Introduction

What was Italian Exceptionalism and how did it come about? This book intends to investigate the cultural uniqueness of Italy that gave birth to the lay intellectual in medieval western Europe. I intend to explain why and how it was that, whereas clerics elsewhere largely monopolized intellectual life roughly up to 1500, in Italy by the thirteenth century the majority of intellectuals were laymen. An answer to this question will help us to understand better why humanism, an intellectual movement that contributed significantly to the development of the modern European mentality, began in Italy, and why it was primarily laymen who sustained it.

The sources for answering this question, however, lie deep in Italy's ancient and medieval past, and therefore analysis must begin long before the thirteenth century. This book focuses primarily on the history of Italian education in the medieval centuries, but it is also intended as a general history of Italy's medieval Latin culture. At the same time, the story cannot be separated from the social, political, and religious environment in which educational developments took place and with which schools and teachers interacted. Although often detailed matter is involved, the ultimate questions we are seeking to answer remain in the forefront of the analysis.

Geographically, this book concerns the northern half of the peninsula, because the early assumption of intellectual leadership by laymen that I describe was limited to that area – essentially the Kingdom of Italy (the *regnum*), whose borders were largely set by the Carolingian conquest. Created in the aftermath of the Lombard defeat in the late eighth century, the *regnum* initially included most of northern Italy and a large portion of central Italy down into Umbria. The papacy, however, was recognized as exercising joint authority over the Exarchate of Ravenna, which extended from Bologna to Ravenna, and the Marches with its five cities, Rimini, Pesaro, Fano, Senigallia, and Ancona. From the late ninth century, although the papacy's claims were generally recognized, for all practical purposes government in both the Exarchate and the Marches was in the hands of the secular ruler. Just below the Marches and southeast of Rome, the region of the Abruzzo formed the *regnum*'s southernmost part. Although in the twelfth century the papacy expanded its power to Umbria and into the Marches, on the whole

the territorial arrangement remained relatively unchanged until the second half of the thirteenth century.[1]

The Carolingian conquest of Italy in 773 constitutes a good starting point for discussing Italian exceptionalism. Not only does documentation become relatively abundant beginning with the years around 800, but also reforms made by the Carolingians in their new territory contributed to a reorganization of ecclesiastical, political, and legal institutions that was to have profound consequences in centuries to come. The present study ends with the middle decades of the thirteenth century at the beginning of the humanist movement, whose development I have discussed elsewhere.[2]

Historians have long recognized that what is known about the northern half of the Italian peninsula does not conform to the general models that have traditionally been used to describe European society in the Middle Ages. From the eleventh century the northern half of Italy was highly urbanized; a significant portion of the nobility lived in towns; social mobility was relatively high; and although the predominant part of the population continued to work in agriculture, an increasing number of people lived from commerce and industry. Over the following two centuries, with the development of urban communes, republican government became the principal political form; and at least after 1100 laymen figured prominently in intellectual life. To explain Italian exceptionalism, historians have generally looked to Italy's historical background and its geographical position. While Italy had undergone the same period of invasions as the rest of Europe, the roots of ancient city culture were deeper there than north of the Alps. Being situated between the eastern and western Mediterranean, the peninsula was ideally situated to play the role of intermediary between East and West. The basis of the European economic revival lay principally in agriculture, especially in increased production of cereals, but the Italians were also able to profit by exploiting their position as middlemen in trade with the more economically developed East. In succeeding centuries they never lost the initiative, and they dominated the international trade of western Europe up into the sixteenth century.

Historians of Europe, especially since World War II, have documented the ascent of Italy to economic superiority over its European neighbors and have in the process provided convincing explanations of why that dominance emerged. Careful work has traced the mutations of political order in the various Italian city-states as power moved from the bishop to lay control, from one lay faction to another, and in many instances, finally to a signorial regime.[3] Nothing akin to the detailed research on economics and politics in the period, however, exists for the development of Italian culture. In particular, although it has long been assumed that Italian laymen

[1] Vito Fumagalli, *Il regno italico* (Turin, 1978), 44, defines the territories of the *regnum* in 800. On the Exarchate, see Carlo G. Mor, *L'età feodale*, 2 vols. (Milan, 1952), 2:107–8 and 219. See as well Wilhelm Kölmel, "Die kaiserliche Herrschaft im Gebiet von Ravenna (Exarchat und Pentapolis) vor dem Investiturstreit (10/11. Jahrhundert)," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 88 (1968): 257–99.

[2] Ronald G. Witt, *"In the Footsteps of the Ancients": The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden and New York, 2000).

[3] The monumental study of medieval Italian and economic life by Philip Jones, *The Italian City State* (Oxford, 1997), contains a rich bibliography of the political and economic studies.

attained intellectual ascendancy in some areas of learning hundreds of years before their counterparts in northern Europe, no general study of the phenomenon has yet been undertaken.

The reason for the neglect resides in the easy assumption that the precocious emergence of Latin-literate laymen was simply a corollary of the Italian inheritance from ancient Rome: namely, the existence of an urbanized, republican society and the enriching effect of regional and international commerce. Since from about 1100 the leading intellectual discipline in Italy was the study of Roman law, a subject monopolized there by laymen, it seems obvious that laymen would play the prominent role in society that they did. In Francia in the same period, however, Roman law was taught not by laymen but by clerics. Therefore, even if the dominance of laymen in Italian intellectual culture could be traced to their hold over the study of Roman law, we would still be left with the puzzle of why in Italy laymen, not clerics, occupied that position.

I first became interested in Italy's medieval Latin culture in the course of my efforts to establish the origins of humanism in the thirteenth century. Because humanism began and largely remained a lay intellectual movement in Italy, I became aware of the need for a broader understanding of the general development of intellectual culture in medieval Italy and of the changing roles of laymen and clerics within it. From the outset I realized that a study covering such a wide range of topics as those included under the term "medieval Latin culture" could not entirely depend on my own primary research. I was aware of the danger that in an effort to construct a consistent historical narrative my discussion of these trends would contain little material unknown to specialists and that, given the breadth of Latin culture and the length of the period treated, I would often have to sacrifice depth to coverage.

Nonetheless, I determined to undertake the project, partly enticed, perhaps, by Jacob Burckhardt's assertion that the Italian had become "the first-born among the sons of modern Europe."[4] While the present study does not resolve the question of what Burckhardt meant by such a phrase, still less in what sense he may have been right, the inquiry should contribute to the development of a more precise historical understanding of how certain aspects of intellectual culture developed in medieval Italy that ultimately came to make themselves felt generally in intellectual culture all over the globe.

Essential to my analysis of Italian Latin culture is the fact that Italy, in contrast to the rest of Europe, had essentially two cultures, which from the tenth century became increasingly well defined: on the one hand, the traditional book culture, dominated by grammar and including the corpus of Latin literature of the ancient educational curriculum together with the liturgical and patristic heritage of the late ancient Christian Church; and, on the other, a legal culture, which developed in two stages. First came the culture of the document, which the Carolingian conquerors found already active in the *regnum*; and second, a new book culture, centered on the Justinian corpus and spawned by the documentary culture, which emerged in the course of the eleventh century. The development of *ars dictaminis* (the art of

[4] *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, trans. Samuel G. C. Middlemore (New York, 1954), 100.

letter writing) and the discipline of canon law in the twelfth century, both of which were immediate outgrowths of the Investiture Struggle, served to reinforce the legal culture and to augment the grip the legal mentality had on Italian intellectual life.

No other medieval European society could be meaningfully discussed from the standpoint of this twofold distinction, initially between the traditional book culture and that of the document, and subsequently, between the former and the new culture of the legal book. Tracing the evolution of the relationship between these two cultures over a period of four hundred and fifty years constitutes the fundamental task of explaining Italian exceptionalism.

Of the two cultures, the first was located principally in the cathedral, where – as in other parts of western Europe – clerical masters, supported by benefices, nurtured their students with instruction in liturgical practice, religious texts, and late ancient pedagogical treatises such as the grammars of Donatus and Priscian. In schools offering an advanced level of training, students were introduced to pagan poets and prose writers. Some of the students were expected to become masters themselves, and the best or best-connected among them could anticipate high ecclesiastical preferment. The school was dependent on the cathedral library, which in turn depended on the *scriptorium*, where teachers and advanced students used their calligraphic and decorative skills in copying and illuminating manuscripts. Intimately tied to the school and the *scriptorium* was the chancery, which maintained written contact with the ecclesiastical and secular world outside and guarded the cathedral's hoard of documents. The school, *scriptorium*, and chancery were not usually housed in three distinct offices; especially in smaller dioceses, we might better think of three functions performed by the same group of clerics. The important point is that Latin-literate clerics created whatever intellectual or literary life the cathedral generated.

The leaders of the second Latin culture of medieval Italy, at least until the middle of the eleventh century, were the notaries. Nowhere else in medieval Europe did society so depend on written records at all levels. Nowhere else in medieval Europe from the ninth to the thirteenth century did a comparable group of practically literate men who earned their living by writing legal documents both for private individuals and for ecclesiastical and secular powers exist.[5] Eminently practical, conscious of the fallibility of memory and the tricks of fortune and of men, the notaries envisoned the written word as the best human means of controlling the future. Enshrined in notarial documents, the written word had a relatively wide diffusion in medieval Italian society, nourishing a popular consciousness of the power of the law, placing a premium on practical literacy, and encouraging a litigious mentality largely foreign to populations north of the Alps.

Initially, clerics as well as laymen were the bearers of documentary culture, but already by 1000 laymen had generally taken over the profession, and in the course of the eleventh century, with the strengthening of the reform movement and the effort to disentangle the clergy from the laity, laymen were moving toward a near-monopoly. Study for the notariate generally required no particular institutional support. In

[5] The phrase "practical literacy" is borrowed from Michael T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass., 1993), 328.

the early centuries of our period, training consisted simply of apprenticing with a practicing notary. Even in the thirteenth century, when there is clear evidence that notarial schools existed in Bologna, the vast majority of notaries continued to learn the profession through apprenticeship.

The claim regarding the virtual elimination of clerics from the notariate entails a distinction between clerics and laymen, one of the most difficult problems involved in the following narrative. According to ecclesiastical law, those who sought higher orders in the Church (that is, the rank of subdeacon or above) could not marry or, if they were already married, had to separate themselves from their wives. In practice, however, until the great reform movement of the late eleventh century, members of the higher clergy often retained their wives and families. In any case, lower clergy were never required to remain celibate.

Throughout the Middle Ages clerics below the level of subdeacon, often married and with children, differed from laymen in only five respects: they bore the title *clerici*, were tonsured, wore clerical garb, were prohibited from engaging in work that degraded the clerical status, could not bear arms or engage in tournaments, and – a significant privilege – they enjoyed the *privilegium fori*, the right to be tried only in ecclesiastical courts. At least from the middle of the twelfth century, a sixth attribute of clerical status was added, the *privilegium immunitatis* or exemption from secular taxation.[6] The exemption from secular courts and communal taxation would ultimately prove to be the major factors in marginalizing the clergy as a group from urban politics after 1100, when communal governments came increasingly to dominate the political life of Italian cities.

Many men in lower orders never had the intention of advancing to the subdeaconate or beyond. Many sought clerical status, rather, because it guaranteed exemption from secular authority and because it offered possibilities for earning at least a partial income from ecclesiastical service of some kind. To complicate the distinction between clerics and laymen further, it was not unusual for a layman, even late in life, for religious or economic motives or after the death of a spouse, to enter the clergy and even rise in the hierarchy of orders.

Because the lines between laymen and the multitude of clergy in lower orders were often blurred, I have relied in constructing the earlier part of my narrative – up into the eleventh century – on a distinction drawn between the culture of the book, controlled by a clerical elite generally linked with a cathedral, and the culture of the document, the practical, legal Latin culture of the notariate, in which both laymen and lower clergy participated, although the latter, generally designated as *notarii clerici*, disappeared as time went on.

It should be said, however, that even the culture of the clerical elite had a practical orientation. In the first place, throughout the Middle Ages, in most schools of the Church, education had as its major concern the practical purpose of performing

[6] Marino Berengo, *L'Europa delle città: Il volto della società urbana europea tra Medioevo ed Età moderna* (Turin, 1999), 660, points out that in Italian cities taxation of income from ecclesiastical real estate was common but income from the economic activity of the cleric was not. For a general discussion of the mingling of clerics with laymen in the workplace, see Erich Genzmer, "Kleriker als Berufsjuristen im späten Mittelalter," *Études d'histoire du droit canonique dédiées à Gabriel Le Bras*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1965), 2:1207–36.

the liturgical rites in accordance with decorum. Furthermore, at least to the end of the eleventh century, the Carolingian and Ottonian program of training higher administrators of the empire in the best grammatical tradition remained a central concern of ecclesiastical education. High ecclesiastical officials in royal and imperial government might have had only a tangential connection with the actual production of official documents; nonetheless, their grammatical education undeniably made them capable of directing a writing office. Finally, some upper clergy wrote in notarial rather than library scripts, no doubt reflecting their early training. Such men may well have risen in the hierarchy from the clerical notariate without undergoing thorough training in the traditional grammatical curriculum.[7]

I would insist, however, that by the late tenth century, generally speaking, the culture of the book and the culture of the document did not significantly overlap, either in their focus or their membership, and that the distinction between the two cultures furnishes a useful way of tracing the intellectual developments in the *regnum* at least from the ninth to the eleventh century. By the second half of the eleventh, it is no longer possible to view documentary culture alone as a counterweight to cathedral culture. By that time the second book culture was emerging, this one fostered by the documentary culture of the notary but founded directly on the study of the books of Roman law.

Legal education, like notarial education, did not require an elaborate library. Teaching was mainly done privately by practicing lawyers, whose interpretations would often be written down and circulated as teaching material along with copies of legal texts or portions of them. When, by the mid-twelfth century, canon law became an organized discipline alongside that of civil law, its teachers, primarily clerics, began to follow the example of teachers of civil law by giving private instruction.

It is important to stress that the existence of two cultures did not lead, as one might expect, to conflicts between clerics and laymen. In the ninth and tenth centuries both orders were members of the documentary culture, and beginning in the eleventh century both laymen and clerics participated in the legal book culture, through civil and canon law respectively. Nor does the apparent increase of laymen active in the traditional book culture from the early twelfth century, or their commanding position in both the documentary-legal culture and major aspects of the traditional book culture by the thirteenth century, seem to have encountered clerical resistance. Indeed, instead of competing with each other, educated laymen and clerics put their different literacies to work for their mutual benefit. Latin literacy itself formed a bond that overrode the late eleventh-century efforts of radical papal reformers to exalt the clergy.[8]

[7] On the calligraphy of the upper clergy, see Armando Petrucci, *"Scriptoribus in urbibus": Alfabetismo e cultura scritta nell'Italia medievale* (Bologna, 1992), 119–20 and 216–21.

[8] In northern Europe, with several exceptions, advanced education remained a clerical domain down to the late fifteenth century whereas, as we shall see, the lay notary made his appearance in northern Europe only in the course of the twelfth century. From its introduction in the first half of the twelfth century, the clergy exercised a monopoly over the study of civil law up into the thirteenth century. The tendency to generalize about education in the medieval centuries on the basis of the northern experience has been prevasive. See, for example, the summary judgment of James A. Brundage, *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, and Courts* (Chicago, 2008), 63: "Virtually every school that we know much about in the West between the sixth century and the thirteenth

The analysis that follows the traditional book culture and the legal culture in its second phase, when it became centered on the books of Roman law, will at points be treated as intimately linked to two different disciplines – the former to grammar and the latter to rhetoric. Throughout antiquity grammar was taught through poetry; rhetoric, through prose, especially oration. The grammarian devoted himself to philology and mythology; allegory was, for him, both a way of seeking truth and of encoding it in his own writings; he wrote for an elite; his work required tranquility, and the private life was congenial to his enterprises. In contrast, the rhetorician realized himself more fully in the public arena, where through his eloquence he could gain fame and exert influence. By teaching his students to write and speak effectively, he prepared them for participation in politics and the law courts.

As we shall see, from the Carolingian period onward the cathedral school, the major educational institution of the diocese, provided an education that was essentially grammatical in nature, an education that focused on learning to read Latin as a preparation for liturgical performance. Some cathedral schools went beyond the elementary level, teaching students to use ancient poetry as models and, to the extent that history and letter writing were taught, ancient prose as well. In a subordinate position to grammar, the study of rhetoric entered the program at this point with its teachings on *colores rhetorici*, construction of arguments, word choice, and word arrangement. The cathedral school might also provide some training in theology and canon law.

By contrast, from the eleventh century the revival of Roman law was largely a lay initiative, and its teaching was done by laymen in private schools. Teachers of Roman law probably accepted students with basic grammar skills and taught them what more they needed of grammar through the study of legal texts. Rhetoric was central to legal training. Until the second half of the twelfth century, lawyers, whose business it was to create verisimilitude in their argumentation, relied not on Aristotelian logic (dialectic) but primarily on tools of rhetoric, including enthymemes, examples, and maxims. To equip lawyers with these tools, rhetoric, too, was taught in law schools.

Closely connected to the development of legal studies and the increasing attention devoted to the construction of more legally sophisticated notarial formulae, *ars dictaminis* became a new medieval rhetoric, highly formulaic in character, offering a simplified set of rules for written and oral expression. The teacher had no need of the resources of an ecclesiastical library: a short manual sufficed. Severed from classical precedents, the teaching texts for *ars dictaminis* were designed to be written and understood easily by those with even minimal literacy. Because the Italian vernaculars of most regions in northern and central Italy still remained close to Latin, even illiterate listeners would still probably have been able to understand something of a document's contents if it was read aloud. The clerics and laymen participating in the emergence of the new rhetoric needed only introductory Latin grammar to do so. *Ars dictaminis*, consequently, offered an alternative, more democratic means of communication to that provided by the traditional book culture.

aimed primarily, if not always exclusively, at training future priests, clerics, monks, or nuns. It was no accident that the Latin vocabulary of the early Middle Ages treated the words 'cleric' and 'literate' as synonyms."

Like Roman lawyers, canon lawyers were responsible for providing students with the technical Latin needed to understand their texts, and rhetoric played a role in training. Nonetheless, the systematic study of canon law that began in the mid-twelfth century relied less on rhetoric and more on dialectic. The example of canon lawyers may subsequently have influenced scholars of Roman law later in the century to place more dependence on Aristotelian logic in their arguments. Because no solid evidence exists for the teaching of an independent course on logic until around 1200, presumably before that date students learned most of what they knew of the subject in their courses in Roman or canon law.

Perennial questions are involved in my analysis of the changing relationship between the two Latin cultures. What were the origins of the university? How to explain the relatively low productivity of medieval Italians in writing Latin literary prose and poetry? Why did literature in Italian dialects appear only in the thirteenth century?

The first question concerns the degree of continuity between the cathedral schools of the twelfth century and the development of Italian universities that appeared in the thirteenth, an issue that in the nineteenth century was held hostage to the intense contemporary debate over public versus church schools.[9] Although profiting from accumulated research, recent scholars remain divided over the extent to which the new institutions of advanced study were outgrowths of private schools taught by laymen and clerics, and to which they were linked to earlier cathedral schools.

Basically, modern scholars hold three different views. That championed by Giuseppe Manacorda (1912–13), Ugo Gualazzini (1943), and Giovanni Santini (1979) envisages the Italian *studia* as expansions of the twelfth-century cathedral schools.[10] By contrast, another group of scholars, including Emilio Nasalli Rocca (1947) and Giorgio Cencetti (1966), maintain that the university was a new creation, of lay origin.[11] Giorgio Montecchi (1984) represents the third position in that, while

[9] Scholarship on the topic began with the Latin essay of Wilhelm Giesebrecht, *De litterarum studiis apud Italos primis medii aevi saeculis* (Berlin, 1845), who first stressed the importance of laymen in medieval Italian intellectual life. By identifying a rivalry between medieval clerical and lay schools, Antoine-Frédéric Ozanam, *La civilisation au cinquième siècle: Introduction à une histoire de la civilisation aux temps barbares* (Paris, 1862), 410, fed the contemporary debate over the role of the new Italian state in education.

[10] Giuseppe Manacorda, *Storia della scuola in Italia: Il medio evo* (Milan and Palermo, 1912–13), 1:1, 69–87; Ugo Gualazzini, *Ricerche sulle scuole preuniversitarie del Medio Evo: Contributo di indagini sul sorgere delle università* (Milan, 1943), passim; Giovanni Santini, *Università e società nel XII secolo: Pillio da Medicina e lo Studio di Modena. Tradizione e innovazione nella scuola dei glossatori. Chartularium Studii Mutinensis (regesta) (specimen 1069–1200)* (Modena, 1979), 140.

[11] Emilio Nasalli Rocca, "Scuole vescovili e origini universitarie nella regione emiliana," *Archivio giuridico F. Serafini* 84 (1947): 54–65, held that the origin of the *studia* was intimately connected with the teaching of civil law, so that cathedral schools could not have been the source of the new institutions. Taking a different approach, Giorgio Cencetti, "*Studium fuit Bononie*: Note sulla storia di Bologna nel primo mezzo secolo della sua esistenza," *SM*, 3rd ser., 7 (1966): 815, considered the *studia* to have grown out of private *societates* of students and teachers (primarily laymen) outside of ecclesiastical control. Although Arrigo Solmi, "La genesi dell'Università italiana," in *Contributi alla storia del diritto comune* (Rome, 1937), 253–68, argued for *studia* of lay origin, he believed that an unbroken continuity had existed between the lay public schools of the late Roman Empire and the universities of the Middle Ages.

agreeing with Rocca and Cencetti as to the lay origin of *studia* at Parma, Bologna, Modena, and Reggio, he credits the bishop in the last city with having played a significant role in the school's foundation. He remains noncommittal for Piacenza and Ravenna.[12] By emphasizing the negative effect of the Investiture Struggle on the Italian cathedral school, Gina Fasoli (1974) and Girolamo Arnaldi (1984) allow us to formulate the problem of the origin of the *studia* in a new way, that is, to ask to what degree was the vitality of the cathedral schools so diminished in the twelfth century that they could not have furnished the institutional basis for the *studia* of the thirteenth?[13]

The second question regards the character and quantity of Latin literary production in the *regnum*. Already in 1885, Adolfo Gaspary emphasized that medieval Italy generally had produced almost no Latin literature, a point that Francesco Novati and Angelo Monteverdi later made with even greater insistence, arguing that Italian production of literary works in the eleventh and twelfth century had been small by comparison with that of transalpine Europe, and that in Italy, as they put it, "nothing reveals to us the mark of a true classical culture."[14] Unfortunately, their observation on the dearth of literary creativity in twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Italy as a whole has been almost completely ignored in subsequent discussions.

Rather than searching for an explanation for Italy's low literary productivity and lack of classical inspiration in the twelfth century, twentieth-century scholars soon became caught up in a discussion that obfuscated the issue and impeded the investigation. This new discussion began with the publication of Louis Paetow's *The Arts Course at Medieval Universities with Special Reference to Grammar and Rhetoric* (Champaign/Urbana, 1910) in which the author claimed that by 1200 interest in ancient pagan literature had been replaced by scholasticism, with its passion for the study of philosophy, theology, and natural sciences based on the Aristotelian corpus.

In a rebuttal published in 1929, Edward K. Rand responded by lavishly demonstrating that pagan literature remained important in thirteenth-century education. The evidence for both positions was overwhelmingly transalpine in character, but in 1961, Helene Wieruszowski joined the discussion by arguing that classics in Italy remained vital in the thirteenth century. In formulating her argument, she simply assumed that intensive study of ancient literature and history had been as common in twelfth-century Italy as it was in northern Europe.[15]

In his *Il secolo senza Roma* (1933), Giuseppe Toffanin, the first Italian scholar to contribute to the exchange, argued for the existence of an intimate contact between

[12] Giorgio Montecchi, "Le antiche sedi universitarie," in *Le sedi della cultura nell'Emilia Romagna: Età communale*, ed. Girolamo Arnaldi et al. (Milan, 1984), 117–29.

[13] Gina Fasoli, "Ancora un'ipotesi sull'inizio dell'insegnamento di Pepone e Irnerio," *Atti e memorie della Deputazione di storia patria per le provincie di Romagna*, n.s. 21 (1971): 30; and Girolamo Arnaldi, "Alle origini dello Studio di Bologna," *Le sedi della cultura nell'Emilia Romagna*, 104.

[14] Adolfo Gaspary, *Geschichte der italienischen Literatur*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1885–88), 1:42 and 46–47; and Francesco Novati and Angelo Monteverdi, *Le origini continuate e compiute da Angelo Monteverdi* (Milan, 1926), 646.

[15] Kenneth E. Rand, "The Classics in the Thirteenth Century," *Speculum* 4 (1929): 249–69; Helene Wieruszowski, "Rhetoric and the Classics in Italian Education of the Thirteenth Century," *Studi graziani* 11 (1967): 169–208 (republished in her *Politics and Culture in Medieval Spain and Italy*, Storia e letteratura, no. 121 (Rome, 1971), 589–627.

Christianity and the classical tradition up to the thirteenth century, when it was interrupted by anti-Christian and – in line with Paetow, whom he seems not to have read – anticlassical tendencies in scholasticism.[16] Toffanin's thesis of "the century without Rome" encountered serious opposition from a number of critics ranging from Eugenio Massa (1956) to Francesco Bruni (1987), both of whom, like Wieruszowski, endeavored to assert the importance of ancient literature in thirteenth-century Italy.[17] Vitally important for Francesco Bruni were the studies of Giuseppe Billanovich and his students, who proved the intensive interest in ancient literature of the Paduan circle of scholars surrounding Lovato de' Lovati (1240–1309). Billanovich's journal, *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, first published in 1958, contains dozens of articles devoted to the study of ancient Roman literature and history in the thirteenth century, particularly at Padua.

The most recent analysis of the comparative interest in classical literature, Robert Black's *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (2001), essentially returns to Paetow in arguing that, as in Francia, a vigorous interest in studying ancient literature and history in the twelfth century was followed in the thirteenth by a significant decline in its importance in the first half of the century. Revival of these studies only occurred in the course of the second half of the thirteenth century with the group around Lovato. Black bases his conclusion on a comparative study of schoolbooks from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that survive in the manuscript libraries of Florence. In his view, the early humanists, beginning in the second half of the thirteenth century, were endeavoring to reestablish the study of the ancient authors that had lapsed in the first half of the century.[18]

I will argue that by insisting on the continuous study of the ancient Latin works between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in Italy or, as does Black, on the decline of classical interests in the thirteenth after a century of intense study of pagan authors, these scholars have not confronted the conclusions of Gaspary, Novati, and Monteverdi, who pointed out that literary production was slight in the twelfth century and that it showed little sign of classical influence. Confining myself to the *regnum*, it will be my task to explain the relative paucity of literary writings in Italy up into the thirteenth century and its significance for the cultural life of the kingdom.

While my analysis will endorse the judgment of older scholars that, compared with transalpine Europe, relatively few literary works were produced in medieval Italy, the judgment is inevitably beset by two major problems regarding manuscript preservation. The first has to do particularly with the *regnum*: relative to northern Europe and southern Italy, more of the manuscripts produced were lost over time because the conditions of documentary storage in the *regnum* were poorer. The vast bulk of manuscripts that survived in medieval Europe did so because they belonged

[16] Giuseppe Toffanin, *Il secolo senza Roma* in *Storia dell'Umanesimo dal XIII al XVI secolo*, vol. 1 (Bologna, 1933).

[17] Eugenio Massa, *Ruggiero Bacone: Etica e politica nella storia dell'"Opus maius"* (Rome, 1955), 81–130; Francesco Bruni, "Metamorfosi dei classici nel Duecento," *Medioevo romanzo* 12 (1987): 103–28.

[18] Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge and New York, 2001), 192.