

CHAPTER 1

Lapo's Life and Work

In the years that preceded the more or less permanent reentry of Pope Eugenius IV into Rome, the Renaissance humanist movement was in the middle of an interesting phase. At that time a large component of its members consisted of intellectuals who lacked fixed institutional places. Humanism—this new *ars* whose curricular focus was the *studia humanitatis*—had still to find its place in society and was dependent largely on patrons. One practitioner of this new art was the Florentine Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger, who died in 1438 at the age of thirty-three. One of his most interesting cultural bequests to us is a treatise that he wrote in the year of his death, entitled *De curiae commodis*, or *On the Benefits of the Curia*. In this dialogue, Lapo offers us a portrait of the papal curia that is written elegantly, learnedly, earnestly, and even angrily. It is a human document that is alive with information not only for intellectual historians but for social and cultural historians as well. The goal of this study is to discuss this dialogue in its intellectual and social contexts. A critical edition of the Latin text along with an annotated English translation follows the discussion.

This first chapter offers an examination of Lapo's life and work, followed by a brief look at the historiography on the dialogue. Chapter 2 deals with the literary context of the dialogue and examines a complicated passage on the virtues, which I believe can serve as an interpretive key for the piece as a whole. Chapter 3 has a twofold theme: Lapo's self-presentation as a papal propagandist and, linked to this, his defense of wealth in the *De curiae commodis*. Chapter 4 presents concluding thoughts, and chapter 5 offers an introduction to the text and translation.

Lapo was born in 1406 into a family of the feudal aristocracy, whose name remained intact but whose financial situation was not what it once

had been.¹ The family's most famous fourteenth-century member was Lapo the Elder, an acquaintance of Petrarch, noted jurist, and major participant in the events leading up to the 1378 revolt of the Ciompi.² His lifelong defense of the rights and privileges of the aristocracy led during that crisis to the burning of the family estate and to his exile.³ Although Lapo the Elder died in 1381 in Rome, Lapo the Younger must have grown up in the shadow of his family history.

Most of the data of Lapo's life have to be reconstructed from his self-collected letters and the prefaces of his various works,⁴ where the preponderance of what we find consists of references to his humanistic career. The 1430s, consequently, are the years about which we know the most.

At some point in the early 1430s he spent time in Bologna, perhaps working for a family-owned banking concern.⁵ Humanistic studies, however, were without doubt his first love; what little we know of Lapo's life has to do for the most part with his continuous search for humanistic employment. For Lapo, as for most humanists, this type of search was conducted on the basis of what would today be called networking.

1. This overview relies, but is not exclusively based, on Fubini. For the date of Lapo's birth, see Fubini, 44.

2. See M. Palma, "Castiglionchio, Lapo da," *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 22 (1979): 40–44; P.J. Jones, "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 24 (1956): 182–205, at 191–92; M. Becker, *Florence in Transition* 2 vols. (Baltimore, 1967–68) 2:136–37, 144–46, and *ad indicem*; G. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence: Society, Culture, and Religion* (Goldbach, 1994), *ad indicem*. Lapo the Elder authored a number of influential juridical works, but his most important work with respect to the information it holds about fourteenth-century Florentine elite mentalities is his letter to his son Bernardo; see Lapo Castiglionchio the Elder, *Epistola o sia ragionamento di Messer Lapo da Castiglionchio*, ed. L. Mehus (Bologna, 1753).

3. Palma, "Castiglionchio," 42.

4. See the lengthy excerpts of these works in Luiso; there is a more complete edition, unfortunately unpublished, in E. Rotondi, "Lapo da Castiglionchio e il suo epistolario" (Tesi di laurea, Università di Firenze, Facoltà di magistero, 1970–71), cited in Fubini, 51. Since this thesis, however, is unavailable for photocopying or loan from the Biblioteca della Facoltà di Magistero (even on written request), I shall cite Lapo's letters either from Luiso's excerpts or from the Codex Ottobonianus in the BAV (Ottob. Lat. 1677), henceforth cited as O, with occasional recourse to the Parisinus (MS Paris BN Lat. 11,388), henceforth cited as Par. Lat. 11,388. Another important manuscript source for the letters is MS Como, Biblioteca Communale 4.4.6, for which see *Iter*, *ad loc*.

5. He may also have been in Bologna at some point in 1427, when a Florentine *cat-asto* record shows him as being absent from Florence (Fubini, 45).

Toward this end, perhaps the most important person whom Lapo encountered and with whom he studied was Francesco Filelfo.

Born in Tolentino, Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481) was an immensely learned humanist scholar who went to Constantinople for six years in the 1420s to study Greek, in the same fashion as Guarino Veronese and other early humanist pioneers had done. He was a professor from 1429 to 1434 at the Florentine *studium*, where he ran afoul of Niccolò Niccoli and Carlo Marsuppini. Subsequently—or perhaps consequently—he antagonized the Medici (of whom Niccoli and Marsuppini were strong allies) after Cosimo returned from exile to Florence in 1434.⁶

The alienation of Filelfo, Lapo's teacher and friend, from the main source of humanistic patronage in Florence is certainly one of the underlying reasons why Lapo was compelled to seek his fortunes elsewhere. In 1435 Lapo engaged in an interesting but abortive attempt to win Medicean favor, dedicating to Cosimo his translation of Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles*. Given the extensive discourse on exile in this *Life* and the fact that Cosimo himself was newly returned from exile, we can see this as a bold maneuver on Lapo's part, as he finds a way to level the playing field with Cosimo in a manner otherwise unthinkable.⁷ In any case this did not result in any subsequent connections between Lapo and

6. After his Florentine period came to its end with Cosimo's return, Filelfo moved to Siena. He was there until 1439. Thereafter he went on to become perhaps the single dominant personality in the humanist culture of Milan. Only in 1481 was he reconciled to the Medici, dying in Florence in July of that year. See in general A. Rabil, Jr., "Humanism in Milan," in *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, ed. A. Rabil, Jr., 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), 3:235–63, at 249–52. For Filelfo's life, see C. de' Rosmini, *Vita di Francesco Filelfo da Tolentino*, 3 vols. (Milan, 1808); D. Robin, *Filelfo in Milan, 1451–1477* (Princeton, 1991); eadem, "A Reassessment of the Character of Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 36 (1983): 202–24; G. Gualdo, "Francesco Filelfo e la curia pontificia: Una carriera mancata," *Archivio della Società Romana di Storia Patria* 102 (1979): 189–236. On Milanese culture in the second half of the fifteenth century, see E. Garin "L'età sforzesca dal 1450 al 1500," *Storia di Milano* 7, no. 4 (1955–56): 540–97.

7. See Celenza, "Parallel Lives," for a further elaboration of this argument. Recently Marianne Pade has begun excellent systematic work on Renaissance Plutarch translations. See her "Revisions of Translations, Corrections and Criticisms: Some examples from the Fifteenth-century Latin Translations of Plutarch's 'Lives,'" in *Etudes classiques IV: Actes du colloque "Méthodologie de la traduction: de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance,"* ed. C.M. Ternes (Luxembourg, 1994), 177–98; and eadem, "The Latin Translations of Plutarch's *Lives* in Fifteenth-century Italy and Their Manuscript Diffusion," in *The Classical Tradition in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. C. Leonardi and B.M. Olsen (Spoleto, 1995), 169–83.

the Medici. Later, in 1438, when Lapo was in Ferrara with the papal curia at the council, he would refuse to meet with Cosimo when Cosimo came to town, perhaps because of Cosimo's earlier failure to support him.⁸

In 1435 Lapo went with Filelfo to Siena, where he met with an influential circle of leaders in the humanist and Maecenean community. There he came into contact with Angelo da Recanate, with whom he remained a fast friend. At that time Angelo was the secretary of Cardinal G. Casanova, and in the summer of 1435 Lapo too came into the service of this cardinal, encouraged by Angelo.⁹

In affiliating himself with Cardinal Casanova, Lapo must have hoped to come into the orbit of Eugenius IV, as his letter of self-introduction to the cardinal makes explicit. Humbly presenting himself to Casanova, Lapo mentions that he has been preparing translations to dedicate to the pope. Knowing, however, of his own lowly status, he realizes that he needs a highly placed mediator to intercede for him.¹⁰ During his period of service to Cardinal Casanova, Lapo dedicated to Eugenius IV his translations of Plutarch's *Life of Solon* as well as Lucian's *De fletu* and *De somnio*.¹¹ In a contemporary letter to the pope, preparing him, as it were, to receive the coming translations, Lapo flatters Eugenius for his

8. For the refusal to meet Cosimo, see Lapo's letter to G. Bacci, 14 March 1438 (Rotondi, "Lapo da Castiglionchio," 275; Fubini, 46). The dedicatory preface is edited in Celenza, "Parallel Lives," 148–52; there is a partial translation in J. Hankins, "Cosimo de' Medici as a Patron of Humanistic Literature," in *Cosimo 'il Vecchio' de' Medici, 1389–1464: Essays in Commemoration of the Six Hundredth Anniversary of Cosimo de' Medici's Birth*, ed. F. Ames-Lewis (Oxford, 1992), 69–94, at 87; see also Hankins's discussion loc. cit. In the dedication Lapo writes, "and if I see that this work [i.e., the translation] is approved, I confess that I shall apply myself to more and greater work in your name. Be well" [et me si haec probari abs te percepero, plura ac maiora tuo nomine aggressurum esse profiteor. Vale] (Celenza, "Parallel Lives," 152).

9. For Angelo's encouragement, see Luiso, 212 ("Quare, cum flagitante Angelo tuo vel nostro potius . . ."). Lapo was employed as a letter writer (Fubini, 46–47).

10. "Iampridem mihi proposueram, quibuscumque rebus anniti atque efficere possem, summo Pontifici gratificari; ob eamque causam, cum accepissem illum his nostris studiis admodum delectari, et quaedam ex graecis interpretatus essem, ad eum mittere statueram. Verum ad id mihi dux quidam et princeps opus erat qui pro me hoc onus laboris officiique susciperet, eaque ad summum Pontificem deferret meque sanctitati suae commendaret ac ei omnem statum fortunasque meas et studia declararet. Hunc mihi diu perquirenti tu solus occurristi qui ad id ita idoneus visus es, ut, si ex omnibus unus mihi deligendus sit, neminem profecto habeam qui tecum aut studio aut voluntate aut facultate aut gratia conferendus sit" (Luiso, 211–12).

11. See, in Luiso, letters to Casanova (211–12) and Eugenius IV (213–14). See also Fubini, 47; Fubini corrects Luiso's dating.

well-known generosity¹² and his desire for Christian concord,¹³ and having gone through the *prooemium* and *exordium*, he comes to the *petitio* and asks for the pope's support. Lapo cannot offer the pope gold or jewels but rather offers "only" his whole heart and mind and whatever talent for words that he has.¹⁴ Conscious of the value of the wares he has to offer and of his need for patronage, Lapo makes his *petitio* with rhetoric as the *quid pro quo*.

Lapo's translations of Plutarch's *Life of Pericles* and Josephus's *On the Death of the Maccabees* (a part of *The Jewish Wars*) also belong to this period.¹⁵ Lapo dedicated *Pericles* to Giovanni Vitelleschi, who would become a cardinal in August 1437.¹⁶ The dedication ends with the leitmotiv of Lapo's search for patronage at the curia. Addressing Vitelleschi, he concludes, saying, "think well of me and, by your recommendation, make me as pleasing as possible to the pope. Be well."¹⁷

When Cardinal Casanova died in March 1436, closing off for Lapo an important channel to the higher echelons of curial patronage, Lapo dedicated his translations of Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* and *Life of Romulus* to Cardinal Prospero Colonna and became part of his household, then in Florence.¹⁸ This channel, too, disappeared for Lapo when Prospero went with the pope to Bologna in April of the same year. Lapo once again found himself in his *patria* without a source of income. A letter from this period to the then papal protonotary Gregorio Correr indicates Lapo's extreme frustration with his intractable housemates in the cardinal's *familia*.¹⁹

12. ". . . nemo adeo inops te adierit, quin auctus et locupletatus discesserit" (Luiso, 213).

13. See O, ff. 190–190v.

14. "Pro hoc [sc., the pope's support] tibi, pater beatissime, non aurum aut gemas pollicerer, quae nobis nulla sunt et tu minime expetis, sed—quod unum possumus—omnem animum et ingenium, hanc totam, quaecumque est, facultatem meam, hunc denique spiritum, hanc vocem tua ope praesidioque recreatam et confirmatam ad te ornandum et illustrandum libentissime conferemus" (Luiso, 214).

15. See the preface to the *De morte Macabeorum* in Luiso, 291–92.

16. Luiso, 291–92 n. 3. The dedicatee of the *De morte Macabeorum* is uncertain (*ibid.*).

17. ". . . me diligas et apud summum Pontificem tua commendatione quam gratiosum facias. Vale" (Luiso, 264–65).

18. See the dedication in Luiso, 268–71; Fubini, 47.

19. "Non de Principe haec loquor (est enim nemo melior, nemo probior, et ut vere possum affirmare, nemo humanior nec facilior), sed de illis qui eius domum frequentant, quorum ego, ne quid gravius dicam, inertiam, desidiā, barbaros et agrestes mores non modo nunquam sine stomacho et indignatione perferre, sed ne sine vomitu aspicere quidem potuissem" (letter to Correr, 4 May 1436, in Luiso, 218–20).

Subsequently Lapo hoped to succeed Filelfo at the *studium* of Siena (where the latter had been employed only a short time); but even this hope went unfulfilled, as he relates in a letter to Angelo da Recanate.²⁰ His distress is apparent, as he speaks of losing his fortune as a result of the bitter misfortunes of Florence, even as he had hoped to win acclaim by means of his constant humanistic labors. Now he must bear his poverty only with the help of others.²¹

He made an unsuccessful try at becoming a part of the court of Alfonso of Aragon, to whom he dedicated his translations of Plutarch's *Life of Fabius Maximus* and Isocrates' *Nicocles* and *Ad Nicoclem*.²² He even sought patronage—unsuccessfully—from Cardinal Giuliano Cesarini, then in Basel advocating the conciliarist position.²³

During this difficult period, he sought and received epistolary encouragement from Leonardo Bruni.²⁴ One of Bruni's letters to Lapo illustrates the manner in which humanists discussed the search for patronage among themselves.²⁵ Bruni urges Lapo "ad constantiam, perseverantiam, et durationem" and goes on to say that he himself has had experience with the papal curia and has come to know that "whoever perseveres and lasts can have for himself the most certain of hopes of obtaining what he desires" but that "if he lacks perseverance and [his] haste [to leave] is

20. See the letter to Angelo da Recanate, 16 June 1436, in Luiso, 223–27, at 226–27.

21. *Ibid.*, 225: "Itaque qui sperabam his meis laboribus vigiliisque mihi ultro honores et praemia delatum iri, idem varie iactatus gravissimis et acerbissimis nostrae civitatis casibus, ne fortunarum quidem mearum statum incolumem retinere potui; sed bonis omnibus amissis aliunde opem et auxilium petere, et alienis copiis meam inopiam sustentare coactus sum. . . ." Lapo must be referring to the wealth of his family in general.

22. In a letter of 30 May 1436 to Antonius Panormita (i.e., Antonio Beccadelli) Lapo alludes to the translation of the *Life of Fabius Maximus* that he sent "ad regem." See the letter in Luiso, 222; Fubini, 48. For the Isocrates works, see A. Carlini, "Appunti sulle traduzioni latine di Isocrate di Lapo da Castiglionchio," *Studi classici e orientali* 19–20 (1970–71): 302–9, at 306.

23. See Lapo's letter to Cesarini, 11 September 1436, in Rotondi, "Lapo da Castiglionchio," 12; cit. Fubini, 48.

24. See Lapo's letter to Bruni in Luiso, 234–36. It was written sometime prior to November 1436, according to Luiso; Fubini (48) dates it 23 September.

25. See Bruni's letter of either VI idus mart. 1437 (1436, Florentine style)—according to O, f. 205—or VI kal. mart. 1437—according to MS Ravenna, Bibl. Classense, 182 f. 115v. The letter is edited in Leonardo Bruni, *Epistolarum libri VIII*, ed. L. Mehus, 2 vols. (Florence, 1741), at bk. X, letter 9; here and elsewhere in the Bruni *epistolario*, see the comments *ad loc.* of F. P. Luiso in *Studi su l'epistolario di Leonardo Bruni*, ed. L.G. Rosa, Studi storici, Istituto storico italiano per il medio evo, fascicles 122–24 (Rome, 1980).

untimely, the thing disappears in the middle of its course." Bruni continues:

do not, therefore, find fault with the beginnings, even if they don't agree exactly enough with your desire; rather, embrace the highest hope, [so that you may attain] such future things as you desire, if you persevere. Let your studies—in which all hope of your status ought to be placed—grow night and day, and do not cease to gain for yourself the friendship and acquaintanceship of older and younger men. For you, this will be surest way of future greatness and worth. Be well.²⁶

Finally Lapo seemed on the verge of success when, through the influence of Lodovico Trevisan, a papal *cubicularius* and the bishop of Traù, he received an appointment to teach rhetoric and moral philosophy at the *studium* of Bologna.²⁷ Elegant speeches given in Bologna in November 1436 as *prolusiones* to his academic employment there belong to this episode.²⁸ But once again success managed to elude Lapo, as illness prevented him from taking the position. He recounted to Bruni that he acceded to the recommendations of doctors who, on account of his "slenderness of body and weakness," had persuaded him not to continue with his post at the *studium* but to seek rest. He goes on to say that he did this unwillingly, because he knew that vacating his post would hurt his reputation.²⁹

Nevertheless, his friend Angelo da Recanate remained a supporter,

26. Letter cited in previous note: "Expertus equidem sum omnia, omnia curiae huiusmodi negotia esse, ut qui perseveret et duret, certissimam sibi spem repromittere possit optato potiundi. Quod si perseverantia desit et immatura sit properatio, in medio cursu res evanescit. Noli ergo principia incusare, etsi non satis tuo desiderio correspondent, sed spem optimam complectere, futura, si perseveras, qualia tu exoptas. Studia vero tua—in quibus omnis spes tui status reposita esse debet—noctu dieque augeantur et familiaritates ac notitias maiorum ac minorum hominum tibi conciliare ne cesses. Haec erit tibi via certissima amplitudinis atque dignitatis futurae. Vale." Lapo's response to this letter can be read in Luiso, 242–45.

27. See Lapo's letter to Trevisan, 19 November 1436, in Rotondi, "Lapo da Castiglionchio," 157; Fubini, 48.

28. They are edited in K. Müllner, *Reden*, 129–42.

29. Letter to Bruni, 23 March 1437, in Luiso, 242–45, at 244: ". . . quia medici ob gracilitatem corporis et imbecillitatem mihi eum laborem deponere suadebant, et me ad aliquam remissionem vacationemque conferre, decrevi ab incepto desistere. Itaque invitatus feci, quia eam rem mihi dedecori futuram sciebam, nec mediocrem opinionem imperitiae et tarditatis excitaturam esse apud eos qui omnia ad suam libidinem interpretantur. . . ." See also Lapo's letter to Trevisan, 19 November 1436 (cited in n. 27 supra), as well as his letter to Francesco Patrizi, 3 December 1436, in Rotondi, "Lapo da Castiglionchio," 169; cit. Fubini, 48.

and through his efforts Lapo was associated in Bologna with Giacomo Venier, a *clericus camerae* (cleric of the papal chamber). Lapo spent almost the entire year helping to manage Venier's household when the cleric was away in Avignon in the early part of 1437.³⁰ By this time Lapo had also come to know Lorenzo Valla, whom Lapo describes in a letter to Francesco Patrizi as "a good man and one with whom I am very good friends." Lapo says to Patrizi, "he [Valla] is most attached to me because of our intimate friendship and is highly learned in both Latin and Greek."³¹ While Lapo may have been exaggerating the state of his friendship with Valla, there must have been something to his claim, since Valla was kind enough to transport this letter of Lapo to Patrizi.³²

In December 1437 we find Lapo still in Bologna. During this period, and certainly toward the end of his stay at the house of Venier, Lapo must have been thinking of making English contacts. It was not unknown among humanists in the 1430s that Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, was willing in various ways to patronize Italian humanists.³³ Indeed, in 1437 Leonardo Bruni completed his translation of Aristotle's *Politics* for the duke.³⁴ Tito Livio Frulovisio (by late 1436 or early 1437) and Antonio Beccaria (by October 1438 at the latest) were actually able to find work in England with the duke,³⁵ owing largely to the intervention of Piero del Monte.³⁶

30. Fubini, 48.

31. "Vir bonus et summa mecum amicitia, usu ac familiaritate coniunctissimus, et cum graecis tum latinis litteris adprime eruditus." See G. Castelli, "Nuove lettere di Lapo da Castiglionchio il Giovane" (Tesi di laurea, Università Cattolica Milano, 1966-67), cit. in XX-XXIII; Lorenzo Valla, *Epistole*, ed. O. Besomi and M. Regoliosi (Padua, 1984), 152-53.

32. The letter of Patrizi to Lapo, 22 April (X kal. maias) 1437 (Par. Lat. 11,388, f. 758; cf. Luiso, 247-48), mentions that "Laurentius romanus iam pridem una cum tuis litteris mihi reddidit."

33. See A. Sammut, *Unfredo Duca di Gloucester e gli umanisti italiani*, Umanesimo 4 (Padua, 1981); R. Weiss, *Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century*, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1957), especially chaps. 3 and 4, on Humphrey; K.H. Vickers, *Humphrey Duke of Gloucester* (London, 1907).

34. Weiss, *England*, 46-49. The association of Bruni and Humphrey would not last long and did not bloom into a patron-client relationship. With the translation of the *Politics*, the story came to an end (ibid.).

35. See R. Sabbadini, "Tito Livio Frulovisio: Umanista del sec. XV," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 103 (1934): 55-81; T. Livii de Frulovisiis de Ferraria, *Opera hactenus inedita*, ed. C.W. Previtè-Orton (Cambridge, 1932), cited in Sabbadini, op. cit., 56. On Frulovisio's dramas, see W. Ludwig, *Schriften zur neulateinischen Literatur*, ed. L. Braun (Munich, 1989), 70-97. For Beccaria, in addition to Weiss, *England, ad indicem*, see R. Weiss, "Per la biografia di Antonio Beccaria in Inghilterra," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 110 (1937): 344-46.

36. Weiss, "Per la biografia."

In Bologna in 1437 Lapo heard of the duke's generosity, through the praises of the duke and his patronage by Zenone da Castiglione, the bishop of Bayeux since 1432.³⁷ Sometime during 1437, directly encouraged by Zenone, and perhaps indirectly inspired by Brunni's slight contact with the duke, Lapo sent the duke as samples of his work the *Comparatio inter rem militarem et studia litterarum* together with some translations of Isocrates.³⁸ Then, in December 1437, still in Bologna, he put the finishing touches on his translation of Plutarch's *Life of Artaxerxes*, which he dedicated to the duke.³⁹ But no immediate success followed this attempt to win the duke's patronage. It is difficult to say whether Lapo eventually would have had success, since he died about nine months later.

Shortly after his attempts to gain Duke Humphrey's patronage and with the help of Leonardo Brunni, Lapo entered the service of Francesco Condulmer (who would later be the dedicatee of the *De curiae commodis*) and accompanied him to Ferrara and to the church council there, which was just beginning.⁴⁰ Still, no important office came Lapo's way. He was dissatisfied, after the council's beginning, to be closed up in the pontifical palace of Ferrara, translating conciliar documents from Greek to Latin and receiving "merces nulla" for his efforts.⁴¹

It is uncertain how it occurred, but in this period Lapo was placed in the service of his respected friend Cardinal Giordano Orsini, whom he had known since at least September 1436 and whose passing he would lament at the beginning of the *De curiae commodis*.⁴² Lapo dedicated his translation of Plutarch's *Life of Publicola* to the cardinal, with praise in classic humanist terms.⁴³ After a trip with Lapo to the baths of Siena,

37. See Weiss, *England*, 49–50; and see the literature cited there. Zenone was a student of the famous pedagogue Gasparino Barzizza, on whom see R.G.G. Mercer, *The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza* (London, 1979); G. Martellotti, "Barzizza, Gasparino," *Dizionario biografico degli Italiani* 7 (1965): 34–39.

38. Weiss, *England*, 50–51.

39. See F, at f. 1, also cited in Luiso, 275 n. 3. For more on the translation of the *Vita Artaxerxis*, see Celenza, "Parallel Lives."

40. For literature on the Council of Ferrara-Florence, see chap. 3 of this study.

41. See the letter to G. Bacci, 12 February 1438, in Rotondi, "Lapo da Castiglionechio," 302 et seq.; Fubini, 48.

42. On Orsini, see E. König, *Kardinal Giordano Orsini †1438: Ein Lebensbild aus der Zeit der großen Konzilien und des Humanismus*, Studien und Darstellungen aus dem Gebiete der Geschichte, vol. 5, pt. 1 (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1906). For a study and critical edition of the cardinal's testament, see C.S. Celenza, "The Will of Cardinal Giordano Orsini (ob. 1438)," *Traditio* 51 (1996): 257–86.

43. See Celenza, "The Will," 264.

Cardinal Orsini died in May 1438,⁴⁴ after which Lapo returned to Ferrara and the household of Cardinal Condulmer, to whom he dedicated his last work.

It was during the summer of that year, in fact, that Lapo wrote the *De curiae commodis*. As he says (IX.15),

I, Lapo, finished this at the Council of Ferrara in the Palazzo Maggiore on Monday, the seventh day before the calends of September [26 August], after the third hour of the night, in the year of our Lord 1438.

The last months of Lapo's life are still a mystery. Perhaps he followed in practice the suggestion of Angelo da Recanate—which he seems to have been debating in the dialogue—to leave the curia and pursue intellectual leisure, *otium*, elsewhere. Despite his seeming estrangement from the Medici, Lapo may have thought he could do this in Florence, since Filelfo, in a letter of 30 September, had recommended him to Bruni.⁴⁵ But in October—according, at least, to the frontispiece in the autograph manuscript on which our edition is based—Lapo, aged thirty-three years old, died in Venice of plague.⁴⁶ As if by the echo of Lapo's desire alone, a half-century after his death Vespasiano da Bisticci, the well-known

44. See the preface to the *De curiae commodis*.

45. Filelfo *Epist.* II.44 (entire letter): “Francesco Filelfo sends greetings to Leonardo of Arezzo. Although I know that all my associates are—even without any recommendation from me—very well cared for by you, nevertheless let me not neglect to ask and even to request urgently of you that—if you are well disposed toward me—you do whatever will be in your power to make our Lapo, a thoroughly learned and literate man, understand that my recommendation carries great weight with you. Be well. From Siena, 30 September 1438” [FRANCISCUS PHILELPHUS LEONARDO ARRETINO S(ALUTEM). Quamquam scio meos omnes familiares, vel nulla mea commendatione tibi esse commendatissimos, non tamen omittam quin abs te petam atque contendam ut, si me ames, Lapum nostrum perdoctum et perdisertum virum quibuscumque rebus poteris ita tractes ut intelligat meam apud te commendationem plurimum valuisse. Vale. Ex Sena Pridie Kal. Octob. MCCCCXXXVIII].

46. See F, f. iii^v: “Mori nella cit<t>à di Vinegia, anno MCCCCXXXVIII, del mese d'ot<t>obre d'età d'an<n>i XXXIII di morbo.” This is partially cited in Fubini, 50. Fubini suggests that at that point Lapo “left the curia definitively.” See *ibid.*: “Poco dopo la stesura del dialogo, secondo le esortazioni quivi attribuite ad A. da Recanati, il C. lasciò definitivamente la Curia. In settembre era nuovamente a Firenze, dove per lettera del 30 il Filelfo lo raccomandava a L. Bruni.” Fubini cites Filelfo's letter (as in n. 45 *supra*), but the letter of recommendation does not mean necessarily that Lapo gave up hope of ever pursuing a curial career or that he was in Florence for all that long. Moreover, he died soon after the writing of the dialogue in “Vinegia”—Venice, not Florence, at least according to the frontispiece in F, which Fubini, too, follows.

fifteenth century biographer and bookseller, believed that Lapo was on the verge of becoming a secretary to Eugenius. But documentation by which we can ascertain the truth of that presumption is lacking.⁴⁷

Although he may have planned to find support for his humanistic labors in Florence, Lapo searched mainly for work in the environment of the papal curia. While the curia, like most other institutions, was in a process of continuous evolution, the 1430s and 1440s were crucial years. Paradoxically, the *curia Romana* was still not permanently at home in Rome and thus must have seemed—as an institution in flux—perfect prey for humanists seeking posts. The problem was that there simply were not all that many opportunities, as Lapo, to his dismay, may have begun to realize.

It has been observed that most humanists, if not already endowed with the traditional accoutrements of social and economic enfranchisement, attempted to avail themselves of those things.⁴⁸ In addition, to find *otium* for their literary pursuits, humanists inevitably made concessions to provide for necessities. Secretaries, pedagogues, lawyers, learned courtiers, hired pens of all sorts—these were some of the employment options available. In the papal curia of the 1430s, the positions suited for Lapo would have included those of *scriptor*, abbreviator, and apostolic secretary.

The most realistic position to hope for would have been that of *scriptor*, one of the paths to advancement within the curia. As later thinkers would be, Lapo was fascinated (if somewhat put off) by the relative upward mobility in the curia.⁴⁹ The *scriptores litterarum apostolicarum* were located, institutionally, in the chancery, the administrative branch of the curia. On the whole the chancery was the most likely place in the papal curia for humanists to find employment, since the skills required there were the ones they possessed. The chancery was responsible for the

47. Vespasiano da Bisticci, ed. Greco (at I, 582) mentions that Lapo “et ebbe da papa Eugenio ch’egli fusse suo segretario, et non so che altro ufficio.” Vespasiano goes on: “et era tanto amato in corte et da cardinali et da altri prelati, che, s’egli fussi vivuto, arebbe aquistata qualche dignità maggiore in corte di Roma.”

48. The four main features were “financial status, public office, . . . marriage, . . . [and] claim to a Florentine family tradition.” See L. Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390–1460* (Princeton, 1963), 10 and passim.

49. For one such later thinker, see G.F. Commendone, *Discorso sopra la corte di Roma*, ed. C. Mozzarelli (Rome, 1996), cited and discussed in P. Partner, *The Pope's Men: The Papal Civil Service in the Renaissance* (Oxford, 1990), 17–18. I have been unable to locate the edition of D. Rota cited in Partner.

issuance of many different papal bulls, as well as papal briefs, which were a comparatively new way to bypass the longer, more formal process involved in issuing a bull. The brief, especially, offered the humanists a chance to use their rhetorical skill to advantage, since it was a relatively new and thus somewhat malleable form. Within the chancery, the *scriptores* were responsible for copying out chancery-issued documents, so a command of Latin and well-honed calligraphical skills were requisite. In the time of Eugenius IV there were 101 of them.⁵⁰ This was occasionally a first stop for humanists in the chancery.⁵¹ Among humanists who at one time held the post of *scriptor* are Leonardo Bruni, Poggio Bracciolini, Cencio de' Rustici, Cristoforo Garatone, and, later, George of Trebizond.⁵²

The abbreviators were also located within the chancery. They were responsible for producing short versions from papal bulls that would contain the essential facts once decisions had been made.⁵³ In Lapo's day the abbreviators functioned as an annex to the *scriptores*, and they were not permanently organized into their own separate college until the pontificate of Sixtus IV.⁵⁴ Although later in the century the college of abbreviators would include some humanists,⁵⁵ in Lapo's day few humanists held this position.⁵⁶

The post of apostolic secretary would certainly have been the most desirable for a humanist, since it commanded a significant amount of power in its own right, as well as offering direct access to the pope. In general the institution of the secretary was one whose star was on the ascendant in late medieval European governments, and the Roman curia was in step with this trend. The office had evolved in the fourteenth cen-

50. Bresslau, 1:304.

51. D'Amico, 29; Bresslau, 1:307–8; B. Schwarz, *Die Organisation kurialer Schreiberkollegien von ihrer Entstehung bis zur Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen, 1972), 179.

52. Hoffman, 2:107–12.

53. Usually these were matters relating to a supplication. See D'Amico, 26.

54. Hoffman, 1:121–28, 2:28; D'Amico, 26–28. The *collegium abbreviatorum apostolicorum* was created by Pius II, dissolved by Paul II, and reconstituted by Sixtus IV. For the different divisions of abbreviators and their specific function, see D'Amico, 29.

55. D'Amico, 28.

56. Bruni, Poggio, and Andrea da Firenze at one time held this office. See Hoffman, 2:105–12.

tury, as it became necessary to bypass the sometimes cumbersome chancery procedures for issuing letters.⁵⁷

Aspects of the secretariate were shared between the apostolic chancery (the *cancellaria apostolica*) and the apostolic chamber (the *camera apostolica*).⁵⁸ The chamber functioned as the finance department of the curia.⁵⁹ A secretary would take his oath of office and receive his stipend from the chamber.⁶⁰ But the functions that secretaries fulfilled were much more often connected with those of the chancery, the curia's administrative branch.

Despite the appeal of such an office, Lapo's odds at becoming a secretary would have been long, since with hindsight we can see that the number of humanists who attained posts as secretaries was small, especially for humanists without independent means, as the tendency toward venality in the chancery was growing (even if secretarial venality was not officially instituted until Innocent VIII's 1487 creation of a college of secretaries).⁶¹ In Lapo's lifetime the average number of secretaries was six, and there was also a secretary especially close to the pope—eventually called a *secretarius secretus*, *domesticus*, or *intimus* or even a secretary *a secretis*—who functioned as a personal secretary to the pope and resided in the papal household. It is generally thought that the first time this office is explicitly mentioned is during the pontificate of Nicholas V (1447–55), when Petrus de Noxeto is spoken of as a “secretarius secre-

57. Partner, *Pope's Men*, 42. One sees in the time of John XXII (1316–34) and perhaps even of Clement V (1305–14) that there was in the papal *familia* a *scriptor domini nostri*. In 1333 there are three of them, and in 1341 they are called *secretarii*. See Bresslau, 1:312–13; Hoffman, 1:142.

58. See Partner, *Pope's Men*, 26.

59. The chamber would collect “from spiritual and temporal sources monies due to the Holy See, such as annates and Peter's pence; [direct] the Pope's personal finances; and [govern] the papal states” (D'Amico, 24). Other officers in the chamber included its head, the chamberlain (*cardinal camerarius*); the treasurer general of the Roman church (*thesaurarius generalis Ecclesiae Romanae*); and the *clerici camerae*, seven of which were active members (i.e., *de numero*) along with other supernumerary members with that same title. These all made up the *collegium camerae*. See *ibid.*

60. Hoffman, 1:143.

61. With the bull *Non debet reprehensibile* of 1487. See Bull. Rom., 5, 332; cit. Bresslau, 1:325. The asking price for the office in 1487 was 2,600 ducats; see Partner, *Pope's Men*, 54. The secretariate and other nonspiritual offices surrounding the curia were important sources of income for those who had them; the fees paid for them, however, functioned as a kind of funded debt for the curia. See D'Amico, 27.

tus”⁶²—even if it is recognized that the office existed in fact before this.⁶³ However, since Lapo speaks of Poggio Bracciolini as *pontificis maximi a secretis* in the *De curiae commodis* (V.5), and since Poggio was kept on by Eugenius as a secretary after having been reinstalled in the office by Martin V in 1423,⁶⁴ it seems reasonable to assume that Lapo’s 1438 mention of this office is the earliest we have and that Poggio was the domestic secretary of Eugenius IV, at least by 1438.

Another factor limiting the secretariat as a place for humanists to find employment was that it was not simply a post for a learned pen; a secretary was often used for diplomatic or political functions. If one did not command political astuteness and experience in addition to literary sophistication, it would have been difficult indeed to hope for this position.⁶⁵ Of the seventy-three secretaries named from the pontificate of Urban VI (1378–89) to that of Eugenius IV (1431–47), only twelve were humanists of note: Leonardo Bruni, Antonio Loschi, Iacopo degli Angeli da Scarperia, Gasparino Barzizza, Poggio Bracciolini, Cencio de’ Rustici, Andrea da Firenze, Flavio Biondo, Cristoforo Garatone, Giovanni Aurispa, George of Trebizond, and Enea Silvio Piccolomini.⁶⁶ It was really not until the second half of the Quattrocento, when humanism as an educational program became truly infixed in Italian culture, that the apostolic secretariat took on a predominantly humanist flavor.⁶⁷

Moreover, even in the early days of the Quattrocento, rivalry could be fierce for secretarial posts. Vespasiano reports an interesting competition for a position as apostolic secretary between Bruni and Iacopo degli Angeli during the pontificate of Innocent VII (1404–6). Each was pre-

62. Hoffman, 2:122.

63. *Ibid.*, 1:152.

64. This is directly after Poggio’s return from his three-year stay in England. See E. Walsler, *Poggius Florentinus: Leben und Werke* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1914; reprint, Hildesheim, 1974), 84–85. See also *ibid.*, 428, *ineditum* no. 2, where Poggio thanks Cosimo for his help at the curia, which Poggio heard about through Neri di Gino Capponi; it is true that the help is unspecified, but the letter as well as Tommaso da Rieti’s report indicate that Cosimo did help Poggio in getting his old position back. See *ibid.*, 85 n. 3. See also Hoffman, 2:110.

65. See Hoffman, 1:144.

66. I use the lists of secretaries in Hoffman, 2:105–22. For a study of the diplomatic missions of one of these secretaries, see L. Pesce, *Cristoforo Garatone trevigiano, nunzio di Eugenio IV* (Rome, 1975).

67. See D’Amico, 29–35. However, it might well be the case that the pontificate of Eugenius IV was a turning point of a sort. Of the twelve secretaries mentioned in text, the last six were appointees of Eugenius. Perhaps Lapo, with his customary astuteness, could sense that something was afoot, although his early death does not allow us to see how he might have negotiated the higher echelons of the curial environment.

sented with the task of writing a letter for the pope on the same topic. The two letters would be judged, and the one who wrote the better letter would be given the position. If we can believe Bruni's own report, his letter won the contest by the acclaim of all who listened, even those who had previously been among Iacopo's supporters.⁶⁸

Although Lapo and others comment on the possibility for upward mobility at the curia, it had only slightly the meritocratic organization one might associate with modern bureaucracies. While there are certainly examples of people who managed to work their way up the ladder in the curia, the vast majority of advancements occurred, as they did in other Italian courts, through networks of kinship and patronage (if one takes the word *kin* in its widest sense, to mean not only blood relations but also protegés of a powerful patron). Advancement was not always linear and did not function in the same way for all curialists. What distinguished the *curia Romana* from other courts, as Peter Partner has shown, was that it offered opportunity of access to the centers of power to "people who would not have had that opportunity in other Italian courts."⁶⁹ Lapo, cut off from Medici patronage, was certainly one of those people, so that the curia must have seemed an optimal place to establish new social networks that might at some point lead to support. The wide opportunities for lateral mobility that the larger curial ambient created were just as important as the slimmer opportunities for direct vertical mobility within the Roman curia itself.

In fact, while it may be the case that Lapo had his eye on an office within the administrative structure of the *curia Romana*, the rest of the curial environment is also important, for it offered the most opportunity for humanists in search of work. Of chief importance were the cardinals and their *familiae*. Although their number could vary slightly, the normal

68. See Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le vite*, ed. A. Greco, 2 vols. (Florence, 1970–74), 1:465–66. For Bruni's report, see his letter to Salutati in Bruni, *Epistolarum libri VIII*, I, II, cited by Greco at 465 n. 2: "Hic ego letatus mihi occasionem praestitam cum illo, ut optabam, in comparationem veniendi, rescripsi uti praeceptum fuerat, biduoque post constituto tempore meae illiusque litterae Pontifici, Patribusque recitatae sunt. Quibus lectis, quantum interesse visum sit, nescio, illud tantum scio, fautores illius, qui tam arroganter illum mihi praeferebant, aperte iam confiteri se falsa nimium opinione ductos errasse. Pontifex certe ipse mihi statim gratulatus, reiecto illo, me ad officium dignitatemque recepit." In any case this episode did not prevent Iacopo from being appointed secretary later by Alexander V (1409–10), a pope of the Pisan observance. See Hoffman, 2:108.

69. See P. Partner, "Ufficio, famiglia, stato: Contrasti nella curia Romana," in *Roma capitale (1447–1527)*, ed. S. Gensini (Pisa, 1994), 39–50, at 41.

number of cardinals was twenty-four, as stipulated by three of the four concordats between the papacy and various secular powers at the end of the Council of Constance.⁷⁰ Since the *familiae* of cardinals were micro-cosmically akin to the papal *familia*, they offered additional possibilities for patronage to humanists.⁷¹ For one humanist acquaintance of Lapo, Leonardo Dati (1408–72), service as a secretary to Cardinals Giordano Orsini and Pietro Barbo (a nephew of Eugenius IV) led eventually to an appointment as a papal secretary in 1455, in the service of Calixtus III.⁷² When the Venetian Barbo was elected pope as Paul II in 1464, Dati moved into the position of domestic secretary.⁷³ Similarly, Lapo was a protégé of Orsini and subsequently of a papal nephew; had he lived, might his career have followed a similar path? It is impossible to know, but there was one essential difference between the two men: Dati retained strong links to powerful people in Florence, whereas Lapo, the onetime ally of Filelfo, had seemingly lost all such ties irrevocably. In the world of the curia, any and all patronage networks one could utilize were essential. Even in Lapo's short career, estrangement from the Medici probably cost him greatly, since it limited the number of people to whom he could appeal for support.

The best hope for someone aspiring to a curial position at this time was to become attached to a powerful person, preferably of high rank. Lapo's manifold attempts at securing patronage demonstrate that he was obviously aware of this and that like a good fisherman, he had many lines in the water. In his search to find patrons, Lapo dedicated works not only to curialists but to many powerful people outside the Roman curia altogether. It is clear that, in the tradition of Petrarch, Lapo's prime motivation was to find a way to continue his humanistic pursuits.

70. See J.A.F. Thomson, *Popes and Princes, 1417–1517: Politics and Polity in the Late Medieval Church* (London, 1980), 65.

71. Cf. D'Amico, 38–60.

72. Lapo must have known Dati, since Francesco Patrizi, in a letter of 19 April 1436 from Siena, asks Lapo to send greetings to Dati. See O, f. 217. On Dati, see F. Flamini, "Leonardo di Piero Dati," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 16 (1890): 1–107; the *Life of Dati* in Bisticci, *Le vite*, 1:299–300; and the literature cited in D'Amico, 254 n. 138.

73. Hoffman, 2:123. In Gaspare da Verona's *De gestis Pauli secundi* (in Muratori, *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, III:XVI [Città di Castello, 1904], 3–64), he is spoken of as "a secretis pontificis maximi Pauli II illum unice amantis et magnificientis" (23) and as "secretario primo" (51).

Much of Lapo's work consisted of translations from Greek to Latin. For Lapo as for others of his generation, the works of Plutarch, especially the *Lives*, were very important when it came to seeking patronage.⁷⁴ Since the *Lives* were short, for a limited effort the translator would have a work suitable to send to a prospective patron. As a translator, Lapo was excellent and fluid, and he has been recognized as such by his own and later generations. He paid attention to Bruni's precepts regarding proper translation, and in addition he gave special attention to verse. In these senses Lapo was very much in step with his generation. However, Lapo's translations are also interesting beyond their technical features.

For Lapo, woven into the enterprise of translation was a web of ideological concerns. He chose his dedicatees carefully, and in offering the works to various patrons, he saw to it that not only his dedicatory prefaces but the translated material itself transmitted messages. Indeed, while the prefaces are often rather ordinary in their mix of sycophancy and moralism, a deeper level can be perceived if one judges the contents of the translated material in light of the perceived characteristics of the dedicatees. Lapo would often match the works he chose to translate to the character of the dedicatees; he even occasionally used the enterprise of translation to address to highly placed people comments that he never could have made in any other manner.

Although Lapo's translations are clearly his most lasting legacy, the other two aspects of his work, his self-collected letters and his prose treatises, also deserve attention. There has been a long-standing historiographical tendency to focus on the translations; for example, when Vespasiano da Bisticci discussed Lapo's work, he never mentioned by name any of Lapo's prose compositions.

He composed and translated many works, both of Lucian and of Plutarch as well as of others. He was quite well suited to this labor, and because of this, his works, wherever they went, acquired quite a reputation that lasts even until today.⁷⁵

74. The arguments in this paragraph and in the following paragraph are more fully developed in Celenza, "Parallel Lives."

75. "Compose et tradusse di molte opere, et di Luciano et di Plutarco et d'altri. Fu atissimo a questo exercicio, et acquistonne assai fama per tutto dove andorono l'opere sua, et ancora oggi dura." See Bisticci, *Le vite*, 1:581–83, at 582. In the last sentence of the *Life of Lapo* Vespasiano indicates that he had intended to give a list of the works Lapo had translated and composed: "L'opere tradutte et composte dallui quali

But in addition to the translations, Lapo arranged his letters for publication, in conformity with the custom of the time.⁷⁶ All of them offer a window into early Quattrocento humanism and afford us a glimpse into the mechanisms of Renaissance patronage, at least in its literary variety.⁷⁷

The letters are also important as sources for the development of Lapo's thought. Especially noteworthy along these lines is Lapo's lengthy letter to a Simone di Boccaccino Lamberti, which he placed at the head of his *epistolario*.⁷⁸ It is an exhortation to Simone, encouraging him in his recent decision to give up a military career in favor of a humanistic one. For the first time Lapo strongly emphasizes a theme that would become persistent throughout his work: the salutary power of the humanities and their character as a refuge against the ills of society.⁷⁹ This treatise also reflects and develops in germ many characteristic themes and tendencies in Lapo's thought.

One of these is a familiar, humanistically conditioned enthusiasm for disparaging modernity and making use of the well-worn topos of the golden age. In his arguments to convince Simone that giving up the military life is the right choice, Lapo inveighs against the scandalous practices of contemporary military personnel and compares them unfavorably with virtuous military leaders of both Greek and Roman antiquity. As foreshadowing, almost, of his later criticisms of the curialists, there is also criticism of the "delicacy" of the military leaders under discussion, of the manner in which they "effeminate."⁸⁰

arò notitia le metterò qui da piè." But the list does not appear in the authoritative manuscript on which Greco bases his edition. Moreover, in the traditional printed exemplars of *Le vite* this last sentence itself does not appear (see *ibid.*, 583 note b); thus the possibility of transmitting (through Vespasiano, at least) a title list of Lapo's works that would have included the prose works was obviated very early on.

76. Petrarch comes to mind, as does Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder, on whom see J. McManamon, *Pierpaolo Vergerio the Elder: The Humanist as Orator* (Tempe, 1996), 1. On the question of the ordering of Lapo's *epistolario*, see Luiso, 209–10. Discussing humanist epistolography, Georg Voigt recognized that the letters of Lapo were a "treasure that up until now has remained untouched" (*Die Wiederbelebung des klassischen Altertums oder das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus*, 2 vols. [Berlin, 1960], 2:417–36, at 435).

77. The Renaissance and patronage have been frequently discussed in recent scholarship. For a distillation of the literature and for bibliography, see Robin, *Filelfo in Milan*, 13–17. Among the citations, see the collected studies in F.W. Kent and P. Simons, eds., *Patronage, Art, and Society in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1987).

78. Luiso, 207.

79. Fubini, 46.

80. Par. Lat. 11,388, ff. 6v–9.

In this letter Lapo also includes a catalogue of illustrious contemporaries of his who practice the humanistic arts, which closely resembles the list he will offer later in the *De curiae commodis*.⁸¹ In terms of the evolution of Lapo's prose composition, there is a youthful self-consciousness of the task at hand, which he will later temper but not rid himself of in the *De curiae commodis*; we see him often very aware that he is writing a treatise.⁸²

Other letters offer insight into Lapo's view of his social position, which he believed was tenuous at best. In step with his age, when Lapo writes to higher-ups, sycophancy and supplication are the norm. To Pope Eugenius he writes: "For some time now, Pontifex Maximus, great fear and doubt have prevented me from approaching you, even though I desired to do so. After all, when I think in my soul about the splendor and magnitude of your holiness, I am quite put to shame. . . ." ⁸³ To Cardinal Casanova he writes (before Lapo was in his service), "I am quite well aware how impudently and almost insanely I am acting, since I—a humble man and one from almost the lowest place and social order, who has no special excellence or worth—am daring to impose such a burden

81. Par. Lat. 11,388, ff. 1v-2: "E quibus, ut preteream reliquos—qui sunt pene innumerabiles—eloquentissimos viros et omni laude doctrine cumulos, hos tantum commemorasse sat erit qui non modo hanc laudem temporum excesserunt sed pene veteribus illis se aequarunt; //2// Guarinum Veronensem virum exquisita doctrina et summa rerum copia et varietate ornatissimum ac duos illos venetos plurimis maximisque presidiis et adiumentis fortune, virtutis, ingenii, doctrine prestantissimos: Franciscum Barbarum et Leonardum Iustinianum, qui, quasi duo eloquencie rivuli ex Guarini fonte manarunt; tum, e nostris, Nicolaum Nicolum, qui tum precipua morum gravitate ac severitate, tum in perquirendis veterum scriptis ceteris omnibus—meo quidem iudicio—diligentia solertiaque antecellit; ad hos [MS. hec] Iohannem Aurispam, Ambrosium abbatem, Carolum Aretinum, ac tria illa lumina latine lingue: Poggium Florentinum, preceptorem meum summum virum Franciscum Philelphum, et horum omnium principem Leonardum Aretinum, qui hec studia sua industria, assiduitate, labore, sua denique eruditione, suisque literis maxime excitarunt, auxerunt, locupletarunt, ornarunt."

82. "Quorsum igitur hec spectat tam longa et tam alte repetita oratio?" (Par. Lat. 11,388, f. 2); "que, si cui longior videbitur oratio, ne quis id mihi adscribat, . . ." (f. 6); "sed eo spectavit oratio mea ut ostenderem . . ." (f. 11); "Sed nimis iam e cursu noster deflexit oratio" (f. 13); etc.

83. Luiso, 213; O, f. 189v: "Iam pridem, Pontifex maxime, sanctitatem tuam adire cupientem non mediocriter me diu timor et dubitatio retardavit. Nam cum splendorem et magnitudinem sanctitatis tuae mecum animo reputarem, verebar profecto maxime. . . ."

on you—a man who is so famous and splendid, and who occupies the highest position after the pope. . . .”⁸⁴

When he writes to friends with whom he sees himself on equal footing, Lapo does not hesitate to complain about a lack of correspondence and asks openly for his friends’ assistance. To Francesco Patrizi Lapo complains that he has sent letters a number of times with Gaspare, their mutual friend, but has heard barely a word in return: “For I have often sent letters to you, but for nine months I haven’t had but two letters from you, and they were small ones at that.”⁸⁵ To Antonio Tornabuoni (who would later rise quite high in the papal curia) Lapo complains that he has had no response, even though Lapo made his own last letter to Antonio intentionally short to make responding easier.⁸⁶ To head off Antonio’s possible objection that he is weighed down by duties, Lapo mentions his knowledge that Antonio has written long letters to a common friend.⁸⁷ Lapo further admonishes Antonio:

And so, since you can have no excuse left, you had better take care that your letters get to me as quickly and rapidly as possible, so that with them you can purge yourself of this crime and satisfy my desire, or else get ready to be cursed! What else can I do other than inveigh against you as I might against a man who is idle, neglectful, proud, disrespectful, and a hater of friendship? Or I could just be forever silent with you. Now it is up to you that neither of the two options happens.⁸⁸

84. O, f. 192 (cf. Luiso, 211): “Non me fugit quam impudenter ac prope dementer agam, cum ego, homo humilis ex infimo pene loco atque ordine, qui nec praestantia aliqua aut dignitate valeam, tibi viro clarissimo ornatissimoque et summo post pontificem maximum gradu collocato, tantum oneris imponere ausim. . . .”

85. O, f. 217. Parenthetically, we might add that Lapo dedicated his translation of Xenophon’s *Praefectus equitum* to Gaspar; on this, see D. Marsh, “Xenophon,” in *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum*, 7, ed. V. Brown (Washington, DC, 1992), 75–196, at 140–42.

86. O, f. 178: “. . . et ad te perbreuem epistolam scripsi, quo facilior tibi responsio videretur. Atqui ad eam tu ad hunc diem nihil respondisti.”

87. O, f. 178v: “Occupationes vero quae tantae esse possunt ut te a tam honesto, tam facili, tam officioso munere abducere debeant, cum praesertim scribas aliis amicis? Nam Giglofortes noster tuas saepissime et quidem longissimas epistolas legit, ut non ab occupato homine, sed ab ocioso et loquaci et negociorum inopia laboranti propectae appareant!”

88. O, f. 179: “Quare cum nulla tibi iam reliqua excusatio esse possit, tu operam dato ut tuae ad me quam crebro et quam celeriter litterae perferantur, quibus et te hoc crimine purges et meo desiderio satisfacias, aut convitiis et maledictis responsurum te parato. Quid enim aliud facere possum quam ut vel in te veluti in hominem inertem, desidiosum, superbum, contumeliosum, contemptoremque amicitiae inveham, aut perpetuo tecum silentio utar. Quorum utrunque ne eveniat, tuae iam partis erat providere.”

In his fear that his friends are forgetting him, Lapo goes somewhat beyond friendly banter.

Lapo's prose work the *Comparatio inter rem militarem et studia litterarum* is, as Riccardo Fubini notes, no mere "humanist commonplace,"⁸⁹ coming instead out of a late medieval literary tradition that has as its centerpiece a conflict between a representative of *militia* and a representative of *jurisprudencia*.⁹⁰ Here the place of the representative of *jurisprudencia* is taken by a representative of the *humanae litterae*. According to Fubini, Lapo here follows Bruni, who in a letter had placed the *humanae litterae* ahead of *jurisprudencia*. In addition, the work is one of the first of the fifteenth century, along with Alberti's *De commodis litterarum atque incommotis*, to argue for the social, as well as intellectual, prestige of the learned person in society.⁹¹ In this respect it is consistent with Lapo's early long letter to Simone di Boccaccino Lamberti.

Lapo also authored two orations held at the beginning of the academic year in November 1436 at the *studium* of Bologna, where Lapo was to teach rhetoric and moral philosophy.⁹² Both are characterized by optimism and a rekindled faith in the power of learning to produce intellectual, moral, and financial advantage. In the first Lapo emphasizes what becomes a repeated topos in his prose: the papal curia as a place of upward mobility. Yet even here, in 1436, we observe seeds, perhaps, of something that Lapo would emphasize much more starkly two years later. Simply put, the upward mobility of the curia, as Lapo must have learned even by 1436, was bound up inevitably with its disadvantages.

. . . we see in the Roman curia itself—which I would have no doubt in calling a theater of all races and nations—in the Roman curia itself, I say, we see that men bereft of learning are on so much more disadvantageous footing than the educated and learned; the result is that holy orders are conferred on almost no other basis than the basis of learning, or reputation for learning. I could enumerate here quite a few men who were born into a poor social class and were endowed with the scantiest wealth and abilities and who, [nonetheless,] owing only

89. Pace Luiso; see Fubini, 46.

90. Present in manuscript in MS Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, LII.7, ff. 49–66v; MS Florence, Bibl. Riccardiana 149, ff. 64–84; MS Paris, BN Lat. 1616, ff. 58–73. The first two locations are noted in L. Bertalot, *Initia humanistica latina*, Vol. 2, pt. 1, ed. U. Jaitner-Hahner (Tübingen, 1990), 275–76, no. 5071. For the third, see the siglum P in chap. 5 *infra*.

91. Fubini, 46.

92. Edited in Müllner, *Reden*, 129–42.

to the supports and distinctions of learning, gradually gained [control over] the greatest and most abundant polities; some even became popes.⁹³

There is upward mobility in the curia, to be sure, at which Lapo never ceases to wonder. Yet he also demonstrates a degree of distaste for those who were “born into a poor social class,” were endowed with scant means, and nonetheless managed to climb their way to the top of the curial hierarchy.⁹⁴

One more word might be said about Lapo’s thought and his own concept of upward mobility. He had an abiding faith in the essential goodness not only of the *studia humanitatis* but also of other branches of study. In his view, study betters the scholar not only in a moral and sapiential sense but also monetarily. Both in the 1436 oration at the *studium* of Bologna and in the *De curiae commodis*, we see the papal curia invoked as a place of upward mobility. Yet in both of these works, as in other works as well, it is as if Lapo feels an irresistible pull to mention the distasteful side of upward mobility. This might be, for instance, that the people who are therewith engaged are naturally “endowed with the scantiest wealth and abilities” or are, like the cooks in the curia (VII.30), “men covered with grease and grime in the middle of the kitchen, embroiled in the smoke and stench.” Of the latter, Lapo points out that “out of nowhere, you see them move back to their homeland, raised not only to the priesthood but even to the highest degrees of honor.” What could this negative depiction of upward mobility represent for Lapo?

At the beginning of the fifteenth century, in the wake of Lapo the Elder’s misfortunes, the family of the Castiglionchio found itself a representative of the growing class of the financially debased aristocracy. Yet, paradoxically, it was exactly upward mobility that Lapo, throughout his

93. Müllner, *Reden*, 133: “. . . videmus in ipsa Romana Curia, quam ego omnium gentium et nationum theatrum appellare non dubitem, in ipsa inquam Romana Curia videmus tanto iniquiore loco esse homines eruditionis expertes quam doctos atque eruditos, ut nulla fere re alia quam doctrina aut opinione doctrinae sacri ordines demandentur. possem hic enumerare plurimos, qui malo genere nati, quam tenuissimis opibus ac facultatibus praediti, praesidiis tantum ornamentisque doctrinae maximos principatus atque amplissimos gradatim consecuti sunt, nonnulli etiam in pontifices maximos evaserunt.”

94. In this oration Lapo goes on to praise extensively the *artes liberales* and the many benefits of learning. The second oration, the very short *De laudibus philosophiae*, stresses the advantages of philosophy as an incitement to virtue and as a protection against the ills of society.

whole life, was compelled to seek through the humanities and failed to achieve. Perhaps Lapo's repeated failures represent in some way a cause of his negative valuations and distaste; and perhaps the negative valuations and distaste represent a sort of disdain of self and of the position in which he had, through *fortuna inconstans*, been placed in society. Maybe it is no wonder that he acquired a reputation, with Vespasiano, as "melancholic, and of a nature that rarely laughed."⁹⁵

Finally, there is the *De curiae commodis* itself, a work that Lapo wrote in the summer of 1438, completing it only a few months before his death. Here I shall offer only the shortest of overviews, since I address certain aspects of the dialogue in more detail in chapters 2 and 3. Lapo begins with a dedicatory preface to Cardinal Francesco Condulmer, a churchman who came from the family that had produced Pope Gregory XII and Eugenius IV, the reigning pope.⁹⁶ After opening comments about the greatness of the Roman curia, which compares favorably with any of the great empires of history, Lapo sets the stage. On returning from the baths of Siena to the curia (which was then in Ferrara for the council), Lapo stopped at the house of his friend Angelo da Recanate.

During their meal, Angelo consoled Lapo, who was grieving over the death of his friend and patron Cardinal Giordano Orsini. After the meal and after Lapo had been consoled, the conversation took a different turn, and the two found themselves talking about "the fall, the want, of the Roman church, which is surrounded by the most serious of troubles and difficulties and is being despoiled by its own princes. . . ." (I.10). Later, Lapo decided to re-create the conversation in dialogue form and dedicate it to Francesco, whose great reputation is well known.

As the dialogue proper begins, Angelo laments the way fortune has treated Lapo, and he encourages Lapo to leave the corrupt curia, so that he can pursue his studies in an environment of intellectual leisure, of true *otium* (II.1–5). Lapo is surprised at this and opines that, since patronage in his *patria*, Florence, is not in these times readily available to him, one cannot imagine a place better suited to living well than the curia (II.11). Angelo challenges Lapo to prove this (II.14); Lapo makes an unsuccessful attempt to avoid the discussion and then suggests that they engage in

95. ". . . maninconico, di natura che rade volte rideva, . . ." (Bisticci, *Le vite*, 1:582).

96. See chap. 3.

a Socratic discussion, in which, Lapo is sure, he will convince Angelo of the curia's worthiness. (II.18–19).

The dialogue is structured as a series of examinations of the benefits—the *commoda*—of the Roman curia. As such, it divides into a number of different sections. In the first, the curia is presented as a good place because it is a concentrated seat of religion. In the treatise's next section, the curia is presented as a good place because one can, through experience, acquire virtue there (IV).⁹⁷

We are then treated to what amounts to a cataloguing of reputable humanists who managed to flourish at the curia: Poggio Bracciolini, Flavio Biondo, Giovanni Aurispa, Andrea da Firenze, and Leon Battista Alberti, among others (V).⁹⁸ Their achievements, it is argued, show that one can attain great glory with the curia as a home: Athens could not give this much glory to Alexander, nor Olympia to Themistocles; after all, theirs were praises only of one country, while the internationalism of the curia allows the laudable figure to hear praises sung by many different nationalities (V.13). This section also intends to show by the examples of the named humanists that scholarly leisure, *otium*, can indeed be pursued with the curia as a home. The curia is viewed as a grand theater where all acts are seen by all people, where nothing notable can be done without having it viewed by all (V.14).⁹⁹ To its denizens of the time, the curia appeared to be a very public place where all acts were on display.

There follows a section analyzing the earning potential at the curia (V). And in the dialogue's next section, the interlocutors enumerate the ways in which one can delight the senses at the curia (VII). They discuss auditory, visual, gustatory, and sexual pleasures. Each of these discussions of pleasure is attended by interesting, often highly revelatory side observations. The final major section of the dialogue encompasses arguments for and against the possession of great wealth on the part of the pope and other, lower-ranked curialists (VIII). Wealth is defended, mainly by stressing the position that it enables one to practice the virtues of *magnanimitas* and *liberalitas* (VIII.17–18). There is also an interesting

97. On the intricacies of these passages, see chap. 2.

98. *Honoris causa* he mentions two who were at that point lacking at the curia: Filelfo, his esteemed teacher and friend, and Bruni.

99. Garin's edition ends with this passage (at 208–10). Approximately two years prior to completing the *De curiae commodis*, Lapo had described the curia with similar language in his *prolusio* at Bologna. Cf. Lapo's "Oratio Bononiae habita in suo legendi initio . . ." in Müllner, *Reden*, 129–39, at 133: "Romana Curia, quam ego omnium gentium et nationum theatrum appellare non dubitem . . ." and see pages 21–22 in this chapter. Lapo has taken the terminology from Cicero (*In Verr.* V.35 and *Brutus* VI).

argument made regarding Christ's poverty and its place in considering curial wealth. But some of the arguments offered in the "defense" of wealth and curial luxury really, in an implicit fashion, function as expositions of vice.¹⁰⁰

Historiography

Lapo's dialogue has often been noticed, in his own century and beyond. The dialogue was known to the mid-Quattrocento Benedictine monk, Girolamo Aliotti. At the end of December 1454 Aliotti sent a copy of the text to Domenico Capranica, and in May 1470 Aliotti sent a copy to Francesco Castiglione, calling it a *praeclarum opusculum*.¹⁰¹ Later, enlightenment era Florentine aristocrats also became interested in Lapo and even made plans to have his work printed, but the plans never came to fruition. Lorenzo Mehus and Etienne Baluce (Stephanus Balutius) were both interested in Lapo.¹⁰² Baluce was especially engaged, calling Lapo a *scriptor non contemnendus*; he made a short catalogue of Lapo's works in his possession, which is preserved in manuscript.¹⁰³ Also preserved in manuscript are certain letters from Baluce, then in Paris, to Magliabecchi, in which Baluce expresses his desire to see Lapo's work printed.¹⁰⁴ In the English world, the *De curiae commodis* was known to the Oxford don Humphrey Hody, who, in his work *On Famous Greeks*,

100. On these latter sections, see chap. 3.

101. See Hieronymus Aliottus, *Epistolae et opuscula*, ed. G.M. Scarmatus (Arezzo, 1769), I.346 (i.e., bk. IV, no. 49) and 553 et seq. (i.e., bk. VI, no. 59), cited in R. Scholz, "Eine humanistische Schilderung der Kurie aus dem Jahre 1438, herausgegeben aus einer vatikanischen Handschrift," *Quellen und Forschungen aus italienischen Archiven und Bibliotheken* 16 (1914): 109–10 n. 2, 113 n. 1. In his letter to Capranica, Aliotti called the work a text "in defensionem Romanae Curiae plures iam annos editum adversus nonnullos mordaces latratores." In his letter to Francesco Castiglione he sends to "Francesco Castiglioniensi, Lapi, gentilis tui, praeclarum opusculum, Dialogum scilicet de commodis Curiae Romanae, qui nuper in manus venit." Since he does not speak in any more detail about the work in these letters, it is difficult to determine whether Aliotti in fact saw the work as a straightforward defense of the curia or was aware of its more satirical aspects and simply chose, wisely, not to emphasize these in his letters.

102. See L. Mehus, *Historia litteraria florentina* (Florence, 1769; reprint, with an introduction by E. Kessler, Munich, 1968), 141–42 and *ad indicem*.

103. MS Florence, BN Magl. IX.50. I have examined this manuscript in person. It is a rebound miscellany containing a number of different items; no. 14 (ff. 51–53) is the "Catalogus operum Lapi Castelliunculi quae penes me sunt." It is anonymous but identified as of Baluce in Mehus, *Historia*, 142.

104. These are in MS Florence, BN Magl. VIII.262, also noted in Mehus, *Historia*, 142. The letters are of 1730 and 1731.

printed from the dialogue a short passage that described the coming of the Byzantines to the Council of Ferrara.¹⁰⁵

Modern scholarly discourse on Lapo began, unsurprisingly, with scholars writing in German in the late nineteenth century. In his famous study *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Althertums*, Georg Voigt called Lapo's self-collected letters an "untouched treasure" of the early Renaissance.¹⁰⁶ Although he also took notice of the *De curiae commodis*, correctly noting that it had never been printed, he did not describe the work, calling it simply a treatise "in defense of the Roman curia against its enemies."¹⁰⁷

In 1902 the Italian scholar Arnaldo della Torre commented on Lapo's dialogue in his monumental *Storia dell' accademia platonica di Firenze*,¹⁰⁸ where he sought to describe the literary influence on Florence of the presence of the papal curia there during the pontificate of Eugenius IV. He made very brief use of Lapo's work, citing from the autograph (F in this study), to help describe and illustrate his conviction that the curia functioned as an "alma mater studiorum." Again, the critical or ironic aspects of the dialogue were ignored.¹⁰⁹

Richard Scholz was the first to study the *De curiae commodis* in depth. In two different articles, Scholz presented first an interpretation of the dialogue and then a Latin edition.¹¹⁰ While he recognized the dialogue's

105. Humphrey Hody, *De graecis illustribus*, ed. S. Jebb (London, 1742), at 30–31 (in his *Life of Chrysoloras*, to show the diverse customs of the Greeks) and 136 (in his *Life of Bessarion*, to illustrate the esteem in which the Greeks' level of learning was held). Hody lived from 1659 to 1706. This forms the only exception to the fact that Lapo's dialogue work was never printed in the early modern period. Hody does not specify his source other than calling it a manuscript (30: "ex Lapi Castelliunculi tractatu MS"; 136: "in dialogo MS De curiae [*Romanae*] commodis").

106. Voigt makes the mistake, also made by Vespasiano, of asserting that Lapo was a curial secretary; see *Die Wiederbelebung*, 2:36–37, 52, 175, 257, 435. As Luiso notes (205), Voigt's attention was called to Lapo by the work of A. Wilmanns, who pointed out that MS Vat. Ottob. 1677 contains Lapo's *epistolario*; see *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* 47 (1879): 1489–1504, at 1491.

107. Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung*, 2:36–37: "Er hat hier kurz zuvor [i.e., in Ferrara at the council shortly before his death] eine Schrift in dialogischer Form zur Vertheidigung der römischen Curie gegen ihre Feinde verfasst, die gern gelesen aber bisher nicht gedruckt worden ist." To show that the treatise was "gern gelesen" Voigt cites the letters of Aliotti mentioned in n. 100 supra.

108. A. Della Torre, *Storia dell' accademia platonica di Firenze* (Florence, 1902; reprint, Turin, 1968).

109. *Ibid.*, 246–48.

110. For the interpretation, see R. Scholz "Eine ungedruckte Schilderung der Kurie aus dem Jahre 1438," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 10 (1912): 399–413; for the edition, see his "Eine humanistische."

importance and saw fit to present it to the scholarly public, he based both of his studies on only one manuscript copy of the text, thanks to which his edition is often lacking.¹¹¹ In his interpretation Scholz emphasized the defense of wealth in the treatise and discussed the manner in which this was consistent with certain aspects of emerging humanist culture,¹¹² a point Hans Baron would later emphasize forcefully. However, as we shall see, this issue is not without its complications in the dialogue. The defense of wealth in the treatise does not go completely untempered by protest and is not nearly as simple and unequivocal as Scholz made it out to be.¹¹³

More recent historians who have touched on the dialogue include George Holmes,¹¹⁴ John D'Amico,¹¹⁵ Hans Baron,¹¹⁶ Riccardo Fubini, and Peter Partner. The latter two offer especially interesting insights into the dialogue. Fubini points out the negative aspects of the papal curia that Lapo presents in the *De curiae commodis*.¹¹⁷ He also emphasizes

111. See chap. 5 *infra*.

112. Scholz, "Eine ungedruckte," 410.

113. See *ibid.*, 407, where Scholz discusses what he sees as "eine Verteidigung der kurialen Praxis." See also Scholz, "Eine humanistische," 114–15: "Im Ganzen ist der Traktat ernst gemeint, als wirkliche Verteidigung der Kurie und des kurialen Lebens. . . . Was Lapo interessiert, sind allein die Freuden des Weltlebens im Sinne der Renaissance: dieses Renaissance-Ideal findet er in Ferrara an der Kurie. . . ."

114. George Holmes, *The Florentine Enlightenment, 1400–1450* (Oxford, 1969), 83.

115. D'Amico, 118. For D'Amico, the importance of Lapo's dialogue lay in its stress on the unifying force of the Latin language in the curia, a point that Lorenzo Valla would later develop widely and powerfully in his *Oratio in principio sui studii* of 1455. For Valla's treatise, see the edition in Lorenzo Valla, *Opera omnia*, ed. J. Vahlen (Basel, 1540, reprint with additions, Turin, 1962).

116. Baron's analysis focused on the text as evidence for a feature that he saw as part and parcel of early Quattrocento Florentine humanism: the positive rehabilitation of the value of private wealth. However, Baron seems to stress the passages of the dialogue that defend the curial accumulation of wealth and he does not take much notice of its countertendencies. See his *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism: Essays on the Transition from Medieval to Modern Thought*, 2 vols. (Princeton, 1988). Baron had discussed the treatise much earlier in his article "Franciscan Poverty and Civic Wealth as Factors in the Rise of Humanistic Thought," *Speculum* 13 (1938): 1–37; chaps. 7–9 in his 1988 collection represent an amplified and revised version of his 1938 article. For his discussion of Lapo, see *In Search of Florentine Civic Humanism*, 2:244–46. As far as text-critical matters go, Baron used the autograph manuscript but judged that the autograph "differs from Scholz's version at unimportant points only" (2:245 n. 16). This judgment was correct for the sections of the dialogue that Baron examined but would be difficult to maintain if applied to the whole treatise.

117. See Fubini.

Lapo's literary methodology, which Fubini terms a "pro and contra style" of argumentation. He argues that whenever a thesis is expounded in the dialogue, the most pessimistic point of view is set forth first. Then the dialogue offers a counterposition that does not contradict the first position but tempers it, by sticking more closely to reality.¹¹⁸ Because of this, it is difficult to come up with a consistent interpretation of the dialogue, as Fubini recognizes.¹¹⁹

Peter Partner's interpretation of the dialogue stresses its ambiguities.¹²⁰ He emphasizes the notion that its critical tendencies show, along with certain treatises of Valla and Poggio, that there was a certain latitude of opinion possible at the papal court. In addition Partner (114–15) lays stress on the importance of considering the environment in which this treatise on the curia was written: "Eugenius IV had been chased out of Rome, was threatened outside Italy by the council of Basle, inside by a host of enemies, and was seeking reconciliation with the Greek church to support his threatened prestige."

I shall argue that at least one of the things motivating Lapo as he composed the treatise was the desire to present himself as a skillful papal propagandist. The relative instability of the curial environment in which Lapo was working must have made this seem all the more necessary. Before I can move on to the ambient of the papal court, a question sug-

118. Fubini, 49: "Nel corso del dialogo il C. sviluppa un tipo di argomentazione già altre volte adottato, vale a dire il procedimento retorico del pro e contro, dove all'esposizione della tesi, che rispecchia il punto di vista più pessimistico, fa seguito una confutazione che, senza negarlo, lo contempera con uno sforzo di maggiore e più spregiudicata aderenza alla realtà."

119. Fubini, 50: "It remains difficult to establish if, with his little work, Lapo da Castiglionchio had really aimed to flatter the dedicatee, offering a sort of model for a new curial apologetic, or if he had intended—given the all too transparent polemic and casual open-mindedness of opinions—to launch a sort of challenge to the world of the curia from which he saw himself rejected, almost as a recapitulation of an unfortunate career" In a recent article focusing on Bruni's *Dialogi ad Petrum Histrum*, Fubini emphasizes the anti-institutional potentiality inherent in humanistic works like Lapo's, which are often suffused with irony. This often allowed humanists to say things in opposition to traditional cultural institutions that they could not have done using then-traditional modes of discourse. See R. Fubini, "All'uscita dalla Scolastica medievale: Salutati, Bruni, e i 'Dialogi ad Petrum Histrum,'" *Archivio storico italiano* 150 (1992): 1065–99. The argument I shall develop regarding the dialogue is influenced by Fubini's insightful and penetrating position but does not follow it directly, since I believe that, alongside the obvious irony, Lapo presents a sincere admiration for the curia's potential. See *infra*.

120. See Partner, *Pope's Men*, 114–18.

gests itself. Despite the dialogue's many and brilliant ambiguities, can Lapo have been staking out any consistent positions? In chapter 2, after sketching out a literary context for Lapo's work, I attempt to offer an answer.