In gallos:

Renaissance Humanism and Italian Cultural Leadership

By Marianne Pade

In my contribution to the proceedings of the first Text & Contexts conference on The Role of Latin in the Early Modern World, *I discussed how Italian humanists, from Petrarch onwards, increasingly claimed the heritage from classical Antiquity for themselves. I based my observations on a number of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century writers who maintained – more or less explicitly – that only Italians could have the proper mastery of Latin and only they possessed the culture that came with that language.*[1] *In this article I hope to take this further: scholars who study how national identity is constructed often point out how important it is not only to have something in common, like a shared past, but also to have a common enemy or another group from whom one can distance oneself. In the present article, I focus on the role of this other group – the French.*

In a recent article on "The Renaissance as the Concluding Phase of the Middle Ages", John Monfasani sums up the debates of more than 150 years regarding both the character of Renaissance humanism and the very term 'Renaissance'. As he points out, one can still, after more than 150 years, discern the influence of the Swiss historian Jakob Burckhardt's *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (1860). Modern scholars generally disagree with Burckhardt's evocation of Renaissance individualism versus medieval corporateness, of the Renaissance as the period where the individual developed, and his assertion that the Italians of the Renaissance were "the firstborn among the sons of modern Europe". Nonetheless, his definition of the Renaissance as the beginning of modernity, and in its essence anti-medieval, is still found not only in unreflecting notions of the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, but also in more scholarly views. Burckhardt managed to appropriate many positive characteristics for the period he wrote about – as opposed to the Middle Ages; accordingly the adjective 'medieval' is often

[1] The conference was held at Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Casa Convalescència, 5–6 May 2010 and organised by Alejandro Coroleu, Carlo Caruso and Andrew Laird. See Pade 2012.

associated with superstition and cultural backwardness, and the term 'Renaissance' with innovation and cultural brilliance.

Burkhardt's views have of course provoked numerous reactions over the years. John Monfasani manages to bypass many of them by avoiding qualitative assessments of medieval vs. Renaissance cultural forms. To him, the main point is not so much whether the cultural interests and achievements of the Italian humanists were radically different or more brilliant than those of their medieval predecessors. The main point is that they were Italians: as Kristeller pointed out, even if one denies that there was a Renaissance, one cannot deny that there was a renaissance of Italy. Before the fourteenth century Italy was relatively backward, but by the late fifteenth century it had assumed cultural leadership and its influence on the rest of Europe was marked. John Monfasani actually contends that "the Renaissance was a period of Italian cultural leadership in Europe displacing traditional French cultural leadership, and that the end of the Renaissance was the reassertion of French cultural leadership in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in a world that increasingly rejected medieval traditions." Thus to Monfasani it is not necessarily essential to distinguish between medieval and Renaissance culture or make qualitative assessments of successive cultural forms as the basis of periodization. It is a question of when Italian cultural forms became influential in the rest of Europe.[2]

The question I want to address in the following is not whether Monfasani's model is correct. Rather, I shall examine a number of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century texts to see if we can find reflections of the developments he described in them, for instance if the appropriation of cultural hegemony was in any way a deliberate process. I shall try to argue that Monfasani's description of the Renaissance as "a period of Italian cultural leadership in Europe, displacing traditional French cultural leadership," is echoed *ante factum* by writers such as Petrarch, Guarino Veronese and Lorenzo Valla, who all wrote polemically against French cultural influence in Italy, especially regarding the standard of Latin.

Contemporary periodization

In the following we shall see if Italian humanists expressed the periodization implied by Monfasani's model, and if they did, how they explained it.

Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca, 1304–1374) came to see the centuries stretching from the fall of the Roman Empire up to, and including, his own age as a period of cultural decline. He often used metaphors of darkness when

[2] Monfasani 2006.

referring to it, thus formulating, as it were, the notion of the dark ages.[3] Writers after antiquity all counted as *moderni* and were almost inherently inferior to their ancient counterparts. One of Petrarch's disparaging remarks about the *moderni* is found in his letter to Homer in Book 24 of the *Familiares*. Talking about the fame of Homer, Petrarch says to him that "neither the ancients nor the moderns – if there are any left with even the faintest spark of the old quality – think of you merely as a holy philosopher, as you yourself say. No, you are seen as more important and elevated than a philosopher, as someone who covers noble philosophy with the finest, most exquisitely decorated veil".[4] Petrarch here not only reveals his lack of esteem for the *moderni*, we also get a glimpse of his hierarchy of genres where poetry ranks above formal philosophy.

In spite of his attitude towards the cultural and literary manifestations of his own and preceding centuries, Petrarch still believed that things might change for the better, that there could be a return of the golden age of Antiquity. There can be no doubt that he saw his own works as contributing materially towards the achievement of this goal, nor that for him a significant part of the process had to do with language. The high culture of ancient Rome was so intimately connected to its language that the cultural reawakening Petrarch hoped for depended on a re-appropriation of this linguistic idiom. As modern scholarship has shown, he assiduously worked to make his own Latin more classical, with regard to vocabulary, morphology, as well as syntax.[5]

Petrarch's views on the literary qualifications of the *moderni* are shared by his followers, as for instance Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406), chancellor of Florence and leader of the Florentine avant-garde around 1400. In a dispute about the correct form of address in letters, Salutati asks Giovanni Conversino of Ravenna: "You, who serve as soldiers alongside the ancients in the camp of eloquence, why do you, full of flattery, follow the moderns like a faithless renegade?"[6] Some years later, praising the style of the Istrian

[3] See Mommsen 1942, and the discussion of his ideas in Pade 2014 (1), 8–15. The topos of medieval 'darkness' lived on, cp. Maas 2010.

[4] "Apud antiquos quidem ac modernos, siqui sunt, in quibus scintilla vel tenuis prisce indolis adhuc vivat, non modo philosophus sacer, ut ipse ais, sed, ut dixi, philosopho maior atque sublimior haberis, ut qui pulcerrimam philosophiam ornatissimo ac tenuissimo tegas velo," PETRARCA *fam* 24,12,29. For Neo-Latin texts I use the sigla adopted by Johann Ramminger in his *Neulateinische Wortliste* whenever possible, cp. Ramminger 2003–.

[5] On Petrarch's Latin and its influence on later Neo-Latin, see Rizzo 1988, 1990, 1992–1993, and 2002, Celenza 2005, and Tunberg 2014, 155. On Petrarch and *imitatio*, McLaughlin 1995. For a more general discussion of the reorientation of Latin which began in the mid-fourteenth century, see Ramminger 2014.

[6] "cumque milites in castris eloquentie cum antiquis, cur quasi perfidus transfuga blandiendo loqueris cum modernis?" SALVTATI *ep* 8,10 (*a.* 1392).

humanist Pier Paolo Vergerio, Salutati writes that its solidity, so rare among the moderns, is very pleasing; it is redolent of the moderation of the ancients.[7]

The periodization inherent in many of Petrarch's programmatic statements may also be expressed as pride in the literary and linguistic achievements of contemporary Italian humanism. Leonardo Bruni (1370–1444), for instance, proudly describes the blossoming of letters throughout Italy which, according to him, was caused by the return of Greek studies to Italy after 700 years.[8] Others, too, associated the reawakening of the *studia humanitatis* in Italy with Greek studies. Guarino Veronese (1374–1460), the great humanist educator, even described Manuel Chrysoloras' (1350/55–1416) tenure in Florence, where he taught Greek for four years from 1397,[9] as inaugurating a new bloom of learning and a 'Roman Age', in which pure Latin, long in disuse and contaminated, would be purged by Chrysoloras' remedies and, exposed to the light, shine again.[10]

Petrarca *in Gallos*

Petrarch was perhaps the first to depict the French as inferior cultural upstarts and to focus so emphatically on Italian cultural supremacy. Although he grew up at the papal court in Avignon, at the time one of the most important intellectual centres of Europe, he never had much good to say about the place. In his farewell to Avignon, eclogue VIII of the *Bucolicum Carmen* (1346–1349, definitive version 1358), the shepherd Amiclas, *alias* Petrarch himself, describes his old pastures, i.e. Avignon, as a polluted place, with infected waters and poisonous earth. He wants to leave for Italy, where he will be able to play under Apollo's laurel.[11] In eclogue IV the two shepherds Tirrenus (the Etruscan, i.e. Petrarch) and

[7] "placet rara penes modernos soliditas, que sobriam redolet vetustatem," SALVTATI *ep* 14,11 (*a.* 1405).

[8] "Litterae [...] mirabile quantum per Italiam increvere, accedente tunc primum cognitione litterarum graecarum, quae septingentis iam annis apud nostros homines desierant esse in usu", BRVNI *rer gest comm* p. 431.

[9] See Maisano & Rollo 2002, with earlier bibliography.

[10] "Is delatus Florentiam quasi reflorescentis eruditionis auspicium […] Sensim augescens humanitas [...] pristinum vigorem reparabat, qui in hanc perdurans aetatem romana portendere saecula videtur. [...] Longa itaque desuetudine infuscatus ante latinus sermo et inquinata dictio Chrysolorinis fuerat pharmacis expurganda et admoto lumine illustranda," GVARINO *ep* 862 (*a.* 1452).

[11] "Nil spretum, nisi silva ferox pastorque protervus,/ et gignens aconita solum, et mestissimus auster/ plumbo infecti latices, et turbine tortus/ Pulvis, et umbra nocens, et grandinis ira sonore," PETRARCA *buc* 8,69–72. For this eclogue, see Jensen 1997 which also contains the Latin text with English translation. There is a discussion of Petrarch's view on Avignon in Mercuri 1997, 118–122.

Gallus (the Frenchman) argue about Tirrenus' lyre, presented to him at his birth by Daedalus. Gallus wants to buy the lyre, but of course a lyre, i.e. poetic inspiration, cannot be acquired with money. It is hardly a coincidence that the somewhat unfeeling shepherd is Gallus, a Frenchman.

However, in the *Bucolicum Carmen*, Petrarch's spite is still restrained, compared to what we meet in some of his later writings. Trying to persuade Pope Urban V to move the papacy from Avignon back to Rome (1368) he famously argued that

> of the four doctors of the church, two are Italian and Roman. Of the rest one is born near to and almost in Italy, the other had moved to and lived in Italy. All four are buried there. None is French, and there aren't any learned men in France.[12]

He goes on to extoll Italian achievements in secular and canon law, and of course in literature. After all, Italians were the rightful heirs to the Latin language, they *were* the Latin nation to which the French could only pretend to belong. Moreover, he says,

> Regarding every-day manners, I admit that the French are jolly people, easy in manner and speech, they like games, they sing merrily, they drink and party. But it was always among Italians one found true seriousness and morality. And though true excellence is disappearing from the entire world – and that is a grievous loss – if there is anything left at all, it is found in Italy, if I am not mistaken.[13]

Again he talks about the position of the church saying the French church may be noble, but there cannot be any doubt that the head of the church, *caput Ecclesiae*, is Italian.

Petrarch's letter to Urban V provoked a tract by the French theologian Jean d'Hesdin, in answer to which Petrarch composed the highly polemical treatise *Against the Slanderer of Italy*. Not surprisingly it abounds with disparaging jibes at the French, as for instance when Petrarch wonders that his opponent is annoyed at being called a barbarian:

> He shouldn't get angry with me – I am not the one who began this. No, it was historians and cosmographers – and there are too many to

[12] "E quattuor ecclesie doctoribus duo sunt itali ac romani, duorum reliquorum alter iuxta et prope intra Italie fines ortus, certe intra Italiam doctus ac nutritus, alter in Italia conversus et conversatus; omnes in Italia sunt sepulti. Nullus est gallicus, nullus doctus in Gallia," PETRARCA *sen* (*precanonica*) 9,1,35–36.

[13] "De moribus vulgaribus, fateor Gallos et facetos homines et gestuum et verborum lenium, qui libenter ludant, lete canant, crebro bibant, avide conviventur; vera autem gravitas ac realis moralitas apud italos semper fuit, et licet, quod flebile damnum est, virtus toto orbe decreverit, sique tamen eius sunt reliquie, in Italia, nisi fallor, sunt," PETRARCA *sen* (*precanonica*) 9,1,38.

> name them – who invented the name. Of all these writers, is there even one who does not call the French – or the Gauls – barbarians?[14]

The French of course were *barbari*, in the sense that they were foreign, non-Greeks or non-Romans, but when Petrarch wrote I believe that the disparaging meaning of the adjective was much stronger than the geographical one. Furthermore, Petrarch goes on, the Gauls may think of themselves what they want – and they are prone to that – but learned people never doubted it: the French are barbarians. Although – and I won't deny it – they *are* the gentlest of all barbarians.[15]

It is well known how Petrarch pretended to have received on the same day two invitations to be crowned poet laureate, one from the University of Paris and one from King Robert of Naples. He chose the latter.[16] In *Against the Slanderer of Italy* we see why:

> Paris may be a fine city and seat of the king, and its university may be old, founded by Alcuin, the teacher of Charlemagne. Be that as it may, I never heard that anyone from Paris achieved fame there. If anyone did, they were foreign, and – if the barbarians' hate doesn't blind them – mostly from Italy, such as Pietro Lombardo from Novara, Thomas from Aquino, Bonaventura from Bagnoregio, Egidio from Rome and many others.[17]

However, one could not blame the French for their modest cultural achievements; to strive against nature was hard work, and the French were rude, unteachable by nature.[18]

Admittedly *Against the Slanderer of Italy* is a polemical treatise, and

[14] "si ad barbari nomen irascitur, irascatur non michi – neque enim ego nominis huius inventor sum –, sed historicis omnibus atque cosmographis, qui tam multi sunt, ut eos epystola una vix capiat. Quorum quis est omnium, qui non barbaros Gallos vocet?" PETRARCA *c maled It* p.1160.

[15] "Fingant enim Galli se credantque quod volunt [...] Ad hoc opus sane nulla gens promptior quam Galli. Ceterum opinetur ut libet, barbari tamen sunt, neque de hoc inter doctos dubitatio unquam fuit; quamvis ne id quidem negem, nec negari posse arbitrer: esse Gallos barbarorum omnium mitiores," PETRARCA *c maled It* p.1162.

[16] On the coronation, see Friis-Jensen 2011.

[17] "Est illa civitas bona quidem et insignis regia presentia. Quod ad studium attinet, ceu ruralis est calathus, quo poma undique peregrina et nobilia deferantur. Ex quo enim studium illud, ut legitur, ab Alcuino preceptore Caroli regis institutum est, nunquam – quod audierim – parisiensis quisquam ibi vir clarus fuit; si qui fuerunt, externi utique et – nisi odium barbari oculos perstringeret – magna ex parte itali fuere: Petrus Lombardus Novariensis […]; Thomas de Aquino, Bonaventura de Balneo Regio atque Egidius Romanus multique alii," PETRARCA *c maled It* p.1220.

[18] "At ne semper accusem, excusabiles Gallos non negaverim, si modice literati sunt. Nempe contra naturam niti, sepe labor est irritus. Natura autem Galli sunt indociles," PETRARCA *c maled It* p.1220.

Petrarch allowed himself to indulge in some exaggerated mirth, but as I have shown we find the same attacks on France as a cultural nation elsewhere in his writings, together with the praise of Italy's cultural achievements.[19]

Giovanni Boccaccio

Petrarch's friend and follower, Giovanni Boccaccio (1313–1375), mentions that Petrarch often had to defend his work against the Gauls,[20] but he himself was far less polemical. Boccaccio originally wrote mainly in the vernacular, but after meeting Petrarch in 1351 and reading his Latin epistles, Boccaccio increasingly relinquishes the vernacular to write almost exclusively in Latin. Moreover, it is in his Latin works that we find most of his metadiscursive statements regarding the cultural project he became part of through Petrarch's influence.

Boccaccio touches upon many of the themes we have already discussed: the conception of a previous period of cultural darkness that would to some degree be dispelled during his own time through the reawakening of the *studia humanitatis*; the idea that the corruption leading to this cultural weakening of the Latin West was due to foreign influence; and that the present cultural reawakening was caused by Italians.

In his early life of Petrarch (*De vita et moribus Domini Francisci Petracchi de Florentia*, 1341), Boccaccio describes the ceremony in 1341 when Petrarch was crowned poet laureate on the Capitoline Hill in Rome, a ceremony that according to Boccaccio had not taken place since the Roman poet Statius had been crowned with the laurel by the Emperor Domitian.[21] Boccaccio thus emphasizes that Petrarch's coronation was the equivalent of a ceremony that had taken place in ancient Rome – but not in the meantime. He mentioned Petrarch's coronation some years later in the *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, praising him as someone to be "counted rather among the illustrious men of old than among the moderns".[22]

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[19] There is an amusing analysis especially of Petrarch's attacks on the French as a part of rising Italian nationalism in Hirschi 2012, Ch. 7.2. "Barbarising the French or how Italian humanists successfully fought reality".

[20] "Et sic, ne per cuncta discurram, oportuit eum sepissime fatigare calamum in sui suorumque carminum defensionem adversus plerosque cisalpinos gallos et alios," BOCCACCIO *ep* 19 (*a.* 1372) to Pietro da Monteforte.

[21] "[...] in urbe romana celsoque Capitolio [...] eum (*i.e. Petrarch*) in poetam laurea corona solenniter coronavit; [...] Quod quidem ibidem fieri non ante contigerat a coronatione dignissima Statii Pampinei Surculi tolosani, qui anno ab Urbe condita DCCCXXXIIII sub Domitiano Cesare creditur coronatu," BOCCACCIO *vita Pet* p. 241.

[22] "Et Franciscum Petrarcam [...] inter veteres illustres viros numerandum potius quam

Again in *De mulieribus claris* (On famous women, 1361), in the preface to Andrea Acciaiuoli, Boccaccio described Petrarch as someone who took up, so to speak, where the ancients had left off:

> Long ago there were a few ancient authors who composed biographies of famous men in the form of compendia, and in our day that renowned man and great poet, my teacher Petrarch, is writing a similar work that will be even fuller and more carefully done.[23]

Boccaccio himself was of course doing the same thing, writing series of lives, both in *De mulieribus claris* and in *De casibus virorum illustrium* (On the fates of famous men, 1355–1374), but he implies that no one had used this form, which he praises in the preface, between his own time and that of Cornelius Nepos, Suetonius or the *Historia Augusta.*

Boccaccio saw himself and Petrarch as following in the footsteps of the Ancients, and like Petrarch he saw this revival of *litterae*, of good letters, as something specifically Italian. Boccaccio's life of *Carmenta*, who invented the Latin alphabet, contains a eulogy of Latin, which in some respect anticipates Lorenzo Valla's famous preface to the *Elegantiae*. Latin had bestowed great gifts on the Roman civilization, some of which

> we (*the Italians*) have lost, others we have given away, and some we still preserve, in name at least, if not in practice. But regardless of the effects of fortune and our neglect of these other gifts, neither the rapacity of the Germans, nor the fury of the Gauls, nor the wiles of the English, nor the ferocity of the Spaniards, nor the rough barbarity and insolence of any other nation has been able to take away from the Latin name this great, marvellous and fitting glory.[24]

Though Boccaccio expressed himself less fiercely than Petrarch, we recognize the Italians' claim to be the only true heirs of ancient Rome and accordingly to have an innate cultural priority over other nations, among them the French. It is also evident that to Boccaccio Italian cultural leadership was intimately bound up with Latin language and literature. In this, as we have seen, he is in perfect accordance with Petrarch and with many

inter modernos, induco," BOCCACCIO *gen* 15,6.

[23] "Scripsere iamdudum nonnulli veterum sub compendio de viris illustribus libros; et nostro evo, latiori tamen volumine et accuratiori stilo, vir insignis et poeta egregius Franciscus Petrarca, preceptor noster, scribit; et digne," BOCCACCIO *mul praef* 1.

[24] "Ceterum ex tam egregiis dotibus quedam perdidimus, quedam dedimus et nonnulla adhuc fere nomine potius quam effectu tenemus. Verum, quomodocunque de ceteris nostro crimine a fortuna actum sit, nec germana rapacitas, nec gallicus furor, nec astutia anglica, nec hispana ferocitas, nec alicuius alterius nationis inculta barbaries vel insultus, hanc tam grandem, tam spectabilem, tam oportunam latino nomini gloriam surripuisse potuit unquam," BOCCACCIO *mul* 27,15–16.

fifteenth-century humanists. The reassertion of Italian cultural leadership in Europe, after the intervening period of cultural darkness, was bound to the revival of the literary forms and linguistic idioms of ancient Rome.

Fifteenth-century humanism

In the writing of later fifteenth-century humanists, disparaging remarks about French culture and attempts to safeguard the ancient cultural heritage against any French proprietary claims abound – but suffice it here to mention a couple of examples:

In a letter of 1406 in which he discussed various solecisms in contemporary Latin, Coluccio Salutati asks where one would come across them if not with the French, whose Latin is the pinnacle of barbarism?[25] Leonardo Bruni wanted to defend Virgil against the iniquity of being born in a city at some point colonized by the Gauls – as some people viciously maintained; no, Mantua was founded by the Etruscans and gained its strength from this fact. The Gauls may have come there, but they were not a factor.[26]

In the letter where Guarino hailed the beginnings of a 'Roman Age' inaugurated by the return of Greek learning to Italy (see above n. 10), he also explained why things had been so bad: Latin letters, he said, had been asleep and covered in darkness ("studia ipsa humanitatis obdormissent iacentis in tenebris"), because

> people did not heed "Cicero, who more than anyone else was the father of Roman eloquence", and from whose tongue, at the time of our ancestors, "speech flowed sweeter than honey". From his speech Italy had created an image of how to speak, as from a mirror.[27]

The linguistic corruption set in when Italy instead of Cicero "devoured various Prosperos, *Eva Columba* and *Chartulae*, coming from God knows where, [and] a rough and uncouth style of speaking and writing develop-

[25] "nunquam, fatebor enim ingenue, potui videre talis ignorantie rationem, nisi quod apud Gallos, quibus latinitatis est summa barbaries," SALVTATI *ep* 14,24 (*a.* 1406)

[26] "Nam qui dicunt, Mantuam conditam quidem ab initio a Tuscis, sed posteris temporibus una cum Tuscis conditoribus Gallos, et Venetos habitare coepisse, hi non multum satisfaciunt. [...] tamen id remanet Mantuam ab initio conditam fuisse a Tuscis, et postmodum alias quoque gentes in civitatem receptas ita tamen, ut Tusci dominarentur, atque praeessent. Hoc enim signant verba illa: *Ipsa caput populis; Tusco de sanguine vires* ? (Verg. *Aen*. 10,203): idest robur et potentia Tusci sanguinis. Restat ergo utcumque tandem verseris Mantuam a Tuscis conditam fuisse," BRVNI *ep* 4,13 (10,25 M.) (*a.* 1418).

[27] "Ignorabatur 'romani maximus auctor Tullius eloquii' (LVCAN. *civ*. 7,62), cuius ex lingua penes maiores nostros 'melle dulcior fluxerat oratio' (CIC. *Cato* 31,16), a qua velut e speculo Italia dicendi formarat imaginem," GVARINO *ep* 862 (*a.* 1452)..

ed".[28] Guarino here criticises the influence from some very widespread scholastic grammars, namely that of Prospero of Aquitania, and two named after their *incipits*, *Eva Columba* and *Chartula*. According to Guarino they were responsible for the barbaric Latin found in the preceding centuries, and they were foreign! *Prospero* was actually French. Guarino was, as we have seen, optimistic about the contemporary development of Latin. We may assume that this development was due to the fact that not only did the study of Cicero flourish; to some degree, at least, Italian-produced Latin grammars, among them Guarino's own, replaced the French scholastic grammars.[29]

Lorenzo Valla

Valla's (1404–1457) famous preface to the *Elegantiae* is not only one of the most eloquent statements about the humanists' linguistic project, it is also an exquisitely elegant critique of French influence on Latin. Valla addresses his fellow citizens – anybody interested in *studia humanitatis* – asking:

> *Quousque tandem, Quirites* ... How long, citizens, will you endure that your city – and I don't mean the seat of the Empire but the parent of letters – is held captive by the Gauls?[30]

Valla's *quousque tandem* of course alludes to Cicero's first Catilinarian speech, held in a situation where there was an overwhelming danger of a *coup d'état* in Rome. In the following he refers to the so-called 'Gallic catastrophe': around 390 BC the Gauls invaded and sacked Rome; afterwards the city was rebuilt by Camillus. The choice of metaphor shows how central the linguistic aspect was to the humanists' project, and it is hardly without significance that Valla chose an image where the Gauls are the enemy. As we have seen, Italian humanists from Petrarch onwards regularly accused the French of lack of learning, uncouth manners, and barbaric Latin. In the preface to the *Elegantiae* the French held Latin culture captive, and a new Camillus was needed to free it.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article, I referred to John Monfasani's definition of the Renaissance as the period during which Italian cultural forms substituted

[28] "cum Prosperos, Evas Columbas et Chartulas irrumpentes quaquaversum imbuta absorbuisset Italia, quaedam germinabat dicendi et scribendi horrens et inculta barbaries," GVARINO *ep* 862 (*a.* 1452).

[29] See Pade 2014 (2–5).

[30] "Quousque tandem, Quirites [...] urbem vestram, non dico domicilium imperii, sed parentem litterarum a Gallis esse captam patiemini?" VALLA *eleg* 1, *praef* 35.

French ones in Europe. In his description of this development, Monfasani stated that from a less prominent position before the fourteenth century, Italy surged to cultural leadership in Europe by the late fifteenth century, displacing traditional French cultural leadership; the end of the Renaissance was the reassertion of French cultural leadership in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. His article, which has inspired this paper, does not focus especially on the reasons for this development. What I have tried to show here is that more than a century before the high Renaissance, when Italy had become the leading cultural power of Europe, Italian humanists were claiming their birthright, as they saw it, to this cultural leadership. In doing so they were perfectly aware that the enemy they had to defeat were the French: they were writing *in Gallos.*

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