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978-0-521-76474-2 - The Two Latin Cultures and the Foundation of Renaissance Humanism in Medieval Italy

Ronald G. Witt

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THE TWO LATIN CULTURES AND THE FOUNDATION OF RENAISSANCE
HUMANISM IN MEDIEVAL ITALY

This book offers the first comprehensive account of the birth of a lay intelligensia, the first in Europe, in the medieval kingdom of Italy. The analysis deals extensively with cultural exchanges between the kingdom and transalpine Europe, primarily Francia and Germany. Ronald G. Witt's research traces the rise of laymen to intellectual dominance in northern and north-central Italy by the mid-thirteenth century and the evolution of a new conception of secular life which, through Latin humanism, ultimately had a transformative effect on the moral, political, and religious values of western Europe.

Ronald G. Witt is currently William B. Hamilton Professor Emeritus of History at Duke University. His most recent book, *"In the Footsteps of the Ancients": The Origins of Italian Humanism, 1250–1420* (2000), received the Helen and Howard R. Marraro Prize of the American Historical Society (2001), the American Philosophical Society's Jacques Barzun Prize in Cultural History (2001), and the Renaissance Society of America's Gordon Book Prize (2001). He is also the author of *Humanism and Reform* (2001); *Hercules at the Crossroads: The Life, Works and Thought of Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406)* (1983); and *Coluccio Salutati and His Public Letters* (1976), as well as numerous articles.

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RONALD G. WITT

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
 Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
 32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA
www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521764742

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First published 2012

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
 Witt, Ronald G.

The two Latin cultures and the foundation of Renaissance
 humanism in medieval Italy / Ronald G. Witt.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-76474-2

1. Italy – Intellectual life – 1268–1559. 2. Latin literature, Medieval
 and modern – Italy – History and criticism. 3. Humanism – Italy –
 History – To 1500. 4. Renaissance – Italy. I. Title.

DG443.W57 2011

945'.04-dc22 2010030604

ISBN 978-0-521-76474-2 Hardback

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*To Mary Ann
for forty-six years of lively dialogue,
understanding, and love*

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xi
Introduction	I
PART I. THE TWO LATIN CULTURES OF MEDIEVAL ITALY	
1 The Carolingian Conquest	17
2 Italy and the Ottonian Renaissance	71
3 The Golden Age of Traditional Book Culture and the Birth of a New Book Culture (1000–1075)	116
PART II. THE BIRTH OF A NEW ORDER	
4 The Investiture Struggle and the Emergence of the Communes	181
PART III. THE DOMINANCE OF THE LEGAL–RHETORICAL MENTALITY	
5 The Triumph of the Legal Culture	229
6 The Institutional Structure of Education, 1100–1180	268
7 Literary Culture in the New Age	291
PART IV. THE FRENCH RENAISSANCE OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY	
8 French Literary and Scholarly Achievement in the Twelfth Century	317
PART V. TOWARD A BROADER INTELLECTUAL LIFE	
9 The Destabilization of the Elites and the Expanding Market for Education	351

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Ronald G. Witt

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

10	New Knowledge and the Tempering of the Legal-Rhetorical Culture	383
11	The Development of the Traditional Disciplines and the Resolution of the Crisis of Language	411
12	The Return to Antiquity	438
	Conclusion	472
	<i>Appendix</i>	487
	<i>Bibliography</i>	493
	<i>Index</i>	559

Acknowledgments

When I initiated my research into the origins of Italian humanism in 1977, I could not have imagined that the work would occupy the larger part of my scholarly career. Because the first humanists were laymen, mostly notaries, I decided that I would have to start my study centuries before the second half of the thirteenth century, when humanism began, in order to explain the precocious origin of the lay intellectual in Italy. My work would trace the historical antecedents of humanism from the Carolingian conquest.

In the course of an intellectually stimulating semester spent at the Newberry Library in Chicago in the first half of 1991, I came to a crucial decision. Because the development of the Latin culture of Italy in the period before 1250 had never been given a conceptual framework, I concluded that I would not be able to complete this part of my project for many years. Consequently, I put aside my chapters on the earlier period and devoted my energies to completing the second half of the study, which was concerned with the immediate origins of humanism. For this period, roughly 1250 to 1420, I had the advantage of having preceding interpretations to work with. That study, *“In the Footsteps of the Ancients”*: *The Origins of Italian Humanism from Lovato to Bruni*, appeared in 2000. This book should be considered its “prequel.”

I have many scholars to thank for their help over more than three decades. The comments of Giles Constable, Edward Peters, and David Lines on drafts of the first chapters proved invaluable at an early stage in establishing my major lines of inquiry, as did the generous comments of Marcia Colish and Maureen Miller on later versions of the partly finished manuscript. My thinking has profited much from my monthly lunches with John Headley over the last decade. He read the final version of the manuscript and offered numerous suggestions for improving the cogency of some of my arguments. As my readers will note, the writings of Brian Stock, Charles Radding, and Antonio Caralli provided me with fundamental conceptual tools for understanding the singular course of Italian intellectual life. I am deeply indebted as well to George Dameron, Brett Whalen, and Susan Keefe for commenting on individual chapters, and to Brian Copenhaver, Michèle Mulchahey, William North, Marjorie Curry Woods, and Lila Yawn for advice at crucial points in the development of my argument. I was fortunate to have two anonymous readers for Cambridge

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[More information](#)*Acknowledgments*

University Press who read the manuscript with great care, all of whose suggestions I eagerly accepted. Barbara Folsom, my manuscript editor for Cambridge University Press, demonstrated throughout our work together not only her fine editorial skills but also her patience and good nature in dealing with a lengthy manuscript text with equally lengthy footnotes. I also want to express my deepest thanks to Helen Wheeler, my production editor at Cambridge University Press, who gently guided me through all the stages of the process of publication.

Over the decades I have frequently availed myself of the Latin expertise of Francis Newton and, more recently, of that of Clare Woods. Anna Celenza came to my rescue with her knowledge of Dutch.

As in the case of the volume published in 2000, Andrew Sparling played a major role in the production of the final version. A gifted historian, he not only edited the first eight chapters of the book, but he raised provocative challenges to my analysis at almost every key point, often leading me not only to rewrite the presentation of my position but to rethink it. He is also responsible for the index with its extensive articulation of my arguments under the appropriate subjects. Unfortunately, urgent academic obligations made it impossible for him to complete work on the remaining chapters. Nevertheless, to a significant degree, whatever merit this book has is owed to him.

Selected portions of pages 52–54, 95–100, and 110–11 from my *“In the Footsteps of the Ancients”*: *The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2000) have been republished here with the kind permission of Koninklijke Brill NV.

Over the last thirty-three years I have received generous financial support from a number of foundations. A Guggenheim Fellowship in 1978–79 and a summer grant from the Council of Learned Societies facilitated the initial research in France and Italy. In 1983, I received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for a semester of research at the National Humanities Center in the Research Triangle; a second, for a semester at the Newberry Library in 1991; and a third (with a generous salary supplement from Duke), for a year’s residence at the American Academy in Rome. A Fulbright–for–Research–in–Two–Countries made possible a year in Rome and Paris in 1985–86. A visiting professorship at Harvard’s Villa I Tatti in 2005 helped me to finish a rough draft of the manuscript, and an Andrew W. Mellon Emeritus Fellowship in 2006 and 2007 made it possible for me to spend an extended time in Paris and Rome to put the manuscript into final form. I used a short residency at the American Academy in the fall of 2009 for a final rechecking of notes.

Abbreviations

BAV	Biblioteca Apostolica vaticana, Vatican City
BHL	<i>Bibliotheca hagiographica latina antiquae et mediae aetatis</i> , 2 vols. (Brussels, 1898–1901)
BISI	<i>Bullettino dell’Istituto storico italiano</i> (1886–1921) <i>Bullettino dell’Istituto storico italiano et Archivio muratoriano</i> (1923–33) <i>Bullettino dell’Istituto storico per il Medio Evo e Archivio muratoriano</i> (1935–94) <i>Bullettino dell’Istituto storico italiano per il Medio Evo</i> (1995–)
BML	Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence
BMV	Biblioteca Marciana, Venice
BNP	Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris
BRF	Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence
BSM	Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich
CAPar	<i>Le carte degli archivi parmensi dei sec. x–xii</i> , ed. Giovanni Drei, 3 vols. (Parma, 1924–50)
CDL	<i>Codex diplomaticus Langobardiae, Historiae Patriae Monumenta</i> , no. 13 (Turin, 1873)
CDPad, 1	<i>Codice diplomatico padovano del secolo sesto a tutto l’undecimo secolo</i> , ed. Andrea Gloria, Monumenti storici, Deputazione veneta di storia patria, ser. 1, Documenti, no. 2 (Venice, 1877)
CDPad, 2	<i>Codice diplomatico padovano dall’anno 1101 alla pace di Costanza</i> , ed. Andrea Gloria, Monumenti storici, Deputazione veneta di storia patria, ser. 1, Documenti, no. 4 (Venice, 1879)
CReg, 1	<i>Le carte degli archivi reggiani fino al 1050</i> , ed. Pietro Torelli, Biblioteca della reale Deputazione di storia patria dell’Emilia e della Romagna, sez. Modena (Reggio-Emilia, 1921)
CReg, 2	<i>Le carte degli archivi reggiani (1051–60)</i> , ed. Piero Torelli and Francesco S. Gatta, Biblioteca della reale deputazione di storia patria dell’Emilia e della Romagna, sez. Modena, no. 2 Reggio (Emilia, 1938)
DBI	<i>Dizionario biografico degli Italiani</i>

Abbreviations

<i>DSArezzo</i>	<i>Documenti per la storia della città di Arezzo nel medio evo</i> , ed. Ubaldo Pasqui, Documenti di storia italiana, no. 11 (Florence, 1899)
<i>FSI</i>	<i>Fonti per la storia d'Italia</i>
<i>IMU</i>	<i>Italia medioevale e umanistica</i>
<i>MGH</i>	<i>Monumenta Germaniae historica</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>RCPisa</i>	<i>Regesto della chiesa di Pisa</i> , ed. Natale Caturegli, Regesta chartarum Italicae, no. 24 (Rome, 1938)
<i>RIS</i>	<i>Rerum Italicarum scriptores</i>
<i>RMan</i>	<i>Registro mantovano</i> , ed. Pietro Torelli, Regesta chartarum Italiae, no. 12 (Rome, 1914)
<i>RMod, 1</i>	<i>Regesto della chiesa cattedrale di Modena</i> , ed. Emilio P. Vicini, Regesta chartarum Italicae, no. 16 (Rome, 1931)
<i>RMod, 2</i>	<i>Regesto della chiesa cattedrale di Modena</i> , ed. Emilio P. Vicini, Regesta chartarum Italicae, no. 21 (1936)
<i>RRav 1</i>	<i>Regesto della chiesa di Ravenna. Le carte dell'Archivio estense</i> , ed. Vincenzo Federici and Giulio Buzzi, Regesta chartarum Italiae, no. 7 (Rome, 1911)
<i>RRav 2</i>	<i>Regesto della chiesa di Ravenna. Le carte dell'Archivio estense</i> , ed. Vincenzo Federici and Giulio Buzzi, Regesta chartarum Italiae, no. 15 (Rome, 1931)
<i>SCV, 1</i>	<i>Storia della cultura veneta</i> , ed. Gianfranco Folena and Girolamo Arnaldi, vol. 1 (Vicenza, 1976)
<i>SCV, 2</i>	<i>Storia della cultura veneta</i> , ed. Gianfranco Folena and Girolamo Arnaldi, vol. 2 (Vicenza, 1976)
<i>SG</i>	<i>Studi gregoriani per la storia di Gregorio VII e della riforma gregoriana</i> (1947–61) <i>Studi gregoriani per la storia della "Libertas ecclesiae"</i> (1970–84) <i>Studi gregoriani</i> (1985–)
<i>SM</i>	<i>Studi medievali</i>
<i>SSCISAM</i>	Settimane di Studio del Centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo