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978-0-521-87606-3 - The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Renaissance

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The Cambridge Companion to
the Italian Renaissance

The Renaissance in Italy continues to exercise a powerful hold on the popular imagination and on scholarly inquiry. This *Companion* presents a lively, comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and current approach to the period that extends in Italy from the turn of the fourteenth century through the latter decades of the sixteenth. Addressed to students, scholars, and non-specialists, it introduces the richly varied materials and phenomena as well as the different methodologies through which the Renaissance is studied today both in the English-speaking world and in Italy. The chapters are organized around axes of humanism, historiography, and cultural production, and cover a wide variety of areas including literature, science, music, religion, technology, artistic production, and economics. The diffusion of the Renaissance throughout Italian territories is emphasized. Overall, the *Companion* provides an essential overview of a period that witnessed both a significant revalidation of the classical past and the development of new, vernacular, and increasingly secular values.

MICHAEL WYATT is an independent scholar. His work is engaged with the pre-modern cultural histories of Italy, England, and France, particularly questions of translation as both a textual practice and a socio-political phenomenon. He is the author of *The Italian Encounter with Tudor England: A Cultural Politics of Translation* (2005) and co-edited (with Deanna Shemek) *Writing Relations: American Scholars in Italian Archives – Essays for Franca Nardelli Petrucci and Armando Petrucci* (2008). He is currently working on a second monograph, *John Florio and the Circulation of Stranger Cultures in Early Stuart Britain*, a critical edition of Florio's 1603 translation of Montaigne, *The Essayes or Morall, Politique and Millitarie Discourses*, and he is an associate-editor of *The Encyclopedia of Renaissance Philosophy*.

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For Jacques Grès-Gayer

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Preface

The idea for a volume of essays dedicated to the Italian Renaissance first occurred to me fifteen years ago when I was teaching the literature and cultural history of the period to American undergraduates. My students and I were frequently in need of a synthetic presentation of subjects critical for understanding the texts or objects being studied but which were outside either the scope of their preparation or my expertise, and there was at the time no up-to-date resource pitched at the right level that might have helped to address these lacunae. Since then several useful books have appeared that examine many of the central concerns of the Italian Renaissance, some written by single authors and others organized as collections of essays (see “Renaissances,” my introduction to this volume), each bearing the disciplinary imprint of their authors or editors. This *Companion* reflects the literary, linguistic, and historical interests of its editor, but the aim here has been to provide a broad framework for the interdisciplinary study of the Italian Renaissance, with contributions from scholars at various stages of their careers who represent the disparate traditions of Anglo-American and Italian scholarship. The volume has been conceived with advanced undergraduate and graduate students in the English-speaking world in mind, but as these essays are more than mere summaries of existing scholarship it is hoped that they will have something to offer both to professionals working in Italian Renaissance studies and related fields and to general readers interested in the period.

While the initial impetus for this *Companion* arose from teaching, the actual form the book has taken owes a great deal to the enormously stimulating environment of Villa I Tatti, the Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies in Florence, where I and many of this volume’s authors have had the privilege and pleasure of being fellows.

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Preface

Constituted by a widely diverse and ever-expanding global community of scholars, I Tatti has played a crucial role over the last fifty years in the promotion and renewal of Italian Renaissance studies through its fellowship program for junior scholars, sabbaticals for senior scholars and museum curators, publications, conferences, concerts, and innovative initiatives such as the one that brought sixteen Chinese scholars to Florence in the summer of 2013 for a three-week seminar examining the “Unity of the Arts in Renaissance Italy.” I owe a particular debt to Katharine Park, who as Acting Director of I Tatti during the second half of my fellowship year patiently worked through several versions of the initial proposal for this *Companion*, greatly improving it in countless ways large and small. Thanks are also due to former Director Joseph Connors for encouraging me to apply (and reapply) for an I Tatti fellowship in the first place; and to current Director Lino Pertile for his advice with regard to this project, and for the hospitality he and Anna Bensted so generously extend to former fellows. Michael Rocke and his excellent staff have built the unparalleled library collection at I Tatti into the finest dedicated resource anywhere in the world for the study of the Italian Renaissance.

Collaborative ventures pose particular challenges to all involved, and this *Companion* has seen its fair share of difficulties and delays. I am especially grateful for the forbearance and understanding of both my contributors and Sarah Stanton, our editor at Cambridge University Press. Thanks also to Fleur Jones, Rebecca Taylor, Anna Lowe, and Jonathan Ratcliffe at Cambridge and to our copy-editor Anna Hodson for their attentive work in producing the volume; thanks as well to Rebecca Frankel for her assistance in preparing the index, and to Eugenio Refini for his diligent editing of it. For their help, advice, recommendations and/or moral support with regard to various aspects of this project, I would also like to thank Dario Tessicini, Frances Andrews, Monica Calabritto, Agata Pincelli, Alessandra Petrina, Massimo Scalabrini, Paul Gehl, Gerry Milligan, David Lummus, Mary Therese Martinez, Nancy Durling, Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, Raúl Martinez-Martinez, Daniel Zolli, Louise George Clubb, Lucinda Byatt, Ilaria Andreoli, Giovanni Carlo Federico Villa, and Maria Luisa di Rinaldis. Special thanks are due to Giorgio Alberti; and to Stephen Orgel, my best editor and most exigent critic, who has carefully read the entire manuscript (some parts of it more than once).

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Note on money

It is difficult to provide precise modern equivalents for earlier monetary values. The tangle of currencies and unstable economic markers resulting from the political and administrative fragmentation of the Italian peninsula and its islands in the period of the Renaissance make the task particularly problematic. But some sense of what the principal instruments of financial exchange were worth at the time is useful for understanding the costs of goods and services mentioned in the essays in this volume and its bibliography.

Coins were struck all over Italy in *zecche* [mints] regulated by the particular authority to which they were accountable, whether republics, duchies, lordships, and feudal principalities, the Papal States, or the kingdoms of Naples, Sicily, and Sardinia.¹ Gold coins were primarily used in large transactions, while silver-based and billon coins (like the *soldo di piccioli* in Florence) were mainly used for smaller everyday payments. However, over the course of the sixteenth century exchange rates between gold and silver coins fluctuated constantly. There were also virtual systems of coinage, moneys of account based on the *lira* and made up of 20 *soldi*, 240 *denari*. These “ghost moneys” only appeared in account books and never in anyone’s purse.² The gold coins most commonly cited here are the Venetian *ducato*, the Florentine *florin* (replaced by the *scudo* in 1530),³ and the papal *scudo*,⁴ each with its own fixed local value that fluctuated with time. In Venice between 1517 and 1573, for instance,

¹ Travaini (2007). Notwithstanding the close controls, counterfeit was a constant worry, or seen from another perspective, a tempting opportunity.

² Goldthwaite (2009) 611.

³ Cipolla (1989) 61.

⁴ Guidi Bruscoli (2007) xiii.

xx Note on money

1 gold *ducato* varied in value from roughly 6 to 8 *lire*;⁵ and in Florence throughout the sixteenth century 1 *florin* was worth 140 *soldi*, although its real purchasing power was halved over the same period.⁶

To translate these figures into more easily understandable terms: 1 Florentine *florin* would have provided fourteen days of an unskilled worker's stipend in 1500, but only seven days in 1600;⁷ "in 1536 [1] *scudo* would buy twenty-eight chickens or fifty kilograms of flour and represented one week's wages for a master builder";⁸ a document from Pavia in 1547 specifies that the rent of a house for the eight-month academic year accommodating five students, meals, and the wages and maintenance of two servants cost 192 *lire* (28 Venetian *ducati*) per student;⁹ an unbound copy of the first edition of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (1516) cost 1 *lira*; and the total labor costs for the construction of Villa Farnese at Caprarola (completed in the 1570s) was 25,855.80 *scudi*.¹⁰

Acknowledgment

Thanks to Lucy Byatt for her suggestions and improvements to this note.

⁵ Birnbaum (2003) 121.

⁶ Goldthwaite (2009) 612.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Hollingsworth (2004) xii.

⁹ Grendler (2002) 167–68.

¹⁰ See in this volume, respectively, Richardson, "Publication," Chapter 7, 171; and Wyatt, "Technologies," Chapter 5, 130.

Timeline

- 1282** War of the “Sicilian Vespers” drives French Angevin colonizers from Sicily; they are replaced by Aragonese rulers, the first sign of the Spanish presence in Italy that will come to dominate the territory in the latter period of the Renaissance.
- 1297–1323** Reform of the Venetian *Maggior Consiglio*, the principal political organ of the city–republic responsible for electing the Doge, magistrates, and other civic officials, and consisting exclusively of all male members of the aristocracy.
- 1303–05** Dante Alighieri writes *De vulgari eloquentia* (incomplete); Giotto and his workshop fresco the Cappella Scrovegni in Padua.
- 1309–77** Papacy moves its seat to Avignon, in southern France.
- 1327–74 (c.)** Petrarch writes and rewrites his cycle of vernacular poems, the *Canzoniere* (also known as *Le rime sparse* or the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*).
- 1340s (c.)** First recorded use of gunpowder-based firearms, imported from Asia, in Italy.
- 1341** Petrarch crowned Poet Laureate in Rome, after a three-day examination conducted by Robert of Anjou, King of Naples.
- 1347–53** Black Death ravages Europe, killing roughly one-third of the population of the continent.
- 1347–80** Catherine of Siena, Dominican mystic, fought for the reformation of the church and return of papacy to Rome.
- 1347–51** Cola di Rienzo is acclaimed Tribune in Rome in an attempt to re-establish a form of ancient republican government in the city.
- 1349–74** Giovanni Boccaccio writes his vernacular *Decameron* and, among many other works in Italian and Latin, compiles his encyclopedia of classical mythology, the *Genealogia deorum gentilium*.
- 1365–80** Giovanni Dondi designs and builds his “planetarium.”

- 1377–1417** Great (Western) Schism, which saw the papacy divided into two, and then three, competing factions.
- 1395–1402** Gian Galeazzo Visconti is Duke of Milan.
- 1397** Giovanni di Bicci de’ Medici, a banker with close ties to the papacy, returns to Florence from Rome to establish the bank that would guarantee the future wealth and status of his descendants.
- 1401** Lorenzo Ghiberti awarded commission to cast doors for the baptistery of cathedral in Florence.
- 1417** Poggio Bracciolini “rediscovered” a manuscript of Lucretius’ *De rerum natura*.
- 1420–36** Filippo Brunelleschi plans and constructs the dome of the cathedral in Florence.
- 1420** Pope Martin V (Ottone Colonna) brings the papacy back to Rome.
- 1423** Vittorino da Feltre establishes his Latin grammar school in Mantua.
- 1424–27** Masaccio and Masolino fresco the Church of the Carmine in Florence.
- 1429** Cosimo de’ Medici inherits the family bank and begins the consolidation of Medici power in Florence.
- 1432–1502** The “Ufficiali di notte,” a tribunal established in Florence to adjudicate accusations of homosexual sodomy.
- 1434** Pope Eugene IV (Gabriele Condulmer) forced to abandon Rome due to local political instability; he manages to bring the papacy definitively back to Rome only in 1443.
- 1440** Lorenzo Valla writes *De falso ementita Costantini donatione declamatio* – exposing the document claimed for centuries to justify the church’s temporal authority as a forgery; Donatello casts his bronze David for the courtyard of Palazzo Medici in Florence.
- 1442** Alfonso V of Aragon is crowned Alfonso I, King of Naples, linking the political destinies of Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples to the Spanish Aragonese.
- 1443–57** Leon Battista Alberti writes his architectural treatise, *De re aedificatoria*.
- 1447** Francesco Sforza seizes power in Milan; election of Pope Nicholas V (Tommaso Parentucelli), who initiates the monumental reconstruction of Rome.
- 1452–71** Construction of the *Triumphal Arch of Alfonso I* at Castel Nuovo in Naples.
- 1453** Ottoman conquest of Constantinople, after which many Greek-speaking intellectuals immigrate to Italy together with their libraries.
- 1458** Election of Pope Pius II (Enea Silvio Piccolomini).
- 1465–82** Luciano Lauredana and Francesco di Giorgio Martini build the Palazzo Ducale for Federico da Montefeltro in Urbino.

- 1465–67 Germans Conrad Sweynheym and Arnold Pannartz establish first known printing press in Italy, at the Benedictine monastery of Subiaco outside of Rome.
- 1465–77 Francesco di Giorgio Martini compiles his reflections on technological developments, the *Codicetto*.
- 1469 Lorenzo de' Medici, "The Magnificent," assumes control of his family's interests, and, de facto, those of Florence.
- 1471 Election of Pope Sixtus IV (Francesco della Rovere). Major building continues in Rome, including the Sistine Chapel and the Vatican Library (formally constituted in 1475).
- 1474 Isabella d'Este born in Ferrara; Flavio Biondo publishes his geography of Italy, *Italia illustrata*; and Marsilio Ficino completes his *Theologia platonica* (published in 1482).
- 1472–75 (c.) Andrea Mantegna paints his *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*.
- 1478 "Pazzi Conspiracy" in Florence that wounded Lorenzo de' Medici and killed his brother Giuliano.
- 1480 (c.) Piero della Francesca writes his treatise on visual perspective, *De prospectiva pingendi*.
- 1480 Angelo Poliziano's version of the Orpheus myth, *Orfeo*, staged with designs by Leonardo da Vinci in Mantua (an earlier date, 1473, has been suggested by some scholars).
- 1480s Gubbio *Studiolo* realized by the workshop of Giuliano da Maiano after designs by Francesco di Giorgio Martini.
- 1480–81 Ottoman siege of Otranto that threatened a Muslim invasion of the Italian peninsula, repelled by various Italian contingents and troops of the Hungarian humanist king Matthias Corvinus, cut short by the premature death of the sultan Mahomet II.
- 1482 Francesco Berlinghieri publishes his *Septe giornate della geografia*, the first comprehensive effort to modernize Ptolemy's ancient geography; Sixtus IV authorizes the dissection of human cadavers for medical research.
- 1486 Pico della Mirandola publishes his controversial 900 theses dedicated to philosophical questions.
- 1491–1507 Giovanni Pontano, Neapolitan humanist, publishes his five *Dialogi* (*Charon*, *Antonius*, *Actius*, *Aegidius*, and *Asinus*).
- 1492 Election of Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia); Columbus sails west; death of Lorenzo de' Medici.
- 1494 Descent into Italy of the French King Charles VIII, initiating a period of extreme political instability on the Italian peninsula that would last until 1559 with the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis; Luca Pacioli publishes his mathematical treatise *Summa de arithmetica, geometria, proportioni e proportionalità e della divina proportione*.
- 1494–98 Dominican friar Girolamo Savonarola becomes effective leader of Florence, at the end of which time he is publicly hanged and burned as a heretic.

- 1495** Matteo Maria Boiardo's incomplete *Orlando innamorato* published posthumously.
- 1495–98** Aldus Manutius publishes in Greek the complete works of Aristotle in Venice.
- 1497–1502** Filippino Lippi frescoes the Strozzi Chapel in the Church of Santa Maria Novella, Florence.
- 1498** Leonardo da Vinci paints his *Last Supper* in the refectory of the Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan.
- 1498–1512** Florentine Republic re-established; Niccolò Machiavelli appointed secretary to the Second Chancery (for internal and military affairs).
- 1499** The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, an anonymous prose romance (Francesco Colonna may be the author) written in a hybrid language and among the most highly prized books of the early period of Italian printing, published by Aldus Manutius' press in Venice.
- 1501** Ottaviano Petrucci publishes the *Harmonice Musices Odhecaton*, a collection of ninety-six polyphonic pieces, a landmark in the printing of music.
- 1501–04** Michelangelo's *David*, originally intended for the roofline of the Florence cathedral, placed in front of the administrative seat of the Florentine republic, Palazzo Vecchio.
- 1503** Election of Pope Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere).
- 1504** Amerigo Vespucci publishes *Mundus novus*, an account of his four journeys to the West Indies and Brazil; the Kingdom of Naples assimilated into the Spanish Hapsburg empire.
- 1506** The ancient Hellenistic monumental statue-set of *Laocoön and his Sons* unearthed in Rome.
- 1506–1615** St. Peter's Basilica in Rome rebuilt by numerous architects.
- 1507–24** Baldassare Castiglione writes his treatise of the ideal courtly life, *Il libro del cortegiano* (published in 1528).
- 1508** Bologna conquered by Julius II.
- 1508–09** Ludovico Ariosto writes his vernacular comedies *Cassaria* and *I suppositi*, modeled after works of the ancient Roman playwrights Plautus and Terence.
- 1508–12** Michelangelo frescoes ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.
- 1509** Republic of Venice defeated in the Battle of Agnadello by the League of Cambrai consisting of the papacy allied with the major European powers, exposing vulnerabilities in Venetian control over its mainland territories.
- 1509–11** Raphael frescoes the Vatican *Stanza della Segnatura*.
- 1512–14 (c.)** Giovanni Bellini paints the *Feast of the Gods*.
- 1513** Machiavelli begins work on the *Discorsi* (finished by 1519 but not printed until 1531) and writes *Il principe* (printed in 1532); election of Pope Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici), following the restitution of the Medici in Florence the previous year.

- 1516** First edition of Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, subsequently enlarged and published in a second edition in 1521, further expanded and adapted in the now-standard Tuscan dialect and issued definitively in 1532; Giovan Francesco Fortunio publishes his *Regole grammaticali della volgar lingua*, the first printed Italian grammar; Pietro Pomponazzi publishes *De immortalitate animae*, arguing against the immortality of the soul.
- 1521** Teofilo Folengo publishes his macaronic mock-epic *Baldus*.
- 1521–36** Gian Giacomo Acaya transforms the feudal settlement of Segine (near Lecce) into the fortified town of Acaya.
- 1523–34** Papacy of Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici).
- 1524** Marcantonio Raimondi publishes his erotic engravings (subsequently destroyed on order of Clement VII) known as *I modi* after (lost) images of Giulio Romano for which Pietro Aretino wrote accompanying sonnets.
- 1525** Battle of Pavia between France and the Holy Roman Empire, after which French claims on Italy end with the French king Francis I taken prisoner; Pietro Bembo publishes *Le prose della volgar lingua*.
- 1525–26** Aldine press in Venice publishes the ancient medical texts of Galen and Hippocrates in Greek.
- 1527** Sack of Rome by troops of Hapsburg Holy Roman Emperor Charles V.
- 1530** The Paduan physician Girolamo Fracastoro publishes his poem dealing with syphilis, *Syphilis sive Morbus Gallicus*, a disease that had first appeared in Europe in the late fifteenth century and may have been brought to Italy with the French invasion in the 1490s.
- 1534** Election of Pope Paul III (Alessandro Farnese).
- 1534–35** Lorenzo Lotto paints his *Annunciation* for the Confraternity of Merchants in Recanati.
- 1536–41** Michelangelo frescoes *The Last Judgment* in the Sistine Chapel.
- 1538** Vittoria Colonna's *Rime* printed.
- 1542** Creation of the Holy Office, the administrative center of the Roman Inquisition.
- 1543** First edition of *Il beneficio di Cristo* (issued anonymously but written by Benedetto Fontanini) – the most influential text of the Italian “Reformation” – published in Venice.
- 1545–63** Council of Trent, the Catholic counter-offensive to the Protestant Reformation.
- 1547** Tullia d'Aragona publishes her *Rime*.
- 1549** Giovanni della Casa, Papal Nuncio to the Republic of Venice, compiles the first Italian Index of Forbidden Books (his treatise on social customs, *Il Galateo*, is published posthumously in 1558); Laura Terracina publishes her chivalric romance in dialogue with Ariosto, the *Discorso sopra tutti i primi canti dell' "Orlando furioso."*

- 1550** Giorgio Vasari publishes the first edition of his survey of the Italian visual arts, the *Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architettori* (expanded and reissued in 1568).
- 1550s (c.)** Cristoforo Sabbadino writes his treatise dealing with the technological and ecological challenges facing the Venetian lagoon, the *Trattato delle acque* (unpublished in the period).
- 1550–59** Gian Battista Ramusio publishes the three volumes of his collection of accounts of the voyages of discovery, *Navigazioni et viaggi*, from Marco Polo through Vespucci and including the exploration of Africa (printed together with maps of Giacomo Gastaldi).
- 1551** Leandro Alberti publishes his *Descrittione di tutta Italia*, the first geography of Italy to include Sicily and Sardinia.
- 1552** Giovanni Filippo Ingrassia, a Sicilian physician and public health official, publishes *De tumoribus praeter naturam*, documenting his earlier discovery that the human brain could host tumors.
- 1554** First three parts of Matteo Bandello's *Novelle*, the most important collection of short narrative fiction since Boccaccio's *Decameron*, published (a fourth part was issued posthumously in 1573).
- 1555** Election of Pope Paul IV (Gian Pietro Carafa).
- 1556–73** Vignola (Jacopo Barozzi) designs and builds Villa Farnese at Caprarola.
- 1558** Gioseffo Zarlino publishes his influential treatise of music theory, the *Istitutioni harmoniche*.
- 1559** Papal Index of Forbidden Books established; first anthology of verse by women poets, the *Rime diverse d'alcune nobilissime et virtuosissime donne*, published in Lucca; Cosimo I de' Medici, Duke of Florence since 1537, named Grand Duke of Tuscany by Pope Pius IV (Giovanni Angelo Medici di Marignano).
- 1560** Giovanni della Porta founds the "Accademia Secretorum Naturae" in Naples, one of the earliest learned societies in Europe dedicated to the natural sciences; Laura Battiferri publishes the *Primo libro dell'opere toscane*, a collection of her own poetry and that of a group of male correspondents.
- 1561** Alessandro Citolini publishes his encyclopedic dictionary of the knowledge of the world, *La tipocosmia*; posthumous publication of Francesco Guicciardini's *Historia d'Italia*, a devastating critique of Italian politics between 1492 and 1532.
- 1562** Isabella Andreini, the most famous actress of the "Commedia dell'arte" and a prolific poet, born in Padua.
- 1564** Death of Michelangelo.
- 1566** Election of Pope Pius V (Antonio Ghislieri).
- 1569** Girolamo Mercuriale publishes his treatise on physical exercise, *De arte gymnastica*.

- 1570 Andrea Palladio publishes his architectural treatise, the *Quattro libri di architettura*.
- 1571 Battle of Lepanto in which for the first time a league of European Christian allies prevailed over Turkish forces at sea.
- 1574 Stefano Guazzo publishes *Della civil conversazione*, a “courtesy” manual dealing with education, family life, and social practices.
- 1575 Veronica Franco publishes her collection of poems, *Terze rime*.
- 1580–81 Torquato Tasso publishes *Aminta*, a widely imitated pastoral play, and his equally influential epic poem, *La Gerusalemme liberata*.
- 1580–83 Ignazio Danti supervises the painting of frescoes of maps of Italian territories in the Vatican Gallery of Maps.
- 1582–85 Renegade Dominican friar Giordano Bruno writes and publishes in London six Italian dialogues dealing with a wide range of controversial philosophical and cosmological issues, including the heliocentric universe and the infinity of worlds.
- 1584 Installation of the Fontana Pretoria in Palermo, originally built by Francesco Camilliani in 1554 for the Florentine villa of Don Pedro di Toledo.
- 1585 Inauguration of the Teatro Olimpico, designed by Andrea Palladio, in Vicenza.
- 1588 Giovanni Botero publishes his treatise on cities, *Della grandezza e magnificenza delle città*.
- 1589 Elaborate musical *intermezzi* staged between the acts of Girolamo Bargagli’s comedy *La pellegrina* in a theater constructed within the Uffizi Palace in Florence for the wedding celebrations of Grand Duke Ferdinand I and Christine of Lorraine.
- 1593 Antonio Possevino’s *Biblioteca selecta* forcefully reasserts the relationship of Aristotelianism and Catholic doctrine, subordinating all philosophical thinking to the teaching magisterium of the church.
- 1598 John Florio, son of an Italian religious exile, publishes in London *A Worlde of Words*, an Italian–English dictionary and the most comprehensive lexicon of the Italian language to date (a second, greatly expanded edition, *Queen Anna’s New World of Words*, is published in 1611); Ferrara loses its independence to the papacy.
- 1600 Giordano Bruno executed by the Roman Inquisition.