d. 1250) after the defeat of his son Manfred in Benevento in 1266 and the passage of the Apulian and Sicilian kingdoms to the Angevin of northern France, which meant the end of the conditions that had allowed the birth of an indigenous literary tradition that could compete with its transalpine models.[61]

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[60] See note 58.

[61] Cf. Leonardi, Lino, and Comitato nazionale per le celebrazioni dell'VIII centenario della nascita di Federico II. *I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini*. SISMEL-Ed. del Galluzzo, 2000.

The culture of the troubadours and that of the Sicilians as is preserved in the Italian songbooks had been successful in crossing the traditional medieval border between high-brow and low-brow culture. While it is true that the origins of both literary traditions seem to originate as fully-fledged phenomena among the upper reaches of the nobility (see the first patrons of both traditions: William IX, the powerful Duke of Poitiers and central figure for all the poets of the Limoges and Toulouse area, and Emperor Frederick II), the circulation of the texts of both poetic schools is such as to make it impossible to classify either tradition as belonging to the high culture or the low culture of the medieval period. The texts of the Occitan and Old French poets can be placed on a larger spectrum, going from those aimed at a select group of men belonging to the nobility, like those of William IX, to those performed by itinerant minstrels in town squares for the entertainment of popular crowds. The texts of the Sicilians on the other hand display contents almost exclusively limited to courtly love and natural philosophy. Yet, their circulation must have also interested urban dwellers in central Italy if the assumption remains correct that central Italian satirical poetry has its roots in the texts of the Sicilians, the latter figuring prominently at the beginning fascicles of the *Canzoniere Vaticano* 3793, where most of the early Italian lyric tradition, including the later low-brow poems ('poesia giocosa') produced by central Italian imitators is preserved.[62] After all, there are traces even within the more formal Sicilian tradition of texts of a more popular character, like 'Rosa fresca aulentissima' by Cielo D'Alcamo.[63]

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[62] Alfie, Fabian. *Comedy and culture: Cecco Angiolieri's poetry and late medieval society*. Routledge, 2017; Suitner, Franco. *La poesia satirica e giocosa nell'età dei comuni*. Vol. 39. Antenore, 1983.
[63] Pagliaro, Antonino. *II Contrasto di Cielo d'Alcamo e la poesia popolare*. G. Mori & Figli, 1953.

The manuscript tradition of both the Occitan and the Sicilian tradition signals that both courtly and urban readers in northern Italy were interested in the preservation of the early lyrics. While many 'canzonieri' seem to reflect the taste of the nobility for manuscript codices of vernacular poetry, and were produced to be preserved in their libraries or to be donated to other lords - like for example the so-called *Codex D* also known as Estense - we owe the preservation of some of them to otherwise unknown individuals from the lower classes.[64] The best example of a member from the lower classes invested in the preservation of early lyrics is attested by a possession note left on the *Canzoniere Vaticano*, the manuscript preserving about one thousand early Italian poems and being the sole testimony of a significant portion of them. An individual who signs himself as 'Nuccio Albergatore' in a script that betrays his humble education is the possessor of the codex at some point in the fourteenth or perhaps early fifteenth century.[65]

We know from this possession note that the *Canzoniere Vaticano* had fallen in the hands of a humble hostel owner and hence was out of favor with the vernacular poetic community before the end of the fourteenth century. This seems to agree with the fact that without the *Canzoniere Vaticano* 3793 our knowledge and understanding of the early Italian literary tradition would be very limited, as this codex alone preserves many of the texts that are considered foundational to the later Italian tradition up to Petrarch and Boccaccio. The reason why the texts of the early Sicilians may have fallen out of favor may depend on their connection to the Hohenstaufen dynasty: Frederick II and his son Enzo are not only patrons of the early Italian lyric poets, but even figure in the

[64] Pulsoni, Carlo. "Appunti per una descrizone storico-geografica della tradizione manoscritta trobadorica." *Critica del Testo VII / 1,* 2004 and its bibliography.
[65] Ms. Vat. Lat. 3793, f. 9 r. available in facsimile in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Canzoniere Vaticano as the authors of some poems. After the defeat of Manfred in 1266 and the passage of the Sicilian kingdom to the Angevin, the culture of the Sicilian court started to fall out of favor with the elites.

Tuscany seems to have been the exception, where presumably the prestige associated with the Sicilian poets was still lively in the minds of the new higher classes, e.g. the financier and banker Monte Andrea, who on top of being the author of the poems collected in the last fascicles of the *Canzoniere Vaticano*, may have also been one of its commissioners, a thesis I may explore in a different project.[66] It is in Tuscany that the *Canzonieri* were assembled and what we call today the Sicilian-Tuscan tradition arose from the ashes of the Sicilian school, eventually producing the Guittone School and the Stil Novo.[67] The reasons for the survival of the literary tradition of the Sicilians in central Italy and its disappearance from the South of the peninsula, where no manuscript tradition of these texts exists, remain unclear. New fragments continue to emerge, like the *Zurich Fragment*, but are from the north of the peninsula and display graphic adaptations of the text for an audience speaking a northern Italian vernacular.[68]

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[66] See Steinberg, Justin. *Accounting for Dante: Urban Readers and Writers in Late Medieval Italy*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007.
[67] Cf. Carrai, Stefano, and Giorgio Inglese. *La letteratura italiana del Medioevo*. Carocci, 2003. Worth of reference is also Abulafia, David, ed. *Italy in the Central Middle Ages 1000-1300*. Oxford University Press, 2004, where the authors, especially Varvaro, further problematize the achievements of the Sicilian poets and their cultural reach. See also Mallette, Karla. *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100–1250: A Literary* History. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.
[68] The fragment of Giacomino Pugliese known as Zurich fragment is preserved in Ms. Zurich Zentralbibliothek C 88. See Brunetti, Giuseppina. *Il frammento inedito» Resplendiente stella de albur «di Giacomino Pugliese e la poesia italiana delle origini*. Vol. 304. Walter de Gruyter, 2011.

The lack of a manuscript tradition for these texts in the South is a topic that I have pondered since I began this research: our sources point insistently to the north of the peninsula not only as central for the reception of Sicilian poetry but also for its production. Contrary to what most literary histories and monographies on the subject have argued, many if not most of the poems we call Sicilian may have been written in the center and north of the peninsula, where the itinerant court of Frederick II spent years attempting to solidify its political position against that of the rich city-states of medieval Italy. While the activity of the Frederician court in the south had not been less demanding of the attention of the emperor at the beginning of his reign, when many of the barons and feudal lords who had supported his father Henry VI rebelled against him partially because of the legal tutelage of the young emperor accorded to the fearsome Pope Innocent III by the emperor's pious and aging Norman mother Constance, the poetic work of the earliest poets, like Giacomo da Lentini, cannot be dated to earlier than the 1230s, a point in time when the attention of the emperor had long shifted from the rebellious barons in the south to its political interests in the north of Italy and in Germany, where the government of his son Enzo faced grave difficulties.[69]

The problem of whether the Sicilian poems were produced in the south of the peninsula or in the north arises because the current theory regarding the lyrics is that they were composed in a southern vernacular, or to be more precise a Sicilian vernacular, of which they would preserve some linguistic features.

[69] Abulafia, David. *Frederick II: a medieval emperor*. Oxford University Press, USA, 1992.

| The Sicilian poets and the identity of their vernacular

The rest of the chapter considers the hypothesis of an original Sicilian vernacular and proposes to update it in the light of a better knowledge of the Sicilian tradition made possible by recent critical editions, commentaries, and monographs devoted to the texts of the poetic schools.[70] Given the lack of any trace of the Sicilian texts in the archives of Sicily, and Southern Italy more generally, the state of the tradition would suggest that these texts were not often recorded, nor circulated widely, in the form of songbooks, i.e. the manuscript-form which was typical for lyrics in medieval Italy. Hence, the Tuscan songbooks, especially their brilliantly curated opening sections on the Sicilians, generate multiple questions. Because the Sicilian lyrics may not have circulated in the form of songbooks before their arrival in Tuscany, the question arises whether a coherent collection arrived in Florence where the generation before Dante could use it as a model for its own local songbooks or rather was assembled in the receiving culture. Our lack of evidence prior to our codices does not mean that the Sicilian texts did not have a large circulation between 1230 and 1266: after all small traces of Sicilian influence can be

[70] Cf. Antonelli, Roberto, Costanzo Di Girolamo, and Rosario Coluccia, eds. *I poeti della scuola siciliana.* I: *Giacomo da Lentini*. Edizione critica con commento a cura di Roberto Antonelli. II: *Poeti della corte di Federico II*. Edizione critica con commento diretta da Costanzo Di Girolamo. III: *Poeti siculo-toscani*. Edizione critica con commento diretta da Rosario Coluccia. Mondadori, 2008, and Sanga, Glauco. *La rima trivocalica: la rima nell'antica poesia italiana e la lingua della Scuola poetica siciliana*. Il cardo, 1992. For the issues of linguistics to which I refer in this section, cf.: Rohlfs, Gerhard. 1949-1954. *Historische Grammatik der italienischen Sprache und ihrer Mundarten*. 3 Bde. Bern: Francke. Trad. it., *Grammatica storica della lingua italiana e dei suoi dialetti*. 3 voll. Torino: Einaudi. 1966-69. On the ethnolinguistic and historical issues, cf.: Varvaro, A.. *Lingua e storia in Sicilia. Dalle guerre puniche alla conquista normanna*. Palermo: Sellerio, 1981. For an attempt at an edition following different principles than Antonelli's, see Sanga, Glauco. "Lavori preparatorii per l'edizione del Contrasto di Cielo dal Camo" in *Atti del Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese* XXXIII-XXXIV (1992-93), pp. 130-151.

found across poetic communities throughout the north of the peninsula.[71] Furthermore, the prominence granted them by the Tuscans in their songbooks, and the diverse geographical provenance of the addressees of several Sicilian sonnets in these collections (cf. the Abbot of Tivoli, Jacopo Mostacci, Rinaldo D'Aquino, Compagnetto da Prato, etc.), suggests with little uncertainty that these texts circulated independently from the existence of large collections, perhaps following the itineraries of their authors, itinerant bureaucrats at the service of Frederick II, perhaps bundled together with their epistles. As testified by the epistolography of Guittone D'Arezzo, Dante and Cino da Pistoia, it was a common Italian practice to attach a sonnet to an epistle.[72]

Based on the overlap of the texts known by Dante and those known to us through the songbooks, Leonardi argued that our textual tradition must go back to a restricted number of sources, possibly one, which collected the Sicilian texts as early as the mid-thirteenth century, when the Sicilian tradition was still blossoming.[73] This organized collection would predate Dante, who accordingly transcribes the incipits of the texts in his *De Vulgari Eloquentia* in an order analogous to the one recorded in the Tuscan codices.[74] The texts of the Sicilians do not seem to continue the diverse tradition of the 'senhal', where a woman, or an anonymous party, is addressed throughout the poem with a nickname, sometimes the name of a man, to declare a love that is at best illegitimate

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[71] See note 68.
[72] Dante's epistles are the best example of this practice. See the latest edition and commentary: Alighieri, Dante. *Epistole, Egloge, Quaestio de aqua et terra*. A cura di Baglio, Marco; Azzetta, Luca, Petoletti, Marco; Rinaldi, Michele. Salerno editrice 2016. Cf. also: Montefusco, Antonio. "Le Epistole di Dante: un approccio al corpus." *Critica del testo* 14, no. 1 (2011): 401-457.
[73] See note 61.
[74] See Kay, Sarah. *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotations and the Development of European Poetry*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013.

and at worst adulterous.[75] Rather, the Sicilians seem more interested in the titillating conversation between men typical of the genre 'tenzone'. Ideas, tenets, and the social stage on which these are embodied are challenged in a manner that has reminded several readers of the university disputations with which our learned poets, with almost no exception university graduates, had familiarity thanks to their professional training.

A case in point is the *tenzone* between Giacomo da Lentini, whom Dante already considered one of the main exponents of the Sicilian tradition, and the figure referred to as Abbot of Tivoli. The Abbot is probably a Roman *laicus* who had received an abbey in 'commendam' in consideration of his social status. He is thus suspended between lay and clerical culture. The sonnet with which the Abate begins the *tenzone* is a humorous pun on Love as the archer god of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and the subtleties of Cappellano's Latin treatise *De amore*, all codified in the vernacular:[76]

Oi deo d'amore, a te faccio preghera
ca mi 'ntendiate s'io chero razone:
cad io son tutto fatto a tua manera,
aggio cavelli e barba a tua fazzone,

[75] Fuksas, Anatole. "La pragmatica del senhal trobadorico et la 'sémiothique des passions'", *Critica del Testo, VIII/1*, 2005, pp. 253-279; and Vallet, Edoardo, "Il senhal nella lirica trobadorica (con alcune note su Bel/Bon Esper in Gaucelm Faidit)", *Rivista di studi testuali*, V, 2003, pp. 109-165, e VI-VII, 2004-2005, pp. 281-325.

[76] I use the text in Antonelli 2008. In this sonnet the Abate invokes the god of Love and asks an explanation for the fact that despite having being struck by a golden arrow of Ovidian memory, the 'dardo dell'auro' that makes one fall in love, he behaves like he was struck by the leaden arrow, the 'dardo de lo piombo', which makes him flee the presence of his beloved. The four steps (*quattro scale*) reference clerical literature, e.g. they might be the four steps of spiritual love as formulated by Bernardo di Chiaravalle in *De diligendo deo*; they could also refer to the four *gradus* of love, which are memorably discussed by Andrea Cappellanus: "Primus in spei datione consistit, secundus in osculi exhibitione, tertius in amplexus fruitione, quartus in totius personae concessione finitur". Or the five steps of the goliardic tradition as one finds them, for example in song 72 (2a.) of the *Carmina Burana*: "Visu, colloquio,/ contactu, basio, / frui virgo dederat". The 5 steps of the *Carmina Burana* explain why the Abate is dissatisfied with Love: the last *gradus* is still out of his reach.

ad ogni parte aio, viso e cera,
e seggio in quattro serpi ogni stagione;
per l'ali gran giornata m'è leggera,
son ben[e] nato a tua isperagione.

E son montato per le quattro scale,
e som'asiso, ma tu m'ài feruto
de lo dardo de l'auro, ond'ò gran male,

che per mezzo lo core m'ài partuto:
di quello de lo piombo fa' altretale
a quella per cui questo m'è avenuto.

Giacomo saliently provides a diagnosis for the situation of the Abbate and brings attention to his pagan outlook on love. The Apulian is ready to prove with the method of scholastic philosophy ("*per quia e quanto*") that Love is not a deity at all. The tone is tongue-in-cheek and ironic:

Feruto sono isvarïatamente:
Amore m'à feruto, or per che cosa?
cad io vi saccia dir lo convenente
di quelli che del trovar no ànno posa:

ca dicono in lor ditto spessamente
c'amore à deïtate in sé inclosa;
ed io sì dico che non è neiente,
ca più d'un dio non è né essere osa.

E chi lo mi volesse contastare,
io li l[o] mostreria per [q]uia e quanto,
come non è più d'una deïtate.

In vanitate non voglio più stare:
voi che trovate novo ditto e canto,
partitevi da ciò, che voi peccate.

As we have witnessed, whether their lyrics were sung or not, the Sicilian poems are characterized by an aura of privacy, of dialogue between a select few, all male, conducted

independently of the daily interactions they might have had with women, if such interactions existed at all. The more abstract and philosophical elements of Sicilian poetry were present in only a few of their Occitan models. The most important among them is Folchetto of Marseille, whose lyrics Giacomo da Lentini translates in some of his most famous poems, and thus implicitly extols as a fundamental influence on the tradition he is christening.[77] In Sicilian poetry, the woman, if present, is a distant figure. For example, in the foundational text *Madonna, dir vi voglio* by Giacomo da Lentini, the 'madonna' of the incipit is an evanescent presence, perhaps justified only by the original Giacomo is translating: *A vos, midonç, voill retrair' en cantan* by Folchetto.[78] The poem's central attention is on the inner world of the author, which is compared to a cob that ripens without producing fruits. Sicilian lyrics have a private dimension unmatched in their Occitan models, which would suggest their circulation among small circles of friends rather than public performances or declamations. Their tone often matches that of private epistles from the period, like those of Guittone d'Arezzo.[79]

| The modern identities of the medieval Sicilian vernacular

The Sicilian texts, as we mentioned, are exclusively preserved in northern manuscripts and are considered by most scholars to be Tuscan rewritings of the originals. Their vernacular as is preserved in the manuscripts does display central Italian features:

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[77] Squillacioti, Paolo. *Le poesie di Folchetto di Marsiglia: edizione critica*. Vol. 16. Pacini Editore, 1999.
[78] Lombardi, Elena. "Traduzione e riscrittura: da Folchetto al Notaio." *The Italianist* 24, no. 1 (2004): 5-19.
[79] D'Arezzo, Guittone. *Lettere*, ed. critica a cura di Claude Margueron, Bologna, Commissione per i testi di lingua, 1990.

yet, the philological basis for the theory of a Tuscan rewriting is scant, based as it is on second-degree evidence recorded by the humanist Giovan Maria Barbieri (1519-1574) in an unpublished work, and by modern assumptions on the role of the copyist in the middle ages.[80] Barbieri recorded having found a manuscript containing a few Sicilian texts written in what to his eyes appeared to be a Sicilian vernacular of his own days. He wrote down two of the poems in that curious linguistic form in his personal parchments and passed it on to the next generations of scholars. The Sicilian manuscript he discovered is not extant, but Barbieri's evidence plays a larger role than it should in modern reconstructions.[81] As for the copyists, they are attributed an active role of reshaping and modification of the tradition whose extent is not always justified. Texts of the Sicilian school with curious linguistic features are not unique, even among the few hundreds preserved by the *Canzoniere Vaticano* 3793. As for the latest manuscript findings such as the *Zurich fragment*, these preserve parts of famous Sicilian texts in a Venetian and a Lombard refashioning.[82] Notably, the fragment predates the *Canzoniere Vaticano* and conjures up the idea that the Lombards were active in the copy of the texts of the Sicilians before the Tuscans.

The scholarly debate was intense: in the early twentieth century, the German philologist Gerhard Rohlfs attempted to explain the Tuscan linguistic patina of the

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[80] A summary and a well-thought problematization of the role of the medieval and modern editor of the Sicilian texts in: Coluccia, Rosario. "Trasmissione del testo e variazione: qualche appunto sulla fenomenologia dei processi e sulle scelte degli editori." *Medioevo letterario d'Italia* 6 (2009): 9-23.
[81] On Barbieri's evanescent *Libro siciliano*, cf.: Debenedetti, S. *Le canzoni di Stefano Protonotaro*, in *Studi romanzi*, XXII, 1932, 5-68; Santangelo, S. *Il siciliano lingua nazionale nel XIII sec.,* Catania 1947, 30 and ff.; and Panvini, Bruno. "Studio sui manoscritti dell'antica lirica italiana", in *Studi di filol. ital.*, XI*, 1953,* 92-95.
[82] See note 68.

Sicilian texts by arguing that after the arrival of the Normans, Sicily had been colonized with peoples from central Italy in the attempt to eradicate the Muslims who still inhabited the island. While the colonization is recorded in some of the legislature of the Normans, certainly on a smaller scale than Rohlfs admits, the language spoken by post-Arabic Romance speakers in Sicily tells us nothing about the linguistic identity of the Sicilian authors, half of whom were plausibly not natives of the island. To his merit, Rohlfs did not exclude that the texts we preserve with a Tuscan patina may be the originals, and not merely rewritings or translations, as the majority of modern philologists do. Notably, Rohlfs was not the only one who seriously considered the hypothesis that the Tuscan codices may be copies, and not rewritings, of the originals. Several scholars active between the late 1800s and early 1900s sided with him in the debate: the most important were Napoleone Caix, Nicola Zingarelli, and Vincenzo De Bartholomeis.[83]

The advancements of historical linguistics inform the way of thinking with which modern scholars have tackled the problematic of the identity of the Sicilian vernacular. Italian philologists, in particular, believe that hypercorrection, dialect mixture, and scribal error corrupted the original texts to the point of forcing us to assume that the ones we have are rewritings, or even translations.[84] This assumption is based on three fundamental issues with the manuscripts: the absence of the vocalic shift known as metaphony (typical of southern Italian vernaculars and of Sicilian dialects), the problem of the so-called

[83] See at least: Caix, Napoleone. *Le origini della lingua poetica italiana. Principii di grammatica storica italiana ricavati dallo studio dei manoscritti e con una introduzione sulla formazione degli antichi Canzonieri italiani*, Firenze 1880 and De Bartholomaeis, Vincenzo. *Primordi della lirica d'arte in Italia*, Torino 1943.
[84] Cf. Labov, William. *Principles of Linguistic Change.* Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994.

'rima siciliana', and the linguistic patinas left by the central Italian copyists who penned them.[85]

Metaphony is the characteristic vocalic shift of several southern Italian vernaculars. In Sicilian, Southern Calabrian and the dialects of Salento the vowels *e* and *o* of modern Italian (Tuscan) are pronounced *i* and *u*: e.g. the modern Sicilian evolution of the Latin 'amorem' → 'amuri' (cf. Italian 'amore'). Considering that the earliest texts in Sicilian vernaculars – not to be confused with the texts of the Sicilian school - appear as late as the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, we have very little data to determine at what point in time the vocalic shift started among the peoples of Sicily. As a result, there are several theories about the vocalic shift. According to Fanciullo, the shift is with some probability a result of the century-long Byzantine Greek hegemony of the island: in medieval Greek (as is also the case in modern Greek) the letters ῆτα and *ου* [o:] were pronounced as *i* and *u*.[86] The shift would thus be according to Fanciullo the product of the Sicilian bilingualism (Greek, Latin) prior to the conquest of Sicily by the Arabs in 827. Speech acts with and without metaphony may have cohabitated on the island for centuries before the shift imposed itself on all the inhabitants, even within relatively smaller communities. Thus, in the thirteenth century, the vocalic shift may have still been

[85] See note 80. Examples of 'rima siciliana' also appear in Tuscan texts from all periods, but are for the most part the product of the imitation of what were perceived as authoritative models. Such rhymes thus do not play a role in my argument, as they are either cases of cultural rhymes or else confirm my hypothesis by displaying that even later Tuscan authors could take advantage of southern phonetics if they so wished, perhaps in homage to a text or an author they were in dialogue with. But a handful of these rhymes can be found in Dante, for example. See: Cita, Martina. "La rima imperfetta di tipo siciliano nella Commedia di Dante." in *Filologia Italiana* 13 (2016): 9-21.
[86] Browning, Robert. *Medieval and modern Greek*. Cambridge University Press, 1983. Cf. also: Fanciullo, Franco. 'Il siciliano e i dialetti meridionali'. In *Quattordio Moreschini* (1984), 139–59.

in progress and alternative pronunciations might have been accepted by the speakers. This fact together with the prestige given to words without metaphony by their proximity to the Latin root could thus justify the absence of this phenomenon in the texts of the Sicilian poets.

In Romances affected by metaphony, the vocalic shift interests the pronunciation of all languages by those speakers who can speak more than one language.[87] Thus, a learned speaker who received a Latin education, would pronounce many Latin words according to his native phonetics, which is what explains why Latin has several competing national pronunciations down to our day (different 'prolationes', in Dante's terms). Similarly, modern Portuguese speakers - Portuguese being a modern language with metaphony like Sicilian - often exhibit the vocalic shift when they speak Italian, despite the latter does not allow it. Given the absence of a standard pronunciation of Latin in the Middle Ages, native southern Italian speakers would naturally display their native phonetics in their secondary learning languages, like Latin or any kind of literary vernacular. Because medieval vernacular scripts only partially recorded the phonetic value of the vowels, as we have seen above, it made sense that vernacular 'vocabula' were heavily based on their Latin roots, and the actual pronunciation or 'prolatio' was left to the discerning ability of the reader. I propose that southern Italian writers may have elected a Latin-based 'scripta' for their lyrics, but pronounced it according to their native phonetics, e.g. they may have spelled 'amore' but pronounced it '*amuri'.[88] Tuscans

[87] Calabrese, Andrea. "Metaphony in Romance." *The Blackwell companion to phonology*, 2011.
[88] Nencioni, Giovanni. *Di scritto e parlato*. Bologna: Zanichelli 1983.

however could read it without the metaphony. If this hypothesis holds, the second key issue with the manuscripts, i.e. the 'rima siciliana', is resolved.

What we call 'rima siciliana' in the manuscripts is an apparent inconsistency pertaining the structure of the rhymes. In numerous cases - the number of which in the corpus is often exaggerated - accented syllables containing *i* and *e* (e. g. "patire" - "potere"), and *o* and *u* (e. g. "croce" - "luce") are made to rhyme with each other.[89] The rhyme structure of the poems suggests that these are supposed to be perfect rhymes and not approximated rhymes, or 'rime imperfette'. Issue with these perfect rhymes arises because we pronounce them according to the phonetic rules of modern Italian or Tuscan, where */e/* can correspond to the sounds [è] and [é], but not to [ì]. According to the theory I am rejecting, the scribes who copied the texts of the Sicilians adapted these texts to their own native language and script, thus modifying words written according to a hypothetic southern orthography, presumably *'amuri', with their Tuscan equivalent, e.g. 'amore'. The reason behind this active refashioning of the texts on the part of the copyists would be ignorance and negligence, if not a form of cultural appropriation and colonization. My hypothesis has the advantage of being more economical, even not considering the hints that should generate some incredulity as to the current state of the question; among these, the fact that while the Tuscan copyists would have drastically altered the texts of the Sicilian poets, they have managed to preserve the rest of the Romance vernacular tradition (in Occitan and in the other central and northern Italian vernaculars) in excellent conditions. Based on the study of the independent branches of the manuscript tradition of

[89] Antonelli, Roberto. *Repertorio metrico della scuola poetica siciliana*. Vol. 7. Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, 1984.

the central Italian texts as they are collected in other extant manuscript collections vs. their versions in the *Canzonieri*, the picture that emerges is that the copyists that took liberties with the Sicilians hardly took any liberties at all with central and northern Italian authors, not even those who clearly wrote in literary vernaculars as different from Tuscan as Bolognese.[90]

As I mentioned above, the ordering and linguistic features of the lyrics in *De Vulgari Eloquentia* suggest that Dante read the Sicilian texts in a version analogous to Vat. Lat. 3793. If these versions were rewritings, it would imply that as early as 1304 the Tuscan readers had lost any notion that a rewriting of the original texts had happened, even though the first generation that had received the texts of the Sicilian poets was still alive. For the ignorance of the transliteration of the originals to be explained among Dante's contemporaries, the rewriting of the texts would have had to happen so early in the manuscript tradition of the Sicilians as to be unexplainable: the Tuscans could not have transliterated the Sicilian texts before a local vernacular tradition had established itself in Central Italy, or before the later Sicilian poets had circulated their lyrics. If Dante's contemporaries, who were alive thirty years after the last activity of the Sicilian poets, had no reason to suspect an arbitrary linguistic camouflage of the sources, we have few elements to argue for it eight centuries later, especially considering our dearth of reliable sources. Those who bring up the evidence of the two texts in the Sicilian vernacular recorded by Barbieri in the Renaissance forget that those sources cannot be dated and

[90] An easy example on which to verify my statement could be the manuscript tradition of Guido Guinizzelli, a non-Tuscan. On the manuscript tradition of Guinizzelli, see: Avalle, D'Arco, Silvio. "*La tradizione manoscritta di Guido Guinizzelli"* in *Studi di filologia italiana*, XI (1953), pp. 137-162.

could potentially be as late as Barbieri's finding. The oldest piece of manuscript evidence to date is the recently discovered *Zurich fragment*, which we have mentioned above: should we infer that the Sicilian texts were first written in Lombard? In truth, purely based on the sources, the latter hypothesis would be based on more convincing evidence than that of a Tuscan transliteration of Sicilian originals. Above, I have suggested instead that the texts preserved in the *Canzonieri* represent quite closely the originals penned by Giacomo and his peers in the middle of the thirteenth century. As for the origin of the northern patina we detect in the *Zurich fragment*, I think we do not have enough information (or text) to determine how it originated.[91]

| Reading medieval Sicilian today

How should we pronounce the medieval vernacular of the Sicilian poets in view of this chapter? We can pronounce them both according to Tuscan phonetics, as is traditional, or according to the 'prolationes' of a vernacular with metaphony: the latter can provide alternative 'prolationes' which potentially give new or competing meanings to some of the lyrics. The Old Sicilian poets had the choice between alternative realizations of the vowels interested by the phenomenon of the southern vocalic shift. Old Sicilian script emphasized Latin base-roots and orthophonic features but left a considerable amount of freedom to the poets: one of the most visible features of Old Sicilian poetry are neologisms, borrowings from Latin and Occitan, and duplicates (alternate spellings, often reflecting different linguistic roots) of the same words. Hard to determine how much of a conscious choice of the initiators of the tradition these features of the language were. The

[91] See note 68.

vast number of territories represented by the poets of the Sicilian School may provide a partial explanation: from historical information about the poets that have been identified, and these a relatively small number compared to the number of anonymous poems in the *Canzonieri*, almost half of them can be traced to families outside the island of Sicily. Giacomo da Lentini, for example, considered the initiator of the school, was an Apulian from mainland Italy. Apulian vernaculars would have been starkly different from Calabro-Sicilian romances. The Abate di Tivoli, with whom Giacomo engages in an exchange of sonnets, shows some central Italian features in the few lyrics we preserve. These features along with the title of abbot of Tivoli, a town near Rome suggest that the poet was also of mainland Italian origin. The old Sicilian poets were engaged in a thick network that crossed the entire peninsula and was certainly not limited to the island of Sicily.

Because the Sicilian poets wrote for an audience of competing geographical allegiances, they adopted a script that could accommodate all the parties with whom they engaged in an exchange. This script was heavily based on Latin, and often Italian words with Latin etymologies are written in an archaic Latinized form. The closer to Latin and to the other great literary model, Old Occitan, the better, if the goal was to build a linguistically-diverse community of readers and writers.[92] Old Sicilian was not a

[92] I can attach some examples of this supra-municipal script. Latinisms are typical, especially when they also reproduce roots shared with the Old French and Old Occitan poetic languages: blasmare, blanca, blonda, clamare, claro, clarore, inclosa, speclu, placiri (placere, placer, place, placeria, plagente, plagenza, placimento, displaciri, planger, planto, plu (plui). Borrowings from Old Occitan are also present throughout and some of them make it into modern Italian, like the word ‘giardino’: virtually all words ending in –anza, -enza, -mento, -ore, -ura are virtually borrowings from transalpine texts. On one hand, they provide the text with the prestige associated with Occitan poetry and its culture, to whose models the reader is constantly referred. On the other, acting as

vernacular based on any language spoken on the Sicilian island. Old Sicilian lyrics carry traces of southern Italian phonetics because some of its writers presented them when speaking, reading, and writing, as they engaged in the mechanisms of 'consent' and 'reciprocity' with their counterparts. However, these southern traits account for a smaller percentage of the text in comparison to that of Old Occitan and Latin features. Its success among the central Italian audiences and the destruction of the culture that had originated the school in 1266, meant that from that date the tradition evolved almost exclusively in the mouths and through the copying hands of central and northern Italian speakers; the alternative phonetic realizations of the Old Sicilian poets were thus eventually forgotten by the Tuscans along with many semantic and phonetic pairs of different stylistic value.

The argument of the Tuscan transliteration of the original texts seems to be unnecessary; the Tuscan copyists acted in the interests of the tradition and preserved the original lyrics to the best of their abilities. An edition of the Sicilians following the principles I highlighted in this chapter would preserve the critical text reconstructed based on the manuscript tradition but require the student to explore the possibility of semantically or stylistically different 'prolationes' that have the same graphic representation. Medieval records of the Old Sicilian literary tradition, like those of any other, are incomplete and defective: as to the extent to which the lyrics preserved in the

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alternative suffixes and adaptive spellings, they offer the poets writing in a new language more combinations. Duplicates, and semantic and stylistic variants are also a defining characteristic of Old Sicilian. The wealth of suffixes enriches the restricted lexicon and determines the communicative strategy that we see enacted in the majority of the lyrics: repeating a handful of concepts and declining them in the multiple semantic and stylistic forms available.

manuscript tradition are different from the originals, we have no way of knowing exactly how wide the *Spagat* might be.

Chapter 2

The ‘Sicilianum’ Vernacular and its Providential Mission in *De Vulgari Eloquentia*

This chapter contextualizes the period of Dante’s life during which the author composed the treatise *De vulgari eloquentia*; it then dwells on the issues that inform its contemporary exegesis, and their relevance to the topic of the identity of the medieval ‘vernacular’, before reconstructing the historical meaning that Dante assigned to the use of the ‘vulgare latium’.

The year 1304 is a turning point for Dante’s career as an author: two hectic years have passed since he was last at home in Florence where he had once held the highest political office, the priory. In Florence, two years earlier, he had been condemned ‘in absentia’ to banishment, the forceful seizing of his assets, even to be burnt on the stake upon any attempt to reenter the city. Made an outcast, Dante had to reinvent himself, as many of his political friends and enemies had done before him. Among them, the best friend of his youth, the poet Guido Cavalcanti, who had preceded Dante on the road to

exile as he had once preceded him on that of literary fame.[1] Between the exile and his fortieth birthday, after a failed attempt to reenter Florence, the probability of a return to Florence diminished. On the other side of Italy, between the Romagna and the Veneto, he bartered the professional skills acquired as a prior for the favors and protection of both powerful strangers and not-so-powerful friends. Outside Florence, his fame, or what was

[1] Guido died upon reentering Florence from the exile, having contracted malaria during the time he spent in Sarzana before being recalled. Regarding the historical and biographical data on Dante that appears in this chapter, I have integrated whenever possible the latest Italian sources, which in the past decade, leading to the Dantean centenary of 2021, have been especially numerous and are exhaustively listed in the final bibliography: if a historical turn in Dantean scholarship had already been announced at the turn of the century by the late Umberto Carpi in the seminal volumes *La nobiltà di Dante* (2004), it is with the works of Mirko Tavoni, Marco Santagata, and Giorgio Inglese that the biography of Dante has assumed a central role in the exegesis of the political, cultural, and poetic ideals conveyed by the Dantean corpus. The lines of research explored by Carpi culminated in the volume *L'Inferno dei guelfi e i principi del Purgatorio* (2013), centered on an analysis of the first two canticles of the *Commedia* as recording a direct reaction to the political situation of the years in which they were composed. The studies of Tavoni, Santagata, and Inglese were born and primarily fueled by their respective researches on *De vulgari eloquentia*. Tavoni in the context of his commentary for Mondadori, brought to completion under the direction of Santagata; Inglese in that of the lines of research he adopted after his critical edition of the text. Dante studies have been increasingly characterized in the past decade by a historicist approach throughout the last ten to fifteen years. I use the adjective 'historicist' to refer to a recent trend characterized by monographies and articles that focus at great length on the historical events surrounding the composition of a text at the expense of the text. Its main features is that evidence from the text is secondary to the one provided by historical data. This trend can be especially witnessed in the work of the scholars who wrote on *De vulgari eloquentia* in the past decade. For a detailed recounting of Dante's life according to the latest scholarship, see Santagata Marco, *Dante: il romanzo della sua vita,* 2012; Tavoni Mirko, *Qualche idea su Dante*, 2015, Inglese Giorgio, *Vita di Dante: una biografia possibile*, 2015. None of these developments would have been possible without Giorgio Padoan's bold volume, *Il lungo cammino del poema sacro* (1993), where the author challenged the scholarly consensus (at least since Petrocchi's edition) on the chronology of the composition of several cantos of the *Commedia*. In 2018 Elisa Brilli coordinated a dialogue on Dante's biography and the new historical trend in the journal *Dante Studies* ('Forum Dante and Biography', coordinated by E. Brilli, with M. Gragnolati, G. Inglese, E. Lombardi, G. Milani, P. Pellegrini, M. Tavoni, J.-Cl. Schmitt, D. Wallace, in: *Dante Studies* 136 (2018), pp. 133-231). On Guido, see: Ardizzone, Maria Luisa. *Guido Cavalcanti*. University of Toronto Press, 2002.

left of it, came from his earlier poetic activity. In Eastern Italy, and especially in Bologna, where the poet found, at least for some time, hospitality during the exile, the name of Dante was, before anything else, that of a famous love poet. Ten years had passed since he had collected his most songs and sonnets in the *Vita Nova,* an alternation of prose and verse in the vernacular. Could the poetic career of his youth do more than merely haunt the humbled, elder figure that now presented itself to the courts of the Romagna, stripped of horse and armor, the signs of social status that were taken away from him after the banishment?

De vulgari eloquentia is the product of these years of transition, and the interest that scholars attribute to the historical events surrounding its composition is due to the importance that the linguistic thought expressed in its pages plays in the overall work of Dante along with its problematic relationship with the *Commedia*.[2] The treatise has a long

[2] The treatise begins: 'Cum neminem ante nos *de vulgaris eloquentie doctrina* quicquam inveniamus tractasse'. 'Doctrina' should be added to the title as we know it; the common title is inferred from the mention made by Dante in the first book of *Convivio*. For a chronology of this work I have referred primarily to the research of Enrico Fenzi for the newest national edition of the treatise: Enrico Fenzi (ed.), *Le opere*. *Dante Alighieri, 1265-1321*. v. 3. Roma: Salerno Editrice, 2012. In his introduction, Fenzi brilliantly summarizes the state of the many open questions regarding the treatise that have intervened since the seminal edition and study by Mengaldo in the 1960's, including its early reception. Cf. Santagata 2012, Tavoni 2015, and Inglese 2015 for a detailed chronological discussion of *De vulgari eloquentia*'s composition. In a paper I delivered at the 2018's MLA in New York, titled Dante's *amica sollicitudo*, I explored an original interpretation of the use of the Latin sources in *De vulgari eloquentia*, and proposed the hypothesis of a composition of the treatise in Verona, rather than the Bologna of Tavoni's thesis. The simple Latin syntax and the use of vernacular poems alongside well-known capitulary texts such as the histories of Paolo Orosio suggest, according to my argument, the tutelage of a young pupil, perhaps associated with the Scaliger court, as the reason behind the composition, and the peculiar features, of *De vulgari eloquentia*. As for the numerous theories regarding its composition, two more deserve particular mention: that of Maria Corti, who argued that *De vulgari eloquentia* was written in Verona between the composition of the first and second book of Convivio (Corti, Maria. *Scritti su Cavalcanti e Dante: la felicità mentale; Percorsi dell'invenzione e altri saggi*. Einaudi, 2003); and

history of being reputed apocryphal, notably in the humanist period, an issue to which I return in chapter 3 and 4.[3] To the learned men of Dante's time, the title that we use to refer to this treatise would have seemed an oxymoron: that a vernacular could have 'eloquence', a classical concept used to refer almost exclusively to Latin throughout late antiquity, was a challenging notion because vernacular texts were thought to lack the moral and aesthetic qualities of high Latin poetry. [4] The treatise had little to no reception until its rediscovery in the Renaissance: there is no evidence that Petrarch nor the early Dantean commentators read it and the earliest authors who had access to the text are Giovanni Villani, and Boccaccio, who mentions the treatise in the *Trattatello*.[5] When the treatise resurfaced in the humanistic cultural discourse at the beginning of the sixteenth

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Marchesi who in an early article argued that the Latin treatise was composed after the third book of *Convivio* was completed (Marchesi, Simone. "La rilettura del" De Officiis" e i due tempi della composizione del" Convivio"." *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 178, no. 581 (2001): 84-107).

[3] See chapters 3 and 4. On the rediscovery of the treatise and the issue of the spurious authorship: Pulsoni, Carlo. "Per La Fortuna Del" De Vulgari Eloquentia" Nel Primo Cinquecento: Bembo e Barbieri." *Aevum* 71, no. 3 (1997): 631, and "Il De Vulgari Eloquentia Tra Colocci e Bembo." In *Angelo Colocci e Gli Studi Romanzi*, 449–471. Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 2008.

[4] For an introduction and exhaustive bibliography on medieval rhetoric and its aesthetics, enriched by English translations of medieval rhetorical treatises (some on vernacular texts), see: Copeland, Rita, and Ineke Sluiter, eds. *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300–1475*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, and Minnis, A. J., and A. B. Scott. *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

[5] Further updated bibliography in Pistolesi, Elena. "Il" De vulgari eloquentia" di Giovanni Boccaccio." *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 191 (2014): 161-199, and Bologna, Corrado. "Un'ipotesi Sulla Ricezione Del De Vulgari Eloquentia: Il Codice Berlinese." *La Cultura Volgare Padovana Nell'età Del Petrarca*, n.d., 205–256. Interesting discussion by two very different authorities in: Ascoli, Albert Russell. "Neminem Ante Nos": Historicity and Authority in the" De Vulgari Eloquentia." *Annali d'italianistica* 8 (1990): 186–231, and Rosier-Catach, Irène. "«Non Mi Pare Di Dante...». Sur Diverses Lectures Du De Vulgari Eloquentia Dans Les Débats Sur La Questione Della Lingua." *Freiburger Zeitschrift Für Philosophie Und Theologie* 59, no. 2 (2012): 407–425.

century, the understanding was that if the text was genuinely by Dante, it belonged to the latest production of the author, after the composition of the three canticles of the *Commedia*. Most humanists were not close readers of the treatise and much of the historical data regarding its composition that could be gathered from the text went unnoticed in the sixteenth century. Moreover, the text appeared in the Trivulziano manuscript together with the *Monarchia*, a work which has traditionally been associated with the last years of the author; hence a late chronology was suggested to its humanist readers by the manuscript tradition.[6]

The chronology of the composition of *De vulgari eloquentia* has been updated and revised throughout the past decade.[7] The text of the treatise offers a 'terminus ante quem' and a 'terminus post quem' for its composition, the latter being the exile of the poet in 1302, to which the author refers in *De vulgari eloquentia* 1 6 3, and the former the death of Giovanni di Monferrato in 1305, who appears alive in chapter 12 of the same book.[8]

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[6] On the Trivulziano manuscript, see Padoan, Giorgio. "Vicende veneziane del codice Trivulziano del "De vulgari eloquentia"." *V. Branca-G. Padoan (a cura di), Dante e la cultura veneta, Atti del Convegno di studi organizzato dalla Fondazione "Giorgio Cini", Verona* 30: 385-393. For its description in the context of the other codices of *De vulgari eloquentia*, see the latest national edition (Fenzi, 2012) and the section 'De vulgari eloquentia: ricezione' in the *Enciclopedia Dantesca*. Cf. also chapter 3 and 4 in this dissertation and the bibliography I reference there related to Gian Giorgio Trissino, who rediscovered the codex in the early sixteenth century.

[7] See note 1 above for the recent secondary bibliography on this topic. In this chapter I refer to the findings of Tavoni regarding the chronology of *De vulgari eloquentia*, and partially to Inglese's, as is specified in the notes at the bottom of the page. In the few instances where my interpretation differs significantly from that of both these two scholars, I signal it in the corpus of the chapter. My chronological approach and my approach to the issues at stake are developed in more detail in my article 'Dante and Cangrande', which appeared in *Dante Notes* in 2017, in which I challenge the established chronology of another Latin text by Dante, the *Quaestio de aqua et terra*.

[8] Book 1 12 is also written before March 1309, or the death of the Angevin Charles II. This is relevant for the argument of the relative chronology of *Convivio*, where 1 6 is reminiscent of *De vulgari eloquentia* 1 12, and perhaps contemporary. See note 2 in this

The *terminus ante quem* refers only to the first book; as we will see, it is not certain that the second book was written continuously after the first: in its incipit, Dante writes he is resuming the work after a pause (*Dve* 2 1 1). The other Dantean treatise written during the exile of the poet, the *Convivio*, also offers some support to this tentative chronology. Dante announced the composition of *De vulgari eloquentia* in *Convivio* 1 5 10 ("uno libello ch'io intendo di fare, Dio concedente, di Volgare Eloquenza"). The statement is generally interpreted as suggesting that the poet conceived the treatise on vernacular eloquence shortly after having begun to compose the *Convivio*. The section of the *Convivio* mentioned above also seems to refer to a passage of *De vulgari eloquentia* (1 9 7), as we can see from comparing the two texts:

> Quapropter audacter testamur quod si vetustissimi Papienses nunc resurgerent, sermone vario vel diverso cum modernis Papiensibus loquerentur.
> (*Dve* 1 9 7)

> Sì ch'io dico che se coloro che partiro d'esta vita già sono mille anni tornassero alle loro cittadi, crederebbero la loro cittade essere occupata da gente strana, per la lingua da[lla] loro discordante. (*Cv* 1 5 9)

Occurrences such as these have helped advance hypotheses regarding the composition of the two treatises and when these overlapped. [9] The years immediately following the exile,

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chapter for a discussion of the various chronological hypotheses for *De vulgari eloquentia* and *Convivio* in the secondary literature.

[9] Cf. note 2. No consensus exists regarding the priority of the composition of the first book of *De vulgari eloquentia* relative to *Convivio*, for which I am arguing here. Most scholars believe that the Latin treatise was composed either after or at the same time as

i.e. 1302-1303, are not viable as year of composition of either treatise. Throughout 1302 and the early months of 1303 Dante acted as chancellor of the 'Universitas partis Alborum', an organism reuniting the displaced members of the Florentine White Guelph faction and their allies abroad. There is an almost universal agreement that the latter date ought to serve as a 'terminus post quem' for the resuming of literary writing on the part of the author. The beginning of the composition of the two treatises could not date any earlier than the Spring of 1303 or the first half of 1304 at the latest. The Dantean epistles, collected with much effort by Boccaccio, who often copied them in his own hand, offer some help to arrive at a more solid chronology. In *Epistle* 1, written in proximity of the failed peace negotiations between the black and the white factions led in Florence by Cardinal Niccolò da Prato in the Summer of the year 1304, the poet records a significant delay on his part in participating in the peace effort and the attempts to reenter the city of his allies. Biographers and historians have various theories about this delay: some believe

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the four books of *Convivio*. The starting point for any study on the *Convivio* is the critical text of Vandelli and Busnelli (1934-1937). Apart from the studies referenced in note 2, I signal Brambilla-Ageno's (ed.) *Convivio. I*/I**. Introduzione. II. Testo*., Firenze: Le Lettere, 1995. voll. 2, in 3 tomi; "Convivio", a cura di Gianfranco Fioravanti, canzoni a cura di Claudio Giunta. Alighieri, Dante. *Opere. II. "Convivio". "Monarchia". "Epistole". "Egloge"*. Gianfranco Fioravanti, Claudio Giunta, Diego Quaglioni, Claudia Villa and Gabriella Albanese, eds., ed. by Marco Santagata. Milano: Mondadori, 2014: 3-805. By the time I have written this, the national edition of the *Convivio* by Andrea Mazzucchi for the Centro Pio Rajna has, alas, not yet been published. Cf also the studies: Fenzi, Enrico. "Dal *Convivio* al *De vulgari eloquentia*: appunti di lettura". Bartuschat, Johannes and Andrea Aldo Robiglio, eds. *Il Convivio di Dante*. Ravenna: Longo, 2015: 83-104; Tavoni, Mirko. "Le *Prose della volgar lingua*, il *De vulgari eloquentia* e il *Convivio*". Morgana, Silvia, Mario Piotti and Massimo Prada, eds. *"Prose della volgar lingua" di Pietro Bembo. Gargnano del Garda, 4-7 ottobre 2000*. Cisalpino: Milano, 2000: 123-138, Gilson, Simon A. "Reading the Convivio from Trecento Florence to Dante's Cinquecento Commentators." *Italian Studies* 64, no. 2 (2009): 266-295, Arduini, Beatrice. "Le implicazioni del Convivio nel corpus dantesco." *Medioevo letterario d'Italia* 6 (2009): 89-116.

that Dante had in the meantime entered the service of Bartolomeo della Scala in Verona, others that he had approached the opposite faction in Arezzo and distanced himself from the whites.[10]

Regardless of the exact reason for the interruption of his relations with the Whites hinted at in the epistle, the latter could have provided the opportunity for taking up the composition of the two treatises. Another primary document, a 'procura' dated October 6, 1306, identifies Dante as the envoy of the famous Black Guelph family of the Malaspina. This represents the first record that Dante had abandoned the White faction and approached his former enemies. We know that between the negotiations of 1304 and the 'procura' of 1306 Dante had written an epistle titled "Popule mee, quid feci tibi?" in which he requested his enemy faction, the black Guelphs (led by Corso Donati, a relative of his wife), to be pardoned, and had vowed to abandon the Whites. Leonardo Bruni, a fifteenth-century Florentine chancellor, could still read this epistle in the archives of the Florentine chancery before it was lost.[11] Bruni never mentions the date of the letter, and some, like Carpi, have proposed to situate it right after the 'Battle of the Lastra' (July 1304), a decisive victory for the blacks. At some point between the years 1304 and 1306,

[10] See the biographical studies listed in note 1 for a detailed discussion of these years in the life of the author (especially Tavoni 2015). For Boccaccio's recovery of the epistles, see Montefusco, Antonio. "Le Epistole di Dante: un approccio al corpus." *Critica del testo* 14, no. 1 (2011): 401-457, and Marco Petoletti. "Boccaccio editore delle "Egloghe" e delle "Epistole" di Dante", in *Boccaccio editore e interprete di Dante*, a cura di Luca Azzetta, Andrea Mazzucchi, introd. di Enrico Malato, in collaborazione con la Casa di Dante in Roma, Roma, Salerno, 2014, pp. 159-183 (the manuscripts discussed are: Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plutei 29 8 e 33 31). Padoan 1993 also dwells at length on the role of Boccaccio as editor and first biographer of Dante in the reconstruction of the chronology of his work.

[11] The humanist Leonardo Bruni could still read the original of the epistle in the archive of the Florentine chancery in the early fifteenth century (cf. Tavoni 2015, 106).

the exact date being an object of discussion as we saw, Dante abandons the white Guelph faction and attempts a reconciliation with the black Guelphs.[12]

The change of faction has been traditionally considered relevant to the chronology of the composition of *Convivio* and *De vulgari eloquentia* because both works display a marked Ghibelline, that is filo-imperial, character that would appear at odds with a reconciliation with the Blacks. Scholars have often argued for as late a date for the passage from the Whites to the Blacks as the little evidence at their disposal allowed. It would be unfair to assume a true political conversion to be necessary for a change of faction to happen, especially when the latter was precipitated by the necessity of survival as an exile. *De vulgari eloquentia* was never published by Dante, and if he had any plans to circulate it they must have been dropped before interrupting the treatise. The Latin in which it is written, as Machiavelli and Martelli reported in the Cinquecento, is very simple and thus at odds with the Latin prose of Dante's epistles or *Monarchia*.

Fenzi, in his commentary on *De vulgari eloquentia*, intervenes on the question regarding the passage of faction of Dante, following Carpi in identifying the Battle of the Lastra as the moment of the departure of the poet from his white allies, without making explicit that the idea goes back at least to the studies of Petrocchi; he advances several counterpoints to Tavoni's argument that Dante left the white faction at a later date than the Battle of the Lastra and spent part of his exile in Bologna, where he conceived *De vulgari eloquentia*. Whether scholars argue for a sojourn in Guelph Bologna, the Verona of the Scaliger, or at the court of the Da Camino in Treviso as the place of composition of

[12] At the time of the 'procura' of 1306, as we have seen above, Dante has already passed to the other faction: see Tavoni 2015, 138-146.

the two treatises, what drives them is the conviction that their efforts will enrich our understanding of the evolution of Dante's political thought. . As it emerged from the trajectory of Carpi's books, he operated with the conviction that a more solid intellectual history of the author would produce more accurate readings of the *Commedia*. Studies in this critical tradition are likely to multiply in the next few years as others intervene on the manifold questions of Dantean chronology that remain open - not for scholarly negligence, but for the necessity of making heavy use of historical conjecture in addressing them.[13] The words written by Umberto Carpi in an article published on the Spanish journal *Tenzone* in 2008, in which he addresses the contextualization of the Dantean song "*Doglia mi reca*", summarize the shortcomings of a research method inspired by an attention devoted primarily to the historical context and secondarily to the text:

> Siamo in uno *scivolosissimo terreno di ipotesi*, ma credo che Fenzi abbia ragione se devo seguire fino in fondo *il criterio che mi è caro delle compatibilità e delle convenienze politico-relazionali cui Dante* soprattutto in questa fase, né avrebbe altrimenti potuto lui esule per di più nel momento in cui compiva una traumatica, pericolosa scelta di scissione e dunque di schieramento altro, *fu stretto ad attenersi*. (italics mine)[14]

Carpi's "criterio [..] delle compatibilità e delle convenienze politico-relazionali [..] cui Dante [..] fu stretto ad attenersi" instrumentalizes Dante's text to the necessities of a

[13] The latest is Took, John. *Dante*. Princeton University Press 2020.
[14] Umberto Carpi, 'La destinataria del congedo e un'ipotesi di contestualizzazione' [per "*Doglia mi reca"*], *Tenzone*, 2008, 19.

narrow historical interpretation: the result is that of creating ideological firewalls between different works, and, as in the case of Carpi's last book, between parts of a single canticle, the *Inferno*.

| The hunt for the vernacular in *De vulgari eloquentia*

The premise of *De vulgari eloquentia* is the fact of the existence of a variety of human vernaculars ('quoniam permultis ac diversis ydiomatibus negotium exercitatur humanum'; *DVE* 1 6 1).[15] As we mentioned in chapter 1, Dante planned to end his analysis of the 'vulgaris locutio' with the study of the vernaculars of discrete families and individuals: "inferiora vulgaria illuminare curabimus, gradatim descendentes ad illud quod unius solius familie proprium est.".[16] Speakers can have a unique 'forma' through which they generate 'vocabula' and 'prolationes'.[17] The object of the treatise is the 'vernacular' in which the poets of Frederick II's court wrote their lyrics, which is distinguished from other 'vernaculars' because it does not display the 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' of any special place, but rather of all places at the same time. As we saw in chapter 1, this was the result of the mechanisms of 'reciprocity' and 'consent' that unwittingly shaped the vernacular. The search for the 'vulgare latium', pictured a panther with a perfumed breath, is framed as a hunting expedition in the Italian peninsula. Dante reviewed the vernaculars spoken in Italy during his lifetime, offering insight into how linguistic diversity was perceived in the medieval period. These were almost too many to enumerate, close to a thousand according to his computation. Dante divides them in

[15] See chapter 1 for a the meanings of 'vernacular' in Dante's text.
[16] *DVE* 1 19 3.
[17] See chapter 1.

fourteen groups and goes through each of them individually to demonstrate that none of them can be said to have all the 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' of the 'vulgare latium'. The best vernacular, he contends, cannot be found in any of the languages commonly spoken in the peninsula, regardless of their geographical provenance.

Dante defined the 'vulgarem locutionem' as the natural ability that infants pick up in their households from their mothers and nurses, with whom the baby is almost exclusively in contact at the beginning of its life:

> […] vulgarem locutionem appellamus eam quam infantes adsuefiunt ab adsistentibus, cum primitus distinguere voces incipiunt; vel quod brevius dici potest, vulgarem locutionem asserimus, quam sine omni regula, nutricem imitantes, accipimus.[18]

The learning of the vernacular on the part of the child had generated interest already in the fourteenth century: according the Franciscan Salimbene who wrote a chronicle of Frederick II's reign and painted him in negative terms, the emperor and some of the natural philosophers at his court devised an experiment to test whether children could develop the ability to speak the vernacular without being cared for by a nurse. [19] They

18 *DVE* 1 1 2. Cf. chapter 1.

[19] Salimbene de Adam*, Cronica, nuova ed. critica, a cura di Giuseppe Scalia*. Bari: Laterza, 1966. Cf. also the two biographies of the emperor: Kantorowicz, Ernst. *Frederick the Second, 1194–1250*. New York, 1937, and Abulafia, David. *Frederick II: A Medieval Emperor*. Penguin Press, 1988. These sources may indeed be spurious. Much of the medieval literature on Frederick has depicted him as the Anti-Christ, whether rightly or wrongly we should not be as sure as Kantorowicz was in his ground-breaking biography of the emperor - and this dark anecdote may belong to

imprisoned two infants and deprived them of all human contact except for a nurse who provided them with food but was forbidden to make any sound. The emperor and his scientists wondered whether the children would have developed a vernacular and whether this would be the vernacular of their parents or, as the philosophers hypothesized, the first human vernacular used by Adam or Hebrew. Salimbene also tells us that the children died from being deprived of the comfort of human contact before they could develop a vernacular. Using Dante's term in *De vulgari eloquentia*, this experiment aimed at discovering the 'forma' possessed by the children, and what 'vocabula' and prolationes' it would produce without any external linguistic input.

The nurse or the mother gives the child the opportunity to manifest what Dante believed to be 'necessariam', i.e. the innate ability to communicate, or 'locutio'. That faculty is necessary to learn any other vernacular, included the 'locutio secondaria' or 'artificialis', Latin. Latin is 'artificialis' in Dante's sense because its rudiments need to be imparted in the 'vulgaris locutio', which is the primary manifestation of the 'locutio'. It would be impossible to teach Latin resorting to the vernacular. This was not of course the case when Latin was spoken by the historical Roman community and Roman children were raised in it; Latin was not back then a 'locutio secondaria' at all in Dante's sense. By the late medieval period, however, Latin had become a language that one needed to learn in school, and early grammatical and rhetorical works, going back at least to the late imperial classic written by Quintilian through Priscian, had monopolized its learning, imposing artificial rules on its use to facilitate its learning by non-native speakers and to

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that genre. However, the anecdote goes a long way to show the sophistication of late medieval linguistic thinking.

reduce the influence of the vernaculars and their syntaxes, vocabularies, and phonetics. Because the 'vulgaris locutio' is the vernacular of everyday life, the hypothesis of a vernacular 'eloquentia', as we mentioned above, would have seemed controversial to many, especially to medieval Latin schoolmasters. There were however examples of vernacular works, such as the lyrics of the troubadours and Sicilian poets, that had shown how a vernacular text could be used to develop topics usually relegated to the 'lingua artificialis'. Similarly, vernacular prose could increasingly lay a claim to 'eloquentia', as more translators reworked philosophical classics into the vernacular.[20] However, even texts such as these were still far from being included in the curricula of schools and universities next to the established Latin literature. The primary education and primary writing career of a medieval author was in Latin, and many vernacular works were passed on to us without the name of their authors, who were frequently Latinate, educated, and belonged to the clerical class, so that they assigned little importance to what they wrote in the vernacular. Their writing in the vernacular served the interests of the nobility, most of whom only received rudiments in Latin, but nonetheless created a consistent demand for a literature they could access in their vernaculars. The theoretical work required to graft the vernacular literatures on the lofty branches of medieval high culture is attempted and partially accomplished by Dante by deploying an innovative theory of the origins and the role of the vernaculars. Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* theorizes the vernacular languages as historical actors, coming in a historical succession according to God's plan for the history of humankind. Every historical time has a vernacular through which the events established by God can take place.

[20] Imbach, Ruedi. *Dante, la philosophie et les laïcs*. Freiburg, 1996.

Dante's theories can be understood as a commentary on the biblical book of *Genesis*, and notably on the episodes of the gifting of language to the first man Adam, and that of the Tower of Babel, when the confusion of the human languages started. The existence of a supra-municipal vernacular which has its roots in that of the poets of the Sicilian School is an occurrence to which Dante at traits attributed the importance of a divinely predetermined event, the opportunity to make 'Ytalia' the seat of the Empire, and the 'vulgare latium' its vernacular.[21]

In chapter sixteen of book 1 of *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante figures as a hunter tracking down an elusive panther in the forests of Italy:

> Postquam venati saltus et pascua sumus Ytalie nec panteram quam sequimur adinvenimus, ut ipsam reperire possimus, rationabilius investigemus de illa ut, solerti studio redolentem ubique et necubi apparentem nostris penitus irretiamus tenticulis.

Here the poet refers for the first time to the vernacular that he has defined throughout book 1 as a panther. The image of the panther is at the core of Dante's original vernacular poetics. Dante uses the image of the panther to refer allegorically to the 'vulgare latium', and that of a 'silva' or forest to refer to the many distinct vernaculars spoken in the Italian peninsula. The panther is an animal deeply embedded in the medieval imaginary. A quick glance at medieval bestiaries reveals the extent to which the feline is apt as a trope for a

[21] See the article by Marchesi, "Dante's Vertical Utopia*"* 2001, cited above.

common language. [22] Isidore provides an etymology from the ancient Greek 'pan' (neuter of 'pas', 'all') to signify, according to the etymologist, that the panther is friendly to 'all' beasts, except the dragon. Traditionally, its fur is of many colors and it emanates a scent from its mouth upon feeding. More importantly, it is often used as a Christological trope. A peculiar image to apply to the object of the treatise, the 'vulgare latium'. Upon reading "I haven't caught the panther I was hunting, albeit I tracked her down the woods and fields of Italy" (1 16 1), we are left to wonder as to stakes of this veiled allegory. The panther's allegory suggests a unique outlook on the role of the vernacular in history; Dante's theorization is a privileged vantage point to see how the process of formation of a supra-municipal vernacular that we described in chapter 1 could give rise to identifications with a historical mission such as the imperial one.

It was not the first time that a writer referred to language as an animal. Among the sources that would certainly be among Dante's direct literary antecedents we find the Augustine of the thirteenth book of the *Confessions*. There Augustine addresses the sacraments, the preaching of the priest, and the Word of the *Bible* as linguistic expression and physical utterance. By 'linguistic expression' and 'utterance' Augustine means that the Word, and hence the sacraments, are expressed in 'innumerable languages and in innumerable phrases of any particular language' (*Confessions* 13 24-36). The phrases of a language that convey the light of wisdom provided by God, e.g. those recorded in the *Gospels*, are described as the birds of sky, i.e. can rise above the abyss of the human

[22] Harris, Nigel. "Der Panther und sein Atem in der deutschsprachigen Literatur des Mittelalters". in Harris, Nigel, Robertshaw, Alan, & Wolf, Gerhard (eds.). *Natur und Kultur in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Colloquium Exeter*, Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997, pp. 65-75.

flesh. The relationship between the two texts clarifies several 'loci' of *De vulgari eloquentia*.[23] The 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' of the *Gospels*, to use Dante's terms, remedy humanity's weaknesses and guide it toward God; the specific language of the sacraments and the Word of the Scripture are thus fulfilling God's plan for humankind, who would remain blind were it not for the guide provided to it through them. 'Vocabula' and 'prolationes' are constantly evolving and changing according to the passing of time, yet without their message of wisdom being affected. If anything, the changes clarify the wisdom of God and act as a guide out of the darkness of sin.

New expressions and new vernaculars, we infer from Augustine, bring forth new interpretations of the *Scripture*, unforeseen by earlier generations. These new interpretations allow the men of a certain time to fulfill their roles in history. Dante adapts this Augustinian idea to the 'vulgare latium', given to 'Ytalia' as the verbal incarnation of its political mission. If the forces that bring about the emergence of a language may very well be best described as providential, the mechanisms through which this happens are, as we have seen in the previous chapters, socio-cultural and built upon the practices of reciprocity and consent that regulate a literary community as it develops a script for the first time.[24]

| The attributes of a supra-municipal vernacular

After introducing the image of the panther, the next step in the argumentation of the treatise is to attribute four adjectives to the supra-municipal vernacular: these are

[23] See Marchesi, Simone. *Dante and Augustine: Linguistics, Poetics, Hermeneutics*. University of Toronto Press 2011.
[24] See chapter 1.

“illustrious”, “cardinal”, “aulic”, and “curial”. It is “illustrious” (from the Latin root “lucs / lux”, “light”) in so far as it is both enlightening and enlightened, meaning that is it is well-learned and can convey good teachings. It also makes its users outshine kings in honor and glory (1 17 5) because those who use it are held in supreme esteem by the community at large. Consequently, the ‘vulgare latium’ gives power (“potestas”) to the one who uses it, as if they were kings or noblemen.

Dante, as we mentioned, partakes especially of this advantage bestowed on him by his vernacular writing. His fame as a poet is so wide-spread that he wrote “it is thanks to her sweetness [i.e. literary fame] that I care not for my exile” (1 17 6). This fame, and the power it brings - which the treatise was surely meant to amplify - is what provided him with the necessary means of sustenance during the first two years of his banishment from Florence. The best vernacular is also ‘cardinal’ (from the Latin “cardo”, “hinge [of a door]”) because all other vernaculars obey it “as a door obeys its hinge”. Dante meant that the flaws of the local vernaculars are curbed by the supra-municipal one, which acts as a virtual term of comparison whenever words and construct enter (or exit) a language. The ‘vulgare latium’ is compared to the leader of a gardening crew who orders new grafts or uproots the thorny bushes of the local vernaculars. The kingly aura of authority introduced by the first adjective is mirrored in the discussion of the second by the association of the vernacular to the head of the family (“pater familias”). Dante thus associates both a kingly and fatherly authority to the supra-municipal vernacular. The third adjective describing the vernacular is “aulic”, from the Latin “aula”, “royal court”. The implications are twofold. On the one hand, the ‘vulgare latium’ and its users act as a royal court in so far as they govern the entire forest (“silva”) of the Italian vernaculars.

On the other hand, Dante argues, "those who frequent any royal court always use an illustrious vernacular". Here, a more straightforward connection between the supra-municipal vernacular and political theory is established. The connection of the best vernacular with monarchic authority becomes explicit. We are left to wonder as to the mechanisms through which the supra-municipal vernacular regulates linguistic phenomena according to Dante, which are addressed, if only partially, in Book Two.[25]

"If Italy had a royal court", writes Dante almost in jest, "the Vernacular would be the language of the royal palace". But what royal court, and what royal palace did Dante have in mind? The only "aula" contextually relevant to the Italian case is, for historical reasons, the imperial one. The emperor of the Holy Roman Empire had a traditional claim to the Kingdom of Italy since Charlemagne took it from the hands of the Lombards. The iron crown of the Lombards, and the Kingdom of Italy that came with it, however, was not passed from emperor to emperor without complications. The kingdom of Italy was characterized by a high degree of independence from the central imperial authority which translated to the animosity of the Italian clergy and aristocracy, who had never been prone to acknowledging a Teutonic emperor as their lawful ruler, toward manifestations of imperial power. In the political vacuum left by the absent imperial government, the various Italian political entities emerging from the high Middle Ages had increasingly solidified their self-sufficiency. As their thriving banking and trading economies filled their coffers, fueling military expansion against their neighbors, these 'signorie' and 'repubbliche' had the choice to side with the emperor and its heirs, the papacy, or to follow their own interests by supporting one or the other based on their own local agenda.

[25] See chapter 1.

The presence of the pope in Rome also complicated the administration of the Italian kingdom; the papal court revendicated the powers of a royal court on Italian territory. By arguing that Italy lacked a royal court in *De vulgari eloquentia*, Dante denied the self-fashioned Pope-King its claims to temporal power in the Italian peninsula. Furthermore, the papal court lacked the other necessary qualities which, if present, would result in the use of the supra-municipal vernacular by its courtesans. The language of the Romans was described in *De vulgari eloquentia* as "the most horrendous and vile" because "they are outstanding for the ugliness of their way of life":

> "Romanorum non vulgare, sed potius tristiloquium, ytalorum vulgarium omnium esse turpissimum; nec mirum, cum etiam morum habituumque deformitate pre cunctis videantur fetere".[26]

The moral accusation against the papacy helps contextualizing the *De vulgari eloquentia* in the years immediately following the poet's exile and preceding the departure of the papal court for Avignon. In his mind, Dante has a concrete historical precedent for a universal court, one that shaped his understanding of Mediterranean history throughout the composition of the *Commedia*. This precedent is the Italy of the 1230s and 40s, during which Frederick II attempted to make Italy the seat of the empire; the court of the 'puer apuliae' is the historical referent to which the Dante in *De vulgari eloquentia* refers to when referencing the notion of a royal court.

[26] *DVE* 1 11 2.

The value assigned by Dante to Frederick II's reign can enhance our understanding of the linguistic theory expounded in *De vulgari eloquentia*, as some remarks on the fourth and last adjective that Dante attributes to the supra-municipal vernacular, 'curial', can show. 'Curial" in Dante's usage means "sanctioned by law" (from the Latin "curia", "tribunal court"). Dante's general definition of "curialitas" amounts to the respect of a law aimed at producing good outcomes; because this law arises from the norm shared by the most noble and just, it must reside with the highest representatives of a supra-municipal law, which resided in the tribunal court of the Emperor.[27] In this context, Dante argues something remarkable: "Because the best Italian vernacular may very well have been made into norm ["libratum sit"] in the most excellent of the Italian tribunals", he writes, "it deserves the name of 'curial'" (1 18 5). There is a subtle issue - perhaps intentional on the part of the author - with the translation of this sentence. The predicate of the subordinate phrase "libratum sit" (a Latin perfect subjunctive) can have at least two distinct values in Latin, both applicable to the context. The first value is potential, which I have used in the translation directly above. According to this value of the predicate, Dante would be arguing the best vernacular he has in mind to be such that it could have been constructed in the most excellent tribunal court, and yet wasn't. So just and noble under all its aspects, that is, that it could have only been devised by the ideal members of that ideal tribunal, which Italy lacks.

The second value is that of a simple perfect: not only could have been normalized in the highest tribunal, but was, a meaning that silently insinuated in the text by the

[27] See the treatise *De Monarchia* for Dante's musings on temporal power and its divine origins and the role of the papacy.

content of the next pages if not by the immediate syntactic context. That Italy lacks such a tribunal court, as Dante is swift to concede, would make the statement a lament for an unrealized potentiality frustrated by history. Yet, with a sleight of hand, Dante turns the discussion upside down: a tribunal court exists but its members are physically scattered across Italy. The affirmation would have sounded inaccurate to his contemporaries: it is a challenging notion that a legislating body exists or continues to function where a central administrative state is lacking. It is unclear what exactly survives of a centralized tribunal court after its dissolving and scattering apart from its members. To add to that, the reader is also left to wonder as to whether Dante is here referring to an actual historical tribunal which has been scattered (perhaps that of Frederick and his heir Manfredi, dissolved in 1266) or rather is speaking in metaphors comparing the group of poets like Cino da Pistoia and himself who write in the best vernacular to a legislating body, linguistically-speaking. We could argue that the two groups do not need to be distinguished. Dante and Cino da Pistoia were indeed ministerial functionaries in their city-states and saw themselves as heirs to the imperial mission of a first attempt at a centralized administrative state on Italian territory since the fall of the Roman Empire, that of Frederick II. Dante went as far as to hold the priory, the highest civil role, in his hometown of Florence. Cino was a famous jurist, whose expertise in legal matters was frequently sought after during his professorship at the University of Bologna. In addition to that, both men's scholarly interests collided with the problem of centralized legislation in the Kingdom of Italy.

Cino's most well-known work is a commentary to the Justinian Code viewed through the special lens of the descent of the Emperor Henry VII to reaffirm imperial rule

in Italy. Dante, on the other hand, tackles the question of law throughout his literary career, but especially in the *Convivio*, and in his late treatise of political theory *De monarchia*. The involvement in politics of the poets who make up Dante's canon is central to understanding the political imagery hovering over the treatment of the linguistic issue at hand. The idea of a supra-municipal tribunal court scattered throughout Italy was hard to reconcile with the history of medieval Italy, characterized by political fragmentation and the competition for power of the 'signorie' and 'repubbliche'.

| Codifying a Sicilian School

The name of the 'Sicilian' poets was popularized by the first generation of humanists that rediscovered the treatise and then was accepted by contemporary scholars without critical reflection. In no lyric composition, however, do the poets of Frederick's generation ever identify themselves as "Sicilian". In *De vulgari eloquentia* 1 12**,** where Dante searched among the various vernaculars of Italy the 'vulgare latium' and provides a literary account of the activity of the poets of the court of Frederick II and their vernacular, he proposed that all that was written in the vernacular in the Italian peninsula ("quicquid Ytali poetantur") ought to be called "Sicilian" ("sicilianum vocatur"). Dante does not claim to have named them "Sicilians" for the first time; rather, from his use of the term it seems that it was common when he penned the treatise. That "sicilianum" was a literary category already in existence finds some confirmation in a treatise on Occitan versification written by the Catalan Jofre de Foixà sometime before 1300, in which the Benedictine listed 'Lombard' and 'Sicilian' as the vernaculars on the opposite side of the

Alps that had a written tradition comparable to that of the troubadours.[28] Hence, perhaps, the preference for the Romance loan-word 'sicilianum' instead of the Latin "siculum", an occurrence neglected by all commentators. Dante may have wanted to distinguish it from 'siculum' to avoid confusion with that vernacular, which was not to be identified with the supra-municipal one.

An interesting concept used by Dante is 'indigenas' to refer to the few Sicilian poets who were natives of Sicily and had sung in the high poetic style ('doctores indigenas').[29] Yet, the language in which these 'indigenas doctores' wrote, which is the 'vulgare latium', was not the same that was spoken by the members of the middle and lower classes of their island: however, some incorrectly infer from this that Dante is saying that the Sicilian poets were natives of Sicily. [30] The local vernaculars of Sicily were characterized by a 'drag' ('non sine quodam tempore'; D*e vulgari eloquentia* 1 12 6) that was incompatible with the 'vulgare latium' Only the best ('primi') among the 'indigenas doctores' of the Sicilians wrote in the 'latium vulgare' together with their mainland peers, and thus distancing themselves from their vernacular to follow a more

[28] Gotti, Ettore Li (ed.) and Jofre de Foixà. *Jofre de Foixà. Vers e Regles de trobar*. Società tipografica modenese editrice, 1952.
[29] Truly, the use of the title of "doctor" in the treatise to refer to vernacular poets, rather uncommon, betrays the context to which Dante is thinking. In the Sicily of Frederick II the identity of most of the poets corresponds, based on the rubrics we find in the songbooks, to the functionaries of Frederick's chancery, most of whom would have been Bologna-educated doctors of law. Guido delle Colonne, from which Dante draws several demonstrative examples, was, like Pier delle Vigne, a jurist of the highest level in addition to being a vernacular poet. See the introductive essays to the latest edition of the Sicilian poets: Antonelli, Roberto, Costanzo Di Girolamo, and Rosario Coluccia, eds. *I poeti della scuola siciliana, Vol. 1,2,3*, Mondadori, 2008.
[30] Mallette, Karla. *The Kingdom of Sicily, 1100-1250: A Literary History.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005. The monography is otherwise useful as an English-language introduction to the poets of the Sicilian school.

'curialis' norm (cf. *De vulgari eloquentia* 1 12 9). The term 'sicilianum', such as it is used to refer to the language of the poets of Italy who wrote in a supra-municipal vernacular before Dante, does not mean that these poets wrote in a Sicilian vernacular. Dante uses "sicilianum" neither to refer to a southern vernacular, nor to a geographical area proper. 'Sicilianum' is the name of the 'vulgare latium' as it manifested during the empire of Frederick II and was preserved by the later generations because the poets of Frederick's court enjoyed the most far-reaching fame of all and were given the support of the Emperor himself, who went as far as to compose vernacular verses alongside them. As we mentioned above, many of the poets of the Sicilian school did not hail from the island.[31]

Dante's argument is the inevitability of the occurrence of the 'vulgare latium' at the court of Frederick II in medieval Italy: the kingdom of Sicily during the reign of the Hohenstaufen qualifies for Dante as the most noble and just of its time, hence as the purveyor of the best that humans can achieve, from law to literature and the arts; that the best state produces the best men (hence the best language) is an axiom that Dante derives from strands of political thought that have not yet been assessed. It is then only natural that it would also produce the best vernacular:

> Siquidem illustres heroes Federicus Cesar et benegenitus eius Manfredus, nobilitatem ac rectitudinem sue forme pandentes, donec fortuna permisit, humana

[31] See chapter 1. Dante dwells on this at length. He correctly identified Giacomo da Lentini, one of the leading figure of the first generation of poets, as Apulian, not Sicilian as modern accounts argue. *De vulgari eloquentia* 1 12 8 presents Giacomo as evidence that despite the brutality of the Apulian vernacular, some of its speakers have arisen to the level of the best vernacular, as is the case of several others from other peninsular vernaculars.

> secuti sunt, brutalia dedignantes; propter quod corde nobiles atque gratiarum dotati inherere tantorum principum maiestati conati sunt; ita quod eorum tempore quicquid excellentes Latinorum enitebantur, primitus in tantorum coronatorum aula prodibat; et quia regale solium erat Sicilia, factum est ut quicquid nostri predecessores vulgariter protulerunt, sicilianum vocaretur: quod quidem retinemus et nos, nec posteri nostri permutare valebunt. [32]

Dante boldly calls Frederick and Manfred "heroes" ("illustres heroes"; 1 12 4), in neat contrast to a historiographical tradition that in the north of the Italian peninsula was particularly hostile to the Hohenstaufen Emperor. The praise of Frederick II would have made a more radical Guelph than Dante wince; in fact, the whole idea that Frederick's kingdom was enlightened could have been highly debatable according to Dante's contemporaries. Not only the Hohenstaufen had been excommunicated several times by the Pope, but several contemporary chronicles referred to Frederick as the antichrist, e.g. the one by Salimbene from which we have drawn the episode of the experiment on the two children.

Dante's positive portraiture of the emperor ought to be taken more seriously as indispensable to the economy of the treatise and capable of offering insights about its

[32] "Indeed, those illustrious heroes, the Emperor Frederick and his worthy son Manfred, knew how to reveal the nobility and integrity that were in their hearts; and, while Fortune allowed, they lived in a manner befitting men, despising the bestial life. On this account, all who were noble of heart and rich in graces strove to attach themselves to the majesty of such worthy princes, so that, in their day, all that the most gifted individuals in Italy brought forth first came to light in the court of these two great monarchs. And since Sicily was the seat of the imperial throne, it came about that whatever our predecessors wrote in the vernacular was called 'Sicilian'". *DVE* 1 12 4.

date of composition, and its intended public and their presumed political allegiances. Modern historians see the Sicilian Hohenstaufen as the victim of the acrimony of his contemporaries and reject negative accounts of his reign: Frederick is presented almost exclusively in a positive light in contemporary studies.[33] Frederick's administrative reforms are often seen as important milestones for the development of the modern administrative state. The set of laws promulgated by the emperor at the height of his power, known as Constitutions of Melfi, have rightfully attracted the attention of historians. Apart from emphasizing the sacredness of the ruling rights of the Emperor and making them independent of those of the Pope, the Constitutions brought the clergy under the authority of the common courts, severely limited the initiative of the restless Italian nobility, and prohibited the formation of communes and the election of 'podestà', the two institutions that most characterized the cities of northern Italy and equipped them with justice and administrative apparatuses independent of that of the emperor. The constitutions also had the ambitious task of bringing under the same law Lombards and Germans, Greek and Arabs, Jews and crusaders of the most diverse provenance on a territory that extended from the Baltic sea to Sicily, and included Jerusalem and vast regions in the near East, brought under Christian rule by Frederick's crusading efforts in the 1220s.

There is a close connection between the world of the Melfi Constitutions and that of the early vernacular poets known as the 'Sicilians' because the earliest texts are dated to the years surrounding the promulgation of this legislative code, and many of the Sicilian poets whose identity has been at least partially reconstructed belong to the higher reaches

[33] See Abulafia, David. *Frederick II: a medieval emperor*. Oxford University Press 1992.

of the administrative caste of the Kingdom of Sicily. Among these, famous jurists like Pier delle Vigne, and Guido delle Colonne; notaries, like Giacomo da Lentini; imperial heirs like Re Enzo; and many more imperial bureaucrats, who served Frederick in various capacities. This fact makes it easier to understand where Dante gets the idea that a royal court and its tribunal are the ideal laboratory for the supra-municipal vernacular, which incarnates the best qualities of each as the adjectives that describe it demonstrate, especially 'aulic' and 'curial'. When Dante needs to provide an example of the nobility of the 'vulgare latium' he chooses two canzoni by Guido delle Colonne, a judge from Messina, "Ancor che l'aigua per lo foco lassi" and "Amor, che lungiamente m'hai menato".

Given the prominent role of Guido delle Colonne, Giacomo da Lentini, and many others of the poets of the Sicilian school in the culture that led to the constitutions of Melfi, Dante's sentence "because the best Italian vernacular *may* have been weighed and evaluated ["cum libratum sit"] in the most excellent of the Italian tribunals" (1 18 5) seems unnecessarily cautious. The poets' identities, corresponding to those of Frederick's ministers and dignitaries, would suggest another meaning, also possible in Latin (where "cum" + perfect subjunctive can have the force of an indicative perfect), along these lines: the best Italian vernacular has in fact been made into norm in the most excellent of Italian tribunals, that is the royal court of Frederick II where our poets worked as professionals (judges, notaries, diplomats, etc.). The ambiguity of the perfect subjunctive is thus perhaps intentional on the part of the author, who manifests similar linguistic nuances in the prose of his Latin letters. Dante is trying to suggest that Italy lacks a high tribunal court so that he can set the reader up for a surprise when, a few lines later, he

argues that a tribunal court of this kind indeed exists, hidden in plain sight, in the kingdom of Italy.

> Sed dicere quod in excellentissima Ytalorum curia *sit libratum*, videtur nugatio, cum curia careamus. Ad quod facile respondetur. Nam, licet curia, secundum quod unica accipitur, ut curia regis Alamanie, in Ytalia non sit, membra tamen eius non desunt; et sicut membra illius uno principe uniuntur, sic membra huius gratioso lumine rationis unita sunt. Quare falsum esset dicere curia carere Ytalos, quanquam principe careamus; quoniam curiam habemus, licet corporaliter sit dispersa. [34]

Botterill's translation of this passage understandably flattens the ambiguity of the text by translating the perfect subjunctive as a perfect, according to the value that the second instance of "sit libratum" - but not the first, which I translated above - has.

That a high tribunal court exists in the Kingdom of Italy even as a 'scattered' ('dispersa') institution in the year 1304-1305 is a surprising thesis for a man in Dante's situation. His banishment from Florence and the failed appeals to the authorities above his commune (the Pope, the non-Florentine leaders of the faction responsible for his exile, the Black Guelphs, the French, and finally, the imperials) should have suggested him the opposite conclusion, that of a condition of political anarchy for the small

[34] "Yet it seems a joke to say that it has been assessed in the most excellent tribunal in Italy, since we have no such tribunal. The answer to this is simple. For although it is true that there is no such tribunal in Italy - in the sense of a single institution, like that of the king of Germany - yet its constituent elements are not lacking. And just as the elements of the German tribunal are united under a single monarch, so those of the Italian have been brought together by the gracious light of reason. So it would not be true to say that the Italians lack a tribunal altogether, even though we lack a monarch, because we do have one, but its physical components are scattered."

municipal entities of northern Italy. The brazen attitude of the Black Guelphs in front of the White Guelphs and the filo-imperial Ghibelline factions should provide sufficient proof that no single entity could claim to be able to restrict the arrogance and the desire for power of the Florentines and their French allies. The claim of the existence of a scattered court plays in favor of Dante's project in at least two ways. First, if the members of the highest tribunal court are scattered across the peninsula in 1304-1305, the tribunal must have existed as a single entity at some point in time, as it does not seem plausible that the part could exist before the whole. To Dante, in whose imagination Frederick II and Manfred were "heroes", one needs not go much back in time to find the institution that according to him continued to exist, although scattered all over the peninsula, in 1305. Little is known about the tribunal court of Frederick outside what can be learned from preserved official documents and the *Urkunden* (i.e. the so-called *Diplomata*, or the official records of a reign), which generally leave out of their scope the less official pastimes of the court, among which our vernacular lyrics would figure prominently. Even less can one gather on how exactly Dante imagined this tribunal court to continue to exist in the post-Frederician age without a centralized administration. What made such court other than the bodies of which it was composed? What was its mission, and could it operate in absence of the emperor? It was the 'vulgare latium' that according to Dante served as the receptacle of the court after the cessation of Frederick II's kingdom.

Dante sees himself as an ideal member of the scattered court of Frederick II. Alongside him, once a Florentine prior, poets like Cino da Pistoia, the jurist, appear as reincarnations of the ministerial poet of the Frederician age. This literary strategy could be a display of favor toward a certain political faction encountered by Dante during the

exile or the gratification of his own poetic persona by association with the court of Frederick. Dante is claiming the Frederician age to be his inheritance by arguing that he belongs in spirit – not yet in fact[35] - to that old institution. The Hohenstaufen legacy was alive when Dante wrote; the Ghibelline faction still rallied around the memory of the imperial household. The homage to the memory of the emperor would not have passed unnoticed in the scriptoria of cities like Verona, even before the events that lead to the descent of Henry VII, had the treatise been circulated. The Frederician high court represented in Dante's imagination a turning point for the two historical questions: that of the country's political and linguistic unification. Frederick's unification efforts may be better understood in a larger context of attempted unifications of the territory throughout Italy's history, the last of which, in 1861, ended up being successful and resulted in the birth of a modern administrative state under the Savoy monarchy and their Piedmontese army.

Dante's personal historiography of the Sicilian Kingdom in *De vulgari eloquentia* should not appear to be less striking because modern historians have somewhat corroborated it, restituting value to Frederick II's persona and rejecting the nefarious attributes given him by medieval historiography. The consequences that Dante infers from his sympathetic study of Frederick's reign for the linguistic project pursued in the treatise are, in fact, extraordinary. 'Fredericus cesar et benegenitus eius Manfredus [..] donec fortuna permisit humana', wrote Dante in *De vulgari eloquentia*,' secuti sunt,

[35] When Henry VII comes down to Italy he joins him. Also by returning to Verona to serve Cangrande he is operating on behalf of the imperial vicar Cangrande, the representative of the German emperor in Italy. For more see my article: Placidi, Andrea. "Dante and Cangrande" in *Dante Notes* 2017.

brutalia dedignantes'; virtue shared the throne with the emperor, and all good things sprung forth from the seat of the imperial power. As we know from several passages in the rest of the work of Dante (see especially *Convivio* 4 5 6), he shared the providential understanding of history typical of the Middle Ages: the history of Israel and of Christ was one with the history of Rome and of the Roman empire. For a medieval man, momentous events in history were 'pleni', a term connected to the image of history as a "pregnant" woman, of future events. Such was the notion of "plenitudo temporis" (the fullness of the age), a concept whose main example is the Roman Empire: according to medieval historiographies, Christ had been born a subject of the Romans so that Christianity could later be carried as far as the borders of their empire, thanks to the conditions of peace and prosperity created by Caesar Augustus.[36]

All historical events happened when the times were 'pleni' according to a providential plan laid down by God at the beginning of times. What Dante is arguing in the passage quoted above - where Frederick is described as a hero and his kingdom as enlightened – is that God had envisioned for Frederick's empire a providential role in human history, one which went well beyond the fall of the Hohenstaufen dynasty in 1266. As a former prior, and now an exile worried about the political fragmentation of Italy, Dante's imagination was captivated in the first half of the 1300s by the idea that a shared vernacular, conceived as a vehicle of civic and moral virtues, could have worked better than armies and diplomacy in bringing the inhabitants of Italy together under the same standard.

[36] The best example is Paulus Orosius, *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, especially, VI, 22.

Dante had the example of Latin as a vehicle of the civic and religious values of the Romans. He probably also derived similar ideas from his experience as a poet in Florence during his youth. Poetry, characterized at the time by intense poetic and epistolary exchanges among poets from different cities, brought together the noblest individuals of each municipality, regardless of their political faction, under the rule of what was conceived and formulated by the poets as the highest human values: love, virtue, and honor. Poetry created, through a common vernacular, common values and identities. Dante knew that the language in which he and the other northern poets wrote had been inherited from the virtuous chancellors who had lived at the court of Frederick II, who were its original architects. He reconstructed the features that generated the 'vulgare latium' and argued that the 'sicilianum' could serve, similarly to Latin, as a political tool to establish an imperial seat in Italy, from which the emperor and his court could rule over Europe. The understanding of the providential mission of the "hero" Frederick II according to *De vulgari eloquentia*, was that he and his court had given Italy the vernacular, and the civic and moral values of which it was a vehicle, under which one day the emperor's frustrated project of a unified empire with its seat in the Italian peninsula would be realized.

One may wonder about the legitimacy of this argument: did Dante really envision the vernacular created at the court of Frederick as a catalyst of unification, a providential force fated to save Italy and perhaps Europe from chaos? The admiration expressed by Dante toward the emperor throughout his work does not necessarily justify such a cosmic

role for Frederick and his chancellors.[37] Yet, there is a clear signal that a cosmic role was just what Dante envisioned for the poetic tradition to which he belonged. The image of the panther evoked previously in this chapter takes on new qualifications in light of the view of providential history we have reconstructed in the text. In *De vulgari eloquentia*, the panther is an allegory of the 'vulgare latium' is the same as the language of Frederick II's court. As we mentioned above, the panther was during the Middle Ages a Christological image, and Christ's incarnation was to medieval Christians the most important event in human history, a happening of cosmic proportions. It had been announced throughout history by the events of the Old Testament, and would be reenacted on a smaller scale (the Eucharist, the lives of the saints, the works of the Church, the miracles of conversion, etc.) until the end of times. Adopting this image to refer to the language of the Frederician court is without doubt an unorthodox thing to do, especially considering how the late medieval Church had condemned Frederick's legacy. Yet, the panther allegory conveys Dante's principal argument: just as Christ was incarnated when the times were ripe, that is at the beginning of the Roman empire, so the supra-municipal vernacular arose at the time of Frederick's reign according to the notion of 'plenitudo temporis'; like Christ brought the word of the *New Testament* with him, Frederick gave the peoples of Italy a language to rise above injustice; lastly, like Christ lives on in his Church for all of eternity, the vulgare latium' of the Frederician curia lives on in the community of poets writing after the fall of the Emperor.[38]

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[37] Cf. *Convivio* 4 3 6, where Frederick is "the last emperor of the Romans"; *Inferno* 13, 75, where he is called "d'onor degno" by Pier delle Vigne; and his praise by Piccarda Donati in *Paradiso* 3, 120.

[38] See D'Urso, Daniele. "Il profumo della pantera: La metafora venatoria nel de vulgari eloquentia." *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 48, no. 1 (2006): 137-155.

In *De vulgari eloquentia* Dante distanced himself from the understanding of his lyric career as a blemish on his youth. By framing his poetic activity within the timeline of providential history, he assumed a global view of history with Italy as the seat of a medieval empire, of the 'vulgare latium' as a motor of that history, and of himself as a protagonist of what he conceived as a key event of providential history. Whether he truly believed in this cosmic narrative and the role it assigned to the poetic texts of his youth, or had rather found himself having to adopt it to reacquire a modicum of that sense of self-importance that the dreadful reality of the exile from Florence had taken away from him, we cannot say. This moment in *De vulgari eloquentia* announces for Dante the imminent re-systematization of his youth's poetic work within the universe and confines of the *Commedia*.

Developing an original linguistic theory, Dante transcended the thick localisms of late medieval Italy and gave the 'vulgare latium' in which he wrote the same attribute of the body of Christ in the Eucharist: universality, or being wholesomely present everywhere and nowhere at the same time (cf. "[pantera] ubique et necubi apparentem"; *De vulgari eloquentia* 1 16 1). The notion of a 'vulgare latium' is thus reinforced by the association with the panther as a Christological image, and consequently with the Eucharist. In this context, 'supra-municipal' intersects the meaning of 'supra-local', an archaic term describing the unique properties of the holy bread in the Eucharistic rite[39].

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[39] For a discussion, see Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* III, 76, 5.

In this chapter, I have continued the analysis of *De vulgari eloquentia* begun in the previous chapter and situated the notion of 'vulgare latium' in the political thought expressed by Dante in the sections of the treatise devoted to Frederick II. This political thought can be summarized as the vision of 'Ytalia' as an imperial seat, and of the 'vulgare latium' as the supra-municipal vernacular available to the members of this idealized court.

In the next chapter, I turn to the rediscovery of *De vulgari eloquentia* in the sixteenth century, and to the role it played in the 'Questione della lingua'. In the Cinquecento, several humanists used the text of Dante to assign new identities to the 'vernacular': among these are the 'lingua toscana', the 'lingua cortigiana', and finally, the 'lingua italiana'. These new identities reflect the historical transformations undergone by the Italian peninsula from 1305 to 1529, when *De vulgari eloquentia* was published in translation for the first time: the Cinquecento, in particular, sees the passage from the manuscript culture of the medieval period to the print culture of the Renaissance, an important factor for the circulation of a supra-municipal vernacular.

Chapter 3

On the Identity of the Renaissance 'Vernacular': the 'Lingua Toscana' and the Reception of *De Vulgari Eloquentia* in the Cinquecento

The search for the identity of the vernacular continued into the early modern period, when interactions between Italian intellectuals intensified due to the economic and political expansion of the *signorie* and *repubbliche*, which increasingly employed men drawn from the university-educated elite from across the peninsula, and accelerated the emergence of a common language of communication.[1] The literary vernacular was modeled after the use of the courts and chanceries of the period but remained grounded in the medieval texts of Petrarch and Boccaccio, hence it was consequently identified by most as 'lingua toscana'.[2] The growing numbers of actors involved in the political scene

[1] For an overview of the cultural history of the Italian peninsula, see: Nauert, Charles G., Jr. *Humanism and the Culture* of Renaissance *Europe*. 2d ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

[2] Cf. Alberti, Leon Battista, *Grammatichetta e altri scritti sul volgare*, a cura di G. Patota, 2ª ed. rivista: *Grammatichetta. Grammaire de la langue toscane précédée de Ordre des lettres*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 2003) and Tolomei, Claudio. *Il Cesano: de la lingua toscana*. Edizione critica riveduta e ampliata a cura di Ornella Castellani Pollidori, Firenze: presso l'Accademia della Crusca, 1996.

and a slow but consistent shift from Latin to the vernacular in the official activities of most Italian courts and chanceries brought several humanists to reflect upon the vernacular spoken in their professional environments. This professional vernacular, influenced by speakers of all regions of the peninsula, was perceived as different from both the vernacular spoken in Florence and the 'lingua toscana' modeled after Petrarch and Boccaccio.[3] The observation of this fact by several humanists turned the quest for the identity of the vernacular into an object of great interest and scholarly fascination throughout the sixteenth century. The quest for the identity of the vernacular, which came to be known as 'Questione della lingua', left a deep mark in the cultural history of the Renaissance, and directly built upon the ideas of *De vulgari eloquentia*, which was rediscovered and published in translation in 1529.[4]

The rediscovery of *De vulgari eloquentia* was made by Gian Giorgio Trissino, who brought the text to the attention of the foremost intellectuals of the period: first in private readings, like those he held at the Accademia degli Orti Oricellari, and later with the publication in print of a vernacular translation.[5] The question of the identity of the

[3] See Tesi, Riccardo. *Storia dell'italiano. La formazione della lingua comune dalle fasi iniziali al Rinascimento*, Bologna, Zanichelli 2007 and Giovanardi, Claudio. *La teoria cortigiana e il dibattito linguistico nel primo Cinquecento*, Roma, Bulzoni 1998.
[4] Dante had not published the text, and very few medieval authors apart from Boccaccio and Dante's sons seem to have had any notion of the existence of the treatise. See: Trovato, Paolo. *Il primo Cinquecento*, in *Storia della lingua italiana*, a cura di F. Bruni, Bologna, il Mulino 1994.
[5] Pozzi, Mario. *Gian Giorgio Trissino e la letteratura italiana*, in Id., *Lingua*, *cultura e società. Saggi sulla letteratura italiana del Cinquecento*, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 1989, pp. 156-169. Benedetto Varchi writes at length about Trissino in his *Lezioni sulla poesia* and mentions his presence at the Orti Oricellari. According to Varchi, Trissino was considered "più tosto come maestro e superiore, che come compagno e uguale": see Varchi Benedetto. *Opere*, 2° vol., 1859, p. 718).

vernacular regained traction at a pivotal moment in the intellectual life of the peninsula, marked by the introduction of the printing press. The new technology, along with Trissino's influence, allowed the discussion begun on the pages of Dante's unfinished medieval treatise to quickly reach a national and international audience. The printing press didn't merely give the quest for the identity of the vernacular a larger audience: it also shaped and directed it, creating a demand for a rationalization of the vernacular so that it could go hand in hand with the new medium, which demanded a coherent graphic and linguistic appearance of the text throughout the print.[6]

Thus, the appearance of a professional vernacular spoken in the courts and chanceries and the introduction of the printing press and the demand for a single, coherent means of graphic representation of a spoken literary language built interest around the question of the identity of the vernacular. I consider these two forces in the following pages and explore the identities and the names (e.g. 'lingua toscana', 'lingua cortegiana', 'lingua italiana', 'toscano letterario') given to the vernacular as a result of these trends in the Italian Renaissance. Commonly, Trissino's efforts as exegete and translator of Dante's treatise are identified as the inception of the 'questione della lingua'; yet, *De vulgari eloquentia* would not have become central for the discussion of the identity of the Renaissance vernacular if many of Trissino's peers, among whom

[6] On the printing press and its impact, see: McKitterick, David. *Print, Manuscript, and the Search for Order, 1450–1830*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005, and Eisenstein, Elizabeth L. *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Machiavelli, had not challenged Dante's authorship of the text and deconstructed its arguments in detail in print, accelerating its circulation.[7]

| The humanists vs. *De vulgari eloquentia*

The reaction to *De vulgari eloquentia* that many humanists had early on in the history of its reception (centered on the original idea of one literary vernacular shared by all intellectuals) signals that the identity attributed by Dante to the vernacular did not fit anymore with the humanists' experience of the present. To the humanists, the reality was that of multiple vernaculars, all of which aspired to the title of best vernacular: tensions were building between the Tuscan of Petrarch and Boccaccio and that of contemporary Tuscan writers, and both of the above were at odds with the vernacular spoken in the various courts and chanceries.[8] Representatives of all three options argued for the merits of their understanding of the identity of the vernacular, and a criterion to judge the merits of each was lacking. Those who supported a less Florentine-centric identity for the literary language argued that even the language of Boccaccio and Petrarca exhibited non-Tuscan traits, and argued for new linguistic models informed by the vernaculars of the courtesans of the courts of Milan, Ferrara, and the other major Italian city-dynasties.[9]

Trissino was aware that the linguistic situation in Italy had changed since Dante had penned the Latin treatise, but felt that the text, and especially the idea it conveyed of a

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[7] Tesi, Riccardo. *Storia dell'italiano. La formazione della lingua comune dalle fasi iniziali al Rinascimento*, Bologna, Zanichelli 2007.
[8] See Trovato, Paolo. *Il primo cinquecento*. Storia della lingua italiana a cura di F. Bruni. Bologna. Il Mulino 1994.
[9] A synthesis in Bruni, Francesco (a cura di) *L'italiano nelle regioni. Lingua nazionale e identità regionali*, Torino, UTET 1992.

single literary language for the entire peninsula, remained relevant to him and his network. Little to no information survived about the details of the rediscovery of the treatise by Trissino, which may date as early as the 1510s and have happened in one of Verona's libraries or through the vast network of friends of the Vicentine.[10] Trissino, who was a renowned counselor to both the Medici popes Leo X and Clement VII and was even made Count Palatine by Emperor Charles V, took ample time between the discovery of the Codex Trivulziano containing *De vulgari eloquentia* and the publication of its translation in 1529 to study and discuss the text with his peers. In the last century, Lattès has attempted a reconstruction of the events leading to the rediscovery and of the readings of *De vulgari eloquentia* that Trissino held in Florence at the Accademia degli Orti Oricellari and in Rome in the 1510s and 20s; yet, these essays are today looked down upon by many, and Paolo Cosentino in the *Enciclopedia Machiavelliana* published in 2015 only writes that Machiavelli and Trissino 'may' have met in Florence.[11] Trissino, despite the prestige of his scholarly authority, faced a reaction in Florence, where *De vulgari eloquentia's* stance on the Tuscan vernacular, which was extremely negative, relegating Florentine to the bottom of the list of the Italian vernaculars worthy of mention, was received with incredulity by many of the members and friends of the Accademia.

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[10] See Padoan, Giorgio. "Vicende veneziane del codice Trivulziano del 'De vulgari eloquentia'". In *Dante e la cultura veneta*, Atti del Convegno di studi organizzato dalla fondazione 'Giorgio Cini', Verona-1966, a cura di Vittore Branca e Giorgio Padoan, Firenze, Olschki, pp. 385-393.

[11] Cosentino, Paolo, 'Giangiorgio Trissino', in *Enciclopedia Machiavelliana*, Treccani 2015; Lattès Santino, "La conoscenza e l'interpretazione del ' De vulg. Eloq.' nei primi anni del Cinquecento", *in Rendic. Accad. Archeol. Lettere e Belle Arti Napoli,* XVII (1937) 157-168. See also the pages on Trissino in C. Dionisotti, *Machiavellerie*, Torino 1980, pp. 289-90, 295-96.

As Machiavelli insisted in the *Dialogo intorno alla nostra lingua*, an essay he wrote to argue against the authenticity of *De vulgari eloquentia* in the aftermath of Trissino's readings at the Accademia degli Orti Oricellari, it didn't seem probable that Dante would vilify the Tuscan vernacular in *De vulgari eloquentia*, having written the *Commedia* in Tuscan.[12] Another grave issue relating to the negative reception the treatise received from the humanists had to do with the language in which it was written, a watered-down medieval Latin infused with Romance loanwords. The Latin of *De vulgari eloquentia* seemed at odds with the one that most humanists were familiar with from Dante's Latin epistles as they had been collected and circulated by Boccaccio.[13]

The linguistic examples used by Dante in the first treatise of *De vulgari eloquentia* were vilified by Machiavelli in his *Dialogo*. The irony and meaning of Dante's examples, which could only be reconstructed by situating the text in the years when Dante penned it, escaped the humanists, who were deeply invested in their own understanding of what made a vernacular better than another. We can dwell on a single instance to show how the identity of the vernacular had shifted in the sixteenth century as to make Dante's argumentative line of difficult interpretation to the humanists, who were also in most

[12] For the text of the dialogue and a recent discussion, see: Machiavelli, Niccolò. *Opere.* a cura di C. Vivanti. (I, *Primi scritti politici*, *Decennali*, *Il principe*, *Discorsi*, *Arte della guerra*, *Scritti politici «post res perditas»*; II, *Lettere*; *Legazioni e commissarie*; III, *Rime varie*, *Canti carnascialeschi*, *Capitoli*, *L'asino*, *Favola*, *Teatro*, *Scritti letterari in prosa*, *Dialogo sulla nostra lingua*, *La vita di Castruccio Castracani*, *Istorie fiorentine*). Torino, Einaudi 1997-2005.

[13] Petoletti, Marco. "Boccaccio editore delle "Egloghe" e delle "Epistole" di Dante", in *Boccaccio editore e interprete di Dante*, a cura di Luca Azzetta, Andrea Mazzucchi, introd. di Enrico Malato, in collaborazione con la Casa di Dante in Roma, Roma, Salerno, 2014, pp. 159-183.

cases not familiar with his entire work.[14] In *DVE* 1 13, Dante dismissed the Tuscan vernacular arguing that a vernacular in which a sentence such as "*manichiamo introcque che noi non facciamo altro*" exists can lay no claim to literary status.[15] Both the Florentine humanist and modern commentators could not find anything that is particularly at fault in the construction mentioned by Dante: a sentence like the above could be easily found in the so-called 'fiorentino argenteo' of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[16] Yet, if we recall the exegesis of the text I proposed in my first chapter, it appears that Dante was directing its attack against the ill moral stance of the Florentines, which was mirrored in their vernacular, not on the Tuscan vernacular itself. According to Dante's argument, only enlightened citizens could produce the best vernacular. If we look closer at the expression attributed by Dante to the Tuscans, we notice that the meaning of 'manicare' is a synonym in medieval Italian for acquiring money illicitly at the expense of others: because money-lending was a central activity to the merchants and financiers of Florence and the foundation of the economic success of the region and its aggressive territorial expansion, it becomes clear that Dante is criticizing the morality of the Tuscans and testing it against that of the Sicilian poets, who were identified as 'doctores' and 'heroes' along with Frederick II.[17]

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[14] See Gilson, Simon. *Reading Dante in Renaissance Italy: Florence, Venice and the 'Divine Poet'*. Cambridge University Press, 2018.

[15] "*manichiamo introcque che noi non facciamo altro*" translates to "let us eat non-stop because we don't do anything else anyway". See Alighieri, Dante, Fenzi Enrico (ed.), *De vulgari eloquentia*, in *Le opere: Dante Alighieri*, vol. 3, Salerno, 2012 for further commentary.

[16] For the 'fiorentino argenteo', see: Castellani, Arrigo. "Italiano e fiorentino argenteo". In *Saggi di linguistica e filologia italiana e romanza*, Roma, Salerno Editrice, 1980, tomo I, pp. 17-35.

[17] *DVE* 1 15 6 and 1 12 4. See Fenzi, Enrico. "Dante ghibellino. Note per una discussione." *Per Leggere* 13, no. 24 (2013): 171-198.

The pun and the irony behind the instantaneous expulsion of Florentine from the number of the vernaculars worthy of achieving literary status was lost on an early modern readers, who were consequently baffled by any claim in favor of the authenticity of *De vulgari eloquentia*. The controversy generated by Machiavelli's *Dialogo intorno alla nostra lingua* greatly contributed to generating interest and discussion around the rediscovery.[18]

| The transformation of the practices of reciprocity and consent in the age of the printing press

The rejection of Dante's paternity of the text came when the work of Dante as a whole was living a low point in the history of its reception.[19] The humanist looked at Petrarch and Boccaccio as models and rejected the *Commedia*'s mixture of high and low styles and its multilingualism. Trissino's attempt to highjack the linguistic debate in the direction of *De vulgari eloquentia* was made possible by a combination of several factors: Trissino's fame in several academic circles, especially in Rome and Florence; the decision to use the printing press to accelerate the quest for the identity of the Renaissance vernacular; and the support of powerful patrons such as Leo X and Clement VII.[20] I dwell on all three of these factors in detail in this chapter and the next.

Until the 1520s, the debate on the identity of the vernacular took place for the most part in private academies and in private letters: a larger audience was however quickly

[18] See Dionisotti, Carlo. *Machiavellerie*, Torino 1980, pp. 289-90, 295-96.
[19] See note 14.
[20] See notes 5, 6 and Monaco, Mario. '*Le finanze pontifi*cie *al tempo di C*lemente *VII',* in *Studi romani,* VI (1958).

forming across the peninsula because of the role that the vernaculars were taking on in the courts and chanceries of the time.[21] Trissino was among the first to notice the existence of such an audience and to take advantage of it to transfer the debate from the privacy of academic meetings and epistles to the printed medium. Before turning to the reconstruction of those events, at which I look closely in chapter 4, it is useful to look at the impact that the introduction of the new medium had on the community of vernacular writers that had inherited the notion of literary vernacular as it had emerged from the medieval literatures, and how the discussion shifted from the world of manuscript culture to those of printed culture in the Renaissance.

The printing press caused three major shifts in the sphere of the vernacular writing: first, it required an author to find a sponsor to finance the publishing, which was several times more expensive than having scribes copy a few manuscripts of a work by hand and required large sums upfront that could not be recouped until after the sale of the volumes.[22] Second, it created the demand for a large interested audience before going to print to make the investment worthwhile and to make the most of the ability of the printer to produce a large number of copies in a short amount of time before the types were needed for the next business order. Third, it required a normalized text consistent throughout the printed volume, which for the first time posed upon the vernacular author the demand to establish his own critical text.[23]

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[21] See Tesi 2007 and Giovanardi 1998.
[22] Petrucci, Armando (a cura di), *Libri, editori e pubblico nell'Europa moderna. Guida storica e critica*, Roma-Bari 1977.
[23] See Trovato, Paolo. *Con ogni diligenza corretto: la stampa e le revisioni editoriali dei testi letterari italiani 1470-1570*. Bologna: Mulino 1991 and Stoppelli, Pasquale. *Filologia dei testi a stampa*. Bologna: Mulino 1981.

Prior to the advent of print, handwritten manuscripts could undergo several rewritings throughout the years and circulate among readers in versions that were vastly different from each other. Authorial variants were extremely common and always mediated by an epistolary conversation with the author or a friend of the author, who was the one who shared the manuscript.[24] Works also circulated under pseudonym or a fictitious authorial persona because readers would be trusted to recognize and make excuses for the lack of authorial identification. Publication meant trusting servants, friends, and students to copy the manuscript of the author and circulating it in their circles, making sure that the readers and the copyists had the author's best interest in mind. Little was formally done to protect the intellectual property of an author in this age prior to the invention of copyright.

The copy by hand allowed authors to continue working on the text *ad libitum*, creating authorial variants, changing the graphic and linguistic appearance, or sometimes adding sections to a book without having to recall previous stages of the work, the reading of which could always be supplemented by a conversation with the author, who could personally mediate the ideas on paper. As authors started turning to publishers, these practices started to transform quickly. Especially the issue of a vernacular that could remain consistent throughout the publication was perceived as fundamental both by the author, who felt the impending judgment of his peers, and the printer, who wanted to minimize the occurrence of typos due to changes in spelling or linguistic patina.

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[24] Richardson, Brian. 'Autografia e pubblicazione manoscritta nel Rinascimento', in Guido Baldassarri and others (eds*), 'Di mano propria': gli autografi dei letterati italiani. Atti del Convegno internazionale di Forlì, 24-27 novembre 2008* (Rome: Salerno Editrice, 2010), pp. 269-85.

The introduction of the printing press thus meant that the author was required to establish a standard edition of his own work. Such normalization of the text had never been necessary before, not even in those manuscript anthologies that were meant as precious gifts to sovereigns or wealthy individuals, a genre in which one might notice some - inconsistent - attempts at linguistic standardization, starting with the earliest exemplar in Italian, the *Canzoniere Vaticano* 3793. The author could always go back with the pen and correct in the manuscript the words, syntactic constructions, and spellings that were not perceived as current anymore and did not fit the new taste, or that trusted readers had reported as archaic or awkward.[25] The clearest example of this custom is testified by the various extant copies of Petrarch's autograph copies of the *Canzoniere* investigated by Armando Petrucci; Petrarch returned onto his vernacular sonnets and songs over and over to make sure they adhered to the linguistic ideal he developed throughout his poetic career.[26]

The necessity to provide the critical text of one's work had also rarely fallen upon the author himself, but rather on later generation of copyists working with what we recognize today as intricate manuscript trees and variants, which resulted in the imposition of the copyist's linguistic patina on the text. If the text to print was in the vernacular, as were most texts involved in the quest for its identity, the printing author had to demonstrate his own vernacular and uphold it against the judgements of others with little opportunity for appeal in a community that as we mentioned was divided among proponents of entirely different identities for the 'vulgare'.

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[25] See notes 23 and 24.
[26] Petrucci, Armando. *La scrittura di Francesco Petrarca*. Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 1967.

In general, linguistic practices varied wildly even among the documents in the vernacular penned by members of the same academies. The printing press quickly changed this situation because common-sense norms of reciprocity suggested that an author should reply to a work in print with another publication in print, even better when with the same publisher (in order to reach the same audience), accelerating a distancing from the manuscript culture of the previous age.[27] These simple practice of reciprocity caused the debate, which up to that moment had been happening exclusively behind the walls of academies and chanceries, or in private letters, to migrate to the printed medium, even for those who had otherwise preferred not to use the new technology for their own scholarly publications.[28] This shift was greatly accelerated between 1524 and 1529 by Trissino's clever collaboration with the Roman publishing industry.[29]

| New identities for the vernacular: from Italy to Europe

The period between 1524-1529 is marked by the publication of several key works for the definition of the identity of the Renaissance vernacular, from Bembo's *Prose della volgar lingua*, to Machiavelli's *Dialogo intorno alla nostra lingua*, and Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano*. Critics have correctly recognized how Trissino's publication of an epistle on the vernacular (*Epistola de le lettere nuuvamente aggiunte ne la lingua italiana*) with his tragedy *Sofonisba* in 1524 acted as catalyst for the publication of all three of these works, spurring the intellectual circles where he was considered 'maestro e

[27] See Richardson, Brian. *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
[28] Among these were the Sienese Claudio Tolomei. See note 54.
[29] For Arrighi and his collaboration with Trissino, see: Pagliaroli, Stefano. "Ludovico degli Arrighi." In Studi medievali e umanistici III (2005), pp. 47-91. Cf. also chapter 4.

superiore' to engage him in print.[30] Trissino collaborated with the Roman publishing industry, and especially with the publisher Ludovico Arrighi, to bring the quest for the identity of the vernacular on the pages of printed books (the publication of the *Sofonisba* in Rome representing a tipping point for the debate).[31] The same period also marks the end of the rivalry between the publishing industries of Rome and Venice, with the latter emerging as the Italian capital of printing in the aftermath of the forced suspension of business imposed on the Roman publishers during the *Sacco di Roma* of 1527, the invasion and sacking of the city by the mercenary troops of emperor Charles V, which left Ludovico Arrighi, Trissino's collaborator, dead.[32]

Rome played a central role in the definition of the identity of the vernacular in the first quarter of the Cinquecento. We can ascertain this by looking at a passage by Equicola taken from one of the early redactions of his *Libro de natura de amore*, written around 1508 and hence vastly different from the printed version of 1525:

> Havemo la [lingua] cortesiana romana, la quale de tucti boni vocabuli de Italia è piena, per essere in quella corte de ciascheuna regione preclarissimi homini. Chi in corte non è pratico accostese alla latina (de' docti parlo). Et volemo tucto il tusco idioma imitare per havere Dante, Boccaccio et Pulci non dico da imitare, ma robare? Cosa de imbecillo ingegno! Che, se dicti auctori si deperdissero, paricchi

[30] Cf. note 5. See also Richardson, Brian. *Print Culture in Renaissance Italy.* Cambridge: CUP 1994.
[31] Marazzini, Claudio. "*Questione romana" e "questione della lingua"*, «Lingua nostra» 39, 4, (1978), pp. 97-103.
[32] Di Pierro, Antonio. *Il sacco di Roma 6 Maggio 1527: l'assalto dei Lanzichenecchi*, Milano: Mondadori 2015.

> muti ad dito monstraremo che a presente impieno le carte de insomnii […]. Non observo le regule del toscano, se non tanto quanto al latino sono conforme et le orecchie delectano. Per ho de et di troverai senza lo articulo, Dio non Iddio, benché sequente vocale, in modo che, dove li imitatori de la toscana lingua totalmente ogni studio poneno in lontanarse dalla lingua latina, io ogni cura et diligentia ho usato in aproximarme ad quella.[33]

In this passage, we can recognize the Dantean argument that an excellent court attracts the best intellects, and with them the best language (cf. *DVE* 1 12 4). Notably, Trissino later uses the same term used here by Equicola, e.g. '*lingua cortesiana*' or '*cortegiana'* to translate the Latin *'lingua curialis'* of *De vulgari eloquentia*.[34] As readers, we can notice the example of the excellent court chosen by Equicola, the Roman papal court, to which Dante had looked with acrimony as the antithesis of the good Sicilian court of Frederick II when he penned the first book of the treatise in the years 1304 and 1305.[35] Equicola was not entirely mistaken in identifying Rome as the future linguistic capital in this passage from the *Libro de natura de amore*: the role of Trissino and Bembo at the papal court of the two Medici popes, along with his collaboration with

[33] Ricci, Laura, and Mario Equicola. *La redazione manoscritta del Libro de natura de amore*. Vol. 89. Bulzoni, 1999, pp. 213-214.
[34] See: Trissino, Gian Giorgio. *De la eloquentia volgare, epistola sulle lettere nuovamente aggiunte alla lingua italiana, Dialogo del Castellano*, in *Sur la langue italienne (Dante Alighieri, Giangiorgio Trissino, Agnolo Firenzuola)*, textes traduits et annotés par Claude Malherbe et Jacquesline Malherbe-Galy, et presentés par Jean-Luc Nardone, Grenoble, Barnéoud, 2008.
[35] *DVE* 1 11 2.

Roman printer Ludovico Arrighi would make Rome, if only temporarily, the epicenter of the 'Questione della lingua' until the ominous sacking of 1527.[36]

As Equicola argued, it was true that many Italian writers would have been unable to write in the vernacular had the writings of a Dante, Petrarch or a Boccaccio to which they constantly referred been suddenly lost, incapable as they were of using a form of the vernacular other than the archaic one of the Trecento authors. However, Equicola failed to recognize that whether they were 'robbing' Trecento authors, parroting contemporary Florentine speakers, or Latinizing their native vernaculars, Italian authors had already succeeded in the early 1500s in producing enough linguistic uniformity in their writings for manuscripts and books to circulate unencumbered by linguistic difference across the peninsula.[37] The dialogue of the humanists in the linguistically-diverse academies, courts, and chanceries had already created a unified readership. A standard built upon mutual understanding, reciprocation, and consent had emerged and the vernacular of the Roman curia played less of a role in it than Equicola recognized. The common standard was rather the one formalized by Pietro Bembo in the *Prose della volgar lingua*, parts of which circulated at least for a decade before the publication of 1525, financed and supported by the Pope.[38]

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[36] See notes 29 and 31.
[37] Manni, Paola. *Dal toscano all'italiano letterario*, in Serianni- Trifone. *Storia della lingua italiana*, Torino, Einaudi, 3 voll. (vol. 1º, *I luoghi della codificazione*; vol. 2°, *Scritto e parlato*; vol. 3°, *Le altre lingue*), vol. 2º, pp. 321-342.
[38] See at least: Dionisotti, Carlo. *Scritti sul Bembo*. Edited by Claudio Vela. Turin: Einaudi, 2002; and Mazzacurati, Giancarlo. "Pietro Bembo e la barriera degli esemplari." In *Misure del classicismo rinascimentale*. Edited by Giancarlo Mazzacurati, 133–220. Naples: Liguori, 1967.

The flourishing of the printing industry in Rome and Venice in the first quarter of the sixteenth century created a new vernacular readership for printed books across the peninsula. The first clear sign of a unified readership is the impressive demand for the Aldine edition of Petrarch on which Bembo started working in 1501, an edition that introduced numerous linguistic novelties in the graphic appearance of the text of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, product of the attentive study of the autograph manuscripts by Bembo himself from the vantage point of the identity of the vernacular.[39] The amelioration of the text of Petrarch published in Venice was directed to a readership that went beyond that of the Venetian republic. It was the first time that a vernacular text was put at the service of the interests of a printing enterprise, such as building an exclusive, unified market for its products, and establishing an easily reproducible standard. Bembo's solutions for the text were not only the result of philological research, but also of the pragmatic necessities of printing a luxury book for the types of Aldus Manutius.[40] The graphic appearance of Bembo's Petrarch heralded the new season of print by providing the example of how a work in the vernacular could cater to a universal Italian readership like that of the classics published in Latin by the same printer.

Up until that point, the only unified readership was that made up of those who could read and speak Latin. Equicola, in the passage above, mentioned how many scholars looked at Latin in the effort to standardize their language in a more efficient way

[39] Pulsoni, Carlo, and Gino Belloni. "Bembo e l'autografo di Petrarca: Ancora sulla storia dell'originale del 'Canzoniere.'" *Studi petrarcheschi* 19 (2006): 149–184.
[40] See Cohen, Simona. "An Aldine Volume of Petrarch Illuminated for a Prestigious Patron." *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 73, no. H. 2 (2010): 187-210; and Giarin, Sandra. "Petrarca e Bembo: L'edizione aldina del 'Canzoniere.'" *Studi di filologia italiana* 62 (2004): 161–193.

than that of blindly following the idiosyncratic uses of Trecento authors. Latin remained the language of knowledge and the principal alternative to a literary standard in the vernacular, but it did not hurt the ambitions of the latter; rather it served them, thanks to humanists of the earlier generation than that of Bembo and Trissino, like Leon Battista Alberti, who grafted a vernacular readership onto the Latin one.[41]

The vernacular readership of the Quattrocento was smaller because Latin had remained the common language of the intelligentsia, and was always ready to recover the space taken by the vernacular. Fifteenth-century humanists had shared the position of the Valla of the *Elegantiae* (1441), who had argued in favor of the Petrarchan thesis that Latin was an instrument of providence offered to the European nations to overcome their natural barbarity.[42] This barbarity, which had manifested in the Middle Ages according to some humanists, was an ethical and moral condition that the knowledge of classical Latin literature, and the rational thinking and liberal arts curriculum that came with it, could ameliorate. The ability attributed to Latin by Petrarch and Valla to morally elevate a nation was not forgotten in the sixteenth century. Soon, the humanists portrayed the literary vernacular as the instrument of moral uplifting for the Italian states, fallen into disorder as the center of gravity of the Holy Roman Empire shifted to the northern European territories. The vernacular literary standard, be it the '*lingua cortegiana*' of Castiglione's *Cortegiano* or the 'lingua toscana' of Machiavelli's *Dialogo*, was believed to have the power to rescue Italy from its political crisis.

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[41] Biffi, Marco (2007), "La terminologia tecnica dell'Alberti tra latino e volgare*"*, in *Alberti e la cultura del Quattrocento* 2007, vol. 2º, pp. 654-682.
[42] For a discussion of Valla's position, see: Regoliosi, Mariangela. *Nel cantiere del Valla: elaborazione e montaggio delle" Elegantie"*. Vol. 13. Bulzoni, 1993.

In the sixteenth century, on the other hand, Latin was progressively and increasingly relegated to the world of the sciences and universities, while courts, chanceries, and academies started to adopt the vernacular as their *koine*, even in those fields, like epistolography, where Latin had hold sway for centuries.[43] As we have mentioned, the vernacular of Italian diplomacy remained yet uncodified but started to assume an increasing importance in the practice of government and politics in the peninsula. This phenomenon interested other European nations as well as Italy: Spain, who was emerging from the medieval fragmentation following the Arabic conquest of the peninsula in the eighth century, prepared to switch its official communications entirely to Spanish, as its empire grew beyond the national borders defined by the *Reconquista*, and encountered non-European nations, notably in Western Africa and in the Americas.[44]

The thick interaction between Italian and Spanish humanists exposed Iberian intellectuals to the struggles for a linguistic reform of their Italian peers. Questions of linguistic reform were timely in Spain due to the acquisition of new territories outside Europe and the linguistic fragmentation within the communities that went to colonize them.[45] The Valla of the *Elegantiae* had been the literary model of a key figure in the linguistic history of Spain, Antonio Nebrija, who authored the first Spanish grammar. Nebrija had been exposed to Valla's works during his ten-year residency in Italy, mostly

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[43] On the concept of koine and the demarcation of its spaces in relation to Latin, see: Sanga, Glauco (a cura di). "Koinè in Italia dalle origini al Cinquecento". *Atti del Convegno di Milano e Pavia (25-26 settembre 1987),* Lubrina: Bergamo 1990.
[44] Lynch, John. *Spain 1516–1598: From Nation State to World Empire*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.
[45] Gilbert, Claire. *The politics of Language in the Western Mediterranean c. 1492-c. 1669: Multilingual Institutions and the Status of Arabic in Early Modern Spain.* Ph.D. diss., UCLA, 2014.

at the university of Bologna, and had concluded that Spanish could be to the Iberian nations what Latin had been to the peoples of the Mediterranean under the Roman conquest: a means of moral elevation.[46]

The *Gramática de la lengua castellana*, published in print in 1492, can be made to mark the end of the *Reconquista*, and the beginning of an empire that spoke the vernacular. By providing the Iberian administrative state with a modern grammar at such a decisive moment, as was the verge of its vertiginous territorial expansion, Nebrija rose to international fame and gained Valla a long reception in Spain.[47] Spanish would be heralded as the enlightened language of the American *conquistador* and violently imposed on the subjugated peoples of the new continent as a means of their forceful redemption from what the Europeans perceived as uncivilized societies.[48] Verily, the claim that Spanish could serve as the language of a multilingual kingdom had a long history going as far back as the kingdom of the enlightened medieval King of Castile Alfonso El Sábio.[49]

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[46] For a discussion, see: Bruni, Francesco. *Italia: vita e avventure di un'idea*. Bologna: Il mulino, 2010, 169. On Nebrija, see: Baños, Pedro Martin. *La pasión de saber. Vida de Antonio de Nebrija*, con prólogo de Francisco Rico, Huelva: Universidad de Huelva, 2019.

[47] For an extensive overview of Valla's reception, see Rossi, Marielisa. "Bibliografia degli scritti su Lorenzo Valla." In *Lorenzo Valla: Edizioni delle opere* (sec. XV–XVI). Edited by Marielisa Rossi, Vecchiarelli, 2007.

[48] Gray, Edward, and Fiering, Norman, (eds.). *The Language Encounter in the Americas, 1492–1800*. Papers presented at a conference entitled Communicating with the Indians: Aspects of the Language Encounter with the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas, 1492–1800, held 18–20 October 1996, John Carter Brown Library, Providence, RI. New York: Berghahn, 2000.

[49] Márquez Villanueva, Francisco. *El concepto cultural alfonsí*. Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2004 (first edition 1994).

In his volume *Italia: vita e avventure di una idea*, Bruni attributes importance to Valla's influence on Nebrija and explores the different problems of the Spanish and Italian quests for a common vernacular.[50] Tuscan, unlike Castilian in the Spanish territories, could hardly lay any claim to becoming the language of the highest political authority in Italy, that of the Holy Roman Empire, whose Teutonic head had since the times of Emperor Frederick II (d. 1250) been absent from the Italian peninsula. There had been a few exceptions, like the descent of Emperor Henry VII to reunite the German and Italian kingdoms, concrete enough to nourish the imperial enthusiasms of the exiled Dante, but the authority of the Empire was hardly felt outside the walls of the imperial chanceries and the episcopal palaces where legal practice was conducted. The practice of government on behalf of the Emperor was conducted in Latin in Italy by lay and clerical professionals, with the occasional use of translators for those Transalpine rulers who, like Barbarossa, hardly spoke anything other than a Bavarian dialect.[51] On the other hand, Spanish was more successful at taking over the spaces that once belonged to Latin, despite the fact that the latter remained a strong presence in the Iberian Church and university culture.[52] Latin, however, saw its political prestige lessened by the practical demands of the administration of a growing kingdom, and later, an immense transatlantic empire, where the classical language was only known by the ecclesiastical elites. Interestingly, when Charles V came to inherit both the Holy Roman Empire and the

[50] See note 46.
[51] Vignettes of the use of Latin for the administration of the Holy Roman Empire in Godman, Peter. *The Archpoet and Medieval Culture*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
[52] See Taylor, Barry, y Coroleu Lletget,Alejandro (eds.). *Latin and Vernacular in Renaissance Spain*. Manchester: Manchester Spanish & Portuguese Studies y Cañada Blanch Centre for Advanced Hispanic Studies, 1999.

Spanish crown, the administration of the two empires was kept separate, and no novel linguistic policy was brought about by the reunification, citing the different administrative nature of the two territories.[53]

Italy's fragmentation and lack of an empire, and in particular its repercussions on the linguistic debate did not go unnoticed as an important object of rumination among the humanists. Claudio Tolomei, a humanist and bishop from Siena (one of the main adversaries of the linguistic theories of Trissino), had argued in *Il Cesano de la lingua toscana* that Tuscans would never be able to impose their language on other nations in the same fashion as had once done the Greeks and the Latins "per non avere […] i Toscani, molto grande imperio, anzi poco e ristretto".[54] Because of the small territory they occupied, other nations would never see the usefulness nor the necessity to learn the vernacular of the Tuscans; nothing other than usefulness and necessity ("per utilità e necessita") had driven the subjects of the ancient empires to learn the language of their conquerors.[55] Rather, Tuscan, Tolomei writes, would not be learned by non-native speakers by military conquest, but for its beauty:

> "chiaro si vede come per forza, non per arme, non per essere altri obbligati a saperla, ma solamente per la bellezza e leggiadria sua è da forestiere genti amata,

[53] Lynch, John. *Spain under the Habsburgs*. 2 vols. 2d ed. New York: New York University Press, 1981.
[54] On Tolomei, and for an updated bibliography, see the newly completed voice in the DBI: Lucioli, Francesco. 'Tolomei, Claudio'. In *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, volume 96 (2019), Treccani. These quotes and those that follow are taken from: Tolomei, Claudio. *Il Cesano: de la lingua toscana*; edizione critica riveduta e ampliata a cura di Ornella Castellani Pollidori, Firenze: presso l'Accademia della Crusca, 1996, pp. 42-43;58.
[55] See note 54.

imparata, onorata in tal guisa che nel comune parlare nessuno si crede acquistare pregio di bel ragionatore che questa lingua non parli".[56]

Tolomei's argument in this passage is remarkable in so far as it conveys a fundamental tension in his thought; the vernacular Tolomei is discussing is said to be a valid form of "comune parlare" (language of conversation) for all non-Tuscan native Italians ("forestiere genti"). Yet, that Tuscan could be a "comune parlare" in the courts and chanceries of the period is at odds with the reality that Tolomei's contemporaries perceived, and was consequently criticized by Castiglione and Trissino, who were aware of not speaking Tuscan, but rather a pan-Italian linguistic standard drawing elements from literary Tuscan, Latin, and other dialects, or 'lingua cortigiana'.[57] Castiglione's definition of "lingua cortegiana", in particular, had arisen from the notion that literary Tuscan and the vernacular of the Italian intelligentsia were different. Castiglione had independently come to conclusions that remind at least in part of those of *De vulgari eloquentia*, i.e. that what had emerged as the linguistic standard was not any special vernacular - especially not Tuscan - but rather a 'curialis vulgare', perceived as an eloquent language of conversation spoken throughout the peninsula.[58] If Tuscan, and the peculiar linguistic features of its vernacular, like its vocalism and phonetics, do account for many aspects of modern Italian, arguing that the latter is merely Tuscan, as Tolomei did, meant ignoring the contributions of all those writers who like Trissino and Castiglione (or Ariosto, Tasso, etc.) did not speak nor write in a Tuscan vernacular.

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[56] See note 54. Cf. a discussion of the same passage in Bruni 2010, 238.
[57] See note 3.
[58] For a discussion and a bibliography on Castiglione, see the next section.

If we look at the question of the vernacular from our vantage point as contemporary observers, it seems clear that the expansion of the Italian vernacular community was the product of the quest for the identity of the vernacular in the print culture of the Renaissance, and not that of the beauty of the 'lingua toscana', as Tolomei argued. The print culture of the Renaissance and its ability to reach intellectuals all over the peninsula laid the foundations for the early modern identity of the notion of 'Italy'.[59] The name of the 'Italian' language is proposed for the first time by Trissino at this juncture: instead of giving authority to the notions of 'lingua toscana' or 'lingua cortegiana' preferred by his peers, he popularizes the concept of a 'lingua italiana' in his translation of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, where 'lingua italica' and 'lingua italiana' are presented as translations of the Latin 'vulgare latium'.[60]

The flourishing Italian printing industry, the impressive circulation of books, and the quality of the debate on the linguistic question in Italy is what distinguishes the peninsula from France and Spain, where the quest for a common vernacular was not driven by the interaction between private printing businesses and small private networks of intellectuals, but rather by the demands of a fast-growing administrative state.[61] This generated in the humanists of France and Spain a fascination with the Italian vernacular of the time, and with its models. Petrarch was especially revered and several transalpine humanists attempted to use the 'lingua toscana' as a model for their own national

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[59] See the deep history of this notion in Bruni 2010.
[60] See note 34 and the dated, but still relevant, Griffith, T. Gwynfor. "Giangiorgio Trissino and the Italian language." *Hermathena* (1976): 169-184. Note the title of the epistle published with the Sofonisba in 1524: *Epistola de le lettere nuovamente aggiunte alla lingua italiana.* More on this letter and on the shift from 'vulgare latium' to 'lingua italiana' in chapter 4.
[61] See notes 30, 44, 45, 52.

vernaculars.[62] The texts of the Spanish Petrarchists transcended the concept of translation because the Spanish and the Italian vernaculars share a close Latin origin, and because both have their roots in the translation and adaptation of the lyrics of the troubadours dating to the twelfth and thirteenth century. Emulating Petrarch was a form of cultural insurance for the Spaniards who at the beginning of their 'Siglo de Oro' looked for ways to pair their political prestige, tied to an empire already struggling with endemic problems deriving from the difficult government of the Americas, with a culture that reflected their values.[63]

| Baldassarre Castiglione on the vernacular

Humanistic networks between Italy and Spain are also of great importance for the publication of one of the key texts of the Italian 'Questione della lingua': Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano*. The book had been conceived at least as early as 1515 and dedicated to Alfonso Ariosto of the Este court of Ferrara (grandfather of the Ludovico of the *Orlando Furioso*) and François d'Angoulème, soon to become Francis I, King of France.[64] Castiglione reworked the text without publishing it up to 1524 when he was alerted during a diplomatic mission in Spain that one of his patrons, the noblewoman and intellectual Vittoria Colonna, wife of the Marquis of Pescara, had let the text fall in the

[62] A wealth of non-Italian sources including many on Petrarchism in Spain and France, in Marcozzi, Luca. *Bibliografia petrarchesca: 1989–2003*. Florence: Olschki, 2005. For some examples in Spain, see: Cruz, Anne J. *Imitación y transformación: el petrarquismo en la poesía de Boscán y Garcilaso de la Vega*. John Benjamins Publishing, 1988.
[63] See notes 49 and 53.
[64] Ghinassi, Ghino. *Fasi dell'elaborazione del "Cortegiano"*, «Studi di filologia italiana» 25 (1967), pp. 155-196.

wrong hands, and that it could be published against the will of the author.[65] Preoccupied that the text might convey the suggestion of political sympathies on his part toward the French Monarchy at the very time when he was about to enter the service of the Pope as ambassador to the Emperor and King of Spain Charles V, sworn enemy of the French king - against whom he had bought the imperial election borrowing money from the Fugger family - Castiglione seems to have failed to regain control of the circulation of his text by 1525, when he writes from his diplomatic mission in Spain to Vittoria Colonna to urge the return of the copies of his work she possessed, which according to rumors were about to be printed and distributed in Naples.[66] Colonna's unresponsiveness prompts Castiglione to pursue the publication of his work immediately, with the necessary corrections, to prevent damages to his intellectual property, as he explains in the dedication of the Aldine edition of 1528.

Castiglione's attention was diverted from his diplomatic duties when this was most needed, and Pope Clement VII later blamed him for the events leading to the sacking of Rome in 1527. The loss of the pope's favor resulted in unfortunate consequences for Castiglione, perhaps worse than those of the publication of an uncensored *Libro del cortegiano* would have been. The secretary of Charles V, Alfonso Valdés, addressed to him a dialogue, the *Lactancio*, to justify the 'Sacco' as a just punishment toward the corruption of the papal court, and had Castiglione investigated by the Spanish Inquisition for heresy; Castiglione was even accused of displaying sympathies toward the Lutherans

[65] As explained in the dedication of the *Libro del cortegiano* in the Aldine edition of 1528. A recent interpretation of this episode in Tagliaferri, Lisa. "'A Gentlewoman of the Courte': Introducing and Translating the Court Lady." *Ceræ: an Australasian Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 3 (2016).
[66] See Tagliaferri, *A Gentlewoman*.

and Erasmus of Rotterdam.[67] In the maelstrom of these events, Castiglione had to use all his political acumen to recover from the diplomatic failing, at the same time as he faced the Spanish Inquisition and followed the publication of his manuscript.[68]

While Castiglione's ideas on the identity of the vernacular as the language of the courts and chanceries, to which we briefly turn below, had a significant following and may have been put into practice by some, the written model proposed by Bembo, founded on the Tuscan vernacular of Petrarch and Boccaccio (and distilled in the Aldine editions of Petrarch he curated) continued to encounter more success among the humanists. The main advantage of Bembo's proposal was that it was built upon the tastes of a community that had existed for more than a century: this community was that of the close readers of Petrarch and Boccaccio, steeped in classical Latin education, who had internalized the medieval vernacular of their models. To them, the model offered by their favorite authors remained stronger than that offered by the best orators or diplomats of the chanceries and courts of the time.[69]

We can compare the mature formulation of the language question by Castiglione as it appears in the preface to the *Libro del Cortegiano* with Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*. Castiglione inherits Dante's skepticism towards the Tuscan vernacular and mitigates the archaizing demands of Machiavelli and other pro-Florentine theorists by putting at the forefront of his linguistic proposal the norms and the expectations that regulate the use of the vernacular in his community, the Renaissance courts and chanceries of Milan,

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[67] See Vagni, Giacomo. "La polemica epistolare fra Baldassarre Castiglione e Alfonso de Valdés dopo il sacco di Roma." *Quaderni di Gargnano* 2 (2018): 527-552.
[68] A reconciliation happened at the Council of Bologna in 1529, shortly before Castiglione died of a fever in Toledo.
[69] See Giovanardi 1987.

Ferrara, and Urbino. The linguistic model he was most critical of was the Boccaccian one, the most mainstream among both the courtly theorists and the pro-Florentine:[70]

> […] e nella lingua, al parer mio, non doveva [imitare Boccaccio], perché la forza e vera regula del parlar bene consiste piú nell'uso che in altro, e sempre è vizio usar parole che non siano in consuetudine. Perciò non era conveniente ch'io usassi molte di quelle del Boccaccio, le quali a' suoi tempi s'usavano ed or sono disusate dalli medesimi Toscani. Non ho ancor voluto obligarmi alla consuetudine del parlar toscano d'oggidí, perché il commerzio tra diverse nazioni ha sempre avuto forza di trasportare dall'una all'altra, quasi come le mercanzie, cosí ancor novi vocabuli, i quali poi durano o mancano, secondo che sono dalla consuetudine ammessi o reprobati; e questo, oltre il testimonio degli antichi, vedesi chiaramente nel Boccaccio, nel qual son tante parole franzesi, spagnole e provenzali ed alcune forse non ben intese dai Toscani moderni, che chi tutte quelle levasse farebbe il libro molto minore.

Castiglione argues that current use and conversational habit ought to be the primary criteria informing the writings of an author willing to publish a work in the vernacular, rather than medieval models. He delivers an attack against Boccaccio by bringing the reader's attention to the 'forestierismi', or loan words from other languages, that recur

[70] See the 'Dedica', capitolo II in Castiglione, Baldassarre. *Il libro del Cortegiano*, a cura di Giulio Preti, Torino: Einaudi 1965, pp. 4-5 (available online at: www.letteraturaitaliana.net/pdf/Volume_4/t84.pdf).

throughout the prose of the author of the *Decameron*. Castiglione argued that not even the Boccaccian model had the linguistic uniformity which the pro-Florentine extolled in their calls for linguistic reform; he thus cleverly released himself from the obligation to justify to his readers the use of words or constructs that are distinctly non-Tuscan in the *Cortegiano*.[71] According to Castiglione, loan words from other languages were justified by the conversational language of Italian diplomacy, his argument being that the humanists working in the courts and chanceries of Milan, Ferrara, and Urbino would have been unable to speak if they had to test their vernacular against the vernaculars of Petrarch and Boccaccio. Castiglione, however, does not deny the importance of the literary model of the two 'corone' but relegates it to the lyric genre. Both Tuscans and non-Tuscans, Castiglione implies in the preface to the *Cortegiano*, adhered more closely to the medieval Tuscan model in their lyric activity than in the practice of government and diplomacy.

Here is a passage from Castiglione's introduction to the *Cortegiano* where he argues for the inclusion of non-Tuscan authors like himself, men of state, letters, and war ('omini savi, ingeniosi ed eloquenti, e che trattano cose grandi de' stati, di lettere, d'arme') in the number of those perfectly eloquent in the vernacular, a move that has an antecedent in the first book of *De vulgari eloquentia (De vulgari eloquentia* 1 9 2*):*

> E perché al parer mio la consuetudine del parlare dell'altre città nobili d'Italia, dove concorrono omini savi, ingeniosi ed eloquenti, e che trattano cose grandi di

[71] A seminal discussion in Cian, Vittorio. *La lingua di Baldassarre Castiglione*, Firenze, Sansoni 1942.

> governo de' stati, di lettere, d'arme e negoci diversi, non deve essere del tutto sprezzata, dei vocabuli che in questi lochi parlando s'usano, estimo aver potuto ragionevolmente usar scrivendo quelli, che hanno in sé grazia ed eleganzia nella pronunzia e son tenuti communemente per boni e significativi, benché non siano toscani ed ancor abbiano origine di fuor d'Italia. [72]

In this passage, Castiglione addresses *en passant* complex questions of linguistic history: most Renaissance vernaculars preserved some unaltered Latin roots, words which for a variety of reasons did not undergo substantial phonetic evolution or were direct loanwords from the classical language. In many cases, a non-Tuscan vernacular preserved a Latin word that had underwent corruption and/or phonetic evolution in Tuscan. The latter case posed an obstacle to the understanding of Tuscan by non-Tuscan speakers with a Latin education, which was the majority of the humanists, and constituted an unnecessary barrier to the achievement of a linguistic standard. To Castiglione, Trissino, and other non-Tuscan intellectuals, who were native in Latin and had learned literary Tuscan as a secondary language from the texts of Petrarch and Boccaccio, the doublets, as they are sometime called (e.g. 'pieve' – 'plebe'), were particularly regrettable, especially when one's own vernacular preserved the classical Latin root and the Tuscan one didn't. On the other hand Castiglione did not refuse to use these lesser Tuscan words when they are justified not merely by the prestige of Tuscan but by the common use of the men of his time; however, he claimed for himself the right to use less

[72] Castiglione, *Libro del Cortegiano*, pp. 3-4 (see note 70).

corrupted words from his native Lombard, if available, in those cases when exchanging one for the other should appear 'tollerabile' to the reader:

> Oltre a questo usansi in Toscana molti vocabuli chiaramente corrotti dal latino, li quali nella Lombardia e nelle altre parti d'Italia son rimasti integri e senza mutazione alcuna, e tanto universalmente s'usano per ognuno, che dalli nobili sono ammessi per boni e dal vulgo intesi senza difficultà. Perciò non penso aver commesso errore, se io scrivendo ho usato alcuni di questi e piú tosto pigliato l'integro e sincero della patria mia che 'l corrotto e guasto della aliena. Né mi par bona regula quella che dicon molti, che la lingua vulgar tanto è piú bella, quanto è men simile alla latina; né comprendo perché ad una consuetudine di parlare si debba dar tanto maggiore autorità che all'altra, che, se la toscana basta per nobilitare i vocabuli latini corrotti e manchi e dar loro tanta grazia che, cosí mutilati, ognun possa usarli per boni (il che non si nega), la lombarda o qualsivoglia altra non debba poter sostener li medesimi latini puri, integri, proprii e non mutati in parte alcuna, tanto che siano tollerabili.[73]

Verily, a close reading of the *Cortegiano* reveals that Castiglione took such liberties very rarely.[74] In the remainder of the passage (see below), Castiglione refers to an anecdote in Cicero's *Brutus* to dismiss with humor the accusations that the supporters of

[73] Castiglione, *Libro del cortegiano*, p. 5.
[74] See note 71.

the ‘lingua toscana’ may address him upon reading the *Cortegiano*. In the ancient story mentioned by Cicero, Theophrastus, the famous Greek orator (whom the city of Athens had adopted from Lesbos at an early age, and would eventually succeed Aristotle at the head of the Peripatetic School) asked an old woman in Athens the price of some goods. He received the answer, following the Latin text of Cicero’s *Brutus*, ‘hospes, non pote minoris’ (‘foreigner, you won’t get a better price’; *Brutus* 172). Theophrastus was outraged by the fact that the woman had called him ‘foreigner’, since he had lived in Athens most of his life and was considered the best orator in the country, despite his provincial origins. Castiglione draws a further detail from Quintilian, on which the irony of this passage hinges: when Theophrastus, visibly annoyed, asked the old woman what had given him away she replied that he spoke Attic too well (*Institutio oratoria* 8 1 2).

Theophrastus’ story provided Castiglione with a case in point against making the effort of becoming a proficient user of a vernacular that was not truly his own. If even an old woman from the lower class could tell right away that the best Athenian orator was not a native Attic speaker, he and most Italian literates would subject themselves to the reproach of those who would accuse them of writing in a vernacular (the ‘lingua toscana’ in this case) that was not their own, even if they exerted perfect control of it, like it had happened to Theophrastus with Attic. The text of Castiglione goes thus:

> Penso adunque, e nella materia del libro e nella lingua, per quanto una lingua po aiutar l’altra, aver imitato autori tanto degni di laude quanto è il Boccaccio; né credo che mi si debba imputare per errore lo aver eletto di farmi piú tosto conoscere per lombardo parlando lombardo, che per non toscano parlando troppo

> toscano; per non fare come Teofrasto, il qual, per parlare troppo ateniese, fu da una simplice vecchiarella conosciuto per non ateniese. Ma perché circa questo nel primo libro si parla a bastanza, non dirò altro se non che, per rimover ogni contenzione, io confesso ai mei riprensori non sapere questa lor lingua toscana tanto difficile e recondita; e dico aver scritto nella mia, e come io parlo, ed a coloro che parlano come parl'io; e cosí penso non avere fatto ingiuria ad alcuno, ché, secondo me, non è proibito a chi si sia scrivere e parlare nella sua propria lingua; né meno alcuno è astretto a leggere o ascoltare quello che non gli aggrada. Perciò, se essi non vorran leggere il mio Cortegiano, non me tenerò io punto da loro ingiuriato.[75]

This reasoning allowed Castiglione to candidly confess that he did not write the *Cortegiano* in the 'lingua toscana' and avoided him the scrutiny of the Tuscan pedants and bores. Even the latter, like Theophrastus, risked being taken for foreigners in their own land due to the obstinacy with which they cling upon defunct ways of speaking and writing. The inconsistencies of Castiglione's musings on language are only visible to the close reader: his language is overall a less provincial and more Latinized version of the 'lingua toscana', at least in the print version. I consequently place him nearer Bembo and the supporters of the 'lingua toscana' than to Trissino on the spectrum of the proposed reforms in the context of the print culture of the Renaissance. Despite the author's amusing acrimony against the supporters of the 'lingua toscana', just witnessed in the

[75] Castiglione, *Libro del cortegiano*, p. 6.

passage from the preface of the *Libro del Cortegiano*, the printed *Cortegiano* pays silent homage to the norms elaborated and formalized in Bembo's *Prose*.[76]

In this chapter I have looked at the evolution of the quest for the identity for the vernacular as the debate leaves the medieval manuscript culture and enters the print culture of the Renaissance. From this transition have emerged two key identities for the vernacular: the 'lingua toscana' and the 'lingua italiana'. In the next chapter, I focus on the elaboration of the notion of a 'lingua italiana' in the linguistic writings of Gian Giorgio Trissino.

[76] See notes 64 and 71.

Chapter 4

Trissino's *De Vulgari Eloquentia* and the Notion of a 'Lingua Italiana'

The notion of 'Italy' has a long history going back millennia and can be defined as a geographical entity at least since the Roman imperial period, and I have used the word 'Italy' predominantly in its geographical qualification in this dissertation.[1] The notion of an 'Italian' vernacular, on the other hand, is much more recent, and enters the history of ideas of the peninsula around the time of the introduction of the printing press in the Renaissance. If Dante had been among the first to conceive a vernacular common to all the inhabitants of Italy in *De vulgari eloquentia*, as we have seen in chapter 1, it was the humanist Giangiorgio Trissino to popularize the notion of 'lingua italiana' to refer to the literary vernacular used by the intellectuals of the Italian peninsula. This vernacular had been called by his contemporaries 'lingua toscana', and it was only at the beginning of the Cinquecento that non-Tuscan humanists, among whom Equicola and Castiglione, had

[1] Bruni, Francesco. *Italia: vita e avventure di un'idea*. Il Mulino, 2010 and Gensini, Stefano. 'Dante, Trissino e l'identità della lingua'. In *Studi filosofici: annali dell'Istituto universitario orientale [AION], XXVII* (2004). See also at the end of this chapter.

begun to problematize that notion in writing and proposed the alternative one of 'lingua cortegiana'.[2]

The notion of a 'lingua italiana' enters the print culture of the Renaissance in 1524 with Trissino's publication of the *Sofonisba*, the printed volume of which was accompanied by an epistle addressed to Pope Clement VII titled *Epistola de le lettere nuωvamente aggiunte ne la lingua Italiana*.[3] If Trissino was at this date already in possession of the codex Trivulziano containing Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, the ideas drawn from the medieval treatise would surface explicitly only a few years later in the dialogue *Castellano*, published in 1529, the same in which Trissino's translation of Dante's text was published.[4] The letter neither referred back to Dante's idea of the 'vulgare latium' nor it justified or commented upon the notion of a 'lingua italiana': it introduced the new letters, some from the Greek alphabet, and argued that their addition would be '*cωſa, che ajuterà mirabilmente ad aſſeguire la pronuntia Toſcana, ε la Cortigiana'.*[5]

In short, the *Epistola* explained the orthographic reform that Trissino had been putting into practice in his own manuscript works since a few years earlier, which

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[2] See chapter 3.

[3] See Trissino, Gian Giorgio. *Sofonisba*, a cura di L. Lugignano Marchegiani, Roma: Bulzoni 1990. For the writings of Trissino discussed in this chapter, see: Trissino, Giovan Giorgio. *Scritti linguistici*, a cura di A. Castelvecchi, Roma: Salerno Editrice 1986. The 1524 edition the epistle has been digitized and made available online: https://it.wikisource.org/wiki/Indice:De_le_lettere.djvu. A complete bibliography of the early modern editions of the works of Trissino and the most relevant secondary sources in Corrieri, Alessandro (a cura di). *Giangiorgio Trissino. Bibliografia* (aggiornata al 2 settembre 2010), 2010, available on the 'banca dati' online: http://www.nuovorinascimento.org/cinquecento/trissino.pdf.

[4] See note 3.

[5] Excerpts are taken from the digitized edition of the 1524 epistle (see note 3), pp. 6-7.

involved the introduction of five new letters in the Italian alphabet, an innovation that had been received with amusement and support by the Pope, and soon made possible in print by Trissino's collaborator, Ludovico Arrighi.[6] The introduction of the new letters addressed in particular the ambiguity in the Italian orthographic system of the vowels /e/ and /o/, a feature we have encountered in the poetry of the Sicilian school in chapter 1 where it determined the possibility to realize perfect rhymes even when these were spelled differently, e.g. 'uso-amoroso'. Having the ability to distinguish between the four possible phonetic realizations of these two vowels allowed Trissino to distinguish the instances where he adhered to the pronunciation of the 'lingua toscana' (e.g. 'forse') and when he adhered to that of the 'lingua cortigiana' (e.g. 'fœrse'), which was rich in non-Tuscan lexicon and phonetic elements of foreign influence because it was based on the vernacular spoken in courts and chanceries.[7]

As to why Trissino reputed important that such distinctions were made representable in the Italian orthographic system, we can attribute this fact primarily to a distinction he drew between the 'lingua toscana', the 'lingua italiana' and the Tuscan

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[6] For an overview, see Migliorini, Bruno. 'Le proposte trissiniane di riforma ortografica', «Lingua nostra» 11 (1950), pp. 77-81.

[7] "*[I]n molti vocaboli mi parto da l'uſo Fiorentino, ε li pronuntio ſecondo l'uſo Cortigiano, com'è hœmo dico, ε non huœmo",* writes Trissino in the epistle; *"ne la quale [Sofonisba] tanto hœ imitato il Toſcano, quanto ch'io mi penſava dal rεſto d'Italia poter εſſere facilmente inteſo; ma, dove il Toſco mi parea far difficultà, l'abandonava, ε mi riduceva al Cortigiano, ε commune."*. See note 3 for the digitized manuscript, pp. 14-15. Notably, the proposal made in the epistle that accompanies the 1524 version of the *Sofonisba* did not match ancient Greek phonetics: Trissino decided to pair the letter /η/ to the sound [è] and the letter /ω/ to [ò] purely based on the graphic appearance of these letters, which to him suggested the idea of a long, open vowel. The sounds had, however, a different realization in ancient Greek so that Trissino decided later in his career to pair the Greek letters with the sounds [é] and [ó] respectively, which resembled more closely how they were pronounced in Greek. More in Giovanardi, Claudio. *La teoria cortigiana e il dibattito linguistico nel primo Cinquecento*, Roma, Bulzoni 1998.

vernacular, and to his interest into a more realistic representation of the linguistic habits of his peers. Both of these are central to understand the advantages and the drawbacks of his proposal. The distinction between 'lingua toscana', Tuscan vernacular, and 'lingua italiana' was not addressed in writing until the publication of the *Castellano* in 1529, where Trissino defended himself in the voice of his friend Giovanni di Bernardo Rucellai from the accusations of his detractors, represented in the fiction of the dialogue by Filippo Strozzi.[8] The gravest of these accusations was that of having taken away the merit and honor of the Tuscans by merely replacing the name of their vernacular with that of 'lingua italiana'.[9]

Rucellai, i.e. Trissino, dwells at length on this heated point of discussion and provides an unexpected explanation for his use of the expression 'lingua italiana':

> "Veramente tutto il mondo nomina lingua italiana , sì come ancora fa lingua greca, lingua ebrea, lingua araba e simili. E poi i Tedeschi, i Spagnuoli e le altre nazioni, che hanno un poco di cognizione delle lingue d'Italia, ogni cosa, che vedono scritta in qualunque di esse, dicono essere scritta in lingua italiana, e dicono il vero."[10]

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[8] The quotations from the *Castellano* that follow are taken from a nineteenth century edition of the dialogue in which the editor has eliminated the signs added to the Italian alphabet by Trissino. I used this edition instead of the original because it made it easier to format the long excerpts that follow within this document and I had it with me as I wrote this chapter. See Trissino, Giovanni Giorgio, and Claudio Tolomei. *Il Castellano di Giangiorgio Trissino ed Il Cesano di Claudio Tolomei: dialoghi intorno alla lingua volgare ora ristampati con l'epistola dello stesso Trissino intorno alle lettere nuovamente aggiunte all'alfabeto italiano.* A cura di Giulio Antimaco. Milano: G. Daelli e C. 1864. Cf. Trissino, *Scritti linguistici*, 1986.

[9] The accusation was that of having "spogliato toscana del nome de la sua lingua". See Trissino, *Il castellano*, pp. 9-10 (cf. note 8).

[10] *Il castellano*, p. 12 (cf. note 8).

To the foreign observer - and at this point there were many keen to study the language of Petrarch and Boccaccio in Europe – anything that was written in Italy in a vernacular, was called 'Italian', and not Tuscan. This happened because of the different history of the notion of 'Italy', which had already been exported to other European countries despite the lack of a unified 'Italian' political entity; but also because the foreign observer remained unaware of the implications behind the fact that even Italian writers who were not Tuscans defined their language as 'lingua toscana' in the first half of the Cinquecento.

The first justification of the use of 'lingua italiana' in Trissino's writings thus comes from taking the point of view of the non-Italian observer: this indirect way of looking at the Italian situation from the outside was unique in the Cinquecento, and since it vastly increased Trissino's powers to include in his analysis phenomena that were perceived as discrete by his peers (e.g. 'lingua toscana', 'lingua cortegiana', 'vulgare'), it also gave his linguistic thought an edge. Assuming the point of view of the other, especially that of the humanists in the European monarchies such as France and Spain who imported literature from Italy, allowed him to recognize and anticipate the notion of a supra-municipal vernacular, not limited by the ethnic and linguistic identity of the Tuscans, but open to the interaction with other vernacular identities. This interaction was mediated, according to his formulation, by the 'lingua cortigiana', which was the repository from which he drew the tools to build a vernacular that would reflect his intuition of a 'lingua italiana' as he perceived it seen from abroad.

This thinking, however, although ahead of its times, is not sufficient to justify and understand the reform of the orthographic system Trissino proposed throughout his

career. To understand it, we need to read closely the parts of the *Castellano* where Trissino engages with Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia*, and reconstruct the role that the treatise played in his thinking. Such is the case because Trissino's efforts to distinguish the identities of different pronunciations, non-Tuscan graphisms, and the provenance of some vernacular words by means of an orthographic reform suggest a reading of Dante which is markedly different from the one I have presented above. We can follow Trissino's reasoning:

> la lingua toscana si divide in lingua fiorentina, senese, lucchese, pisana, aretina e simili; che hanno tutte qualche differenzia di pronunzie, modi di dire, e vocaboli. E cosi si fa dell'altre. Ciascuna poi di queste specie, parimente come genere considerata, si divide in altre specie, che hanno parimente qualche particulari proprietà ; come la lingua fiorentina si divide in lingua certaldese, in pratese, dell'incise, sanminiatese, della città e simili. Ciascuna di queste ancora si divide in contrade; come Fiorenza in via Maggio, Borgognissanti, Gualfondra e simili; e quelle in case, che sono specie specialissime; e queste in uomini, che sono individui; perocchè ciascun uomo, e casa, e contrada, ha qualche particulare proprietà di parlare, che l'altro non l'ha; verbigrazia, Palla mio fratello ha qualche particulare proprietà nel suo parlare, che non l'ho io; e Lorenzo vostro fratello n'ha qualcuna, che non l'avete voi, e così parimente la casa nostra, ha qualche differenzia di parlare dalla vostra, o la nostra contrada da un'altra e simili. Non vi pare che questo sia vero?[11]

[11] *Il castellano*, p. 32 (cf. note 8).

Trissino is here paraphrasing the prose of *De vulgari eloquentia* and expanding on what Dante had described as the differences among the vernaculars of even individuals of the same town, district, and family, a topic that the author announced would be the object of the last book, but was never written.[12] Trissino used the sifting of the different vernaculars he had found in the first book of *De vulgari eloquentia* to problematize the notion of 'lingua toscana', which seemed self-evident to others, especially Machiavelli or Tolomei, as is represented in the fiction of the dialogue by the surprise elicited by these lines in Filippo Strozzi's character. The 'lingua toscana' was a whole made of many parts, i.e. the vernaculars of the various Tuscan towns, and Trissino argued that the same would hold true in the case of the 'lingua italiana', of which the 'lingua toscana' would be only one of many components.

Trissino's reasoning is accurate up to this point; it takes, however, a different trajectory in the remaining part of the dialogue, wherein lies an original yet problematic interpretation of what Dante called 'vulgare latium', which Trissino had rendered in his 1529 translation with 'lingua italiana':

> Così i certaldesi hanno alcuni vocaboli, modi di dire e pronunzie differenti da quelli di Prato, e quelli di Prato da quelli di San Miniato e di Fiorenza, e cosi degli altri lochi fiorentini; ma chi rimovesse a tutte le differenti pronunzie, modi di dire, e vocabuli, che sono tra loro, non sarebbono a lor tutte queste lingue una medesima lingua fiorentina, e una sola? A questo medesimo modo si ponno

[12] "[A]d illud quod unius solius familie proprium est". Cf. *DVE* 1 19 3.

> ancora parimente rimovere le differenti pronunzie, modi di dire, e vocaboli alle municipali lingue di Toscana, e farle una medesima, e una sola, che si chiami lingua toscana. E parimente rimovendo le differenti pronunzie, modi di dire e vocabuli, che sono tra la lingua siciliana, la pugliese, le romanesca, la toscana, la marchiana, la romagnuola, e le altre delle altre regioni d'Italia, non diverrebbono allora tutte una istessa lingua italiana?[13]

Paraphrasing *De vulgari eloquentia*, Trissino argued that the difference between the Tuscan vernaculars among themselves, and between the 'lingua toscana', 'siciliana', 'romanesca', and the other Italian vernaculars are different 'vocabuli, modi di dire e pronunzie', his translation of Dante's 'vocabula et prolationes'.[14] But then Trissino argues that if one were to remove these different 'vocabula et prolationes', leaving only those that are in common among all, one would transform all these different vernaculars into the 'lingua italiana'. This notion is at odds with the identity of the vernacular according to Dante as I have reconstructed it in my earlier chapters. Dante had indeed argued that different 'ydiomata' (or 'linguae', its synonym in the treatise) were distinguishable by observing their distinct 'vocabula and prolationes'. He had also argued that the vernaculars of different Italian cities had many words in common, as did also the 'lingua si', the 'lingua oc' (Provençal) and the 'lingua oil' (old French); such was the result (according to Dante's biblical interpretation of the phenomena of linguistic evolution) of their common provenance from the same diasporic group that had populated

[13] *Il castellano*, p. 34 (cf. note 8).
[14] Cf. *DVE* 1 1 4: "licet in diversas prolationes et vocabula sit divisa [locutio]".

Western Europe after the construction of the Tower of Babel and the curse of the 'lingua confusionis'.[15] Yet, Dante never argued that the sum of the 'vocabula and prolationes' shared by the various Italian vernaculars was to be identified with the 'vulgare latium'. Dante had argued in favor of a different thesis, informed by his understanding of the vernacular of the Sicilian and non-Tuscan lyric tradition in Italy and its ties to the Tuscan poets of his own generation; rather than consisting only of those words and pronunciations that were common among all poets, Dante argued that the 'vulgare latium' could use any vernacular 'vocabulum' or 'prolatio' as long as this manifested the inherent qualities of the 'vulgare latium' (i.e. 'illustre', 'cardinale', 'aulico' and 'curiale'); their provenance did not matter.[16]

The definition of 'vulgare latium' in Dante aligns with the identity I have assigned to the vernacular above, which I have defined as the product of a two-way written exchange based on norms of reciprocity and consent among writers who spoke different vernaculars.[17] According to this identity, there does not need to be a break between the linguistic theory of *De vulgari eloquentia* and the language of the *Commedia*, something that is often given as a datum in the secondary sources.[18] Dante did write the *Commedia* using a language that fits the identity I have assigned to the 'vulgare latium': a vernacular that uses mostly words and pronunciations (the latter we can reconstruct primarily from the rhymes and caesurae) that are Florentine and Tuscan, but that is also made up of the words and pronunciations of many other vernaculars, which have suggested modern

[15] Cf. *DVE* 1 8.
[16] *DVE* 1 16 6.
[17] See chapter 1.
[18] See at least: Ascoli, Albert Russell. *Dante and the Making of a Modern Author*. Cambridge University Press, 2008.

critics the adjective 'multilingual' to describe the poem.[19] Multilingualism, or 'pluringuismo', is however a limiting description of the language of the *Commedia*. The modern notion of multilingualism, as it has been applied to medieval Italian literature, would appear to be fundamentally biased, in so far as Dante's definition of the vernacular in *De vulgari eloquentia* is founded on the observation that no single vernacular exists independently from another: as Dante argued (and Trissino repeated in the *Castellano*), different vernaculars exist even within the same town and family, making it impossible for any vernacular (be it that of the individual or that of a town) to be distinguished as discrete from another, because each and any of them can be said to belong to a larger whole. Once this larger whole is identified, no vernacular can be said 'multilingual': e.g. a text written in a mix of Tuscan and Bolognese stops being multilingual as soon as we call it 'Italian', a fact which was one of Trissino's observations in the *Castellano*:

> Perciocchè ogni volta, che una specie, con un'altra del medesimo genere mescolata, si vuol tutta insieme nominare, non si può con verità per il nome della specie, ma sì bisogna per il nome del genere dire, come se aveste in un luogo pere, susine, fiche, e persiche mescolato, volendole tutte insieme con verità nominare, nè per pero, nè per susine, nè per fiche, nè per persiche le nominereste; ma ben per frutte, suo generale vocabulo, le chiamereste. […] E cosi dicendo sarà vero, ma poi non

[19] The notion of 'plurilinguismo' is popularized by Contini in an essay first published in 1953: Contini, Gianfranco. "Preliminari sulla lingua del Petrarca." *Varianti e altra linguistica* (1970): 169-192.

> contraddirà al Trissino, il quale, quando come specie pura la nomina, sempre la dice toscana; ma quando come genere, italiana.[20]

Thinking about this issue more generally, all vernaculars are constantly interacting with each other within the small communities of their literary users, and changes happening in one of them affect indirectly all the others, in such a way that it becomes impossible to distinguish in principle if a linguistic feature belongs in one vernacular rather than another, because as soon as it happens in one it changes all the others it interacts with. This is the more general mechanism behind the exchange of lyrics regulated by the customs of reciprocity and consent: by increasing the interaction between different vernaculars, this exchange simultaneously transformed them all, and redefined the whole of which the individual vernaculars were simple parts. From such phenomena arose the feeling that both Dante and Trissino attempted to describe of the existence of a language that is common and can be understood by all in Italy.

The latitude of the language of the *Commedia* is analogous to the one the Sicilian poets had manifested in their texts, characterized by a high number of allotropes and loanwords from non-Italian vernaculars and a high degree of intertextuality with poets from across the peninsula (the latitude being the result of this intertextuality). Because Trissino wrote in the Cinquecento, he distanced himself from Dante in so far as he understood differently the causes behind the perception of the existence of a common language; thus, the identity he assigned to the 'lingua italiana' only partially overlaps with the 'vulgare latium' in *De vulgari eloquentia*, but it remains of some interest

[20] *Il castellano*, pp. 35-36 (cf. note 8).

because it explains the features of his orthographic reform and the goal that the humanist envisioned for his proposal.

As we can gather from the pages of the *Castellano* I have quoted above, Trissino believed that that by putting together all the 'vocabula' the Italian vernaculars (e.g. the 'sicilianum', 'lingua toscana' and 'lingua cortigiana') had in common, one would obtain the common language, and it would only be a matter left to the author what particular pronunciation to use, e.g. whether one wrote 'forse' or 'fœrse' (although Trissino had clear opinions as to which spellings ought to be used by his peers). The orthographic reform and the addition of the new letters aimed at empowering the writer to be conscious of the various options, and to adapt accordingly as these options changed over time: even Trissino's favored words and pronunciations changed throughout his lifetime, often going back and forth between 'lingua toscana' and 'lingua cortigiana', but the author adheres more or less coherently to the orthographic reform he proposed in 1524, i.e. he represents his phonetic choices coherently and without ambiguity, in the attempt to constantly reflect the input he received from the speakers of the time and the trends that he inferred from it.[21]

Although it may depend on one's interpretation of Trissino as reader of Dante, the Vicentine suggested that the 'lingua italiana' was not different as a vernacular from the 'lingua toscana' or the 'lingua cortigiana', the latter merely being 'specie' of a larger whole, similarly to how 'lingua senese' and 'lingua pratese' were more specific manifestations of the 'lingua toscana'. Dante had avoided this simplification and veiled

[21] Migliorini, Bruno. 'Le proposte trissiniane di riforma ortografica', in «Lingua nostra» 11 (1950), pp. 77-81.

the identity of the 'vulgare latium' behind the metaphor of the scent of the panther, an animal to which medieval bestiaries attributed the power to release a perfumed scent from their mouth before disappearing.[22] Dante did not endorse the assumption that the whole made of the many Italian vernaculars (he had described it 'lingua cardinale' because it was the hinge around which all others revolved), or of the vernaculars of Europe (e.g. 'lingua oc', 'si', 'oil') was itself a spoken vernacular with more general characteristics than those of its parts; such proto-vernacular did not exist at the same time as the other vernaculars, as Trissino seems to suggest.[23] Trissino's orthographic reform, which gave the writer the tools to style his own vernacular according to the ever-shifting shared features of the vernaculars that made up this larger whole, arose from this exegetical knot in *De vulgari eloquentia*.

The attempted reform attributed a primacy to the vernacular spoken by his contemporaries because Trissino conceived it as closer to what he conceptualized as a common language than those of Petrarch and Boccaccio, who had written when a 'lingua cortegiana' and the political and socio-economic institutions that had brought it about did not exist. The language of the *Sofonisba*, which verges on the linguistic realism and immediacy produced by the sifting of expressions common to both the 'lingua toscana' and 'cortigiana', is a testament to this, despite the many words and pronunciations that seem to only align to the 'lingua toscana'.[24] The appeal of a tragedy written in a vernacular of such immediacy and the prestige of the name of Trissino contributed to

[22] See D'Urso, Daniele. "Il profumo della pantera: La metafora venatoria nel de vulgari eloquentia." *Rivista di cultura classica e medioevale* 48, no. 1 (2006): 137-155.
[23] Cf. *DVE* 1 8.
[24] On the *Sofonisba*, see: Gallo, Valentina. 'La *Sofonisba* di Trissino. Fondazione o riscrittura?'. In *Ariel* I (2002), pp. 67-103.

accelerate the publication of Bembo's alternative proposal in the *Prose*: the latter even hastily procured himself a manuscript copy of *De vulgari eloquentia* (Vat. Reg. Lat. 1370).[25] The *Prose* distinguished themselves from the assumptions behind Trissino's orthographic reform because they assigned the linguistic primacy to a vernacular that changed and transformed more slowly than the 'lingua cortegiana'. This 'lingua toscana', as Bembo referred to it, was rooted in the text of Petrarch but open to the intervention and adaptation of the modern editor, as it had been demonstrated by the rational principles displayed by the Aldine edition he had curated in 1501.[26] The object of this designation was necessarily different from that of Trissino.

Assuming the perspective of the Renaissance reader of vernacular literature, Trissino's reform would have assisted non-Tuscan readers to pronounce correctly Tuscan words characterized as we have seen above by an ambiguous vocalic system (e.g .'pesca' ['peach'] vs. 'pesca' ['the act of fishing']). The root of this orthographic ambiguity was a result of the appropriation upon the emergence of the vernacular literatures in the early medieval period of the orthographic system of Latin. In Latin, different vocalic sounds were expressed by the same sign, such /ă̆/, /ē̆/: this differentiation is not obvious in prose but becomes evident when reading a verse like the hexameter or pentameter because they require a set order of long or short quantities to respect the meter. Several extra vowels

[25] For Bembo's copy of the *De vulgari eloquentia*, see: Danzi, Massimo. *La biblioteca del cardinale Pietro Bembo*. Geneva: Droz 2005, p. 299.
[26] See Clough, Cecil H. "Pietro Bembo's Edition of Petrarch and His Association with the Aldine Press." In *Aldus Manutius and Renaissance Culture: Essays in Memory of Franklin D. Murphy*. Edited by David S. Zeidberg. Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1998, 47-80.

are thus not accounted for in the orthographic system of Italian Romances, which developed by giving open or closed quality to the long or short Latin vowels.

Because this was an issue perceived also by other intellectuals, Trissino's proposal was not necessarily fated to fail from the beginning. However, the fact that the Roman curia had entered a period of decline following the Sacco of 1527, and Ludovico Arrighi who was responsible for first devising a technique to print the new letters in his books had died during the events affected the first, important stages of the realization of the reform. Several intellectuals had reacted promptly to the publication: shortly after the first distribution of the *Sofonisba*, Alessandro de Pazzi wrote an epistle to Francesco Vettori about the *Epistola de le lettere nuωvamente aggiunte alla lingua italiana* that accompanied the tragedy; Alessandro reports to Francesco that "quel che noi ridicule dicevamo, costoro [Trissino] lo fan sul serio". [27] The content of the letter to Francesco reveals that even the Florentine humanists felt a need for a reorganization of the orthography of the vernacular, despite the fact that this was routinely dismissed as impractical. Similarly, the Senese Claudio Tolomei's dialogue *Cesano de la lingua toscana* recognized the necessity of an orthographic reform to perfect the notation of the Italian vowels but harshly rejected Trissino's proposal as idiosyncratic.[28] In his other dialogue the *Polito*, Tolomei even calculated the number of new signs necessary to complete the orthography of the vernacular to thirteen (vs. Trissino's five), and persuaded

[27] In Archivio di Stato di Firenze, *Carte strozziane*, *Serie II*, 48, p. 569. Cf. Trissino, *Scritti Linguistici,* 1986.
[28] Cf. note 8.

the reader to abandon projects of such difficult realization.[29] Trissino, who respected the linguistic scholarship of Tolomei, responded to many of the arguments of the *Polito* in the *Dubbi grammaticali*.[30]

The resistance of humanists like Pazzi and Tolomei to Trissino's proposal revolved around the respect assigned to the manuscript tradition of the Italian poets from the Sicilians to Petrarch; Bembo's collaboration with Aldus Manutius had contributed to raising the sensibility of the vernacular readership to the importance of the text received in the manuscripts of the authors of the fourteenth century, as well as the rediscovery of an increasing number of medieval Latin manuscripts and ancient texts. Other intellectuals, like Colocci and Barbieri, were making the canzonieri that preserved the tradition of the Duecento better known and appreciated after a long century of neglect.[31] The addition of the new letters was hence perceived as an attempt to corrupt the vernacular as it was preserved in the manuscripts, and resistance was displayed both by those who supported the 'lingua toscana' and those who supported the 'cortigiana'. Once Trissino paved the way, however, there were other attempts at orthographic reform by other humanists: Ludovico di Lorenzo Martelli in the *Risposta alla Epistola del Trissino de le lettere nuovamente agguinte alla lingua volgar fiorentina* proposed a system of

[29] Tolomei, Claudio. '*Il Polito'*, in *Trattati sull'ortografia del volgare, 1525-1526*, a cura di B. Richardson, Exeter 1984, pp. 77-130. Cf. in particular paragraph 226 of the dialogue.
[30] See note 3.
[31] See the excellent studies in the volume: Bologna, Corrado, and Bernardi, Marco (eds.). *Angelo Colocci e gli studi romanzi*. Roma: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 2008.

accents based on Hebrew to resolve the ambiguity of the vowels, and as the title suggests rejected both the addition of the new letters and the notion of a 'lingua italiana'. [32]

Some intellectuals envisioned a linguistic convention to overcome the divisions among the humanists. In a letter addressed to Agnolo Firenzuola written during the events that led to the Council of Bologna (1529-30), where the Pope and the Emperor reconciled after the Sacco, Tolomei argued that no other event would gather as many of the intellectuals involved in the 'Questione della lingua' as the upcoming Council, and that it could serve as a unique opportunity to resolve the differences under the auspices of both Pope and Emperor.[33] Humanists from every corner of Italy traveled to Bologna to assist the chanceries of either Charles V or Clement VII in the slow arbitrations. Tolomei and Firenzuola's plans, however, were frustrated by the Pope's decision to have Romolo Amaseo pronounce a declamation in favor of the use of Latin against the vernacular in front of him and the Emperor at the Council.[34]

Pope Clement VII was a patron of the vernacular literatures: he was Bembo and Trissino's Maecenas.[35] The declamation in favor of Latin was a clever political move by the pope: the Roman chancery had an edge on its imperial counterpart in the negotiations because it had the better command of legal Latin, a fact of which the Roman curia had

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[32] See Cosentino, Paola. 'Martelli, Lodovico'. In *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, volume 71 (2008).
[33] Rajna, Pio. 'La data di una lettera di Claudio Tolomei ad Angolo Firenzuola', in *La Rassegna*, s. III, I, 1916, 3-13. The letter is also mentioned in Bruni, *Italia*, 2010, pp. 235-7.
[34] The declamation was titled 'De linguae latinae usu retinendo' (1529). See: Amaseo Romolo. *Romoli Amasei orationum volumen*, Bologna: Ioannes Rubrius 1564, pp. 101-146.
[35] See chapter 3.

taken advantage against the German emperors since the early medieval period.[36] To Clement, who assumed a defensive position during the negotiations following the events of 1527, it was of the utmost importance that the new deliberations between the two powers be drafted in the Latin of his curia. The pope was interested in showcasing Latin as the language of contemporary European politics; within Italy, however, he favored Bembo's proposals for a 'lingua toscana' to advance the prestige of Tuscany and his family, the Medici, in the peninsula.

There were vernacular works that defied the terms of the debate, e.g. the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, written in a vernacular made of Latinized graphisms and loanwords from several Romances.[37] Experiments such has these remained at the fringes of the debate because they departed from the language of medieval Italian lyrics, whose appreciation was on the rise throughout the Cinquecento. The flexibility of Roman and Venetian printers and their ability to adapt their technology to the demands of the humanists helped sharpen the sensitivity of the learned vernacular readership to the problem of orthography in a way that is unique to the Italian peninsula. A linguistic convention like the one envisioned by Tolomei, however, happened only in the fiction of Sperone Speroni's *Dialogo delle lingue* (1542).[38]

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[36] See Godman, Peter. *The Archpoet and Medieval Culture*. Oxford University Press 2014, chapter 3.

[37] On the language of the *Hypnerotomachia*, see the introduction to the excellent volume: Colonna, Francesco. *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: Riproduzione dell'edizione italiana aldina del 1499-introduzione, traduzione e commento*. 2 volumi. A cura di M. Ariani e M. Gabriele. Adelphi 2004.

[38] Speroni, Sperone. *Dialogo delle lingue*. A cura di A. Sorella, Pescara: Libreria dell'università editrice 1999.

The details of Trissino's reform kept transforming over time following his notion of 'lingua italiana' as the whole made up of the words and pronunciations shared by the speakers situated in the Italian peninsula. Because Trissino understood from reading Dante that the 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' of the vernaculars were always changing and transforming, it was necessary that the whole changed and transformed with them. His orthographic reform allowed the written language to reflect and adapt to these changes; archaisms, i.e. the 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' of the past would remain in the older texts, but contemporary authors would not be forced to use constructions that were not current anymore just to pay homage to a tradition or to show the knowledge of a common model, as was the case with the proponents of the 'lingua toscana'. Trissino, for example, proposed Latinized graphisms of several Tuscan words, and the addition of two more letters to represent the aspirated consonants /ph/ and /th/ in the words coming from Greek, when he published the *Dubbi grammaticali* in 1529. Following a similar mindset in the *Grammatichetta*, Trissino offers a grammar of the 'lingua italiana' that does not quote as example the text of any famous author, instead it discriminates between different options based on reasoning and on his own observation of the current state of the 'lingua cortigiana' and 'lingua toscana'. The *Grammatichetta* thus departs from the genre of the 'Eleganze' or 'Osservazioni', which were grammatical glosses that authors such as Augurelli and Liburnio attached to the texts of canonical authors.[39] The evolution of Trissino's orthographic reform signaled how fast-paced was the environment of the print culture of the period.

[39] See note 3 and Marazzini, Claudio. *Le teorie*, in *Storia della lingua italiana*, a cura di L. Serianni, P. Trifone, 1° vol., *I luoghi della codificazione*, Torino 1993, pp. 252-59.

Trissino was among the first to picture a non-Tuscan humanist as an author in the classical sense of the word, independent from the need to excavate and test his own language on the sources of the Tuscan Duecento and Trecento. He reevaluated the role played in the canon by the poets of the Sicilian school and following Dante he argued that their language was the 'lingua italiana' of the Duecento in the *Castellano*. Because Trissino believed that the 'lingua italiana' was not made of the words and pronunciations of a single vernacular but rather of those shared by all the speakers of all the different vernaculars, he looked at the texts of the Sicilians with less of a bias than the Tuscan humanists: he did not need to assume that they were written in the 'lingua toscana' because he knew that the imperfect system of notation of the Italian vowels could not represent in writing the actual 'prolationes', or pronunciations, of the Sicilian poets. While many words and pronunciations may have been read by Tuscan readers as if they were written in 'lingua toscana', Trissino knew that the ambiguous orthography of the medieval language could hide a very different vernacular than the one realized by the Tuscan reader. Because the Tuscan vernacular and the vernacular of the Sicilians interacted for a century before the 'lingua toscana' emerged as the literary model across the peninsula, the Renaissance reader was unable to discern the words and 'prolationes' in the 'lingua toscana' that may have descended from an original Tuscan vernacular and those that instead entered it as a result of the influence of the vernacular of the Sicilians on the Tuscan speakers of the previous centuries.[40] A hint that this was a possibility was available in the form of the 'rime siciliane': the latter suggested an ambiguity in the graphic representation of perfect rhymes and alerted the careful observer that the

[40] See chapter 1.

‘prolationes’ of the Sicilian poets were, at least in these instances, different from those of the ‘lingua toscana’ of the Renaissance.

Trissino proved to be a better reader of the early Italian tradition than the proponents of the ‘lingua toscana’ because he knew that the words and pronunciations of the ‘lingua toscana’ of his time were not necessarily the same as those of the poets of the Sicilian school. Starting from Barbieri and Colocci in the Renaissance, however, and intensifying in the nineteenth century, scholars began to entertain the idea that the texts of the Sicilian schools had undergone a Tuscanization, and consequently were not to be considered the original lyrics from the Duecento. Tuscan readers flattened the vocalic system of the Sicilian school onto that of the Tuscan vernaculars: because the most prominent feature of Tuscan, in comparison to most other Italian Romances, is the absence of the phenomenon of the metaphony of the vowels, the ‘rime siciliane’ were bound to be misunderstood by many generations of readers because they could not be explained by the vocalic system of Tuscan .[41]

The ambiguity of the orthography of medieval Italian was what had allowed poets of such diverse ethnicities as the Sicilians of the court of Frederick II to write in one ‘lingua’. This ‘lingua’ could contain the words and pronunciations of all speakers, no matter their provenance, who were gathered in the Italian court of the emperor (e.g. the letter o could be used to represent both Trissino’s /o/ and /ω/, or the sound [u], which was the realization of the accented /o/ common among the many vernaculars affected by metaphony; cf. Tuscan ‘amore’ vs. early modern Sicilian ‘amuri’). The ‘rime siciliane’ suggest that within this ‘sicilianum’ or ‘vulgare latium’, as Dante called it, there were

[41] See chapter 1.

words and pronunciations that had become common to all the members of the circle of the emperor despite betraying an origin that was not from a central Italian vernacular.

This means that the flexibility that Trissino wanted to restitute to the written language of his time (fossilized due to the the superimposition of the 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' of the 'lingua toscana' over anything written) had been a feature of the literary vernacular all along, throughout its evolution from 'sicilianum' to 'lingua italiana', but the awareness of it was lost among his contemporaries. Trissino's reform aimed at the possibility of a 'lingua' that could accommodate the 'vocabula' and 'prolationes' of all the speakers involved in the 'Questione della lingua', not just those that belonged to a Tuscan vernacular. Through this reasoning, Trissino arrived at the definition of the 'lingua italiana' that we have encountered in the passages I have excerpted above from the *Castellano*. The feeling of a common language in the Renaissance, which was common across the divisions between proponents of one or the other vernacular, was thus the result of the combination of the two factors on which I have dwelt on at length in this dissertation. On the one hand, the mechanisms of reciprocity and consent on which the exchange of written materials, especially lyrics, was based in the manuscript culture of the medieval period, because these accelerated the emergence of a common 'lingua' between those that took part in the exchange. On the other hand, the ambiguity of the vocalic system of the vernacular, which did not permit to mark vocalic values unequivocally, because it allowed throughout the passage from 'sicilianum' to 'lingua italiana' to continue to read the medieval texts as if they had just been written, applying the 'prolationes' of the modern reader. This contributes to the

stronger than average impression of a continuity of the vernacular literary tradition in Italy from the medieval period to modernity.

By puncturing the balloon of the 'lingua toscana' as the literary language, and that of its prominence among the other vernaculars, Trissino was following in the footsteps of the Dante of *De vulgari eloquentia*, who had famously denied the role that the Tuscans had assigned themselves in the elaboration of the literary vernacular as 'amentiam', or stupidity:

> "[…] veniamus ad Tuscos, qui, propter amentiam suam infroniti, titulum sibi vulgaris illustris arrogare videntur; et in hoc non solum plebea dementat intentio, sed famosos quamplures viros hoc tenuisse comperimus […]".[42]

As we have seen in these last two chapters, among those 'famosos viros' who participated in the 'amentia' were not only Guittone D'Arezzo, Bonagiunta da Lucca, and Brunetto Latini, but also many Renaissance humanists.

The reflections of Dante on the 'vulgare latium' and those of Trissino on the 'lingua italiana' problematized the meaning of 'Italy' for those who wrote in the vernacular so that a different dissertation might have been written on the meaning of 'Italy' for Dante. The issue with the notion of 'Italy' from Dante onward is that it may appear to be an entity that existed prior to the objects I have analyzed: 'sicilianum' or 'vulgare latium', 'lingua toscana', and 'lingua italiana'. If we take, for example, the final definition that Dante gave at the end of the first book of *De vulgari eloquentia* of the 'latium vulgare'

[42] Cf. *DVE* 1 13 1.

(or 'sicilianum' as he argues his 'predecessores' had called it) we see that an entity defined as 'Italy' is necessary to define the 'vulgare latium', but not vice versa:

> "quod totius Ytalie est, latium vulgare vocatur. Hoc enim usi sunt doctores illustres qui lingua vulgari poetati sunt in Ytalia, ut Siculi, Apuli, Tusci, Romandioli, Lombardi et utriusque Marchie viri."[43]

The 'vulgare latium' is the language of all 'Ytalia', used by all those that wrote in the vernacular in 'Ytalia'. The term has a geographical qualification, and this is the sense in which I have mostly used it in the dissertation; however, its qualifications are not only geographical. Dante uses the term 'Ytalia' with complex nuances and very little insight comes from looking at it through the lens of the modern idea of 'nation' because the name 'Ytalia' in Dante must be situated in the medieval culture of the author.[44] The notions of 'Italia' and that of 'vulgare latium' must however shape and inform each other in a biunivocal way. The meaning of 'Ytalia' at the time of writing of *De vulgari eloquentia* already reflected the conclusions that Dante had drawn regarding the 'vulgare latium': if the latter was the vernacular that had been spoken at the 'curia' of Frederick II, the meaning of 'Ytalia' referred to the community that took part in the life of that court, which was drawn from every corner of the peninsula and beyond. The heritage of that 'Ytalia' was the de-localized 'curia' that is at the center of Dante's historical analysis of the present in *De vulgari eloquentia*:

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[43] Cf. *DVE* 1 19 1.
[44] See Hastings, Adrian. *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997.

> "Quare falsum esset dicere curia carere Ytalos, quanquam Principe careamus, quoniam curiam habemus, licet corporaliter sit dispersa."[45]

The potential identification of 'Ytalia' with the dispersed Frederician 'curia' that somehow lived on in the absence of a central authority in 1304-1305 may be described as a historical utopia.[46] Dante's attempt to project the existence of a 'curia' with the features of the Frederician one onto a volatile present and an even more volatile future is among the most fascinating and problematic aspects of *De vulgari eloquentia*. If Dante's 'Ytalia' overlaps to some extent with this 'curia', it seems that Dante argued that the 'curia' existed even before the rule of Frederick II, and would continue to exist after, in different forms, an issue that greatly problematizes the meaning of 'curia' along with that of 'Ytalia'. It is tempting to adopt the idea of a permanent 'curia' as a necessary and indestructible part of the political reality of the Italian peninsula: the 'lingua toscana', the 'lingua cortigiana', and the 'lingua italiana' of the Renaissance could then be thought of as manifestations of the different instantiations of this latent 'curia', and delineate a trajectory of cultural *translatio* from the Sicilian kingdom, to medieval Florence, to the courts and chanceries of the Renaissance, and finally to another de-localized 'curia', the one made up by the community participating in the 'Questione della lingua' that defines the print culture of the Cinquecento. There is undoubtedly a continuity from the

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[45] *DVE* 1 18 5.
[46] See Marchesi, Simone. "Dante's Vertical Utopia: *Aulicum* and *Curiale* in the *De vulgari eloquentia,*" in *Utopianism/Literary Utopias and National Cultural Identities: A Comparative Perspective*, Paola Spinozzi ed. (Bologna: Cotepra, 2001): 311-316.

Frederician ‘curia’ to the actors involved in the ‘Questione della lingua’ that goes beyond the adoption of a vernacular language deeply indebted to the former, and a transformation of the notion of ‘Ytalia’ from the medieval to the early modern period, but the study of these phenomena remained outside the scope of my dissertation.[47]

Trissino’s orthographic reform made it possible for the written vernacular to reflect the evolution to which it would be inevitably subject due to the change of the spoken vernaculars. Trissino understood before most that the written vernacular would always be at odds with the vernacular of the humanists unless it was given the ability to reflect the changes that affected the latter. The vernacular Trissino envisioned allowed writers to retain all of the linguistic heritage of the ‘lingua toscana’ and to use it at will, while at the same time paving the way for future authors who like Dante and Petrarch would use their own ‘vocabula’ and ‘prolationes’ to write their literary works. If it is true that the reform was rejected by the humanists on traditionalist grounds, Trissino’s notion of a ‘lingua italiana’ that could contain ‘vocabula’ and ‘prolationes’ from different vernaculars (similar to the medieval ‘sicilianum’) reflected the reality of the vernacular texts of the medieval period better than any of his philology-bent contemporaries’. Trissino’s major literary work, *L’Italia liberata dai Goti*, enacted this notion to a large extent and looked confidently toward the future of a vernacular that was not confined to the ‘lingua toscana’, and that evoked the ancient Greek syntax of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* much

[47] Dionisotti, Carlo. ‘L’«Italia» del Trissino’, in Pozza, Neri (a cura di). *Convegno di studi su Giangiorgio Trissino* (Vicenza, 31 marzo - 1° aprile 1979), Vicenza, Accademia Olimpica.(1980), pp. 19-42.

more than that of Petrarch.[48] The topic of the medieval Gothic-Italian nation was attractive to him linguistically because of the possibilities it afforded for attempting a form of linguistic realism other than that of the Tuscan literature of the period.

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This chapter focused on the notion of a 'lingua italiana' as it emerged in the linguistic writings of Gian Giorgio Trissino, and the reaction to it in the print culture of the Cinquecento. It brought to conclusion the discourse on the importance of the Renaissance reception of Dante's *De vulgari eloquentia* for the 'Questione della lingua', and underscored the differences between the early modern exegesis of the treatise and the one that I have reconstructed in chapter 1, situated at the time of its writing in 1304-1305.

[48] See Vitale, Maurizio. *L'Omerida italico: Gian Giorgio Trissino. Appunti sulla lingua dell'«Italia liberata da' Gotthi»*, Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze Lettere ed Arti 2010.

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