

Introduction: Shared Spaces and Knowledge Transactions in the Italian Renaissance City

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“What news on the Rialto?” Shylock asks in the first act of *The Merchant of Venice*. As Shakespeare’s contemporaries knew from countless travel accounts, the bridge and the market area around it was the main site of trade in one of Europe’s busiest cities. Merchants, ambassadors, spies, traders and artisans knew they could obtain information there about commerce, people, and events, both local and far away. The Rialto was also regarded as a symbol for the very act of information exchange. Authorities published decrees there, and the expression “publicato sopra le scale di Rialto” was a legal formula indicating the most inclusive act of distributing knowledge, both literally and figuratively. The flow of information in the Rialto shaped and influenced the physical space of the area: towncriers affixed decrees onto its columns, scurrilous placards were placed on its statues or sheltered from the rain under its porches, and graffiti was scribbled on the walls of its walkways.

The marketplace in the Rialto did not obliterate distinctions of wealth, status or ethnicity. Rather, trading required knowledge transactions between different social and professional groups, whether that knowledge was shared intentionally or, in a crowded space, overheard. Sailors and sea captains brought news of distant events, which local operators – ranging from investors to maritime insurers – could compare with news they received from their agents or passed on by the authorities, who in turn had their own extensive networks of informers, from diplomats to consuls. Authorities also had a keen interest in collecting information at Rialto, through both market-regulating magistracies and strategically located moles.¹ And at all levels of the market, effective bargaining required secure, or at least confident, knowledge, both local and international. Moreover, the information available at Rialto had a powerful effect on people well beyond its boundaries. The price of commodities all over Venice, for instance, was determined by the influx of news received at Rialto. As such, Rialto acted both as a crossroads and as a magnet for the movement of people, goods, and news.

For these reasons Rialto had a particularly iconic status although other, more marginal areas played similar roles in Venice, as did squares and neighborhoods in other cities of Italy. This collection of essays investigates how the physical spaces of Italian cities shaped the circulation of knowledge in the early modern era, with ramifications for other European cities. We ask how such spaces acted not merely as settings for interactions, but as conduits that facilitated, directed, or limited the content and exchange of ideas. Our study is grounded in the assumption that spaces are “practiced places,” based on Michel de Certeau’s distinction between place (*lieu*) and space (*espace*) where place is a fixed, physical site and space is the actualization of place through bodily experiences.² We consider both specific locations and types of places, including artists’ workshops, marketplaces, streets, houses, and villas, and the relation of those sites to other locales in the wider urban space. We also explore how some places enabled the exchange of information among men and women from a variety of social and educational backgrounds: professionals, nobles, academics, artists, rural dwellers, and the poor. The

social encounters and knowledge exchange facilitated by these spaces were not only potentially productive, but also possibly conflictual and riddled with tension. The themes of secrecy, exclusion, and social differentiation run through many of the essays presented here. Our approach shifts from single knowledge domains – politics, medicine, theology, or visual arts – to sites of knowledge exchange, and this allows us to capture not just the interconnections amongst different social groups, but also the overlappings among different areas of expertise and communicative media, from visual semantics to written messages and orality.

Renaissance Italy, one of Europe's most heavily urbanised, literate and populous regions at the time, is fitting terrain for this study. As cities sought to recover from the Black Death, the period witnessed remarkable immigration, previously often forbidden, bringing together people with different cultural and sometimes linguistic backgrounds. The economic opportunities opened by the loss of manpower made for renewed demographic growth and immigration, which translated into high population density and made every square meter count.³ A veritable explosion in building programs ensued, which in many cases transformed the face of cities, notably moving the focus away from the closed towers of medieval families to the open loggias sponsored by public authorities. From the fourteenth century onwards, new dynasties, oligarchies, or the representatives of the substantial minority of the *popolo grasso*, became keen to use such sites to celebrate their deeds visually before their cities' inhabitants.⁴ Meanwhile, the mendicant orders saw to the construction of monastic complexes and great churches with squares to accommodate the masses they attracted to hear their sermons.⁵ Confraternities and popular devotional movements also made a mark on civic space with their processions and building programs, such as the establishment of hospitals.⁶ At the same time, a new civic attitude—with the sense of pride in one's city and competition with one's neighbours—brought about the construction of public buildings, such as cathedrals, town halls, guild halls, and baptisteries, whose design and placement expressed the ideals of a city's citizenry.

Concurrently, those seeking power sought to control populations through spatial dominance by constructing buildings (such as palaces)⁷ and new streets (that involved the demolition of structures)⁸ or through physical presence (such as policing *piazze* or dissident exchanges of individuals and groups).⁹ In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, these trends increased in cities that became capitals of large regional states, attracting wealth and fostering new classes of administrators and courtiers who saw their palaces and the areas immediately surrounding them as stages for showing off their status and competing for influence. All these sites, public squares as well as private buildings, were covered with words and images: symbols of civic piety that encouraged particular forms of behavior; paintings, sculptures, mottoes and *imprese* that represented founding myths, valiant heroes or significant recent events; mechanical clocks that conveyed reliable information about time, or sculpted units of measurements that set down standards for commercial exchange.¹⁰ Such inanimate means of communication were meant to inform, to entertain, to please, persuade or control. At the same time, they reflected and promoted the human exchange of information. In short, they were devices triggering knowledge transactions.

The era also witnessed widespread record-making and -keeping. The notariate, that paralegal body responsible for the production of most written records in Italy, underwent

significant development in the fourteenth century.¹¹ Equally significant, urban space, including specific places and buildings, became a focus of the growing administrative records of civic government, as well as many types of texts, such as panegyrics and descriptions that were part of the growing genre of chorography;¹² architectural treatises and maps;¹³ vernacular tales such as those found in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Sacchetti's *Trecento Novelle*;¹⁴ and pamphlets and ecclesiastical records.¹⁵ This means that we have many more sources from this historical era with which to consider how citizens reflected on the meanings of space. Moreover, the discipline of cartography, and increasingly topography, developed as part of the taste for geography among humanists.¹⁶ This involved not only mathematical mapping of a place, but also an antiquarian reconstruction of important sites (cities, buildings, and the location of historical events), an approach to space that went far beyond the way it had been understood during the Middle Ages.¹⁷ Mapping was a form of recording knowledge about the world, part of a desire for knowledge that led also to an interest in artisanal technologies among non-artisanal groups, for whom it became necessary (and desirable) to enter work spaces to make discoveries.

The essays in this volume explore how representative spaces were understood and practiced during the Renaissance. This collection stands at the intersection of two thriving and related strands of research in Renaissance history, too often kept separate. The first is the study of urban space and the growing emphasis on a spatialized understanding of collective life. Historians have long recognized the importance of the physical environment, drawing from the long-standing connection between socio-economic history and geography most famously evident in the *Annales* school.¹⁸ In recent decades this tendency has developed in a new, more culturally oriented direction known as the "spatial turn". With this expression Denis Cosgrove originally emphasized attention for the symbolic meaning of landscape, both lived and imagined.¹⁹ But this research is crucial for urban history too. The importance of topography for civic narratives is evident in medieval chronicles that tied particular events to noteworthy buildings or places in the city.²⁰ The twentieth-century classics of Georg Simmel and Louis Wirth identified the fabric of the city, its physical features and consequent demographic density, as the defining characteristics of urban life.²¹ More recent reflection has problematized the notion of space in ways that historians have found influential: as an ideological construct for Henri Lefebvre; as a tool of control for Michel Foucault; as a function of bodily and social boundaries for Richard Sennett.²²

Renaissance Italian cities are at the center of these scholarly preoccupations.²³ Architectural historians have long drawn attention to the idea of civic space as a signifier of identity, the product of competing views of architects and patrons.²⁴ Inspired by anthropology and human geography, cultural historians have explored the symbolic significance of space in central *piazze*²⁵ and the spatial construction of community in neighborhoods.²⁶ Meanwhile, focusing less on symbolism than on economic realities, social historians have underlined the extent to which space in the Renaissance city occasioned conflict, with competition for the control of public space, rival attempts to dominate the property market, and the jurisdiction of particular areas.²⁷ These issues have now been pursued beyond the traditional centers of Renaissance studies to include Southern Italy.²⁸ Collectively, these works have shed light on how urban sites were invested with cultural meaning and, in turn, how they shaped people's everyday life, from

mundane functions to the relationship with the sacred. Research on the sensory and sensual experience of urban life has added richly to this.²⁹ In recent years, new digital technologies have made it possible to expand these views and to study archival sources on a large scale concerning the distribution of space in the entire city, including the prevalent functions of streets and the physical characteristics and ownership of buildings. Donatella Calabi's and Caroline Bruzelius's *Visualising Venice* project and the Florentine *Decima* project led by Nicholas Terpstra stand out as important examples.³⁰

The second strand of research from which we draw, and to which we hope to contribute, is the social history of knowledge, including the circulation of ideas, information, techniques, skills and expertise, an approach that increasingly includes not just individual authors, artists and scholars, but socially diverse groups of people. Intellectual historians as well as historians of literature, science, medicine and art – in short, historians of culture – have emphasized how knowledge and ideas, ranging from political information to literary and philosophical debates to technical knowledge, circulated among men and women of different social status, education, and access to power, and have underlined how cultural innovation and discovery arose out of this cross-pollination. First pioneered by historians of the book, this socially inclusive approach to cultural history has emphasized different media and their interaction. While the focus has been on print and manuscript culture, there is an increasing interest in orality.³¹ Here too spatiality has played a significant role. Cultural historians have underlined, for example, the importance of modern metropolises as engines for cultural production because they attracted economic capital, intellectual skills and cultural diversity from the eighteenth century onwards.³² But even during the Renaissance large cities on the Italian peninsula functioned as centers for groups of skilled migrants – from artisans and artists to scholars and typographers – who brought together different cultures from the surrounding regions, the rest of the peninsula, and much of Europe and the Mediterranean.³³ The emphasis on social inclusivity and spatial specificity has led to the revision of traditional assumptions and the elaboration of new and more complex models for the circulation of ideas. This has been true, separately, in a range of well-established disciplines and to some extent it has enabled a breaking down of the boundaries between those disciplines.

In the mid-twentieth century historians of literature challenged the conventional picture of a unitary literary history by creating one that acknowledged regional specificities. Carlo Dionisotti's seminal *Geografia e storia della letteratura italiana* argued as early as 1967 for a regional view of the Italian literary landscape occasioned by distinctive systems of governance and patronage and by the different relationships between local vernaculars and literary language in each region.³⁴ In this spirit, in the 1980s and 1990s the multi-volume *Letteratura italiana* edited by Alberto Asor Rosa sought to relate works, authors and genres to broader institutional, social and economic contexts.³⁵ Most recently, the *Atlante storico della letteratura italiana*, edited by Sergio Luzzatto and Gabriele Pedullà is not only arranged by city but also includes mapping essays on “luoghi della cultura.” The literary life of authors is inserted into the wider world of cultural production, from libraries to famous meeting places, galleries, bookshops, schools, confraternities, theatres and taverns.³⁶

Historians of science – such as Paula Findlen, Pamela H. Smith, Deborah Harkness and Cynthia Klestinec – have emphasized the importance of sites in the

exchange of medical, technical and philosophical ideas about the natural world, from academies to cabinets of curiosities, laboratories, anatomy theatres, and artisans' workshops.³⁷ Some exchanges took place over long distances, notably through letter-writing in the European Republic of Letters. Others were localized in specific settings where practitioners met with famous experts later canonized as scientists, and exchanged empirical observations and technical know-how – think, for example, of Galileo's connections with the artisan Marcantonio Mazzoleni and the time he spent in the *botteghe* of mirror- and glass-makers.³⁸ Participants represented different social backgrounds, including both unschooled artisans and ruling elites, especially as this period witnessed a new interest in processes of making as an assertion of power in both princely and republican capitals. This is not to say that ideas circulated unhindered, or that there were no claims to ownership and control. Many historians have explored how individuals and groups were jealous either of their professional know-how or of the social networks which had allowed them to obtain their knowledge.⁴⁰

In the history of art, the home and the workshop have come to the fore as important sites of, respectively, material consumption and artistic elaboration. Art historians have long studied the artists' *botteghe*,⁴¹ but they are no longer seen as simply a backdrop for an artist's work. In line with other scholarship in the history of knowledge and techniques, they have investigated the role of participants in creating works of art and the workshop as a site for training. In particular they have questioned whether the master played a direct role in making objects or whether he served primarily as a business manager allocating work to his assistants.⁴² Other studies have pointed to artists' workshops and other shops in the Renaissance city as places for both artistic and economic production.⁴³ Franco Franceschi, Margaret Haines, Dale Kent and Louisa Matthew have pointed to the importance of artists' workshops as sites of sociability and for the circulation of artistic ideas, tools and techniques,⁴⁴ while Michael Cole and Mary Pardo have emphasized the spatial organization of the workshop as a sign of new attitudes towards artistic production as an intellectual enterprise, expressed most emphatically by the development of the study at the back of the *bottega*.⁴⁵ And the burgeoning interest in materiality has led to explorations into the artist's workshop as a site for technological experiments and discussions among socially diverse groups,⁴⁶ and of how artists expressed metaphorical ideas through their processes of making.⁴⁷ In recent years, private homes have attracted attention as arenas where conspicuous consumption served social strategies, as shown by Patricia Fortini Brown,⁴⁸ but also where individuals and small groups sought refuge for their intellectual activities, as in the work of Dora Thornton, Marta Ajmar and Flora Dennis, and Stephen J. Campbell.⁴⁹

Perhaps what used to be the most traditional field of history, politics, has also experienced a healthy renewal as a result of the study of spatially defined practices of sociability and collective engagement, from celebrations to joining confraternities, from mingling to mobilization. Many Renaissance historians have found inspiration in Jürgen Habermas' notion of the public sphere centered in the coffee-houses and salons in eighteenth-century England and France.⁵⁰ But we now study many other spaces that enabled people to mingle and communicate during the Renaissance, such as taverns, pharmacies and barbershops.⁵¹ Moreover, Habermas' model of communication is notoriously abstract and treats location as a mere backdrop, while recent scholars have studied the way in which the material dimensions of these places affected the gatherings

which took place there.⁵² In Venice, for instance, political intrigue was tied intimately to space: informers were posted in key places throughout the city in an attempt to curb the spread of delicate information beyond the authorized space of council chambers.⁵³

In recent years social historians of Renaissance Italy have adopted spatial analysis in their studies of conflict and cooperation within local communities. Neighborhoods and streets have served as a focus for investigations of the relationship between space, sociability, and identity formation.⁵⁴ Tom Cohen's studies of physical and symbolic violence in the streets of Rome and in the villages of Latium draw from anthropology to show how gestures and language were used to make opposing claims to space;⁵⁵ and Robert Davis' study of recurrent fistfights, both ritualized and rowdy, over the bridges of Venice shows how this expressed professional and/or neighborly loyalties that competed with the civic unity championed by the authorities.⁵⁶ Gender is particularly important to this scholarship. Initially scholars interested in gender focused almost exclusively on women, studying the degree to which public space excluded women or assigned them a particular place in the urban geography.⁵⁷ Early scholarship on this theme also presented cities as divided rigidly into separate male and female spaces. More recently the theme of gendered spaces has expanded beyond these binaries, as scholars have shown how some women traveled in urban space more freely than was previously assumed, and how men and women used the same spaces while maintaining their separate gender identities.⁵⁸

The papers contained in this volume consider the relationship between setting and information exchange. We contend that sites can be interrogated themselves (and were, by contemporaries) for meaning. Our essays can be grouped into three categories: the transmission of knowledge in domestic and work space, in politically-inscribed space, and in spaces understood topographically. Domestic and work spaces emerge from these papers as porous and shifting concepts with their own historically situated language and culture. It is anachronistic to consider domestic space as a site where only "private" interactions took place, Roisin Cossar contends in her essay. Cossar describes how, in encounters with their clients and peers within their houses and parishes, Venetian priest-notaries, who also sometimes worked as moneylender and pawnbrokers, constructed identities for themselves as authoritative (and possibly authoritarian) figures moving fluidly between the ecclesiastical and secular worlds. The priest's house and parish become both the setting for and players in the priest's multivalent roles in his community. Marta Cacho Casal challenges the primacy of the *bottega*, an interior place of work, as the privileged site of artistic creation. She argues instead that artists worked outdoors (in the countryside, in courtyards filled with antique sculpture, and in places between their home towns and the city to which they were traveling, etc.). This meant that the journey was an important part of artists' learning experiences, just as much as lessons learned from the master in the workshop. In addition, she argues that our picture of the *bottega* needs to account for the way that an artist's workspace, even when it was an interior space, changed depending on the workshops' proximity to the domestic sphere and other activities that went on in the same space. In contrast?, Christina Neilson argues that the physical arrangement of space in Renaissance artists' workshops can be analyzed to illuminate changes in attitude towards artists and their production. Artists depended on the openness of their workshop so that their talents could be appreciated. Yet some chose to maintain a level of secrecy about part of their activity through the use of a private back room, a study. Through this concealment, artists hoped to heighten the mystique about

their production and thus add to their reputation. She also proposes that the private study can be read as an architectural anatomy of the artist's mind (the seat of *ingenium* was located in the backroom; it was here that the intellectual work was done). This structure mirrors Renaissance anatomical diagrams of the brain, where rational thought was relegated to the second ventricle, behind the first, where forms were apprehended.

The three essays that follow demonstrate how the embodied experience of movement through spaces shaped the nature of encounters and had the potential to realize political ambitions or create political conflict. Cecilia Hewlett explores how the marketplace was a crucial space for social encounters and information exchange in Tuscany. She points out how the swift circulation of knowledge from the countryside to the city (and vice versa) was an unforeseen effect of legislation introduced to encourage the mobility of people to Florence's market—such as that introduced to avoid price volatility for grain—and she notes the important role played by *contadini* (including women) in these exchanges. Filippo de Vivo explores how the practice of walking through Venice made manifest the ideal of the Venetian Republic, with patricians sharing the space of the street with members of all social classes (though their particular manner of walking—or gliding—distinguished them from the others). But de Vivo also shows how space was used to delimit the boundaries around social classes. When Venetian patricians wanted to have a private conversation, they chose to walk in the *broglio*, an open space near the Doge's palace, to prevent eavesdropping. Yvonne Elet's paper points to how the passage of visitors along the roads designed by Raphael to the Villa Madama and on to the Vatican palace activated contemporary ideological notions about the pope's sources of spiritual and temporal power, highlighting the role of Leo X as a new Constantine. According to Raphael's design, important diplomatic visitors would be ushered from one landmark of political and religious significance to another, taken on a journey that would culminate in a papal audience in the Vatican. In this way, they would become participants in a tableau enacting papal ambitions, thanks to Raphael's creative programmatic construct encompassing roads, symbolic toponyms, views, and decorations, from the Milvian Bridge to the Sala di Costantino.

Finally, two contributors engage with the spatial imaginary in the Renaissance. Niall Atkinson explores the theme of getting lost in the Renaissance city, connecting Italians' understanding of the built environments of their cities with their perceptions of social identity. He argues that the literary genre of topography becomes a metaphor for the experience of knowledge that Francesco Petrarca, Flavio Biondo and others embedded in their writings, thereby serving as a kind of “theatre of knowledge” for their readers.⁵⁹ The pathways described by Petrarch and Biondo become imagined spaces that enable readers to *experience* the landscape like a three-dimensional palimpsest.⁶⁰ In his essay, Dario Tessicini shows how recent interdisciplinary conversations between the history of science and the history of information can be enriched by considering the role of space. In his essay the route between San Marco to Rialto mirrors contemporary explanations about the nature of comets, expressed in the form of a dialogue shouted back and forth between two speaking statues located in these *piazze* and printed in a sixteenth-century pamphlet. The spaces in which the two statues stand represent the two centers of trade and politics in Venice. Moreover, the route between them had significance: criminals were flogged in the streets leading from San Marco to Rialto during their public punishment. The

pamphlet's author intentionally played on the ways in which the imagined space of the dialogue also represented a route of deep significance for its Venetian readers.

Our project builds on current and recent scholarship on the history of communication, science and technology. We aim to uncover the connection between the generation of ideas and the settings in which they took place, so that streets, bridges, towers, shops and so on became characters of a sort in a history of the circulation of knowledge. In localizing exchanges the essays in this volume address the role that different media played in making communication possible, and so contribute to recent debates about the varying importance of print, manuscript and oral cultures. Even the circulation of written texts often took the form of oral exchange.⁶¹ As Shona Kelly Wray once wrote: "the written word was embedded in orality and the spoken word was implicated in the literate domain of writing."⁶² Moreover, news delivered by mouth was often considered more trustworthy than printed news, because accuracy was guaranteed by mutual knowledge and personal trust.⁶³ Oral communication interacted with different kinds of media, both textual and visual, including architectural landmarks, books of secrets, chronicles, court records and testaments, pasted placards, manuscript newssheets and printed pamphlets.

The essays contained here are the fruit of conversations held among the editors at Villa I Tatti in 2011-12 and of a conference at the University of Manitoba in September 2014. Sadly, one of the original organizers, Shona Kelly Wray, died during the initial discussions in the spring of 2012, and this volume of *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* is dedicated to her memory. Shona would have loved the process of bringing these essays together for publication. She combined warmth and great affection for her colleagues with rigorous scholarly methods, a strong critical sense, and a desire to push herself and her field in new directions.⁶⁴

Shona Kelly Wray was a historian of fourteenth-century Bologna and Italy. Throughout her career, she advocated for nuanced, complex analysis of her main source material, the records produced by Bologna's notaries during the fourteenth century. Her doctoral work on the responses of Bolognese citizens to the onset of the Black Death, as seen in testaments of citizens of all ranks, led to several articles and an important book on Bologna during the plague and to an interest in the connection between notarial culture, literacy and orality, and power and justice in the later Middle Ages.⁶⁵ Her 2009 article in the *Journal of Social History* examined how notaries facilitated peace agreements between warring factions in the city, and she argued that as they did so, notaries became associated with civic power.⁶⁶

Shona's work on the notariate also considered notaries as a social group, and by extension the spaces in which the notary exercised his profession, including his household. The final presentation she gave, at a conference in Belgium just a few days before her death, was titled "Notarial Families and Households in Trecento Bologna." In that paper, she examined the testaments of notaries, their wives, widows, and daughters, to argue for the heterogeneity of the notariate and the "socially flexible nature of the profession" in mid-fourteenth century Bologna. As she wrote, "scholarship tends to view the notariate as a single occupation, with common training and professional techniques. But this uniformity fades when we examine the private lives: at the social level the notariate was varied and divided."⁶⁷

While a fellow at the Villa I Tatti in 2011-12, Shona began tracing the households of professionals in late medieval Bologna across urban space, drawing on notarial records

located in Bologna's vast collection of the *Libri Memoriali*. This project was connected to her broader interest in rethinking traditional institutional narratives about medieval professions by connecting the professional sphere and the family and household in the later Middle Ages. Her I Tatti fellowship project in 2012 also comprised a study of the families of professors at the University of Bologna during the fourteenth century through an investigation of their dowries, testaments, and household inventories. She was particularly interested in locating the women in these families, not just within domestic space, but also in the wider community, as she asked about their roles in their husbands' and fathers' careers. She planned to write a book on faculty families, possibly organized into case studies dealing with families from each of the faculties of the university. This plan has already yielded results: an essay on the wives of law faculty members in Bologna that appeared in a volume co-edited by Nicholas Terpstra in 2012.⁶⁸ She was also planning an essay drawing together the experiences of women married to professors in law, medicine, notarial arts, grammar, philosophy, and logic. The essay was to examine not only the women's wealth, through their testaments and inventories of their husbands' estates, but also their influence over their husbands' work, as seen in the example of the wife of the legal scholar Giovanni d'Andrea, whom Giovanni credited with giving him useful advice when he was writing. Thus, her work provides us with a new perspective on the flow of information and ideas through spaces and individuals not usually associated with such subjects.

Shona Kelly Wray's legacy as both a great friend and an engaged scholar endures in the pages of this volume. We dedicate it to her, in celebration of the memory of her friendship and intellectual generosity.

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¹ Pierre Sardella, *Nouvelles et spéculations à Venise au débuts du XVIe siècle* (Paris, 1947); Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford, 2007); Elizabeth Horodowich, *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge, 2008). On Shakespeare's possible inspiration in the real life of sixteenth-century Venice, see Brian Pullan, "A Ship with Two Rudders: 'Righetto Marrano' and the Inquisition in Venice", *Historical Journal*, 20 (1977): 35–58.

² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, 1984), 117.

³ On demographic patterns see Karl Julius Beloch, *Storia della popolazione d'Italia* (Florence, 1994) and Christopher F. Black, *Early Modern Italy: A Social History* (London and New York, 2001); on immigration, Trevor Dean, *The towns of Italy in the later Middle Ages* (Manchester, 2000).

⁴ Carol Lansing, *The Florentine Magnates: Lineage and Faction in a Medieval Commune* (Princeton, 1991); Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (New York, 1979)

⁵ Augustine Thompson, O.P. *Cities of God: The Religion of the Italian Communes, 1125–1325* (University Park, PA, 2005); Robert Brentano, *A New World in a Small Place: Church and Religion in the Diocese of Rieti, 1188–1378* (Berkeley, 1994)

⁶ Daniel Bornstein, *The Bianchi of 1399: Popular Devotion in Late Medieval Italy* (Ithaca, 1993); Roisin Cossar, *The Transformation of the Laity in Bergamo, 1265–c. 1400* (Leiden, 2006); Nicholas Terpstra, *Lay Confraternities and Civic Religion in Renaissance Bologna* (Cambridge, 1995); John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Chicago, 1994); John Henderson, *The Renaissance Hospital: Healing the Body and Healing the Soul* (New Haven, 2006); Lance Gabriel Lazar, *Working in the Vineyard of the Lord: Jesuit Confraternities in early modern Italy* (Toronto, 2005); Gilles Gerard Meersseman, *Ordo Fraternalitatis: Confraternite e Pietà dei Laici nel Medioevo* (Rome, 1977)

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⁸ Stefano Borsi, *Nicolo V e Roma: Alberti, Angelico, Manetti e un grande piano urbano* (Florence, 2009); Charles Burroughs, *From Signs to Design: Environmental Process and Reform in Early Renaissance Rome* (Cambridge, MA, 1990); Carroll William Westfall, *In this most perfect paradise: Alberti, Nicholas V, and the invention of conscious urban planning in Rome, 1447–1455* (University Park, 1974); David Friedman, *Florentine New Towns: Urban Design in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1988); Areli Marina, *The Italian Piazza Transformed: Parma in the Communal Age* (University Park, 2012); Guido Rebecchini, “After the Medici: The New Rome of Paul III Farnese,” *I Tatti Studies* 11 (2007): 147–200; P. Portoghesi, *Roma nel rinascimento*, 2 vols. (Rome 1971); Christoph Frommel, *Der Römische Palastbau der Hochrenaissance*, 3 vols. (Tübingen, 1973), 1: 11–23; Luigi Salerno, Luigi Spezzaferro, Manfredo Tafuri, *Via Giulia, una utopia urbanistica del ‘500* (Rome, 1973); Luigi Spezzaferro and Richard Tuttle, “Place Farnèse: Urbanisme et Politique,” in *Le Palais Farnèse*, ed. André Chastel and Georges Vallet, 3 vols. (Rome, 1981), 1: 85–123; James Ackerman, “The Planning of Renaissance Rome,” in *Rome in the Renaissance. The City and the Myth*, ed. P. A. Ramsey (Binghamton, 1982), 3–17.

⁹ Marvin Trachtenberg, *Dominion of the Eye: Urbanism, Art, and Power in Early Modern Florence* (Cambridge, 1997); Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *Sopra le acque salse: Espaces, pouvoir et société à Venise* (Rome, 1992); Stephen J. Milner, “The Florentine Piazza della Signoria as Practiced Place,” in *Renaissance Florence: A Social History*, ed. Roger J. Crum and John T. Paoletti (Cambridge, 2006), 83–103; Stephen J.

Milner, “...Fanno bandire, notificare, et expressamente comandare...’. Town Criers and the information economy of Renaissance Florence,” *I Tatti Studies* 16, no. 1/2 (2013): 107–151.

¹⁰ Dean, *The towns of Italy*, section 1.

¹¹ Shona Kelly Wray, *Communities and Crisis: Bologna during the Black Death* (Leiden, 2009).

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⁵⁹ Elizabeth Cohen made this comment at the conference “Cultural Encounters and Shared Spaces in the Renaissance City, 1300–1700. A Conference in Memory of Shona Kelly Wray,” at the University of Manitoba in September, 2014.

⁶⁰ Thanks to Nicholas Terpstra for this comment about palimpsest and space as three dimensional rather than two dimensional at the conference (*ibid.*).

⁶¹ See for example, Brian Richardson, “‘Recitato e cantato’: The Oral Diffusion of Lyric Poetry in Sixteenth-Century Italy,” in *Theatre, Opera, and Performance in Italy from the Fifteenth Century to the Present: Essays in Honour of Richard Andrews*, ed. Brian Richardson, Simon Gilson, and Catherine Keen (Leeds, 2004), 67–82.

⁶² Shona Kelly Wray, “The Public Voice and the Written Word within the Notarial Culture of Late Medieval Bologna,” unpublished paper delivered at the Renaissance Society of America conference in 2007, quoted by Roisin Cossar, “In memoriam: Shona Kelly Wray,” *The Medieval Review* 12.06.22. As Elizabeth and Thomas Cohen have demonstrated in many of their studies, close archival research can reveal the interplay of different forms of communication in the street: from spoken words, to gestures and written letters. See for example Thomas V. Cohen and Elizabeth S. Cohen, *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome: Trials before the Papal Magistrates* (Toronto, 1993) and more recently, E. Cohen, “To Pray, To Work, To Hear, To Speak: Women in Roman Streets c. 1600,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 12 (2008): 289–311.

⁶³ Elizabeth A. Horodowich, “Introduction: Speech and Oral Culture in Early Modern Europe and Beyond,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 16 (2012): 301–13, 302.

⁶⁴ On her formation as a scholar, see Roisin Cossar, “Shona Kelly Wray: In Memoriam” *The Medieval Review* 12.06.22.

⁶⁵ Shona Kelly Wray, *Communities and Crisis: Bologna during the Black Death* (Leiden, 2009).

⁶⁶ Shona Kelly Wray, “Instruments of Concord: Making Peace and Settling Disputes Through a Notary in the City and *Contado* of Late Medieval Bologna,” *Journal of Social History* 42 (2009): 733–760.

⁶⁷ Shona Kelly Wray, “Notarial Families and Households in Trecento Bologna,” *Archival Scribes in the Medieval West: Training, Careers, Connections*, Namur, Belgium, 3 May, 2012. Shona’s paper will appear in the published proceedings of the conference.

⁶⁸ Shona Kelly Wray, “Law Faculty Wives of Trecento Bologna,” in *Bologna. Cultural Crossroads from the Medieval to the Baroque: Recent Anglo-American Scholarship*, ed. Gian Mario Anselmi, Angela De Benedictis, and Nicholas Terpstra (Bologna, 2012), 45–56.

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ABSTRACT The article studies the *Dialogo del Gobbo da Rialto, et Marocco dalle pipone dalle colonne di S. Marco*, a rare and little-known pamphlet that stages an oral conversation between two talk Italian city-states trading during the late Middle Ages set the stage for the Renaissance by moving resources, culture, and knowledge from the East. **Learning Objectives.** Show how Northern Italy and the wealthy city-states within it became such huge European powers. **Key Takeaways.** **Key Points.** • city-state: A political phenomenon of small independent states mostly in the central and northern Italian peninsula between the 9th and 15th centuries. **Prosperous City-States.** During the late Middle Ages, Northern and Central Italy became far more prosperous than the south of Italy, with the city-states, such as Venice and Genoa, among the wealthiest in Europe. **The Italian Renaissance in Context.** Fifteenth-century Italy was unlike any other place in Europe. It was divided into independent city-states, each with a different form of government. Florence, where the Italian Renaissance began, was an independent republic. • To Renaissance scholars and philosophers, these classical sources held great wisdom. Their secularism, their appreciation of physical beauty and especially their emphasis on man's own achievements and expression formed the governing intellectual principle of the Italian Renaissance. This philosophy is known as "humanism." For the first time, it was possible to make books—and, by extension, knowledge—widely available. **Renaissance Art and Architecture.** During the Italian Renaissance, art was everywhere.