

# Editing Elizabeth I's Italian Letters

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## *Abstract*

Much excellent scholarship has been based upon the fine editions of Elizabeth's letters and works which have been published to date. Modern scholars, however, have unjustly neglected her Italian missives, leaving untouched a critical source for scholarly work. By means of some hitherto unpublished documents, the article will endeavour to cast some light on Elizabeth's Italian correspondence, and will describe some of the challenges (and intriguing mysteries) one has to face when editing these letters.

*Keywords:* Correspondence, Editing, Elizabeth I, Letter Writing, Manuscripts

## 1. *Introduction*

Writing to Secretary Gabriel de Zayas in 1578, the Spanish Ambassador Bernardino De Mendoza noted that the Queen had recently paid him what almost amounted to a compliment: 'she said that if I were a *gaglioffo* (for she likes to use such terms as these in Italian) I should not have remained here so long' (Hume 1892-1894, II, 617). While the affirmation that Mendoza, a nobleman of the highest Spanish lineage was not, after all, 'a worthless knave' was not exactly flattering, the ambassador's incidental remark is intriguing. It is in fact revealing of Elizabeth's use of Italian in her diplomatic relationships, a language she often employed, in conversation and in writing, for irony, understatement, or as a means to establish a more intimate rapport with her interlocutor or addressee.

While evidence abounds as to Elizabeth I's proficiency in Italian, only a fraction of her letters in this language has so far come to light, and only one has been edited in Mueller and Marcus' *Autograph Compositions and Foreign Language Originals* (2003, 5-6), the well-known first extant letter by the then Princess to Katherine Parr. A research project commenced in 2009 has so far located about 30 of these missives, including seven entirely in the Queen's hand. These documents comprise three addressed to Emperor Maximilian II in the mid-1560s, for which both the holograph drafts and the sent copies, in Elizabeth's best hand, have been discovered.<sup>1</sup> If one can feel quite confident about the authorial element in these texts, which deal with an issue as delicate as that of the Queen's marriage to Archduke Charles of Austria, much of the non-holograph texts touch on far less exciting topics. One may expect the Queen's most trusted collaborators, such as her Principal Secretaries and the office of the Latin Secretary, to have played a considerable part in the composition of such material. Questions of authorship

related to these letters clearly arise: how is one supposed to distinguish between what 'the Queen wrote' and what her ministers asked her to sign? As will become evident in the following pages, the Queen may have been more involved with their composition than has been previously acknowledged, which clearly calls for a new approach to these materials.

## 2. *Material Letters*

An analysis of the holographs shows that the Queen penned and revised her drafts very carefully. In the case of the Vienna letters, she later copied out the final versions in what are three exceptional examples of her best hand, resembling, in various ways, the beautiful calligraphic 'Palatino' script of her early writings. When one considers the attention which Elizabeth devoted to her lexical choices, her careful use of rhetoric, and examines a document such as the one reproduced here as figure 1 (which Elizabeth sent to Maximilian on 22 June 1567) it becomes evident that she considered both the verbal element and the presentation of the letters to be of equal importance for the content she intended to convey.<sup>2</sup>

Such significant features suggest a new approach to Elizabeth's epistolary texts. In *Shakespeare's Letters*, Alan Stewart has pointed out that the material evidence of Renaissance correspondence 'force[s] us to consider the letter not as a text but as an object' (2008, 66), and a number of recent publications have proven how fruitful such an approach can be (see e.g. Daybell and Hinds 2010; Daybell 2012; Allinson 2012). Focusing on material evidence (including, for example, seals, watermarks, endorsements and handwriting styles) can lead to exciting discoveries. When one examines the non-holograph material from this perspective, in fact, a number of important issues come to light; in particular one can understand that the commonly accepted accounts of how what F.J. Platt (1994) has termed the Elizabethan 'Foreign office' worked, may not always apply to the Italian missives – and perhaps not even to the entirety of the Latin correspondence.

A joint study of these two categories can, in fact, be very useful to dispel some generally held beliefs. In his edition of the letters sent to the Protestant Powers, for example, E.I. Kouri states that 'letters given under the signet were in English, but those belonging to the queen's diplomatic correspondence with foreign powers... were not sealed with the signet... The Royal signature written at the foot sufficed as proof of genuineness' (Kouri 1982, 13; see also below, note 14). The small but unique collection of letters sent to some continental Princes in Latin and Italian signed by Elizabeth preserved at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington (MS X d 138) seems to contradict this statement. All of the letters in this volume, in fact, show traces of a seal, and at least one bears a papered signet seal (Folger X d 138, fig. 2). The size of the wax stains (1.5 x 1.5 inches) visible on the letters in this manuscript are certainly compatible with the surviving seal, and with another one of the same dimension and appearance now in Folger V b 181. This detail is significant: the presence of a signet seal suggests that the production of these

missives should be seen in relation to an identifiable group of court employees, the clerks of the signet. Among these were men such as Thomas Windebanke, who often enjoyed a unique working relationship with Elizabeth, which even included transcribing the prose parts of her translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, into which she added, in her own hand, the poetry sections (National Archives, Kew, State Papers [hereafter 'SP'] 12/289; see the edition by Kaylor and Phillips, 2009; for a facsimile see Pryor 2003, 112). One can clearly see that an exploration of the links between these documents and the Elizabethan bureaucratic apparatus is one which can bear much fruit.

### 3. *Offices and Official Hands*

The production of the majority of the official foreign correspondence, the greater portion of which was in Latin, was dealt with by the secretariats of State (the office of the Principal Secretary) and of the Latin Tongue (cf. Kouri 1982, 13-18; Platt 1994; Allinson 2012, 17-19; 25-28). Roger Ascham, Elizabeth's first appointed Latin secretary, apparently made a point of penning and personally countersigning most of the Queen's missives which he was required to compose, and used collaborators mostly in order to keep copies of these texts for his records.<sup>3</sup> Ascham's successor in this post from about 1568, Sir John Wolley, had evidently a very different view of his position. Not being endowed with what one may term beautiful handwriting, and having to deal with a significantly increased workload, he regularly employed various copyists for both drafts and the final versions to be sent.<sup>4</sup> Probably in an effort to ensure that the numerous Latin letters by the Queen produced under his supervision were not too dissimilar from one another, Wolley seems to have established a 'house style' which featured engrossed capital letters placed to the left of the text to mark the beginning of paragraphs, and an overall similar script for the first line, which normally included a formal salutation starting with the name of the queen (fig. 2a).<sup>5</sup> His successor from 1596, Christopher Parkins, whose italic was much more acceptable, was to continue, at least in part, this tradition.<sup>6</sup>

The office of the Principal Secretary would frequently provide the Latin secretariat with either English versions of the missives to be translated or with Latin texts to be revised (cf. Kouri 1982, 13; Ryan 1963, 225; Platt 1994, 730; Allinson 2012, 46-47). Just like Ascham, Elizabeth's most trusted collaborator, William Cecil, first Baron Burghley from 1571, was frequently personally involved in the shaping of a letter, following its *iter* from draft to final copy. A typical example of the concluding phases of such a procedure may be seen in SP 70/8, fol. 12, in which the Lord Secretary provided the final touches to the Latin text prepared by Ascham (but probably not copied by him), including the various titles of the addressee, Fredrick II of Saxony, the final formal salutation, and the place and date (fig. 3).<sup>7</sup>

With respect to the vernacular correspondence, it should be noted that during Elizabeth's reign no secretary for the Italian tongue was ever appointed. The office of the Latin secretary – at least, in theory – would have to deal with this language as well. Interestingly, though, no example of an Italian letter signed by Elizabeth in Ascham's hand has come to light, and in fact there are no Italian texts in his letter books (BL Royal 13 b I and Add MS 35840, the latter relating to Ascham's brief service under Mary I, 1554-1558), nor have any been included in the printed collections of letters attributed to him.<sup>8</sup> One could suppose that the Italian missives of this period were mostly taken care of by the collaborators of the Lord Secretary; however, out of five letters in this language extant for the years in which Ascham was in office, three are in Elizabeth's holograph, and only two (which will be discussed below) are in an unidentified scribal hand. It was, furthermore, not one of the scribes working for the Secretary, but Cecil himself who inserted the date '2 aprilis' on one of the Italian letters to Maximilian (cf. Bajetta forthcoming). It seems reasonable that Cecil, who could certainly read Italian, wanted to be privy to the contents of these letters: they touched, after all, upon a crucial theme for the realm of England, that of the marriage of its sovereign. Hence, in all likelihood, he may have dealt with them in a way similar to that in which he dealt with the most important Latin missives he usually handled.<sup>9</sup>

The man Elizabeth affectionately nicknamed her 'Spirit' had a prominent role in the foreign correspondence for a large part of the Queen's reign. He was appointed Lord Treasurer in 1572, a position which entailed rather different commitments from those of the Principal Secretary; nevertheless, he exercised considerable influence in the area of foreign policy also during the brief term of office (1572-1577) of his successor, Sir Thomas Smith – to the extent that Elizabeth sometimes refused to sign papers until Burghley had approved them. Furthermore, on Walsingham's death (which took place on 6 April 1590), the vacant secretaryship was not filled, and Burghley took over most of the work, with the assistance of his son Robert.<sup>10</sup> Burghley's careful scrutiny was thus behind much of the early correspondence as well as a number of the missives sent abroad in the 1590s.<sup>11</sup>

A series of Italian letters written between the early 1580s and mid-1590s represents a good example of how the analysis of handwriting can help to reconstruct the origin and textual vicissitudes of documents such as these. The first draft of a missive to the Albanian-born diplomat Bartolomeo Brutti (SP 97/2, fol. 41), penned by an unidentified scribe in 1590, was endorsed by Cecil and bears at least one correction made by him. The second, corrected version of this (on fol. 43) is in the hand of a different scribe ('A'), who also worked on a letter which Elizabeth addressed to Don Antonio of Portugal in 1594 (SP 89/2, fol. 216 and 219). The same man's hand is visible in the draft of a message sent in the following year to Ferdinando I of Tuscany (SP 98/1, fol. 107). A note on the back of this document states that the wording of this

missive was the result of the joint efforts of Sir John Wolley and 'Dr. James', almost certainly John James (c.1550-1601), one of the Queen's physicians and keeper of the State Papers. Scribe 'A', who inserted this note after the endorsement (in another man's hand), which typically summarised briefly the identity of the addressee and the purpose of the letter, may simply have wanted to signal the fact that he had had no role in drafting (or translating) the text. One wonders, though, if this addition could also be meant to indicate that the text was originally composed in Italian. Such an *iter* would probably not have been an exception: an English text of a missive sent to Venice in April 1584, headed 'translated out of the Italian Language' is, in fact, extant in SP 99/1, fols. 21-24. Pace Evan's suggestion (1923, 171) that 'the Latin secretary's duties were bureaucratic, not political', Wolley was paid £40 a year, a sum almost equivalent to the earnings of a minor country gentleman (cf. *ibid.*, 21 and Allinson 2012, 27). Valued at such an amount of money, his services may well have extended beyond the mere translation of documents. His unofficial sharing of the principal role of secretary with Robert Cecil (who had taken over a significant proportion of his father's responsibilities since the early 1590s) between 1593 and 1596, moreover, would almost certainly entail the drafting of important pieces of correspondence (Allinson 2012, 27; Croft 2008).

The main body of the sent copy of the letter to Ferdinando I (Archivio di Stato di Firenze, Mediceo del Principato 4183, fol. 36) was not, however, penned by James, the Latin Secretary, or by 'A'. It presents, in fact, the typical 'house style' of Wolley's secretariat (with a handwriting which will be identified as that of scribe 'B'). 'A', however, had a role in this document as well, since he added the place and date at the bottom of the text (fig. 4b) and the address 'Al Serenissimo Principe / il gran Duca di / Toscana' on what is now fol. 51. Quite interestingly, a third scribe ('C') was employed for an earlier draft, with a significantly different text (now SP 98/1, fol. 105). This man was evidently known to be a trusted servant of the court. It was him whom Agostino Graffigna (the Genoese merchant who briefly got involved in the negotiations with the Duke of Parma in the mid-late 1580s) asked to write a rather curious letter of self-recommendation which he had composed in 1586, in the hope that Elizabeth would sign it immediately and send it to the Doge of Genoa (cf. BL Cotton Nero B. VI, fols. 250-251).<sup>12</sup> Graffigna, who clearly knew that C's hand was used in royal correspondence, evidently saw calligraphy as a means of obtaining the sovereign's approval.

C's career may have begun at least some four years earlier, when he had penned a beautiful letter sent to Venice in 1582. He went on to write three more letters which were sent during the 1580s as well as one to the previous Duke of Florence, Francesco I, in 1585 (Mediceo del Principato 4183, fol. 26). While 'A' was working with the Cecils and Wolley (and, later, Parkins, cf. SP 98/1, fols. 113 and 118), 'C' was clearly collaborating with Wolley and the office of the previous Principal Secretary: some English drafts of the Venice

letters (BL Add 48126, fols. 175-176 and 178) were, in fact, annotated by Walsingham and his close collaborator and kinsman Robert Beale.<sup>13</sup>

What the data presented so far indicate is that the production of the Italian letters was far less straightforward than some modern accounts such as Platt and Kouri's would have us believe. These and other studies, in fact, have presented what appears to be a simplified *iter* for the production of the international correspondence: from State to Latin secretariat, and hence, via the Signet Office, to the hands of the Queen for her signature.<sup>14</sup> The evidence, however, would suggest that the process was less clear-cut: draft letters and copies, in fact, seem to go both ways between the office of the Principal Secretary and that of the Latin Tongue. In a way, this may be simply the result of what Beale, who was evidently familiar with the workings of the 'Foreign Office', suggested as standard practice:

When anie businesses cometh into the Secretarie's handes, he shall doe well for the ease of himselfe to distribute the same and to use the helpe of such her Majestie's servants as serve underneath him, as the Clercks of the Councell, the Clercks of the Signett, the Secretarie of the Latin and of the French tonge, and of his own servants. (Read 1925, I, 426)

Beyond the mere analysis of handwriting styles, one needs, then, to turn to the work carried out by these men.

#### 4. *From Hands to Heads*

One would expect the first category of these court employees, the clerks of the Privy Council, to have had a significant role in the shaping of the Italian letters. The Council clerks had frequently travelled abroad and/or had experience of diplomatic missions. They were important collaborators of the Secretary of State on matters of foreign policy, and were, at least at Whitehall, located conveniently near the Latin secretariat (cf. Platt 1982, 124; *id.*, 1994, 728-730; Vaughan 2006, 64). However, no example of the handwriting of civil servants such as Bernard Hampton, Edmund Tremayne (who had spent a year in Italy), Robert Beale, Thomas Wilkes, Henry Cheke (both of whom had certainly a working knowledge of Italian), William Waad, Anthony Ashley, Daniel Rogers, Thomas Smith (the future Secretary of State, who had earned his degree from Padua), another man of this name,<sup>15</sup> or Thomas Edmondes (later Secretary of the French Tongue), has been identified in the forty-eight known surviving specimens (which include drafts, copies and sent versions) of Italian correspondence examined in the course of this research. Among the other members of the Elizabethan 'Foreign Office', the clerks of the signet, which included men of significant expertise in the writing of official correspondence such as Thomas Lake (nicknamed 'Swiftsure' for his ability to speedily dispatch with business)

and Nicholas Faunt (the author of the *Discourse Touching the Office of Principal Secretary of State*, 1592), only the hand of Thomas Windebanke was identified in documents connected to the Italian letters (albeit, as will be shown below, in what appears to be an early English draft).<sup>16</sup>

Walsingham, Burghley and Robert Cecil (who *de facto* took over his father's job after his death) employed a large number of persons to deal with the enormous amount of paperwork which their respective position and status entailed. As his servants Michael Hicks, Vincent Skinner and Henry Maynard knew only too well, Burghley alone received hundreds of letters from petitioners every week, in addition to the burden of the foreign and home affairs he would have been required to deal with (cf. Alford 2008, 305 and *passim*).<sup>17</sup> In fact, the Secretaries' private collaborators were, as Platt (1994) has shown, a sort of unofficial appendix to the 'Foreign Office' staff. Quite importantly, the difference between the official and unofficial members of this group was sometimes blurred by the fact that some of the Council and signet clerks were either former, current or soon-to-be employees – and even, sometimes, relatives – of Burghley (e.g., Bernard Hampton was his secretary, and Henry Cheke his nephew) and Walsingham (Faunt had been in his service since 1578 and after his master's death was employed by Cecil; Lake was taken on in 1584 and became a clerk five years later; Edmondson was employed to assist Sir Francis in making ciphers in 1589 and may have later worked for Robert Cecil; Beale served as secretary and later became a kinsman of Walsingham's through marriage with the latter's sister in law).<sup>18</sup> It is no surprise, then, to find that a draft letter from Elizabeth to Don Antonio of Portugal, written in 1580 by an unidentified amanuensis, presents a subscription in what could be the hand of Lisle Cave, and was endorsed by Lawrence Tomson, both private secretaries to Walsingham (SP 89/1, fol. 134 r-v).<sup>19</sup>

In many respects, these men were not merely 'living pen[s]' (Goldberg 1990, 265). Beale (himself the author of an account of the secretarial mission and tasks),<sup>20</sup> Faunt, and Robert Cecil all emphasise how the main office of the man serving the Principal Secretary should rest, as Sir Robert stated, in 'trust and fidelitie', and in his being a 'keeper or conserver of the secret unto him committed' (266). Sometimes, though, the duty went far beyond that of being a mere recorder. Bernard Hampton was not only asked by William Cecil to produce fair copies out of his notes of restricted meetings of the Privy Council; he was 'a key draughtsman in the delicate relationship between Queen and Council in the parliamentary session of 1566, and he worked on some political papers which can only be described as private Cecil projects' (Alford 1998, 11).<sup>21</sup> An experienced diplomat such as Beale was allowed to act as State Secretary during Walsingham's absence from England in 1583, and Sir Thomas Smith went on to occupy this post after having previously served as a clerk (Kouri 1982, 15; Vaughan 2006, 21-23).<sup>22</sup> When collaborators of this stature, serving either in the Principal or the Latin secretariat, happened to be skilled in foreign languages, such knowledge would have been put to good use. As Vaughan notes, 'clerks like

Edmondess with extensive experience in a single country [France], or like William Waad who served in virtually every major western European country, became expert diplomats abroad, and continued to serve the Privy Council as envoys abroad and specialists at home throughout their tenures as clerks of the Council' (2006, 79).<sup>23</sup> One cannot exclude *a priori*, then, that many (visible) hands and a number of (unseen) heads collaborated in producing the Italian missives.

It should be noted, however, that the physical production of these documents was apparently not something which anybody who 'had Italian' could participate in. In fact, where one might expect to find the handwriting of some of the Italian figures gravitating around the Elizabethan court (such as the writing master Petruccio Ubaldini, Elizabeth's Italian teacher Giovan Battista Castiglione, the regius professor of law at Oxford Alberico Gentili, or less known figures such as the royal physician Giulio Borgarucci, the grammarian Alessandro Citolini, Elizabeth's envoy Guido Cavalcanti, or even some of the members of the Lupo family, the court musicians) one finds only, as will be seen below, the hand of the merchant and diplomat Horatio Palavicino.<sup>24</sup> Most of the 'Italian' scribes remain anonymous; on the other hand, as seen above, their links with the inner circle of the court employees are quite evident.

As regards the concrete act of collaboration between 'hands' and 'heads', some distinction can be made between the different phases of the material process of letter writing, which clearly entailed different skills. Scribe 'B' was evidently a trusted collaborator of Sir John Wolley: it is his hand, in fact, which appears in the Latin Secretary's letter-book (Cambridge University Library Dd 3.20).<sup>25</sup> Frequently employed to copy out letters in Latin, 'B' was also occasionally employed for Italian texts (see e.g. Folger Shakespeare Library MS X.d.138 [4-5], two beautiful examples of sent letters signed by Elizabeth, one of which is reproduced here as fig. 2a-2b). This hand, though, does not appear in any of the drafts related to the early phases of composition and revision of any known Italian letter. That this man's proficiency in the language was, in fact, far from perfect, is evidenced by the number of significant mistakes which can be found in his transcriptions in the Cambridge letter-book. His style, however, was evidently considered more than adequate for official letters, and for keeping a record of them.<sup>26</sup> The case of 'B' not only shows, again, that not all of the scribes working for the Latin Secretariat – no matter how trusted they were as collaborators – were involved in the various phases of the composition and revision (and/or translation) of the royal letters. It also suggests that some of these men, professionals trained to copy out what was set in front of them with what we could today call photostatic precision, were employed only for the final versions to be sent, irrespective of their proficiency in Italian. The initial drafting, and possibly even the early copying of the drafts, however, was entrusted to people who had significant proficiency in this language. The absence of Italian letters in Ascham's hand might be the result of such a division of the labour, or simply be due to the fact that during his term of office the only occasion which may

have required the use of this language – the complicated marriage negotiations with Maximilian II of the mid-1560s – also required the employment of a significantly more authorial hand, that of the Queen herself.

Some other issues related to collaboration can be surmised from the textual vicissitudes through which some of these letters went. In the case of the 1594 letter to Don Antonio, the text scribe 'A' copied on SP 89/2, fol. 219 evidently originated from an English document, still visible on the preceding folio (fig. 5). One would be more inclined to consider this as a set of notes rather than a real 'draft letter': the state of some of these lines is tormented indeed:

as for this young Prince the

Lastly, this bearer her *Majestie* can not but giue him his <sup>due</sup> meri<t>  
in that she awowith he hath governed himself very honorably  
of him the father in respect therof

euer since ~~the~~ the fathers *departinge* hence And so doth recomende  
and of that his good toward hyme she hath taken cause to comm occasion to  
to imparte commit certain som thing by word of mouth vnto him, wch she doubteth not

him the sonne vnto the Louuinge fathere. Vnto both whom we  
but hee will deliure as well as any elder. one of more We praye

the remembrance of the Marinare she wisshith all prosperitie and  
yeeres, wherby A wherby he being the roote of the branche  
good

may very Iustly *conseaue* hope off very good fruite, And for suche a one  
her *majestie* doth recomende him to such a father vnto whom and  
she wishith all prosperitie and good successe, as in their meaning  
We have committed certain thinges to by word off mouth vnto this  
one Prince may wish as any other

your yong sonne, wiche we doubt not but he will deliure as  
aptilly as an elder.

As an analysis of the handwriting has confirmed, this text was written by Elizabeth's trusted private secretary, Thomas Windebanke. As mentioned above, the latter had taken down most of Elizabeth's translation of Boethius, which she dictated to him at a tremendous pace between 10 October and 8 November 1593. It took less than a month for this work to be translated, a *tour de force* which resulted in Windebanke becoming one of the best reporters of Elizabeth's words.<sup>27</sup>

The various layers of text set out in the lines presented above seem to bear witness to the fact that these lines are the result of a collation of notes taken at dictation together with a number of subsequent revisions. The use of 'We' in 'We praye the remembrance of the Marinare' is significant in this respect. While the third person is used elsewhere, the royal plural is here associated with a figure which was certainly familiar to Elizabeth, and she certainly meant to allude to it. It came from a very personal holograph, an extravagant, half-Portuguese half-Italian letter to the Queen – addressed as 'bella amichevole molinara del mio core' – which Don Antonio had signed 'Il Marinaro' (CP 185/130). There seems to be little reason

to doubt that the source of these lines was, at least in part, the English monarch herself, which is also supported by Elizabeth's characteristic use of metaphors ('roote of the branche'; 'may very lustly conseae hope off very good fruite').

Permitting a secretary to draft a letter from what amounted to little more than a set of notes was not an uncommon procedure in the Renaissance. It is not, in fact, dissimilar from the one described by Henry Cuffe, the Earl of Essex's secretary, when producing a tract recording a military expedition. Cuffe remembers having first received 'his Lordship's Large [that is, general] enstructions' for this text, then having proceeded to pen 'very truly' a first draft, drawing 'on my owne knowledge' of the events, adding 'sundry particulars of the moment' that the Earl provided. Later

after I had penned it as plainly as I might altering little or nothing of his owne drawght, I caused his Lordship to *peruse* it on[c]e againe and to adde [further parts or corrections] extremam manum. (Lambeth Palace Library, MS 658, fol. 88; Wolfe and Stewart 2004, 55)

Interestingly, the passages connected with the Mariner and the metaphor relating to the tree and its fruits are found at various points in the text of each of the three Italian draft versions, which indicates that these were far from being mere translations. It seems, in fact, that the letter was subjected to revision by a reader who was very attentive to such details. One wonders if the Queen herself did not want to go over her text again and again. Robert Beale had clearly experience of this; in his treatise he encouraged would-be secretaries:

Be not dismayed with the controlments and amendments of such things which you shall have done, for you shall have to do with a princess of great wisdom, learning and experience... The princes themselves know best their own meaning and there must be time and experience to acquaint them with their humours before a man can do any acceptable service. (Read 1925, I, 439)

### 5. *Heads and Hands Penning Trouble*

Men like Beale and Windebanke were clearly much more than mere executors. One would wish to know more not only about these royal secretaries, but also about those assistants who were helping to pen the letters they collaborated in composing. Unfortunately, as Elton once observed, while the handwriting of the civil servants of the Tudor era is 'quite familiar', even when 'we know a name, we cannot assign a hand, and familiar hands have no known owners' (1959, 304). In the course of this research, however, material evidence (which may include endorsements, notes, or corrections sometimes associated with other features such as seals and watermarks), has often been found that links the various states of the Italian missives to a specific entourage. What such evidence tells us is that the drafting and final copying of the Italian letters seem to have

quite frequently been the result of the active cooperation of the offices of the Principal and the Latin Secretary, with occasional assistance from other people who, like John James or Windebanke, were trusted court employees. Even if we should probably interpret 'office' *latu sensu* (to possibly include, that is, some of the personal collaborators working in these secretariats) it is clear, however, that the production remained nevertheless within a restricted circle of men often working within the precincts of the court and/or the private rooms (which could technically be 'at court' during the numerous progresses of the Queen; cf. Cole, 2007) of the Secretary of State and the Latin Tongue.<sup>28</sup>

Intriguingly, the lack of a link between such a context and the extant Italian missives, almost invariably, signals trouble. A draft letter to the Doge of Venice now in the Cecil Papers 153/64 (1-2), datable around 1560-1561, is neither in Ascham's hand nor in that of his anonymous collaborator who copied some of the items in his letterbooks now preserved in the British Library (Add MS 35840 and Royal 13b I). It is quite probable, given the style and the spelling, that both of the versions of the Cecil Papers missive were penned by a native speaker from Northern Italy. Apparently, this is just a typical letter of introduction for the new English envoy, one Marcantonio Erizzo. The letter mentions one apparently minor problem: the man in question is 'an exile', and would therefore need a pardon to return to his native lands. An analysis of contemporary documents reveals, in fact, that Erizzo was quite probably a former English spy, who had been convicted of murder (he had killed his uncle) and had managed to escape from the Venetian prisons. The Venetian government had certainly sufficient motives to consider Marcantonio a *persona non grata*. In fact, the reason why he wanted to go to Italy was that he had promised to provide the English State with a large quantity of bowstaves, bows, brimstone and saltpeter from Naples, all at a very reasonable price (cf. SP 70/24, fols. 3-5; SP 12/16 fol. 77; see also Cressy 2013, 51). Unsurprisingly, the letter is not to be found in the Venetian archives, and was probably never sent.

A rather different case is that of a signed letter to the Grand Duke of Tuscany in 1592, in which Elizabeth asked Ferdinando I to suppress a book which, she claimed, offended her and the memory of her mother and father. She consequently demanded that its author, a friar of the Santa Maria Novella convent, be punished (cf. Wyatt 2005, 260-261). The book in question, *Historia ecclesiastica della rivoluzione d'Inghilterra*, was in fact printed in Florence (and later Bologna) in 1591, and was reprinted in 1594 in Rome.<sup>29</sup> What has not been hitherto noticed is that the letter is in the hand of Horatio Palavicino, the Genoese merchant who played a major role as Elizabeth's financial agent in the negotiations with the contemporary European powers between the 1580s and the early 1590s.<sup>30</sup> Notwithstanding his diplomatic appointments and his being on good terms with Burghley, Palavicino is not known to have ever been directly involved in the work of the Elizabethan 'Foreign Office' either prior to or following this instance. In 1591, however, he was asked to produce an Italian version (Mediceo del Principato 4183, fols. 30-31,

an adaptation rather than a mere translation) of a missive which Burghley had drafted in English (now SP 98/1, fols. 72-74).

What the material evidence of these letters tells us is that, depending on the specific case, when matters were potentially quite delicate and complicated, specific expertise could be sought after. A man from Northern Italy (even if not necessarily from Venice) was consulted in an attempt to identify the most appropriate tone and perhaps calligraphy to communicate with the Venetians in relation to the Erizzo *affaire*. Similarly, Palavicino was evidently believed to be a man capable of finding the right tone to translate a rather delicate missive, one which was implicitly asking the Duke of Florence to take the side of those who, even if indirectly, were against the Church of Rome.<sup>31</sup>

Both the presence of 'familiar' and 'unfamiliar' hands, then, indicate specific choices of collaborators, who were frequently (but not necessarily always, as witnessed in the case of scribe 'B' above) chosen not only for their calligraphic skills, but in all likelihood also for their linguistic abilities. When penning the words of the Queen, heads appear to have counted as much, and possibly even more, than hands.

#### 6. *Authorship Issues and the Italian Letters*

That considerable attention was devoted to the choice of collaborators locates the production of royal letters in a context nearer to an Eliotian 'each man to his job' than to a postmodern dream of collective 'co-creation'. As noted above, even when we cannot always identify a scribe, the material evidence of the Italian letters demonstrates that while, occasionally, *ad hoc* 'consultants' were called in, the Queen's Italian correspondence was generally kept within a circle of trusted civil servants. As the series of notes and amended drafts for the Don Antonio letter reveals, these were men who, just as Beale had emphasised, were used to interpreting their masters' will, and ready to amend their texts at any stage.

Certainly, though, one should not disregard or minimise the 'social' nature of these texts, which is endemic in diplomatic correspondence: various individuals contributed to the production of the royal letters, and one cannot but acknowledge the existence of different layers of authority in them. Traces of the authorial presence can sometimes be detected in specific details of language and style; the elusive nature of internal evidence, however, suggests considering such proof irrefutable only when it comes in tandem with material elements. At the simplest level, for example, the queen's explicit approval of a letter may be glimpsed by the addition of a holograph final salutation in the original; should Elizabeth's typical use of metaphor be identified in the text, this would arguably be evidence, at the very least, of her intervention in the composition or correction of the missive. One should note, though, that other codes, apart from the purely linguistic, were occasionally employed in the Italian letters sent to foreign princes. The letters sent to the Doge and Signory of Venice in the

1580s, for example, imitate, and quite probably were meant to compete with, a formal Venetian *lettera ducale*, an official missive from the Doge (cf. e.g. SP 70/105, fol. 186; fig. 6a). One should not underestimate the visual impact that a letter such as the one reproduced here as figure 6b (sent in 1582) could have had on the ruling elite of the Venetian Republic. *In Senatu senator, in foro civis, in habitu princeps*, as the common saying went, by the late sixteenth century the Doge enjoyed only limited power. Any letters addressed to him were opened in public, in front of the Senate or in the presence of a small number of councillors (cf. Da Mosto 1937-1940, I, 16 and 1960). Elizabeth's message, then, far from being a private communication between heads of state, was in itself a powerful display of intercultural awareness, and an explicit assertion of willingness to negotiate.

Interestingly, the 1582 missive to Venice presents a rather elaborate lengthy sentence in the last paragraph, immediately preceding the final salutation:

Quanto poi concerne l'antica, et stretta amicitia tra i Nostri Regni, Et la Vostra Repubblica: Vi assicuriamo, che nessuno de i nostri predecessori ha piu desiderato la continuation d'essa, che Noi; si per il rispetto dell'affettione, che portiamo generalmente à tutti quei della natione Italiana, Et si particolarmente della Vostra Inclita Repubblica. (Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Collegio, Lettere principi 33, fol. 7)<sup>32</sup>

This letter is particularly emphatic in its stress of the bonds of affection which bind Elizabeth and Italy in general and the Queen to the *Serenissima Repubblica* in particular. These were significant words for a monarch: they were clearly meant to have a very powerful rhetorical effect – an effect matched only by the stunning dimensions and elaborateness of the letter. All this could hardly have been achieved without the Queen's consent and active participation.

In the case of the non-holograph letters, as Rayne Allinson has observed, "The work of any number of unseen "authors" could lie behind the royal "we" (2012, 27). The royal signature, when combined with other significant verbal and non-verbal elements, brought together such often collective endeavours, unifying them in an act of authorial approval. Such sanctioning of collaboration was by no means unnatural or artificial. Elizabeth cared about her Italian correspondence, and on a number of occasions chose this language when writing to non-Italians as if it represented a neutral territory on which to meet a foreign ruler. As in real life, when an important visitor came to court, such meetings had to be prepared very attentively if a successful outcome was to be achieved, and such preparation required the assistance of many hands. In the end, though, it was the Queen one met. Something quite similar happened with her letters. The challenge an editor is faced with when working on Elizabeth's Italian correspondence, then, is that of accepting to deal first with many of her courtiers and servants – as most of her contemporaries had to do – in order to have, eventually, admittance to the presence of the English Gloriana.

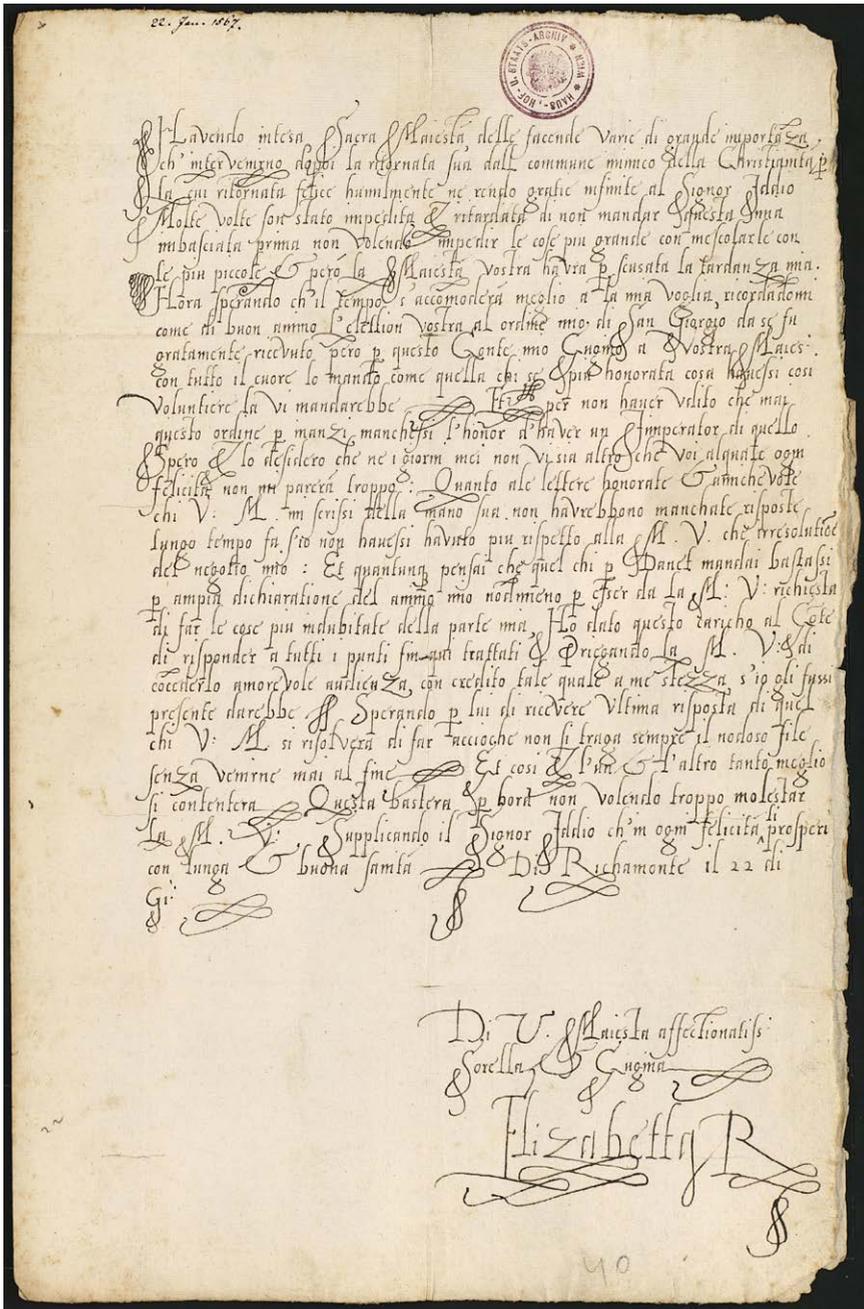


Fig.1 – Queen Elizabeth I's holograph letter to Emperor Maximilian II, 1567  
 (reproduced by permission of the Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Vienna)

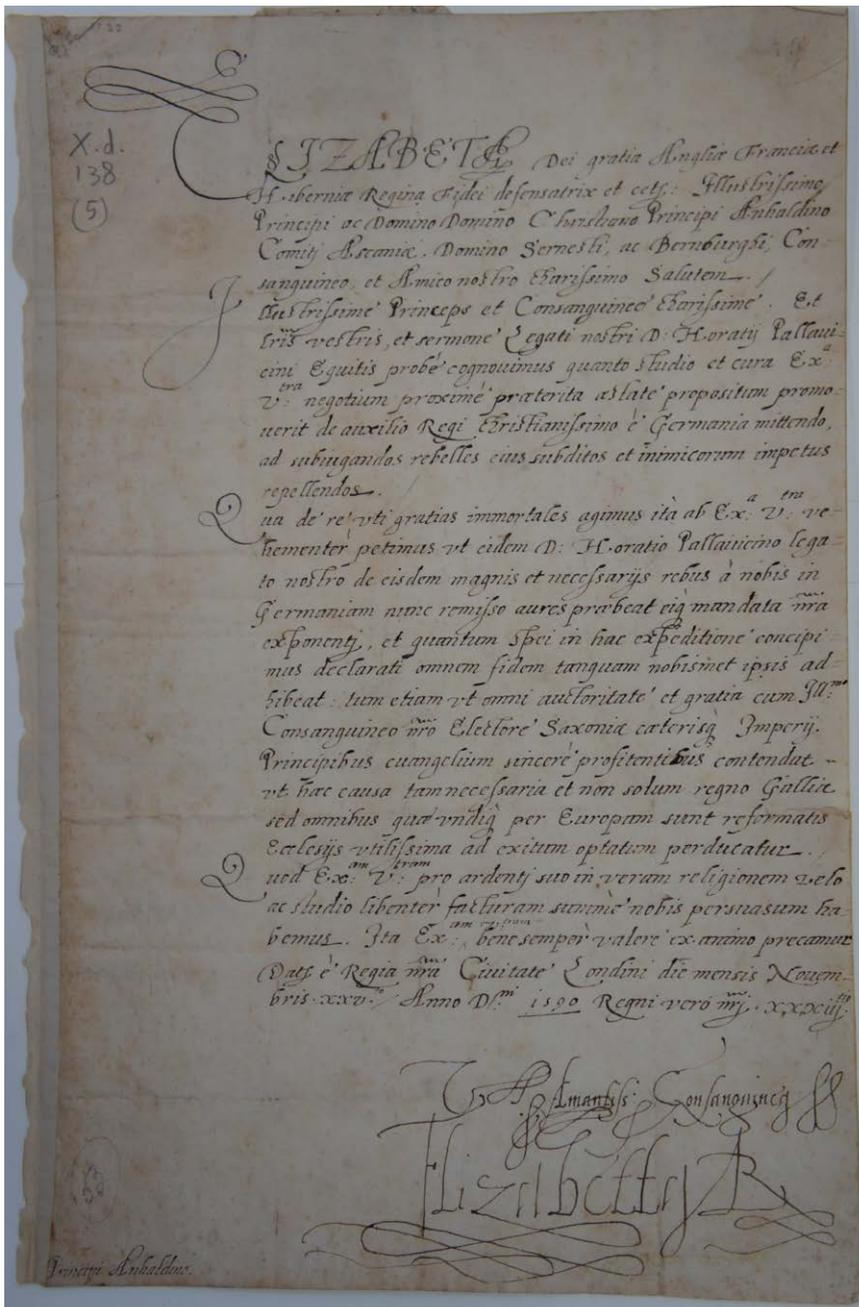


Fig. 2a – Latin letter penned by scribe ‘B’ and signed by Elizabeth with the addition of the signet seal, 1590 (reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington)

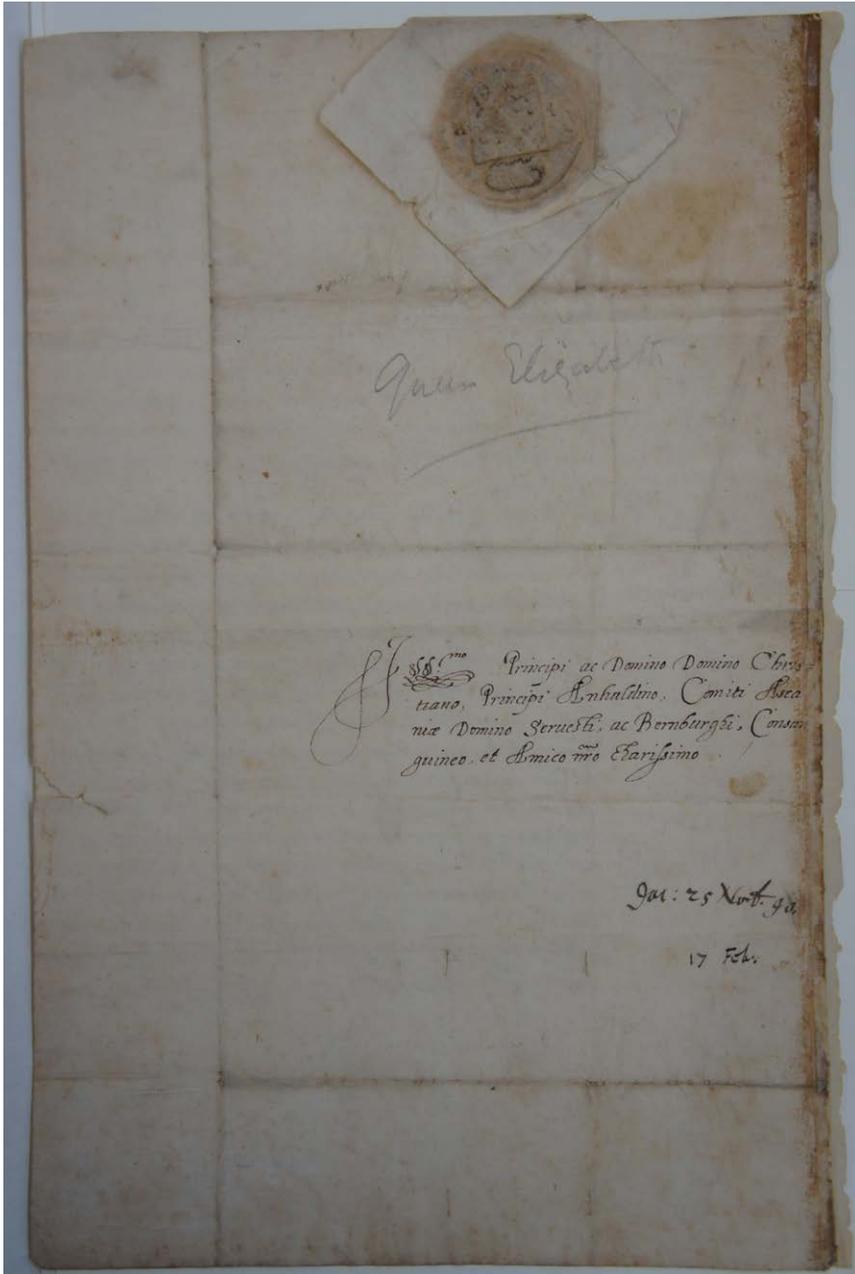


Fig. 2b – Latin letter penned by scribe 'B' and signed by Elizabeth (verso, showing the signet seal)

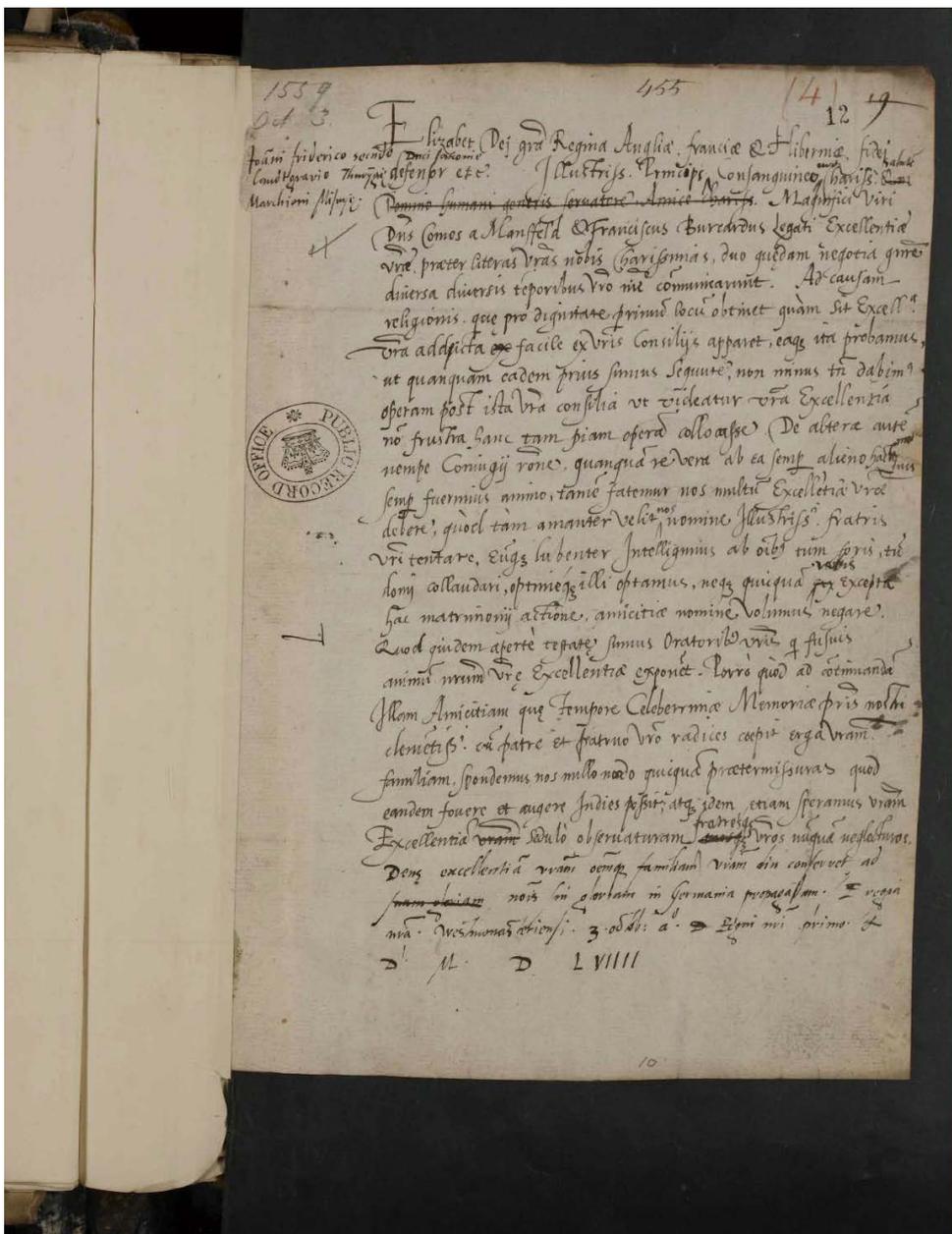


Fig. 3 – Draft of a letter to John Frederic II, Duke of Saxony, showing Cecil's holograph additions (reproduced by permission of the National Archives, Kew)

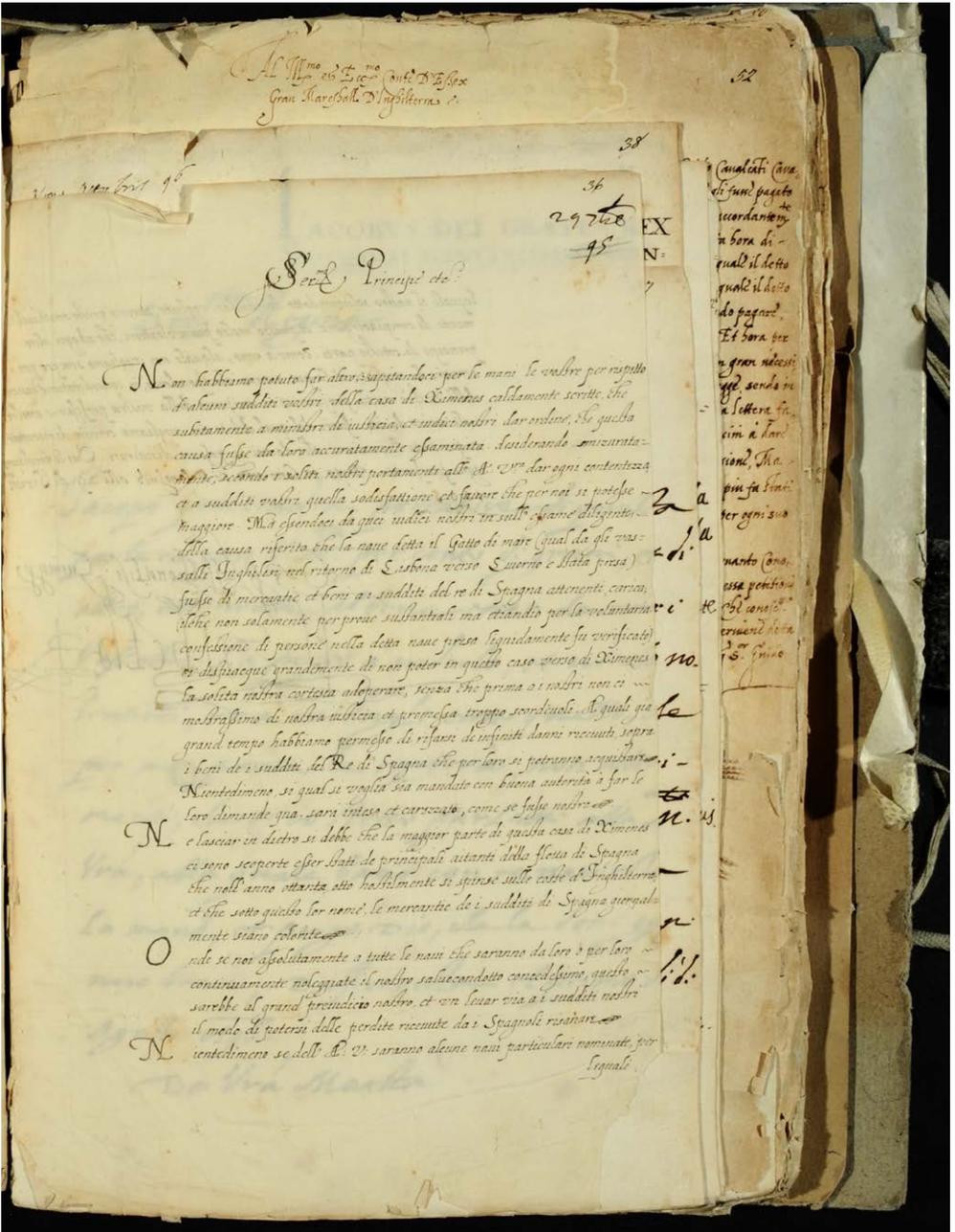


Fig. 4a – Letter to Ferdinando I of Tuscany penned by scribe ‘B’ and signed by Elizabeth (reproduced by permission of the Italian Ministero dei Beni Culturali)

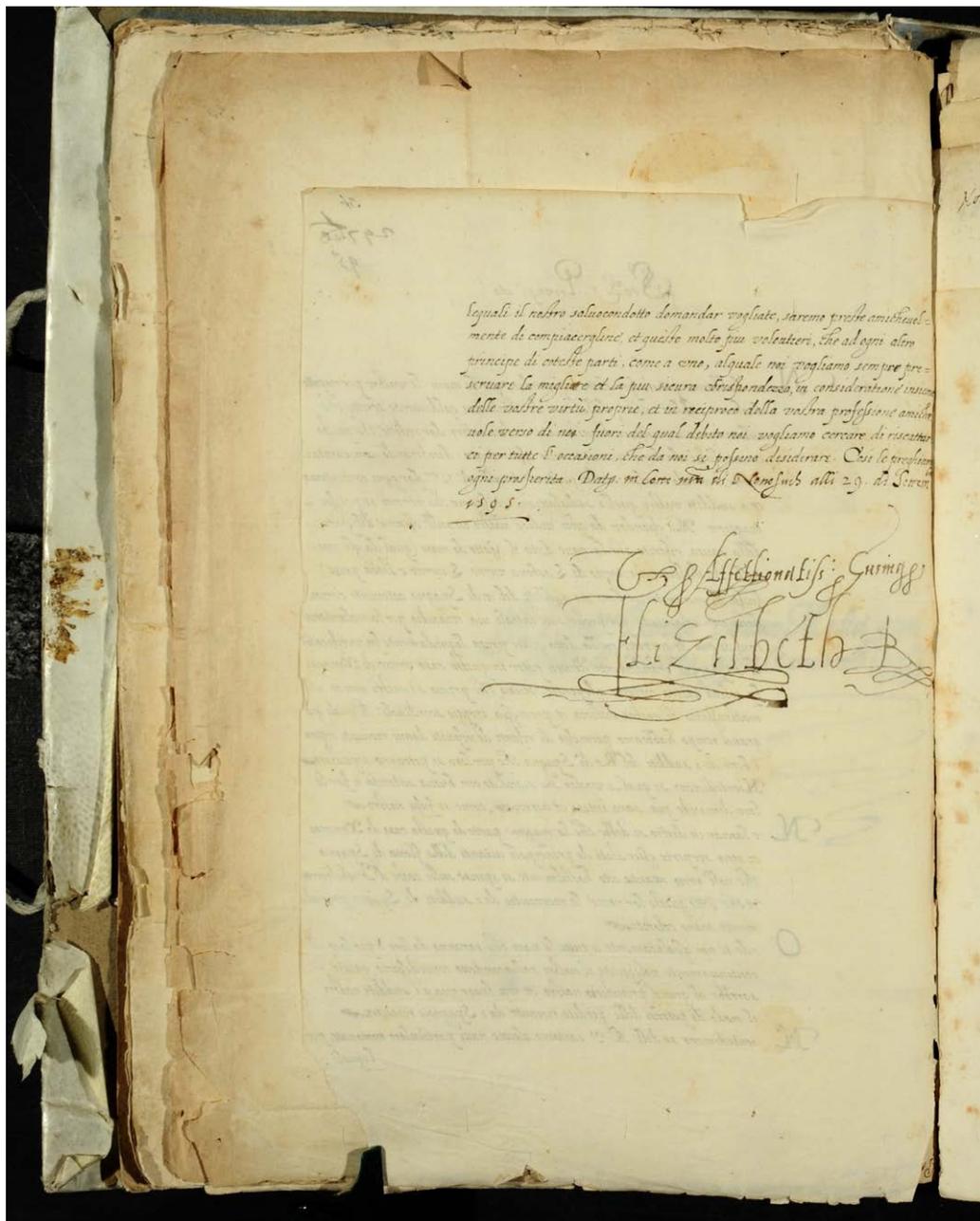


Fig. 4b – Letter to Ferdinando I of Tuscany penned by scribe 'B'  
(verso, showing Elizabeth's signature)



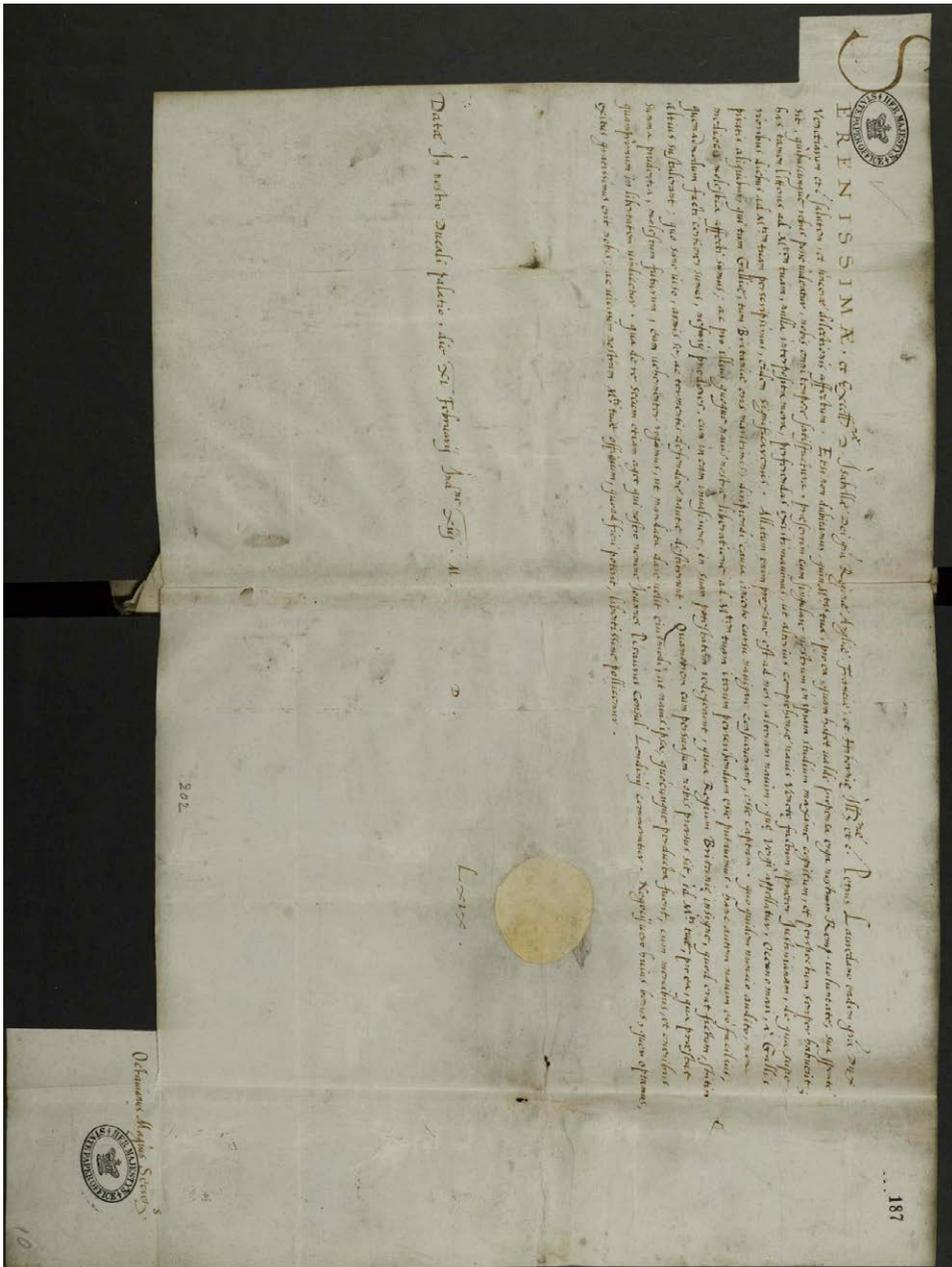


Fig. 6a – A formal Venetian *lettera ducale*, 1569 (reproduced by permission of the National Archives, Kew)

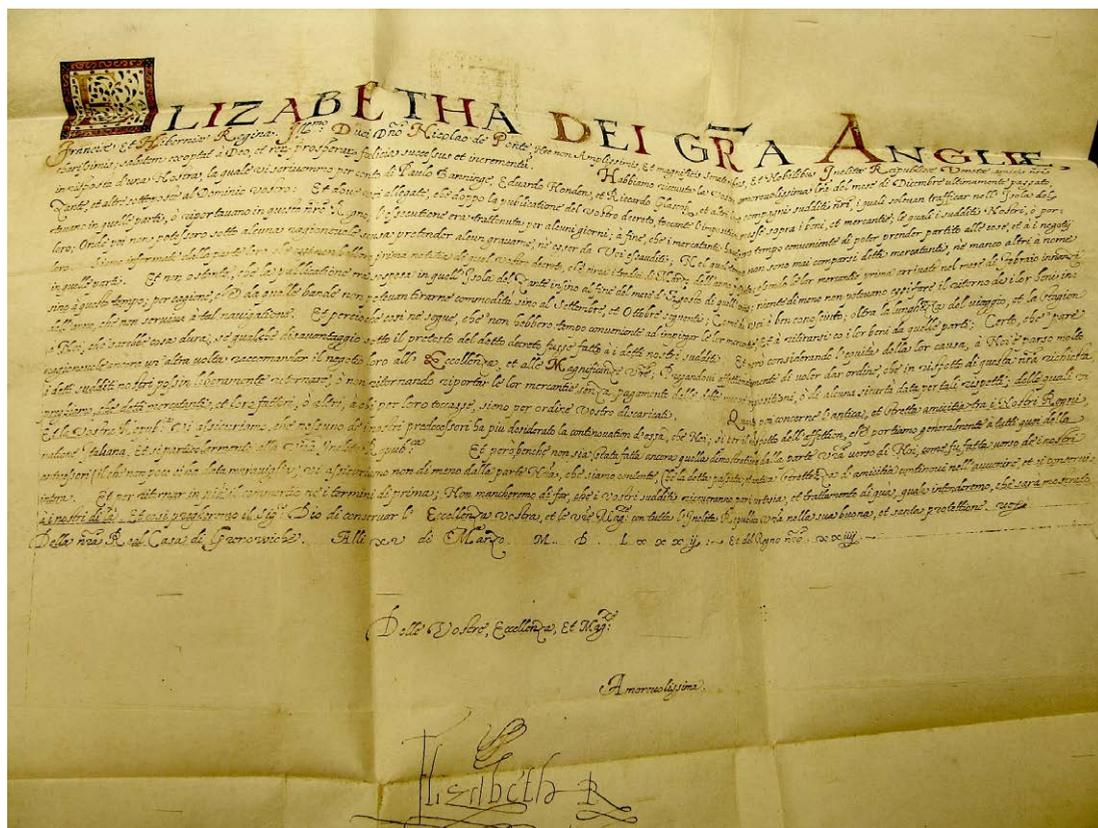


Fig. 6b – Letter to the Doge and Signory of Venice penned by scribe ‘C’ and signed by Elizabeth, 1582 (Collegio, Lettere Principi, filza 33, fol. 7; reproduced by permission of the Italian Ministero dei Beni Culturali; Archivio di Stato di Venezia, atto di concessione n. 60/2013)

<sup>1</sup> Some sections of this article were delivered as papers at University College, London, in July and September 2011, and at the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, in June 2012. A fellowship at the latter institution during the summer of 2012 allowed me not only to consult some of the manuscripts quoted here, but also offered an extraordinary experience for frequent discussions with other scholars, including Andy Boyle, Alan Bryson, Carole Levin and Heather Wolfe, and an occasion to meet (or meet again) with others such as Steven May and Jane Lawson. I am most grateful to all of them for their advice, suggestions, and encouragement.

On these letters see Bajetta, Coatalen and Gibson, forthcoming; see also Giuliana Iannaccaro and Alessandra Petrina’s contribution in the present volume.

<sup>2</sup> This manuscript is now Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Hausarchiv, Familienakten, Karton 21 (formerly Karton 15), Konvolut 4, Faszikel 5, fol. 40. Elizabeth may have had these texts revised by Roger Ascham or William Cecil, who added the date in the final version of the first letter quoted here; see Bajetta, forthcoming. On Elizabeth’s early handwriting see Woudhuysen 2007 and Gibson 2011; on her use of rhetoric in these letters see Iannaccaro, forthcoming.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. e.g. SP 70/5, fol. 7; Folger X d 138 items 1-2. See also Kouri 1982, 13. Ascham's register for the ten years he served as Latin Secretary to Elizabeth is now British Library (henceforth 'BL') Royal MS 13 B I. This manuscript presents both holograph transcripts and a number of copies in other hands; see Ryan 1963, 327. A list of the letters written to the European heads of State is in BL Lansdowne MS 98, fol. 102.

<sup>4</sup> For examples of Wolley's hand (which Kouri, 1982, 14, believes, erroneously, to be that in Cambridge University Library MS Dd 3.20) see e.g. BL Cotton Caligula C VIII, fol. 220; Lansdowne 18/64, 23/69 and 61/165. For an example of a final copy produced by one of Wolley's scribes, complete with Elizabeth's signature and her signet seal, see Hatfield (Herts.), Hatfield House, Cecil Papers (hereafter 'CP') 147/82. For further instances of scribal copies written under Wolley's supervision see below.

<sup>5</sup> Wolley, who seems to have enforced the use of this style from the mid-1570s, may have found a model in some of Ascham's letters; see e.g. Sir Roger's holograph file copies in Royal 13 b I, fols. 16-24 and Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Hausarchiv, Familienakten, Karton 21 (formerly Karton 15), Konvolut 4, Faszikel 5, fol. 131.

<sup>6</sup> See, however, Parkins' holograph copy of a Latin letter from Elizabeth to Emperor Rudolph II, SP 80/1, fol. 181. Even if acting as Latin Secretary after Wolley's death (Kouri, 1982: 14), Parkins was officially appointed only in 1601. A former Jesuit and a resident in Italy for about three years, Parkins quite probably knew Italian sufficiently well (cf. McCoog 2008). During his tenure, at least six letters in Italian (all extant) were produced. None of the drafts or final copies of these presents, however, his handwriting; two drafts and one sent letter are in the hand of scribe 'A' (see below).

<sup>7</sup> See also Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Hausarchiv, Familienakten, Karton 21 (formerly Karton 15), Konvolut 4, Faszikel 5, fols. 124-125, a rare example of a sent letter countersigned by both Ascham and Cecil.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. e.g. the editions of Ascham's 'collected letters', which include more than merely 'familiar' topics (*Disertissimi viri Rogeri Aschami, Angli, Regiae maiestati non ita pridem a Latinis epistolis, familiarium epistolarum libri tres*) published in 1576, 1578, 1581 and 1590 (the latter two with a variant title). See also Elstob 1703; Giles 1864-1865; Vos 1989. No Italian letters are included in another short compilation of letters written by Ascham for Elizabeth now in BL Lansdowne 98 (item 12, fols. 69-102v).

<sup>9</sup> Cecil could certainly read Italian, as witnessed by his numerous endorsements and notes to missives in this language. In the mid-1580s he received a series of letters in Italian connected with the peace negotiations in the Netherlands, which he annotated in his hand; cf. e.g. SP 77/1, fols. 179, 194, 194v. Cf. also MacCaffrey 2008. Ascham's role was evidently quite different during the reign of Mary, when he would be drafting, at times, a significant number of Latin letters in a very limited period of time; cf. Ryan 1963, 204.

<sup>10</sup> See respectively MacCaffrey 2008 and Archer 2008. Interestingly, the only Italian letters composed during Smith's tenure of the secretaryship appear in the letter-book of the Latin Secretary Sir John Wolley (Cambridge University Library, Dd 3.20), who would later actively collaborate with the Cecils; see below.

<sup>11</sup> William Petre, appointed under Mary, was retained as a councillor by Elizabeth. He does not seem, however, to have held any office of state, apart from a brief spell as acting secretary when Cecil was in Scotland in the summer of 1559 (cf. e.g. Evans 1923, 45, 156; Knighton 2011). After Smith's death in 1577, Thomas Wilson (1523/4-1581) was appointed as one of the queen's two principal secretaries. Notwithstanding his good knowledge of Italian (and the existence of holograph letters by him composed in this language connected to his position, cf. e.g. SP 70/141, fol. 121), he seems to have had little role in the writing of the Queen's Italian missives. Possibly this has to be seen in relation to Walsingham's pre-eminence in foreign policy and the typical work division of the Elizabethan secretariat; cf. Evans 1923, 49-50 and Platt 1994, 727.

<sup>12</sup> For a history of the negotiations see van der Essen 1933-1957, V, 85-113; Oosterhoff 1988, 167-169; 171-179. On Graffigna's role in the negotiations with Parma see SP 84/9, fols. 112-113 and Graffigna's account of his interview with the Duke in his letter to Lord Cobham, CP 163/68. See also Parma's letter to Philip II in Archivio General de Simancas, Secretaría de Estado, Negociación de Flandes, 590, fol. 47.

<sup>13</sup> These documents will be transcribed *in extenso* in my edition of Elizabeth's Italian letters, which is currently in preparation (Bajetta, ed., forthcoming). On these letters see also Taviner 2000, 169-170.

<sup>14</sup> See e.g. Platt 1994, 730: 'The secretaries of the French and Latin tongues translated all the Queen's, Council's, and principal secretary's formal foreign correspondence... There four Signet clerks transformed the queen's foreign correspondence and formal instructions to ambassadors into Signet letters'. See also Allinson 2012, 17-35.

<sup>15</sup> See Vaughan 2006, 41-42; 194. A specimen of the handwriting of the second Thomas Smith is visible in CP 46/20.

<sup>16</sup> On the clerks of the Privy Council see Vaughan 2006. For a complete list of their appointments and tenure see *ibid.*, 194-198 and, for a list of both these and of the clerks of the signet, see the on-line publication prepared at the Institute for Historical Research, *Office Holders in Modern Britain*, <<http://www.history.ac.uk/resources/office>> (01/2014). Faunt's discourse is printed in Hughes 1905. On Henry Cheke's travels to Italy and his translation of an Italian work see Bajetta 1997; on Tremayne, Bartlett 2008; on Lake, Lockyer 2008. It is rather unfortunate that for Windebanke one has to turn to the old *DNB* entry.

<sup>17</sup> On Cecil's secretariat and, in particular, Hicks, Skinner and Maynard see Smith 1968 and 1977. A comparison between their surviving holograph documents has failed to associate their hands to Elizabeth's Italian letters.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Kouri 1982, 4-5; 12-13; Alford, 1998, 148-156; Bajetta 1997 and 2008; Levin 2008; Vaughan 2006, 43; Bell 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Butler 1904, 442 (that the main body of the text is in Walsingham's hand seems, however, incorrect). On Tomson see MacMahon 2008.

<sup>20</sup> BL Additional MS 48149, fols. 36-96, printed in Read 1925, I, 423-443.

<sup>21</sup> See also Vaughan 2006, 50: 'Had the clerks worked merely as stenographers or secretaries their work experience would have been irrelevant and the position could have been filled by any Oxford or Cambridge graduate. The participation in events and proximity to power of the office itself required the selection of multi-talented clerks, and the importance of their selection and placement is reiterated by the change of clerks after a change of regime'.

<sup>22</sup> As Vaughan notes (2006, 14) 'being clerk did not exclude these men from holding other government positions, frequently including posts outside of England, a situation that... became more frequent during Elizabeth's reign... The clerkship often led to promotion, both in diplomatic office and in central government. This is true of most of the clerks, and holds true even for those who remained clerks until retirement or death'.

<sup>23</sup> Another, earlier, example is that of Hampton, who 'was particularly talented in Spanish and its dialects, because he was noted as a person "well versed in the Spanish tongue" who, along with Armagil Waad, was such a "sufficient Castilian" that he could translate documents from that language. Indeed, Hampton was so talented he served as Spanish secretary to Queen Mary during his clerkship of the Privy Council' (Vaughan 2006, 78).

<sup>24</sup> A comparison has been carried out between the holograph letters of these men (on whose career in England see Wyatt 2005 and Ashbee 2008) and the drafts, duplicates and final copies of the Italian missives; for reasons of space, further details concerning these documents will be made available in my edition of the letters (Bajetta, ed., forthcoming). One may want to remember that John Florio's career at court started in the Jacobean era; cf. Yates 1934, 246 ff.

<sup>25</sup> On this manuscript see Owens 1973-1974. Scribe 'C' could be the person referred to as 'Sir John Wolley's man' in a letter from Thomas Lake to Sir Robert Cecil; Allinson 2012, 39; Andreani 2011, 130-131.

<sup>26</sup>Paradoxically, this scribe's rather mechanical copying may have preserved some elements of a lost original by the Queen: see Bajetta 2013.

<sup>27</sup>Elizabeth began writing the text herself; at book 3 prose 1, however, probably for reasons of time (cf. Mueller and Scodel 2009, 50) she began dictating to Windebanke. On the schedule imposed by such short time see Windebanke's memorandum, which is attached to the original manuscript, SP 12/289, fols. 9-19; cf. also Mueller and Scodel 2009, 49-53. One may also want to remember that Windebanke had collaborated with Wolley between 1587 and 1590, when, during Sir Francis Walsingham's frequent bouts of ill health, the latter had taken on most of the routine work of the office of the Secretary; cf. Parry 2008.

<sup>28</sup>Quite significantly, both the first draft of the missive to Brutti and the 1595 letter to Ferdinando I bear the same Eagle watermark found on Elizabeth's holograph translation of Cicero's *Pro Marcello* (Bodleian Library MS 900, probably written c. 1592; cf. Mueller and Scodel 2009, 3-10); cf. also Woudhuysen, 2007, 27.

<sup>29</sup>The *Historia* derived from *De origine ac progressu schismatis anglicani* (Cologne, 1585) by the English recusant priest Nicholas Sanders, a book which was completed, after Sander's death in 1581, by a fellow recusant cleric, Edward Rishton.

<sup>30</sup>Cf. Wyatt 2005, 144-145. See also Archer 2008, and, on Palavicino's missions for the English State, Stone 1956, in particular 98-181. The fact that the Genoese was employed in framing such an important letter may have helped his returning into favour after the unfortunate 1590-1591 mission: in 1594 and in 1598 he exchanged New Year's gifts with the Queen, receiving the same amount of gilt plate as he had received earlier on, when his standing at court was certainly good (*ibid.*, 25-26). See also Lawson 2013.

<sup>31</sup>Even if a native of Genoa, one should add, Palavicino was in a position to have a good understanding of the situation in central Italy and Tuscany in particular as he and his family had been dealing in alum at least from the 1570s until the early 1580s (cf. Stone 1956, 41-64, in particular 47-49; 63).

<sup>32</sup>'For what concerns the ancient and close friendship existing between our Dominions and Your Republic, we assure you that none of our predecessors has desired the continuation of it more than We do; both in respect of the affection we bear to all the people of the Italian nation [i.e., race], and in particular to those of your illustrious Republic' (my translation).

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