

# Chorography as Culture: Biondo Flavio and Leandro Alberti

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## 1. Introduction

The Bolognese Dominican, Leandro Alberti's (1479-1552) *Descrittione di tutta Italia* was first printed in 1550, about a hundred years after the first publication, in MS format, of Biondo Flavio's *Italia Illustrata*<sup>1</sup>. That is to say, it was written and released into a different world from Biondo's, one being transformed by printed books<sup>2</sup>, by a propagating convulsion of Christianity that incentivized manifold scholarship, by the reclamation of a hemisphere, and, with exploration, by the re-conceiving of the nature of travel and distance and time – among other epochal developments. Bolo-

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<sup>1</sup> The *editio princeps* of the *Descrittione*: Bologna, Anselmo Giaccarelli 1550 (Alberti 1550). And it seems that the travels Alberti put to the literary purposes of the work and the execution of most of it were completed by 1532 (see below). For Alberti, see Redigonda 1960. For Biondo, see (the still definitive) Fubini 1968. (The passing of Professor Riccardo Fubini [† 9 August 2018] was marked, e.g., in «RSA Renaissance News», definitively also, by William J. Connell: <https://www.rsa.org/blogpost/856879/307618/Riccardo-Fubini>.)

<sup>2</sup> As Gaspare Biondo says (to a friend of his father) on the production of the 1474 *editio princeps* of the *Italia Illustrata* (see White 2016, 209 and 210): *Coegerunt me tandem assiduae tuae voces, praestantissime Pater, ut Italiam illustratam, Blondi Flavii Forliviensis, genitoris mei, amici quondam tui tuarum laudum et gloriae studiosissimi opus, per librorum impressores in multa volumina scribi curarem, cum diutius negare non possem tibi, quotidiano convicio negligentiam meam accusanti quod (nactus praebitam nostro saeculo multiplicandorum per impressores librorum occasionem) non providerem in posterum gloriae patris mei, et pariter cum possem satisfacere, negligerem...* («Most distinguished Father, you were once my father Biondo Flavio's friend, and he was most eager to promote admiration for you, and glory. And so at last your tireless insistence has compelled me to take charge of a transcription of his work, the *Italia Illustrata*, by book printers into many copies: I couldn't deny any longer your daily reproofs of my carelessness and irresponsibility; your charge that, though I had at my disposal the opportunity (offered us in these modern days) to multiply books by printing, I wasn't promoting my father's glory into the future; and, likewise, though I could satisfy the desires of the many devotees of my father's work, I wasn't doing it...»).

gna, where Alberti was born and entered into religious life as a teenager, remained the seat and focus and chief referent of his life – despite time in Rome and Naples and much traveling for his order (particularly with its Master General, Francesco Silvestri), including in the Mezzogiorno and on Sicily and outside Italy. The humanist Giovanni Garzoni<sup>3</sup>, himself a Bolognese, a Ciceronian and pupil of Guarino (and Valla's) and friend of Pomponio Leto, was the major superintendent of Alberti's intellectual formation. We may assume that the latter found his responsibilities as friar later as satisfying as, for example, Biondo Flavio found his career (when unobstructed) as curialist – and also compatible and bound up with his scholarly work. Alberti was attached, intermittently, to the Basilica and Arca (or tomb-shrine) of St. Dominic and to the inquisition in Bologna; and, towards the end of his life, he was Inquisitor of Bologna, a status powerful and influential.

## 2. Alberti's writings

As author, Alberti collaborated in writing in Latin (1517) a collection of biographies of eminent Dominicans. And he wrote «lives» of various saints in the *volgare*. He worked in spurts on *Historie di Bologna* (printed 1541- )<sup>4</sup>, a municipal history (like his teacher, Garzoni's), a portion of which remains in MS form only today. Also, two Venetian monographs, mostly biographical. Right up to the present, though, his *Descrittione* has been regarded as his most important and interesting work. It remained a popular source-book and exemplar for a couple of centuries, while Biondo Flavio's *Italia Illustrata* was mined but under-esteemed in comparison<sup>5</sup>.

In a Latin pamphlet that we have from 1532, on the Ark of St. Dominic and the anniversary of the canonization of the saint<sup>6</sup>, Alberti says that the saint's tomb is as noble as any that he's seen in Italy or elsewhere in his travels. Then he adds a qualifying relative clause to the *Italiam* of his

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<sup>3</sup> Whom we know from *his* history of Bologna (see Montovani 2010) and from his letters (see Lind 1992). Also, on Garzoni, see Ridolfi 1999.

<sup>4</sup> See Alberti 1541.

<sup>5</sup> See Castner 2016, 188. For Alberti's *Descrittione*, I use the 1557 edition throughout (Alberti 1557); and all citations of the *It. Ill.* will come from White 2005. Citations of other Biondo works, from Biondo 1559. Of the *It. Ill.* editio major [Pontari 2011-] in process, I had available to me only vol. 1.

<sup>6</sup> See Redigonda 1960.

statement: *quam totam peragravi*, i.e., an obvious echo of Biondo Flavio's famous *Postquam vero omnem Italiam peragraturus ero*, «After I have ranged over all of Italy», at the beginning (*Liguria* §10) of the *Italia Illustrata*, evidence of early acquaintanceship and influence. And in his description of the distinguished men of Forlì, in his *Romagna* of the *Descrittione*, Alberti's treatment of Biondo is a warm and genuine (if cursory) *omaggio*, acknowledging his indebtedness to the «uncommon and painstaking genius of the *antiquario* and historian» and listing Biondo's works and place of burial<sup>7</sup>. But even a superficial glance at the *Descrittione di tutta Italia*, and at its Index (*Tavola*), and marginal notation of the printed editions, gives a sense – despite all the advantages to Alberti of the passage of almost a century – of a near collaboration.

For a while now, sparked by Riccardo Fubini and Ottavio Clavuot and a few others (like Angelo Mazzocco in the United States), Biondo studies in general (not just the *Italia Illustrata*) have been being re-animated, and new editions and translations of his works and studies on them, and recent sessions of RSA meetings in NYC (2014)<sup>8</sup> and Chicago (2017) are all examples. Something like this is true, too, for Leandro Alberti and his *Descrittione*: e.g., the Bologna conference (2004) collection of Massimo Donattini published in 2007<sup>9</sup>, and the Foggia conference (2006) collection of Domenico Defilippis published in 2009<sup>10</sup>. And inevitably, the same names are beginning to turn up in current comparative work on both authors, like Defilippis particularly<sup>11</sup>, Fubini, Paolo Pontari and others, which is very promising. For my developing understanding of the relationship between Biondo and Alberti, I am indebted to Defilippis, Fubini, Clavuot, Pontari, Giancarlo Petrella<sup>12</sup>, and Catherine Castner.

### 3. Alberti and Biondo's *Italia Illustrata*

It's difficult (and sometimes a trap) to try to reduce so multivalent a work as *Italia Illustrata* to essentials. But we should listen to Biondo when he says (*Liguria* §10) that the work is three things: an updated geography

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<sup>7</sup>At f. 280v: ...*huomo di raro, & curioso ingegno, & inuestigatore dell'antichitati...*

<sup>8</sup> Papers printed in Mazzocco 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Donattini 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Defilippis 2009.

<sup>11</sup> See Defilippis 2005.

<sup>12</sup> See Petrella 2007. Also, the exhaustive Petrella 2004.

of the Augustan Plinian province of *Italia* (I use the word «geography» loosely, Biondo says «*descriptio*»), a catalogue of her famous men and their achievements, and a breviary of Italian history. (I should say that, for his exposition, Biondo divides the *provincia* of *Italia* up into 18 *regiones*: the *regiones* are *vocabula accomodatiora*, Biondo says [*Liguria* §9], terms of convenience – partly classical and partly church-medieval and observing contemporary political realities – that he expected his readership would be comfortable with.) In the *Italia Illustrata*, Biondo says (*Preface* §3), he'll match current with classical toponyms, authenticate them, bring back lost toponyms, and use them all, as making a kind of substructure, better to understand a reclaimed thousand-year *Italian* history, i.e., to throw some light onto it (*illustrare*), and hence his title. It's a painstaking salvaging operation, he says in *Preface* §4, echoing VERG. Aen. 1.118-19 on the wreck of the Trojan fleet, as Prof. Castner<sup>13</sup> first noticed. A very bookish salvaging and reintegration operation. Biondo will take up this idea again, emphatically, in *Lazio* §§47-50, with his fine account of Leon Battista Alberti and his literal grappling with one of two Roman ships at the bottom of the Lago di Nemi: this is the image that captivated Anthony Grafton and that he saw as an apt icon of the I Tatti Renaissance Library [=ITRL] series and of the Italian Renaissance itself<sup>14</sup>. Though Leandro Alberti speaks more adventurously at the beginning of the *Descrittione*, rather, of «unfurling *his* sails»<sup>15</sup>, as if preparing for *travel*, both are doing pretty much the same basic things (above) much of the time: differences between them seem a matter of proportion and «touch» – at least at first.

Alberti's greatest advantage over Biondo is Biondo himself. His *Descrittione* is inconceivable without the *Italia Illustrata*, I think. Biondo supplied him with a schema (or literary design) and a methodology and – for all its then-irremediable incompleteness – an enormous matter. The passage of time, as we've said, gave Alberti (1) an expanded classical canon, Latin and Greek, with new translations (particularly out of Greek) and

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<sup>13</sup> Castner 2005, 233. And the *Commentaria Classica* reader wonders, sensibly, if Biondo might have been prompted here also by Boccaccio's shipwreck image in the *Prohemium* to the *Genealogia*: *...undique in tuum desiderium, non aliter quam si per vastum litus ingentis naufragii fragmenta colligerem sparsas, per infinita fere volumina deorum gentilium reliquias colligam, quas comperiam, et collectas evo diminutas atque semesas et fere attritas in unum genealogie corpus, quo potero ordine, ut tuo fruaris voto, redigam* (see Solomon 2011, 18 [§40]).

<sup>14</sup> Grafton 2006.

<sup>15</sup> *...spiegando al vento le vele ...*(fol. 1r).

commentary; (2) an extensive new contemporary geographical and historical literature in Latin and Italian on Italy – much of it produced by writers likewise indebted to Biondo (though sometimes critical of him); and (3) good maps. Learning itself had expanded and was becoming international. Alberti, in his *Descrittione*, completed the last four regions of peninsular Italy that Biondo had been forced to give up on, King Alfonso's *regno* (the *Mezzogiorno*); re-sequenced the regions in his exposition somewhat<sup>16</sup>; and eventually the islands (1561) and maps (1568) were added. The *Descrittione* is about four times the size of *Italia Illustrata* – even if we don't count Alberti's *Roma*<sup>17</sup> and the completed South and the islands. In this connection, Biondo likes an adjective, that he uses sparingly of buildings and construction programs like Cosimo's in Florence (*Tuscany* §31): *insanus*. It's not necessarily pejorative and has nothing to do with unsoundness, mental or physical: in the *Italia Illustrata*, Biondo makes it mean «extravagant» in size *and* conception. It fits Alberti's *Descrittione* well.

#### 4. Alberti and his other sources

In general, Biondo is meticulous (within obvious constraints)<sup>18</sup> about choosing and citing ancient sources, Pliny, e.g., or Livy, or Martial, or Servius: he's very much looser and thinner when it comes to acknowledging later authorities, medieval and near-contemporary, but there were fewer of them for his purposes<sup>19</sup>. Alberti's use of later authorities is much fuller necessarily – and acknowledged, because his work is supplementary,

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<sup>16</sup> In Alberti, they are nineteen as against Biondo's eighteen. However, among all Alberti's up-dates and enhancements of the *Italia Illustrata*, I can find no indication of his use or even awareness of Biondo's *Additiones Correctionesque Italiae Illustratae* of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS. Series Nova 2960 and Riccardianus 1198 MSS tradition: see White 2016, 202-204: text and English translation in White 2005, 2, 362-395.

<sup>17</sup> The object of Biondo's completed *Roma instaurata* and the on-going *Roma triumphans*.

<sup>18</sup> As with texts defective or not immediately accessible, which he sometimes quotes from memory, or as having to tailor texts to his chorographical design. And unlike Alberti, whose Greek was good, Biondo was dependent on translations into Latin of such Greek texts known to him mostly from before the fall of Constantinople.

<sup>19</sup> This is to ignore for now the question of unacknowledged later sources in the *Italia Illustrata*.

in a sense, and an *aggiornamento*: and because, for him, the new information of these modern authorities helps to give his work a special quality and a special point of view – I think he would say – *surpassing* Biondo's. This was the very type of information that Biondo, for the most part, was unable to get «to order» from the court of Alfonso, e.g., after all<sup>20</sup>. Ancient authorities, through the mediation of others, in Alberti, are another matter, as we'll see. In any case, each work is a *cento* of sources, and the marshaling of sources has a great deal to do with the character of the work and how it's read.

Here is a sample only – which merely skims the surface – of Alberti's modern sources, some deficient in the methodological rigor and discrimination of Biondo and Brunì (Biondo's history master and friend): though much of his work is a kind of translation and paraphrase of Biondo, Biondo himself, in the *Italia Illustrata* and *Decades*, is Alberti's most often-exploited source; also, Alberti uses: Leonardo Brunì of Arezzo's (†1444) *History of the Florentine People*<sup>21</sup>; Niccolò Perotti (or Perotto) (†1480), translator of Polybius – among many other humanist enterprises<sup>22</sup>; Platina's (Bartolomeo Sacchi) (†1481) history of Mantua and the

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<sup>20</sup> White 1984, 277. Biondo's failure ever to rectify the omission of Alfonso's South (cf. White 2005, 1, at *Liguria* §9, 2, *Abruzzo* §1 [with note 1], and, 2, *Puglia* §1 [with note 1]), i.e., to «make whole» the *Italia Illustrata* according to his own conception and intentions, has not yet been satisfactorily explained. The islands are another matter. Alberti, obviously, conceives of Sicily – following Volterrano – as helping vitally to comprise his «*Tutta Italia*». Biondo says expressly (at *Liguria* §9) that he will describe Italy without the islands (...*Italiam sine insulis*...) and enumerates the eighteen regions of his design: i.e., for him *insular* Sicily, is indeed part of *Italia*, but he is excluding it from his *Italia Illustrata*.

<sup>21</sup> See Brunì 1914- and Brunì 2001-. And see Vasoli 1972. Of Brunì, at Arezzo in *Hetruria mediterranea* (fol. 58v), Alberti says: ...*Leonardo Bruno ornato di lettere Grece, & Latine, come chiaramente si conosce dall'opere da lui scritte, & tradotte di Greco in Latino. Passò di questa uita tant'huomo nell'anno della salute 1440. & di sua età 74. in Fiorenza, di cui lungamente era stato segretario.*

<sup>22</sup> Whom Biondo knew and some of whose work, at least, could have profited from – though he never cites him: see *Piceno* §10; also: *Quamquam, etsi nunc abest [Bartholus], breui aderit alter Sassoferatensis Nicolaus Perottus, Sipontinus archiepiscopus, Bartholi affinitate non iniuria gloriari solitus, eloquentiae omnino deditus, adeo ut, si forsan minori quam deceat reverentia de Bartholo scriberem, me suis ipse scriptis, sua dicendi elegantia pariter sit laesurus* (Biondo to Gregorio Loli, in Nogara 1927, 205f.). And see D'Alessandro 2015.

Gonzaga<sup>23</sup>; Giovanni Simonetta's (†1490) history of the reign of the dynast Francesco Sforza<sup>24</sup>; Alberti's brother Dominican, the Sicilian Pietro Ranzano's (†1492) unpublished universal history<sup>25</sup>, history of Palermo (called the *Opusculum*)<sup>26</sup> and pervasive – in Alberti – *Descriptio totius Italiae* (Books XIV and XV of the universal history, recently edited by DiLorenzo and others)<sup>27</sup>; Cristoforo Landino's (†1498) commentaries on Vergil, Horace and Dante and translation of Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*<sup>28</sup>; Antonio Mancinelli (†1505)<sup>29</sup>; Sabellico's (Marcantonio Cocchi) (†1506) *Enneades*, another universal history<sup>30</sup>; Volteranno's (Raffaele Maffei) (†1522) *Geography (Gaeographia)*, the first part of his universal encyclopedia<sup>31</sup>; Pietro Marso's (†1511), a student of Pomponio Leto and known and admired by Erasmus, commentaries on Cicero, Terence, Ovid, Silius Italicus<sup>32</sup>; Bernardino Corio's (†1519) *volgare* history of Milan<sup>33</sup>; Ambrogio Leone's (†1525) history of Nola<sup>34</sup>; Giovanni Candido's (†1528) history of Aquileia<sup>35</sup>; the Venetian geographer and cartographer Pietro Coppo's (†1555) unpublished Latin world geography (with twenty-two maps) and *volgare* chorography of Istria<sup>36</sup>; Elia Capriolo's (mid-15th cent.) history of his native Brescia to c. 1500 (called the *Chronica*, 1505) in twelve books, originally in Latin<sup>37</sup>; and, for garnish as well as information,

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<sup>23</sup> See Platina 1675; also, Platina 1722.

<sup>24</sup> See Simonetta 1486; also, Simonetta 1932.

<sup>25</sup> *Annales omnium temporum*: the *Commentaria Classica* reader notes: Palermo, Biblioteca Comunale, MS. 3. Qq. C. 54-60 (Kristeller, *Iter I*, 26).

<sup>26</sup> See Ranzano 1797; also, Ranzano's Italian translation of the *Opusculum* in Di Marzo 1864 and in Sciascia 1982.

<sup>27</sup> Now in Ranzano 2007.

<sup>28</sup> On Landino, see Foà 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Editor of Cicero, Herodotus, Horace, Juvenal, Suetonius, Vergil. See Mellidi 2007. Often paired in Alberti's citations with Landino, whose Vergil commentary Mancinelli included in his edition.

<sup>30</sup> See Sabellico 1498, 1509, and 1560.

<sup>31</sup> See Volteranno 1506.

<sup>32</sup> On Marso, see Benedetti 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Corio 1503. And see Guerra 1978.

<sup>34</sup> Leone 1514. And see now de Divitiis 2018.

<sup>35</sup> Candido 1521.

<sup>36</sup> *De toto orbe* (later abbreviated to *De summa totius orbis*, also unpublished) and, for the *Del sito*, see Coppo 1540. Also, see Degrassi 1924.

<sup>37</sup> Also: «Cavriolo», «Caprioli». Capriolo 1505; an expanded version in Capriolo 1704 and Capriolo 1723.

the «Dantesque» (in *terza rima*) mid-14th-cent. *Dittamondo* of Fazio degli Uberti, un-visited by Biondo<sup>38</sup>, a world tour undertaken by the poet at the instigation of Virtue and accompanied by the geographer Solinus.

### 5. Alberti and Nanni

But the most conspicuous of Alberti's sources (and one requiring special attention) is a third Dominican, Annius of Viterbo (†1502), Giovanni Nanni<sup>39</sup>, troubled genius and counterfeiter. Even his name, «Annius», was made up. From books he «found» in Mantua, he concocted texts and translations of texts and fragments of ancient authors, real and unreal, lost and found – like the Chaldaean Berosus (the «lost» books only), the Egyptian Manetho, Cato Censor, Fabius Pictor, C. Tuditanus – , with commentaries: the infamous *Antiquitatum variarum volumina XVII*<sup>40</sup>; Annius's *Antiquities* has many peculiarities, e.g., an obsession with *Etruscana* (he felt that Biondo had short-shrifted Viterbo [at *Tuscany* §5] in the *Italia Illustrata* as a «*civitas parum vetusta*)»<sup>41</sup>, contempt for all things Greek (as «*favole e ficciones*»), and an impressment of the god Janus into service as Noah, father of the race, Trojan *capitano* and king, King of Italy, one of the founders and kings of Rome (and hence the *Janiculum*), inaugurator of the office of *pontifex maximus*, first *pontifex maximus* himself, in fact first pope. (Biondo, e.g., at *Liguria* §24, scoffs at de Voragine's making a conventional pre-Nanni Janus the founder and eponym of Genoa: Nanni's Janus would have horrified him.) Many were suspicious of Nanni's frauds, right from the beginning, but many (like Alberti) were not: some

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<sup>38</sup> With good reason. «Yet one should not omit to mention this second rate poet here. For in his dreary *Dittamondo*, a poem now known to few and entertaining to none, he not only introduced a personified Rome, whom he makes tell her history from the coming of Noah to Italy right down to the coronation of Charles IV in 1355, but he also gave a description of the ancient city, really no more than a versified catalogue of the principal monuments drawn from Solinus, the *Mirabilia*, and Martinus Polonus. Naturally it adds nothing to what was already known» (Weiss 1988) 46f. See degli Uberti 1474 and Corsi 1952. Cf. (at *Tuscany* §55) Biondo's admiration for and confidence in the learned scholar-poet Francesco da Fiano (†c. 1420), a Curial insider like himself. On him, see Bacchelli 1997.

<sup>39</sup> See, Fubini 2012; Stephens 1984, 309-322; Stephens 2013, 277-289; Weiss 1962, 425-41; Cochrane 1981, 432-435; Grafton 2013, s.v. «Annius» (46f.) and s.v. «Janus» (495f.); Grafton 1990, 8-38; Ligota 1987, 44-56; Rowland 2016, 433-445.

<sup>40</sup> See Defilippis 2005, 49 with note 84.

<sup>41</sup> Fubini 2012.



of his fancies even migrated with Michelangelo into the Sistine Chapel<sup>42</sup>. Recent speculation that Nanni just might be, as C.R. Ligota says<sup>43</sup>, «a sophisticated explorer of fictions», like the Argentine Borges, «rather than an earnest, patriotic forger», only creates more unease about him in *us*<sup>44</sup>. In any case, Nanni, along with Biondo and Ranzano, lords it over Alberti's *Descrittione*.

Eric Cochrane is stern in his judgments of Alberti as historian: he calls his work «an inelegant medley of fact and fiction»; and Alberti, credulous and indiscriminate in his use of sources, self-contradictory, and, in assessing competing stories, having a preference for the fantastical<sup>45</sup>. These are accurate judgments, but needing qualification and expansion. The number of Alberti's sources is overwhelming and his (sometimes) lack of specificity and discrimination in citing them, very often, infuriating. E.g., Alberti, on his first page (fols.1r and 1v), lists some thirty-five peoples as immigrants into Italy, from Oenotrian and Lydian down to Breton and Avar, and cites *mere* names as his authorities: Cato, Mirsillus Lesbius (a Lydian king, Nanni's «Myrsilus of Lesbos»), the Chaldaean Berosus (also Nanni's), Solinus, Polybius, Livy, Procopius – «*con molt' altri scrittori*», and nothing more. Biondo and Nanni, Apollonian and Dionysian elements (so to say), are the polarities of Alberti's work<sup>46</sup>. But somehow, Alberti seems to remain his own – eccentric – man.

## 6. Alberti's use of Biondo

Before considering how Alberti uses the *Italia Illustrata*, it may be well to consider, briefly, how he reads it. At *Liguria* §1 of the *Italia Illustrata*, e.g., Biondo Flavio, just getting under way, leaves go an encomium to Italia of his own and defers humbly to the unsurpassable Vergil, Pliny, Pet-

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<sup>42</sup> Grafton 2013, (s.v. «Janus») 495f. Luther also was a believer, and many others. It took a good while for Nanni's constructs to leach out of European cultural imagination.

<sup>43</sup> Ligota 1987, 56.

<sup>44</sup> With touches, it could be added, of P.T. Barnum: up-to-the-minute methodology in league with fervent dishonesty. A full account of the (acknowledged and unacknowledged) indebtedness of Alberti to Nanni – its true nature and etiology – has yet to be worked up: but Nanni's *Antiquities* is a disfigurement and fundamental flaw of the *Descrittione di tutta Italia*.

<sup>45</sup> Cochrane 1981, 305.

<sup>46</sup> Biondo (at 280v), «uomo di raro, et curioso ingegno», and Nanni (at 69v), «uomo di grande, et curioso ingegno», though both are formulaic in Alberti.

rarch: to VERG. georg. 2.136-176, PLIN. nat. 3.38-42, and – I used to think, though Biondo doesn't specify for any of the three – *Canzoniere* 128 (the famous *Italia mia*)<sup>47</sup>. The view that Biondo has the atypical *Canzona* 128 in mind is reinforced stoutly by his treatment, at *Romagna* §§40-51, of Cunio, and of the condottiere Alberico da Barbiano (†1409) and his Campagna di San Giorgio and the emancipation of *all* Italy from savage foreign oppression and squalor that Biondo credits them with – and that Petrarch could only pine after in his poem a hundred years before. And Petrarch's *Ben provide Natura al nostro stato, / quando de l'Alpi schermo / pose fra noi et la tedesca rabbia* could be said to find resonance in Biondo, *Liguria* §3, *montes altissimi, Alpes lingua Gallica a celsitudine dicti, illam <Italiam> a barbarorum, ut inquit Cicero, incurso naturae benignitate communiunt*, and in *Histria* §11, *ad hanc Alpium partem quam natura ei munimento adversus externas nationes ...opposuit*: even though the figure of the bastion of the Alps is a commonplace. Yet *Canzona* 128 is not really an encomium (*laudatio*)<sup>48</sup>, but a *cri de coeur* and deliverance psalm rather, and it's composed in the *volgare*: and, Biondo's affectionate description of Leonardo Giustinian's vernacular songs, at *Venice* §22, e.g., notwithstanding<sup>49</sup>, all Biondo's interests and aims in the work seem to require him to have a Latin text in mind here<sup>50</sup>.

This is why, I think, Leandro Alberti,<sup>51</sup> a very close and often insightful reader of the *It. Ill.*<sup>52</sup>, thinks Biondo means Petrarch, *Epistolae Metricae* 3.24 (*Salve cara Deo tellus sanctissima, salve*), a considerably smaller Latin hexameter *laudatio*, and quotes the first three lines of it<sup>53</sup>. Although he

<sup>47</sup> See Contini 1964, 168-171.

<sup>48</sup> Despite heartfelt touches, like: *Non è questo 'l terren ch' l' toccai pria? / Non è questo il mio nido / ove nudrito fui sí dolcemente? / Non è questa la patria in ch' io mi fido, / madre benigna et pia, / che copre l'un et l'altro mio parente?*

<sup>49</sup> ...*dulcissimis materna lingua carminibus peritissimeque compositis omnem replevit Italiam* ... Also, in *Venice* §23, Biondo has high praise for the Latin-less admiral Pietro Loredan, whose (now lost) nautical *Commentari* in the *volgare* he ranks as the equal of his magnificent achievements at sea. On Loredan, see Gullino 2005.

<sup>50</sup> See, for one of many like examples, Biondo's proud paean, at *Romagna* §§26-31, to Latin *eloquentia* in Italy.

<sup>51</sup> Without comment on Vergil and Pliny.

<sup>52</sup> At fol. 5r. And see, on Biondo's summary of Justin at *Histria* §2, below.

<sup>53</sup> Text of the poem in Rossetti 1831, 2, 266-268, and in Schönberger 2004, 284f.

says nothing to justify his choice, the poem, called by later ages, the «*Inno al' Italia*», does have Latinity as a strong recommendation – and the spirit of Catullus 1.31 (*Paene insularum, Sirmio*), e.g., which is to say the spirit, at least, of a more proper *laudatio*<sup>54</sup>. Certainty here is out of reach, but Alberti's identification is reasonable, certainly intelligent: he reads Biondo as Biondo's sacristan and exegete.

We've mentioned Alberti's *index* already (at least of the Venice, 1557 edition): «*errore di Biondo*» is a common entry in it. Often, Alberti corrects Biondo, bringing forward right information fully cited to make his point, or, at least assesses Biondo's assertions very carefully: e.g., Biondo describes Siena and Viterbo, in *Tuscany* §42 and §49, as cities of no great antiquity: Alberti counters (52r) rightly with Plin. *nat.* and Tac. *hist.* in the case of Siena to disprove him and leaves Biondo's statement on Viterbo (69v) well enough alone – surprisingly, but eulogizes Nanni. In *Liguria* §1, Biondo brings Genoa back to the First Punic War with Livy, but Alberti (fol. 13r) has it founded in prehistory, as «*Janua*», by Janus and «*Genuino*», the son of Janus, on the authority not of Nanni, but of Giacomo Bracelli<sup>55</sup> and «many other [nameless] writers». At §24 in *Lazio*, Biondo, citing Verg. *Aen.* 7,762 (and Servius *ad loc.*), mentions *Ariccia* for *Atina* mistakenly<sup>56</sup> as among five cities supplying Aeneas with armor: Alberti (*Campagna di Roma*, fol. 129v) corrects him in passing and notes his error. Alberti, as usual, is reading Biondo minutely and, in a sense, editing him.

At *Italia Illustrata*, *Romagna* §34-35, his treatment of his hometown, Biondo locates Forlì off the river Montone along the Flaminian Way. Then he marks it (or its citizens or fruits) as mentioned among ancient authors, in Pliny (twice), Eusebius, and in Vergil and Horace: leaving some false impressions<sup>57</sup>. He forgoes, without commentary, treatment of

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<sup>54</sup> «Ein Loblied auf Italien», Schönberger 2004, 379, who do compare the poem there to *Canzoniere* 128.

<sup>55</sup> *Descriptio orae ligusticae*, which Biondo had absorbed almost wholesale into his *regio prima, Liguria*, of the *It. Ill.*: see in the Bracelli miscellany vols. Bracelli 1520 and Bracelli 1573; also Andriani 1924.

<sup>56</sup> Though earlier (in §8), he got it right.

<sup>57</sup> The poet Gallus is generally thought now to have come from Fréjus along the French Riviera, not Forlì, and while often met in Vergil (and Propertius and Ovid), doesn't come up in Horace as Biondo says he does; and Pliny nowhere mentions a fine *Liviense* vintage.

the toponym's etymology<sup>58</sup> or version(s) of the the city's founding<sup>59</sup> and goes directly to discussion of Forlì's abundant distinguished men (§34): scholars, churchmen, soldiers, among them his five young lettered sons<sup>60</sup>. And of the fertile city-state's abundant produce, he highlights its spices. The history of the city and the evolution and stresses of its polity down to his own time seem to interest him here very little<sup>61</sup>. He concludes his description of Forlì by paring down its contentious messy 1,500-year history to a single incident: he notices the late-13th-cent. razing of the city's walls by Martin IV in revenge for the massacre, by the Forlivesi and Guido da Montefeltro, of the pope's French agent Jean Epée's<sup>62</sup> knights investing the city<sup>63</sup>: emphasizing, it may be, the hopelessness of the city's politics even despite virtue (*honestissima ... causa*), learning and science (Bonatti), and art (Dante).

In the *Descrittione*, Alberti's account of Forlì (fols. 278v-280v) is about five times the length of Biondo's. Most of his material, as he tells us at the start, comes from the chronicle of Leone Cobelli (†1500, his work unknown to Biondo) to which he was directed by a friend, another Forlivese, Paolo Guarini, a man «di elegante & curioso ingegno»<sup>64</sup>. First he locates

<sup>58</sup> Aside from the obvious *forum*.

<sup>59</sup> On which, see on Alberti and Salinator below.

<sup>60</sup> Guido Bonatti, Rainerio Arsendi, Cecco (Francesco) Rossi (de Mileto, Melletti, dei Luzzi), Neri Morando, Giacomo della Torre, Jacopo Allegretti, Ugolino Urbevetano (da Forlì), the Franciscan Ludovico da Pirano (1450), bishop of Forlì, Giovanni Ordelaffi, Brandolino and Tiberto Brandolini, Mostarda da Forlì, Niccolò dall' Aste, Manfredò Maldenti, Stefano Nardini.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. his fuller treatment, e.g., of Florence (*Tuscany* §§26-28) or Bologna (*Romagna* §§60-62); Biondo's *Venice* (§§5-20), a whole *regio* with much help from Andrea Dandolo, seems a special case.

<sup>62</sup> Called «Guido Appia» (§35) mistakenly, in Biondo, and corrected quietly by Alberti (fol. 279r) to «Giovanni». And see: *...fuitque IV Martinus pontificatus nomine appellatus, vir bonae (ut constitit) mentis et omnia probe in pontificatu gesturus – nisi Gallicos reges nimis favoribus persequi curavisset* (Biondo, *Decades*, 325C).

<sup>63</sup> On the siege of the city and on the destruction of the walls, see also Biondo, *Decades* 326H and 328F.

<sup>64</sup> I use here Cobelli 1874. On Cobelli, see E. Menestò 1982; on Guarini (a name reappearing in Forlivese scholarship), Tinti 2003. Other authors of the moderns Alberti cites on Forlì are Biondo, and – also beyond Biondo's reach – Platina (above, note 23), Sabellico (above, note 30), Bernardino Corio (above, note 33), Elia Capriolo (above, note 37). And it ought to be noted that Alberti himself was formally received into the Dominicans in Forlì in 1493 and was there

Forlì within Romagna, and then finds Forlì in Pliny, the *Antonine Itinerary*, and Ptolemy (in the Latin translation, *not* in the Greek).

Next, with Cobelli's<sup>65</sup> help – and on no ancient authority, Alberti supplies the city with a foundation legend that connects *Forlivo*, strenuously, with C. Livius Salinator and the *gens Livia* and the epic past of the Hannibalic War. This is the very type of earnest parochial unscientific fabrication that Biondo usually steers clear of, as he does here, though the figure Salinator persists in present-day local consciousness. Then Alberti characterizes the Forlivesi as «*huomini Marciali*», equally likely to turn their weapons against Forlivesi as against others – an aperçu from which, at least here, Biondo refrains<sup>66</sup>. In any case, the idea of an indiscriminately martial citizenry seems to sound the keynote of the longish history of Forlì that follows in Alberti.

The Alberti/Cobelli history of Forlì is a linear tapestry of violent ebb and flood, decline and ascendancy: of remote and proximate forces and trends, of East and West, of local magnate families, papal and imperial parties, seignories, and contaminated versions of some or all of these<sup>67</sup>. By the time of Biondo's death in 1463, the family of the Ordellaffi, strengthening for two-hundred years, were in control. It's very hard to imagine Biondo not commanding information sufficient to have treated all this if he had wanted to, and probably worth noting that, at the one point of coincidence, the siege of Forlì by Martin IV's forces (discussed above), Alberti leaves out the tearing down of the city's walls – as also Biondo's metaphysical speculation about the incident. The remainder of Alberti's history, by the time of publication in the early 16<sup>th</sup> cent., having

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for two years before returning to Bologna and the Basilica of St. Dominic (Redigonda 1960).

<sup>65</sup> Who cites, in this connection, Cecco Rossi, whose work Biondo must have known and chose not to use (see Biondo's *Romagna* §34), and the Augustinian Giacomo Filippo Foresti (*Supplementum chronicarum*). On Rossi, see now Mascanzoni 2017; on Fra Giacomo, Fratini 1997.

<sup>66</sup> But cf. Biondo, *Decades* 493D: *populum etiam Forliviensem..., homines natura bellicosos et recentis damni stimulis agitados ...*

<sup>67</sup> Rome republican and imperial; the exarchs of the Byzantines; the Lombards; the Bolognese, Florentines, and Mantuans; always the Ordellaffi; the da Calboli and Orgogliosi; Ludwig of Bavaria; the cardinal Gil Alvarez Carillo Albornoz (*Aegidius, Sabiniensis*, Spagnuolo) (cf. Biondo at *Romagna* §20, but not here); Niccolò and Francesco Piccinino; Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta; the Lambertazzi; the Alidosi; Filippo Maria Visconti.

moved down through Sixtus IV and the Riarii, the Orsi, the magnificent and alarming Caterina Sforza, Alexander VI and the Borgia, and Julius II, and the de' Numagli and Morattini, concludes with Pius III and the eclipse of the Ordelaffi, and papal dominance over the city.

Biondo's procession of distinguished men, which caps – his usual practice – his description of the city of Forlì, follows this sequence: the learned, soldiers, living representatives (including churchmen); and it's the core of Alberti's updated one<sup>68</sup>, which is much longer and ends his treatment of the city. Alberti follows this sequence: saints<sup>69</sup>, churchmen (some learned, some Dominican) and learned, eulogy of Biondo (above) and fond obituary of Guarini (above), soldiers, saints again and saintly.

Also, Alberti's treatment, at Cunio in *Flaminia (Romagna)* (fols. 285r-286r), of Alberico and his mercenary company (above, p. 70), pretty much repeats Biondo at *Romagna* §§46-51, with some add-ons and updating, particularly on the professionalizing, technologizing, and italianizing of war in Italy: Biondo of the *Decades* (not the *Italia Illustrata*), Bernardino Corio (aptly), and Sabellico and Platina are cited – among the usual vague *altri scrittori*. However, Biondo's sophisticated universalist remarks in the *Italia Illustrata (Romagna)* §§50-51 about Alberico's innovations helping to rectify the balance of payments and bumping upwards what we would call the standard of living and, even, «quality of life» of all *Italia*<sup>70</sup>, Alberti just omits. Similarly, at *Abruzzo* §28, Biondo makes the

<sup>68</sup> It seems just possible that chronology would have allowed Alberti's (at fol. 280r) orientalist humanist Palmerio [Palmieri?] da Forlì to have been known to Biondo. Certainly, as a type (i.e., a kind of Cyriac: cf. Biondo's *Piceno* §15), Palmerio would have tempted Biondo powerfully: *Palmerio huomo di grande & curioso ingegno che vagò per la Grecia, Caldea, Arabia & per molti altri luoghi, accio vedisse i loro costumi...* (Alberti, 280r). And it seems curious that Biondo doesn't mention him, if so. But this Palmerio seems to be known only in Alberti – or in others speculating on the identity of Alberti's Palmerio. The (17<sup>th</sup> cent.) Bonoli 1826, 2, 300f., cites Alberti on Palmerio and quotes a nameless MS chronicle: *Item Palmerium nostrum maria transeuntem, Grecosque, et Hebreos, Chaldeos, Arabes, et eorum linguas didicisse legimus. Hic enim de incarnato Deo elegantissimum opus contra Hebreos laude dignum complevit; eruditissimis namque rationibus comprobavit; cosi una cronica mss.*

<sup>69</sup> Biondo (for whom Alberti's Sts. Mercuriale and Valerian would have been an instinct) includes none: but cf., e.g., his *Friuli* §7, which is not atypical.

<sup>70</sup> *...et quod uni in expilatione damno est opes alteri Italico accumulatur – quas externus barbarusque asportasset...Nullusque mihi ostenderet aedificandi, vestiendi, ornandi et ceteram omnem vitae huius nostrae quam hoc saeculo vivimus luxuriam,*

shrewd worldly observation that the fortuitous death of Bernardino of Siena in L'Aquila (in 1444) brought throngs of pilgrims into the city to visit his tomb and witness his miracles, which not only enriched the city economically, just in time, but eased it out of its old civic disharmony: Alberti (fol. 236r) mentions merely the reverence in which the corpse of the Franciscan reformer (a saint since 1450) is held in the city of *his* day and moves directly on to the Dominican theologian Giovanni Aquilano, whose sermons he recommends.

In *Campania* §§50-51, for the site of the ancient Pompeii, Biondo argues against the learned of Alfonso's court in Naples who place the town (along with Herculaneum) around Torre del Greco (once *Turris Octava* or *Turris Octavii*). Biondo uses Livy and Nuceria and the river Sarnus to argue, half-heartedly and vaguely, that Pompeii was on the site of Torre Annunziata (*Oplontis*) [and again at §56] and Castellammare di Stabia. Biondo uses only two paragraphs to exhaust Herculaneum, Pompeii, Vesuvius (Monte Somma) and the death of the elder Pliny in the eruption of 79 and the aftermath of the eruption. Alberti's treatment (*Terra di Lavoro*, 171r-173v), crammed with citations, is more than four times the length of Biondo's, but on the site of Pompeii no more conclusive – except to say that Ranzano supports Biondo's Torre Annunziata. (In fact, Domenico Fontana rediscovered Pompeii [modern «Pompei»] by accident only in 1599, and then it had to be rediscovered again in 1748 and excavations were finally begun.) Alberti uses Platina, Marso, and Leone of the moderns<sup>71</sup>, and, of the ancients<sup>72</sup>, Pliny the Younger's famous letter (6,16:

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*lauticiam, ceterosque magnificos apparatus, his qui superioribus saeculis fiebant certe maiores, aliunde quam ab hac securitate et tutela originem habuisse, quae omnia Albrico nostro Cunii alumno, quod excisum nunc aratur, non immerito laudem gloriamque perpetuam accumulanti.* («And what is lost as plunder to one Italian piles up as wealth for another, which the barbarous foreigner would have made off with... No one will convince *me* that the sumptuousness, elegance and other magnificent paraphernalia of our buildings, dress, and decoration, and all the rest of the life we live in this world – surely pitched at a higher level than was customary in the past – originated from anything other than this sense of security and being well protected»).

<sup>71</sup> Along with Biondo and Ranzano, Cristoforo Landino and Antonio Mancinelli, a book of «Fisco il Vescovo Stabiese», Petrarch (*Trionfo della Fama*), and himself in the *Croniche di Bologna*, Volteranno, Niccolò Perotti.

<sup>72</sup> Along with C. Sempronius Tuditanus («*nella divisione d'Italia*»), Livy, Strabo and Ptolemy, Pomponius Mela, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Pliny the Elder, Solinus, Tacitus (*Histories*), Eusebius, Lucius Florus, Cassius Dio, Suetonius, Ap-

un-cited by Biondo)<sup>73</sup>, and Procopius, and a translated Dio Cassius (*Epitome* 66.21-24) particularly (unavailable to Biondo), to sound apocalyptic notes, with earthquakes, ghostly mutant giants, days turned into nights, and ash carried by furious winds as far away as Egypt and Syria, etc.

At Fabriano in *Piceno* §§12-13, Biondo makes an awful digression, a classic portrayal of the «other». It's a tale of sexual perversion, the ritual murder of children, and sacramental cannibalism: the nocturnal covens of the schismatic Fraticelli and the «*barilotto*». Biondo's information on the sect seems to come straight from the Franciscan inquisitor San Giovanni da Capistrano<sup>74</sup>. Alberti, on Fabriano («*il nobile castello*») in *Marcia Anconitana*, 256r-256v, has lots of other information on the town, but keeps absolute silence about the Fraticelli. Defilippis thinks that the episode is simply too offensive to Dominican pieties for Alberti (or Ranzano, for that matter) to transmit<sup>75</sup>. Still, at Novara in *Lombardy* §35, Biondo's account of the final adventure on Monte Gazzada («Monte Gazzarone», Alberti)<sup>76</sup> near Monte Bosso (Monte Rosa) and gruesome (but edifying) deaths of the heretics Dolcino and Margherita of the «Apostolici» are repeated (almost translated) in Alberti's *Gallia Transpadana* (394r) – though, overall, it must be admitted that it is a less repulsive passage. And at Nemi in *Lazio* (§§47-50), Biondo's account of Leon Alberti and the raising of the galley from the bottom of the Lago di Nemi mentioned above, so central as an image to Biondo's whole work, is ignored (140r-140v) by Alberti, who includes much other material on the neighborhood of the lake – anyone, e.g., who enjoys Sir James George Frazer and the king-priest of the dying year in his *The Golden Bough* will perk up – , both from Biondo and from other sources<sup>77</sup>. But Biondo's description, in *Lazio* (§33), of the shafts (which he saw himself) cut deeply into a hill near the

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pian, Galen, Nanni's Berosus the Chaldaean and Manetho, Martial, Silius Italicus, Lucan, Vergil, Vibius Sequester.

<sup>73</sup> Though he knows the story. See: *...praeter superioris Plinii mortis locum, quem ibi fuisse necessarium tenemus. Nulla enim in parte alia Vesaevi montis incendia, quibus imprudenter inspiciendis Plinius est necatus, navi potuerunt adiri (Campania §50).*

<sup>74</sup> *Retulit nobis religiosissimus et certe sanctus vir Iohannes Capistraneus ... (Biondo, Piceno §13).*

<sup>75</sup> In Defilippis 2005, 60 ff.

<sup>76</sup> *Gazz-* from It. *Gazzari*, i.e., «Cathars».

<sup>77</sup> Like Strabo 5,3,12 – which Biondo had in Latin (cf. *Lazio passim*) but chooses not to use here.



little towns of Portella and Cantalupo to vent an ancient subterranean aqueduct carrying water from the Fucine lake to Rome, translated and cited by Alberti (at *Lazio*, fol. 134r-134v), indicates a shared fascination with engineering-technology and archaeology.

Finally, at *Istria* §2, Biondo paraphrases a passage from Justin's *Epitome* (32,3,13-15), and a corruption has settled firmly into the textual tradition of the *It. Ill.* as a result: Biondo seems to make Justin say that men living on the Danube (*Ister*) «helped» the Argonauts carry the *Argo* overland down to the Adriatic and named the land where they settled later *Istria*. But the passage is both ungrammatical<sup>78</sup> and makes no sense as a narrative<sup>79</sup>. In all the MSS and editions that I know of, it must be that *adiuvisent* («helped») has subplanted *audivissent* («heard»)<sup>80</sup>. Biondo paraphrased Justin's impersonal ablative absolute with a consecutive clause, *cognito quod...* («when they understood that...»), with *cum audivissent...* («when they heard that...»), which a very early copyist misread as *adiuvisent*. Alberti, again reading Biondo very closely<sup>81</sup>, sees there is a problem and simplifies by merely quoting the whole Justin passage in Latin (443v) to remove it. And a little later, at §§5-8, when Biondo says that Sdregna (Zrenj, of Croatia) is the ancient Stridon, the birthplace of St. Jerome, Alberti (fol. 446v) can't agree. The question is still unsettled today, and Alberti's arguments against Sdregna are perfectly reasonable, but they don't attend to Biondo's most important arguments for the identification, which are emotional and spiritual (over and above what he says about an inscription about Jerome's father found there) – and not really geographical: Jerome, out on the fringes of the province of *Italia*, where Latin isn't a first language (nor Italian in Biondo's time)<sup>82</sup>, is – like Biondo himself

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<sup>78</sup> *adiuvare* followed by an infinitive clause.

<sup>79</sup> The men were Colchians and Aeëtes sent them to run Jason and Medea and the Argonauts down, not help them.

<sup>80</sup> See White 2018, 553-555. Biondo's paraphrase: *Histriam regionem, Iapydiam prius simul cum Foro iulio appellatam, vult ex Trogo Pompeo Iustinus sic fuisse appellatam ab Histri amnis (qui et Danubius) accolis, qui cum Argon navim ab Argonautis a Danubio in Adriaticum mare humeris deferris ADIUVISSENT / AU-DIVISSENT, in ea Iapydum regione consedentes Histriam de patriae regionis nomine appellarunt* (MSS and Froben 1559).

<sup>81</sup> In the *It. Ill.* Venice (De Gregori) edition of 1510 (Biondo 1510), which I haven't seen in a material copy: see Petrella 2007, 311.

<sup>82</sup> Like some Greek- (in Calabria), French- (in Asti, Turin, Ivrea), and German-speaking (in Vicenza and Verona) peoples of places elsewhere in *Italia*. In a

(who authenticated Jerome's translation of the Holy Office into Slavonic in Glagolitic script for Eugenius IV: §8) and like the elder Vergerio, of Capodistria (§3) closer to home – a creature of and a distinguished participant in the deathless «culture» of *Italia*, in (to be proleptic) «Italianità»: in a culture that Biondo is at pains to establish as a *continuum* – from the Republic, down through the Empire and the Sack of Rome, across a *medium aevum* (language which Biondo never used, though Brunni did), to the contemporary Church on Earth in Rome<sup>83</sup>.

## 7. Conclusion

Biondo says (at *Romagna* §26) of Petrarch's imperfectly developed Latin eloquence: «we do not criticize in him want or defect of genius so much as lack of books» – a statement true of Biondo himself (as pioneer) in relation to Alberti<sup>84</sup>. Petrella<sup>85</sup> sees the *Descrittione* as a catchment of Quattrocento and Cinquecento antiquarian streams. But despite chronology and the dearth of material he sometimes struggled with, Biondo – if we can leave out his shortcomings of expression and (occasionally) of discrimination – is a more modern and scientific man than Alberti, as Fubini notes<sup>86</sup>.

Castner, following Pontari<sup>87</sup>, sees a permeable membrane between the *Italia Illustrata* and the *Decades*: these two works, with the *Roma instaura-*

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letter to Barbaro of 26 October, 1453, Biondo links the date of his recall to Nicholas V's curia, 30 September (the feast day of St. Jerome: *ad gloriosi Hieronymi diem*), to the intercession of the saint of his especial life-long (and earlier!) devotion: *sicque eo, cui in ventre matris addictus fui et post semper devotus, intercedente Hieronymo, admissus sum* (Nogara 1927, 167). And, in *March of Treviso* §16, Biondo notes Guarino da Verona's poem on Pisanello called «Guarino's Pisanello», thanking the artist, his fellow Veronese, for a (now lost) painting of St. Jerome.

<sup>83</sup> And see Pontari 2016, 167-171.

<sup>84</sup> ...*in quo quidem nos librorum magis quam ingenii carentiam defectumque culpamus*. And see Weiss 1988, 130, on the proliferation of accounts of local antiquities from the last of Biondo's days onwards: «That even Biondo's *Italia Illustrata* was no longer found adequate was typical of the new climate, which found in Leandro Alberti's *Descrittione di tutta Italia* (1550) a far better answer to *present needs*» (my emphasis).

<sup>85</sup> See Petrella 2007, 309. Also, Petrella 2002.

<sup>86</sup> Fubini 2007, 141.

<sup>87</sup> Castner 2016, 181. Also, see Raffarin 2018.

*ta, Roma triumphans*, and *De verbis Romanae locutionis*, I think make chapters of a whole great work: a (to be proleptic again) «*Kulturgeschichte*» of *Italia*, which Biondo held in his mind – more so as the composition and revision of some of his works began to overlap: Biondo, at one stage, was working on the *Decades*, *Italia Illustrata*, and *Roma triumphans* simultaneously, and there is more than a hint, in *March of Treviso* §3 of the *Italy Illuminated*, that he had started to reconceive his *De verbis Romanae locutionis*. Alberti in his *Descrittione* doesn't do what Biondo does in his *Italia Illustrata* because, no matter how attentively he reads Biondo, he doesn't see Biondo doing it. Biondo's *It. Ill.* is austere, impersonal, messianic (or programmatic), rigorous: the silver mines of Laurium. Alberti's *Descrittione* is luxurious and abundant, gregarious, *ad libidinem*, discursive, almost Chaucerian: Aladdin's cave. Each author instructs and edifies. Alberti strives to gratify and astonish also.

Alberti – however well-traveled – is tethered notionally to Bologna and the Dominican order, while Biondo, who had known exile and alienation, is deracinated from place and institution, as Clavuot and others have seen<sup>88</sup>: the word «panorama», in the sense of an old-time «magic lantern show», is often used of Alberti's *Descrittione*, usefully; «σύνοψις» – with some gaps – , in the literal sense of seeing a thing whole or comprehensively<sup>89</sup>, applies better to the *Italia Illustrata*. And it's the deracinated Biondo, the universalist, who – like Vergil (and the Greeks he couldn't read) – can see things whole across space and time and see the universal in the particulars. Biondo's *Italia Illustrata*, with Alberti's resources of information, would be a different book but it wouldn't be the *Descrittione di tutta Italia*.

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<sup>88</sup> See Castner's summation, *ibid.*, 183, with her note 16.

<sup>89</sup> And of an unobstructed view in all directions.

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*Abstract:* The essay examines convergences and divergences in the treatment of some of the matter of Leandro Alberti's († 1552) *Descrittione di tutta Italia* and of Biondo Flavio's († 1463) *Italia Illustrata*, Alberti's paradigm and major source. It considers how divergences, which are considerable, might be best accounted for by – in addition to nearly a century's increase in accessible sources, ancient and contemporary, from Biondo to Alberti – differences in the personal history, temperament and scholarly attitude and preparation of the two authors. It concludes that Alberti, though advantaged by time and not uncritical *de minimis*, lacks Biondo's fundamental caution, deliberateness and largeness of conception, i.e., modernity. An earlier version of the paper was presented in Chicago, at the Renaissance Society of America's annual meetings, on 30 March 2017.