Past/Present: Leonardo Bruni's *History of Florence**

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The importance of historical consciousness in the Renaissance is a fact generally recognized by scholars of the period. From Petrarch on, it is possible to discern a growing awareness of the past: "men became more and more conscious that all sorts of things—buildings, clothes, words, laws—changed over time."¹ As Panofsky puts it, men "were convinced that the period in which they lived was a 'new age' as sharply different from the medieval past as the medieval past had been from classical antiquity."²

This heightened sense of the past is itself one of the manifestations of a long civilizing process that still remains to be fully investigated. Some of the forces at work in shaping historical consciousness are to be identified in the progressive differentiation of social functions, which in turn favours the gradual spreading of literacy among laity.³ Already in the 13th and 14th centuries the new demands of the communal civilization had redirected cultural activities toward more marketable professions: alongside theologians, canonists, poets, physicians and scientists, we see more and more jurists (particularly those versed in Roman law) notaries, lay clerks and accountants—all people particularly sought out by the political leading class and by the entrepreneurial and manufacturing classes.⁴

To meet the demand created by this progressive differentiation of social functions, the Florentine society of the time, composed, as it was, mainly of craftsmen and businessmen, sees to it that its children receive their education through commercial practice. On the other hand, travels to distant lands, contacts with different kinds of people, and lastly the mental habit acquired through recording commercial transactions in time will lead those very merchants to put down in writing much more than mere figures. Thus the transition from simple ledgers to "libri segreti," "ricordanze," diaries, annals, and chronicles, which record in a neat and orderly fashion events chronologically arranged in a well defined space. The place is Florence, and particularly the milieu of the merchant's family; the time

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is a quantifiable one, according to the daily, monthly or yearly human activity, which is now more precisely measured by the city's mechanical clocks. Thus the universal and eternal dimensions of earlier medieval chronicles are no longer to be found in the Florentine "ricordanze" of the end of the 14th century. The recital of the Florentine merchant-chronicler unfolds rather like a sequence of contemporary, or relatively recent, economic and social events, centred in the family's or city's life, and occasionally interspersed with ethical considerations.⁵

The Florentine humanist historiography of the early 15th century moves instead on a different plane. According to Alberto Tenenti, there are similarities, but also marked differences in the way the merchant and the humanist, respectively, approach and write history: namely, the former writes chronicles, the latter *historiae*; the former easily accommodates in his narrative God and the Divine Providence, the latter excludes both; the former deals prominently with economic and social issues, the latter disregards them altogether and deals, instead, mainly with political and military matters, on a quite different level.⁶ Furthermore, Tenenti, strongly disagreeing with Christian Bec and indirectly even with Yves Renouard, rejects the notion of these two scholars that there is merely a difference in degree between the humanist and mercantile cultures. He contends that, while it cannot be denied that at a certain time there was in fact a meeting of minds in Florence between merchants and humanists, it still remains to be fully investigated how and why this meeting of minds took place and which group was most affected, positively or negatively, by the other.⁷

The following pages on Leonardo Bruni's *History of Florence* are intended to help to bring into focus some modes of humanist thought, the level on which humanists operated, and more specifically the way in which Bruni himself related to the past.

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While chroniclers seem to be content with recording in the vernacular the mere sequence of the family's or city's life without trying to grasp its underlying rationale, Leonardo Bruni writes instead in Latin and for a selective audience, in a more detached way aiming above all at reconstructing events.⁸ He is quite aware of the difficulty of the task, "But writing history requires a method continuously applied to so many things at once, and calls for an explanation and judgment of each single fact."⁹ In Bruni's *History of Florence*,¹⁰ the scope of the narration has gained breadth compared with that of diaries and even most chronicles. No longer limited to city events, it also embraces the Italian and transalpine scene insofar as the internal affairs of Florence are considered intertwined and connected to those of other states.

Bruni's narrative, in addition to expanding beyond the city walls, also

goes beyond the boundaries of individual memory, which was the source and object of diaries, annals and most chronicles:¹¹ "As far as I am concerned, I have decided to write not only the present history, but also the past history of this city, going as far back as memory allows."¹² Thus personal memory and written memory are essential to the reconstruction of the past; Bruni sees this task as an important civic duty too often shunned in the past.¹³

Bruni, therefore, is about to weave the strands of the past, from which lessons spring for the present and the future, and relies upon archival documents whenever other sources—chronicles, annals or commentaries—are unconvincing or incomplete. As far as more recent events are concerned, Bruni's main sources are obviously personal reminiscences and those of his contemporaries, on the one hand, or archival documents, on the other. The events narrated and handed down to posterity through written memory are, therefore, those concerning the people of Florence, more precisely the internal and external strife and other noteworthy peace and wartime developments, along two separate lines set by the author himself.¹⁴

Indeed the annalistic framework of Bruni's *History* is traditional, as is the selection of historical facts, according to a long-established historiographic criterion going back to Thucydides that dictates that only noteworthy civic and military achievements should be narrated. Nonetheless, following the example set by 14th-century Florentine chroniclers, other episodes and phenomena affecting in one way or another the life of the city are also recounted. The description of the "Whites' " processions, which took place at the very end of the 14th century, stands out for its effectiveness and sobriety. It was a spontaneous manifestation of popular piety originating in France and spreading to Italy, and it was all the more striking both for the author and the Florentines of the period because it marked, so to say, a natural pause in the middle of the struggle against Giangaleazzo Visconti. Swarms of men and women, garbed in white, went in procession from one city to the other, calling for peace and mercy and swelling their ranks with new proselytes. Yet Bruni's description assumes in the course of the narrative a rhetorical function; it marks a pause—as was the case in the historical reality—between two phases of the war: "As long as the religious fervor lasted, warfare and its dangers were on nobody's mind, but soon after that fervor ceased, things got once again back to the previous cares of the mind."¹⁵

We can say that such an ebb and flow of human behavior, which is equally present in the alternation of internecine conflicts and external struggles, of war and peace, of unity and disunity, runs through Bruni's narrative and indeed constitutes the rhythm of historical time:

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The external front had hardly quieted down when internal strifes, as never experienced before, disturbed the city.

The following year everything was quiet on the external front, but inside serious disturbances arose, and the citizens took up arms for the reasons we are about to tell.

I think therefore that, after the barbarians ceased to constitute a threat, for a while peace prevailed among our cities; but pretty soon, as these cities were no longer threatened from the outside, they started to grow in power, and were beleaguered by envy and rivalry.¹⁴

Turning now to the theme of liberty and tyranny that underlies Bruni's narrative, we find that the yearning for liberty becomes a tropism on a universal scale: whenever liberty remains stifled, all life consequently languishes; whenever it finds new space, life blossoms again:

As larger trees hamper the growth of young plants growing close to them, so the overwhelming power of Rome in no way could tolerate that another city would grow to be greater.

... little by little the Italian cities began to turn their eyes to liberty ... finally ... they started also to grow, flourish and regain the former authority.¹⁷

If we consider now the rôle of classical models in Bruni's *History*, we notice that for certain aspects their presence is more immediately discernible, namely in the few explicit references to ancient Rome and to some specific sources (Cicero, Sallust, Vergil and Livy), in the prominence of battle descriptions, in the use of fictitious orations (e.g. Thucydides, Livy, Polybius), in the annalistic framework and in the texture of language—both derived from Livy—in the *brevitas* of the style, and finally in the selection of facts worthy of memory, which should be of great utility to the readers of the *History*:

And all these events seem to me particularly worthy of being preserved in writing; and the knowledge of those facts, I thought, should be greatly useful both to statesmen and private citizens.

This entire story deserves indeed to be recorded, both as a lesson to citizens, and as a warning to princes.¹⁸

The presence of classical models in Bruni's *History* is at times less conspicuous and obvious, as is the case for some reminiscences of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* and *Bellum Iugurthinum*.¹⁹ Such a presence becomes even more elusive whenever the ancient ethos finds itself in agreement with the present to the point of being absorbed by it.

As far as the history of the communal period of Florence is concerned,

Bruni clearly outlines how far the people of Florence had progressed in the previous two centuries, and invariably highlights the strife that had torn the city apart and those instances where Florence, in spite of her ineptness, had had *Fortuna* on her side. But it is the mercantile spirit and values that clearly emerge from Bruni's pages. In 1329—and let us keep in mind that Bruni was writing those pages precisely one hundred years later, when Florence's designs on Lucca were once again manifest—the Florentines were presented with the opportunity of purchasing Lucca from a garrison of German mercenaries for 80,000 golden florins; but, in the end, the citizens could not come to an agreement and nothing came of it. Through Pino della Tosa, who supports the decision to purchase Lucca before the "consiglio del popolo," Bruni voices the legitimate ambitions of a mercantile society, which with its industriousness had brought prestige, power and honour to the city. The rationale of ever-increasing gain, prominent in Pina della Tosa's address, exactly reflects the mentality of that society:

Indeed, as one who is familiar with communal life and customs, so I must confess that I can't help being moved by all things which are commonly regarded as good: *broadening territorial boundaries, increasing power, exalting the glory and magnificence of one's city, providing security and profit*: now, if we do not agree that these things should be sought after, then the caring for the republic, the love for our native land and indeed our whole way of life would be subverted . . . Our ancestors, the Romans, would never have dominated the world if, *content with their lot*, they had shirked any new military venture and relative expenses. On the other hand we certainly cannot say that the end of public and private life is the same one. Indeed the end of public life is *magnificence*, which consists of glory and greatness; the end of private life consists of *modesty and frugality*.²⁰

Such a mercantile cast of mind, operative on the socio-political level, surfaces in a palpable way even elsewhere in Bruni's *History*. In each case the assumption is identical: in pursuing a policy of growth or aggrandizement, one must have a great quantity of money that can be accumulated and gradually increased only by virtue of the spirit of initiative, the boldness, and the providence that are peculiar to a merchant. In the following passage, the *Bolognesi* apologize in 1390 to the Florentines for not being able to sustain any longer the common war effort against Giangaleazzo Visconti:

The fact is that neither are our men endowed with the kind of *ingenuity* which would make them particularly *industrious* in earning money, nor do they travel over France and England for the purpose of trade; they are rather simple men, *content with their lot*, happily enjoying what they have at home. We can hardly say that such a style of life is conducive to *wealth*, which is accumulated by *industriousness*, and increased by *diligence*.²¹

That the spirit of gain and love for daring also permeate the speeches of Florentine orators shows how fully aware are the Florentines of their legitimate claims. In 1273, for instance, the Florentines refuse to readmit into the city the exiled Ghibellines as requested by Gregory X, rebutting one by one the Pope's arguments. Directly addressing the Pope, they say at a certain point,

Please, do not bind us to a too strict and rigorous norm of life: the rules governing earth are not the same as those governing heaven . . . And that we stood firm by the Church can be proved not only by facts, but also by various *letters* of previous popes, filled with exhortations and commendations, which are kept in the *public archives*.²²

The actions of the past, committed to the written memory of the archives, once again acquire a precise meaning in the context of the relations between the Church and the Florentine Republic.

Almost one hundred years later, in 1376, Florentine orators Alessandro dalla Antella and Donato Barbadori, speaking to Pope Gregory XI, will defend their city from the accusation of having helped in more than one way the people of Città di Castello, Perugia, Spoleto, Todi, Gubbio, Forlì, Ascoli, Viterbo and Bologna to throw off the yoke of the apostolic delegates. There is indeed deference for the papal office, though tinged somewhat by ostentation, but there is also full awareness of what is at stake, namely the defense of civic liberties, which in turn implies the defense of the economic interests and of the political and cultural heritage of Florence. Particularly cutting, in contrast to the generally conciliatory tone of the oration, is the following remark: "All the more your Holiness must lend a very impartial ear to us, because, being so far from the scene, you didn't think fit either to see with your own eyes or to listen with your ears to your delegates' wrong doings."²³

In conclusion, Bruni's background is broad and composite. He was particularly familiar with Cicero, Livy, Polybius, Thucydides, Plutarch, Plato, Aristotle, Xenophon, Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio; he had done extensive translation work, particularly from Plutarch, Aristotle and Plato, and had acquired intellectual and political experience while he was part of Salutati's circle and as a papal secretary and head of the Florentine Chancery. All these elements contribute to his intellectual formation, but equally so do his contacts with the Florentine mercantile milieu. We can say, therefore, that an osmosis between the system of values of the mercantile culture and that of Bruni's humanistic culture enhances those values. Later on, Alberti will propose them as ideal norms governing everyday life. The merchant's mind, being so centered on profit and increasing gain, was rather inclined to exalt "utilitas," "ratio," "industria," "ingenium," "diligentia," "magnificentia," "modestia," and "frugalitas," all values that are

particularly prominent in Bruni's *History*, and that he holds to be peculiar to man as actor and master of his earthly fate. In this connection, one should also keep in mind that the Florentine mercantile class was considered the supporting framework of the Republic by many of Bruni's generation. Since the mercantile culture is a constitutional part of Bruni's ethical horizon, it is hardly surprising to find it reflected in his *History*, and more explicitly so in some of the fictitious orations. Furthermore, while in the diaristic ("ricordanze") prose the data of memory are arranged on the same level in a sort of unidimensional representation, in Bruni's *History* they are arranged in a relation of interdependence and of cause and effect, placed on different levels, in a deeper temporal dimension. The selection of historical data is effected through a critical evaluation of past chronicles, as he chooses the more plausible accounts, or resorts when necessary to archaeological and documental material. Bruni focuses not only on Florence's internal and external affairs, but also on the social dynamics and the partisan passions that stir it, leading to a "tyrannical" or "free" regime, and on the origin and development of those civic institutions whose effects are still felt in the present.²⁴ The systematic exploration and reconstruction of the past actually serve to justify the present configuration of the Florentine world.

The historiographic criterion of truth/impartiality adopted by Bruni in his *History* does operate in more than one way: in his rigorous research and evaluation of sources; in his caution before reaching conclusions, whenever the evidence is less than sufficient; and in his willingness to point out the ineptness and relative good fortune of the Florentines. How far we are from the spirit of panegyric of the *Laudatio florentinae urbis*! Bruni himself consciously distinguishes between the two genres: history is quite different from panegyric; history "must closely follow truth" ("quidem veritatem sequi debet").²⁵

It is also necessary to emphasize the narrowly political and mundane perspective through which the Church and its relations with Florence are regarded. Ethico-religious considerations are almost entirely missing in the *Historiae*.²⁶ Bruni goes on with his story to the year 1375 before incidentally remarking that since 1342 the popes had been French and residing in France, and the only reason he mentions this fact is to expose the maladministration of the apostolic delegates in Italy.²⁷ In short, nothing is said about the uneasiness that the faithful might have felt because of the remoteness of the Pope. On the other hand, Bruni does not fail to claim impartially privileges and prerogatives of Florentine ecclesiastics and citizens.²⁸ Liberty and tyranny, oppression and civic life: these are in the final analysis the poles in Bruni's historical narrative.

Further discussion of some aspects of Bruni's work will show to what extent he availed himself of the analytical tools common to his social and intellectual milieu, and to what extent, conversely, he forged his own analytical tools through the very process of reconstructing the past. In short, was he altogether conditioned by the political and social norms prevailing in the Florence of his day, to the extent of not being able to see the past except through the eyes of the present; or was he, instead, able to perceive the distance separating the former from the latter, so that he actually obtained a *binocular*, rather than a *monocular* view of past and present events? I think that, while dealing with past events in the framework of time and space relationships, Bruni got closer and closer to the specific conditions of the time in which such events were rooted, and consequently gained a better understanding of the present Florentine socio-political situation. For instance, the Florentine Guelfs' decision to abandon their city without resistance as a result of their party's defeat at Montaperti in 1260 is for Bruni perfectly understandable, given the precise circumstances, and not reprehensible as others had thought because of unfamiliarity with those very circumstances.²⁹ Similarly, according to him, the final outcome of the same course of action might be determined by different circumstances, as when in 1280 Cardinal Latinus was able to accomplish what only a few years before had eluded Pope Gregory X.³⁰ Summing up: though Bruni's historical perspective is obviously determined and shaped by present concerns, his evaluation of past events is based on his appreciation of the precise circumstances that affected them. On the other hand, past events are not considered by Bruni solely for their significance at the time they occurred, but also as starting points of an evolutionary process (for instance, an institutional change whose impact is still felt in the present social and political situation).³¹

This interplay between past and present, which cast light on each other, enables Bruni to grasp among other things the increasing inadequacy of a *popular* Florentine regime that still relied on obsolete communal political structures when confronted with the twofold problem of domestic stability and external expansion. The issue of competence in public office and effectiveness in the executive surfaces over and over again in the recounting of past failures. Looking backward, Bruni could indeed fully appreciate the cumulative effect of recurring malfunctions in past Florentine governments.³² It is fair to say that his very ideal of civic liberty was as much affected by his consideration and reconsideration of the past as by the present political mutations in Florence. His cognitive powers were certainly enhanced and his consciousness heightened by the gradual realization of the varied causes that had produced certain effects. Toward the end of his work, while Bruni was writing about the valiant Florentine resistance to Giangaleazzo Visconti's hegemonic bid in Northern and Central Italy, more and more things started to fall into place and the significance of those

years became clearer and clearer, offering him a better understanding of present-day Medicean Florence.³³ It was no longer a question of whether political decisions, especially those concerning foreign affairs, should be the direct expression of the wishes of all citizens, but rather of how an efficient state could better provide for the needs and aspirations of a city that aimed at acquiring a larger territorial basis.³⁴

In the process of drawing up his *History of Florence*, Bruni continued to read the ancient authors over and over again, and also to take part in his city's intellectual and political debate. Both discourses, that with the past and that with the present, certainly helped to shape and refine his analytical tools and also to weaken or strengthen some of his ideas. As far as the dialogue with ancient authors was concerned, the reading of Thucydides must have been for him particularly illuminating.³⁵ Though the differences between Athens in the Peloponnesian war and Florence in its present struggles are in more than one way significant, still there was one striking similarity: both cities were quite conscious of their means and of their aims, while facing similar political realities. For instance, both cities needed to secure large sums of money to wage wars that would allow them to broaden their sphere of influence and at the same time guarantee the preservation of their cherished liberties, and both encountered, at times, the same obstacle—the reluctance of the citizens to contribute to the expenses. In either case, the citizens, in order to be persuaded, needed to be reminded of what was actually at stake, namely their cherished liberties, the very basis of their wealth.³⁶

In this connection, the great prominence Bruni gives to wealth in the *History of Florence* needs to be emphasized. The almost inexhaustible ability of the Florentines to make and provide money for the sundriest enterprises at home and abroad becomes a *leitmotiv* in the narrative and a parameter of historical interpretation as well.³⁷ Bruni the historian, obedient to his set criterion of impartiality, recognizes that the greatness of Florence cannot be accounted for without taking its wealth into proper consideration. Conversely, he cannot help noticing that many past shortcomings of the city were the result of the incompetence of its public officers;³⁸ hence, his implicit comment that only qualified men should be charged with public responsibilities.

The emphasis Bruni places on wealth and the use of qualified men in relation to the growth of Florence, pushes into the background the substantial rôle that a communal force like the guilds, for instance, actually played in the development of the city.³⁹ Oddly enough, even the activity of trading, *per se*, is discounted by Bruni as a significant factor in such a growth.⁴⁰ Merchants are mainly seen by him as purveyors of money,⁴¹ lacking the political or military experience necessary to carry out public duties.⁴² In a way, their function is absorbed by the State.⁴³

The dialectics between past and present that underlie Bruni's historical

interpretation also reflect the kind of political debate that gradually developed in Florence after 1406, as shown by the protocols of the “pratiche.”⁴⁴ The fact that the speakers of the “pratiche” would repeatedly re-evoke events of the past and point to their significance in relation to the present situation in order to lend more weight to their arguments is a demonstration of how broad and well-articulated the political discourse had become. Ideas that had until then been aired primarily in restricted intellectual circles like Salutati’s or in writing⁴⁵ could now be verified in the larger forum of public debate: their applicability to a concrete political situation was thus tested on the basis of a past experience adapted to present circumstances. A connection was established between theory and practice, and this in turn infused new blood into the intellectual and political discourse. But most noteworthy is that the exchange of ideas and opinions among people of diverse background and experience stimulated and refined their analytical faculties, so that new contents found new modes of expression. In the “pratiche” a genuine need arose for each speaker to persuade his audience as well as he could, which made it necessary for him to construct his speech in an orderly, logical, and suggestive manner.⁴⁶ Some of the orations in Bruni’s *History of Florence* point directly to this style and to the actual stimuli that prompted it in the Florentine “pratiche”:

ORATIONS⁴⁷

I – “Please, let’s put aside such pompous rhetoric; let’s get, as I said, to the *substance* of the matter!”

II – “As long as I can remember, time and again, in various occasions, because of our tendency to *act slowly* and take things lightly, we failed to *make decisions and implement them at the right time.*”

III – “As a matter of fact it is *not proper* that issues concerning so many people be *decided by a few*, nor is it *safe* for the few who decide.”

“PRATICHE”⁴⁸

–The speaker is Gino Capponi: “The proposal presented by Piero Baroncelli was very nice but lacking in *substance.*”

–The speaker is Sandro Altoviti: “Issues under consideration demand no long speeches but prompt action.”

–The speaker is Filippo Corsini: “As Sallust recounts in his *Catilinaria*, following Caesar’s elegant oration, Cato said: ‘Present circumstances admit *no delay: prompt action* is vital to our success.’ And because the Romans delayed their action, Hannibal overtook Saguntum.”

–The speaker is Agnolo Pandolfini: “It is *neither proper nor wise* to ignore decisions made by and concerning so many people; in any case, it is worse to follow *the advice of the few* than the advice of the many, even when it is demonstrated that the implementation of the decision might result in some inconvenience.”

In each case the preoccupation seems to be the same: (i) the oration of the Florentine who recommends that the exiled Ghibellines not be readmitted into the city (year 1323) is a logically well-constructed and straightforward speech, aiming at the substance of the matter ("*ad solidum*") as much as Capponi's and Altoviti's speeches in the "pratiche"; (ii) the oration of Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi in 1399 reveals a concern for prompt and substantive action similar to the one expressed by Filippo Corsini; (iii) finally, the oration of the old Florentine citizen in 1351 advocates the overall advantages of a broadly based decision process, as does Agnolo Pandolfini in the "pratica" held in April 1423. Thus it can be said that, in the composition of fictitious orations, Bruni was following not only an ancient model but also a present one, recapturing through the latter the ethos that pervaded the former. It can be added that the audience of the "pratiche" would have easily recognized in Bruni's *History of Florence* the common conceptual frame of mind and the common disposition to present different opinions. Bartolomeo Orlandini refers to such method of procedure in the "pratiche" when he says that "... all opinions should be expressed and aired in a large assembly of people, as has been the case so far. . . ."⁴⁹ Bruni, on the other hand, presents, in binary orations, the opposing views of disputing parties.⁵⁰ In addition, toward the end of his work, he transcribes from documents two speeches uttered by Viscontean and Florentine orators in 1401, and invites the reader to use his own judgment in evaluating them: "I shall submit the arguments of our adversaries along with our own reply, so that the reader might judge by himself."⁵¹ Both Bruni and the interlocutors of the "pratiche," whether politicians or businessmen or lawyers or humanists, furthermore never seem to lose sight of the fact that without concrete social and financial support their personal aspirations, no matter how noble, are bound to founder. This heightened civic consciousness, which is wary of fumous projects and stands on the more solid ground of individual and collective claims, finds its expression in some of Bruni's fictitious orations examined in the first part of this paper.⁵² That, in public affairs, the case should rest on solid arguments rather than on theory was also the opinion of Agnolo Pandolfini, who said in a "pratica," "The administration of public affairs may not be conducted on the basis of theoretical knowledge, since it primarily requires specific data."⁵³

After having considered the effects that education, reading, translating, writing and participation in political life had on Bruni's historical outlook, only a few remarks remain to be made on his private life, vis-à-vis his intellectual and civic concerns. As we know, he was a *civis novus* in Florence, and consequently his steady effort through the years was to reach a status that would allow him to feel at ease in his adopted home town. The pursuit and attainment of honorary citizenship and of excep-

tional fiscal exemptions, his marriage with a woman belonging to a wealthy and prestigious Florentine family, his profitable investments, and his ability to walk a political tightrope when necessary, together with his intellectual talents and scholarly achievements, offered Bruni, at least to a certain extent, that material and psychological security also eagerly sought by many other Florentines of his day. In many ways Bruni was much less of an outsider in Florence than was Giovanni Cavalcanti, for example, who, though a native Florentine and of noble descent, felt little at ease in his city—indeed he felt like an outcast.⁵⁴ At the opposite ends of the social ladder, both were vying for social recognition, attainable in their time mainly by entering the orbit of local influential families and by accumulating a substantial patrimony. On the other hand, Bruni was certainly not speaking casually, but showing awareness of what the privilege of being a Florentine citizen precisely implied, when he proudly wrote in a letter to a friend of his toward the end of 1416, “. . . ego, qui novus Florentinus civis sum . . .”⁵⁵ Such a privilege represented a stepping stone toward a further climbing of the social and political ladder. Bruni was much better equipped than Cavalcanti for the ascent: he had a superior culture—the kind in tune with the times—and legal, administrative and political experience, accumulated through the years. The two were actually far apart in more than one way, but both wrote a history of Florence (Cavalcanti’s covered a short period and only contemporary events) and both bore witness to their times, though to a different extent and from a different point of view. Looking at them together also helps to bring forth what links them together, namely a common culture and common civic concerns, though by no means an equal vision of reality. Cavalcanti, cut off as he was from any direct participation in public life and rather immersed in self-indulgent grief, could hardly develop a broader view of things. Bruni could instead derive from his involvement in intellectual and political life a better comprehension of past and present realities. On the other hand, any Florentine who kept minimally in touch with present realities had quite a clear notion of what was absolutely needed to succeed in private affairs and public life: personal, intellectual and political talents, strong ties with powerful families,⁵⁶ and last but not least, a substantial patrimony to start with. Cavalcanti, echoing an old Florentine saying, said that “where prosperity is wanting, friendship is missing too.”⁵⁷ With the help of Juvenal, Bruni saw broader implications in this deficiency: “Indeed wealth may be considered useful, whenever it brings prestige to those who have it and enables them to practise virtue. In fact, we may agree with our poet when he says that ‘those whose talents are impeded by family poverty have a lesser chance to prove themselves in life.’”⁵⁸

In conclusion, one can see that Bruni’s discourse in the *History of Florence* is permeated by various elements of the mercantile culture,

particularly by the logic of utility, which is applied to public life or private affairs or foreign policy. This cast of mind at first simply equipped Bruni with certain conceptual tools and values operative in the social and political life of his day. It goes to Bruni's credit that, by continuously testing those tools inside and outside the political arena, and by repeatedly interrogating the past and the present, he was then able to place those ordinary values in the context of a long tradition, thus heightening their function in Florentine culture. Through the systematic exploration and reconstruction of the past, the present configuration of the Florentine world became clearer and clearer to him. That this was also the case for contemporary readers is doubtful. They might indeed have shared with Bruni the same conceptual frame of reference, but could not—as he had done—seize the full implications of the reconstruction of the past. They simply had not gone through the same experience of connecting and weaving together the strands of an entire tradition.

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Notes

- 1 P. Burke, *The Renaissance Sense of the Past* (London: E. Arnold, 1969), p. 39. (The assertion is supported by quotations from primary sources, on pp. 39-49.)
- 2 E. Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1960), p. 36.
- 3 For the progressive differentiation of social functions, see N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process* (Vol. 1: New York: Urizen Books, 1978; Vol. 2: New York: Pantheon Books, 1982). For the high level of literacy in a city like Florence around 1400, see D. De Robertis, "La prosa familiare e civile," in E. Cecchi and N. Sapegno, eds., *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Milano: Garzanti, 1966), III, 377-384.
- 4 For the contents of this page, I rely heavily on A. Tenenti's chapter "L'umanesimo italiano del Trecento e Quattrocento," in R. Romano and A. Tenenti, *Il rinascimento e la riforma (1378-1598)*, (Torino: UTET, 1976), II, 349-352.
- 5 On "ricordanze" literature see P.J. Jones, "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century," in P. Grierson and J.W. Perkins, eds., *Studies in Italian Medieval History, presented to Miss E.M. Jameson* (London: British School at Rome, 1956), pp. 183-205; V. Branca, "Ricordi domestici nel Trecento e nel Quattrocento," in *Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana* (Torino: UTET, 1974), III, 189-192; F.W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1977), pp. 272-278; F. Pezzarossa, "La memorialistica fiorentina tra Medioevo e Rinascimento" in *Lettere italiane*, 31 (1979), 97-138; F. Pezzarossa, "La tradizione fiorentina della memorialistica," in G.M. Anselmi, F. Pezzarossa and L. Avellini, *La "memoria" dei mercatores: tendenze ideologiche, ricordanze, artigianato in versi nella Firenze del Quattrocento* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1980), pp. 41-91. On the broader subject of historiography, see A. Tenenti, "La storiografia in Europa dal Quattro al Seicento," in *Nuove questioni di storia moderna* (Milano: Marzorati, 1964), D. Hay, *Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Methuen, 1977), and E. Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).
- 6 Above I have in part paraphrased and in part translated what A. Tenenti says on p. 1327 of his critical note "Les marchands et la culture à Florence (1375-1434)," in *Annales E.S.C.*, 23 (1968), pp. 1319-1329.

- 7 "Or, on ne saurait contester qu'à un certain moment il y ait eu à Florence une rencontre et parfois un accord entre mentalité et sensibilité marchande et humanisme. Mais plutôt que de célébrer cette alliance sans plus, il fallait préciser comment et pourquoi elle s'était effectuée, et surtout jusqu'à quel point, avec quels gains et pertes de part et d'autre" (Ibid., p. 1325). In his critical note, Tenenti reviews Christian Bec's book, *Les marchands écrivains: affaires et humanisme à Florence, 1375-1434* (Paris-La Haye: Mouton, 1967). Yves Renouard's ideas on the rapport between mercantile and humanist culture in Italy, and particularly in Florence, can be read in his *Les hommes d'affaires italiens du moyen âge* (Paris: Colin, 1968), pp. 217-247.
- 8 Cf. Tenenti's chapter "Le culture nazionali e la storiografia," in R. Romano and A. Tenenti, *Il rinascimento*, II, 568.
- 9 "Historiam vero, in qua tot simul rerum longa et continuata ratio sit habenda, causaeque factorum omnium singulatim explicandae . . .," in L. Bruni, *Historiarum florentini populi libri XII*, ed. E. Santini, in "Rerum Italicarum Scriptores" (Città di Castello: Lapi, 1914), t. XIX, part III, p. 3; cf. Bruni's letter to Poggio Bracciolini (from Florence, Jan. 2, 1416): "Exegi librum meum . . . sed tantus est labor in quaerendis investigandisque rebus, ut jam plane me poeniteat incepisse," in *Leonardi Bruni Arretini Epistolarum libri VIII*, ed. L. Mehus, (Florentiae: Ex Typographia Bernardi Paperinii, 1741), part I, pp. 110-111. (All the English translations from Latin appearing in this paper are mine.)
- 10 On Bruni's *History of Florence*, see: E. Santini, "Leonardo Bruni Aretino e i suoi 'Historiarum florentini populi libri XII,'" in "Annali della R. Scuola normale superiore de Pisa" (1910), XXII, 3-173; B.L. Ullman, "Leonardo Bruni and Humanistic Historiography," in his *Studies in the Italian Renaissance* (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1955), pp. 321-344; D.J. Wilcox, *The Development of Florentine Humanist Historiography in the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1969), pp. 1-129; N.S. Struever, *The Language in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and Historical Consciousness in Florentine Humanism* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1970), pp. 101-143; R. Fubini, "Osservazioni sugli 'Historiarum florentini populi libri XII' di Leonardo Bruni," in *Studi di storia medioevale e moderna per Ernesto Sestan* (Firenze: Olshchki, 1980), I, 403-448. Fundamental is Hans Baron's work on Bruni and his time, particularly *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Italian revised edition: Firenze: Sansoni, 1970) and *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968).
- 11 Cf. R. Romano and A. Tenenti, *Il rinascimento*, Vol. 2, p. 569.
- 12 "Ego autem non aetatis meae solum, verum etiam supra quantum haberi memoria potest, repetitam huius civitatis historiam scribere constitui," in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 4.
- 13 "Ita dum quisque vel quieti suae indulget, vel existimationi consulit, publica utilitas neglecta est, et praestantissimorum virorum rerumque maximarum memoria pene oblitterata," *ibid.* This deeply felt public duty to transmit in writing the events of one's time goes back to the conversations held in Salutati's circle and echoed by Vergerius: "Memoria etenim hominum, et quod transmittitur per manus, sensum elabatur, et vix unius hominis aevum exsuperat. Quod autem libris bene mandatum est . . . Nam sunt litterae quidem ac libri certa rerum memoria, et scibilibus omnium communis apotheca," in P.P. Vergerius, *De ingenuis moribus et liberalibus studiis adolescentiae*, ed. A. Gnesotto, in "Atti e Memorie della R. Accademia di scienze, lettere ed arti di Padova," n. s. 34 (1918), p. 120.
- 14 "Nam, cum duae sunt historiae partes et quasi membra, foris gesta et domi, non minoris sane putandum fuerit domesticos status quam externa bella cognoscere," in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 78.
- 15 "Dum religio tenuit animos, de periculis belli nihil cogitabatur; sed postquam finis fuit dealbatorum fervori ad primas rursus curas animi redierunt," in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 279.
- 16 "Externam pacem intestinae confestim discordiae subsecutae, quantum numquam antea civitatem turbarunt," *ibid.*, p. 224; "Proximo dehinc anno quies fuit ab externis bellis; domi autem seditiones insuper coortae graves, et a civibus arma sumpta ex huiusmodi causa," *ibid.*, p. 101; "Atque ego puto per prima illa tempora post barbarorum cessationem inter civitates nostras concordiam viguisse; mox vero, ut crescere coeperunt, vacuas ab externo metu, invidia et contentione transversas agere," *ibid.*, p. 25. See also following passage: "Secuta deinde quies ex pace aliquot menses hominum curas emit . . .," *ibid.*, p. 191.

- 17 "Ut enim ingentes arbores novellis plantis iuxta surgentibus afficere solent, nec ut altius crescant permittere, six romanae urbis moles sua magnitudine vicinitatem premens, nullam Italiae civitatem maiorem in modum crescere patiebatur," *ibid.*, p. 7; "civitates Italiae paulatim ad libertatem respicere . . . denique . . . crescere atque florere et in pristina auctoritatem sese attollere coeperunt," *ibid.*, p. 23.
- 18 "Haec mihi perdigna literis et memoria videbantur, ac earumdem cognitionem rerum utilissimam privatim et publice artibrabar," *ibid.*, p. 3; "Res enim digna est quae literis annotetur, vel pro admonitu civium, vel pro castigatione regnantium," *ibid.*, p. 163.
- 19 Cf. A. La Penna, "Il significato di Sallustio nella storiografia e nel pensiero politico di Leonardo Bruni," in his *Sallustio e la rivoluzione romana* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1968), pp. 409-431.
- 20 "Equidem, ut ista communi vita moribusque hominum utor, ita illa me moveri fateor quae bona apud homines putantur: extendere fines, imperium augere, civitatis gloriam splendoremque extollere, securitatem utilitatemque asciscere: quae nisi expetenda dicamus, et cura reipublicae et pietas in patriam et tota pene haec vita nobis fuerit pervertenda . . . Populus romanus parens noster numquam orbis imperium nactus esset, si suis rebus contentus nova coepta impensasque refugisset. Nec sane idem propositum est homini publice et privatim. Nam publice quidem magnificentia proposita est, quae in gloria amplitudineque consistit; privatim vero modestia et frugalitas," in L. Bruni, *Histor.* ed. cit., p. 140.
- 21 "Non enim eo ingenio sunt homines nostri, ut industria multa in acquirendo utantur, nec ulli per Galliam et Britanniam negotiaturi discursant; simplices magis homines ac suis rebus contenti, eo quod habent domi laetis animis perfruuntur. In huiusmodi autem moribus, opulentia non fit, quam industria parit, diligentia exauget," in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 251.
- 22 "Noli, quaeso, nos ad hanc scrupolosam vivendi normam vocare: aliter enim coelum, aliter terra regitur . . . Atqui stetisse nos pro ecclesia, praeterquam facta, literae quoque pontificum, quarum infinitus pene numerus in publicis servatur archiviiis, cohortationum et commendationum plenae, testantur . . .," *ibid.*, p. 62.
- 23 "Quo enim longius abes, ac minus vel oculis inspicere malefacta gubernatorum tuorum, vel auribus percipere voluisti, eo magis debet tua sanctitas aures aequissimas nobis impertiri . . .," *ibid.*, p. 212.
- 24 Speaking of the institution of the "collegia" in 1266, Bruni concludes: "Ea res quamquam *parva* primo visa, tamen populum a dominantibus ad libertatem traducebant, arma capere et ad suum quaque locum iubens," *ibid.*, p. 48. Referring to the first hiring of mercenary troops in 1351, he decries that decision for its dire consequences: "... *parvis* ab initio erratis permagna deinde pariant detrimenta," *ibid.*, p. 186. Bruni also marks down the momentous creation of a consolidated public debt in Florence, in 1344: "Eadem anno maximum est reipublicae fundamentum, *parvo* ex principio iaci coeptum . . . Quantitatis vero ipsas in unum coacervatas a similitudine cumulandi vulgo *Montem* vocavere; idque in civitate postea servatum . . .," *ibid.*, p. 171. See also: for the change in the electoral system in 1323 and its impact on the political structure of the city, *ibid.*, pp. 121-122; for the institution of the priorate in 1282, *ibid.*, p. 67; and for the institution of the Gonfalonier in 1289, *ibid.*, p. 79.
- 25 L. Bruni, *Epistol.*, ed. cit., part II, bk. VIII, ep. IV, p. 112.
- 26 The indignation for the lack of responsibility displayed by the cardinals during the long vacancy of the papal chair, from 1269 to 1272, and for the despicable behavior of the antipope in 1328, is scarcely reflective of a genuine piety. (Cf. L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., pp. 60, 135).
- 27 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 210. Elsewhere, in relating the events of the year 1351, Bruni simply mentions the fact that the Pope and his court were in Avignon, when Florentine emissaries were sent to him (cf. *ibid.*, p. 186).
- 28 "Principio insequentis anni [1345], crescente in potentiores odio, leges duae ad populum latae sunt: una in clericos iniqua, per quam omnibus eorum privilegiis derogabatur; altera in cives . . .," *ibid.*, p. 171.
- 29 "... potius illorum conditionem temporum non satis notam reprehensoribus puto," *ibid.*, p. 40.
- 30 "His de causis factum est, ut longe faciliorem viam ad res componendas Latinus haberet, quam dudum eadem in causa atque re Gregorius habuisset," *ibid.*, p. 66.

- 31 Cf. supra n. 24.
- 32 "Video enim, quantum ipse memoriam teneo, nos semper omnibus in rebus, ob tarditatem et negligentiam nostram, providendi agendique tempora ignaviter perdidisse," Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi says in 1399, and then adds: "... nos autem post res perditas remedia cogitamus" (L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 277)—the same sad conclusion already voiced by an old citizen in 1351, while addressing the deliberative council during the war with Pistoia: "... vos autem (quod bona venia dictum est) post rem actam consilium postulatis" (ibid., p. 175). Especially in foreign affairs, where time factor and secrecy are paramount in any decision, "popular" regimes show their weakness: "Res enim plerumque celeritatem et silentium poscunt, quibus decreta multitudinis inimicissima sunt" (ibid., p. 277); "Civitates enim quae populariter reguntur neque celare sciunt quod factum est neque possunt: quippe multorum deliberatione et conscientia in singulis decretis opus est" (ibid., p. 236).
- 33 In 1439, while working on the last part of his *History of Florence*, Bruni outlined for a friend the constitution of the Florentine Republic. In this writing he is quite aware of the fact that in Florence there had been for a while a mixed form of government, partly democratic and partly aristocratic, that the process of change from a full democracy to a mixed form of government had gradually started in 1351, when mercenary soldiers were for the first time hired by the Republic, and that consequently the city relies now more than ever on the wisdom of the aristocrats and on the financial resources provided by rich citizens. In this connection see H. Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Italian rev. edition: Firenze: Sansoni, 1970, pp. 464-465), and supra, n. 24. Once again the analogy between Periclean Athens and Medicean Florence must not have escaped Bruni: both cities could no longer be considered *pure* democracies: a first citizen had emerged, few qualified citizens held the most prestigious offices—or at least it was meant to be so—while a certain equality among citizens still existed (cf. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, II 37, 65).
- 34 Cf. L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., pp. 276-278 (Rinaldo Gianfigliuzzi's oration), and supra n. 32.
- 35 Cf. B. Reynolds, "Bruni and Perotti present a Greek historian," in "Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance," XVI (1954), p. 112; R. Fubini, "Osservazioni . . ." cit., p. 425, n. 69. Cf. also supra n. 33.
- 36 In 1390 the Florentines exhort the *Bolognesi* to continue to be their allies in the war against the Milanese tyrant: "Sunt enim pergraves omnibus belli sumptus, sed praesertim populis ac multitudini, quae futura pericula non discernunt . . . Amissa enim libertate, in potestatem victoris omnia transmigrant et insuper dedecus et infamia servitutis adest quae etiam morte est a generosis hominibus repellenda . . . Enimvero, non valet bononiensis populus onera belli perferre? at longe maiora feret, si libertatem amittet: quae enim nunc gravia videntur, tunc levia fuisse putabuntur," in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 252 (cf. Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, II 62).
- 37 Remembering how much money Florence had spent in the period extending from Charles I of Anjou to Charles II, Bruni comments "... inexhausta quaedam pecuniarum materia Florentia illis fuit; ut, si quis a Carolo primo Siciliae rege ad hunc alterum quem modo diximus Carolum pecunias numeret, supra fidem supraque modum videatur populum unum tantis oneribus suffecisse" (in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 138). And again, recounting Florence's endurance and the amount of military forces and financial resources employed in the war against Giangaleazzo Visconti, he concludes: "... ut admirandum sit populum unum ad tantas res gerendas vel magnitudine animorum vel opibus suffecisse" (ibid., p. 246).
- 38 "Haec et huiusmodi permulta rerumpublicarum a gubernatoribus imperitis committuntur . . .," ibid., p. 186.
- 39 Cf. J.M. Najemi, "'Arti' and 'Ordini' in Machiavelli's 'Istorie fiorentine'," in S. Bertelli and G. Ramakus eds., *Essays presented to Myron P. Gilmore* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1978), I, 164-168.
- 40 "Mercaturae quoque, si quis forte eam partem ad incrementum civitatis attinere quidquam existimet, non alibi per id tempus quam Romae commodius exercebatur," in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 7. See also R. Fubini, "Osservazioni . . ." cit., pp. 417, 428-429.
- 41 "Societates Florentinorum permultae et maximae in Roberti Regno et Galliarum partibus . . . fidem abrumperere coactae sunt cum incredibili damno civitatis," in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p.

- 160; "Ea res inopinata et gravis, cum multorum patrimonia afflisset, traxit post se ruinam minorum societatum . . . Decoquentibus itaque permultis, *inaestimabilem iacturam civitas subivit*, fidesque angusta in foro omnia perturbatur", *ibid.*, p. 171 (in both instances, in 1342 and 1345, the bankruptcy of medium and small trading companies greatly reduces the influx of money into the city). See also the oration of the Bolognese envoys, exalting the entrepreneurial talents of Florentine merchants active in France and in England (*ibid.*, p. 251).
- 42 "... scientia enim rei militaris vix illis qui tota nihil aliud meditati sunt contingit, ne dum homines plebeii et otio mercaturisque assueti illam possideant," *ibid.*, p. 200.
- 43 On the other hand, as we will see toward the end of this paper, wealth is deemed indispensable by Bruni for the success of an individual, in private and public life.
- 44 Cf. G. Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1977), pp. 283-302, especially pp. 289-295, 299-302.
- 45 Cf. supra n. 13.
- 46 Cf. G. Brucker, *The Civic World* . . . cit., pp. 299-300.
- 47 "Mitte, quales, hanc verborum pompam, ad solidum, ut ita dixerim accede," "Video enim, quantum ipse memoriam teneo, nos semper omnibus in rebus, ob tarditatem et negligentiam nostram, providendi agendique tempora ignaviter perdidisse," "Nam ea quae multorum sunt, a paucis determinari nec honestum est, nec illis ipsis qui determinant tutum" (in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., pp. 120, 277, 176).
- 48 "Consilium Pieri de Baroncellis fuerat pulchrum sed parvum substantiae," "Sermones longos proposita non requirunt sed executionem citam," "Ut recitat Salustius in Catilinario, post ornatam orationem Caesaris, Cato dixit: 'Tempus non esse dilationem adhibere, sed cito ad rem, unde salus procedat venire.' Et propter dilationes Romanorum, Anibal Saguntum vincit," "A consultis tam unite discedere et pro tot non debemus nec convenit et quamvis ostensum sit quod id sequendum, inconveniens sequi posset, tamen peius esse consilium paucorum sequi quam multorum." (In G. Brucker, *The Civic World* . . . cit., p. 286 n. 188, p. 293 n. 217, p. 307 n. 274. The original passages are to be found in Firenze, Archivio di Stato, CP, 39, f. 117r, *ibid.*, 43, f. 15r, *ibid.*, 42, f. 124r, *ibid.*, 45, f. 101r.)
- 49 "Quod opinionis est ut omnia dici et exprimi debeant in numero copioso populi ut ad presens . . ." (in G. Brucker, *The Civic World* . . . cit., p. 307 n. 277: original passage in Firenze, Archivio di Stato, CP, 45, f. 8v.)
- 50 Some of these binary orations are: Gregory X addressing the Florentines and the Florentines' reply (year 1273); the Ghibellines in exile addressing the Florentines at home and a Florentine adviser's reply (year 1323); altercation between Castruccio Castracani and Guido Tarlati in the presence of Louis of Bavaria (year 1327); the Perugini complaining with the Florentines and the Florentines' reply (year 1336); Alessandro dalla Antella and Donato Barbadori addressing Gregory XI and Gregory's reply (year 1376); the Bolognesi addressing the Florentines and the Florentines' reply (year 1390); the Venetian ambassadors addressing the Florentine ambassadors and the Florentine ambassadors' reply (year 1401).
- 51 "Subiciam vero quae tunc obiecta ab adversariis et quae responsa sunt, ut iustitiae causa a legentibus examinari possit" (in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 284).
- 52 They are the orations of the Florentines addressing Gregory X in 1273 (*ibid.*, pp. 62-63), of a Florentine citizen in 1323 (*ibid.*, p. 120), and of Alessandro dalla Antella and Donato Barbadori addressing Gregory XI in 1376 (*ibid.*, pp. 211-214).
- 53 "Gubernacula rerum publicarum per scientiam haberi non possunt, cum particulariter requirant determinationes . . ." (in G. Brucker, *The Civic World* . . . cit., p. 290 n. 204: original passage in Firenze, Archivio di Stato, CP, 42, f. 103r.)
- 54 For Bruni, see L. Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U.P., 1963), pp. 117-123, 165-176. For Cavalcanti, see my article "A proposito delle 'Istorie florentine' di Giovanni Cavalcanti," in *Quaderni d'italianistica*, 1 (1980), 171-181.
- 55 In L. Bruni, *Epistol.*, ed. cit., part I, p. 117. At a certain point (year 1340), in his *History*, Bruni makes the remark that the punishment reserved to citizens for their misconduct should never be so

severe that one easily forgets that after all they are citizens: "Cives enim sic odendi sunt, ut tamen cives illos esse meminerimus," in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 158.

- 56 For the family in Italy and in Florence, see R.A. Goldthwaite, *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence, a study of four families* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U.P., 1968); E. Sestan, "La famiglia nella società del Quattrocento," in *Convegno internazionale indetto nel V. centenario di Leon Battista Alberti* (Roma: Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, 1974), pp. 235-258; F.W. Kent, *Household . . . cit.*; G. Brucker, *The Civic World . . . cit.*, pp. 14 and ff., 28, 29; and D. Kent, *The Rise of the Medici Faction in Florence, 1426-1434* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1978), pp. 15, 16-17. The social and political support that bonds—not only among close relatives but also among friends—could provide for the individual is a reality quite familiar to Bruni. In his reconstruction of the past (year 1291), he does not fail to see the negative aspects of such coalitions: "Homines longis stipati clientelis, et multis, ut par erat, propinquitatibus subnixi, imbecillos honesta veluti servitute premebant; *frequentes ab his pulsatos mediocri fortunae homines, frequentes bonis spoliatos, praediis ejectos fuisse constatabat*" (one can almost hear G. Cavalcanti's similar complaints concerning other families' and his own predicament: cf. my article "A proposito . . ." cit., pp. 178-179 and notes 16, 17), in L. Bruni, *Histor.*, ed. cit., p. 81.
- 57 "dove manca la prosperità l'amicizia non si trova," in G. Cavalcanti, *Istorie fiorentine XIII* 10, ed. G. Di Pino (Milano: Martello, 1944), p. 380.
- 58 Bruni's quote is from Juvenal, *Satira* III, 164. The entire passage is taken from the preface to the Latin translation of the pseudo-Aristotle's *Economics*, addressed in 1420 to Cosimo de' Medici: "*Sunt vero utiles divitiae, cum et ornamento sint possidentibus et ad virtutem exercendum suppediunt facultatem*. Prosunt etiam natis, qui facilius per illas ad honorem dignitatesque sublevantur. Nam 'quorum virtutibus obstat res angusta domi, haud facile emergunt', ut poetae nostri dictat sententia," in L. Bruni, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften*, ed. H. Baron (Leipzig: Teubner, 1928) pp. 120-121. Bruni rehearses the same argument concerning the possibility of enhancing one's virtue, and more specifically "magnificentia" by means of wealth in a letter to Tommaso Cambiatiore (from Florence: 1420/28): "Nam de ornamento quidem non bene accipis. Nam enim de spintere, aut fimbria, neque de histrionis auro, sed de *magnificentia* diximus. Haec enim virtus ad ornatum pertinet, adeoque *divitias exigit, ut pauper magnificus esse non possit*. Miror igitur, quid in me reprehendas, cum et ob id utiles esse scripserim, quia *ad virtutem exercendam facultatem* praeberent, et *prodesse natis* eadem ratione, *ne illorum virtutibus rei familiaris obstaret angustia*," in L. Bruni, *Epistol.*, ed. cit., part II, p. 14.