In the chapter entitled *La parola ornata e la donna gentile: un connubio ciceroniano* [The adorned word and the gentile woman: a bond with Cicero] the author gives an overview of the linguistic theory of Alighieri, and highlights the importance of Dante’s *philosophical* option for the vernacular language: this choice gives the foundation of the legitimateness of the Roman Empire and—simultaneously—of the supremacy of the Roman people. By the other hand, in Dante’s political vision the Prince, cleared from *cupiditas*, is not exclusively an *executor iustitiae*, but, by using the language of his own people, restores political communication, permeated by the lie of sin (p.76).

In the final chapter of her book *(Disarmonia infernale…)* Di Fonzo reaffirms a hypothesis according to which Alighieri in the process of the draft of the *Comedy* could have been influenced by some Medieval musical theories—and that seems to be obvious in Dante’s “polyphonic” description of the vision of God (p.121).

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*The Early Extant Manuscripts of Baldassar Castiglione’s Il libro del cortegiano in digital format. Transcribed by Olga Pugliese et al. Toronto: University of Toronto Library T-space Faculty Publications. http://hdl.handle.net/1807/32401*

Several years ago I was fortunate enough to see Raffaello’s famous portrait of Baldassar Castiglione on display at the High Museum in Atlanta. I was there for a conference where I was presenting my recent research on Italian Renaissance literary responses to the New World project.

The portrait reminded me of Theodore Cachey’s take on the subject in his pivotal work, the “Invention of America” where he suggests that if Renaissance Italy was not in a position to assert control over an increasingly nationalized Europe or their holdings beyond the Atlantic, then it certainly could advise these new nations on how to build and preserve their newly won dominions. Indeed, it is clear that in the sixteenth century, the Italians comfortably assumed the role of “Pan European” (Cachey’s phrase) counselors, whose “how to books” on statemanship and courtly behavior provided guidebooks for navigating this barely charted, and in some cases, yet uncharted territory.

The portrait thus stands as a visual confirmation of the importance and authoritative nature of Castiglione’s most famous work, *Il libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*), for who, seeing this dashing courtier, his hat tipped just so, his clothing impeccable, could doubt that he knew exactly of what he wrote? Immortalized by Raphael, artist to popes and princes, Castiglione’s eyes are keen but cautious and one gets the sense that Castiglione’s greatest strengths were his power to see that the world was changing and his ability to adapt to altered paradigms.

I was also struck by the wonders of our own new world where a painting nearly five hundred years old could travel across a vast ocean to a country barely imagined at the time of the *Courtier*’s publication in 1528. I had the same sense of wonder when I opened the link to Olga Pugliese’s online publication *The Early*
Extant Manuscripts of Baldassar Castiglione's *Il libro del cortegiano* in digital format. Even before reading the transcriptions I was impressed by the ease with which these precious words were now available: a click here, a click there and the entirety of the project appeared on my screen.

Despite the relatively slow computer on which I was working, the file opened quickly and took little time at all to download. The PDF file contains 784 pages, consisting of an Introduction, transcriptions of Manuscripts A, B, C and D and a list of major deletions from Manuscript script L (i.e. that used for the 1528 edition.) In her introduction Professor Pugliese explains how the transcriptions were formatted and arranged as well as their provenance; four manuscripts are housed in major libraries and the fifth is the private property of the Castiglioni family of Mantua. The privately owned fragments are generally only accessible in microfilm copies but Professor Pugliese enjoyed the rare privilege of examining them in person in 1995. In addition, Pugliese has spent years consulting manuscripts in the Vatican and the Laurenziana libraries. A grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and subsequent funding from other sources enabled her to enlist the assistance of a team of scholars and bring the project to completion.

The result is marvelous and brings to light new information about Castiglione's mode of composition and the evolution of his own vision. Of particular note is the fact that the transcriptions contain deletions not visible on the actual manuscripts but elucidated through the use of a "Woods' lamp." Accordingly, what Professor Pugliese and her team have produced is more than mere transcription, but rather a chronicle of the author's genius and insight into what he deemed worthy and what he deemed unworthy of publication. As such the transcriptions have opened up new avenues for further inquiry into the mind and project of Castiglione. In addition to preserving the contents of these precious and fragile artifacts, Professor Pugliese's contribution to the dissemination of this new knowledge is immeasurable. Her choice to make the transcriptions available online rather than simply creating a hard copy publication is extremely forward-looking and represents the philanthropic spirit of this consummate scholar.

Of course, as Pugliese says in her introduction, there is no substitute for seeing the manuscripts in person. I would follow this train of thought and add that logging on, clicking and then having a manuscript immediately available rather lacks the spirit of adventure and achievement inherent in a trip across the ocean and the experience of navigating the eccentricities of archival research. But it may be that the next generation of readers will place considerably less value on the actual artifact than on its contents; enjoying an online copy of a portrait as much as seeing the original in a gallery. That is, however, another debate. In the meantime, there is little doubt that Professor Pugliese has opened a veritable treasure to those who cannot travel to the archives. In so doing she has created a whole new world of inquiry and intellectual exchange, not unlike the one in which Castiglione found himself, and has shown us how artfully she too can adapt.

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