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Scio Florentinam urbem* from the manuscript number 519 of the Jagiellonian Library. Analysis and critical edition

Zarys treści: Artykuł zawiera analizę i edycję krytyczną anonimowego listu kwestionującego prymat pisarzy florenckich nad antycznymi rzymskimi pod względem elokwencji i uczoności. Przedstawiony został krótki opis kodykologiczny mieszczącego ten utwór rękopisu BJ 519 i charakterystyka jego zawartości. Omówiono wykorzystane w tekście zwroty, topoi, odwołania do autorów antycznych i usytuowane na tle twórczości intelektualistów włoskich XIV i początków XV w.

Abstract: The article includes an analysis and critical edition of an anonymous letter which questioned the primacy of Florentine writers over ancient Roman ones in terms of eloquence and scholarship. A brief codicological description of the BJ 519 manuscript, which contains this text, and a characterisation of its contents are presented. Phrases used in the text, topoi, references to ancient authors, and the work's context within the intellectual landscape of fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century Italy are discussed.

Słowa kluczowe: rękopis BJ 519, Florencja, Rzym, humanizm, retoryka, ciceronianizm

Keywords: MS BJ 519, Florence, Rome, humanism, rhetoric, Ciceronianism

The subject of the article is an anonymous letter questioning the primacy of Florentines over ancient Romans in terms of eloquence and scholarship. It is found in a fifteenth-century manuscript of the Jagiellonian Library, reference number 519, which contains an early humanist Italian rhetorical collection.¹ The letter was written before 1414, most likely in the first decade of the fifteenth century.

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¹ The letter has not been identified in any manuscript catalogues (W. Wisłocki, *Katalog rękopisów Biblioteki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego*, part 1, Kraków 1877, p. 163; *Catalogus codicum manuscriptorum medii aevi Latinorum qui in Bibliotheca Jagellonica Cracoviae asservantur*, vol. 3: *Numeros continens inde a 445 usque ad 563*, eds S. Bartsch-Kabajowa, M. Kowalczyk, P. Czartoryski, transl. A. Kozłowska, Wratislaviae 1984, p. 205; P.O. Kristeller, *Iter Italicum. A Finding List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogued Humanistic Manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and other Libraries*, vol. 1–6, London, 1963–1992) or databases such as *Mirabile* (www.mirabileweb.it [accessed: 4.04.2024]) or *Corpus Corporum* (<https://mlat.uzh.ch> [accessed: 4.04.2024]), *InPrincipio* and *Library of Latin Texts* [accessed: 14.03.2025]. Entering the incipit of this text into internet search engines also yielded no positive results (as of 4 April 2024).

The piece is noteworthy because it reflects a reaction to the Florentine ideology among the humanist community associated with Rome. This ideology, described by Hans Baron as “civic humanism”, referred to Rome’s republican heritage. It was intended to justify Florence’s leadership role as a defender of the freedom and independence of the city-republics of central Italy. Its development was influenced by the conflicts that the republic waged in the second half of the fourteenth century and the early fifteenth century, first against the papacy, known as the War of the Eight Saints (1375–1378), and later, the wars with Milan (1390–1402).²

The analysed text is also part of the dispute among Italian humanists of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries over the evaluation of contemporary writers’ works in relation to ancient authors. It also presents a list of ancient writers valued by Italian humanists for their eloquence. Although the letter is to some extent a typical product of early Italian humanism, it deserves attention because it reflects the discussions held, the canons of reading, popular topoi and phrases. As Clémence Revest noted, to understand the process of the spread of Ciceronian humanism in the fifteenth century, closer attention should be paid to the works of minor, often anonymous authors, which have sometimes been overlooked by researchers focusing on the works of leading humanists. The former texts, considered derivative and formulaic, are crucial to understanding the success of that intellectual and cultural trend.³

Manuscript BJ 519

The BJ 519 manuscript has long attracted the interest of scholars of Italian rhetoric, whose studies have enabled us to appreciate the importance and uniqueness of the collection it contains. Ludwig Bertalot has drawn attention to the corpus of speeches and letters of the Paduan rhetor Gasparino Barzizza (c. 1360–1430), including texts not contained in the edition of his *Epistolarium*.⁴ Lucia Gualdo Rosa found eleven letters by Leonardo Bruni from 1404–1411 in the manuscript in question, one of which was not identified in any other codex.⁵ However, researchers have overlooked the piece that begins with the incipit “Scio Florentinam urbem”.

Several blocks of text can be distinguished in the BJ 519 manuscript. The first (fols 1r–10v) is Cicero’s *Partitiones oratoriae*, placed on the first quire, after which an edict was added concerning indulgences granted to a church by the Bishop of Kraków, Wojciech Jastrzębiec, in 1415.⁶ The second block, taking up two more folders (fols 11r–36r), are forms mainly related to the Milan, Bologna and Florence chancelleries of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, including letters from Emperor Frederick II (1220–1250), Pope Gregory XI (1370–1378), antipope Clement VII (1378–1394), Giovanni Galeazzo Visconti, ruler of Milan (1378–1402), Coluccio Salutati (1332–1406), chancellor of Florence (1375–1406), but also the letters of Cola di Rienzo (1313–1354), politician and reformer, ancient Rome enthusiast, who in 1347 assumed the title of tribune and became the ruler of the Roman Republic he proclaimed.⁷ The third block (fols 37r–170r) is a collection of humanistic Italian rhetorical texts. It is in

² Cf. H. Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance. Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny. Revised one-volume edition with an epilogue*, Princeton 1966, pp. 12–46; R.G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works and Thought of Coluccio Salutati*, Durham 1983.

³ C. Revest, *La naissance de l’humanisme comme mouvement au tournant du XVe siècle*, “Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales”, 68, 2013, no. 3, p. 668.

⁴ L. Bertalot, *Die älteste Briefsammlung des Gasparinus Barzizza*, in: *Studien zum italienischen und deutschen Humanismus*, vol. 2, ed. P.O. Kristeller, Roma 1975, pp. 34–35.

⁵ Inc. “Oro te atque obsecro”, BJ 519, fol. 116r; L. Gualdo Rosa, *Due nuove lettere del Bruni e il ritrovamento del “materiale Bertalot”*, “Rinascimento”, 34, 1994, p. 121; ead., *Censimento dei codici dell’epistolario di Leonardo Bruni*, vol. 1, Roma 1993, pp. XII, 173.

⁶ *Catalogus codicum*, vol. 3, p. 197.

⁷ In the upper left corner on the sheet with Giovanni Galeazzo Visconti’s letter to the Florentines from 1389, the title *Secuntur epistole Victorini* was added (BJ 519, fol. 11r), indicating that the correspondence found in this section may have been attributed to someone else (it is difficult to ascertain whether the name Victorinus refers to Gaius Marius Victorinus, the fourth-century Roman grammarian and orator, author of commentaries on the works of Cicero and letters of St Paul,

this section that *Scio Florentinam urbem* (fols 69r–v) is found. The section includes speeches and letters mostly written at the University of Padua and in its milieu, including a large corpus of works by Gasparino Barzizza, but also writings from the Florentine circle, such as those by Leonardo Bruni (eleven letters, *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum* and translations into Latin of two speeches by Demosthenes).⁸

The manuscript in which the analysed letter is found measures 33.5 x 24.5 cm. It consists of 175 pages and eight protective sheets. It was written down in its entirety by a single scribe in Gothic-humanist minuscule on paper dated around 1413. Relatively wide margins and space for the inscription of decorative initials were left.⁹ Cicero's *Partitiones oratoriae*, located at the beginning of the codex, were collated in Constance in 1414 by Dominicus de Bayardis de Firmo, as evidenced by his note written in humanist minuscule.¹⁰ However, it was not Dominicus mentioned above who wrote the main text.¹¹ The identity of the manuscript's first owner is unknown, as no ownership notes have survived. Most likely, the codex was brought to Kraków by one of the Polish participants in the Council of Constance, or perhaps by Dominicus de Bayardis himself, as he was already in the entourage of Kraków Bishop Wojciech Jastrzębiec (c. 1362–1436) in November 1416.¹² None of the texts in the manuscript was written later than 1415.¹³

The person who commissioned the codex may have been a Pole present in Constance, who took the opportunity to acquire an up-to-date collection with applicable models of speeches and letters.¹⁴ This hypothesis may be supported by the manuscript's contents, specifically the placement of fourteenth-century chancery forms alongside the latest humanist texts by Leonardo Bruni, suggesting that the commissioner was unlikely to have had sophisticated humanist literary taste. Such "mixed" medieval-humanist collections were brought from Italy by visitors from across the Alps; these travellers, due to their different literary background, did not apply the same strict criteria for text selection as Italian humanists.¹⁵ At the Council of Constance, due to the presence of intellectuals who brought

or to some other author). Victorinus' writings on rhetoric were well known in medieval Europe. In BJ 519, next to the letters in this section, no titles are indicating the identity of the sender and addressee, some letters do not include a salutation formula, and in others the salutation and expressions of courtesy (e.g., *Viri magnifici, Fratres karissimi*) are not enough to identify an addressee; furthermore, there are no closing formulas or there is only a *Datum*. Maria Kowalczyk and Marian Zwiercan identified the senders and addressees of the letters; *Catalogus codicum*, vol. 3, pp. 197–204.

⁸ The body of texts consists of Gasparino Barzizza's model letters from the *Epistolae ad exercitationem accomodatae* collection (BJ 519, fols 130r–170r), imitating the Ciceronian style so well that in BJ 519 they were attributed to Cicero himself (*Secuntur epistole Tullii*, BJ 519, fol. 130r). Bruni's works: *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum* (BJ 519, fols 37r–45r); Bruni's letters (BJ 519, fols 85r, 93v, 116v, 117v–120v); translations of *Pro Ctesiphonte* (BJ 519, fols 45v–61r) and *Pro Diopithe* (BJ 519, fols 120v–124r) speeches; *Catalogus Codicum*, vol. 3, pp. 196–241.

⁹ *Catalogus Codicum*, vol. 3, pp. 240–241; J. Słowiński, *Pismo humanistyczne w kręgu piętnastowiecznej Akademii Krakowskiej*, St. Źródł., 35, 1994, p. 102.

¹⁰ "Revidi totum istud opusculum et puto textum esse correctum pro maiori parte. Hec feci anno 1414, 15 Novembris, tempore quo pontifex Iohannes XXIII erat apud Concilium Constancie. Dominicus de Bayardis de Firmo", BJ 519, fol. 9v; *Catalogus Codicum*, vol. 3, p. 197; J. Słowiński, *Pismo humanistyczne*, p. 102.

¹¹ Due to the slightly different handwriting, as well as the errors made by the copyist of the main text, we should rule out Słowiński's hypothesis that Dominicus de Bayardis was the one who copied the entire manuscript and then emended its beginning; id., *Pismo humanistyczne*, p. 10; *Catalogus Codicum*, vol. 3, p. 173; L. Gualdo Rosa, *Due nuove*, p. 122.

¹² J. Słowiński, *Pismo humanistyczne*, p. 103.

¹³ L. Gualdo Rosa, *Due nuove*, p. 121.

¹⁴ Polish researchers believed that the first part of the *Partitiones oratoriae* manuscript was written down in Italy, commissioned by a Pole studying law in Padua or Bologna, and the rest in Kraków around 1420 (a hypothesis which, however, they did not substantiate adequately). It seems unlikely that such a rhetorical collection could have been copied in Kraków around 1420. Cf. *Catalogus Codicum*, vol. 3, p. 241; J. Słowiński, *Pismo humanistyczne*, p. 102.

¹⁵ A. Sottili, *Studenti tedeschi e umanesimo italiano nell'università di Padova durante il Quattrocento*, vol. 1: *Pietro del Monte nella società accademica padovana (1430–1433)*, Padova 1971, pp. 15–16. Among the Poles present at the Council of Constance, a special interest in the new rhetorical models was shown by the envoy of the Bishop of Kraków, Piotr Wolfram (d. 1428), who was the first Pole to quote Petrarch in his letter from Constance; N. Contieri, *La fortuna del Petrarca in Polonia nei secoli XIV e XV*, "Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale. Sezione Slava", 4, 1961, p. 150; J. Domański, *Scholastyka i początki humanizmu w myśli polskiej XV wieku*, Warszawa 2011, p. 77; A. Horeczy, *Cytaty w listach Piotra Wolframa – między średniowieczem a renesansowym humanizmem*, St. Źródł., 58, 2020, pp. 88–94.

their codices and the availability of numerous copyists, texts of all kinds, from theological treatises to humanist speeches, could be obtained with relative ease.¹⁶ The haste with which the codex was transcribed is evidenced by errors and omissions, particularly noticeable in Bruni's texts – a scribe placed the very incipit of the preface to Xenophon's *De Tyranno* in Bruni's translation, but did not include the rest of the work after it.¹⁷ Similarly, he inscribed the dedicatory letter to *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum* twice.¹⁸ The numerous grammatical and spelling errors in the texts in BJ 519 indicate the copyist's limited education and absence of humanistic intellectual formation.¹⁹

The intermediary between the commissioner of the BJ 519 manuscript and the humanists present at Constance may have been Giovanni Campiano of Noto in Sicily. In 1414, he was visiting Bologna, from where he travelled to Constance (perhaps following the Papal Curia). He probably obtained the works from the private archive of a Florentine humanist who arrived in Constance with the Papal Curia in December 1414 and stayed there until March 1415. Campiano also obtained the works of his acquaintance Gasparino Barzizza when he came to Constance in 1416, bringing letters and letter forms.²⁰

The presence of the manuscript in Kraków is confirmed to have been around the middle of the fifteenth century, when it was bound there.²¹ As Maria Kowalczyk pointed out, it was used by Jan Długosz, who was said to have made corrections to Demosthenes' *Pro Ctesiphonte* speech found within, translated by Leonardo Bruni.²² The *Scio Florentinam urbem* bears no traces of reading in the form of interlinear or marginal notes, and a *manicula*. They are found next to other works; for example, a hand mark with an extended index finger was placed in the margin next to the title of another text, *Epistula pulcherrima de laudibus eloquencie*.

The first work in the quire, which includes *Scio Florentinam urbem*, is an oration in honour of St Jerome of Stridon. In the BJ 519 manuscript, the name of the author is not provided. The speech was delivered by law student Niccolò Bonavia da Lucca at the Church of St Andrew in Padua on 30 September 1410, in the presence of Paduan Bishop Pietro Marcello, Florentine Bishop Francesco Zabarella and other church dignitaries and members of the university community. The oration, summarising the life of St Jerome, emphasises his thorough rhetorical training, erudition and unparalleled eloquence.²³ Following *Scio Florentinam urbem* is an anonymous letter sent from Bologna to a certain Paul (*Epistula pulcherrima de laudibus eloquencie et eius ornamentis*). As the title indicates, its subject is the praise of eloquence and the Paduan student Sigismondo Polcastro (1384–1473) and Paduan professor of medicine Giacomo da Forlivio (c. 1364–1414), who distinguished themselves in this field. The author thanked the addressee for sending a letter from Niccolò Bonavia da Lucca, whom he praised for his

¹⁶ P. Lehmann, *Konstanz und Basel als Büchermärkte während der grossen Kirchenversammlungen*, in: id., *Erforschung des Mittelalters. Ausgewählte Abhandlungen und Aufsätze*, vol. 1, Stuttgart 1959, pp. 253–279; J. Helmuth, *Diffusion des Humanismus und Antikerezeption auf den Konzilien von Konstanz, Basel und Ferrara/Florenz*, in: *Wege des Humanismus. Ausgewählte Aufsätze*, Tübingen 2013, pp. 123–134.

¹⁷ BJ 519, fol. 96r; *Catalogus codicum*, vol. 3, p. 213.

¹⁸ BJ 519, fol. 37r, 90v; *Catalogus codicum*, vol. 3, pp. 204, 212.

¹⁹ The expression “id efficerim curabo” instead of “id efficere curabo” in Leonardo Bruni's letter, see L. Gualdo Rosa, *Due nuove*, pp. 121–122. The lack of humanistic erudition is evident in the incorrect names of some ancient characters in *Scio Florentinam urbem*, see Appendix.

²⁰ L. Gualdo Rosa, *Due nuove*, pp. 123–125; L. Bertalot, *Die älteste*, p. 35.

²¹ *Catalogus Codicum*, vol. 3, p. 241.

²² M. Kowalczyk, *Jagiellońskie rękopisy Liwiusza z marginaliami Jana Długosza*, “Eos”, 58, 1969/1970, no. 2, p. 221.

²³ Inc. “Ad universum litteratorum cetum de maximi Hieronimi laudibus oratio feliciter incipit. Tam multe et tam varie laudes”, BJ 519, fols 66r–69r; *Catalogus codicum*, vol. 3, p. 205. This speech is found in four more manuscripts. An earlier study listed three manuscripts: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. lat. 5994, fols 3r–7v; Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, R 92 sup. 2, fols 13r–17r; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Canon. Pat. Lat. 27, fols 219r–236v; A. Božič, “*Movere et delectare*” after St. Jerome: Pier Paolo Vergerio's Fifth Sermon pro Sancto Hieronymo, “Bogoslovni vestnik/Theological Quarterly”, 81, 2021, 2, pp. 535–536; E. Rice, *Saint Jerome in the Renaissance*, Baltimore–London 1985, pp. 82, 95–98, 233–236. More recently, Anja Božič has expanded this list to include one more manuscript also copied at the Council of Constance: Reims, Bibliothèque municipale, Ms. 381, fols 23r–30v (information provided by Anja Božič in the paper “Humanist Oration on St Jerome: Rhetorical Exercise or Transmission of Knowledge?” presented on 3 July 2023 at the IMC Leeds Congress).

eloquence.²⁴ This is followed by an anonymous text, most likely taken from a late medieval copy-book, about the appointment of two public scribes to issue certified documents.²⁵ Then, three university speeches were included. The first, by an unidentified author, praised eloquence and announced the introduction to a lecture on the works of Cicero.²⁶ Another oration was composed by an unknown author in honour of Matthias of Leksyn, a Polish rector of the University of Siena.²⁷ The other is Gasparino Barzizza's speech for the presentation of the insignia of the doctorate in canon law in Padua in 1410.²⁸ It appears that the link connecting *Scio Florentinam urbem* to the neighbouring texts is the idea of praising eloquence.

Characterisation of the work and analysis of its contents

The analysed work features the formal markers of the epistolary genre, as it ends with a farewell formula (*Vale*). However, the dating formula and the initial greeting formula are missing, an occurrence that is quite common for this type of collection (the same is true for other letters included in the manuscript, both by Leonardo Bruni and Gasparino Barzizza). The author himself referred to his text as *locutio* (speech) in the closing section.²⁹ This is in keeping with the tendency for late medieval and Renaissance epistolography to adopt elements of oral culture.³⁰ The style and organisation of the letter testify to the rhetorical preparation and erudition of the author. The text may have been a kind of rhetorical exercise, as evidenced by the phrase *ingenii exercendi gracia*.³¹ Leonardo Bruni used a similar phrase in the preface to a translation of Hieron dedicated to Niccolò Niccoli.³² Italian humanists emphasised the importance of exercise (*exercitatio*) in rhetorical preparation, and they also wrote letters that were pure rhetorical exercises (e.g., Petrarch's letters to eminent ancient figures).³³

²⁴ Inc. "Sepenumero mecum hoc superiori tempore constitueram", BJ 519, fols 69v–70v, cf. *Catalogus codicum*, vol. 3, p. 205. We can assume that this letter was written after Sigismondo's promotion to Doctor of Arts, which took place on 13 October 1412. One of his promoters was Giacomo da Forlivio; *Acta graduum academicorum gymnasii patavini ab anno 1406 ad annum 1450*, vol. 1: 1406–1436, eds G. Zonta, G. Brotto, Padova 1970, pp. 108–109, no. 258; F. Bottaro, *Polcastro, Sigismondo*, in: *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* [hereinafter as: DBI], vol. 84, Roma 2015, <[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sigismondo-polcastro_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/>](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sigismondo-polcastro_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>) [accessed: 8.04.2024].

²⁵ Inc. "Paulo superiori etate tanta rerum alienarum continencia maioribus nostris fuit", BJ 519, fols 70v–71r.

²⁶ Inc. Cum sepenumero vite mee rationi instituissem", BJ 519, fol. 71v; *Catalogus codicum*, vol. 3, pp. 205–206. The author of this speech could not be identified; its style is similar to the orations composed in Gasparino Barzizza's circle. For more detail, see C. Revest, *Naissance du cicéronianisme et émergence de l'humanisme comme culture dominante: réflexions pour une histoire de la rhétorique humaniste comme pratique sociale*, "Mélanges de l'École française de Rome – Moyen Âge", 125–1, 2013, pp. 219–257; G.P. Mantovani, *Le orazioni accademiche per il dottorato: una fonte per la biografia degli studenti? Spunti dal caso padovano*, in: *Studenti, università, città nella storia padovana. Atti del convegno, Padova 6–8 febbraio 1998*, eds F. Piovan, L. Sitran-Rea, Trieste 2001, pp. 87–100.

²⁷ Inc. "Cum vos intueor", BJ 519, fols 71v–74r, *Catalogus codicum*, vol. 3, s. 206.

²⁸ Inc. "Cum multa sepe mecum de rebus maximis", BJ 519, fols 74r–v; *Catalogus codicum*, vol. 3, p. 206; Gasparini Barzizii *Bergomatis et Guiniforti filii opera*, vol. 1, ed. G.A. Furietti, Roma 1723, pp. 64–66; C. Revest, *Culture humaniste et rhétorique cérémonielle à l'université de Padoue (c. 1400–1435)*, vol. 2: *Catalogue*, Roma 2013, p. 18, no. 44.

²⁹ "et tantulam meam locucionem eorum claritudini ineptissimam fore", BJ 519, fol. 69v.

³⁰ M. Mejor, *Epistolografia renesansowa (uwagi wstępne)*, in: *Listowne Polaków rozmowy. List łacińskojęzyczny jako dokument polskiej kultury XVI i XVII wieku*, eds J. Axer, J. Mańkowski, Warszawa 1992, p. 5.

³¹ "Sed mei ingenii exercendi gracia, si tibi viro humanissimo libet, disceptemus parumper", BJ 519, fol. 69r.

³² L. Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-philosophische Schriften mit einer Chronologie seiner Werke und Briefe*, ed. H. Baron, Leipzig 1928, pp. 100, 161; P. Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance. The Theory and Practice of Leonardo Bruni, Gianozzo Manetti, Erasmus*, Cambridge 2004, p. 9.

³³ Leonardo Bruni, in his *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, used Coluccio Salutati to convey the encouragement addressed to younger interlocutors, instructing them not to neglect the exercise of disputation if they wish to progress in their studies, L. Bruni, *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, in: id., *Opere letterarie e politiche*, ed. P. Viti, Torino 1996, p. 84. Regarding Petrarch's letters to ancient men, see R.G. Witt, *Sulle tracce degli antichi: Padova, Firenze e le origini dell'umanesimo*, transl. D. De Rosa, Roma 2005, p. 286.

One can find elements of the *laudes urbium* topos in this text. This literary motif has been present in literature since antiquity and is considered by some scholars to be a separate literary genre.³⁴ Quintilian, in a succinct paragraph devoted to this question in the *Institutio oratoria* (III,7), advised praising cities the same way one praises people, naming their founder, emphasising their antiquity, describing their virtues and vices. In his opinion, the only element appropriate only for praising a city was a description of its location and fortifications.³⁵ Unlike medieval praise of cities, *Scio Florentinam urbem* does not describe the city's location or its buildings, but instead highlights eloquence as the main object of admiration, which coincides with the views propounded by Italian humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.³⁶ They practised what we could call a cult of eloquence, which was not to be an end in itself but a means to achieve wisdom and virtue.³⁷

At the same time, *Scio Florentinam urbem* also has a polemical character. The author objected to placing the talents of the Florentines above the knowledge and skills of the ancient Romans, stating that such an opinion deserved to be reprimanded. The difficulty in interpreting this passage stems from the term *provocatio*, which could mean to challenge, taunt, but also to encourage, cause, but could also occur in the sense taken from judicial terminology as a lawsuit, appeal or reprimand (to challenge the legitimacy of a judgment).³⁸ The rhetorical preparation of the letter's author is also evidenced by the play on words – *provoceris, provocacione* – corresponding to the rhetorical figure called polyptoton.³⁹

The polemic in *Scio Florentinam urbem* is written in a very polite form. The respect that the author expressed towards the addressee (he referred to him as *vir humanissimus*) indicates that the letter was a voice in a humanist scholarly discussion, rather than an element of a heated dispute.

The analysed piece is written in a style that can be considered typical of Italian humanists of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, who strove to imitate Ciceronian prose.⁴⁰ It was pioneered by Petrarch, who, inspired by the letters of Cicero he discovered in 1354, contributed to the revival of the genre of private letters (*Rerum familiarum libri*, a collection of letters by the Italian poet).⁴¹ Characteristic of this type of letter was to address the addressee in the second person singular, following the Ciceronian pattern, rather than in the second person plural as accepted in medieval

³⁴ B. Awianowicz states that the praise of a city as an independent literary work emerged in ancient Greece during the Second Sophistic period, *Urbes laudandi ratio. Antyczna teoria pochwały miast i jej recepcja w De inventione et amplificatione oratoria Gerarda Bucoldianusa oraz w Eserciti di Antonio Sofista Orazia Toscanelli*, "Terminus", 11, 2009, no. 1–2, p. 16. Genealogical problems related to praise of cities are also mentioned by L. Doležalová, *Lack of Self-Praise: A Search for Laudes Urbium in Medieval Czech Lands*, "Medium Aevum Quotidianum", 47, 2003, p. 33.

³⁵ B. Awianowicz, *Urbes laudandi ratio*, p. 19; H. Lausberg, *Retoryka literacka. Podstawy wiedzy o literaturze*, transl., ed., and introd. A. Gorzkowski, Bydgoszcz 2002, p. 137.

³⁶ B. Awianowicz, *Urbes laudandi ratio*, pp. 15–19; C.J. Classen, *Die Stadt im Spiegel der Descriptiones und Laudes urbium in der antiken und mittelalterlichen Literatur bis zum Ende des zwölften Jahrhunderts*, Hildesheim 1980, pp. 5–6; N.R. Miedema, *Die "Mirabilia Romae": Untersuchungen zu ihrer Überlieferung mit Edition der deutschen und niederländischen Texte*, Tübingen 1996.

³⁷ J.E. Seigel, *Ideals of Eloquence and Silence in Petrarch*, "Journal of the History of Ideas", 26, 1965, no. 2, pp. 147–174; id., "Civic Humanism" or Ciceronian Rhetoric? *The Culture of Petrarch and Bruni*, "Past and Present", 34, 1966, pp. 14–19; see also H.H. Gray, *Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence*, "Journal of the History of Ideas", 24, 1963, no. 4, pp. 497–514; J.F. Trinkler, *Renaissance Humanism and the genera eloquentiae*, "A Journal of the History of Rhetoric", 5, 1987, no. 3, pp. 290–292, 308–309.

³⁸ A. Berger, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Roman Law*, "Transactions of the American Philosophical Society", New Series, vol. 43, part 2, 1991, p. 660. Cf. entries *provocatio* and *provoco*, *Słownik łaciny średniowiecznej w Polsce*, vol. 7, no. 10 (61), Kraków 2000, pp. 1495–1497.

³⁹ Cf. R. Kirchner, *Elocutio: Latin Prose Style*, in: *A Companion to Roman Rhetoric*, eds W. Dominik, J. Hall, Malden 2010, p. 188; H. Lausberg, *Retoryka literacka*, pp. 364–368.

⁴⁰ Petrarch and Salutati had already modelled themselves on Cicero, but their style deviated significantly from classical Latin, while the humanists of Leonardo Bruni's generation managed to imitate it almost perfectly; M.L. McLaughlin, *Literary imitation in the Italian Renaissance: the theory and practice in Italy from Dante to Bembo*, Oxford 2001, p. 95; M. Fumaroli, *L'Âge de l'éloquence. Rhétorique et «res literaria» de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique*, 3rd edn, Genève 2002, pp. 42–57; C. Revest, *Naissance du cicéronianisme*, pp. 219–257, R.G. Witt, *Sulle tracce*, pp. 455–521.

⁴¹ J. Papy, *Letters*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*, eds S. Knight, S. Tilg, Oxford 2015, p. 167.

tradition.⁴² Imitating Cicero's style, the humanists returned to classical syntax, such as the introduction of dependent speech using the *accusativus cum infinitivo* construction. In the Middle Ages, on the other hand, indirect speech was more likely to be expressed using a sentence in the conjunctive mode (*coniunctivus*), introduced with the conjunctions *quod* and *ut* (and other words, such as *quia*, *quoniam*, etc.).⁴³ In the prose of Cicero's humanist imitators, one can find expressions (e.g., the exclamation *mehercule*, which also occurs in *Scio Florentinam urbem*) and figures characteristic of the classical *usus*, such as rhetorical questions (in *Scio Florentinam urbem*: "Quis enim pro amplissimis in linguam Latinam meritis Marco Censorio Catoni dignas laudes non afferat?").⁴⁴

Florence and Rome

The piece begins with the statement that Florence cannot be praised enough and that no other city can compare with it.⁴⁵ This incipit, using the topos of ineffability popular in rhetoric, especially in orations, could begin a panegyric in honour of Florence.⁴⁶ In this case, however, the appreciation of the city's magnificence serves to challenge the addressee's view that the Florentines surpassed the talents (*ingenia*) of the ancient Romans.⁴⁷ One can also see here a reversal of the method used in the second book of Leonardo Bruni's *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*. This treatise, addressed to Pier Paolo Vergerio and dated to the second half of 1406, presented a fictional literary debate in the house of Coluccio Salutati concerning the evaluation of the work of contemporary Florentine writers in relation to ancient authors.⁴⁸ The second book begins with a brief stroll through Florence taken by the participants in the conversation, which provides a peak at praising its beauty and the grandeur of its buildings. Salutati recalled Leonardo Bruni's speech (i.e., the panegyric *Laudatio Florentinae urbis* of 1404) and stated that Florence, with its magnificence, elegance and neatness, surpasses all other cities, including Rome, Athens and Syracuse.⁴⁹ From admiring the city's external appearance, Salutati and his interlocutors moved on to praising the literary works of the Florentines, responding to the accusations levelled against Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch by Niccolò Niccoli in the conversations from the previous day (in Book I). Obviously, it is impossible to say for sure whether the author of *Scio Florentinam urbem* was familiar with Bruni's *Dialogi*.

⁴² S. Rizzo, *Il latino del Petrarca e il latino dell'umanesimo*, in: *Il Petrarca latino e le origini dell'umanesimo. Atti del Convegno internazionale Firenze 19–22 maggio 1991*, "Quaderni petrarcheschi", 9–10, 1992–1993 [published 1997], p. 358.

⁴³ K. Sidwell, *Classical Latin – Medieval Latin – Neo-Latin*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Neo-Latin*, p. 32.

⁴⁴ "For who would not grant Mark Censor Cato the due glory for his outstanding achievements in the domain of the Latin language?", BJ 519, fol. 69r.

⁴⁵ "Scio Florentinam urbem haudquaquam satis abunde laudari posse", BJ 519, fol. 69r.

⁴⁶ Leonardo Bruni also employed this topos in the introductory section of *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis*: "Vellem michi a Deo immortalis datum esset ut vel florentine urbi, de qua dicturus sum, parem eloquentiam prestare possem, vel certe meo erga illam studio meeque voluntati. [...] Admirabilis quidem est huius urbis prestantia et quam nullius eloquentia adaequare possit", L. Bruni, *Laudatio florentine urbis*, ed. S.U. Baldassarri, Firenze 2000, p. 3.

⁴⁷ "Nescio quo pacto, quove inductu provoceris, quandoquidem Florentinorum quam veterum Romanorum ingenia sententiarum splendore plurifacias", BJ 519, fol. 69r. If we assume that *splendore* occurs as *ablativus instrumentalis*, then the meaning of the sentence can be rendered as follows: "I do not know how and by what motive you are inclined to value the talents of the Florentines more highly than those of the ancient Romans through the splendour of eloquence". If we conclude that *splendore* was used in *ablativus causae*, then the sense would be: "I do not know in what way and by what motive you are inclined, for the sake of the splendour of eloquence, to value the talents of the Florentines higher than the talents of the ancient Romans".

⁴⁸ S.U. Baldassarri questioned H. Baron's dating of this work (Book I – 1401, Book II – 1405/1406), demonstrating that despite Niccolò Niccoli's disparate assessments of the work of the Florentine writers in Book I and Book II, it forms a compositional unity; S.U. Baldassarri, *Poggio Bracciolini and Coluccio Salutati: The Epitaph and the 1405–1406 Letters*, in: *Poggio Bracciolini and the Re(dis)covery of Antiquity: Textual and Material Traditions*, ed. R. Ricci, Firenze 2020, p. 74; H. Baron, *The Crisis*, pp. 232, 249. See also: R. Fubini, *All'uscita dalla scolastica medievale: Salutati, Bruni e i "Dialogi ad Petrum Histrum"*, "Archivio storico italiano", 150, 1992, pp. 1065–1103.

⁴⁹ L. Bruni, *Dialogi*, pp. 118–120; cf. id., *Laudatio*, p. 13. Cf. S.U. Baldassarri, *Introduzione*, in: L. Bruni, *Laudatio*, p. XV.

The terms that begin the section of *Scio Florentinam urbem* with the praise of Florence and refer metonymically to its citizens, such as *vitae severitas* (severity of life), *morum sanctimonia* (impeccability of manners), *prudentia* (prudence), also seem characteristic of the works of Italian humanists. Quite similar qualities are attributed to Florentines in the opening and closing sections of Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis*.⁵⁰ Prudence, in terms of which Florence is superior to other cities, is praised several times in the *Laudatio*.⁵¹ The use of phrases such as *prudentia*, or *morum sanctimonia*, however, is not in itself a sufficient proof to indicate the dependence of the letter in question on the *Laudatio*. Such terms were popular among Italian humanists. The phrase *sanctimonia morum* was also later used by the Paduan humanist and writer Sicco Polenton (c. 1375/76–1446/47) when describing the rhetoric teacher Giovanni Conversini of Ravenna (1343–1408).⁵² The belief that the virtues of citizens, prudence and justice, are crucial to good governance is present in late medieval Florentine ideology, and also appears in the chronicle of Giovanni Villani (c. 1275–1348).⁵³

The author of *Scio Florentinam urbem* admitted that the people of Florence inherited the exceptional virtues from their ancestors.⁵⁴ He also pointed out that two of his contemporary cities, Rome and Florence, could be considered heirs to the glory of ancient Rome.⁵⁵ The Roman genesis was invoked by Florentine chroniclers as early as the Middle Ages. It was also a significant element of Florentine ideology, which developed especially strongly in the fourteenth century. The invocation of Roman heritage served to legitimise the city's position and defend its independence. It was also intended to justify Florence's dominance in Tuscany and its assumed role as defender of republican liberty. Florentine ideology was remarkably advanced for the war fought between 1390 and 1402 against Milan, which was ruled by the Visconti family.⁵⁶ The main swordsmen in this propaganda battle were, on the one hand, the Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati and his disciple Leonardo Bruni, and on the other, Antonio Loschi as secretary to Gian Galeazzo Visconti.⁵⁷ The axis of this ideological war is marked by Coluccio Salutati's public letters, followed by Antonio Loschi's *Invectiva* and Salutati's reply, *Contra maledicum et obiurgatorem*, and culminating in Leonardo Bruni's *Laudatio Florentinae urbis*. Salutati, praising Florentine liberty, noted that it was inherited from the Roman ancestors.⁵⁸ Loschi argued against this belief, accus-

⁵⁰ "Nam quemadmodum ipsi cives naturali quodam ingenio, prudentia, lautitia et magnificentia ceteris hominibus plurimum prestant, sic et urbs prudentissime sita ceteras omnes urbes splendore et ornatu superat", L. Bruni, *Laudatio*, p. 4; "Ex modestia autem in secundis, iustitia vero ac prudentia in omnibus, preclarum apud omnes mortales nomen maximamque gloriam consecuta est", *ibid.*, p. 30; "Iam vero de honestate vite et, in hoc tempore, sanctimonia morum quis satis digne possit referre", *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 30, 76.

⁵² "Erat hic et sanctimonia morum et his litteris quae ad studia humanitatis ac eloquentiae pertinent [...] princeps", S. Polenton, *Scriptorum illustrium latinae linguae libri XVIII*, ed. B. Ullman, Roma 1928, p. 166; see also B. Kohl, *The changing concept of the "studia humanitatis" in the early Renaissance*, "Renaissance Studies", 6, 1992, no. 2, p. 195; P. Viti, *Polenton Sicco*, in: DBI, vol. 84, Roma 2015, <[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sicco-polenton_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/>](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sicco-polenton_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>) [accessed: 6.05.2024].

⁵³ Z. Anuszkiewicz, *The communal ideology in Giovanni Villani's Nuova cronica*, "Acta Poloniae Historica", 112, 2015, pp. 295–297. See also F. Klein, *Considerazioni sull'ideologia della città di Firenze tra '300 e '400 (Giovanni Villani e Leonardo Bruni)*, "Ricerche Storiche", 10, 1980, pp. 311–336.

⁵⁴ "Hanc profecto civitatem non solum alumnam, verum eciam omnium virtutum heredem dignissime arbitramur" ("Without a doubt, we are right to say that the city [Florence] is not only the nurturer but actually the heiress of all virtues"), BJ 519, fol. 69r.

⁵⁵ "Hee namque due preclarissime urbes reciprocam sociamque gloriam adipiscuntur veluti parentis ornatu. Ut ampliori laude filius eluceat, necesse est nunc ad rem proficiscamur". ("For these two most splendid cities have attained mutual and common fame as if by the splendor of their parent [i.e., Rome]: so for the son to shine with greater glory, we must now get to the point"), BJ 519, fol. 69r. The adjective "socia" may indicate the aspect of co-participation in the fame of the two cities.

⁵⁶ S.U. Baldassarri, *La vipera e il giglio. Lo scontro tra Milano e Firenze nelle invettive di Antonio Loschi e Coluccio Salutati*, Roma 2013, pp. 21–24; J.M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200–1575*, Malden 2008, pp. 188–189.

⁵⁷ H. Baron, *The Crisis*, pp. 12–46. See also R.G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads. The Life, Works and Thought of Coluccio Salutati*, Durham 1983; A. Lanza, *Firenze contro Milano. Gli intellettuali fiorentini nelle guerre con i Visconti (1390–1440)*, Anzio 1991; S.U. Baldassarri, *La vipera*.

⁵⁸ S.U. Baldassarri, *Like Fathers like Sons: Theories on the Origins of the City in Late Medieval Florence*, "Modern Language Notes", 124, 2009, no. 1, pp. 41–44.

ing the Florentines in his *Invectiva* of considering themselves the heirs of ancient Rome.⁵⁹ The topos of inheriting ancestral glory was particularly elaborated in the *Laudatio Florentinae urbis*. In the letter we analyse in the present paper, one can find some similarities with the wording used in Bruni's panegyric, such as his statement that the virtues, nobility and glory of a parent contribute to the fame of their sons.⁶⁰

The author of *Scio Florentinam urbem* also briefly mentioned a revived Rome, but without specifying what he meant by this term.⁶¹ It seems that this remark should be understood in the context of attempts to restore the former splendour of the Eternal City by referring to the ancient tradition. These initiatives were led by intellectuals such as Cola di Rienzo, who sought to revive ancient institutions, and Petrarch, the first poet since antiquity to be crowned with a laurel wreath on the Capitoline Hill.⁶² Late medieval accounts of Florentines visiting Rome portrayed it as a city in decline and its inhabitants as ignorant people unaware of their own history.⁶³ The transfer of the papacy to Avignon and the Great Western Schism also contributed to the city's diminished prestige. A significant cultural revival followed the election of Innocent VII, who sought to make Rome once again the heart of Christianity. The expression of these aspirations was the *Ad exaltationem Romanae Urbis* papal bull of 1 September 1406 (edited by Leonardo Bruni), which aimed to renew the *Studium Urbis*. The main focus of the university was to be the *studia litterarum* and *bonarum artium*, rather than, as in the Middle Ages, law and medicine.⁶⁴ The circle of humanists employed by the Papal Curia played a crucial role in the revival of Rome's cultural traditions, including notable figures such as Poggio Bracciolini, Jacopo Angelo da Scarperia, and Leonardo Bruni.⁶⁵

The question of the relationship of contemporary writers to the ancients is central to the letter under review. Leonardo Bruni's *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum* demonstrate that Italian humanists discussed this problem at the beginning of the fifteenth century. It is worth noting that this treatise is also found in the manuscript BJ 519,⁶⁶ so it cannot be ruled out that the author of *Scio Florentinam urbem* had the opportunity to become acquainted with it.

The addressee's opinion, cited in the analysed letter, that Florentine writers surpassed ancient Roman writers, corresponds with the views propounded by Coluccio Salutati. The Florentine chancellor particularly valued Petrarch's work, preferring him over ancient writers. He began his response to Loschi's *Invectiva* by praising the most famous Florentine writers, citing Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio.⁶⁷ Salutati's stance was met with criticism from some humanists. Poggio Bracciolini, who was employed

⁵⁹ "Videbimus, ecce videbimus illam vestram in defendenda quadam foedissima libertate vel potius crudelissima tyrannide constantiam fortitudinemque Romanam; hoc enim nomine superbire soletis et vos genus praedicare Romanum", A. Loschi, *Invectiva in Florentinos*, p. 144.

⁶⁰ "Quamobrem ad vos quoque, viri florentini, dominium orbis terrarum iure quodam hereditario ceu paternarum rerum possessio pertinet. [...] Quod si parentum gloria, nobilitas, virtus, amplitudo, magnificentia filios quoque illustrat, nichil est in toto orbe quod Florentinorum dignitati possit preferri, quandoquidem ex huiusmodi parentibus nati sunt qui omne generis laudis cunctos morales longissime antecellunt", L. Bruni, *Laudatio*, p. 15. Cf. H. Baron, *The Crisis*, pp. 61–64; G. Ianziti, *Writing History in Renaissance Italy. Leonardo Bruni and the Uses of the Past*, Cambridge–London 2012, p. 95.

⁶¹ "Ex huius itaque tam accurata diligentique industria Romana urbs vetustate confecta, magis atque magis repuerescere videtur" ("Due to such great and meticulous care, this Roman city seems to be growing younger and younger in its old age"), BJ 519, fol. 69r.

⁶² R.G. Witt, *Sulle tracce*, p. 235.

⁶³ A. Modigliani, *Lecture e studi dei cittadini romani tra Medioevo e Rinascimento*, in: *Studieren im Rom der Renaissance*, eds M. Matheus, R.C. Schwinges, Zürich 2014, pp. 203–205.

⁶⁴ B. Schwarz, *Kurienuniversität und stadttrömische Universität von ca. 1300 bis 1471*, Leiden 2012, pp. 77–78; G. Griffiths, *Leonardo Bruni and the Restoration of the University of Rome*, "Renaissance Quarterly", 26, 1973, pp. 1–10; B. Studt, *Tamquam organum nostre mentis. Das Sekretariat als publizistisches Zentrum der päpstlichen Außenwirkung*, in: *Kurie und Region. Festschrift für Brigide Schwarz zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds B. Flug, M. Matheus, A. Rehberg, Stuttgart 2005, pp. 73–74.

⁶⁵ C. Revest, *Poggio's Beginnings at the Papal Curia. The Florentine Brain Drain and the Fashioning of the Humanist*, in: *Florence in the Early Modern World. New Perspectives*, eds B.J. Maxson, N. Scott Baker, Abingdon – New York 2020, pp. 189–212.

⁶⁶ See fn. 9.

⁶⁷ S.U. Baldassari, *La vipera*, p. 17. R.G. Witt, *Sulle tracce*, p. 409; R. Fubini, *L'umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici: origini rinascimentali, critica moderna*, Milano 2001, p. 86; M. Aurigemma, *I giudizi sul Petrarca e le idee letterarie di Coluccio Salutati*, "Atti e memorie della Accademia Letteraria italiana, l'Arcadia", Series 3, vol. 6, 1975–1976, no. 4, pp. 67–145.

by the Papal Curia, sent a letter to the Florentine chancellor in the summer of 1405 on behalf of himself and an unnamed mutual friend residing in Rome, in which he attacked Petrarch's Latin style. In a reply dated 17 December 1405, Salutati pointed out that pagan writers, Cicero and Varro, although they had surpassed their contemporaries in eloquence, must be judged as inferior authors because of their erroneous philosophical and theological views.⁶⁸ In another letter dated 26 March 1406, the Florentine chancellor stated that none of the Florentine writers equalled the brilliance of Dante and Petrarch.⁶⁹ He asked Poggio not to take away the glory of Florentine citizens by criticising their works. He added that Petrarch, as a poet, orator and historian, could be ranked on a par with ancient Roman writers.⁷⁰

It is unknown whether the analysed letter is related to the controversy mentioned above. It is possible that it referred to the glorification of the works of Florentine authors, but one cannot ascertain whether it was explicitly addressed to Salutati.

The author, using the metaphor of an athlete who captures the attention of spectators to such an extent that they overlook his rival competitors, accused the addressee of being blinded by the excellence of ancient Roman commanders on the battlefield and failing to see their erudition. Although it is difficult to say to whom the accusation of underestimating the scholarship of ancient Roman commanders was specifically addressed, it is worth noting the way ancient commanders are portrayed in the writings of the leading authors of Florentine ideology. Salutati most often cited Cato, Brutus and Scipio as symbols of civic virtue.⁷¹ Bruni, in his *Laudatio*, which discussed Florence's Roman roots, referred to the heroes of republican Rome as models of civic virtue. He wrote that the Roman people were the noblest, wealthiest and most famous, and that they fought their way into the largest empire.⁷² Throughout the panegyric, however, he did not mention the eloquence and scholarship of the ancient Romans.

The demand to appreciate the learnedness of Roman statesmen may also have been inspired by the discussion of the role of the speaker in the state in Cicero's *De oratore*, where famous statesmen distinguished by their eloquence (Cato, Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, Quintus Metellus and Gaius Lelius) were mentioned.⁷³ It cannot be ruled out that the author of the analysed letter became acquainted with an incomplete version of *De oratore*, which was known to Italian humanists at the time (Bruni modelled his *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum* on the treatise mentioned above). A manuscript containing the full text of *De oratore* was not discovered until 1421 in Lodi.⁷⁴

Catalogue of ancient men

Of particular note is the catalogue presented in *Scio Florentinam urbem* of Roman men distinguished by their scholarship and literary talents. It includes Cato the Elder, known as Censor, the Gracchi brothers, Scaevola (most likely the lawyer Quintus Mucius Scaevola), the famous rhetoricians Lucius Licinius Crassus and Marcus Antonius, as well as the writers Varro and Sallustius. The author also mentions Livy, St Augustine, Cicero, and Demosthenes, using their authority or by juxtaposition, to justify the greatness of the Roman scholars and writers discussed above.

⁶⁸ C. Salutati, *Epistolario*, ed. F. Novati, vol. 4, part 1, Roma 1905, pp. 126–145.

⁶⁹ “crede michi, preter Dantem et eum ipsum rythmis vulgaribus, non habuit inclyta nostra Florentia clariorem divino eloquentissimoque Petrarca, ut non debeas tu vel alius, qui Florentinus sit, fame nostri civis vel leviter derogare”, *ibid.*, p. 161.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 158–205; see also R.G. Witt, *Sulle tracce*, pp. 408–409.

⁷¹ D. De Rosa, *Coluccio Salutati: il cancelliere e il pensatore politico*, Firenze 1980, pp. 139–140.

⁷² “Nam, ut ceteros ommitam summos ac prestantissimos duces et senati principes, ubi tu gentium Publicolas, ubi Fabritios, ubi Coruncanos, ubi Dentatos, ubi Fabios, ubi Decios, ubi Camillos, ubi Paulos, Marcellos, Scipiones, Catones, Gracchos, Torquatos, Cicerones extra urbem romanam invenies? Atqui si nobilitatem in auctore queris, nichil in toto orbe terrarum nobilium populo Romano poteris invenire; si divitias, nichil opulentius; si amplitudinem ac magnificentiam, nichil omnino clarius neque gloriosius; si magnitudinem imperii, nichil intra Oceanum est quod non armis subactum in eius fuit potestate”, L. Bruni, *Laudatio*, p. 15; “Quis enim ferat Romanorum imperium – tanta virtute partum quanta Camillus, Publicola, Fabritius, Curtius, Fabius, Regulus, Scipiones, Marcellus, Catones alii que innumerabiles sanctissimi et contentissimi viri prestitero”, *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁷³ M.T. Cyceon, *O mówcy*, transl. and comment. B. Awianowicz, Kęty 2010, p. 190.

⁷⁴ R. Sabbadini, *Le scoperte dei codici latini e greci ne' secoli XIV e XV*, Firenze 1967, p. 100.

The catalogue was probably mainly created under the influence of Cicero's writings, as well as other sources. The pairing of two orators, Lucius Licinius Crassus and Marcus Antonius, may have been inspired (perhaps indirectly) by Cicero's *De oratore*, where they were the main interlocutors, and Demosthenes, Cato, and Gracchi were the objects of praise due to their rhetorical skills. The orators and writers listed in *Scio Florentinam urbem* belonged to the canon of authorities cited by humanists of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Coluccio Salutati presented a very similar list of orators in a letter to Poggio Bracciolini (17 December 1405), in which he justified Petrarch's deviations from classical Latin. Pointing out that the ancients also modified the language, he referred to the examples of Cato Censor, Lucius Licinius Crassus, Marcus Antonius, Varro, Caesar, and Hortensius.⁷⁵

The writings of Varro, Livy, Sallustius and Cicero were among the canon recommended in *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*. Appearing as one of the interlocutors in this treatise, Niccolò Niccoli cited all these authors together (adding Pliny to their ranks) as authorities in terms of Latin eloquence and erudition, to which none of his contemporaries could compare.⁷⁶ Belonging to an earlier generation, Petrarch in *Triumphus famae* also mentioned the figures listed in *Scio Florentinam urbem* among many ancient men, but he often referred to them in a different context – he criticised the actions of Gracchus (*Triumphus famae*, I, 112–115), and imputed the rhetoricians Lucius Licinius Crassus and Marcus Antonius with hubris and the pursuit of unworthy fame (*Triumphus famae*, III, 50–54).⁷⁷

Marcus Porcius Cato was introduced in the discussed letter through the authority of Livy.⁷⁸ The story of Marcus Antonius and the soldiers (sent by Cynna and Marius to kill him), which he stopped by the sheer force of his eloquence, could have been gleaned from Valerius Maximus' *Facta et dicta memorabilia*⁷⁹ or Plutarch's *Lives of Marius*.⁸⁰ The former work enjoyed great popularity in the Middle Ages, while the latter was unknown in Latin Europe until Manuel Chrysoloras brought it to Florence in 1397 and began using it to teach Greek. Plutarch's works became a particular focus of interest to Italian humanists in the early fifteenth century.⁸¹ Leonardo Bruni, in the preface to his translation of the life of Marcus Antonius, announced a plan to translate other parallel biographies by the Greek historian; however, he was unable to realise the idea in its entirety. The life of Marius was translated around 1409 by Iacopo di Angelo Scarperia (c. 1360–1410), who had spent his youth in Florence in Salutati's circle, studied Greek under Chrysoloras, and had been in the Roman Curia since 1401.⁸²

The great eloquence of Marcus Antonius as an orator was compared in *Scio Florentinam urbem* to the singing of sirens, as his voice was supposed to induce soldiers from the story to desist from executing him. The metaphor is not found in the account of Valerius Maximus or Plutarch. The sirens used in this comparison do not have an explicitly negative meaning, whereas they do in the interpretation of St Jerome, where they symbolised deadly temptations.⁸³ In a positive sense, sirens appeared

⁷⁵ C. Salutati, *Epistolario*, p. 142.

⁷⁶ "Ubi sunt M. Varronis libri, qui vel soli facere possent sapientes, in quibus erat lingue latine explicatio, rerum humanarum divinarumque cognitio, omnis sapientie, ratio omnisque doctrina? Ubi T. Livii historie? Ubi Sallustii? Ubi Plinii? Ubi innumerabilium aliorum? Ubi Ciceronis complura volumina?", L. Bruni, *Dialogi*, p. 100. Cf. L. Bruni, *De studiis et litteris*, in: id., *Opere letterarie e politiche*, pp. 250, 252, 254, 260, 264, 276.

⁷⁷ F. Petrarca, *Rime, trionfi e poesie latine*, eds F. Neri, G. Martellotti, E. Bianchi, N. Sapegno, Milano–Napoli 1951, pp. 535, 545.

⁷⁸ "Quis enim pro amplissimis in linguam Latinam meritis Marco Censorio Catoni dignas laudes non afferat? Livii verbum est eiusdemque Catonis ingenium ad omnem perarduam rem versatile" (As Livy attests, Cato's talent was capable of any, even the most difficult thing), BJ 519, fol. 69r.

⁷⁹ Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia libri IX*, ed. I. Lewandowski, Poznań 2019, pp. 522 (8.9.2).

⁸⁰ Plutarch z Cheronei, *Żywoty sławnych mężów*, transl. and ed. M. Brożek, introd. by T. Sinko, Wrocław 1955, p. 649.

⁸¹ M. Pade, *The Reception of Plutarch's Lives in Fifteenth-Century Italy*, vol. 1, Copenhagen, 2007, pp. 61–96; ead., *The Reception of Plutarch from Antiquity to the Italian Renaissance*, in: *A Companion to Plutarch*, ed. M. Beck, Chichester 2014, pp. 536–539.

⁸² P. Farzone, *Iacopo di Angelo da Scarperia*, in: DBI, vol. 62, Roma 2004, <[https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/iacopo-di-angelo-da-scarperia_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/>](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/iacopo-di-angelo-da-scarperia_(Dizionario-Biografico)/>) [accessed: 10.05.2024].

⁸³ *Select Letters of St. Jerome*, ed. F.A. Wright, Cambridge 1954, pp. 90, 387; W. Olszaniec, *O znaczeniu motywu syren w przedmowie do Roczników Jana Długosza*, "Meander", 68, 2013, pp. 114–115.

in the considerations devoted to the liberal arts in Cicero's *De finibus*, where they were said to attract not by the sweetness of their voices, but by their knowledge.⁸⁴ The Ciceronian interpretation of the siren singing was referred to by medieval *dictatores*, particularly Cino Rinuccini (c. 1350–1417).⁸⁵ The metaphor of the siren's song was used in a very similar context by Coluccio Salutati when he responded to Loschi that the latter's multisyllabic words and elaborate sentences would not deceive anyone.⁸⁶ Włodzimierz Olszaniec pointed out that Jan Długosz used the metaphor of the siren's song in the *Preface* to his *Annales* (*sireneos cantus obturata aure transiturus*); the scholar added that it was most likely taken from St Jerome's letter to Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria.⁸⁷ Although Długosz used the BJ 519 manuscript, due to the different context and phraseology, it is reasonable to believe that the text of *Scio Florentinam urbem* could not have been the source of inspiration for the sirens motif in the *Preface* to the *Annales*.

Sallustius and his two works, *De coniuratione Catilinae* and *De bello Iugurthino*, take up a lot of space in the analysed letter, compared to only a mere mention of Livy. The author held Sallustius' writing style in high regard, and in particular praised the speeches of Caesar and Marcus Cato the Younger that the Roman writer quoted, placing them on a par with those of Cicero and Demosthenes. Such an attitude to Sallustius seems typical of the formation of Italian humanists of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. Petrarch highly valued Sallustius' writing style (he also appreciated the moralising qualities of his works) as well.⁸⁸ It should be noted that the works of Sallustius had a significant influence on the shaping of republican ideology in the late Middle Ages, as they emphasised the patriotism of the ancient Romans and their attachment to republican institutions.⁸⁹ Salutati also appreciated the beauty of Livy's and Sallustius' style⁹⁰ and invoked their authority in his response to Loschi's *Invectiva*.⁹¹

Varro was introduced in *Scio Florentinam urbem* by a reference to the opinion of St Augustine, who admired his works. Perhaps the author of the letter sought to demonstrate his erudition in this manner, although the authority of the Christian saint may have served to justify reading the works of a pagan author who also wrote about ancient Roman religion. Salutati's example serves as a good illustration of the attitude of fourteenth-century and early fifteenth-century Italian intellectuals toward ancient pagan writers and the moral dilemmas involved in practising the *studia humanitatis*. On the one hand, the Florentine chancellor admired the works of the classics, but on the other hand, he rated them lower than those of his contemporaries – because of the ancients' incorrect faith.⁹² In *Secretum meum*,

⁸⁴ “Mihi quidem Homerus huiusmodi quiddam vidisse videtur in iis quae de Sirenum cantibus finxerit. Neque enim vocum suavitatem videntur aut novitate quadam et varietate cantandi revocare eos solitae qui pretervehebantur, sed quia multa se scire profitebantur, ut homines ad earum saxa discendi cupiditate adhaerescerent”, Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, ed. A. Rackham, Cambridge–London 1983, pp. 448–450.

⁸⁵ C. Salutati, *Contra maledicum*, p. 454, fn. 115; G. Tanturli, *Cino Rinuccini e la scuola di Santa Maria in Campo*, “Studi Medievali”, Series III, 17, 1976, no. 2, pp. 667, 670; R. Siniscalchi, *Rinuccini, Cino*, in: *DBI*, vol. 87, Roma 2016, <https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/cino-rinuccini_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/> [accessed: 8.04.2024].

⁸⁶ C. Salutati, *Contra maledicum*, p. 282.

⁸⁷ W. Olszaniec, *O znaczeniu*, pp. 114–115.

⁸⁸ P.J. Osmond, *Princeps Historiae Romanae. Sallust in Renaissance Political Thought*, “Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome”, 40, 1995, p. 106.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 103–107. On the medieval familiarity with Sallust, see B. Smalley, *Sallust in the Middle Ages*, in: *Classical Influences on European Culture A.D. 500–1500: Proceedings of an International Conference Held at King's College, Cambridge, April 1969*, ed. R. Bolgar, Cambridge–New York 1971, pp. 165–175.

⁹⁰ C. Salutati, *Epistolario*, pp. 140, 143.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 143; *id.*, *Contra maledicum*, pp. 198, 204, 208.

⁹² “in qua quidem sapientia et fidei pietate, si putas Ciceronem, Aristotelem vel Platonem antecelluisse Petrarce, lege librum suum; ut *De vita solitaria* libros et *De otio religioso* et epistolas suas dimittam; lege librum, inquam, *De secreto conflictu curarum suarum*, et videbis eum non religione solum, fide et baptismo christiano, sed eruditione theologum et gentilibus illis philosophis preferendum. Si ipse idem Aristoteles aut Plato reviverent, non auderent se doctrine et veritatis dignitate preferre, nedum Petrarce, eruditissimo viro, sed etiam cuivis Christiano, licet minus quam mediocriter instituto”, C. Salutati, *Epistolario*, p. 135.

by using the figure of St Augustine as an interlocutor who quoted classical authors, Petrarch was able to introduce elements of pagan culture and philosophy.⁹³ In connection with the debate in Italian intellectual circles of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries regarding the reading of ancient pagan writers' works, Leonardo Bruni translated from Greek a letter of St Basil dedicated to this issue; in this way, he attempted to legitimise *studia humanitatis*.⁹⁴

Cicero was mentioned in *Scio Florentinam urbem* as an undisputed authority in terms of eloquence, as was Demosthenes. They appeared as models against whom other authors could be judged, but whose own greatness no longer needed to be substantiated.⁹⁵ Although Cicero was cited among the *auctoritates* throughout the Middle Ages, and his works (not all of them, though) were read, commented on, taught and quoted, it was not until Petrarch expressed his admiration for the eloquence and wisdom of the rhetorician from Arpinum that the latter became a symbol of moral and cultural revival.⁹⁶ Cicero was undoubtedly the most important classical author for the first generation of humanists living at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis enables the inclusion of the piece in question in the humanist debate regarding the evaluation of contemporary Florentine writers' work in relation to ancient authors. The author of the letter cites a catalogue of ancient men distinguished by their eloquence, but fails to mention the names of Tuscan authors. *Scio Florentinam urbem* does not make it clear who its author and addressee may have been (might it have been Salutati himself?) or whether it could have been connected to the dispute over the appreciation of the works of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio held in correspondence between Salutati and Poggio in 1405 and 1406.

The style of the letter and the argumentation used herein indicate that both the author and the addressee went through a humanistic intellectual formation. The author referred to his addressee with respect, valuing his learnedness, and did not question the grandeur of Florence as a city. His knowledge of Florentine ideology may suggest that he maintained close ties with the city's intellectual community. At the same time, he was connected with Rome and felt obliged to defend the primacy of ancient Roman writers over Florentine bards. Arguably, we should be looking for the author of the letter among the humanists employed by the Roman Curia. The features of the style of this piece, the argumentation used in it, the familiarity with ancient literature, assessing the speeches contained in Sallustius' work which went beyond the common wisdom that Sallustius was a great writer, lead us to believe that this

⁹³ F. Petrarca, *Secretum meum/Moja tajemnica*, ed. M. Maślanka-Soro, transl. A.M. Wasyl, Kraków 2022. Cf. W.J. Bouwsma, *Stoicism and Augustinianism in Renaissance Thought*, in: *Itinerarium Italicum. The Profile of the Italian Renaissance in the Mirror of its European Transformations*, eds H.A. Oberman, T.A. Brady, Leiden 1975, pp. 16, 34–35; A. Maggi, "You will be my solitude", in: *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, eds V. Kirkham, A. Maggi, Chicago 2009, pp. 180–182.

⁹⁴ Regarding St Basil's letter, see J. Domański, *Uwagi wstępne*, in: *Enea Silvio Piccolomini broni poezji. Fragment listu do Zbigniewa. Oleśnickiego z 27 października 1453 roku, z rękopisu BJ 173 wyd. na nowo*, transl. and comment. J. Domański, Warszawa 2018, pp. 47–50.

⁹⁵ Petrarch also named Demosthenes in conjunction with Cicero (e.g., in the chapter on eloquence in *De remediis utriusque fortunae*, I, 9); Pétrarque, *Les remèdes aux deux fortunes*, vol. 1: *Texte et traduction*, ed. C. Carraud, Grenoble 2002, p. 50. The critical edition of *De remediis fortunae* does not record any quotations from Demosthenes. In *Triumphus fame* (III, 18–27), the poet considered the Athenian orator second only to Cicero; F. Petrarca, *Rime, trionfi*, pp. 543–544; D. Looney, *The Beginnings of Humanistic Oratory: Petrarch's Coronation Oration*, in: *Petrarch: a Critical Guide*, pp. 132, 391.

⁹⁶ J.E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism. The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla*, Princeton – New Jersey 1968, pp. 3–60, 173–224; J.O. Ward, *The Medieval and Early Renaissance Study of Cicero's De inventione and the Rhetorica ad Herennium: Commentaries and Contexts*, in: *The Rhetoric of Cicero in its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, eds V. Cox, J.O. Ward, Leiden 2006, pp. 3–69; R. Taylor-Briggs, *Reading Between the Lines: the Textual History and Manuscript Transmission of Cicero's Rhetorical Works*, in: *The Rhetoric of Cicero*, pp. 77–108; M. Eisner, *In the Labyrinth of the Library: Petrarch's Cicero, Dante's Virgil, and the Historiography of the Renaissance*, "Renaissance Quarterly", 67, 2014, no. 3, pp. 755–765.

text was composed at the end of the fourteenth or in the first decade of the fifteenth century (before 1414 at the latest).

While this short letter cannot compare with such outstanding works as *Laudatio Florentinae urbis* or *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, it deserves attention as a product characteristic of the Italian intellectual formation of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. It demonstrates that Florentine ideology and the primacy of Florentine writers were debated in Italian intellectual circles of the early fifteenth century, revealing the arguments used in this discussion. For a fifteenth-century reader outside of Italian intellectual circles, the debate in this piece on the style of particular ancient writers, especially the orators and authors of historiographical works, such as Varro and Sallustius, could have been of particular interest. It would be intriguing to find out whether Jan Długosz, who left evidence of his reading elsewhere in the BJ 519 manuscript, also drew on *Scio Florentinam urbem*. So far, it has not been possible to identify arguments in favour of this hypothesis (the motif of sirens appearing in the Preface to the *Annals* was not inspired by the letter in question).

Translated by Krzysztof Heymer

Source annex

Copy: BJ 519, fols 69r–v; scan available at the Jagiellonian Digital Library (<https://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl>), Digital copy identifier: NDIGORP027456

Please note: In editing the text, the guidelines of the instructions for medieval sources were generally followed: A. Wolff, *Projekt instrukcji wydawniczej dla pisanych źródeł historycznych do połowy XVI wieku*, St. Źródł., 1, 1957, pp. 155–180. Standard medieval abbreviations have been resolved. The ae diphthong is rendered according to the manuscript's usage as e (hence hee instead of hae, vite instead of vitae), and the letter c in the cia, cio sounds has been preserved in the same way (hence gracia instead of gratia). Following the recommendations of the abovementioned instruction, the spelling of v and u was modernised in accordance with their phonetic value (hence vetustate rather than uetustate, urbes rather than vrbes).¹

For clarity, the spelling of proper names and names of city dwellers, as well as toponymic adjectives, which in the manuscript are mostly written in lowercase (demosthenes, romanorum), in isolated cases in uppercase (scio Florentinam), has been unified and modernised. The hyphenation of the conjunct tametsi (in the manuscript tam et si) was used.

Obvious errors (perhaps resulting from a copyist's mistake) have been corrected, and versions from the manuscript have been recorded in textual footnotes (e.g. princeps Romanos corrected to principes Romanos). In the case of characters whose names were probably incorrectly cited (as the context indicates), the presumed names were given in the factual footnotes (e.g., Gaius Marius rather than Claudius Marius, as indicated by the cited story about Marcus Antonius and the soldiers who were to kill him).

The punctuation has been slightly modernised. There are two types of punctuation marks in the manuscript: periods at the end of sentences, and slashes that serve as commas, in accordance with the convention of the time.² As a rule, the copyist marked the beginning of a new sentence by capitalising the first word. Modernisation was intended to convey the meaning of the text. For example, at the end of a sentence, the sense of which indicates that it is a rhetorical question, a question mark was inserted in place of a period: Quis enim pro amplissimis in linguam Latinam meritis Marco Censorio Catoni dignas laudes non afferat? Colons were added before enumerations (e.g., satis abunde laudari posse: eius enim vite severitatem), and semicolons were used to separate logically and grammatically independent parts of a statement in compound sentences, e.g., after plurifacias in: veterum Romanorum ingenia sentenciarum splendore plurifacias; huiusmodi iudicium. Some commas have been removed, such as the one used by the copyist before the adverb quam and before sentenciarum in the sentence: Florentinorum quam veterum Romanorum ingenia sentenciarum splendore plurifacias, or the comma before quove in the sentence Nescio quo pacto quove inductu provoceris, as well as the comma before the first magis in the sentence vetustate confecta magis atque magis repuescere videtur. Commas placed in the manuscript before relative pronouns in appositive sentences were left as characteristic of the writing manner of the time.³

¹ This convention is commonly used in editions of fifteenth-century texts, cf. Ioannes de Ludzisko *Orationes*, ed. J.S. Bojarski, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk 1971; Leonardo Bruni, *Laudatio Florentine urbis*, ed. S.U. Baldassarri, Firenze 2000, p. CI.

² A. Skolimowska, *Ioannes Dantiscus' Latin Letters, 1537: Introduction*, in: *Corpus Epistularum Ioannis Dantisci*, eds J. Axer, A. Skolimowska, part I: *Ioannis Dantisci Epistulae Latinae*, vol. 1: *Ioannes Dantiscus' Latin Letters, 1537*, Warszawa–Kraków 2004, p. 71.

³ Similar solutions were adopted in an anthology of fifteenth-century Latin texts; *Lacina w Polsce. Średniowieczne piśmiennictwo myślicielskie. Antologia*, eds J. Domański, E. Szablewska, Kraków 2020.

Scio Florentinam urbem haudquaquam satis abunde laudari posse: eius enim vite severitatem, morum sanctimoniam ceterarumque rerum singularem prudentiam admirari hodie alie urbes, assequi nullo modo possunt. Hanc profecto civitatem non solum alumnam, verum etiam omnium virtutum heredem dignissime arbitramur. Ex huius itaque tam accurata diligentique industria Romana urbs vetustate confecta, magis atque magis repuerescere videtur. Sed mei ingenii exercendi gracia, si tibi viro humanissimo libet, disceptemus parumper. Nescio quo pacto, quove inductu provoceris, quandoquidem Florentinorum quam veterum Romanorum ingenia sententiarum splendore plurifacias; huiusmodi iudicium, ut pace tua dixerim, provocacione dignum est. Nam perinde nostri maiores sciencia doctrinaque illuxerunt, ut perabsurdum inimicumque rationi sit tue urbis ingenia vel vix eorum excellenciam afferre; verum, me hercule, quemadmodum athleta, qui pre ceteris quodam singulari robore agilitateque membrorum insignis apparet, usque adeo ad se astancium oculos movet, ut reliqui certantes nequaquam inspiciantur, ita erga principum^a Romanorum accumulatissimam inauditamque in bello prestanciam vehementissime intentus es, ut eorum scienciam minimum intuearis. Qua in re tametsi supervacuum sit rem apertissimam in contencionem adducere nostrorum tamen hominum ingeniis doctrinisque ornatum in medium apponemus neque hoc turbaturum te fore censeo. Hee namque due preclarissime urbes reciprocam sociamque gloriam adipiscuntur veluti parentis ornatu. Ut ampliori laude filius eluceat, necesse est nunc ad rem proficiscamur. Quis enim pro amplissimis in linguam Latinam meritis Marco Censorio Catoni¹ dignas laudes non afferat^b? Livii verbum est eiusdemque Catonis ingenium ad omnem perarduam rem versatile^c. Hac tempestate ex Gracchorum familia duo^d floruerunt^e, quorum facundia inter principes eloquencie miranda est³. Marchum⁴ etiam Scevolam meminimus, summo omnium consensu atque iudicatu ita digeste elimatque locutum, ut plane suis in legibus, quidquid humanum genus offensusurum videbatur, absterserit. Accedunt ad hec duo integerrima illius etatis lumina: Marchum⁵ Crassum

^a In the manuscript: princeps.

^b In the manuscript: afferatur.

^c In the manuscript: vertile.

^d Letter s is smudged.

^e In the manuscript: flueverunt. Alternatively, one could consider the version fluxerunt (St Thomas Aquinas uses this verb in conjunction with the pronoun ex: "bona fluxerunt ex voluntate boni", *Expositio libri Boetii De ebdomadibus* (1274): *Lectio 5*, although it seems less likely, since we could not find attestation of it in the sources in the sense of "come from").

¹ Marcus Porcius Cato, known as Censor (234–149 BC), senator, writer, and talented orator.

² The text refers to Marcus Porcius Cato, known as Censor. In the Livy's *Ab urbe condita* we can find praise of Cato in several places: "Plurimum causam eorum adiuuit M. Porcius Cato, qui, asper ingenio, tum lenem mitemque senatorem egit", *Titii Livi Ab urbe condita: libri XLI–XLV*, Stuttgartiae 1986, p. 320 (*Liber XLV*, 25); Cf. *Liber XXXVIII*, 54; *ibid.*, p. 598; *Liber XXXIX*, 40, *Titii Livi ab urbe condita, libri XXXI–XL*, ed. J. Briscoe, vol. 2: *Libri XXVI–XL*, Stuttgartiae 1991, p. 672.

³ The brothers in question are Tiberius Sempronius Gracchus (162–133 B.C.) and Gaius Gracchus (c. 152–121 B.C.), whom Cicero praised for their oratorical skills, though he rebuked their politics: "sed ut reliqua praetermittam, omnium mihi videor, exceptis, Crasse, vobis duobus eloquentissimos audisse Ti. et C. Sempronios [...] deserti et omnibus vel naturae vel doctrinae praesidiis ad dicendum parati cum civitatem vel paterno consilio, vel avitis armis florentissimam accepissent, ista praeclara gubernatrice, ut ais, civitatum, eloquentia, rempublicam dissipaverunt", M. Tulliusz Ciceron, *O mówcy*, ed. B. Awianowicz, Kęty 2010, p. 66; cf. Cicero, *De inventione. De optimo genere oratorum. Topica*, ed. H. M. Hubbel, Cambridge–London 1993, p. 10; R.J. Murray, *Cicero and the Gracchi*, "Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association", 97, 1966, pp. 294–295.

⁴ It can be assumed from the meaning that this is a copyist error (perhaps the name was signed with the abbreviation "M." in the manuscript that the letter was copied from). We can surmise that this is a reference to Quintus Mucius Scaevola Pontifex, a speaker and jurist under whom Cicero was educated and whom he praised for his eloquence in *De oratore*: "cum Q. Scaevola, aequalis et collega meus, homo omnium et disciplina iuris civilis eruditissimus et ingenio prudentiaque acutissimus et oratione maxime limatus atque subtilis, atque, ut ego soleo dicere, iuris peritorum eloquentissimus, eloquentium iuris peritissimus", M. Tulliusz Ciceron, *O mówcy*, p. 160 (I.180).

⁵ Likely another error of the copyist, and the passage referred to Lucius Licinius Crassus (140–91 BC), a Roman politician and famous rhetorician, along with the orator Marcus Antonius one of the main interlocutors in Cicero's dialogue *De oratore*. The copyist, on the other hand, may have had in mind Marcus Licinius Crassus (115–53 BC), an influential Roman politician, a member of the triumvirate formed in 60 BC with Julius Caesar and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus.

[f. 69v] Marcumque Antonium⁶ intelligo. Antonii vero tanta vis in dicendo erat, ut quemadmodum ad Sirenum cantus naute, ita Claudii Marii⁷ milites eum interempturi, ne summa suarum vocum suavitate^f a voto abstraherentur, aures suas obtudere^g. Ad ipsius quippe Crassi ingenium quis bonus huiusce rei existimatur, nihil accedere posse putabit. Hiis adicias Marcum Varronem⁸, in quem deorum immortalium beneficencia omnium scienciarum numeri congesti sunt. Huius rei firmissimum atque indelebile argumentum est Augustinus⁹, nostre fidei princeps, qui Varronis volumina veluti numen quoddam et admiratur et colit¹⁰. Si poesim magnificas^h, satiram Menippeamⁱ ab eo et graviter et ornatè lucubratam aspicias; eodemque ab hoc homine acutissimo perventum est, ut quidquid doctrina divina humanaque sciencia continet, scite luculenterque pertractarit. Hiis adiungas licet Salustium¹¹, qui nemini eloquencia cedere^j videtur. Eius enim de Romanorum historia opus¹² tantam vim dicendi habuit, quod degustacione sui Catilinarii¹³ atque Jugurtini¹⁴ coniectare possimus, ut haud facile dixerim, utrum Livii¹⁵ vel sui opus magis auribus animisque legencium satisfecerit. Due quidem Salustii orationes, quarum altera C. Caesaris¹⁶, altera Marci Catonis Uticensis¹⁷ nomine dicitur, inter summas Ciceronis¹⁸ atque Demostenis¹⁹

^f In the manuscript: savitate.

^g In the manuscript: obtundere.

^h In the manuscript: magnificans.

ⁱ In the manuscript: manippeam.

^j In the manuscript: cadere.

⁶ This is probably a reference to Roman politician and orator Marcus Antonius (143–87 BC), considered by Cicero to be one of the most outstanding Roman speakers, along with Lucius Licinius Crassus.

⁷ From the context, we have to conclude that the author was referring to Gaius Marius (157–86 BC), leader of the Popular party, seven-time consul and military commander, whose conflict with Sulla in 88 BC led to a civil war. After returning from exile in 87 BC, Marius, together with Cynna, carried out purges, of which the orator Marcus Antonius was also a victim. Plutarch in his *Life of Marius and Valerius Maximus* in his *Facta et dicta memorabilia* noted that soldiers sent by Marius to kill Marcus Antonius, under the influence of his speech, put away the swords in their sheaths; Plutarch's *lives*, ed. and transl. B. Perrin, vol. IX: *Demetrius and Antony, Pyrrhus and Caius Marius*, London–Cambridge 1959, p. 588, 44.3–4; Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia libri IX*, ed., introd. and transl. I. Lewandowski, Poznań 2019, p. 522, 8.9.2. It is possible that the manuscript from which the text found in BJ 519 was copied contained the notation “C. Marii”, and the scribe resolved “C.” as “Claudii” rather than “Caii” (Gaii).

⁸ Marcus Terentius Varro (116–27 BC), immensely prolific writer, author of literary pieces (e.g., the *Menippean Satires*) as well as scientific treatises of an encyclopedic nature (e.g., *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum*), highly regarded in antiquity.

⁹ Augustine of Hippo (354–430), philosopher and Christian writer, recognised as a saint and Father of the Church.

¹⁰ St Augustine cited Varro several times in *De civitate Dei*, praising his writings and erudition: “Vir doctissimus undecumque Varro, qui tam multa legit, ut aliquid ei scribere uacuisse miremur; tam multa scripsit, quam multa uix quemquam legere potuisse credamus: iste, inquam uir tantus ingenio tantusque doctrina, si rerum uelut diuinarum, de quibus scripsit, oppugnator esset atque destructor easque non ad religionem, sed ad superstitionem diceret pertinere”, *Sancti Aurelii Augustini De civitate Dei libri I–IX*, Turnholti 1955, p. 167; cf. *ibidem*, pp. 172, 210, 212.

¹¹ Gaius Sallustius Crispus (86–35 BC), a Roman historian. His style was appreciated already in antiquity.

¹² The work in question is Sallust' *Historiae*, preserved in fragments, covering the history of Rome from 98 to 35 BC.

¹³ Sallust, *De coniuratione Catilinae*.

¹⁴ Sallust, *Bellum Iugurthinum*.

¹⁵ The work in question is Livy's *Ab urbe condita*, valued in antiquity by Quintilian and Tacitus, among other writers.

¹⁶ Julius Caesar's speech in *De coniuratione Catilinae*, 51; cf. Sallust, *The war with Catiline, the war with Jugurtha*, ed. J.C. Roefe, Cambridge 2013, pp. 108–118.

¹⁷ Speech by Marcus Porcius Cato the Younger (of Utica) in *De coniuratione Catilinae*, 52; cf. Sallust, *The War with Catiline*, pp. 118–128.

¹⁸ Marcus Tullius Cicero (104–43 BC), the greatest Roman orator, an outstanding stylist. 58 of his speeches have been preserved in their entirety or in large fragments, the most famous of which are the speeches from the trial against Verres, the one against Catiline (*In Catilinam orationes*) and against Mark Antony (*In Marcum Antonium orationes Philippicae*).

¹⁹ Demosthenes (388–322 BC), considered the most distinguished Greek orator by Cicero and Quintilian.

orationes nequaquam deiciende sunt²⁰. Michi in hac re iterum atque iterum accuratissime consideranti innumerabilis atque infinita doctissimorum hominum mee urbis multitudo excurrit, quam idcirco tacitus preteream, quoniam eorum laudes diuturnitatem temporis postulare^k videntur et tantulam meam locucionem eorum claritudini ineptissimam fore intelligo. Hoc scripsisse velim, ut prope diem tuo gravissimo iudicio urbem Romanam deorum domicilium fuisse atque eius cives omnium vel obscurissimarum rerum veros interpretes arbitreris. Vale.

^k In the manuscript: posterioris.

²⁰ Please note the syntax problem in the phrase *inter summas Ciceronis atque Demosthenis orationes nequaquam deiciende sunt*. *Deiciendae sunt* (should be rejected) should not be combined with the preposition *inter* and the noun in the accusative (*orationes*) that follows it, but rather with the preposition *de* and the noun in the ablative to express the meaning that “they should by no means be rejected from among”. The entire sentence *Due quidem Sallustii orationes [...] nequaquam deiciende sunt* can be understood as follows: “What is more, the two speeches of Sallust – one attributed to Caesar, the other to Marcus Cato, known as Cato of Utica – should certainly be included among the most outstanding speeches by Cicero and Demosthenes”.

**Scio Florentinam urbem from the manuscript number 519 of the Jagiellonian Library.
Analysis and critical edition**

Summary: The article discusses an anonymous letter, beginning with the words *Scio Florentinam urbem*, which questions the notion of Florentine writers' superiority over ancient Roman writers. The text provides a brief description of the manuscript BJ 519, which contains a letter that was partially copied during the Council of Constance. This manuscript includes a unique collection of early humanist works in Italian, featuring authors such as Leonardo Bruni and Gasparino Barzizza. The analysis aims to explore the connection between the letter and the discussions taking place within Italian intellectual circles at the turn of the fifteenth century. The letter explores the theme of inheriting one's ancestors' legacy and asserts that Florence is the heir to the glory of ancient Rome. This idea was prevalent in Florentine ideology, particularly in the works of Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni, especially in Bruni's *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis*. The addressee's contested view on the superiority of Florentine writers over ancient Roman writers is consistent with Salutati's views cited by Bruni in *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*. The Roman men mentioned in the letter were renowned for their eloquence, particularly Salustius, whom the author greatly admired. These figures became references for intellectuals during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Based on the style and content of the letter, it is likely that it was written in the early fifteenth century. The author appears to be connected to the Roman context, while the addressee is associated with the Florentine milieu. A critical edition is included in the appendix.

**Scio Florentinam urbem z rękopisu nr 519 Biblioteki Jagiellońskiej.
Analiza i edycja krytyczna**

Streszczenie: W artykule omówiony został anonimowy list zaczynający się od słów *Scio Florentinam urbem*, kwestionujący opinię o wyższości pisarzy florenckich nad antycznymi rzymskimi. Przedstawiona została krótka charakterystyka zawierającego ten list rękopisu BJ 519, skopiowanego częściowo w czasie soboru w Konstancji, a zawierającego unikatową kolekcję wczesnohumanistyczną włoską (utwory Leonarda Bruniego, Gasparina Barzizy). Analiza treści ma na celu pokazanie związku listu z dyskusjami prowadzonymi w środowisku intelektualistów włoskich przełomu XIV i XV w. W liście wykorzystany został topos dziedziczenia chwały przodków i przywołana została opinia, że Florencja jest spadkobierczynią starożytnego Rzymu, wykorzystywane w ideologii florenckiej, a szczególnie przez Coluccia Salutatię oraz Leonarda Bruniego w *Laudatio Florentinae Urbis*. Kwestionowany pogląd adresata o wyższości florenckich pisarzy nad antycznymi rzymskimi jest zbliżony z poglądami Salutatię przywołanymi przez Bruniego w *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*. Wymienieni w liście rzymscy mężowie, którzy wsławili się elokwencją, w tym szczególnie podziwiany przez autora Salustiusz, należeli do kanonu przywoływanego przez intelektualistów w XIV i XV w. Na podstawie stylu i treści listu najbardziej prawdopodobna wydaje się hipoteza, że powstał on na początku XV w., jego autor był związany ze środowiskiem rzymskim, adresat zaś ze środowiskiem florenckim. W aneksie zamieszczona została edycja krytyczna.

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