DIALOGICAL STRATEGIES, VOLGARIZZAMENTO, AND CICERONIAN ETHOS IN ANTONIO BRUCIOLI’S DIALOGI DELLA MORALE FILOSOFIA

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Summary: In 1526, Antonio Brucioli (1487-1566) published a series of thirty dialogues that form a typical humanist compendium of moral and political wisdom in the vernacular. Scholars have considered these dialogues mainly from the perspective of Brucioli’s humanist and political allegiances, in particular with exiled Florentine humanists whose discussions in the Orti Oricellari the dialogues echo. However, textual reworkings in subsequent editions (1538 and 1544, in which this group constitutes the first volume, entitled Della morale filosofia, of a series that includes other volumes of dialogues on natural philosophy) warrant a reconsideration that complements intellectual history with literary and rhetorical analysis. This article revalorizes Brucioli’s Dialogi della morale filosofia by arguing that their literary and rhetorical strategies, such as the use of ancient dialogue models, the shifting choice and staging of interlocutors, the creation of Ciceronian ethos and decorum, and the mimetic aspects of the interaction of male and female voices not only evince a conscious application of early Cinquecento dialogue poetics, but also establish the author’s volgarizzamento of a compendium of classical and humanist wisdom as a uniquely Italian project aimed at an emulation and appropriation of moral philosophy by dialogical speaking at the level of a national cultural elite.

In the dedicatory letter to the duke of Milan Massimiliano Sforza that prefaces the first edition of his Dialogi della morale filosofia (1526), Antonio Brucioli (1487-1566) links the use of the dialogue form to his programmatic intent to render the precepts of philosophy in the vernacular:

Il quale studio [the study of philosophy] tanto dolce e grato m’è sempre paruto che quasi tutto il tempo che non è stato in possanza della fortuna di tormi […] seco se n’ha portato, e me a viva forza spinto a scrivere di questa santissima filosofia […] nella materna nostra lingua, essendone infino a’ nostri tempi stata poverissima, e non per altro certamente che per vedere se di nulla […] ad altri giovare potesse, e quegli inanimare a trattare più dottamente di si alta materia. E così per tutte le parti di quella con diversi mie dialogi passato sono. De’ quali volendo ora una picciola quantità mandare a vedere ciò che di questo nuovo e tanto inusitato modo di scrivere si senta […] conveniente cosa e mio debito è paruto, illustrissi-
mo signore mio [...], dovergli dedicare a Vostra Signora [...].\(^1\)

The aim of writing about philosophy in the mother tongue has linguistic significance in that it enriches Italian with philosophical discourse, but it also has a pragmatic importance, namely that the non-initiated may derive benefit from philosophy (“giovare”) and discuss it in a more learned manner (“trattare più dottamente di si alta materia”). The tentative and exploratory attitude he professes toward writing in the dialogue form, limiting his output for now to a small number (“una picciola quantità”) of dialogues in order to gauge its effect, suggests that what he considers a new and unexplored manner of writing might in his view play a crucial role in attaining these goals.

To be sure, in 1526 the dialogue could hardly be labelled “nuovo e inusitato”, especially in Italy where the form had significantly influenced and reshaped literary and philosophical output for at least several decades, including on humanist topics dear to Brucioli.\(^2\) Yet Brucioli’s deliberate intent to feature a dialogical presentation of material that could be considered equally apt for the prose treatise stands out as an early attempt to adopt dialogue as a key tool in a program of *volgarizzamento*,\(^3\) more specifically, of making the sum of classical wisdom (“la sacra filosofia”) not only accessible in the vernacular at an encyclopaedic scale, but also easily applicable to contemporary social and political issues.\(^4\) Earlier critics have con-

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\(^1\) Brucioli, *Dialogi*, 11 (Landi). Strictly speaking, Landi’s critical edition contains only the first (but most important) volume, later entitled *Dialogi della morale filosofia*, of his total of five dialogue collections (see further details below). All quotations from Brucioli will be from this edition. Emphasis is mine.


\(^3\) For the issue of treatise vs. dialogue, see the comments by Cox, who asserts that, while the content may be similar, in dialogue the “verbal dressing” is “an essential part of its message”: “The first problem to confront, if we are to understand the place of dialogue in Renaissance culture is this: what is it that a dialogue can do which its closest rival, the treatise, does not?” (Cox, *Renaissance dialogue*, 1, 4).

\(^4\) See also the following passage from Brucioli’s dedicatory letter to the duke of Urbino Francesco Maria Feltro (della Rovere) in the second edition of the *Dialogi* (1538): “Tanto che a non picciol onore e beneficio mi terrò che gli sieno accette queste mie vigilie ne’ santissimi campi della sacra filosofia vigilate, non si trovando né più onorati né più utili studii di questi né più degno di un tanto signore, essendo essa filosofia una maestra e guida dell’anima nostra, per la quale in diversi atti i giusti governi degli onorati regni e delle laudissime republiche furo alla universale salute della umana generazione trovati” (13).
vincingly argued for a correlation between dialogue and the core issues of the questione della lingua and for dialogue’s role in the creation of a literature in the vernacular for a new audience demanding more colloquial and less erudite material whose distribution was to be facilitated by print. The emerging role of the dialogue form in the questione can be traced back to roughly the same years as Brucioli’s first edition, with dialogues such as Pietro Bembo’s Prose della volgar lingua (1525), Giangiorgio Trissino’s Castellano (1529), and Piero Valeriano’s Dialogo della volgar lingua (1524). However, these single dialogues present theoretical debates about vernacular literary language, and they do not aim at a large scale volgarizzamento of philosophical wisdom from antiquity. Moreover, the Cinquecento’s most successful examples of the coupling of vernacular dialogue to an extensive presentation or treatment of humanist and classical wisdom, such as Speroni’s erudite dialogue series on rhetoric, philosophy, and history (1542), or the lighter, more colloquial, and compendium-style collections by Venetian poligrafi such as Lodovico Domenichi (Dialoghi, 1562), all date from several decades later in the century. Brucioli’s set of thirty dialogues on moral philosophy is thus rather unique at this early point in the century, and therefore in need of further critical attention.

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Brucioli’s literary career is commonly regarded as that of a minor poligrafo. Scholars in intellectual history have focused primarily on his role as a translator and editor of ancient philosophy (in particular of works by Aristotle, Cicero, and Pliny), and even more so on his participation in the Italian reform movement as a commentator on Scripture and as the author of the first Italian translation of the Bible in a Reformist vein, not based on the Vulgate but on the original languages. The ‘Brucioli Bible’ (1530-32), reprinted many times, was immensely popular at all levels of society and would be used by Italian Protestants for decades to come. Ultimately, Brucioli’s career was effectively ruined by two trials for heresy that have attracted significant attention from scholars of the Italian Reformation and heretical movements.

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5 Sperone Speroni’s Dialogo delle lingue, while not published until 1542, was conceived in these years too. See Cox, Renaissance dialogue, 64. See also Godard, Le dialogue à la Renaissance, 33.
7 See for instance Del Col, “Il controllo della stampa a Venezia”, 457-486. See also Spini, Tra Rinascimento e Riforma, 98-104 and 122-131. Spini’s is to date still
As for his ample dialogue production, critics have long studied it in connection with Brucioli’s participation in the discussions of the Florentine humanists, including Niccolò Machiavelli, who, between 1512 and 1522 frequently gathered in the gardens of the Rucellai family, the Orti Oricellari, to discuss socio-political topics related to current events (their discussions ended in 1522 when a number of participants including Brucioli were banished from the city for their participation in a failed conspiracy against the Medici). In their early studies of the first edition of Brucioli’s *Dialogi della morale filosofia*, which covers civic humanism’s stock moral and socio-political topics (man’s condition, family, marriage, the republic, civic and military leadership, as well as the various virtues and Neoplatonic themes), Delio Cantimori and Giorgio Spini considered it to be primarily an echo of the intellectual debates taking place among Florentine humanists.8 This approach has been both continued and nuanced in Carlo Dionisotti’s study of the variation of interlocutors in successive editions, especially Machiavelli but also fellow *fuorusciti* such as Luigi Alamanni and Zanobi Buondelmonti, against the background of a fragile political landscape in which Brucioli crafted both Florentine and Venetian allegiances.9

In the view of scholars of Renaissance intellectual history, it is within this framework of Brucioli’s real-life networks of humanist and political allegiances that this polygraph collects, adapts, synthesizes, translates, and ‘vernacularizes’, at times verbatim, the phenomenal compendium of classical and humanist moral and political wisdom that forms the content of the *Dialogi della morale filosofia*. In his critical edition, Aldo Landi has

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8 Spini, *Tra Rinascimento e Riforma*, 139-169. Spini calls Brucioli a “[...] specchio fedele e pieno di interesse degli orientamenti e fermenti della cultura fiorentina, nella quale egli aveva ricevuto la propria formazione spirituale” (156). Cantimori attempts to valorize Brucioli’s dialogues as the only “source from which precise information may be obtained” on the Orti Oricellari conversations, and emphasizes their value as a memorial to Brucioli’s exiled Florentine humanist friends (“Rhetoric and Politics in Italian Humanism”, 83-102).

painsstakingly referenced the abundance of Brucioli’s sources, ranging from ancients such as Aristotle, Plato, Epictetus, Lucretius, Cicero, Plutarch, Pliny, and Seneca, to contemporaries such as Ficino, Leon Battista Alberti, Erasmus, Thomas More, Agostino Nifo, and Machiavelli. Landi’s task was complicated by the fact that Brucioli makes few explicit references to his sources, especially if they are not major figures, and often misquotes, misunderstands, or wrongly attributes his source material.\textsuperscript{10}

It is perhaps no surprise that critics focusing on Brucioli’s role in intellectual history often arrived at rather negative critical assessments on his behalf, considering his writing typical of the pasticcione approach of many poligrafi,\textsuperscript{11} at best a good volgarizzatore who sincerely seeks to disseminate ancient and humanist wisdom written in classical languages to a larger audience.\textsuperscript{12} A mirror of his time but a poor philosopher and literator.\textsuperscript{13} However, none of these criticisms can negate the considerable position that Brucioli and his works occupied in the Respublica literaria of the early Cinquecento\textsuperscript{14}: his long list of translations and the numerous editions of his dialogues (both those on moral philosophy and the later volumes on natural and metaphysical philosophy), point to an undeniable popularity among contemporary readers. In the case of the Dialogi della morale filosofia, moreover, one is struck by the assiduousness with which Brucioli kept revising, expanding, and publishing his corpus of dialogues during the rest of his life in Venetian exile, with freshly revised editions in 1538 and 1544 when he was already well embarked on his career as a Bible translator and commentator—one with Reformist tendencies—and was occupying himself with issues of a theological nature quite different from the

\textsuperscript{10} In addition to Landi’s line-by-line annotations, see also the “Nota critica” to his edition and Spini, Tra Rinascimento e Riforma, 139-169.

\textsuperscript{11} Landi, “Nota critica”, 559; Spini calls him “infaticabile e superficiale poligrafo” (Tra Rinascimento e Riforma, 135).

\textsuperscript{12} “indubbiamente egli ha il merito di essere stato fra i primi a diffondere in volgare talune opere, o perlomeno ampi stralci di esse” (Landi, “Nota critica”, 562).

\textsuperscript{13} As an author of dialogues, Spini considers Brucioli “una specie di giornalista della cultura, di volgarizzatore dei problemi culturali e spirituali del suo tempo. […] era chiaro che non poteva rimanere altro che un terribile superficiale in ogni campo, compreso dunque quello filosofico” (Tra Rinascimento e Riforma, 135-136). Landi considers him a thinker of no original value, a typical polygraph for whom volgarizzazione is a task “spoglia di qualsiasi esigenza artistica”, and “sopratutto testimone della cultura di un secolo” (Landi, “Nota critica”, 561, 565).

\textsuperscript{14} See also Fachard, “Entre utopie et réalité”, 80.
debates on civic life and politics.

Brucioli’s reworkings principally concern the dialogical ‘dressing up’ of the philosophical material, that is, its mimetic rendering in spoken voices and other rhetorical issues of the dialogues’ opening sections. Therefore a reconsideration of Brucioli’s dialogues is warranted that complements intellectual history with literary and rhetorical analysis against the background of the early Cinquecento dialogue tradition. In an attempt to revalorize Brucioli’s dialogical output, I argue that the dialogues’ rhetorical strategies and literary aesthetics, such as the use of ancient dialogue models, the shifting choice and staging of interlocutors, the creation of Ciceronian ethos and decorum, and the mimetic aspects of the interaction of male and female voices, not only evince a conscious application of the poetics of the dialogue as they were gradually conceptualized and increasingly practised by Brucioli’s contemporaries, but also, more importantly, that these formal considerations play a crucial role in his humanist program of dissemination in the vernacular of a compendium of classical and humanist wisdom, much of which, such as Aristotle’s or Agostino Nifo’s, was originally cast in treatise form.¹⁵

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As noted earlier, the care with which Brucioli established over time a collection of a size (thirty) and thematic coherence as is the volume of Dialogi della morale filosofia is still relatively unique in Italian dialogue production from the 1520s. The publication of dialogues in a collective, encyclopaedic, or compendium-style approach that coherently regroups a substantial number of interrelated topics within one field of study such as philosophy, rhetoric, politics, civic or court life, was a phenomenon more typical of mid- to late century dialogue production (after 1540). In addition to Speroni and

¹⁵ The present study is limited to an analysis of the Dialogi della morale filosofia. Brucioli wrote several other volumes of dialogues, some with multiple editions (Dialogi della naturale filosofia umana [1528, 1537, 1544]; Dialogi della naturale filosofia [1529, 1537, 1545], Dialogi della metafisical filosofia [1529, 1538, 1545]; and a single edition of Dialogi faceti [1538]). However, the first volume is by far the most representative of the formal and literary strategies of Brucioli’s art of the dialogue and their mimetic bond to a content primarily dealing with the application of moral wisdom to real life (Spini, Tra Rinascimento e Riforma, 169). This being said, a detailed study of the formal aspects of the dialogues in the other volumes, while outside the scope of this article, would certainly complement and possibly nuance my findings.
Domenichi mentioned above, we can see Brucioli’s project as a precursor of works such as the twenty dialogues on history and rhetoric by Francesco Patrizi (1560-1562), Torquato Tasso’s series on nobility, courtly life, and amorous Neoplatonic philosophy (1580s), or minor dialogue compendia such as Galeazzo Florimonti’s Ragionamenti on Aristotelian philosophy (1554) or Marco de la Frata et Montalbano’s Discorsi on nobility, family, and the republic (1549). But in 1526 there were virtually no precursor examples of the use of dialogue for such encyclopaedic editorial purposes. The only comparable project that comes to mind in a European context is Erasmus’s Latin Colloquia (1522-1533), covering a wide range of topics in civic and religious life and aimed at spreading divine wisdom on earth in a playful manner. The Dutch humanist’s dialogues may well have been a model for Brucioli as they started to circulate in Europe from the 1520s onward. The 1526 edition of the Dialogi already contains a Del matrimonio that features a dialogized version of another Erasmian source, the declamation In Praise of Marriage (Encomium matrimonii, 1518), and in the 1538 edition Brucioli recasts one of Erasmus’s matrimonial colloquies, Uxor memsigamos, in his Dialogo dello ufficio della moglie. Aside from Brucioli’s interest in marital reform, these reworkings also suggest that Erasmus’s colloquy project, an ever-expanding and revised collection of dialogues, each featuring two or a few interlocutors, with the goal of divulging classical and biblical wisdom through examples of vivid dialogical speaking, may have inspired Brucioli’s idea of a series of dialogues aimed at spreading moral philosophy.

16 I dialogi di Messer Speroni (Venice, 1542); Domenichi, Dialoghi, cioè d’Amore, de’ Rimedi d’amore, Dell’Amor fraterno, Della vera Nobiltà, Dell’Imprese, Della Corte e della Stampa (Venice, 1562).
17 Della historia, dieci dialoghi (Venice, 1560); Della retorica, dieci dialoghi (1562).
18 Their publication is concentrated in the years 1585-1589 (Raimondi, Rinascimento inquieto, 189-217).
19 For bibliographical references to these works, see Cox, Renaissance dialogue, 209-215.
20 See his On the Usefulness of the Colloquies: “Socrates brought philosophy down from heaven to earth; I have brought it even into games, informal conversations, and drinking parties” (1103).
22 For the genesis and publication history of the Colloquia, see Bierlaire, Érasme et ses colloques.
In this respect, another major addition to the Dialogi in Brucioli’s 1538 edition deserves attention, namely the two dialogues featuring Neoplatonic and Aristotelian love casuistry, the *Della bellezza e grazia* and the *Di amore.* Salient for including a female speaker in a prominent role, these dialogues also strike a different tone because their interlocutory dynamics reflect the *ragionamento amoroso* emerging among the erudite courtly Venetian society as Brucioli must have experienced it during his exile and as it was earlier epitomized in Pietro Bembo’s *Asolani* (1505). In partial imitation of Bembo’s tripartite structure of three days each featuring one major speaker who expounds a philosophical perspective on love and beauty, these dialogues form a two-day diptych highlighting the reasonings on amorous philosophy by its main interlocutors.

While these findings reveal only some eye-catching philological links between, on the one hand, Brucioli’s dialogue writing and editorial practice over time, and, on the other hand, the Cinquecento dialogue tradition, they underline the uniqueness of his early attempts to give the staging of dialogical speaking a primordial role in a *volgarizzamento* project of such a large scale, and at the same time point to the author’s acute awareness of and response to developing practices and poetics of humanist dialogue writing. It allows us to explore in detail other key aspects of Cinquecento dialogue writing in Brucioli’s Dialogi, in particular its use of classical models and the creation of a Ciceronian *ethos* for the *volgarizzamento* of moral wisdom.

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The first edition of the *Dialogi della morale filosofia* stands out for the meticulous care with which Brucioli creates in the opening section of each dialogue a referential framework that emphasizes collective speaking as a *praxis* and thus mimetically reinforces the idea of the propagation of wisdom through dialogical exchange. Even though these dialogues are all entirely mimetic and refrain from any narrative introduction by an author or diagetic narrator, the interlocutors provide in their initial replies references that depict the formation of the group of speakers in a rather detailed manner. Since these comments occur before the point at which their exchange becomes a pure mimesis of philosophical reasoning, they help the reader

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23 See also Spini, *Tra Rinascimento e Riforma*, 138. Brucioli removed some shorter dialogues from his original edition so that the number of 30 is maintained. These shorter dialogues, however, reappear in another volume, the *Dialogi faceti*, which exists only in a 1538 edition (see above).
visualize a group of interlocutors in the act of speaking together. In imitation of similar techniques in some Platonic dialogues, such as the Symposium, participants look for, recognize, and meet each other by chance in the street, recall a friend lost in thought from solitary reflection, or invite newcomers to engage in conversation, often while walking to their destination where they are supposed to meet other interlocutors, with whom they subsequently converse.24 Many dialogues create a layered speech situation by having the interlocutors refer to a previous dialogical setting (usually the day or morning before, on the road, or in someone else’s house), a debate they participated in or overheard, and which is either referred to, entirely reported, or of which the actual dialogue itself becomes the sequel.25 In

24 Some examples, all from the first 1526 edition, whereby it should be noted that the generic Greek names are randomly used in various dialogues: a detailed description of Cratippo and Filopeno trying to find out Teocrate’s and Carmene’s whereabouts is followed by: “CRITONE. […] gli ho lasciati insieme sul prato a canto al fonte a ragionare non so di che loro casi. FILOPENO. Andiamo, Cratippo, a confabulare con quelli tant che ‘l caldo passi. TOEOCRATE. O dolcissimi miei Cratippo e Filopeno, voi state i benvenuti, […] ora con Carmene del governo della famiglia parlava” (58-59); Filopeno and Diogeno meet and decide to walk up together to a fountain where Filocrate was supposed to meet Carmene, when Filopeno spots the latter and both hurry their step to catch up: “State, ché se non m’inganna la vista di lontano, quegli sono che poco avanti ci vanno” (208); Teocrate runs into Filopeno and urges him to speak out his worries: “Quale causa, dolcissimo Filopeno, tanto sopra pensiero, d’uno certo non so che lieto, ti mena così solo?” (277); etc.

25 Some examples: Filaglito went to see Carmene, who was sick, when: “a presso il tempio maggiore scontrai Teocrate, che con un certo Gilippo ateniense parlava” (16); after convening with the others Filopeno says: “Noi, Carmene, con tardo passo, per raggiungervi dalle case di Teodeno infino a qui venuti siamo, desiderando che ‘l ragionamento avuto questa mattina del reggimento e governo dell’ottimo principe non rimanga imperfetto” (208); Filopeno reports to Teocrate a dialogue on virtue between Ermeo and Teogeno he overheard in the latter’s garden without being seen (278-279); Cratero claims that “[…] ragionando per cammino qui con Teocrate, venimmo a caso a trattare della giustizia”, which becomes the topic of their dialogue with Filone (293); the young Cratippo reports to Critone how in a dialogue the previous night, rendered in direct discourse, he was lauded by important citizens for his promising quality of fortitude, and now needs advice from Critone on “quello che questa fortitudine propriamente sia” (310); Filopeno had just left a conversation between Teocrate and a friar cousin of his when he runs into Carmene, whom he invites to witness the continuation of their “dotte domande e sagaci sue risposte” (320); Luigi apologizes to Iacopo for not having attended an agreed conversation with
some cases, when dialogues are grouped together in thematic units, their interlocutors refer to the preceding dialogue as having occurred the previous day, for instance in Del governo della famiglia and Del modo dello istruire i figliuoli as well as Della republica and Delle leggi della republica.26

It should be noted that these opening strategies in the 1526 edition do not create historically identifiable settings that document the dialogue in time and space, as was common in Ciceronian dialogue. The fictional events marking the interlocutors’ coming together occur at an unspecified time and in an undefined space: they are but loosely associated with the antiquity their names seem to suggest,27 and descriptive details serve only to evoke their meeting place as the topical secluded locus amoenus conducive to undisturbed debate.28 Rather, these references emphasize ‘live’ conversations and embed, layer, and interrelate collective acts of speaking in a community defined by this activity. In doing so, they visualize a fictional world in which moral philosophy is a praxis of speaking collectively. This carefully crafted oral universe, setting the stage for reasoning on

Cosimo in the latter’s garden, after which Iacopo reports from memory (“dolce ragionamento m’uscirà mai di mente”) the dialogue on friendship led by Cosimo on that occasion (395-396). Filaglito reminds Carmene of his promise made in the conversation of the preceding day that “della umana felicità sia oggi tutto il ragionamento nostro” (473).

26 “TEOCRATE. Molto imperfetto restò ieri fra noi, Carmene, il nostro ragionamento del governo della famiglia” (71); “FILOPANE. Voi (come sapete) ieri insieme con esso noi a lungo parlasti del governo della republica […] essendo la parte che appartiene alle sue leggi rimasta imperfetta […]” (157). The random variation in generic interlocutors with Greek names in the 1526 edition does not yet permit to think of them as collective brigate of like-minded characters (but see below for later editions).

27 The speakers rarely refer to a fictional present explicitly marked as antiquity: see for instance, in Della republica, Teofane runs into two other interlocutors and wonders why they have not left for Carthage (95), in Del giusto principe, Diogene recounts traveling back to Greece from a trip to Egypt (208), and in Dello essilio, Teocrate deplores his fate under the tyrant Dionysius of Syracuse (487) (given the sensitivity of the topic of exile for Brucioli, it is not surprising he covered this potential hint to Medici tyranny in an explicit classical coating that remained unaltered in all following editions). Only in the last dialogue, Della umana miseria, do we have a topical classical (though allegorical) setting of a sailor (Creobolo) and a philosopher (Diogeno) embarked on a boat that just barely weathered a sea storm.

28 See Dello giusto principe (“una valletta” [208]), Della virtù (“quel bellissimo giardino” [278]), and Della verità (“questo chiarissimo fonte” [287-288]).
moral philosophy as a spoken exercise, reminisces some of Plato’s dialogues, in which a fictitious interlocutory scene is evoked in the reader’s mind by the speakers’ opening replies, as well as Erasmus’s Colloquia, a collection of more than sixty real-life, often urban scenes of ‘speaking together’ (con-loqui) by interlocutors not staged for their historical value or individual ethos but as archetypal citizens of Christian humanist morality and carrying, as in Brucioli, generic Latin and Greek names. Yet, while these precursors may have inspired the sense of immediacy of the spoken exchange, Brucioli’s opening strategies are in many cases much more elaborate, in particular in establishing a layered speech situation whereby other dialogues or references to other dialogues are embedded in the fiction. In creating this fictional oral community of speakers, gathering repeatedly over time in ever-shifting dialogical constellations, Brucioli valorizes his translatio of ancient and humanist moral wisdom within emerging poetics of Renaissance dialogue, namely as an active real-life and open-ended process, a practice of speaking on moral philosophy ongoing in time and space and to be potentially imitated by the reader in his or her own contemporary collective. Brucioli did not use dialogue to make classical and humanist wisdom available in the vernacular in a commercially more successful format, but exploited dialogical mimetics to the fullest in order to encourage and assure its propagation in the readers’ mind and its application in their sphere of action.

There is a specific reference to Plato’s way of staging interlocutors in Delle leggi della repubblica: “[…] secondo il costume di Plarone, perché come quello in Creti, con Clinia e Megillo, standosi fra i cipressi e luoghi silvestri, disputava, così ancora noi fra quelle giovani quercie in questa opachissima convalle delle medesime leggi parleremo più fruttiferemente che non ricerca l’uso forense delle intricate corti” (158).

Brucioli’s adaptation of Erasmus’s Encomium matrimonii attests to his sensitivity to dialogical strategies that mime spoken exchange in fiction. While in its content the Del matrimonio recasts Erasmus’s pro-marriage arguments (see Seidel Menchi, Erasmo in Italia, 187-188), Brucioli fully exploits the latent dialogical dynamics of this declamatio. In Erasmus we only hear the voice of the orator arguing in favour of marriage for a young patrician reticent to marry. In Brucioli the diegetic opening (the orator participated in a meal with the youth’s father), has become a multi-layered speech situation whereby Zanobi took part in a dialogue with friends who reported to him that Iacopo’s father had passed away, and who thus argued for him to get married. Brucioli moreover gives Iacopo a real dialogical role in the Socratic dynamics in which Zanobi deflates one by one the objections to marriage. He thus successfully employs a key dialogical strategy Erasmus himself repeatedly uses in his Colloquies, that is, to mimetically repre-
Doubtlessly the most striking set of revisions Brucioli operates in the second and third editions concerns the choice of the interlocutors voicing the dialogues’ arguments. The fictitious characters with classical names from the first edition have been in almost all dialogues replaced in the second edition with historically identifiable figures from the contemporary cultural and socio-political circles Brucioli frequented. We see emerge as speakers of Brucioli’s dialogues a rich amalgam of Italian characters: in addition to the Florentines and fellow exiled fuorusciti, often exponents of the Orti Oricellari milieu, we encounter a great variety of courtly, humanist, and ecclesiastical figures from Venice, Urbino, Mantova, Vicenza, Modena, Genova, Pesaro, Treviso, Viterbo, Ragusa, and even Spain and France. In many cases these were members of famous Renaissance families, such as the Rucellai, the Gonzaga, or the della Rovere, whom Brucioli had known at various occasions in Venetian exile or during trips (in many cases however the exact occasion or relationship cannot be traced). In four dialogues Brucioli once again replaced almost the entire cast of historically identifiable interlocutors with a fresh group of similar figures in the third and final edition, although it is striking that in three of these dialogues, Del governo della famiglia, Della amicizia, and Della voluttà all three prominent dialogues with a multiple cast of speakers, a fictitious “Messer Teocrate” reappears on the scene to fulfill the role of the dominant speaker.

Dionisotti claims that these changes reflect Brucioli’s shifting political and ideological loyalties. For instance, in the first edition he used fictitious
names so as not to incriminate friends and allies still living under Medici rule.\(^{33}\) In the 1540s, Brucioli, moreover, had shifted allegiances and now sought to ingratiate himself again with a new Medici ruler, Cosimo I, who had come to power in 1537 and for whom Brucioli allegedly ended up working as a spy among Venetian exiles. This “voltafaccia” would explain why in the third edition (1544) he sought to minimize the presence of problematic Florentine characters, and in some dialogues replaced Machiavelli and other pro-republican exiles formerly staged as interlocutors, such as Piero Salviati and Roberto Strozzi, with interlocutors from Venice and other regions. Dionisotti’s argument is forceful, but not without flaws. Spini already had downplayed what could be perceived as a betrayal of fellow Florentines by Brucioli, contending he acted in the spirit of the time, not on political motivations but simply in his interest as a literator in need of protectors.\(^{34}\) Landi questions Dionisotti’s hypothesis, pointing out that in the 1544 edition there are still numerous Florentine presences, including Machiavelli and Medici opponents, and suggests that Brucioli may simply have been seeking to create allegiances in all possible places.\(^{35}\)

The predominance of Brucioli’s individual interests as literator over Florentine political ideology could also be seen in connection with personal considerations about the topics under discussion, an issue barely taken into account by critics. For instance, the fact that Della amicizia is the only dialogue with Italian first names referring to Orti Oricellari figures already in the 1526 edition (see footnote 31) could simply point to an affectionate attempt to solidify their friendship in spite of political gaming, an idea corroborated by the reference one of the interlocutors makes to the author himself (402). Likewise, Brucioli’s refusal to alter the fictitious ancient names in Dello essilio in all three editions may just reflect a desire to disassociate altogether his personal situation as a Florentine exile from the topic itself. No potential powerful protector, Medici or other, would arguably want to be identified by the overt reference to Dionysius of Syracuse under whose tyranny the two interlocutors suffer. Moreover, it would be impossible to find purely political-ideological motivations for the

\(^{33}\) Dionisotti, *Machiavellerie*, 220. According to Dionisotti, this is why he started featuring Florentine characters in the second series of dialogues, the *Dialogi della naturale filosofia umana*, because at that time, in 1528, the threat of a Medici revenge had largely disappeared.

\(^{34}\) Spini, *Tra Rinascimento e Riforma*, 82-83.

\(^{35}\) Landi, “Nota critica”, 555.
inclusion or exclusion of each speaker involved with Florence’s politics. For instance, what could possibly be the political consequences of having (in 1538) or not having (in 1544) Machiavelli discuss the Aristotelian notion of voluptuousness (in Della voluttà)?

On the whole, however, all these considerations, whether personal, political, or ideological, are secondary to the over-arching literary motivations that the shift in interlocutors suggests and for which I would now like to argue. They reflect Brucioli’s attempt to create and feature, in connection with his project of the vernacularization of moral philosophy (and eventually, in the successive volumes, of an encyclopaedic philosophical summa), a collective Italian aristocratic and humanist ethos in the Ciceronian sense, which exists independently from socio-political intentions. With his meticulous choices of and shifts in historical figures as interlocutors in his second and third editions, Brucioli, for the purpose of his already existing collection of dialogues, deliberately tapped into the newly emerging tradition of what Virginia Cox has labelled the “documentary dialogue” in the Cinquecento’s early decades and which was so typical for the Italian peninsula (as opposed to the rest of Europe where the fictional dialogue remained predominant). In imitation of the Ciceronian model, these dialogues seek to infer authority on their arguments through historical accuracy, usually depicting, in a quiet, secluded place (a locus amoenus, but located in reality), a group of historically identifiable speakers of an elite social status, and representing individual humanist, civic, or courtly virtue and ethos. Castiglione’s Cortegiano, published in 1528 but circulating several years earlier in manuscript, is the leading model of this genre.

To what extent Brucioli actually sought to confer authority on the debate’s arguments through the prestige of its interlocutors, or rather attempted to promote his dialogues or their author in the culture of the Italian courts in constant search of socio-political self-confirmation (another reason Virginia Cox has adduced for the model’s popularity) is difficult to gauge. The authority argument, for instance, seems somewhat moot in the case of a vernacularization of ancient wisdom clearly identified as deriving from Aristotelian or other authoritative sources. But it is undeniable that his choice of interlocutors among authoritative figures representing the top echelons of Italy’s political and humanist universe allowed him to create in these dialogical settings a common denominator of a national Italian aristocratic and humanist ethos. By adopting the Ciceronian model,

36 Cox, Renaissance dialogue, 10.
Brucioli sought to reinforce the spread and application of moral philosophy in the vernacular as a particularly Italian practice of dialogical emulation of ancient wisdom.

Brucioli’s sense of both geographical and socio-cultural variation is striking in this respect. In addition to the speakers’ origins from all over the Italian peninsula, we should emphasize the mixing of figures with origins lying far apart and originating from a variety of socio-cultural realms (courty, civic, literary, humanist, ecclesiastical), and not bound by a common Orti Oricellari or even Florentine past. For instance, *Della republica* features Bernardo Salviati, Prior of Rome, Machiavelli, Giangiacomo Leonardi, a military architect from Pesaro, and Giangiorgio Trissino, a poet from Vicenza (though with Florentine sympathies); *Del giusto principe* has the same Bernardo Salviati and Giangiorgio Trissino now mingled with Francesco Maria della Rovere, duke of Urbino; *Della tirannide* pits Luigi Bragadino, podestà of Treviso, against Girolamo Quirini, a Venetian churchman; in *Della virtù* it is Donato Rullo from Viterbo, known for his heretical leanings, and Bernardo Feliciano, a Venetian humanist, who exchange wisdom; the diptych *Della bellezza e grazia* and *Di amore* features Antonfrancesco degli Albizi, Florentine, and the noblewoman Giulia Gonzaga, a fervent follower of Juan de Valdés; in *Della quiete* the same Giangiacomo Leonardi from Pesaro is now accompanied by Eleonora Gonzaga, duchess of Urbino, and a certain friar Teofilo from Naples; and *Della felicità umana* features the brothers Filippo and Tommaso Cattanei, civic figures from the Genovese republic, together with Sperone Speroni, the famous humanist from Padua.

In the dialogues in which Brucioli overhauls his cast of characters also between the second and third editions, such as *Del governo della famiglia*, *Della amicizia*, and *Della voluttà*, the replacements manifest an equal concern for geographical and socio-cultural variation. *Del governo della famiglia* stages Vincenzio Capello, a nobleman from Venice, Giovanni di Nale, a nobleman from Ragusa, Lorenzo Pitti from Florence, as well as a fictitious Teocrate, in lieu of the group of Florentines from the second edition (Jacopo Nardi, Zanobi Buondelmonti, Battista della Palla, and Jacopo Alamanni); of *Della amicizia*’s crew in the second edition, consisting of Giulia Gonzaga, a certain Mario Visconto, Francesco Molza (a humanist from Modena), Gabriello Cesano (a philosopher from Pisa), the Florentine Luigi Alamanni, and no less a female figure than Vittoria Colonna, Brucioli in the third edition replaces the first two with Vincenzio Capello and Giovanni di Nale, noblemen from Ragusa, and Vittoria Colonna with a fictitious Teocrate; and in the third edition of *Della voluttà* Vincenzo
Capello and Giovanni di Nale, now accompanied by two other di Nale brothers (Nicolò and Agostino), replace the second edition’s mostly Florentine set of interlocutors that included Niccolò Machiavelli, Piero Salviati, and Roberto Strozzi.37

While the precise reason, if there is one, why Brucioli overhauled the cast of characters in these dialogues also between the second and third editions (as opposed to the majority of dialogues in the volume) remains elusive, a striking common feature emerges in all three: we witness a gradual but not complete fading out of Florentine characters over the editions (Lorenzo Pitti remains a significant interlocutor in the third edition of Del governo della famiglia and Luigi Alamanni, “quel famoso poeta della lingua tosca” [394], is an incontestable presence in that of Dell’amicizia).38 In our perspective, this is indicative of socio-literary rather than individual, ideological, or political considerations: in his attempt to create a collective Italian ethos represented in dialogue by a socio-cultural elite of interlocutors (civic, courtly, humanist, ecclesiastic, etc.), Brucioli merely makes the Florentine contingent a proportionate part of a national elite consisting of authoritative speakers from all over the Italian territory. It could even be suggested (though not satisfactorily proven) that the only fictitious character these three dialogues introduce in the third edition, a “Messer Teocrate”, functions as a sort of allegorical embodiment of this collective Italian ethos, all the more when we take into consideration that it is this interlocutor’s voice that authoritatively dominates both Del governo della famiglia and Della amicizia in the Ciceronian manner of the most authoritative speaker.

To be sure, in the 1520s and 1530s Brucioli was not the first to stage a group of elite interlocutors from a variety of places in the Italian peninsula (as opposed to purely local ones, as in Machiavelli’s Arte della guerra) to voice the arguments of the debate. Castiglione’s Cortegiano and Speroni’s Dialogo delle lingue (published in 1542 but conceived in these years) are cases in point. Yet it is at least noteworthy that precisely in these latter two dialogues we see a similar concern to make the content of the debate, the role of the vernacular (for the Cortegiano in Book I, chapters xxviii-xxxix),

37 No consideration has been given to the fourth dialogue of this kind, Della liberalità, because of the difficulty Landi has in identifying some of the substitute interlocutors and because of the confusion about whom the two new speakers, both indicated as Francesco, exactly replace (419).

38 ‘Florentine presence’ in Della amicizia refers to the first rather than second edition (see above).
a collective national and Italian issue by staging humanists from a variety of locations and by making the Florentine element an equal proportion of the whole. Castiglione has count Lodovico argue in favour of a universal *lingua cortigiana* to offset a strict imitation of Boccaccio and Petrarch, and Speroni stages an allegorical *Cortegiano* character that represents the collective vernacular Italian as linked to court usage.

Brucioli's arduous efforts to reassign the voices of his dialogues from fictitious classical to identifiable contemporary Italian interlocutors between the 1526 and 1538 editions of the *Dialogi della morale filosofia* thus reveal not only an adaptation of emerging dialogical strategies (creating *ethos* through imitation of the Ciceronian model) but also an increased awareness of issues of vernacularization in and through dialogue. It helps us to understand the *volgarizzamento* of his compendium of classical and humanist moral philosophy as a uniquely ‘Italian’ project, aimed at an emulation and appropriation of moral philosophy at the level of a national cultural elite.

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This discussion does not suggest that Brucioli came close to or even sought after a methodical application of the Ciceronian dialogue model. Aside from their mimetic nature, forgoing a precise verisimilar account of the spatial setting in the voice of an author or narrator, the vast majority of the *Dialogi della morale filosofia* do not feature the balanced and open-ended exchange of equally valid ethical perspectives on both sides of the argument (*in utramque partem*) as we commonly find in Ciceronian dialogues. More often, after entering upon the core substance matter, Brucioli seems to struggle not to let the exchange fall back into a pure monologue of one speaker and the other speakers mainly voice requests for clarification that hardly ever substantiate into real debate. Moreover, aside from minor stylistic revisions and the few but significant changes to the opening of

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39 The fact that Brucioli already started using real-life interlocutors as early as the first (1528) edition of the second volume of his dialogues, the *Dialogi della naturale filosofia umana* further corroborates this idea.

40 There are some exceptions of dialogues with a more balanced input by other speakers, such as *Della voluttà* and *Dell’amicizia*, or those that reveal the influences of other dialogical traditions: the *Dialogo della giustizia* and the *Dialogo della temperanza* feature a more intense alternation between speakers, including stretches of dialogical reasoning in the Socratic manner. See also below for the building of *brigate* over successive dialogues, in particular the ones on love and beauty.
some dialogues, which I will discuss below, the content and order of the replies in the main body of the exchange remains virtually unchanged over the three editions.\footnote{The only exception is Della republica, which omits, rearranges, and replaces significant stretches of the original philosophical content material in the first edition.} In other words, Brucioli chose and replaced interlocutors without accordingly changing the content matter they are voicing. This may seem surprising given the importance in Cicero’s own dialogues of the authoritative bond between a speaker’s \textit{ethos} and his argument, but it was not uncommon. While Renaissance dialogue sought to create an illusion of historicity in its spoken exchange, Olga Pugliese has shown that even in a classic such as the \textit{Cortegiano} the choice of interlocutor was often made or changed after conceiving the ideological content. Authors first formed the ideas and then assigned or changed the speakers who voiced them.\footnote{Pugliese quotes Lorenzo Valla as stating that “in dialogical writings, unlike historical works, the characters are to be adapted to the discourse and not the ideas to the person” and adds that “[t]he final decision on the identity of the speaker was often made at an advanced stage in the composition process” (“The Development of the Dialogue in \textit{Il libro del Cortegiano}”, 83-84). See also Pugliese, \textit{Castiglione’s The Book of the Courtier (Il Libro del Cortegiano): A Classic in the Making}, 83-99.} This strategy, however, does not undermine the importance of the speaker’s \textit{ethos} in dialogue, because it is still, for Castiglione and probably also for Brucioli, the determining factor in deciding to which reply he or she was going to be assigned. It simply profiles Brucioli as a full-fledged participant in the literary dialogue’s writing techniques in the early decades of the Cinquecento.

In a number of dialogues, however, Brucioli introduces some significant revisions in the staging of the referential framework in the opening section. As seen above, the first edition features a collective dialogical speaking on moral philosophy as a \textit{praxis} and mimetically underlines the circulation of wisdom through dialogical exchange. While to a large extent retaining these strategies, the second and third editions mark a shift of emphasis toward a more Ciceronian dialogical \textit{decorum}. They increasingly valorize the appropriateness of the individual speakers’ courtly, aristocratic, or humanist \textit{ethos} for the knowledge and practice of moral philosophy in general.

For instance, interlocutors now engage in praising the aristocratic credentials of their fellow speakers and their forefathers. In \textit{Della condizione de l’uomo}, Brucioli retains the first edition’s strategy of one interlocutor
referring back to a previous dialogical setting, but emphasizes noble lineage and contemporary aristocratic *ethos* when one of them, Ferrante Gonzaga, reports to the other, Guidobaldo of Urbino, how he had just enjoyed “[i] ragionamenti, che poco fa si facciano in camera dello illustissimo Duca vostro padre con quegli signori che voi sapete, sopra la morte del signore Giovanni de’ Medici” (16). A strong sense of decorum is built in the new opening of *Del capitano*, in which Francesco Maria della Rovere duke of Urbino instructs his son Guidobaldo on the values befitting the good army commander: the rather superficial introduction in the first edition is replaced by a series of replies that emphasize their family’s hereditary *fama* on the battlefield. Likewise, the reworking of the narrative opening of *Del governo della famiglia* exemplifies, especially in the third edition, the participants’ noble *ethos* and sense of *decorum*. While in the first two editions Brucioli couples a description of a set of speakers feverishly trying to find each other’s whereabouts to an Albertian valorization of the family in civic life (some of the young male speakers are yet to be married and thus need the others to instruct them in setting up a civically responsible family), the third edition substitutes this opening with exchanges that feature the interlocutors’ *decorum*:

> Andiamo, messer Lorenzo [Pitti] carissimo, ché noi *uderemo parlare uomo certamente dottissimo* e che delle cose del mondo intende molto avanti, e a una ora medesima vedrete *quanta nobilità e grandezza d’animo* sia in messer Giovanni di Nale che tanto ami i *valenti uomini* e in tanto pregio gli abbia che sempre con quelli voglia essere e con non piccola liberalità voglia trattenergli, cosa che oggi per altri poco si usa (58-59).

The interlocutor in question replies in equally laudatory fashion, reinforcing their *ethos* within the context of a collective Italian nobility: “O carissimi miei messere Vincenzo [Capello] e messere Lorenzo, onore certo di due *grandissime patrie* quale è la veniziana e la fiorentina, e non manco della *nobiltà e splendore* dei’ nostri *passati* siete i ben venuti” (59). Most importantly, the nobility of their actions is paralleled to that of their speaking: “Voi, messer Giovanni, non solamente volete esser *notabile* per corte sia nella liberalità de’ *fatti*, ma ancora nella dolcezza delle *parole*” (59); and their dialogical exchange carries from the beginning the hallmark of an ennobling friendship: when one of them begs the other to start their

43 “O onorando e carissimo signore padre. Io a’ gran fatti pensavo de’ nostri passati e alla *fama che quegli hanno acquistata nella perizia delle armi*, in quanto pregio per quella sieno stati sempre i duchi di Urbino” (233-234).
debate, his interlocutor reminds him that “le preghiere fra gli amici sono uno argomento che l’amicizia non sia perfetta” (59).

In other dialogues, such as Del modo dello instruire i figliuoli, similar strategies emphasize the *ethos* and *decorum* of humanist literati. The brief set-up from the first edition, simply referring to this dialogue as a continuation of the one on the previous day, is extended over 60 lines in the second and third editions. After depicting the gradual gathering of interlocutors in a “prato […] amenissimo”, Cosimo Rucellai eulogizes the poet Giangiorgio Trissino, who will be the dominant speaker, as the oldest, wisest, and thus most authoritative interlocutor of the whole of Italy in matters of philosophy:

[...] da uomo dottissimo come questo, non potrenno imparare altro che dottissime cose, utili alla vita, non essendo in Italia, che si abbia cognizione, chi tanto dentro intenda in tutte le laudabili discipline filosofice. [...] O messere Giangiorgio, onore e pregio delle toscane Muse, e a noi caro come venerando padre […], noi certo con gran desiderio vi aspettavamo (73).

In a similar manner, the two humanist figures Brucioli assigns to Della virtù in the second and third edition, the ecclesiastic Donato Rullo and the philosopher-commentator Bernardo Feliciano, keep up the fiction of an overheard dialogue from the first edition, but significantly thicken the acknowledgment of each other’s philosophical qualities: “E che può essere stato quello che udito facessi andare voi, uomo dottissimo e tanto nelle migliori discipline della santa filosofia esercitato, così lieto e gioioso?” (278). The opening of Del giusto principe, moreover, presents the *ethos* of leadership as embodied by a combination of humanist wisdom and the experience of a nobleman: omitting the extended visualization of gradually gathering speakers in the first edition, Brucioli in the second and third edition stages Francesco Maria della Rovere duke of Urbino as a speaker with experience in the topic, whose authority equals and complements that of the two other humanist interlocutors (Giangiorgio Trissino and Bernardo Salviati), who had discussed the republic and its laws on the previous days.44

44 In Della republica and Delle leggi della republica, he thus creates a triptych structure (as I will discuss below): “Tutto ho inteso e che della republica avete sempre trattato, materia nel vero bellissima e degna d’uomini quali voi siete, ma io non vorrei però che tanto vi piacessi il governo delle republice che quello d’uno perfetto e giusto principe fussi da voi disprezzato e per indegno lasciato il parlarme” (209).
By assigning the dominating voice of *Della amicizia* in the second edition to a female speaker, Vittoria Colonna, Brucioli already demonstrates that he considers courtly and humanist *ethos* as a quality that can be attributed equally to men and women. The one addition made to *Della quiete* further corroborates this gender-equality in the creation of an interlocutor's *ethos*. Brucioli inserts just one reply by just one interlocutor, namely the opening remark that purposefully guarantees the credentials of the main speaker, in the second and third edition a woman, Leonora Gonzaga, duchess of Urbino, in the field of moral philosophy: “Venite [...] se volete udire cose bellissime e vedere quanto *la filosofia* sia naturale negli uomini, e quanto in questa nostra illustissima signora risplenda” (453).

Furthermore, an increased attention to the spatial setting in the revisions of *Della repubblica*’s opening replies points to Brucioli’s adaptation of the Ciceronian secluded place in order to substantiate the interlocutors' courtly and aristocratic *decorum*, even if he does not follow the Ciceronian tradition of a diegetic preamble. The vaguely classical setting from the first edition is replaced with a detailed account of the beauty of the gathering site:

**PRIORE.** Bellissima è certamente, Niccolò [...] questa città di Pesaro, e non poco ancora mi è piaciuta quella di Urbino, e universalmente tutto questo Stato del Duca, *nel quale buone città e bonissimi ingegni di uomini ho veduti [...]*, quattro o cinque duchi [...] pare che abbino fatto a gara di avanzare ciascuno il suo antecessore in *magnanimità* e *grandezza* di *animo*. [...] **NICCOLÒ.** Ancora vi accrescerà più questa credenza dello splendore e grandezza dei duchi di Urbino, il vedere e bene considerare questa *fabrica* della Imperiale, e le maravigliose cose che sono in quella. Guardate questo cortile, considerate quella loggia, vedete poi queste scale, e l’altra camere e stanze, quanto sieno tutte insieme e ciascuna per sè belle e ben compassate (97-98).

The Priore’s (Bernardo Salviati) admiration for the ducal state’s urban prosperity and Niccolò’s detailed praise of the architectural beauty of the villa ("fabrica") where they gather, extending over almost twenty lines, confirm the bond between the magnificence of the spatial setting and the magnanimity and virtuous *ethos* of the state’s rulers. This visual acknowledgment creates a sense of *decorum* appropriate for the discussion of the topics of moral philosophy featured in this space (in the triptych of *Della repubblica, Delle leggi della repubblica*, and *Del giusto principe*), and, by extension, for the *ethos* of the interlocutors (one of whom will in fact be the duke of Urbino himself).

Finally, in the successive and thematically linked dialogues of *Della repubblica, Delle leggi della repubblica*, and *Del giusto principe*, Brucioli, in the
second and third edition, creates a Ciceronian sense of *decorum* by assigning them to the same cast of interlocutors presented as *brigata*, a ‘happy few’ of authoritative figures speaking on the subject matter over the course of a series of days. This strategy allows Brucioli to compensate the tendency toward monologue in individual dialogues. After all, when seen as part of a diptych or triptych, a dominant voice in one dialogue is offset by another dominant voice in next day’s dialogue, thus creating over time a balanced exchange *in utramque partem*. We saw before that the first edition creates sequences of dialogues by having their interlocutors simply refer to the preceding day or a previously occurring dialogue, without however themselves being explicitly marked as a group. The second and third editions reinforce these dialogues as products of a single constellation of equally virtuous and wise aristocratic and humanist minds.45

In *Delle leggi della republica* Giangiacomo Leonardi da Pesaro points out the group’s next-day return to the same elaborately described *locus amoenus* from *Della republica*: “Qui niente manca, per quanto io veggio, e tutti a’ nostri luoghi siamo ritornati. Ora voi (come sapete) ieri insieme con esso noi a lungo parlasti del governo della republica […]” (157). Yet, while Giangiorgio Trissino had been the prominent speaker of the previous day, the same setting and the same constellation of speakers now accompanies the leading voice of Giangiacomo. Moreover, Giangiorgio emphasizes the transferral of the role of lead speaker to Giangiacomo by a reference to yet another previous dialogical event in the same setting and with like-minded interlocutors:

Voi sapete, messer Giangiacopo [Giangiacomo], che già altra volta, e *in questo medesimo luogo*, ne trattammo, e che tutto il primo giorno consumai in dimostrare quello ch’io sentissi di una republica, e a voi, per lo altro giorno, come si passassi la cosa, toccò a trattare delle leggi di quell-a, in compagnia di que’ due gentili uomini che voi sapete. Sì che come allora presi la cura del primo giorno e voi del secondo, così intendo che oggi, vi avvenga e che voi ne tegnate ragionamento con questi signori fiorentini come io lo tenni ieri (158).

By having one of the characters evoke the exact mirror image of a past dialogue on the same sequence of topics, in the same location, and with the two of the same speakers (in addition to two other like-minded speakers:

45 In the case of *Del governo della famiglia* and *Del modo dello istruire i figliuoli*, however, the allusion to their sequence in the first edition is not followed by Brucioli, who assigns new interlocutors.
“que’ due gentili uomini che voi sapete”), and by positing that model as the blueprint for the current dialogue (Giangiorgio leads the first day, Giangiacomo the second), Brucioli further emphasizes the application of his Ciceronian strategies of spatial staging and brigata-formation to corroborate the interlocutor’s ethos and dialogical decorum.

In this respect, two other features are striking. First, Brucioli omits the remark in the first edition in which Carmene compared their gathering to the way Plato reunites his interlocutors (“secondo il costume di Platone” [158], see above). Second, he links the next dialogue, _Del giusto principe_, which in the first edition forms a separate dialogue, to the same spatial setting, the domain of the duke of Urbino, and to at least a part of the brigata of the previous days: Giangiorgio and the Priore encounter the duke of Urbino himself (208-209), who will lead the ensuing discussion on the righteous ruler as a continuation of the previous days. In other words, by creating a triptych out of a diptych structure, Brucioli reinforces the Ciceronian nature both of the dialogue’s structure as a balanced succession of virtuous speakers, and of its brigata as a group of speakers with the right ethos gathered in a location that mirrors their virtue, and talking with decorum about topics on which they are most authoritative.46

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In the final part of this analysis we need to turn to the mimetic aspects of the interaction between male and female voices in two dialogues added to _

46 For another example of brigata-formation in Brucioli’s revisions, see the triptych of _Della verità_, _Della giustizia_, and _Della fortitudine_ (which are separate dialogues in the first edition), in which Don Francesco de Soria and the brothers Antonio and Tomaso Perrenot, lords of Granvelle, reunite for three successive holidays (“queste tre feste” [287]) and alternately lead the discussion of the day on the topic on which they are most authoritative: “E così, essendo ancora noi tre, a ciascheduno di noi toccherà per vicenda, come principale, a trattare una di queste, e per un tale ragionamento, areno da passare l’ora del caldo questi tre giorni che qua dimorero. […] E voi, don Francesco, che fusti il primo a mettere avanti tale cosa, sarete ancora il primo a dire di essa verità e quello che la sia, lasciando la briga a noi delle altre due giornate” (288). In _Della giustizia_, however, the Ciceronian structure gets somewhat blurred when Tomaso and Antonio engage in a lively argument and Antonio’s becomes the leading voice only toward the end. The same is true for _Della fortitudine_, where Tomaso leads the dialogue and we find no longer any mention of Antonio. In order to create continuity with the previous days, Brucioli omitted a long passage in the first edition containing an embedded dialogue on the issue of fortitude by one of the interlocutors (see above).
the second (1538) edition, the diptych of Dialogo della bellezza e grazia and Dialogo di amore. The way in which gender bears upon dialogical strategies through the participation of Giulia Gonzaga further illustrates Brucioli’s application of developing poetics and practices of dialogue writing (ragionamento amoroso) in the early Cinquecento for the purpose of volgarizzazione of classical moral philosophy (in this case Platonic and Neoplatonic material from the Symposium and Cicero’s Sopra lo amore o ver Convito di Platone [1469], and Neo-Aristotelian content from Agostino Nifo’s treatise De pulchro et amore [1531]).

Giulia’s entry on the dialogical scene in Della bellezza e grazia mimetically exemplifies the shift in dialogical dynamics triggered by female participation in philosophical dialogues. A debate between Antonfrancesco degli Albizi and a certain Mario Viscento opens with the latter’s laudatory but abstract Neoplatonic meditation on the female beauty, grace, and virtue of Giulia, who is as of yet absent from the dialogue: “Grande e maravigliosa è certamente la bellezza e la grazia di questa signora, né io mai la veggo o col pensiero mi rappresento quella, che io non mi senta nascere nell’animo un certo caldo desìo di piacergli” (347-348). While Antonfrancesco’s praise centres on the beauty of her soul rather than her body (“quanta grandezza d’animo”, “la nobilissima anima di quella”, “una simile anima piena di si mirabile virtù”, etc.), it leads Mario to draw his interlocutor into a debate on the celestial vs. carnal Venus that “essi platonici descrissero ne’ loro libri” (348). However, Antonfrancesco’s reply is interrupted by the appearance of the very object of his discourse: “Ma ecco la bellissima signora Iulia, splendore della casa Gonzaga, che nel giardino se ne entra e a passo lento viene verso di noi” (349). Her real presence (“o che maiestà risplende nella reale presenza di quella” [idem]) and real voice (“Sedete, e i vostri ragionamenti ripigliate, voi tacete? Che belle cose erano quelle delle quali voi ragionavvi? Fatele, priego, ancora a me palesi” [idem]) underline the contrast between two forms of dialogical discourse: one in which the female is the object of philosophical reasoning, another in which she is an active interlocutor. Brucioli’s staging of Giulia mimetically draws attention to this difference and prefigures participation of both genders as guaranteeing a more dialogical praxis of philosophy, substituting for a predominantly monological male theoretical discourse that might as well have been shaped as a treatise.

This idea is corroborated by Giulia herself: after she has been told the aim of their conversation (“eravamo venuti […] a trattare di amore” [349]), she instantly rejects many existing reasonings on love for failing to understand its real nature and/or for the author’s incapacity to communicate it to the reader:
Di alta materia e difficile certamente avevi preso a parlare e la quale, benché da molti sia trattata, nondimeno che assai dalle altre mi pare che sia stata intesa o che, se pure fu intesa da qualcuno di quelli che la trattano, manco ne’ loro scritti la dettono a intendere agli altri [...]. (349)

She laments that authors have hidden true knowledge of love in poetic or platonic fables (“tante fabule poetiche o platonice”, “con poetici velami”), metamorphoses (“con tante metamorfosei”), or pagan theology (“con antiche teologie de’ gentili”), thus willfully obscuring either the topic or their lack of understanding or communication thereof:

[…] o che non se ne sia conosciuta la verità, o che non la si sia saputa dare a intendere, in modo che ancora altri la conosca e di qui viene la difficoltà che io dico che è al trattarne. (350)

Her repeated use of the verb “trattare” naturally evokes the trattato as a one-way theoretical discourse springing forth from a single mind but that fails to communicate through exchange (the twice mentioned “dare a intendere”). Connoting the “trattare” of these authors with a lack of understanding and communication, her comments point to the necessity for a deeper level of trattamento or ragionamento that creates understanding and communication as modalities of interpersonal exchange. Giulia’s replies endorse an authentic dialogical discourse: not a monological theoretical discourse superficially dressed in a minimal dialogical veneer, but one in which all interlocutors can practice together moral philosophy in order to reach a collective understanding. In other words, in amorous philosophy Giulia validates dialogical interaction by suggesting that through dialogue one gains true understanding of love because one communicates it to others.

In the ensuing exchange, Giulia’s participation embodies precisely this function of creating understanding through collective dialogical communication. After Antonfrancesco requests that she speaks as their Diotima (“Anzi, in questa prima giornata ci sarebbe di bisogno che voi fussi a noi come Diotima a Socrate e che tutto il carico ve ne pigliassi” [351]), she indeed continually engages both male interlocutors, in the true Diotimean manner, in intense and sustained Socratic maieutics that imitate the ascending movement of Neoplatonic love itself (“levarci con lo intelletto da esse cose coorporee e salire in maggior contemplazione” [355]), but guar-

antees the participation of all speakers, as her male interlocutor affirms: “E così a poco a poco ne [= a noi] avete cavati dalle cose terrene e mortali e condotti alle celesti e divine” (355).

In its sequel, Di amore, Brucioli continues the Ciceronian fiction of a brigata reunited for two-days of debate. Della bellezza e grazia had grounded this setting in time and space, although only after Giulia appears on the scene and not during the first opening replies of the male interlocutors: “Voi, signora, […] vedete come la stagione del tempo e l’amenità del luogo ne invita a simile ragionamento” and “E che ci torrà, illustissima signora, el ritornarci domane a dire se nulla ci resterà che oggi non si dica?” (350). As Giulia reminds Antonfrancesco in Di amore, he will now hold the leading voice in accordance with Ciceronian in utramque partem: “come ieri […] a me toccò quasi tutta la somma del nostro ragionamento e rispondere alle vostre proposte, così oggi è cosa conveniente che e volendo e pensandolo voi, vi pigliate questo assunto” (367).

While in Della bellezza Giulia had gradually led the interlocutors toward higher spheres of Neoplatonic discourse, in Di amore, to our surprise, her main interlocutory function consists in repeatedly reminding Antonfrancesco that his reasoning flies too high and is in need of concrete examples: “Alto ragionamento è certo questo, benché necessario al nostro intendimento, ma con lo esempio bisognerebbe farlo più chiaro” (369); “Voi ieri avesti quasi voglia di riprendermi che io facessi troppo alti i nostri ragionamenti […]. Ma io veggio che le ale del vostro intelletto volano più alto oggi che non feciono ieri quelle del mio” (373); “Dottissimamente certo avete proceduto infino a qui, ma ormai da si alti concetti partendo con più basso ragionamento ne divisate” (377-378). The issue is not so much one of gender equality. After all Giulia proves to be perfectly capable of Neoplatonic reasoning at all levels and does not function as the “decorously ignorant […] stand-in for an unschooled audience” that Virginia Cox laments in many vernacular Renaissance dialogues. Moreover, in De amore her participation emanates control and guidance rather than submission.

48 Giulia’s role here resembles that of the female participants in the Third Book of Castiglione’s Libro del Cortegiano. See for instance the following remark by Emilia Pia who interrupts an Aristotelian debate on the nature of the male and female by two male interlocutors: “Per amor di Dio, disse, uscite una volta di queste vostre materie e forme e maschi e femine e parlate di modo che siate inte-
so” (III, xvii).

49 Cox, Renaissance dialogue, 45.

50 She directs Antonfrancesco’s discourse: “[…] sarà bene fatto che con picciola
Rather, Giulia’s role substantiates gender as an instrument to create an authentically dialogical practice of moral philosophy in a spoken exchange in which all can participate. In this case, the gendered dialogical dynamics do not betray a perceived need to make moral philosophy understood by women, or less philosophically equipped readers, that we could find in some male-authored dialogues, but mimitically emphasize that both the creation and the understanding of philosophical moral wisdom is a collective product of both genders (which in the case of amorous wisdom is particularly appropriate). Brucioli exploits gender as a mimetic strategy that reinforces true and genuine dialogical volgarizzamento of philosophical amorous wisdom as mutually applied between the sexes.

**Brucioli’s case is remarkable for its application of the poetics and the classical models of dialogue as they were being experimented, defined, and refined in the early decades of the Cinquecento, to the translatio and spreading of a classical and humanist heritage of moral philosophy. Instead of surrendering to a tyranny of monologue such as in the vernacular treatise, Brucioli exploits the poetics of dialogue as a tool for volgarizzamento. In doing so, he makes moral wisdom effectively operational as part of a national and socio-cultural Italian ethos that reunites aristocratic, courtly, and humanist values and backgrounds, but also fruitfully incorporates gendered perspectives and, most importantly, valorizes civilized and civilizing dialogical speaking in the vernacular.**

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**WORKS CITED**


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