

12-2005

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Recommended Citation

Dover, P. M. (2005). Royal diplomacy in renaissance italy: Ferrante d'aragona (1458-1494) and his ambassadors. *Mediterranean Studies*, 14(1), 57-94.

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ROYAL DIPLOMACY IN RENAISSANCE ITALY: FERRANTE D'ARAGONA (1458–1494) AND HIS AMBASSADORS¹

Paul M. Dover

IN UNDERTAKING A STUDY OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY of Renaissance Italy, one might be forgiven if he or she came to the conclusion that the Kingdom of Naples was not a constituent part of the Italian peninsula. In the cultural, social and political narratives of the Renaissance, Naples is largely missing—Italy's largest and most populous state is rendered vestigial. This is certainly in part a function of being obscured in the great historiographical glare of Florence and Venice, a fate that has visited other Renaissance princely states as well. It is also the case that in some very important ways Naples was an outlier. It was the peninsula's only kingdom and thus faced political challenges unique to Italy. Although shorn of its Spanish territories in the division of the House of Aragon's inheritance by Alfonso in 1458, the Kingdom of Naples retained a Catalan veneer and was connected to Iberian affairs in a way unlike in any other state in Italy.² The Kingdom also lacked, despite significant achievements in Naples itself, the urban dynamism that has so often been associated with Renaissance culture. As a territory it was overwhelmingly rural and agricultural, and its polity remained largely feudal in nature, despite the centralizing tendencies of the fifteenth-century Aragonese kings.

The Renaissance Naples of historians thus bears a seemingly unshakeable mantle of backwardness. This essay suggests, however, that in one notable area, diplomatic practice, the reign of Ferrante (1458–94) embraced innovations for which Italy has long been credited. Ferrante's Naples, like the Duchy of Milan and other princely states in the second half of the fifteenth century, came to regard diplomacy as a constant and seamless activity of state. He was served not only by short-term envoys but also by representatives who spent numerous years

¹The author would like to thank Professors Geoffrey Parker, Vincent Ilardi, Michael Mallett, and Marcello Simonetta for their assistance in the writing of this essay.

²Upon Alfonso's death, the Kingdom of Naples passed to Ferrante, his illegitimate son, while all of his Spanish possessions, as well as Sicily, Sardinia and Malta, passed to his brother and legitimate heir, John II.

in succession at a single court acting as permanent, resident ambassadors. Historians since Mattingly have rightly located these tendencies as first having taken root in the Milan of Duke Francesco Sforza, Ferrante's most important ally in the early years of the King's reign. As a prince who faced an array of internal and external challenges similar to Sforza, Ferrante recognized the utility of Sforza's innovations and soon adopted them himself. This was very much keeping with Ferrante's realistic and pragmatic approach to statecraft and is at odds with the prevailing view of a ruler and state out of step with the innovations of the Renaissance period.

* * *

A significant hurdle here is the image of Ferrante himself. Historians and contemporaries alike have rarely hesitated to heap opprobrium on Ferrante's character, painting an almost cartoonish figure of deceit, guile and cruelty. Those who cultivated this image often began as far back as his illegitimate birth, some even claiming that his real father was actually a Moor or *converso*.³ Giovanni Pontano, the prominent humanist and a resident of Ferrante's court who looked to him as a patron, nonetheless chose to make prominent mention of the king's fascination with the imprisonment of his enemies, adding that Ferrante regarded them much in the same way that young boys regarded caged birds.⁴ The famed French chronicler Philippe de Commynes declared that there were no men more cruel and vicious than Ferrante and his father, Alfonso.⁵ Machiavelli may very well have had Ferrante in mind when he suggested that his *Principe* act as "simulatore e dissimulatore."⁶ Modern historians have been scarcely less sparing. Of Ferrante, Jakob Burckhardt, the father of Renaissance studies, declared: "it is certain that he was equaled in ferocity by none of the princes of his time."⁷ And recently Melissa Bullard has said of him: "The king demonstrates perhaps the clearest example of a psychology of anxiety, for he

³See E. Pontieri, "La giovinezza di Ferrante I d'Aragona," in *Studi in onore di Ricardo Filangieri* (Naples, 1959), 531–601.

⁴*De immanitate liber*, ed. L. Monti Sabia (Naples, 1970), 21, cited in J. H. Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples* (Princeton, 1987), 22. Pontano was the author of the *De bello Neapolitano*, a highly favorable account of Ferrante's victory in his war against the barons and John d'Anjou in 1458–65. A recent critical edition is by L. Monti Sabia, ed., *Pontano e la storia. Dal De Bello Neapolitano all'Actus* (Rome, 1995).

⁵*Mémoires*, 3:78–81.

⁶*Il Principe*, Chapter XVIII.

⁷*The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (Harmondsworth, 1990), 40.

was a man so thoroughly untrustworthy that he found it impossible to trust others well.”⁸

Lost in all this condemnation, however, as David Abulafia has rightly pointed out, is the reality of Ferrante’s success.⁹ Despite the general hostility of popes of whom he was technically a vassal; despite the enmity of Italy’s richest state, Venice; despite the constant threat of ultramontane claims to his throne; and despite the hostility of many of his barons, which coalesced into revolts on at least two occasions—despite all of this, Ferrante ruled the Kingdom of Naples for thirty-six years, longer than any other Italian prince in the fifteenth century. The sheer length of his reign is often forgotten, almost certainly because the Aragonese regime in Naples did not long outlive his death (ending in 1501). He necessarily wielded an iron hand in dealing with his barons, especially through his son, the Duke of Calabria, and could be merciless with those who rebelled (much of his reputation for cruelty stemmed from this). But given the cutthroat feudal environment of southern Italy, and the level of outside agitation that encouraged the rebellious baronage, it is difficult to imagine the king pursuing a more politic approach.

Judged according to the standards of fifteenth-century Italy, Ferrante’s conduct does not mark him apart as particularly devious. The King’s infamous elimination in 1465 of the *condottiere* Jacopo Piccinino, whom Pope Pius II had labeled a “servant of the devil,” was in fact welcomed by many across Italy.¹⁰ In his commentary on the death of Piccinino in the *Florentine Histories*, Machiavelli himself writes: “So much did our Italian princes fear in others the virtue that was not in themselves, and they eliminated it, so that, since no one remained who had it, they exposed this province to the ruin that not long after wasted and afflicted it.”¹¹ Ferrante was far from alone in his calculating approach to political survival in fifteenth century Italy, as Lauro Martines observes: “Ferrante was notoriously astute and treacherous by reputation, though this meant little more than a readiness to spin right round and to sacrifice allies—no rare dexterity in Renaissance Italy.”¹²

In fact, while Ferrante did quite frequently resort to “bluff, bullying and browbeating,” his foreign policy over four decades was decidedly pragmatic,

⁸Bullard, *Lorenzo il Magnifico: Image and Anxiety, Politics and Finance* (Florence, 1994), 67.

⁹D. Abulafia, “The Crown and the Economy under Ferrante I of Naples (1458–94)” in *Commerce and Conquest in the Mediterranean 1100–1500* (Aldershot, 1993), 125.

¹⁰*Commentaries of Pius II*, trans. F. A. Gragg and L. C. Gabel (Northampton, 1957), Book IV, 309: “But why do we mention Piccinino, as if there were any honor in arms, as if all who are engaged in soldiering were not infamous for perjury and notorious for crimes and did not, like servants of the devil, ravage cities and kingdoms. Let Piccinino, who is a native of Perugia and corrupted by precedents at home, look at himself.”

¹¹Book VII.8, trans. by L. F. Banfield and H. C. Mansfield (Princeton, 1988), 286.

¹²L. Martines, *April Blood* (Oxford, 1993), 191.

restricted by the threats and opportunities that presented themselves at any given time. In general, he was “more fox than lion.”¹³ This approach stands in stark contrast to that of his father, who could call upon the resources of a kingdom that stretched across the western Mediterranean, and whose ambitions in Italy were nothing less than imperial. Alfonso boasted that he “daria ley a tota Italia,” would impose his will on all of Italy.¹⁴ He sought to stake his claim to the Duchy of Milan, to defeat Florence and bring Tuscany under his thumb, and to establish Aragonese control of Genoa.¹⁵

Ferrante had to be considerably more circumspect. To begin with, Alfonso’s aggressive policies and accompanying expenditure meant that at his death, the Kingdom of Naples was both widely resented and financially exhausted. Ferrante was thus bequeathed with a diplomatic situation that Ernesto Pontieri has described as “disastrous.”¹⁶ In the early days of his rule, circumstances forced Ferrante to direct his considerably more limited resources towards consolidating his position in his portion of the Aragonese inheritance—there was no question of him garnering the epithet “the Magnanimous.” This painstaking reconquest of the kingdom, completed only in 1465, conditioned the rest of his rule, as he recognized the fragile political cohesion of his realm.¹⁷ In fact, throughout his reign, Ferrante was forced to keep one eye on his kingdom’s restless feudal nobility, and one on his foreign antagonists, who were all too willing to encourage the discontent of the barons. Each of the two great baronial

¹³D. Giampietro, “Un registro aragonese della Biblioteca Nazionale di Parigi,” *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, IX (1884), 260.

¹⁴N. Rubinstein, “Italian reactions to *terra ferma* expansion in the fifteenth century,” *Renaissance Venice*, ed. J. R. Hale (London, 1973), 200.

¹⁵See M. Jacoviello, “Relazioni politiche tra Venezia e Napoli nella seconda metà del XV secolo,” *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, 96 (1978), 72–3 and R. Fubini, “The Italian League and the Policy of the Balance of Power at the Accession of Lorenzo de’ Medici,” *Journal of Modern History*, 67, supplement (December 1995), 183–4.

¹⁶E. Pontieri, *Per la storia del Regno di Ferrante I d’Aragona Re di Napoli* (Naples, 1969), 93: “La situazione diplomatica del regno quando scomparve il Magnanimo era diasastrosa. Aspri resentimenti pesavano sulla memoria di lui, et la causa non poteva essere altra che la sua politica ambiziosa, infida, aggressiva e bellicosa. Lo stesso Alfonso aveva avvertito l’isolamento in cui si trovava nei suoi ultimi anni di vita, e sapendo bene che la posizione internazionale del suo successore in Italia sarebbe stata diversa dalla sua, gli aveva consigliato una politica di pace, accordando il regno ad una sincera e stabile alleanza col Papato e col duca di Milano.”

¹⁷The Milanese ambassador in Naples Antonio da Trezzo recounted to Francesco Sforza the words of Ferrante in describing the impact that his uncertain accession had had on him: “La Maestà sua me ha decto queste parole: Antonio, tu sai in che extremità me hay veduto doppo che mori la bona memoria del s. Re mio patre; io non ho volontà de tornargli un’altra volta, et però penso, cerco et spero assecurarmi per talle modo che questo mio regno che né mi, né i miei figlioli, né li figlioli dei miei figlioli habiano ad trovarsi in quello che me sono trovato io.” Letter of 7 July 1465 from Naples, published in C. Canetta, “La morte del Conte Jacomo Piccinino,” *Archivio storico lombardo*, Anno IX, 264.

revolts that Ferrante faced, in 1459–62 and again in 1485–6, had important external dimensions, with rivals seeking to capitalize on Ferrante’s discomfort. Ferrante’s activity in the Italian diplomatic arena was thus always closely linked to the degree of internal vulnerability that he sensed.

The reign of Ferrante can be divided into three more or less distinct periods. The first stretched from Ferrante’s accession to the throne in 1458 until 1465, during which Ferrante’s key concerns were the repulse of the French invasion and securing the obedience of his baronage. Ferrante was supported in these efforts diplomatically and politically by Francesco Sforza and Pope Pius II, and financially by the Medici in Florence. This first period ended when a joint Neapolitan and Aragonese force defeated the Angevin fleet, thus putting an end to the Angevin bid for Naples led by Jean d’Anjou.

The second period lasted from 1465–80. Secure in his succession, Ferrante began to assert himself in the Italian political arena. Following the death of Francesco Sforza, it was Ferrante who became the “ago di bilancia” in Italian politics.¹⁸ Acting directly and through surrogates such as the Duke of Urbino, Federico da Montefeltro, Ferrante undertook efforts to acquire territory in Tuscany, to gain dominance in Genoa and influence in Milan, and to shape the political landscape of the Marches and the Romagna to his liking. He even staked a claim to the faraway kingdom of Cyprus.¹⁹ A series of strategic matrimonial alliances, both within Italy and beyond, testify to the enhanced ambition of the king.²⁰ This was a political program that in its scope resembled that pursued by his father. By the late 1470s, with Venice preoccupied by her conflict with the Ottomans, with the Duchy of Milan in the hands of Ferrante’s seemingly pliant protégé Ludovico Maria Sforza, and with recent territorial gains

¹⁸M. Simonetta, “Federico da Montefeltro contro Firenze,” *Archivio storico italiano*, CLXI (2003), 263.

¹⁹M. Jacoviello, “L’ingerenza di Ferrante d’Aragona nella devoluzione di Cipro e l’opposizione di Venezia (1473–1489)” *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, series 3, 20 (1981), 177–92.

²⁰These included the marriages of Ippolita Sforza, sister of the Milanese Duke, to the Duke of Calabria in 1467; of Ferrante’s daughter Eleonora to Duke Ercole d’Este of Ferrara in 1473; of Ferrante’s second daughter Beatrice to Matthias Corvinus, the King of Hungary, in 1474; and finally the betrothal of Isabella d’Aragona (the daughter of the Duke of Calabria) to Giangaleazzo Maria Sforza, the young Duke of Milan, in 1480. Ferrante also explored the possibility of marrying his son Federico d’Aragona to Maria, the daughter of Charles the Bold of Burgundy. Federico traveled to Burgundy in late 1474 with a large contingent of troops, who served alongside Charles’ armies until the summer of 1476. Following the failure of these negotiations, Ferrante also explored the possibility of marrying Federico into the imperial Habsburg family. These wedding matches are in addition to Ferrante’s own marriage to his uncle John of Aragon’s daughter, Jeanne in 1477. This marriage represented an attempt to pre-empt any claims from the legitimate branch of the house of Aragon and to reinforce the Kingdom of Naples against France, which had occupied Anjou in 1475, thus inheriting the Angevin claims. On this match, see J. Vicens y Vives, “La politique européenne du royaume d’Aragon-Catalogne sous Jean II,” *Annales du Midi*, 65 (1953), 405–14.

in Tuscany from the war against Medicean Florence, Ferrante seemed poised to become the arbiter of Italian politics.

This high tide of Ferrante's ambition came to an abrupt halt with the Turkish landings at Otranto in Apulia in the summer of 1480. This event struck terror in hearts all over Italy, and made manifest just how vulnerable the kingdom remained. It was an indication that in his pursuit of his Italian designs, Ferrante had failed to give adequate attention to his Mediterranean flank. The shock of Otranto marked the beginning of the third and final stage of Ferrante's reign. Other Italian states had already become wary of the waxing power of Naples, and some welcomed the bloody nose that the Turkish landings had delivered to the king—one Venetian ambassador remarked that it had stopped Ferrante from becoming king of Italy.²¹ Ferrante was obliged to relieve Otranto the following year with virtually no outside military assistance and only after he had pawned almost all of the queen's jewelry to finance the operation. During the remainder of his rule, Ferrante's chief diplomatic emphases reverted to a concern for the security of his kingdom, the quiescence of his nobility (seriously tested during the great revolt of 1485–6), and the maintenance of a rough balance of power on the Italian peninsula.

Despite these variations in emphasis over time, the overriding geopolitical concerns of the Neapolitan kingdom remained largely the same. First, there was the threat from France, where a series of princes inherited Angevin claims to Naples and threatened to act upon them. The presence of such pretenders to the throne offered convenient opportunities for Ferrante's Italian rivals seeking to destabilize the kingdom. Second, there was Naples' ongoing rivalry with the Republic of Venice, both in Italy and in the Mediterranean. Antagonism and mistrust was the general rule between Venice and Naples, apart from a short-lived rapprochement in 1471–3. Thirdly, there was the ever-present danger of the Ottomans. As the Otranto landings made patently clear, the Kingdom of Naples stood directly in the path of the Ottoman drive to conquer the western Mediterranean. By the time of Ferrante's reign, the Ottoman presence was uncomfortably close to the shores of the Kingdom. The Ottomans had consolidated their hold on Albania by 1478, a short distance across the straits from Apulia. Finally, there was the varying state of relations with the papacy. A pattern developed of alliance followed by open conflict: friendship with Eugenius IV and Nicholas V, conflict with Calixtus III, friendship with Pius II, conflict with Paul II, friendship with Sixtus IV, conflict with Innocent VIII. Riccardo Fubini suggests that the pattern of friendship and conflict masks a deeper, long-term trend whereby the papacy was seeking to re-establish its

²¹Letter of Niccolò Roberti to Ercole d'Este, 7 June 1480, Naples, in P. Perinelle, ed., "Dépeches de Nicolas de Roberti, Ambassadeur d'Hercule Ier duc de Ferrara, auprès du roi Louis XI (Novembre 1478–Juillet 1480)," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, XXIV (1904), 464–72.

sovereignty over its feudal vassals in Italy, and in so doing neutralize its powerful Neapolitan neighbor.²² Friendly accommodation with the Pope was always desirable, but rarely attainable in Ferrante's reign.

Naples' security concerns were thus manifold. This catalog of challenges forced Ferrante to pursue a truly pan-Italian foreign policy that took stock of all the potential threats and opportunities. Whatever political and territorial ambitions the King of Naples might harbor were tempered by incipient dangers. More often than not, prudence, rather than aggression, was the wise policy. Guicciardini made note of this in the first chapter of his *Storia d'Italia*, calling the king "certainly the most prudent prince and of the greatest estimation."²³

If Ferrante was indeed the epitome of Machiavellian statecraft, and pursued a pan-Italian diplomatic strategy, it is curious that historians have not associated him with the important developments in diplomatic practice long identified with the second half of the fifteenth century in Italy. This period saw significant transformations in both diplomatic practice and in the role of the ambassador. It was during these decades that Italian states came to conduct diplomacy on a constant basis, as a daily function of government, to employ permanent resident ambassadors, and to establish institutions such as chanceries and archives that were committed to diplomacy. While extraordinary envoys tasked with specific missions retained an important role in intra-state affairs, diplomatic activity was increasingly in the hands of resident ambassadors occupying posts that were essentially permanent offices of state. These agents would pen dispatches nearly every day and fill their letters with a wide range of political and non-political information. Some of these envoys resided at the same locale for many years. They became part of the social topography of their host courts and courtiers in their own right. These developments, taken as a basket of changes, mark the advent of proto-modern diplomatic practice.

Francesco Sforza, as has already been mentioned, is the figure most commonly associated with these changes. Aware of the tenuous nature of his hold on the Duchy of Milan, Francesco was the first to maintain systematically permanent resident ambassadors throughout Italy. He did so in order to remain vigilant in the face of manifold threats and as a means of managing the balance of power in Italy established with the formation of the Italian League in 1455. Under the stewardship of Francesco's chief secretary, Cicco Simonetta, Milan became the hub of an extensive diplomatic network that produced dozens of

²²R. Fubini, *Italia quattrocentesca: politica e diplomazia nell'età di Lorenzo il Magnifico* (Milan, 1994), 205.

²³*Storia d'Italia*, Book I, Chapter 1, in *Opere*, v. II, ed. E. Scarano (Turin, 1981), 89: "Concorreva nella medesima inclinazione della quiete commune Ferdinando di Aragona re di Napoli, principe certamente prudentissimo e di grandissima estimazione." Here, Guicciardini contrasts the qualities of Ferrante with the shortcomings of Alfonso, the Duke of Calabria.

letters every day, from ambassadors far and wide, including the first extra-Italian permanent resident ambassador at the court of France.²⁴ No other prince in Europe had access to more, or more timely, information from throughout the continent. The Milanese system, further developed under Francesco's sons Galeazzo Maria and Ludovico, would prove to be a model for states throughout Italy and Europe in the decades to come.

Smaller Italian princedoms, notably the Gonzaga of Mantua and the Este in Ferrara, soon adopted the features of the Sforza diplomatic network that their limited resources would allow.²⁵ Both of these second-tier powers employed permanent resident ambassadors at courts across the Italian peninsula and pursued constant diplomatic activity as a key element in the maintenance of their security. The Italian republican regimes took a considerably longer time to implement these changes. Until the end of the century, Florentine and Venetian ambassadors served in short tenures, in what were elected offices. Reforms pushed through by Lorenzo de' Medici in 1480 streamlined Florentine diplomacy by restricting those involved in foreign policy decision-making, but Florentine ambassadors still rarely served for tenures longer than a year.²⁶ In Venice the real change did not come until the first decades of the sixteenth century.²⁷ Thus initially this diplomatic revolution was the product of a specific institutional environment: the despotic *signorie*. With his reputation for duplicity and wheeling and dealing, it would be surprising if Ferrante did not avail himself of the latest developments in diplomatic practice. He certainly had opportunity to learn from the innovations of Francesco Sforza, his closest ally and a keen supporter against the Angevin invasion. Ferrante would have occasion to see Milanese ambassadors in Naples since at least 1442, and it was he who suggested that Francesco Sforza keep a permanent representative at Ferrante's court in 1456.²⁸

²⁴See V. Ilardi, "The First Permanent Embassy Outside Italy: The Milanese Embassy at the French Court, 1464–1483," in M. R. Thorp and A. J. Slavin, eds. *Politics, Religion and Diplomacy in Early Modern Europe: Essays in Honor of DeLamar Jensen* (Kirksville, 1994).

²⁵For the practice of diplomacy in these two states, see Paul Dover, "Letters, Notes and Whispers: Diplomacy, Ambassadors and Information in the Italian Renaissance Princely State," PhD dissertation, Yale University (2003).

²⁶On the Florentine reforms of 1480, see M. Mallett, "Excursus I: Gli Otto di Pratica e la politica fiorentina" in *Lettere*, v. V, ed. M. Mallett (Florence, 1989), 311–316; R. Fubini, "Classe dirigente ed esercizio della diplomazia nella Firenze quattrocentesca" in *I ceti dirigenti nella Toscana del Quattrocento* (Florence, 1987); A. Brown, *Bartolomeo Scala, 1430–1497, Chancellor of Florence* (Princeton, 1979), especially 161–95.

²⁷See T. Beverly, "Venetian ambassadors, 1454–1494: An Italian Elite," PhD dissertation, University of Warwick (1999).

²⁸See the dispatches of these ambassadors in *Dispacci sforzeschi da Napoli 1442–2 luglio 1458*, ed. F. Senatore (Naples, 1997). Senatore cites a letter from the Milanese ambassador in Naples, Antonio da Trezzo, as evidence that Ferrante supported the notion of a permanent resident embassy in Naples.

That Naples has not been included in the narrative of the emergence of the “new diplomacy” is largely due to an absence of sources: most of the Aragonese diplomatic records from the second half of the fifteenth century have been lost, the victim of Nazi reprisals in 1943.²⁹ There are thus considerable challenges in reconstructing the activity of Neapolitan ambassadors. A small amount of relevant material was published or referenced in work dating from before the Second World War, from which we can reconstruct some of Ferrante’s diplomatic activity. A Neapolitan register containing letters to and from Ferrante’s chancery is in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and was published by Giampietro in the nineteenth century, as was a selection covering the years 1467–8 and 1491–4 by Trinchera (in two volumes).³⁰ Early in the twentieth century, Volpicella published a number of Ferrante’s letters to his servants and fellow princes for the period 1486–8, along with extensive biographical information on Neapolitan officials and ambassadors, and Messer published yet another collection of Neapolitan letters housed in the Bibliothèque Nationale.³¹

To this correspondence produced by the King and his ambassadors may be added the second-hand testimony of ambassadors representing other Italian states. Such material, published and unpublished, exists in large volumes, the written product of the diplomatic transformations described above. Correspondence out of Naples and other courts regularly mentions the presence of Neapolitan ambassadors and records and comments upon their activities. This essay examines both the extant Neapolitan documentation and indirect testimony to the activity of Ferrante’s ambassadors, and reveals that the king really did embrace the model pioneered by Francesco Sforza, whose accession was also born in insecurity.

Uncertainty and anxiety rarely abated during Ferrante’s reign, even after the repulse of the Angevin invasion, and he came to see the new diplomacy as an essential tool of foreign policy—one that required constant attention and the employment of a dedicated corps of servants. Thus resident Neapolitan ambassadors logging long years of service became a notable feature of Ferrante’s reign. At any given time, resident envoys from Naples could be found

Antonio, in a letter to Francesco Sforza of 1 January 1456, wrote that “gli pare che mai questo luoco debba stare vacuo che non gli sia continuamente uno.” F. Senatore, “*Uno Mondo di Carta*”: forme e strutture della diplomazia sforzesca (Naples, 1998), 320.

²⁹“New diplomacy” is the term used by M. S. Anderson in *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy 1450–1919* (London, 1993), 1–20.

³⁰D. Giampietro, “Un registro aragonese”; F. Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese o sia lettere regie, ordinamenti ed altri atti governanti de’sovrani aragonesi in Napoli riguardanti l’amministrazione interna del reame e le relazioni all’estero*, 2 v. (Naples, reprint ed. 1984).

³¹L. Volpicella, ed. *Regis Ferdinandi primi instructionum liber* (Naples, 1916); A. Messer, *Le Codice Aragonese* (Paris, 1912).

at the major Italian courts—in Milan, Florence, Rome, usually Venice—and occasionally in some of the smaller Italian princedoms and ultramontane courts as well. This was a pattern of diplomatic representation that looked much like that employed by Sforza in Milan.³²

Like other fifteenth-century princes, Ferrante regarded his ambassadors not only as vectors of political activity and intrigue and as means of communicating with the political elites of other states, but also as sources of information in an environment in which timely and useful news was at a premium. The dispatches from Neapolitan resident ambassadors that survive resemble very closely those of ambassadors from other princely states, in that they are concerned in providing their prince with a comprehensive rundown of the most recent news, events, and gossip. Ferrante was eager to supply himself with the latest information, as he expressed in a letter of September 1467 to his long-time ambassador in Florence, Marino Tomacelli: “I commend you greatly, wanting you to continue to do the same; I am very pleased to be informed frequently about things and occurrences both small and large in that city.”³³ Or as he wrote to Giovanni Zumbo in Venice in 1460: “We want you to write to us more often, by as many routes as possible, because we are very interested in being advised continuously of the things that are happening in that city and the Signoria, especially those that have to do, or might have to do (directly or indirectly) with our state and affairs.”³⁴ This stream of information was deemed invaluable. When Ferrante felt he was not being adequately informed by his ambassadors he would let them know, as he did in a letter to Frabrizio Caraffa, his resident ambassador in Milan in 1467: “these affairs give me great displeasure, and I am upset with you that you have not given me particular notice of them, as is your duty, considering how much interest I have in these matters; so from now on, update me day by day about what happens and what you hear.”³⁵

The flow of information coming into Naples from this corps of resident ambassadors, as well as from his many extraordinary envoys, was varied and

³²For a definition of a permanent resident embassy, see Ilardi, “The First Permanent Embassy.”

³³Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, I, 337–8 (dispatch of 8 September 1467 from Maddaloni), “ve ne commendamo grandemente, volendo noi che continuamente faczati le simile; atteso troviamo piacere grandissimo de essere da voi al spesso cossi de piccole como de grande cose et occurrentie de questa città facti participi.”

³⁴Ferrante to Giovanni Zumbo, 20 February 1460, Naples, in A. Messer, ed. *Le codice aragonese*, 479. “Vorriamo che più spesse volte ni scrivisseno, per queste vie potisseno, perchè a nui ni è grande interesse non havere continue aviasacione de le cose, che occorreno in questa citate et Signoria, maxime, che se sguardeno o squardare se possano (directe vel indirecte) a nostro stato et facende.”

³⁵Letter of 29 January 1467, Casal di Principe: “Le quale [the discord between Galeazzo Maria Sforza and his mother] ne donano singulare molestia affanno de animo, et dolemone de vui che non ne habeate donato particolare aviso, come serria vostro debito, pensando quanto interesse habiamo in quesse materie, perciò fate che da mo inanti ne avisate di per di de quanto soccederea et sentiriti.” Trinchera, *Codice aragonese*, I, 26.

voluminous. The letters of Giovanni Lanfredini, the Florentine patrician and confidant of Lorenzo de' Medici who served as ambassador in Naples in 1485 and 1486 indicate the volume and regularity of correspondence that Ferrante received from his ambassadors across the Italian peninsula. Giovanni, of whom Ferrante spoke with affection, was granted access to many of these letters.³⁶ Giovanni repeatedly made note of the specific contents of these letters coming into Naples, indicating that he was often handed the letters so that he might himself peruse them.³⁷

Ferrante thus oversaw a reasonably sophisticated and extensive diplomatic apparatus that generated a large volume of correspondence and a great deal of information from a wide array of locales. The balance of this essay will examine the manner in which he made use of the features of his diplomatic network, and especially his resident ambassadors in Rome, Florence and Milan, to meet the policy concerns and objectives described above. It will also describe patterns of service among the men who made up Ferrante's diplomatic corps.

* * *

According to the *Chronicon* of San Antonio, the Archbishop of Florence, Alfonso the Magnanimous counseled Ferrante to live in peace with the popes and to consider their friendship the best possible support for the realm.³⁸ Ferrante found this advice very difficult to follow. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the Papacy was intent on re-establishing its place as a temporal, territorial power on the Italian peninsula, a process initiated by Eugenius IV. These efforts included a reassertion of its traditional role as the feudal lord of the Kingdom of Naples. Ferrante relied on the willingness of successive Popes to reconfirm his investiture as king, which had first been granted in 1458 by Pius II, in a bull signed by only thirteen of the College of Cardinals—an indication of

³⁶In a letter to his daughter, Beatrice, the queen of Hungary, Ferrante wrote the following of Lanfredini: "ambasciatore dell'excelsa signoria di Fiorenza appresso nui, el quale ancora, et per la virtù sua, et per li laudabili soi portamenti, et per la optima opera ha facto appresso quella Signoria ad proposito del stato nostro, ne è multo caro." L. Volpicella, *Regis Ferdinandi*, Istruzione, n. IV, 15.

³⁷These dispatches have been published in *Corrispondenza degli ambasciatori fiorentini a Napoli: Giovanni Lanfredini (maggio 1485–ottobre 1486)*, ed. E. Scarton (Naples, 2002). Giovanni gave some sense of the volume of information to which he was given access in his letter to Lorenzo of 22 June 1485 from Naples, he wrote: "Se a vostra magnificentia paressi che io parlasso troppo largho, imputilo alla ignorantia mia et alla fede et amore vi porto, advisandovi che in lettere di messer Marino ho notato tre cose, che me l'anno date in mano a leggere, et cosi fanno di quelle da Milano et da Roma ..." *Corrispondenza*, 182. In a letter of 10 May 1485 from Naples, Lanfredini wrote that he had been shown letters from the ambassador in Rome, Anello Arcamone, that were "secretissime." *Ibid.*, 139.

³⁸Pontieri, *Per la storia*, 238.

the weakness of his support in Rome.³⁹ Such consent could not be taken for granted. Pius II's successor, Paul II, insisted that Ferrante pay the full amount of the annual feudal *censo*, which Pius had waived. When Ferrante sent the customary palfrey in tribute to the Pope in 1465 but no money with it, the Pope sent the horse back. Paul was also dangerously willing to encourage Angevin designs on Neapolitan kingdom, as he did during the Rimini crisis of 1469–71.⁴⁰ Paul declared to a Milanese ambassador that he could “never be a friend of Ferrante, nor could anyone trust him, so false was his nature.”⁴¹ Needless to say, the feeling was mutual—Ferrante was deeply suspicious of his Venetian background and resentful of his desire to return Rimini and other papal vicariates to obedience.⁴² Working with Federico da Montefeltro, the Duke of Urbino, it was Ferrante who took the lead in blocking papal ambitions during Paul's pontificate.⁴³

The change of tone was immediate with the accession of Sixtus IV in 1471. The new Pope instantly signaled his desire to patch things up with the King. Sixtus waived the *censo* once again and made Giovanni d'Aragona the apostolic protonotary, at the tender age of 16, elevating him to cardinal six years later. Ferrante then gave his illegitimate daughter Ilaria in marriage to Leonardo della Rovere, the cousin of the Pope, even though his ugliness and stupidity had made him the butt of jokes at the Curia.⁴⁴ Ferrante also granted Giovanni della Rovere, the prefect of Rome and a scion of the new pope's family, the Duchies of Sora and Arce, a large stretch of territory that abutted the papal states. This rapprochement with the Pope was part of a broader realignment of the king's interests with those of the della Rovere and Riario relatives of the Pope, an affiliation which would lead to his involvement in the Pazzi Conspiracy against

³⁹L. von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, v. III (London, 1901), 27.

⁴⁰See G. Pardi, “Borso d'Este, Duca di Ferrara, Modena e Reggio,” *Studi storici*, XV (1906).

⁴¹Letter of Nicodemo di Pontremoli to Francesco Sforza from Rome of October 31, 1469. Nicodemo also remarked that the Pope also brought up the question of Ferrante's uncertain parentage in his invective against him: “Poi disse de le strane cose havia voluyte da lui fui ad havergli facto domandare Ascoli quamprimium fo assumpto al pontificato et altre domande adeo enorme che mai gli poria esser amico, ne persona se posseva fidare de lui, tanto è ficto e de mala natura, fin a dirmi non è figliolo del re Alphonso et como Papa Calisto gli havia dicto el patre et la matre, quali ha dicti ad me.” Cited by von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, IV, 172.

⁴²In March 1467, the Estense ambassador in Rome, Jacopo Trotti, was convinced that the King was intent on waging war against the Pope. Jacopo Trotti to Borso d'Este, 15 March, Archivio di Stato di Modena (ASMo), Archivio Segreto Estense (ASE), Carteggio Ambasciatori (CA)—Roma, b.1.

⁴³See W. Tommasoli, *Momenti e figure della politica dell'equilibrio (Federico da Montefeltro e l'impresa di Rimini)* (Urbino, 1968), 22–35.

⁴⁴R. Filangieri, “Una congiura di baroni nel castello d'Ischia in vista d'una seconda spedizione di Carlo VIII (5 agosto 1496),” *Archivio storico napoletano*, nouva serie, XXVIII (1946), 194.

the Medici.⁴⁵ The ensuing years of alliance with Pope Sixtus and his nepotistic designs coincided with Ferrante's most aggressive pursuit of his own ambitions.

The pendulum swung back again with the election of the Genoese Innocent VIII in 1484. Ferrante opposed Innocent's election and the relationship between the two never improved beyond thinly disguised loathing. Things soured as early as October 1484 when the Duke of Calabria, returning from the War of Ferrara, visited Rome and demanded that the fiefs of Benevento, Terracina and Ponte Corvo be incorporated officially into Neapolitan territory. When Innocent refused, it was said that Calabria responded that he would soon make the Pope beg for their annexation.⁴⁶ Innocent came to hate Ferrante with a burning intensity and actively sought to destabilize Ferrante's patrimony. Even after the end of the Barons' Revolt in 1486, their relationship remained hostile, the pope threatening excommunication, Ferrante expressing support for a general church council. Innocent's death in 1492 aroused little mourning in Naples.

Unfortunately for Ferrante, the election of his successor, the Catalan Alexander VI, was equally no cause for celebration. Guicciardini reports that Ferrante wept as if he had lost a child when he heard the news of Alexander's election.⁴⁷ The final two years of Ferrante's reign were anxiety-ridden, largely a result of his worries about the designs of Alexander, in tandem with Ludovico Maria Sforza in Milan. He made his concerns clear in a letter to Antonio d'Alessandro shortly before his death: "What he [Alexander] wants is war; from the first moment of his reign till now, he has never ceased persecuting me. There are more soldiers than priests in Rome; the Pope thinks of nothing but war and rapine."⁴⁸

This unsettled relationship with the Holy See meant that the Neapolitan resident ambassador in Rome was perhaps the most demanding diplomatic posting of all. Rome was also the chief diplomatic center in all of Europe, where representatives from across the continent resided, creating a vibrant locale for formal and informal political negotiation and information exchange.

⁴⁵Pontieri describes the impact of this move on the ambitions of Ferrante as follows: "l'unione con i Riario, che poi non era se non un legame d'interdipendenza tra il nepotismo di Sisto IV e le ambizioni di Ferrante, avrebbe a questo consentito una maggiore libertà di movimento, altro dinamismo alla sua azione politica, ben diverse possibilità da realizzare." *Per la storia*, 265.

⁴⁶Von Pastor, *History of the Popes* (London, 1905), V, 249.

⁴⁷Book I, Chapter I of *Storia d'Italia*: "Ma non fuggì, per ciò, né poi il giudizio divino né allora l'infamia e odio giusto degli uomini, ripieni per questa elezione di spavento e di orrore, per essere stata celebrata con arti sì brute; e non meno perché la natura e le condizioni della persona eletta erano conosciute in gran parte da molti: e, tra gli altri, è manifesto che il re di Napoli, benché in pubblico il dolore concepito dissimulasse, significò alla reina sua moglie con lacrime, dalle quali era solito astenersi eziandio nella morte de' figliuoli, essere creato uno pontefice che sarebbe perniciosissimo a Italia e a tutta la republica cristiana: pronostico veramente non indegno della prudenza di Ferdinando." *Opere*, II, 93.

⁴⁸Trinchera, II, 41–8, quoted in von Pastor, *History of the Popes*, V, 409.

Ambassadors in Rome were expected to attend to the ecclesiastical concerns of their prince as well, advocating for candidates for church offices and sinecures. The full scope of these various responsibilities is on display in the thirteen-year tenure (1473–1486) in Rome of Anello Arcamone.

Ferrante customarily assigned to the most important and challenging diplomatic posts those who had established a history of service to him and his state. This was certainly the case with Anello. Hailing from a prominent Neapolitan family, Anello was a lawyer, who graduated from the *studio* in Naples. The author of several learned commentaries on Lombard law, his legal training prepared him for a career in the royal administration and judiciary.⁴⁹ In 1466 he was president of the Regia Camera della Sommaria, and three years later he was chancellor of the Sacred Royal Council.⁵⁰ Anello subsequently served in a number of diplomatic posts, including as resident ambassador in Venice for three years starting in 1470.⁵¹

Anello first arrived in Rome in June 1473, as an advocate for Ferrante's candidates for the cardinalate, Giovanni Gianderoni and Guglielmo Rocha, and remained at the papal court, with a few brief absences, until 1486.⁵² The Pope during most of this stretch was Sixtus IV, and thus the ambassador enjoyed largely friendly relations with the pontiff. It was Anello who arranged and oversaw Ferrante's visit to Rome in February 1475, the purpose of which was to formalize an alliance between Naples and the Papacy. Ferrante sought to strengthen his friendship with the Pope, following the collapse of a short-lived alliance (19 April 1471) with Venice, formed in the wake of the fall of the Venetian base at Negroponte.⁵³ The new sense of cooperation was on display during Ferrante's Roman visit, during which, according to Giovan Pietro

⁴⁹Carlo de Frede, *Studenti e uomini di leggi a Napoli nel Rinascimento* (Naples, 1967), 91.

⁵⁰R. Abbondanza, "Arcamone, Anello" in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani (DBI)*, 3, 738.

⁵¹In 1469, he was an envoy to Piero di Medici in Florence. Sacromoro Sacromoro to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 26 August 1470, Florence, Archivio di Stato di Milano (ASMi), Archivio Sforzesco (AS), Potenze Estere (PE)—Firenze, b.279. Anello met with Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence on his way to Venice. He was in Venice as the Neapolitan resident ambassador until at least the spring of 1473. This can be gleaned by a letter of 16 June 1473 from Naples of the Venetian ambassador, Zaccaria Barbaro, who reported the commission accorded to Anello by Ferrante. *Dispacci*, 613.

⁵²Jacopo Ammannati Piccolomini complained that Anello was seeking to intimidate members of the Curia. Piccolomini's letters describing the activity of Anello are in *Lettere di Jacopo Ammannati Piccolomini (1444–1479)*, II, ed. P. Cherubini (Rome, 1997), 1716, 1723. On the elevation of Giovanni to the cardinalate on 10 December 1477, see C. Eubel, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii Aevi*, II (Regensburg, 1914), 18.

⁵³This pact had crumbled amid a cacophony of mutual recrimination, in part from his rash attempt to marry one of his daughters to the king of Cyprus, thus short-circuiting Venetian claims to the island; but also from his demonstrated desire to pursue territorial gains on the Italian mainland viewed unfavorably by Venice.

Arrivabene, the king returned in the evenings for several secret meetings with the pontiff.⁵⁴

This partnership came to coalesce around a shared antipathy toward Lorenzo de' Medici in Florence. In the 1470s, Ferrante's territorial ambitions in Tuscany and his rivalry with Florence for influence in the Emilia-Romagna created a rift between the King and Lorenzo.⁵⁵ Rome became the primary center for the planning that led to the Pazzi Conspiracy. As early as the summer of 1475, Ferrante was expressing his hostility toward Lorenzo, when he suggested that the Florentine people would lift their hands to heaven in thanks were he to relieve them of the tyranny under which Lorenzo, a "vile merchant," placed them.⁵⁶ Marcello Simonetta has recently discovered and deciphered correspondence that reveals that Federico da Montefeltro, Ferrante's chief *condottiere*, was among the ringleaders of the Pazzi Conspiracy.⁵⁷ In all likelihood, Ferrante too was an active participant in this planning—by the end of 1477, Ferrante had surrounded Florence with a web of alliances.⁵⁸

While there is little documentation to prove it conclusively, it is almost certain that Anello was a key figure in the planning against the Medici. In December 1477, the Neapolitan voice in Rome was reinforced by the elevation

⁵⁴The goodwill was such that when, the following week, the Pope called the Italian powers to resurrect the general league of 1455, Anello was the only ambassador to respond with any enthusiasm. Letters of 5 and 8 February 1475 of Giovan Pietro Arrivabene to Ludovico Gonzaga; letter of Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga to the same, 17 Feb. Archivio di Stato di Mantova (ASMa), Archivio Gonzaga (AG), Affari Esteri (AE)—Roma, b. 845.

⁵⁵Ferrante and the Pope shared dismay over the sale, in 1473, of the city of Imola by Galeazzo Maria Sforza to the Medici, afraid that Florence would extend her influence further in the Romagna. Their combined appeals were sufficient to induce Sforza to restore Imola to the Papacy; it was then conferred as a fief on the Pope's nephew, Girolamo Riario.

⁵⁶The Milanese ambassador in Naples, Francesco Maletta, in a letter to Galeazzo Maria Sforza dated 13 July 1475, recorded the king expressing these sentiments: "parendoli che Sua Maestà non solo non deveria inclinare ad uno vile mercatante et cittadino, come Laurenzo in Fiorenza, che è il mazore et più capitale inimico che'l ve habia, ma doveria, come tante volte gli ha ricordato, cazarlo de Fiorenza o farlo tagliare a peze; il che dice seria facile, perché Laurenzo in Fiorenza como tyranno è odiato universalmente de la mazore et meglor parte di cittadini, li quali non hanno ardimento far motto al presente per paura, che, quando quello che è dicto intervenisse, alzariano le mano al cello, rengratiando Sua Maestà che li havesse liberati de tanta tyrannia, et se li faria Sua Maestà perpetuamente obligate et benivoli." This passage is cited by Riccardo Fubini in *L. de' Medici, Lettere*, II, ed. R.Fubini (Florence, 1977), 117.

⁵⁷M. Simonetta, "Federico da Montefeltro contro Firenze," and "Federico da Montefeltro architetto della Congiura dei Pazzi e del Palazzo di Urbino" in F.P. Fiore, ed., *Francesco di Giorgio alla corte di Federico da Montefeltro: atti del convegno internazionale di studi: Urbino, Monastero di Santa Chiara, 11-13 ottobre 2001* (Florence, 2004), 81ff, with the newly discovered letter of Federico to his lieutenants Agostino Staccoli and Pietro Felici, Urbino, 14 February 1478, 100-02.

⁵⁸Ferrante had formed alliances with Siena, with the Lord of Piombino, Giacomo d'Appiano, with Federico da Montefeltro, and with the papal relatives, the Riario and the Della Rovere. He also enjoyed close ties with the Manfredi in Faenza and the Bentivogli in Bologna.

of Giovanni d'Aragona to the cardinalate.⁵⁹ Anello had long facilitated the cooperation between Sixtus and Ferrante and it was he who was Ferrante's representative at the signing of a new three-way pact between the King, Sixtus and Riario in March 1478, intended to undermine further Lorenzo de' Medici's position in Florence.⁶⁰ The correspondence of Federico of Montefeltro in February 1478 deciphered by Simonetta suggests strongly that Anello was aware of Federico's plans to move against Florence in the wake of the Conspiracy.⁶¹

Sixtus considered Ferrante's reconciliation with Lorenzo de' Medici in 1479–80 a betrayal, and Anello, along with Federico da Montefeltro, worked secretly to fashion reconciliation between Sixtus and the King.⁶² Ferrante was apparently pleased with Anello's handling of these affairs, because in November 1481 he sent Giovanni Albino to Rome to congratulate him for his able negotiations.⁶³ All of Anello's skill was needed, for by that juncture Venice, in alliance with the Pope, was bringing pressure to bear on the Duchy of Ferrara, an ally of Naples, in preparation for the attack that would come in the spring of 1482. Ferrante instructed Anello to do all he could to convince the Pope to discourage a Venetian move against Ferrara.

Anello's closeness to Sixtus, now that the Pope had allied with Venice, placed the Neapolitan ambassador in an awkward spot. Lorenzo de' Medici, perhaps remembering Anello's role in the run-up to the Pazzi Conspiracy, wondered whether Anello could be an honest broker and declared his desire "to do anything to get him out of there."⁶⁴ The Florentine ambassadors in Rome

⁵⁹Giovanni died of the plague in Rome in 1485.

⁶⁰*Lettere*, II, 469.

⁶¹Federico writes in a coded portion of the letter cited in note 56 above: "Io farò come colui che per essere tenuto savio dà contra sé o a li soi perché *mesere Anello* ha havuto a dire che forse questo asecto ha ad avere difficoltà per el facto mio per quello più me havesse voluto fare dare nostro signore et cetera." "Federico da Montefeltro contro Firenze," 284.

⁶²See *Lettere*, V, 43. The shock of the Otranto landings prompted Ferrante to redouble these efforts and by mid-December it was whispered in Rome that Anello and Sixtus were in secret discussions concerning a new alliance. F. Fossati, "Dal 25 luglio 1480 al 16 aprile 1481: l'opera di Milano," *Archivio storico lombardo*, s. IV, XII (1909), 137–203. Milanese ambassadors reported on these efforts by Anello early in 1481. A. Bracelli and A. Trivulzio to Duke of Milan, 6 January 1481, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, b. 87.

⁶³See entry on "Albino, Giovanni" in *DBI*, v. 2, 12–13. L. de' Medici, *Lettere*, VI, ed. M. Mallett (Florence, 1990), 103.

⁶⁴*Lettere*, VI, 219. Whether Ferrante was aware of the suspicions repeatedly expressed by Lorenzo at the time is unclear, but it is likely that Lorenzo, or others, informed him of their qualms. Lorenzo expressed his doubts in a postscript to a letter to Piero Filippo Pandolfini on 6 January 1482. *Ibid.*, 201: "Io vidi a questi di passati copia della commissione che il Re dava a messer Anello per a Roma circa le cose del duca di Ferrara, la quale doveva exequire con gli altri oratori. Nella quale era una parte che dava qualche carico al conte Girolamo nelle cose di Faenza, mostrando che a questo fine havessi confortati Vinitiani ad stare forti contro il duca di Ferrara etc. La quale parte fu obmessa nella exequire la commissione, per essere il Conte absente quando parlorono gli ambasciadori col

made the accusation that Anello was deliberately withholding information from Ferrante, in order to “better his own position.” They also suggested that the Pope preferred to negotiate directly and secretly with Anello, rather than with the representatives of the triple league together.⁶⁵ Anello’s best efforts, however, could not prevent the outbreak of the War of Ferrara, and he was recalled from an increasingly hostile court in May 1482.⁶⁶ Anello soon returned, however, to take the lead in negotiations that resulted in the Pope abandoning Venice and switching sides in the war.⁶⁷ He was then responsible for the often testy attempts to coordinate with the papacy the war effort against Venice in 1483–4.⁶⁸ In 1483 Ferrante rewarded Anello’s service by making him the Count of Burello, in Calabria.⁶⁹ Ferrante apparently agreed with the Duke of Milan’s assessment that Anello was “pieno de naturale et accidentale prudentia.”⁷⁰

Sixtus died in August 1484—his death hastened, it was said, by his dismay at the Peace of Bagnolo that ended the War of Ferrara. The climate in Rome under the new Pope, Innocent VIII, could not be any more different for the Neapolitan ambassador. Innocent’s hostility toward Ferrante soon became

Papa, che così mostra una lettera commune di decti oratori alle potentie della Lega. Io voglio inferire per questo che io credo messer Aniello exequisca male volentieri quelle cose che possono disiungere il Re dal Conte, et nel tempo che io ero costì ne vidi qualche altro segno. Parvemi alhora che non piacessino al Re alchuni simili modi di messer Aniello. Hovene voluto avisare, perché, se pure Dio ci dessi gratia che costì fussi buona dispositione, il che a Dio piaccia, non sia guasto poi da ministri et executori. Perché io credo che habbiate notizia della instructione preducta et così della lettera commune, so m’intenderete senza dirvi più diffusamente.” Lorenzo’s qualms were echoed by Pandolfini and the Milanese ambassadors there, who had been wary of Anello for some time. Piero Filippo Pandolfini wrote on 5 January 1482 that “le carezze che costui [Ferrante] fa al conte Ieronimo procede da messer Anello che sempre lo tiene in speranza che portandosi bene al Conte et col tempo si potrebbe ridurre, et questa vivanda gli piace tanto che facilmente crede quello vorebbe.” *Ibid.*, 219.

⁶⁵Letter of Luigi Guicciardini to Lorenzo, 29 March 1482. *Lettere*, VI, 322.

⁶⁶Branda Castiglioni to Duke of Milan, 21 May 1482, ASMi, AS, PE—Napoli, b. 239. The discontent in Florence with Anello did not end with the outbreak of the War of Ferrara, however. There was a wave of resentment in Florence in November of 1482, when the contents of a letter from Anello to Marino Tomacelli, which accused Florence of being an obstacle to peace and of not taking the security of its ally Ferrara seriously, became known. See *Lettere*, VII, ed. M. Mallett (Florence, 1998), 150.

⁶⁷Anello’s arrival from Naples at the encampment of the Duke of Calabria and his meeting with the papal representative, Giulio Cesare Varano, are described in his letter to Ercole d’Este of 13 June 1482. ASMo, AE, CA—Roma, b. 3a.

⁶⁸See the instructions of Ferrante to Giovanni Albino, sent to Rome and Florence in December 1483, and the instructions to Anello of 2 January 1484 in *Lettere, istruzioni*, 71–9.

⁶⁹J. Mazzoleni, ed. *Regesto della Cancelleria Aragonesa di Napoli* (Naples, 1951), 32.

⁷⁰Duke of Milan to Branda Castiglioni, 9 November 1482, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, b. 241.

clear.⁷¹ Anello's deep knowledge of the Roman court and his close relationships with a number of cardinals now became more problematic. While under Sixtus they were valuable tools in pursuing Ferrante's policy, now such intimacy might be suspect in Ferrante's eyes. Anello's filo-papal tendencies were well known and at some point during the Barons' Revolt, Ferrante began to question Anello's loyalty. Giovanni Lanfredini, the Florentine ambassador in Naples, thought that Anello by mid 1485 had become uncomfortably close to Pope Innocent VIII and to Giuliano della Rovere, the Cardinal St. Peter in Vincole and a sworn foe of the King.⁷² The King came round to share this view. In the middle of peace negotiations with the Pope in 1486, he replaced Anello with Giovanni Albino.⁷³

Soon after his return to Naples in the fall of 1486, Anello was arrested, along with Antonello Petrucci, the royal secretary, whom Ferrante had come to suspect of aiding the rebellious barons. Some had thought Anello a likely candidate to succeed Petrucci as first secretary; instead, both were imprisoned for crimes of *lese majesté*.⁷⁴ Anello saw all of his considerable possessions

⁷¹Innocent labeled Ferrante "the cause of all the wars that have taken place in Italy for a long time up to now." Guidantonio Vespucci to the Dieci, 14 December 1484, Archivio di Stato di Firenze (ASF), Dieci, Responsive, 34, 411ff. *Lettere*, VIII, ed. H. Butters (Florence, 2003), 296.

⁷²Lanfredini to the Ten in Florence, 10 May 1485. *Corrispondenza*, 139.

⁷³In his ambassadorial work, at least, there is no indication that Anello was anything less than loyal. In fact, his advocacy on behalf of Ferrante in Rome put him at considerable risk. In December 1485, with tensions between the Pope and Naples extremely high, a mob of Romans led by Virginio Orsini, the Count of Tagliacozzo, sacked his house, looting it of all its valuables, stealing his horses, and burning much of it to the ground. Anello himself was carted off to the palace of the *conservatori*. The attackers demanded that the Duke of Calabria release a Roman nobleman captured at a recent battle in return for Anello's freedom. The Milanese and Florentine ambassadors went to Calabria's camp to convince him to release the prisoner in question, but Anello was not released until early January. These events are recounted in letters of Battista Bendedei to Ercole d'Este of 27 December 1485 and 9 January 1486, in G. Paladino, ed. "Per la storia del congiura dei baroni. Documenti inediti dell'archivio estense 1485-1487," *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, nuova serie, V (1919-20), 245-6, 250-1.

⁷⁴Giovanni, as late as August 1486, was convinced that Anello, given his competence and skill, as well as his favor with the king, was in line to take Petrucci's job as first secretary. Giovanni Lanfredini to Lorenzo 11 August 1486 (*Corrispondenza*, 645). Giovanni prognosticated: "a iuditio mio messer Anello in breve tempo arà tutto questo governo, prima perché nelle pratiche et agitations delle cose mi pare pongha meglio che nissuno altro et la riputatione e grandezza degli uomini mal può essere in chi non à cervello. Lui è prachissimo di sperientie, assai prudentissimo et da condurre qualunque cosa grande." Lanfredini also wrote, in a letter of 9 July 1486 to Lorenzo: "Il quale Messer Anello è oggi el primo voto appresso el Re et in quello è achaduto m'è parso uno sufficiente cervello fondato et di grande pratica apparienza, e se el Signor Secretario manchassi che Dio lo conserve, nessuno più atto a simile esercizio truovi di lui in questa parte. E hora in tutte le cose importanti che chascano, lui à chura di scriverle o di vederle. È uomo fresco et da servirsene lungamente e secondo mi disse vi scriverà l'uno e l'altro et per loro sodisfazione mi sarà grato mi

confiscated, but he somehow escaped a death sentence; Petrucci was not so lucky.⁷⁵ Anello remained locked up, a victim of the internecine strife of the Neapolitan Kingdom, a nearly forgotten prisoner in the Castel Nuovo, until the capture of Naples by the French in 1495.

The unfortunate Anello was ultimately replaced by Antonio d'Alessandro, a skilled lawyer who had taught at the university in Naples and a former president of the Sacred Royal Council. In 1485, Antonio had been sent to Rome to make the traditional St. Peter's Day presentation of a white palfrey that signified the king's vassalage to the Pope, but Innocent VIII refused to accept it. Instead, on 24 October the Pope affixed to the doors of St. Peter's basilica a bull containing grave accusations against Ferrante, an action that amounted to a declaration of war. Antonio returned to Rome the following year, and as a legally trained notary, had the juridical powers to draft and sign the peace treaty that brought the military conflict with the Pope to an end.⁷⁶

Antonio subsequently stayed in Rome for nearly five years, residing at the Palazzo dei Mellini.⁷⁷ Despite the end of open hostilities between Naples and the papacy, the assignment to Rome was not an easy one, for tensions between Innocent and Ferrante remained high. The determination of Ferrante to wipe out domestic opposition and his refusal to pay the feudal annuity enraged the Pope. In July 1488, Antonio found that the name of the King of Naples had been omitted from the list of the vassals of the Pope published on St Peter's Day, precipitating a sharp exchange between the ambassador and the pontiff.⁷⁸ When

facate fare risposta che la possa loro mostrare." Pontieri, *La politica mediceo-fiorentina*, 194: dispatch of Giovanni Lanfredini to Lorenzo de' Medici (Letter 128).

⁷⁵Benedei recounts the events surrounding the arrest in a series of letters to Ercole d'Este. Paladino, "Per la storia," 236–9. Anello was very, very rich—Giovanni Lanfredini described him as being "buono stato"—and his possessions would have been an appealing target for the king. Giovanni Lanfredini to Lorenzo 7 June 1486 (*Corrispondenza*, 569–70). Anello's possessions by this time included not only the county of Borello, but also the fief of Gioio nel Cilento, the castle of Francolise, and territory in the Mazzone di Capua. See the entry on Anello by R. Abbandonanza in *DBI*, v. 3, 739.

⁷⁶Letter of 23 August 1486, Naples, Giovanni Lanfredini to the Dieci: "Messer Antonio d'Alexandro departire ogi per Roma per esechuire e formare la conclusione de' chapitoli fatti." *Corrispondenza*, 668.

⁷⁷Entry on Antonio d'Alessandro by F. Petrucci in *DBI*, v. 31, 734.

⁷⁸Giovanni Lanfredini to the Dieci, 7 July 1488: "di che questo regio oratore ha fatto gran caso, monstrando che alla Regia Maestà sarà difficile conportare questo secondo apto, non perché e' sia d'altra qualità che quello dello anno passato, ma proceduto con molto mancho dimostrazione et senza alcuna fulminazione di censure. È ben vero che pesa et inporta più questo secondo acto che non fece il primo, et più importerà il terzo. Perché la bolla della investitura della felice ricordanza di Papa Pio, per quanto mi sia detto si dichiara che il primo anno delle contumace del pagamento delli censi s'intende excommunicato, il secondo anno interdicto et il terzo anno private. La Santità di Papa seguita il vigore delle actione per havere leste et preparate le ragioni sua con tanta costumateza et

the following year Innocent had several cardinals and papal legal experts present the case that Ferrante had violated the articles of the 1486 treaty, Antonio was ready. Calling on his own legal training, the Neapolitan ambassador (described by the Florentine resident, who witnessed Antonio's response, as "persona di fide digna"), argued against the legitimacy of the Pope's claims.⁷⁹ Antonio was evidently highly skilled at such legal sparring. Giovanni Lanfredini was impressed by the debating skill of his Neapolitan counterpart, who expressed himself "con parole savie, honeste et molto accomodate."⁸⁰ Despite the insistence of Antonio, Innocent took the step of excommunicating the King in 1489. Antonio's residence, as the representative of an excommunicated prince, lasted until the following year.

* * *

Another important node of diplomatic focus during Ferrante's reign was Florence. Until 1471, Naples was allied to Florence as part of the tripartite alliance with Milan that had been formed by Francesco Sforza and Cosimo de' Medici. Cosimo was Ferrante's primary financial backer in his war against the Angevins in 1458–65. As we have seen, however, in the 1470s, Ferrante's territorial ambitions and alliance with Sixtus IV made Florence and Naples enemies. After the reconciliation with Lorenzo de' Medici, however, the "vile merchant" became Naples' most important Italian ally. In the wake of the Ottoman invasion of Otranto, Florence provided cash to fund the town's recapture (but only after Ferrante had agreed to restore a number of the Tuscan territories occupied in the recent war). In the years after the War of Ferrara (1482–4), faced with the continued hostility of Innocent VIII and the Republic of Venice, an uncertain relationship with Ludovico Maria Sforza in Milan, a restless baronage, and the recurrent threat from the Turks, Ferrante looked to Lorenzo as a reliable partner. Ferrante remained grateful for the remainder of his life for the assistance that Lorenzo extended him during the Barons' Revolt of 1485–6.⁸¹ Amid the uncertain international situation, ready to scale back his ambitions, and wanting to secure the succession for his son Alfonso, Ferrante

honestà, quanta e' può et senza espressione o fulminazione di censure. Et questo segui el di di Sancto Pietro, second il solito." Pontieri, *La politica mediceo*, 315–16.

⁷⁹Giovanni Lanfredini to the Otto, 28 April 1489, Rome. *Ibid.*, 333.

⁸⁰Giovanni Lanfredini to the Otto, 11 September 1489, Rome. *Ibid.*, 351–5.

⁸¹Pontieri, *Per la storia*, 354.

was willing to accommodate himself to the balance in Italian politics that Lorenzo sought to maintain.⁸²

For almost Ferrante's entire reign, a single individual served as his representative in Florence. In fact, no ambassador in fifteenth-century Italy served longer in his post than did Marino Tomacelli, the Neapolitan ambassador in Florence for almost all of the thirty years from 1465 to 1495.⁸³ Marino appears first in the king's service as a soldier under the Duke of Calabria in Tuscany during 1458–65 war. He later became adviser and secretary to the king, and his secretarial signature appears on correspondence and acts issued by Ferrante for the periods 1458–9 and 1473–4.⁸⁴

A noble of Neapolitan background born in 1419, Marino was a lover of letters and an intimate of many in Naples' humanist community. Marino played a role in the acquisition of books for the royal library and had an ample collection of books of his own.⁸⁵ He was a close friend to the humanists Giovanni Pontano and Pietro Golino.⁸⁶ The writing of Marino, a correspondent

⁸²For an interesting discussion of the efforts of Lorenzo to maintain this balance, and Ferrante's role in these designs, see M. Pellegrini, *Congiure di Romagna. Lorenzo de' Medici e il duplice tirannicidio a Forlì e a Faenza nel 1488* (Florence, 1999), esp. 143–71. See also H. Butters, "Lorenzo and Naples" in G. C. Garfagnani, ed. *Lorenzo il Magnifico e il suo mondo* (Florence, 1994), 143–51.

⁸³The extended periods when Marino was away from Florence include January to September 1471 when Bartolomeo Antici da Recanati, secretary and counselor of the King, was the ambassador in Florence. L. Cerioni, *La Diplomazia sforzesca nella seconda metà del Quattrocento e i suoi cifrari segreti* (Rome, 1970), 127. Marino was removed from Florence on the orders of Ferrante in May 1478 following the Pazzi conspiracy—see below. Marino was also in Rome for much of the spring of 1485—letter of Giovanni Lanfredini in Naples to the Dieci of 23 May 1485 in *Corrispondenza*, 147.

⁸⁴His run of service in Florence outlasted, by a considerable margin, even the residences of Zaccaria Saggi, the Mantuan ambassador in Milan (1468–88) and Nicodemo Tranchedini, the Milanese ambassador in Florence (1448–68). On Zaccaria Saggi, see Dover, "Letters, notes and whispers," Ch. 5. For Tranchedini, see P. Sverzellati, "Per la biografia di Nicodemo Tranchedini da Pontremoli, ambasciatore sforzesco," *Aevum*, 52:2 (Spring 1998), 485–557.

⁸⁵See T. De Marinis, *La biblioteca napoletana dei re d'Aragona*, I (Milan, 1952) and II (Florence, 1947); also E. Percopo, "Nuovi documenti su gli scrittori e gli artisti dei tempi aragonesi," *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, XIX (1894), 392ff.

⁸⁶Volpicella, *Regis Ferdinandi*, 451. Pontano expressed his affection by mentioning his friend in many of his poems, and by dedicating his *De Aspiratione* (1469) to Marino. He also made reference to him as his white-haired companion in the poem *Hendecasyllaborum seu Bajarum* (1490–1500). See "Poeti latini del Quattrocento" in *La letteratura italiana: storia e testi* (Milan, 1964), v. 15, 426, 540. See also A. Altamura, *L'umanesimo nel Mezzogiorno d'Italia* (Florence, 1941), 57–8. For the *Hendecasyllaborum*, see Altamura, 33–5. Pontano also addressed an elegy to Marino, who has just lost his brother Leon. Pontano was very ill at the time, fearing for his life, and wrote: "The Fates summon me, kindly light, I am finished. But you, Marino make the funeral arrangements for your poet." C. Kidwell, *Pontano: Poet and Prime Minister* (London, 1991), 39. Marino and Pontano were both participating members of the Neapolitan Academy and were apparently close from the day that Pontano first arrived in Naples in 1448; Pontano, in one of his poems, wrote that in his 54-year friendship with Marino the two never engaged in a single quarrel. Kidwell, *Pontano*, 59.

of Lorenzo Valla among others, reveals a man of considerable education and erudition.⁸⁷ This is perhaps most obviously on display in his final testament, recently published by Filena Patroni Griffi.⁸⁸

Marino arrived in Florence as the resident ambassador on 16 August 1465. It had been some four years since there had been a Neapolitan envoy resident in Florence—Ferrante had last kept an ambassador in the city at the height of the war against John of Anjou, when the Medici were his primary financial backers.⁸⁹ Throughout Ferrante's reign, Florence remained of central importance—as a source of financing, a locale of significant commercial importance to Naples, and periodically as a political ally. Marino was inserted into Florence primarily to fill a role as intermediary in the three-way alliance of Naples, Florence and Milan that dated from the early days of Ferrante's reign. The turn toward Naples was new for Florence, which had historically pursued a francophilic foreign policy. As Cosimo de' Medici commented in 1458, “we find ourselves between the Aragonese and the French.”⁹⁰

Ferrante valued the service of Marino a great deal and entrusted him with considerable responsibility and broad autonomy in Florence for three decades.⁹¹ Marino's Florentine hosts often spoke highly of him,⁹² as did the Venetian

⁸⁷See the letter from Valla to Marino in Altamura, *L'umanesimo*, Appendix I.

⁸⁸“Il testamento di Marino Tomacelli ambasciatore aragonese a Firenze” in *Napoli Nobilissima*, XXIV, F. III–IV (May–August 1985), 120–7. Marino's testament reveals his close relationship with the Benedictines, and especially with the monastery at Montecassino—Marino left a sizable sum for the construction of a chapel dedicated to Saint Benedict in the monastery's basilica.

⁸⁹L. de' Medici, *Lettere*, I, ed. R. Fubini (Florence, 1977), 17.

⁹⁰Quoted in G. Galasso, “Il regno di Ferrante” in *Il regno di Napoli. Il mezzogiorno angioino e aragonese (1266–1494)* (Turin, 1992), 642.

⁹¹An example of this autonomy is seen in the letter of instruction of Ferrante to Marino of 15 May 1467, in which the King wrote: “Pero ad vui che site sopra el facto et vidite le cose in quali termini siano, volemo sia remeso si ve parera de donarla o retinerla, ca ad nui da qua ne è occorso scivere in la forma vederite. Remectimo pero ad vui quello ve parera più expediente o de donarla o no como havemo dicto, et si non ve paresse de presentare dicta lettere, ma verbo referire lo tenore de quella, adiungendo et minuendo quello vi paresse secundo lo bisogno et occurrentia dele cose cossi farriti. Non ne extendimo altramente perchè simo certi havite compresa nostra mente quale e che de questa lettera disponate ad vostro arbitrio et secundo la disposizione de le cose.” Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, 159–60. Later that year, the King again expressed willingness to see Marino improvise in his efforts to get Florence to mobilize against Bartolomeo Colleoni, even if it meant being less than truthful: “unde se a vui paresse ascaldarli un poco da nostra parte et dirli in questo alcuna cosa el remettemo al judicio vostro, et cossi dicimo che parendove da nostra parte fosse da dire più una cosa che un altra el faciati et porriti fingere ve habiamo scripto in cifra et farne una extractione come ve parera de dire.” Letter of 1 August 1467—Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, 257.

⁹²Trinchera, *Codice Aragonese*, lxvi: “Noi qui abbiamo moltissime lettere regie dirette dalla corte di Napoli a Marino Tomacello, delle cui pregiate virtù re Ferdinando diceva fare moltissimo conto. Che gli elogi poi ch'ei riceveva dal suo signore fossero da lui ben meritati cel confermerebbe una lettere dell'Archivio di Firenze, nella quale i dieci di quella Balia, nel costui ritorno a Napoli, scrivevano al re facendone ampissime lodi.”

ambassador Zaccaria Barbaro, who read his dispatches in Naples and remarked upon their quality.⁹³ Marino played a particularly important role in cementing the alliance between Lorenzo de' Medici and Ferrante in the early years of Lorenzo's pre-eminence in Florence. But his assignment as ambassador transcended a merely political role, because, for three decades, Marino was a familiar figure among the Florentine patrician set. Like Nicodemo Tranchedini, the Milanese ambassador who spent some twenty years in Florence, Marino cultivated connections throughout the political class of the city, to the point where he understood the workings of the city's politics as well as any Florentine. He also became a figure well known among the rotating set of Florentines who made up the Council of Ten.⁹⁴ His grasp of the complicated factional divisions within Florence proved to be a valuable asset.⁹⁵

Marino developed an especially close relationship with Lorenzo, after *il Magnifico* succeeded Piero as first citizen of Florence in 1468. Lorenzo de' Medici regularly expressed his affection for Marino. When, in 1471, Bartolomeo Antici da Recanati replaced Marino as Ferrante's ambassador in Florence for several months, Lorenzo expressly wrote to the king to return Marino to his post

⁹³*Dispacci di Zaccaria Barbaro. 1 novembre 1471–7 settembre 1473*, ed. Gigi Corazzol (Rome, 1994), 260: On 26 April 1472, Barbaro, writing from Naples, describes a letter from Marino in Florence "como la Signoria di Fiorenza, adixata per certa via secreta, come luy scrive, de la total disposition ha el capitano Bartholomio de cavalchar omnino, havea mandato ad pregar esso Marino, Sagramoro et el messo del conte de Urbino, li se attrovano, che volesseno andar a corte dei deputati che li haveano ad dir et communicar certe cosse importante. Et li andati gli fo ditto per messer Tomaxo Soderini cum molte acunze parole, quale passo per brevità, de ordine de tuti i altri, l'avixo che haveano dela movesta del capitano, dechiarandoli che non poteva esser senza scandolo et perturbatione de tuta Italia; et però gli ne volevano dar noticia, come se convenia, azò subitamente adixasseno I signor suo," et quelli potesseno consultare la materia et proveder como meglio li paresse se avesse ad fare per conservatione et sollicitasseno havere prestamente la risposta; et cussi fa esso Marino per esse lettere, mostratemi dapoì la improbatione, che luy scrive havere fatto ad tal suspitione, et lettere cum molte efficace raxone, et maxime per quanto l'havea intexo et intendeva dela mente regia, dela Sublimità vostra et delo illustre capitano, quale era certissimo, quando ben fusse disposto a tal effecto, intendolo questo, non se moveria."

⁹⁴In May 1486, Giovanni Lanfredini indicated that Marino had been speaking with its members "very warmly." Lanfredini to the Dieci, Naples, 20 May 1486, Naples. *Corrispondenza*, 106.

⁹⁵This insight was on display following the discovery of a plot against Lorenzo in 1481. Marino wrote a long letter to Giovanni Albino, the secretary of the Duke of Calabria, laying out the details of the conspiracy and its participants. Letter of 6 June 1481, printed in *Lettere, istruzioni ed altre memorie de' re Aragonesi* (Naples, 1769), 19–20.

“per volere adactarse col re.”⁹⁶ It was during this absence that Lorenzo arranged for Marino to receive Florentine citizenship.⁹⁷

This relationship endured even the difficult years that followed the Pazzi Conspiracy. At the end of May 1478, a month after the attack on Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano in the cathedral of Florence, Ferrante decided to recall Marino from Florence. First, however, he lobbied Lorenzo, who was still recuperating from his injuries, to release Cardinal Raffaele Sansoni Riario, arrested in the aftermath of the Conspiracy. The city, however, was less than enthusiastic about his presence in Florence—Lorenzo remarked that it “non pò giovare.”⁹⁸

After the reconciliation between Lorenzo and Ferrante, Marino’s role inside of Florence became even more important—Lorenzo was closer to Marino than any other resident ambassador, and the two shared many conversations and copious amounts of information.⁹⁹ When Lorenzo was away from Florence, he wrote directly to Marino.¹⁰⁰ Marino was the essential link between Florence and Naples, as Lorenzo tried to secure the territories in Tuscany that had been annexed by Ferrante in the recent conflict. Ferrante also borrowed a considerable amount of money from the Medici and Marino frequently urged Ferrante to pay this money back, and his insistence had an effect on the King.¹⁰¹ Such advocacy

⁹⁶Riccardo Fubini suggests that this move had clear political dimensions—Ferrante was at that time finalizing a treaty with Venice that would undoubtedly discomfit the Florentines. “In margine all’edizione delle “Lettere” di Lorenzo de’ Medici” in G. Garfagnani, ed. *Lorenzo de’ Medici: studi* (Florence, 1992). The comment of Lorenzo is recorded in the letter of Cavalchino Guidoboni to Cicco Simonetta, 6 October 1471, Florence, ASMi, AS, PE—Firenze, b. 220.

⁹⁷Signoria to Ferrante d’Aragona, 21 January, ASF, Archivio Mediceo avanti il Principato, Missive 46, c 55 r.: “Donavimus ... illum civitate, et quidem tanto consensus populi, ut nunquam ierit tanta Concordia in suffragia.” Cited in *Lettere*, I, 246.

Other foreign ambassadors who were granted Florentine citizenship include the Milanese residents Nicodemo Tranchadini da Pontremoli (granted in 1450) and Sacromoro Sacromoro (1473). See R. Fubini, “Appunti sui rapporti diplomatici fra il dominio sforzesco e Firenze medicea. Modi e tecniche dell’ambasciata delle trattative per la lega itlica alla missione di Sagromoro da Rimini (1451–1473)” in *Gli Sforza a Milano e in Lombardia e i loro rapporti con gli Stati italiani ed europei (1450–1535)* (Milan, 1982), 319.

⁹⁸*Lettere*, III, ed. N. Rubinstein (Florence, 1977), 92.

⁹⁹Giovanni Lanfredini in Naples wrote to Lorenzo on 16 August 1485 that Ferrante had instructed Anello Arcamone in Rome to write directly to Marino “perché vi [i.e. Lorenzo] comunicchi ogni cosa e vostra magnificentia sia più presto e più apunto avixata e, benché sua maestà desideri sia segreta per le ragioni vi scrissi stamani, non di mancho se vi parrà che messer Marino lo comunicchi più con uno che con altro, o pubblico o privato, tanto vuole che facci quanto vi parrà.” *Corrispondenza*, 234.

¹⁰⁰As in September 1485, when Lorenzo was at Bagno di San Filippo, see *Lettere*, VII, 275.

¹⁰¹Lanfredini indicated in a letter to the Dieci of 24 May 1486 that Marino had written to Ferrante stressing the expenditure that Florence was being forced to undertake: “in quanta spesa si truovon le signorie vostre et, se havessi a essere molto lunga, le signorie vostre la potrieno male comportare et per questo respecto et per chiavarne fructo, habbiendo la maestà sua anche dato di nuovo la prestanza.” *Corrispondenza*, 560.

for the interests of Lorenzo became commonplace in Marino's correspondence. In the end, Marino ended up outlasting both Lorenzo and Ferrante. He appears to have remained in Florence up until the French approach on the city in 1495 made his position untenable. After Charles VIII conquered the Kingdom of Naples, Marino's possessions were confiscated. Already an old man by this time, Marino did not die until 1515, at the unheard-of age of 96.¹⁰²

* * *

The third focal point of Ferrante's Italian diplomacy was Milan. Ferrante's father Alfonso had hoped to seize the Duchy of Milan as part of his imperial designs in Italy. Although he could scarcely contemplate such bald aggression himself, Ferrante continued to seek to influence events in the Duchy. Milan was in many ways the lynchpin state of Italy, a gateway across the Alps of uncertain dynastic status, coveted by several parties. Milanese political and military support was vital in helping Ferrante to defeat the Angevin bid for the throne after 1458. Despite his hostility toward Alfonso of Aragon, Francesco Sforza greatly preferred Aragonese rule in Naples under Ferrante to a French presence in Italy.

Ferrante largely retained the Milanese orientation forged in the early years of his reign. More often than not Milan and Naples were allies, but there were frequent disagreements and antagonisms, particularly after the death of Francesco Sforza in 1466. Among the sources of friction were competing policies toward Genoa and personal animosity between Ferrante and Francesco's successor Galeazzo Maria Sforza, a duke trapped in a seemingly "eternal adolescence."¹⁰³ In the 1470s, Ferrante drifted away from his alliance with Milan, worried particularly that Galeazzo Maria Sforza was too close to France—the Duke had insisted that Louis XI be included in any renewal of the Italian League of 1455. The King wondered whether he could count on protection from his ally if the Angevins again pressed their claim. Vincent Ilardi has aptly called Galeazzo Maria and Ferrante "friendly enemies and hostile allies."¹⁰⁴ By 1474, the split between Milan and Naples was bitter and open. The

¹⁰²Volpicella, *Regis Ferdinandi*, 452.

¹⁰³M. Simonetta, *Il Rinascimento Segreto* (Milan, 2004), 122. The Republic of Genoa was first ceded to Milan by Louis XI of France in 1464, a move that alarmed Ferrante, who saw it as evidence of an unduly close relationship between Milan and France. The Genoese successfully revolted from Milanese rule in 1478. Genoa returned to Milanese suzerainty in 1487, until annexed by Louis XII of France in 1499.

¹⁰⁴On these concerns of Ferrante, see C. de Frede, "Luigi XI e le aspirazioni angioine al regno di Napoli," *Archivio storico napoletano*, N.5, XXXII (1950-1). V. Ilardi, "Towards the *Tragedia d'Italia*: Ferrante and Galeazzo Maria Sforza, friendly enemies and hostile allies" in D. Abulafia, ed., *The French Descent in Renaissance Italy 1494-5: Antecedents and Effects* (Aldershot, 1995).

de facto alliance between Ferrante and Sixtus IV hastened the formation of counter alliance of Milan, Venice and Florence in November 1474. When in 1474 Galeazzo Maria sent troops to aid the *signore* of Città di Castello, Niccolò Vitelli, whom at that time was under attack by a papal army, he claimed that he did so because he saw Ferrante at work behind the papal aggression. He claimed that the king was using all of “his *arte et fitione*” and “all his industry and genius to gain superiority and government over the Italian powers.”¹⁰⁵

Full of contempt for Galeazzo Maria, and aware of the dynastic uncertainties of the Duke’s position, Ferrante began to explore the possibility of securing the Duchy for his son Federico.¹⁰⁶ This represented a renewal of the aspirations of his father, Alfonso. While these grandiose designs never came to fruition, Ferrante continued to interfere in Milanese affairs, redoubling his efforts following the assassination of Galeazzo Maria in December 1476.¹⁰⁷ Ferrante worked to destabilize the regime led by Bona Sforza and Cicco Simonetta, primarily through his support of the brothers of the late Duke, who promised to detach Milan from its alliance with Florence. After the expulsion of the brothers from Milan in early 1477, Ferrante furnished the Adorno, head of the anti-Sforza contingent in Genoa, with money and men in order to stage an armed revolt. Genoa and Savona rebelled against Milanese rule in August 1478. Ferrante simultaneously encouraged the Swiss to invade the Alpine valleys of the Duchy. Eventually, Bona agreed to readmit the brothers in the fall of 1479. Ludovico Maria Sforza gradually seized effective control of the Milanese government, marginalizing Bona and imprisoning and then executing Cicco Simonetta. The triumph of Ludovico led Ferrante to expect to have a dependable and loyal ally installed in Milan, over whom he would be able to exercise considerable sway. In 1480, Isabella d’Aragona, the daughter of the Duke of Calabria, was betrothed to the young Milanese Duke, Giangaleazzo. Ferrante’s political influence across Italy, in these days just before the shock of Otranto, had hit its high-water mark.

Ludovico proved to be considerably less malleable than Ferrante had hoped. Milan offered little or no help in the relief of Otranto. Milan and Naples were allies in the War of Ferrara against Venice, but there were notable tensions, especially between Ludovico and the Duke of Calabria, who led the forces of the League. Ludovico’s aid for Ferrante during the Barons’ Revolt was less than

¹⁰⁵Galeazzo Maria Sforza to Girolamo Riario, 3 August 1474, Galliate, ASMi, AS, PE—Roma, Cart. 77.

¹⁰⁶The King of Hungary, Ferrante’s nephew Matthias Corvinus, made the recommendation that Ferrante marry off Federico to Cunegonde, the daughter of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, in a bid to secure the Duchy of Milan as a dowry. Pontieri, *Per la storia*, 269.

¹⁰⁷For a broad view of the diplomatic reaction to this event, see V. Ilardi, “The assassination of Galeazzo Maria Sforza and the reaction of Italian diplomacy” in L. Martines, ed. *Violence and Civil Disorder in Italian Cities, 1200–1500* (Berkeley, 1970).

Ferrante had hoped, and the cruel marginalization of Isabella d'Aragona in Milan (and her husband, Giangaleazzo Maria) was a constant cause for complaint for Ferrante. The rivalry between Ludovico Maria Sforza and Ferrante of 1492–4 would play a key role in bringing about Charles VIII's invasion of Italy.

Under Ferrante, there was always a Neapolitan ambassador in Milan. At the outset, this was primarily to facilitate communication between the two close allies. But Milan was also the center of the diplomatic network established by Francesco Sforza, so it was a useful listening post for the King and his ambassadors. The Neapolitan ambassador in Milan at the outset of Ferrante's reign was Bartolomeo da Recanati, a scion of the Neapolitan Antici family, who was sent there with "pleno mandato" to secure aid for Ferrante against the Angevins.¹⁰⁸

For such an important post, Ferrante chose experienced servants whom he could trust. Two members of the Cicciniello family served in Milan: Antonio (in Milan in 1464, 1471–5, and then again in 1478–9), a man who served in a variety of domestic and diplomatic roles for Ferrante; and Antonio's uncle, a man known as "Turco," who was in Milan in 1467–71.¹⁰⁹ Antonio was one of the most visible of all foreign agents in Milan and even appeared in a fresco commissioned for the ducal Castello Porta Giovia.¹¹⁰ The experience of Turco Cicciniello in Milan reflects the rocky relations between Ferrante and Milan under Galeazzo Maria Sforza. Turco, like several other ambassadors in Milan, fell afoul of the maddening Duke, and was expelled from the Milanese court.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸Messer, *Le Codice*, 32. On Recanati, see Cerioni, *La diplomazia*, I, 127.

¹⁰⁹Lydia Cerioni makes the error of conflating Antonio with his uncle Turco. *Ibid.* 166.

¹¹⁰G. Lubkin, *A Renaissance Court* (Berkeley, 1994). In 1471, Galeazzo Maria Sforza wrote to Ferrante specifically asking the king that he send Antonio to Florence for the Duke's famed visit to that city. This is reported by Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le Vite*, II (Florence, 1976), 112–13. Like many others, Antonio was dismayed by the behavior of the ill-mannered Duke during his visit, repeatedly asking Ferrante to send someone else in his place. See the letter of Francesco Maletta to Galeazzo Maria Sforza, 3 May 1475, Naples, ASMi, AS, PE—Napoli, cart. 227.

¹¹¹One can follow Turco's turbulent residence in Milan and his sparring with the mercurial Galeazzo Maria in the dispatches of the Mantuan ambassadors in Milan. Zaccaria Saggi da Pisa described Turco as "a man constipated and circumspect" when it came to sharing information, in a letter of 22 February 1470 from Pavia to Ludovico Gonzaga, ASMa, AG, AE—Milano, b.1623. Gradually, however, Zaccaria and Turco warmed to one another. The same cannot be said of the relationship between Turco and the Duke, which was soured by Galeazzo Maria's refusal to sign on to a renewal of a general Italian League and by Ferrante's rapprochement with the Republic of Venice in 1470–1. On 28 September of the same year he described the "grandissima battaglia ha dato messer lo Turcho al signore questa mattina per indurlo nela legha generale." On 22 August 1471 in Cremona, Zaccaria Saggi reported on a lengthy dispute between Turco and the Duke: "e durò per lo spatio di due hore grosse che non fecero may altro che contendere, che'l re voleva governare sua signoria e meser lo Turcho diceva che non era vero, e l'uno si dolleva de l'altro con grosse parole e rincrescevole assay." *Ibid.*, b.1623. The removal of Turco Cicciniello from Milan is chronicled by the Venetian ambassador

It was a fate that also befell Fabrizio Caraffa, who was in Milan in the early years of Galeazzo Maria's reign, and who was accused by the Duke of fomenting discord between him and his increasingly marginalized mother, Bianca Maria. Galeazzo Maria also claimed that the king wanted to rule Milan himself and exert "superiority" over the Duke, and that Fabrizio was the agent of these ambitions.¹¹²

Benedetto Ruggio, often referred to merely as "Abbate" on account of his clerical background, was in Milan between 1480–2, at times joined by the secretary of the Duke of Calabria, Antonio Gazzo.¹¹³

But the longest serving of all Ferrante's resident ambassadors in Milan was the Catalan Simonetto Belprato, who was at the Sforza court from 1482 until his death in 1492.¹¹⁴ He was thus present in Milan in a period during which relations between Ferrante and the Duchy grew steadily worse. Simonetto first served Ferrante as a naval commander and treasurer of the Neapolitan navy, and led a small royal fleet to Genoa in 1478 to support the rebellion against Sforza rule.

in Naples, Zaccaria Barbaro, in a series of letters of January–March 1472. Turco returned briefly to Milan later that year, and Zaccaria reported his death in Naples on 10 August 1472. *Dispacci di Zaccaria Barbaro*, 331. In April 1468, the Mantuan envoy Marsilio Andreasi visited Turco's residence to discuss Galeazzo Maria's recent statements concerning the threat posed by the *condottiere* Bartolomeo Colleoni, and Turco remarked that "non se doveva metter mente a parole generale dicesse questo signore perché dica quello che'l se voglia nondimanco quando se vene a lo effecto." Marsilio Andreasi to Ludovico Gonzaga, 12 April 1478, Milan, ASMa, AG, AE—Milano, b. 1626.

¹¹²*Lettere*, I, 104. This was not the last time a Neapolitan ambassador was asked to leave. In 1480, the Duchess Bona demanded that Giovan Battista Bentivoglio remove himself from Milan, after discovering that he had been involved in plotting with Ludovico and Ascanio Sforza to install them at the head of the Milanese government, displacing her own regency. Zaccaria Saggi reported Bona confronting Giovanni Battista Benivoglio about his behavior in a letter of 3 March 1480, ASMa, AG, AE—Milano, b. 1627: "Poi si voltò intorno al magnifico d. Zohanne Batista Bentivoglio, oratore de la maestà del re Ferrando, il quale era stato mandato qui per casone de operar bene per questo Stato et havea fato tuto l'opposito, perché l'havea aiutato ad indure il prefato monsignore [i.e. Ascanio] in questi seditiosi disordini tenendo tuta via pratiche de mala natura in questa città: il perché sua illustrissima signora non intendeva ch'el stesse più appresso di sé a nome de la maestà del re, e così fin hora lo licentiava che se ne andasse a faria intendere a la prefata maestà haverla licentiato pe le sue male opere." Giovanni learned of his transfer to Urbino on 23 May 1480, *Ibid.*

¹¹³Zaccaria Saggi remarked on Antonio Gazzo's departure on 30 January 1482, in a letter to Federico Gonzaga. Antonio was to visit Mantua on his way back to Naples, and Zaccaria described him as one who "viene molto bene informato de le cose di qua." ASMa, AG, AE—Milano, b. 1626.

¹¹⁴Zaccaria Saggi reported Simonetto's arrival there on 2 January 1482 in a letter to the Marquis Federico Gonzaga. Zaccaria greeted him and "dettoli parole generali." ASMa, AG, AE—Milano, b. 1626. For more on Belprato, see Antonio Galli, *Commentarii de rebus Genouensium*, ed. R. Pandiani, *RIS*, XXIII, I (Rome, 1910–11). See also the entry by I. Walter, "Belprat, Simonetto" in *DBI*, v. 8, 47–8.

Simonetto's Genoese connections made him a particularly useful envoy to have in Milan.¹¹⁵

While in Milan Simonetto faced a challenging task, given the gathering mistrust between Ludovico and Ferrante. Nonetheless, Simonetto enjoyed successes: he was instrumental in convincing Ludovico Sforza to send a force, led by Marsilio Torello, Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, and Gian Francesco Sanseverino, to Ferrante's aid during the Barons' revolt. At the same time, Simonetto was frequently on the receiving end of tirades against Ferrante delivered by Ludovico, who would use "le più coleriche parole del mondo."¹¹⁶ A particularly sensitive issue that Simonetto had to tackle was the systematic marginalization by Ludovico Sforza of the young duke Giangaleazzo and his wife Isabella d'Aragona. Simonetto had been instrumental in arranging this wedding match and he repeatedly complained that Isabella was being mistreated, deprived the honor that was due to the Duchess of Milan.¹¹⁷ The Neapolitan ambassador served as a sounding board for the distressed Isabella amid her tribulations at the hands of the calculating Ludovico Sforza.¹¹⁸ Simonetto also had the embarrassing duty of reporting the unwillingness, or inability, of Giangaleazzo to consummate his marriage with the Duchess. Simonetto called this a "grande infamia" and suspected the malfeasance of Ludovico at work.¹¹⁹

The long-time ambassador in Milan of the Duke of Ferrara, Jacopo Trotti, who arrived in Milan the same year as Simonetto, testified to the pressures on the Neapolitan ambassador. Trotti's dispatches speak frequently of the Simonetto's presence and, faced with many of the same challenges and frustrations at the Milanese court, the two men developed a close and cordial relationship, so much so that Simonetto's secretary called Jacopo "mio patrone

¹¹⁵Following the collapse of Milanese authority in Genoa, Simonetto stayed as a royal commissary, placing Roberto di Sanseverino in command of the Genoese forces that fought off a Milanese counter-attack in August 1478. From Milan, Simonetto undertook a number of short missions to Genoa, including trying to broker a solution in the Florence-Genoa conflict over Sarzana and Pietrasanta. On this role in Genoa, see the letter of Bernardo Rucellai to Lorenzo de Medici, 8 November 1486, Pontieri, *La politica mediceo*, 230. The active role of Belprato in the negotiations is also discussed in C. Bornate, "La guerra di Pietrasanta (1484–85) secondo i documenti dell'Archivio Genovese," *Miscellanea di storia italiana*, s. III, XIX (1992), 194. See also H. Butters, "Lorenzo and Naples" in G. C. Garfagnani, ed., *Lorenzo il magnifico e il suo mondo* (Florence, 1994), 148.

¹¹⁶Jacopo Trotti to Ercole d'Este, 24 August 1489, Pavia, ASM, AE, CA—Milano, b.6.

¹¹⁷Ludovico Sforza and Ferrante quarreled over the yearly stipend for Isabella in Milan. Ferrante insisted on 18,000 ducats, while Ludovico would concede only 13,000. This dispute is emblematic of the broader dispute over the treatment of the Duchess. See the dispatch of Jacopo Trotti of 11 February 1489, *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸Simonetto told Jacopo Trotti that the Duchess expressed her desperation, to the point of desiring death. She was not allowed to receive visitors without the Regent's permission and those assigned to her retinue neither looked at her nor obeyed her commands. G. Lopez, *I signori di Milano* (Rome, 2003), 117.

¹¹⁹Jacopo Trotti to Ercole d'Este, 24 April 1489, ASM, AE, CA—Milano, b.6.

et patre.”¹²⁰ When Jacopo fell ill, Simonetto acted on his behalf, reading letters to Ludovico Maria Sforza and submitting petitions in his name.¹²¹ Ludovico had a dim view of the close relationship of the two ambassadors, in 1489 calling it “ombroso.”¹²² The dispatches of the papal nuncio in Milan from 1488–90, Giacomo Gherardi, testify to the increasing tensions between the Regent and the Neapolitan resident ambassador.¹²³ Despite the rising animosity, Simonetto’s death in Milan was occasioned by a grand funeral, one that Trotti estimated costing at least 500 ducats, and attended by (an undoubtedly exaggerated) six thousand priests and monks.¹²⁴ At the time of his death, Simonetto was the object not only of Ludovico’s displeasure, but also of Ferrante’s suspicion, like Anello in Rome. Simonetto had been away from Naples for several years and Ferrante appeared to suspect that Simonetto’s outlook was being colored by that of his hosts.¹²⁵

* * *

¹²⁰Simonetto’s secretary wrote to the Neapolitan ambassador and asked him “raccomandami al Signore Messer Jacomo Trotto, mio patrone et patre et al resto de quelli magnifici oratori.” This reported in a letter of Jacopo Trotti to Ercole d’Este, 1 January 1489, ASM, AE, CA—Milano, b.6.

¹²¹Letter to Ercole d’Este of 16 July 1489, Pavia, Ibid.

¹²²Letter to Ercole d’Este of 4 March 1489, Milan, Ibid.: “El me ha honestamente dissuaso il commercio assiduo che tengo cum Messer Simonoto per esser ombroso, ma io de risposta li ho convenientemente et bene satisfatto et tracto soa Excellentia de ogni ombra.”

¹²³E. Carusi, ed. *Dispacci e lettere di Giacomo Gherardi. Nunzio pontificio a Firenze e Milano (11 settembre 1487–10 ottobre 1490)* Studi e testi, 21 (Rome, 1909). Among several examples, there is Giacomo’s letter to Pope Innocent VIII of 25 August 1489: “hic Princeps egre admodum fert hunc novissimum actum factum a Rege contra Vestram Sanctitatem et, presente me, dixit oratori Regio non deuisse illum, inconsultis confederatis, talia egisse, ac, si Regia Maiestas parum eos existimaret, ipsi quoque minus ad eam respicerent et versus ad me Princeps, presente oratore Florentino et archiepiscopo Mediolanensi et Maleacensi episcopo: ‘Scribe, inquit, Pontifici bono animo sit; nos ei nunquam defuturos, et, si propter hoc Rex movebit arma contra Sanctitatem Suam, nos illi subministratos auxilia contra Regiam Maiestatem, nec pefatam Sanctitatem sinemus molestari, nec eius honorem quoquo modo ledi, in cuius lesione nos primum lesos putabimus.’”

¹²⁴Letter to Ercole d’Este of 17 January 1492; cited in F. Malaguzzi-Valeri, *La Corte di Ludovico il Moro* (Milan, 1913), I, 153.

¹²⁵Ultimately, he died before the king’s misgivings could be proven. As in the case of Anello, the king linked the souring of relations with the host court with the performance of his resident ambassador. Just as Ferrante had felt that Anello might not have been acting with the king’s best interests in mind at Rome at a time of tension with the Pope, he also wondered whether the increasingly bitter feelings between Ludovico Maria Sforza and Naples in 1491–2 might have something to do with the actions of his ambassador. Ferrante expressed his doubts about the recently deceased Simonetto’s role in a letter to his successor, Antonio de Gennaro in September 1492, wondering whether Simonetto was actively working “against our needs”: “La deliberazione nostra di fare venire in Napoli il Ripoll [an unidentified envoy who was at that time in Milan with Antonio de Gennaro] è processa anco da alcuna sospizione che abbiamo che detto Ripoll tenga delle pratiche e modi che tenea il quondam messer Belprato contro il bisogno del servizio nostro.’ Volpicella, *Regis Ferdinandi*, 281. Antonio de Gennaro would remain in Milan until Ferrante’s death in 1494. Ibid., 341.

The pursuit of Ferrante's pan-Italian diplomatic strategy thus focused on Rome, Florence and Milan, where ambassadors from Naples were always resident. The reach of Ferrante's diplomacy stretched beyond these three locales, to other Italian courts and to non-Italian states. Despite the increased Italian orientation of the Kingdom under Ferrante, Naples, had persistent extra-Italian interests and anxieties. Of particular importance were his communications with his Matthias Corvinus in Hungary and with Charles the Bold of Burgundy, whom Ferrante sought to use as a counterweight to French designs on Naples. Ferrante was the first Italian ruler to keep a resident ambassador at the Burgundian court, even before his formal alliance with Charles the Bold in 1471. Francesco Bertini, the bishop of Andria and later Capaccio, was resident there from the early months of Charles the Bold's reign.¹²⁶ Francesco was the main conduit in the ultimately fruitless negotiations to marry Ferrante's son Federico to Charles' daughter Maria.¹²⁷ Francesco, referred to memorably by Galeazzo Maria Sforza as "capo di tutti li inimici vostri qui," remained in Burgundy until his death in 1475.¹²⁸

Throughout his reign, Ferrante displayed a willingness and ability to identify and retain talent. The limitations of the sources mean that it is impossible to undertake an examination of these personnel that is truly prosopographical in nature, but we can make some general observations. It is notable that we find a considerable number of individuals who served Ferrante for the extent of their careers, or for the entirety of his reign. Antonio Cicciniello was one of these, serving the king for three decades before his unfortunate demise. Antonio d'Alessandro, Marino Tomacelli, and the humanist Giovanni Pontano were in Ferrante's service for duration of his reign.

These lifelong servants of the king have in common that they also served him in domestic offices with the royal administration. As in other princely states

¹²⁶See R. Walsh, "Charles the Bold, the last Valois Duke of Burgundy 1467–77, and Italy," PhD dissertation, University of Hull (1977), and his article "Relations between Milan and Burgundy in the Period 1450–1476" in *Gli Sforza a Milano e in Lombardia e i loro rapporti con gli stati italiani ed europei (1450–1535)* (Milan, 1982), 380–81. For more on Francesco Bertini, see *DBI*, v. 9, 540–41.

¹²⁷See *Dépeches des ambassadeurs milanais sur les campagnes de Charles-le-Hardi duc de Bourgogne de 1474 à 1477*, ed. F. de Gingins la Sarra, I (Paris, 1858), 66ff, 77ff; J. Calmette, *Le projet de mariage bourgignon-napolitain en 1474*, *Bibliothèque de l'École de Chartes*, LXVII (1911), 460–72. Francesco was the Neapolitan functionary at both the signing of the anti-French treaty of St. Omer in November 1471 and at the treaty of Péronne the following June, when Venice and Burgundy signed a friendship pact. Francesco accompanied Charles the Bold on his military campaigns, and was present at the unsuccessful siege of Neuss in 1474, where he found himself in considerable physical danger as the Burgundian forces were forced into retreat. The Milanese ambassador, Giovan Pietro Panigarola, reported news of Francesco's death, "senza confessione né testamento" in November 1475. There are numerous references to Bertini's presence in Burgundy in E. Sestan, ed., *Carteggi Fra Milano Sforzesca e Borgogna*, I (Rome, 1985), II (Rome, 1987). The report of Bertini's death is in a letter of 24 November 1475, II, 121.

¹²⁸R. Fubini, 314.

in the fifteenth century, there was considerable movement between Naples' domestic chancery and the diplomatic corps. The permeability of the line between internal and external service can be seen in the Duchy of Milan and in the smaller princely states in Mantua and Ferrara.¹²⁹ A number of men in Naples who carried the title of *regio consigliere* also served as ambassadors, including Antonio Cicciniello, Antonio d'Alessandro, and Bartolomeo da Recanati.¹³⁰ Giovanni Pontano, the celebrated humanist and a prominent figure in the royal chancery, was dispatched on a number of short-term missions, particularly to the papal court. Giovanni Zumbo was a royal treasurer who later served as the resident ambassador in Venice, and Benedetto Ruggio, a man "closer to Ferrante than others," moved between domestic offices and service abroad during his years in Ferrante's employ.¹³¹ Benedetto died in diplomatic service to Ferrante's

¹²⁹An extensive examination of this practice in Mantua is I. Lazzarini, *Fra un principe e altri stati: relazioni di potere e forme di servizio a Mantova nell'età di Ludovico Gonzaga* (Rome, 1996). For Milan, see F. Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo dello stato: I "famigli cavalcanti" di Francesco Sforza (1450–1466)* (Pisa, 1992).

¹³⁰On Antonio d'Alessandro, see F. Petrucci's entry in *DBI*, v. 31, 733–5. See also Volpicella, *Regis Ferdinandi*, 120–1. Antonio, whom Ferrante called "most skilled," was a royal counselor to Ferrante as early as the beginning of 1459. He was already listed as one of the royal counselors in the draft of the powers accorded to Antonio Cicciniello on his mission to the pontifical court in January 1459, and served as secretary on a number of Ferrante's letters. Antonio signed as follows: "Datum in Castello Novo civitatis nostre Neapolis per magnificum virum utriusque iuris doctorem et militem Antonium de Alexandro locumtenentem illustri viri Honorati Gayetani de Aragonia Fundorum comitis etc." Mazzoleni, *Regesto*, 232. Early in his career, he was sent on a variety of short-term diplomatic missions, including a trip to Rome to congratulate the newly elected Pius II, and to Spain to pay a visit to John II of Aragon. In the years that followed Antonio taught law at the university in Naples but was soon recruited back into the royal administration, serving in a number of judicial and administrative roles before becoming the president of the Sacred Royal Council in 1480. Ferrante also sent Antonio on missions to Spain and to France. The final years of his service to Ferrante were spent in Spain as the resident ambassador to King Ferdinand the Catholic, where he frequently presented remonstrances from Ferrante against the new Pope, Alexander VI.

¹³¹For Zumbo's activity as treasurer, see Giampietro, "Un registro," 272–3. In 1459, Zumbo was sent to secure the loyalty of Calabria. Bernardo Rucellai wrote that Benedetto was "più appresso al Re che altri, e quali hai pratici e sai quello che valagano in cose di stati" in a letter to Lorenzo de' Medici of 3 November 1486. Pontieri, *La politica mediceo*, 226–8. Ferrante greatly valued Benedetto's service; in a letter of 22 August 1486 to his ambassador in Rome, Antonio d'Alessandro, Ferrante expressed his desire to see the Abbey of San Benedetto, a benefice of the recently deceased Cardinal Giovanni d'Aragona, pass into the possession of Benedetto. He lauded him as follows: "Magnifico M. Antonio, vui sapite quali et quanti siano stati li servitij longo tempo havemo receputi dal magnifico Abbate Rugio nostro secretario delectissimo, et perciò non curarimo allargarci molto circa questo: vi dicimo che decti servitij sono stati di tal natura, che havimo causa amarlo quanto altro servitore che habbiamo et procurarli omne bene possibile, per mostrare ad tutto lo mundo che non semo ingannati ne ingrati delli servitij recepimo, massime essendo di quello momento che sono stati quelli che ne ha prestati ipso magnifico Abbate." Giampietro, "Un ambasciatore salernitano," 34. Benedetto later moved into the role of royal secretary, countersigning the king's letters following the disgrace and arrest of Antonello Petrucci. *Ibid.*, 32.

son and successor Alfonso, in Venice in early 1495. The Republic provided him with a solemn funeral at which Sabellico delivered a lengthy encomium. The oration spoke of Benedetto's diplomatic skill, his constancy under pressure, and his modesty despite the gifts and honors showered on him by Ferrante.¹³²

Antonio Ciccinello presents an interesting case. Unlike those who served as long-term resident ambassadors, Antonio acted more as a roving special envoy, deputized by Ferrante to carry out a range of short- and longer term missions. Antonio was a man "of the best reputation in every locale," according to Vespasiano Bisticci.¹³³ In addition to his assignments in Milan, he was also a regular envoy on sensitive missions to Rome, including an attempt to secure papal confirmation of Ferrante's title from Pius II in 1459 and to induce the condottiere Jacopo Piccinino to return control of Assisi to the Pope.¹³⁴ Antonio was a representative of Ferrante at the Congress of Mantua in 1459–60, along with the Archbishop of Bitonto and the Bishop of Benevento, Giacomo della Ratta.¹³⁵ Antonio returned to Rome in 1467, where, along with the resident ambassador Guglielmo Rocca, he pursued negotiations toward a renovation of the general Italian League of 1455.¹³⁶ It was Antonio, more than any other Neapolitan functionary, who was responsible for the planning that led up to the infamous elimination in 1465 of Piccinino, a long-time thorn in Ferrante's side.¹³⁷ His role in the deception of Piccinino meant that he was hardly the man "who never knew how to pretend or lie," as Vespasiano called him in his *Lives of Illustrious Men*.¹³⁸ Antonio's death in 1485, at the hands of rebels in Aquila,

¹³²Giampietro, "Un ambasciatore," 51.

¹³³Bisticci, *Vite*, 101.

¹³⁴Messer, *Le Codice*, 165—January 1459. Powers conferred on Antonio are in Messer, *Le Codice*, 169–70. For a portion of this residence in Rome, Antonio was joined by Niccolò de Stasis.

¹³⁵Giampietro, "Un registro," 84.

¹³⁶Instructions to Antonio and Rocca, in Trinchera, *Le Codice*, 177.

¹³⁷Antonio was the voice of the King of Naples in the finalization of the agreement that brought Piccinino into Neapolitan service and into a marriage match with the Sforza. The Mantuan ambassador in Milan, Vincenzo da Scalona, reported to Barbara Brandenburg that Antonio had been granted full powers to negotiate the agreement with Piccinino. 27 August 1465, Milan, ASMa, AG, AE—Milano, b.1622. The plan to marry off Francesco Sforza's daughter Drusiana to Jacopo Piccinino had been discussed since at least 1460, as evidenced in Ferrante's letter of instruction to Giovanni Zumbo of 20 February 1460 in Messer, *Le Codice*, 483.

¹³⁸"Uomo intero, che mai non seppe né fingere né simulare, diceva largamente quello che'egli intendeva et dove egli è andato ambasciadore, sempre v'è stato con grandissima autorità et molto riputato et istimato." Bisticci, *Le Vite*, 101. In fact, Vespasiano apparently contradicts his own judgment on Antonio by recounting later in his biography how Antonio bribed a barber of the ambassador of Jean d'Anjou to get his papers, and how Antonio used operatives to steal secret codes. Along with the Milanese ambassador in Naples, Antonio da Trezzo, Antonio Ciccinello conspired to lure Piccinino into a trap. After painstaking machinations, he convinced Piccinino, recently married to Francesco Sforza's illegitimate daughter Drusiana, to make a trip to Naples, where, he was told, he would be honored and rewarded with the title of Viceroy of the Abruzzi. Instead, Piccinino was

where he was serving as the king's representative, left Ferrante deeply upset at the loss of a trusted servant.¹³⁹

The faithfulness and dedicated service of these diplomats might seem an anomaly in a polity that was largely defined by instability and treachery. Anello Arcamone's demise and the mistrust directed at Simonetto Belprato before his death reveal that the deeply suspicious attitude of Ferrante toward the baronage of his kingdom could extend into his relationships with his secretaries and ambassadors. The uncertain loyalty of his own nobility might explain his willingness to cull capable servants from other employers. Perhaps the most remarkable example of this is the case of Antonio da Trezzo, for many years the Milanese ambassador in Naples, who ended up serving as the Neapolitan ambassador at the Milanese court. His residence in Naples coincided with a period when Milan was Naples' closest ally, and Antonio and the king established a close working relationship. We have seen how under Galeazzo Maria this alliance cooled, and with it so too did the relationship between Galeazzo Maria and Antonio. Antonio, acting in accordance with the wishes of Ferrante, maintained a secret correspondence with the Duke's mother, Bianca Maria. Galeazzo Maria became aware of this parallel avenue of communication and resented it deeply. Antonio uneasily stayed in his office until 1470 but in the final year Galeazzo Maria ignored him almost entirely.¹⁴⁰ Antonio, replaced in his post, was nonetheless instructed to remain in Naples, in order to satisfy the

arrested, imprisoned and then killed in the Castel Nuovo in Naples. For Cicciniello's role in the conspiracy, see D. Giampietro, "La morte di Giacomo Piccinino" in *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, VII (1882).

¹³⁹ Antonio was sent by the king to the restive city of Aquila as the lieutenant of the prince of Capua, the King's son. Throughout the summer the population of Aquila grew more agitated, egged on by Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere; this was the first volley in the great Barons' Revolt. In September, Antonio brought an armed force of 400 to the town. This only riled up the population more and on 25 September a mob descended on his house, looted the premises, and stabbed the royal official to death. Antonio's body was then cut into pieces and scattered about the street. Bisticci, *Vite*, 120–1. In his distress over the death of Antonio, Ferrante expressed his belief that the Pope was involved in these disturbances. Battista Bendedei, on 1 October 1485 in Naples, when reporting news of Antonio's death to Ercole d'Este, wrote: "Unde che Sua Maestà dixè che questo era caso molto li diaspiaceva, sì per la iactura de tanto homo, come etiam che se puol credere che questo sii sta per opera et cura de N.S." Paladino, "Per la storia," 339.

¹⁴⁰ Antonio's letters from Naples as Milanese ambassador have been published in the volume by Francesco Senatore, *Dispacci sforzeschi*, and these letters serve as the backbone for his "*Uno mundo di carta*." See also D. Abulafia, "The Inception of the Reign of King Ferrante I of Naples: The Events of Summer 1458 in the Light of Documentation from Milan" in Abulafia, ed. *The French Descent*, 71–90. On the falling out between the Duke and Antonio, see V. Ilardi, "Towards the *Tragedia d'Italia*," 95–6; and P. Margaroli, "Bianca Maria e Galeazzo Maria Sforza nelle ultime lettere di Antonio da Trezzo (1467–1469)," *Archivio storico lombardo*, 111 (1985), 327–77.

wishes of Ferrante, who had a favorable view of him.¹⁴¹ The king then determined to give him employment in Naples. In the late 1470s, following the assassination of Galeazzo Maria, Ferrante sent Antonio back to Milan, this time as the Neapolitan ambassador.¹⁴²

Giovanni Battista Bentivoglio was a similar case. A Bolognese by birth, Giovanni's father served Guido Antonio da Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, for many years, rising to the level of vicar general and lieutenant of his territories. Giovanni himself became one of the Duke's closest advisers and vicar of the appellate courts. After carrying out a mission for Federico da Montefeltro in 1460, Giovanni was convinced by Ferrante to transfer his service to Naples, and thereafter Giovanni served in a variety of capacities for the King.¹⁴³ He became one of the king's secretaries, a member of the royal council in 1468, and the president of the Regia Camera della Sommaria in 1473. He also served in a number of ambassadorial postings, including in Florence, Urbino and Milan, where the Mantuan ambassador called him "homo prudentissimo e di grande experientia."¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹He was replaced by Giovanni Andrea Cagnola. F. Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo*, 248.

¹⁴²This return visit to Milan is chronicled in the *Acta in Consilio Secreto Mediolani*, recorded by the Milanese first secretary Cicco Simonetta. Upon first presenting himself in Milan in February 1478, the Secret Council acknowledged his long service to both Francesco and the regent Bona Sforza. *Acta in Consilio Secreto in Castello Portae Jovis Mediolani*, ed. A.R. Natale, 3 Vols. (Milan, 1963–9), 196. "Magnificus dominus Antonius de Tricio, orator domini Regis Ferdinandi, fuit admissus coram illustrissima Domina nostra, cuius Excellentie, sub litteris credentialibus, retulit, nomine Regis, de bona sua dispositione et obligatione versus hunc Statum, commemorando obligationem, quam habebat versus ducem Franciscum et dominam ducissam Blancham et commemorando etiam benefica et demonstratione, quas fecit Rex in morte ducis Francisci et ducis Galeaz, et, maxime, in rebus Janue ..."

¹⁴³For the relationship between Federico da Montefeltro and Ferrante, generally a close one, see C. H. Clough, "Federigo da Montefeltro and the kings of Naples: a study in fifteenth-century survival," *Renaissance Studies*, 6 (1992), 113–72.

¹⁴⁴This assessment of Giovanni is from Zaccaria Saggi, in a letter to Margherita of Bavaria, 4 October 1479, ASMa, AG, AE—Milan. Zaccaria suggested that Ludovico Sforza was not pleased with the choice of Giovanni as ambassador: "Qui è venuto il magnifico domino Zohan Batista da Urbino, mandato dal re per star fermo qui, ma sento che'l signor Lodovico ha scritto al re che non lo vogli tener qui per essere di natura che non sarà grata a persona e che sua maestà vogli mandare un altro." Zaccaria to Federico Gonzaga, 12 October 1479, *Ibid.* At a time when there was already a great deal of suspicion in Milan over the intentions of Ferrante in Milan, the Milanese apparently considered Giovanni to be too pro-Genoese for their liking, and the Duchess especially sought to have him replaced. *Lettere*, V, 7. Like Antonio da Trezzo, he also ended up returning as ambassador at the court of his former employer. He remained a great admirer of Federico da Montefeltro, and was Ferrante's ambassador in Urbino from the middle of 1480 to at least the end of 1482. During this period, he also traveled to Siena to negotiate terms for the restitution of occupied land to Florence. *Lettere*, V, 53–4. Lorenzo de' Medici was deeply suspicious of Giovanni, presumably because of his continued closeness to Federico da Montefeltro and his advocacy for Lorenzo's perennial tormentor, Girolamo Riario. In a letter of 31 January 1480, Lorenzo advised Niccolò Michelozzi to act with

It is unsurprising that Ferrante would make ample use of foreigners in this fashion, given his suspicions of the nobility of Naples. Francesco Bertini, his ambassador in Burgundy, was from Lucca. Simonetto Belprato was a Spaniard, who had come across from Valencia with Alfonso.¹⁴⁵ Garcia Betes, who served as Ferrante's envoy to the English court in 1473–6, was also a Spaniard.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, the employment of foreigners as ambassadors, while never practiced by the Italian republican regimes, was not infrequent among seigniorial governments.¹⁴⁷

Though many of Ferrante's ambassadors were non-Neapolitans, most of them were Italian, and increasingly so. Ferrante's father, Alfonso, had filled his administration with Spaniards and the primary language of Alfonso's court had been Catalan.¹⁴⁸ This changed under Ferrante, who availed himself primarily of Italians (but not necessarily Neapolitans), an indication of the largely Italian orientation of his Kingdom, now separated from the Spanish holdings of the House of Aragon.¹⁴⁹ The most important diplomatic postings for Naples were Italian ones; it made sense to fill them with Italians. This change can be seen in the fact that upon Alfonso's death in 1458, Ferrante sent a Catalan ambassador, Arnaldo di Sançs, to offer entreaties to Pope Calixtus (a Catalan himself), but thereafter all of Ferrante's envoys to Rome were Italians, as were all the popes until the election of Alexander VI in 1492.¹⁵⁰

Ferrante was thus willing to draw from a deep and varied pool for the talent to fill out his diplomatic personnel. Predictably, some of these men were lawyers, like Anello Arcamone, and his replacement in Rome, Antonio

caution when negotiating with Giovanni, for he had repeatedly shown himself hostile to Florentine interests. He wrote that Niccolò had to "purgare ogni sinistra opinione che lui presumessi io haver de lui." *Lettere*, V, 134. The Florentine ambassador in Milan, Piero Filippo Pandolfini, complained to Lorenzo de Medici of Giovanni's role in plans to cede Faenza to Girolamo Riario in the summer of 1480, saying "tutta questa debbe essere opera del duca d'Urbino et di Messer Giovan Battista Bentivogli." Letter to Lorenzo, 7 July 1480, in *Lettere*, V, 67–8.

¹⁴⁵The one full letter of instruction to Belprato that we have, reprinted in Messer, *Le Codice Aragonese*, 415–16, is in Catalan.

¹⁴⁶See *I diari di Cicco Simonetta*, ed. A.R. Natale (Milan, 1962), 191. Garcia's return to Naples, through Burgundy, is mentioned by Giovanni Pietro Panigarola in a letter of 16 January 1476 to Galeazzo Maria Sforza from Neuchatel. *Carteggi diplomatici*, II, 486.

¹⁴⁷For example, the long-serving Mantuan ambassador in Milan was Zaccaria Saggi da Pisa. The Milanese also used foreigners as ambassadors, see F. Leverotti, *Diplomazia e governo*.

¹⁴⁸See A. Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous* (Oxford, 1990), 358–92.

¹⁴⁹Ferrante himself never learned to speak Italian completely or correctly. When speaking or writing to Italians, he employed a sort of hybrid language. With his close confidants, he continued to use Castilian or Catalan. B. Croce, *La Spagna nella vita italiana durante la Rinascenza* (Bari, 1917), 44–5.

¹⁵⁰Giampietro, "Un registro aragonese," 67–8. Calixtus refused even to receive the ambassador and his letters of introduction.

d'Alessandro. Others were churchmen, such as Francesco Bertini, Benedetto Ruggio and Guglielmo Rocca, who served as resident ambassador in Rome in the 1460s. Ferrante employed Spaniards, Neapolitan noblemen, and Italians not from Naples. He was also willing to bring in skilled individuals who were in the service of other employers. This was a diverse group and its make-up testifies to two qualities not habitually associated with Ferrante: flexibility and pragmatism.

Ferrante's political skill and wisdom were widely acknowledged during his lifetime. The characteristics of his image that garnered him opprobrium—caprice, unpredictability and cruelty—were precisely those that served him well in the political environment of Italy in the second half of the fifteenth century. But, as has been suggested above, Ferrante also employed means that were becoming far more conventional—he facilitated his political tightrope act with recourse to the service of his diplomatic corps, composed of individuals who had served him and earned his trust. Like other Italian princes, he regularly employed these officials as resident ambassadors. They kept open lines of political communication, facilitated negotiation, supplied a constant stream of information, and generally served as an Aragonese presence in states across Italy and beyond. In the unlikely 36-year survival of the reign of Naples' bastard king, these ambassadors were an important tool. In the realm of diplomacy, at least, the King of Naples must be counted among the innovators, an enthusiastic participant in novel developments centered in fifteenth-century Italy. Recent scholarship has suggested that Ferrante should also be considered a modernizer and centralizer in the realm of military affairs, where he and his son Alfonso lay the groundwork for a permanent, standing army.¹⁵¹ In fact, Vincent Ilardi, who has done so much to demonstrate the importance of Francesco Sforza's innovatory role, counts Ferrante as the true heir to Francesco in Italy and a statesman who stressed "overriding aspects of state interests over private passions."¹⁵² Thus Ernesto Pontieri chooses to call Ferrante "un machiavelliano *ante litteram*."¹⁵³ Naples was thus not an outlier, an exceptional case inside Italy as it so often portrayed, but rather fully engaged in changes that the rest of Europe would embrace in the following century.

Ferrante of Naples, despite his pursuit of ambitions and his hard-man reputation, recognized that he was in general best served by the maintenance of the balance of power. This was especially the case starting in the 1480s, when the fundamental vulnerabilities of the Kingdom became increasingly clear in the crises that Ferrante faced: Mediterranean vulnerability in the Otranto landings and continued threat of the Turks; Italian vulnerability in his struggle with the

¹⁵¹F. Storti, "Il principe condottiero. Le campagne militari di Alfonso duca di Calabria" in M. del Treppo, *Condottieri e uomini d'arme nell'Italia del Rinascimento* (Naples, 2001), esp. 337–8, 348.

¹⁵²Ilardi, "Towards the *Tragedia d'Italia*," 92, 110.

¹⁵³Pontieri, *Per la storia*, 129.

Pope; dynastic vulnerability in the French claims to his throne; and internal vulnerability in the baronial revolts. All else had to be subjugated to the primary goals of keeping the Kingdom together and immune from cisalpine claims. Giuseppe Galasso has suggested that Ferrante's death "should be judged more damaging to the independence of the kingdom and of Italy than the death of Lorenzo de' Medici."¹⁵⁴ Guicciardini described the latter as the *ago di bilancia* in Italian politics in the late fifteenth century. But it was the demise of Ferrante in January 1494 that quickly precipitated the complete collapse of the pan-Italian diplomatic scheme born in the 1455 Italian League. The viability of this system rested largely on the insulation of Milan and Naples from extra-Italian dynastic claims. In 1494, this insulation was comprehensively transgressed, as Charles VIII of France pressed his claim to the Neapolitan throne through military force. Whereas Ferrante's rule had lasted, against all likelihood, for thirty-six years, his son Alfonso ruled for less than a year. He was forced to abdicate as the French army approached Naples in January 1495. The success of the political balancing act orchestrated by Ferrante, and carried out by his ambassadors, was at an end. For the next hundred years, the future of Naples would be as a province of the Spanish Empire.

¹⁵⁴Galasso, "Il regno," 666.