

THE BOOK OF THE  
**COURTIER**  
BALDESAR CASTIGLIONE



EDITED BY DANIEL JAVITCH

A NORTON CRITICAL EDITION

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Baldesar Castiglione  
THE BOOK  
OF THE COURTIER  
THE SINGLETON TRANSLATION



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AN AUTHORITATIVE TEXT  
CRITICISM

*Edited by*

DANIEL JAVITCH

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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## Preface

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In the 1970s, when I started writing about *The Book of the Courtier*, the views that then prevailed about the work were neither positive nor sympathetic. An interpretive tradition that went back at least to the influential nineteenth-century criticism of Francesco De Sanctis, dismissed Castiglione's court society as superficial and frivolous and objected to the purely aesthetic identity of the model individual fashioned in the book. Less hostile modern accounts of the *Courtier*, particularly evident in surveys of Italian Renaissance literature, tended to perceive the work as an idyllic and nostalgic portrayal of the refined individuals who graced the court of Urbino and to see the model of courtliness projected by the speakers in the book as belonging to an irretrievable past, or else as so idealized as to have little relation to the political realities of its times. It was quite common to find the idealistic features attributed to the *Courtier* unfavorably compared to the hard-nosed assessment of political realities that Machiavelli provided in *The Prince*.<sup>1</sup> Even though Castiglione had lived and worked in the same chaotic Italy as Machiavelli, the *Courtier*, critics complained, seemed quite unrealistic and showed none of Machiavelli's concern about the ways affairs of state were actually conducted.

These views, especially the tendency to dismiss the work as a nostalgic idealization of an aristocratic code, did not correspond to my perception of *The Courtier*. It must be said that I came to the work as a student of English Renaissance literature; and from that perspective it was apparent that, for late sixteenth-century Englishmen, Castiglione's perfect courtier had become an important and appealing model of civilized conduct. The evidence did not suggest that the code set forth in the book was retrograde or out of touch with social and political realities. If anything, Castiglione's book tended to be mistaken by Tudor readers as a practical handbook of manners. While I realized that Castiglione had deliberately refused to write a prescriptive manual, the function that the work subse-

1. For examples, see Giuseppe Prezzolini's preface to Baldassar Castiglione e Giovanni Della Casa, *Opere* (Milano: Rizzoli, 1937) and Attilio Momigliano, *Storia della letteratura italiana* . . . (Milano: G. Principato, 1956), pp. 187–89. The perception of the work as backward looking, nostalgic, and quite out of touch with political realities persists among Italian critics. For its most recent expression see Walter Barberis's introduction to his edition of the *Cortegiano* (Torino: Einaudi, 1998).

quently acquired as a guide to manners and social advancement made me more sensitive to pragmatic and forward-looking aspects of the book.

As Castiglione himself acknowledged, his principal model had been Cicero's *De oratore*. The comparison between the two works that he thereby invited also served to reveal the degree to which the norms of public behavior advocated in *The Courtier*—and they were quite different from those prescribed the ideal Roman orator—were conditioned by the changed political and social circumstances of a modern court. Contrasting the two works, I proposed that the transformation one could discern of the forthright, aggressive, even combative behavior of Cicero's orator into the more indirect, cunning, prudent comportment of the model courtier was due to the exigencies of a courtly establishment and its autocratic ruler.<sup>2</sup> If the suppression of aggressiveness and belligerence that marked the courtier's comportment and differentiated him so notably from Cicero's combative orator was a sign of the courtier's greater civility, it also betokened his relative disempowerment. For what *The Courtier* marks historically is the transformation of the late feudal warrior aristocrat into the polite courtier, the "civilizing process" (as Elias called it) that occurred as first princely courts and then the absolutist state forced the nobility to give up its belligerence and other feudal entitlements and assume a new role as model of *politesse* and social refinement.<sup>3</sup> The deference, the moderation, the indirection, the tact that were part of the code of courtesy the courtier had to observe did not just affirm his superior breeding but also indicated the much more limited freedom, indeed the subjugation that aristocrats had to accept when they became dependent on princes for their status and privilege.

Even though my first study of *The Courtier* began to make evident that the political pressures of despotism shaped and required an artful behavior in Castiglione's book quite foreign to Cicero's ideal of the civilized man, it was in a later essay, eventually published in 1983, that I demonstrated more precisely the extent to which Castiglione's norms of conduct were determined by these pressures. The essay is reprinted in this volume so I will not dwell on it,<sup>4</sup> except to say that one reason the more pragmatic aspects of Castiglione's code have remained so unappreciated is because his speakers cloak the fact that the pressures of autocratic rule shape the norms of

2. See my *Poetry and Courtliness in Renaissance England* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 18–49.

3. See Norbert Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (1939), trans. Edmund Jephcott into two volumes as *The History of Manners and Power and Civility* (New York: Pantheon, 1982). On the way women as well as the prince play a role in pacifying and taming noblemen at court, see Quint's essay on p. 352 herein.

4. See p. 319 herein.

conduct that they advocate. When they recommend various stylistic attributes that the courtier must possess, they rarely, if ever, point out that these attributes are especially desirable because they are pleasing to the prince. Yet virtually every beautiful attribute the Courtier (which is how I will refer, henceforth, to the model individual fashioned in the book) was asked to cultivate could be successfully used to win the good will of a sovereign or to preserve it.

I still believe that prince-pleasing, albeit of a more elevated kind, is one of the book's central but deliberately inconspicuous considerations, but I now feel that my claims about the pragmatic value of Castiglione's code may have been overstated. I was being too reactive to prior critical charges that the work was naively idealistic and out of touch with political realities. Nor was I alone in reacting this way. Other critics also challenged those charges and argued that preferment and political survival shaped the artful behavior recommended in *The Courtier*.<sup>5</sup> Concerned as some of us were, in the 1970s and 1980s, to reassert that Castiglione's code took full account of the exigencies imposed by the autocrats who ruled and would continue to rule Renaissance courts, we paid too little attention to the book's idealism. It is now more apparent that both the readings that dismissed the work as unrealistic (in the Machiavellian sense) as well as those that sought to reclaim its pragmatic aspects were, in their different ways, unsympathetic to the idealistic intention of the work. As any sixteenth-century reader would have readily understood, the game chosen by the *brigata*, or company, "to form in words a perfect courtier" aimed to provide a model of behavior more perfect than the comportment of actual courtiers, even of the ones gathered at Urbino. This image of the ideal courtier was to inspire emulation, on the part not only of the courtiers depicted in the book but of any courtier reading it.

The lack of sympathy for the book's idealistic aims that prevailed since about 1950 stemmed most probably from a failure to appreciate a system of education in which self-improvement was predicated on the imitation of past or imagined models of perfection. Yet this doctrine of *imitatio* was absolutely central to Castiglione's culture. Virtually every process of learning, whether it was writing, speaking, virtuous living, or governing, entailed the imitation of such models.

5. See, for example, Eduardo Saccone's "The Portrait of the Courtier in Castiglione," *Italica* 64 (1987), 1–18 (reprinted in part on p. 328 herein). Saccone challenges the idea that the Courtier was shaped into an autotelic work of art, with no other aim than his self-perfection, by asserting rather that "the Courtier is always fighting on two fronts: that of the competition with his peers and the other to gain his Prince's favor." In a review of modern interpretations Virginia Cox points to the tendency on the part of some critics in the 1970s and 1980s (myself included) to emphasize the functional and pragmatic dimensions of the Courtier's *ethos*, previously perceived in a purely aesthetic key. See her "Castiglione and His Critics," appended to her edition of Thomas Hoboy's *Courtier* (London: J.M. Dent, 1994), pp. 409–26.

And there was something inherently idealistic about the doctrine of *imitatio* since the assumption was that the model, whether a past historical exemplar or a conflation of exemplars or a transcendent idea of perfection, represented a height, an acme of excellence that one could only try to approach. Indeed, the challenge was to try to attain the greatest similarity to the model and, even if one could not equal its perfection, to come as close to it as one's capacity allowed.

Our bias against *imitatio* notwithstanding, there is a need to reaffirm the work's idealism, if only to gain a better understanding of the admiration it elicited for over a century after its publication. The diverse and even conflicting talents that the Courtier is asked to possess offer some of the first indications that he is an idealized projection. He must, for example, be skilled at arms as well as trained in humanistic studies. The aristocracy was normally expected to have military abilities, but when Lodovico Canossa (the first main speaker) states that he wants the Courtier "more than passably learned in letters, at least in those studies that we call humanities" (1.44), he reflects some of the idealistic aspirations of fifteenth-century Italian educators to form a ruling elite as well versed in letters as in handling arms. Canossa goes on to make even more demands. While the Courtier has to know how to write and speak well, he also has to be a good athlete and a proficient dancer. In addition, he has to have some knowledge of music and of the visual arts and even practice them. The expectation that the Courtier will be so versatile, able to *combine* so many talents, is certainly part of the work's idealism; but what I want to highlight in particular are the ways the book asks those who would emulate its model to stretch their virtuosity and their virtue.

Take, for example, the attribute of *grazia*, which, according to Ludovico Canossa, must adorn all of the courtier's actions. Yet, if one doesn't possess it naturally, grace is almost beyond the reach of art (the company is reminded that it is "almost proverbial that grace is not learned" 1.25). When Cesare Gonzaga persists in finding out how grace can be acquired by those not blessed with it by the stars, Canossa recommends, in one of the work's most cited passages, that the Courtier avoid affectation at all costs and practice "*sprezzatura*," that ability to disguise artful effort so that it seems natural, spontaneous, effortless (see 1.26).<sup>6</sup> However, even though one can cultivate this semblance of nonchalance, the difficulty of practicing *sprezzatura* is made clear almost immediately after it is recommended as a source of *grazia*. Bibbiena, one of the participants in the dialogue, presumes that their colleague, Roberto da Bari, displays proper *sprezzatura* while dancing when, "to make it quite plain

6. See Harry Berger's discussion of grace and *sprezzatura* on p. 295 herein.

that he is giving no thought to what he is doing, he lets his clothes fall from his back and his slippers from his feet, and goes right on dancing without picking them up." Such exaggerated nonchalance is immediately criticized by Lodovico Canossa as precisely the kind of affection that the courtier should avoid. "Do you not see that what you are calling nonchalance," Canossa points out,

is really affectation, because we clearly see him making every effort to show that he takes no thought of what he is about, which means taking too much thought; and because it exceeds certain limits of moderation, such nonchalance is affected, is unbecoming, and results in the opposite of the desired effect, which is to conceal the art (1.27).

In objecting to Roberto's performance Canossa not only reveals how hard it is to carry off the appearance of nonchalance and spontaneity but also reminds his interlocutors how difficult it is not to breach the requisite of *mediocrità*, that moderated balance of extremes or opposites also deemed so graceful an aspect of the courtier's style and personality. Whether *mediocrità* consists of balancing self-display with reserve, seriousness with jest, pride with modesty, the epithet that most often accompanies this requisite attribute is *difficile*. When, for example, the court lady is asked, like her male counterpart, to equilibrate opposing traits she must "*tener una certa mediocrità difficile e quasi composta di cose contrarie* (observe a certain mean, *difficult* to achieve, and, as it were, composed of contraries; 3.5). The Courtier's comportment is regularly characterized by this paradoxical and hence difficult balance of opposites: rehearsed spontaneity, reticent exhibitionism. It is reiterated that he must avoid being presumptuous, yet he is also asked constantly to impress beholders.

The standards are so high that for many they are unattainable. One must bear in mind, too, that Castiglione's speakers establish criteria of proper style for an aristocracy. Virtually by definition, then, they cannot be met by just anyone. The distance between the Courtier and the many inferior outsiders who would ape him is maintained by the repeated suggestion that there are inimitable nuances in his graceful behavior. For example, when the Courtier's manner of speaking is discussed, he is asked, at one point, to be able to speak with forceful eloquence when the occasion calls for it and "at other times with such simple candor as to make it seem that nature herself is speaking . . . and all this with such ease as to make the one who listens believe that with little effort he too could attain to such excellence—but who, when he tries, discovers that he is very far from it" (1.34). As this passage suggests, the standards of proper *mediocrità* and *sprezzatura* are made so hard to attain in



order to put them and the achievement of courtly grace out of reach of the bourgeoisie and the lesser folk who threaten to encroach on the courtier's social space.

Part of the idealism of the book, then, consists of the demanding, to most quite unattainable, criteria of stylistic and performative virtuosity it sets forth. But another, even more admirable aspect of the speakers' idealism stems from their desire to fashion a person who will retain as much moral integrity as the system of service in which he functions will allow. For instance, when, in Book 2, Federico Fregoso discusses the relationship of the courtier to his prince or lord, he recognizes that, if the courtier is to retain his sovereign's favor, he needs to be unpretentious, accommodating, and pliant. But he does not expect nor will he permit the Courtier to be a sycophant. Flexible though he has to be, the Courtier should not bend further than the bounds of morality will allow. "Above all," Federico says at one point in the discussion, "let him hold to what is good . . . nor let him ever bring himself to seek grace or favor by resorting to foul means or evil practices" (2.22). By observing that presumptuous and wicked courtiers do very well in contemporary courts, Vincenzo Calmeta, one of Federico's interlocutors, reminds him how hard it is to observe this ethical directive. Moreover, Calmeta goes on to point out how impossible it can become for a courtier, in the service of an immoral prince, to preserve his ethical principles and remain employed. Federico is quite aware that, to retain their employment, that is to say their masters' favor, actual courtiers are often forced to compromise their moral integrity. Yet he insists that the Courtier must obey his lord "in all things profitable and honorable to him, not in those that will bring him [i.e., his lord] harm and shame" (2.23). Even at the risk of being dismissed, he must not let obedience to his prince make him betray his moral self.<sup>7</sup>

By the time we get to Ottaviano's even more high-minded guidelines about the Courtier's relationship to his prince in Book 4 the issue is no longer how the Courtier can preserve his personal integrity. This is taken for granted. Rather his capacity to persuade his sovereign to act for the good of the state and of his subjects is now the central concern. Ottaviano wants to transform the Courtier from a respectful servant to the prince's moral and political adviser. His first requirement is that the Courtier be able to tell his prince the truth without fear of displeasing him. Then he must try to veer

7. Federico's demand—that the courtier obey his moral conscience rather than unprincipled directives from his lord—does not remain unchallenged. His interlocutors suggest that it may be impossible to reconcile the dictates of moral conscience with the demands of the ruler. For an interpretation of this discussion which brings out its more pessimistic conclusion, see Cox's analysis on p. 307 herein.

the prince away from immoral action and induce him to be virtuous (see 4.5). These are the loftiest demands imposed on the Courtier, and Ottaviano's elevated vision of the courtier as the prince's mentor is the most idealistic aspiration in the work (even more so than Bembo's hope of transforming the Courtier into an initiated Platonic lover). Yet Ottaviano does not ignore how arrogant and full of false self-esteem most modern princes are and, therefore, how intolerant they are of others' truthful opinions. Even worse, some of them "abhor reason and justice" (4.7). In addition, he knows that, accustomed as they are to the fawning manners of their subordinates, modern princes would react most adversely if they had to confront "*l'orrida faccia della vera virtù*" (the harsh face of true virtue). The solution lies in the Courtier's beautiful and graceful attributes. These make him so attractive that the prince will desire his company and may heed his advice. To lead the prince along "the austere path of virtue" the courtier must adorn it,

with shady fronds and strewing it with pretty flowers to lessen the tedium of the toilsome journey for one whose strength is slight; and now with music, now with arms and horses, now with verses, now with discourse of love, and with all the means whereof these gentlemen have spoken, to keep his mind continually occupied in worthy pleasures, yet always impressing upon him also some virtuous habit along with these enticements, as I have said, beguiling him with salutary deception; like shrewd doctors who often spread the edge of the cup with some sweet cordial when they wish to give a bitter tasting medicine to sick and over delicate children (4.10).

Even though he has genuine misgivings about the largely ornamental function ascribed to the Courtier by earlier speakers, Ottaviano recognizes here the advantages of his aesthetic talents by disclosing how they can serve as the vehicle of ethical purpose. How effectively he has reconciled beautiful attributes and moral agency is indicated by the idea of "salutary deception," since it allows the Courtier to employ one of his characteristic habits of style in edifying his prince—dissimulation. Ottaviano's "solution" is not merely meant to accommodate the courtier's aesthetic accomplishments in his ethical scheme. It takes into account that moral instruction will be induced in rulers, if at all, by guilefully appealing to their more superficial instincts. The Courtier's likelihood of redirecting his sovereign on to the more austere path of virtue depends on the cunning and deceit he is previously asked to cultivate.

As difficult as the requisites of perfect courtiership are, as high-minded as they become, the ideal envisaged by the speakers is not made to seem totally unattainable. Or at least when the demands do

appear impossible, the speakers are reminded of their excessive idealism. Ottaviano, for example, eventually gets carried away with his vision of the courtier as “educator of the prince,” and il Magnifico Giuliano tries to bring him down to earth by reminding him that the has endowed the Courtier with more dignity than the prince he serves, “which is most unseemly.” Furthermore il Magnifico objects that, by giving the Courtier a role that would befit an older, sober, and more severe councilor, yet asking him as well as to delight the prince with his physical accomplishments and ludic pastimes more appropriate for a young man, Ottaviano requires a blend of attributes too incompatible to find in a single individual. Last, il Magnifico (the champion of equality between courtier and court lady in Book 3) accuses Ottaviano of transforming the Courtier into a political mentor out of misogyny, to make sure he is given a role of greater dignity than the lady of the palace can ever possess (see 4.44).

The objections raised in this instance illustrate how the dialogue form that Castiglione chose for his work offered various means of tempering his idealized projection of the Courtier in general. First of all, the give and take of dialogue allowed the participants to question the excessive idealism voiced by the main speakers or occasionally to challenge it by bringing up the real predicaments of court service. Also, Castiglione's decision to resort to the Ciceronian model of dialogue—that is, one set in a real place with historically real participants—allowed him to give his representation of model building a verisimilitude it might otherwise have lacked. He was also inspired by Cicero to depict his speakers with some of the very attributes they demanded of the perfect courtier. This eulogistic strategy—showing that the historical company at Urbino approximated in their conduct aspects of their idealized self-representation—was at the same time an effective way to make his ideal seem attainable. As Cox most succinctly puts it, Castiglione's “definition of the perfect courtier, like Cicero's of the perfect orator, gains an incomparable persuasive force from the fact that it is elaborated by speakers who are themselves living exemplars of the *ethos* which the book is defining, and guarantors of the efficacy of its recipe for social success.”<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, by actually displaying the grace, the ironic self-depreciation, the wit, the “moderation” they require of the Courtier, the participants in the dialogue affirm the possibility of emulating the model. Moreover, Castiglione's speakers are not only aware of the social and political constraints imposed on courtiers by their autocratic

8. Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue. Literary Dialogue in Its Social and Political Contexts. Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 15.

masters but also display the discretion, the prudence, the artful indirection that they prescribe because of these constraints. Yet what makes these courtiers especially admirable is less their cunning virtuosity than the moral independence and self-respect that they will not give up in their roles as prince-pleasers. There, again, they are shown to practice what they preach for they insist that, in the service of his ruler, the Courtier not forfeit his moral integrity, however difficult it may be to maintain it.

At the very end of his speech in Book 4 Ottaviano claims that neither Aristotle nor Plato would have scorned the name of perfect Courtier since both philosophers had won the favor of princes (Alexander the Great and the rulers of Syracuse, respectively) and had managed to exert some beneficial moral influence on them by means not unlike the ones Ottaviano has prescribed. In the case of Plato, this was true of his effect on Dion of Syracuse but not on the tyrant Dionysius. When Plato eventually discovered that Dionysius was so vicious, his tyranny so ingrained, that changing or correcting him was futile, he "decided not to make use of the methods of Courtiership with him" but to leave him. This is, Ottaviano proposes,

what our Courtier also ought to do if he chanced to find himself in the service of a prince of so evil a nature as to be inveterate in vice, like consumptives in their sickness; for in that case he ought to escape from such bondage in order not to incur blame for his prince's evil deeds and not to feel the affliction which all good men feel when they serve the wicked (4.47).

Ottaviano reiterates, here, more forcefully than Federico had in Book 2, the need for the Courtier to forego serving a vicious and evil ruler. Yet one was also told, in that earlier exchange, how risky it would be for a courtier to abandon his service on moral grounds. In fact, given the unlikelihood of subsequent employment, it was virtually impossible to leave. "We must pray God," Calmeta had maintained,

to grant us good masters, for once we have them, we have to endure them as they are; because countless considerations force a gentleman not to leave a patron once he has begun to serve him: the misfortune lies in ever beginning; and in that case courtiers are like those unhappy birds that are born in some miserable valley (2.22).

So Plato's deliberate departure from the tyrant Dionysius, the last example Ottaviano asks to be followed, must have seemed quite utopian to real courtiers reading Castiglione's book. Yet we must not

assume, living as we do in an age of cynicism, that Ottaviano's directive was dismissed as totally unfeasible. Sixteenth-century readers were fully accustomed to being asked to exceed their capacities, to emulate models that were, by definition, unreachable. Precisely because Ottaviano's final exemplar was so idealistic it was all the more worthy of emulation. And if, in general, there were goals set in Castiglione's book too lofty to be reached by ordinary courtiers that did not mean these goals were not inspiring. One must not underestimate the heroic dimensions that the Courtier acquires by the end of the work and the noble aspirations this model might have incited. The uplifting effects of the book could only increase later in the sixteenth century as courts became more despotic or monarchs, at least, became increasingly dominant and restricted their courtiers' freedom of expression and of action even further.

If, in my earlier criticism, I suggested that the great fortune of *The Courtier* had to do with its value as an art of successful prince-pleasing, I now feel its ongoing appeal stemmed even more from its having raised that art to such a noble level. In the proem to the first draft of his work Castiglione had stated that the end of courtiership was "knowing how and being able to serve perfectly, and with dignity any great Prince in whatever praiseworthy activity so as to obtain favor and praise from him and from all the others."<sup>9</sup> *Dignity* is, I think, the operative word. Castiglione, as well as the speakers in his dialogue knew full well what the aristocratic class had been forced to give up when its members had to become servants of princes: the possibility of military aggressiveness, and the greater personal independence it had previously enjoyed. Yet, when "forming" their ideal, these speakers were not prepared to forfeit the Courtier's independence altogether, at least not his moral one. However disempowered he may have become, they realized that "to serve with dignity" the Courtier could not allow the pressures of autocracy make him behave in the abject and vile ways such a political system encouraged. The Courtier had to retain some moral freedom and, in the best of circumstances, to exercise some moral agency. In their idealized projection of themselves they thus sought to give the Courtier as much range in this regard as the system of princely patronage might allow. It is this range of moral freedom, and the self-respect it allowed the Courtier to preserve, that ennobled their art of prince-pleasing and made it endure.

9. "Altro proemio del Cortegiano tratto dalla prima bozza dell'Autore," in *Lettere del Conte B. Castiglione*, a cura dell'abate, P. Serassi (Padova, 1769), vol. 1, p. 193: "il sapere e potere perfettamente servire e con dignità ogni gran Principe in ogni cosa laudabile, acquistandone grazia e laude da esso e da tutti gli altri."

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The Text of  
THE BOOK  
OF THE COURTIER<sup>†</sup>

THE SINGLETON TRANSLATION



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*To the Reverend and Illustrious Signor Don Michel de Silva,<sup>1</sup>  
Bishop of Viseu*

[1] When signor Guidobaldo of Montefeltro, Duke of Urbino, departed this life, I, together with several other gentlemen who had served him, remained in the service of Duke Francesco Maria della Rovere, his heir and successor in the state. And, as the savor of Duke Guido's virtues was fresh in my mind, and the delight that in those years I had felt in the loving company of such excellent persons as then frequented the Court of Urbino, I was moved by the memory thereof to write these books of the Courtier: which I did in but a few days, meaning in time to correct those errors which had resulted from my desire to pay this debt quickly. But Fortune for many years now has kept me ever oppressed by such constant travail that I could never find the leisure to bring these books to a point where my weak judgment was satisfied with them.

Now being in Spain, and being informed from Italy that signora Vittoria della Colonna, Marchioness of Pescara, to whom I had already given a copy of the book, had, contrary to her promise, caused a large part of it to be transcribed, I could not but feel a certain annoyance, fearing the considerable mischief that can arise in such cases. Nevertheless, I trusted that the wisdom and prudence of that lady (whose virtue I have always held in veneration as something divine) would avail to prevent any wrong from befalling me for having obeyed her commands. In the end I learned that that part of the book was in Naples, in the hands of many persons; and, as men are always avid of new things, it appeared that certain of these persons were trying to have it printed. Wherefore, alarmed at this danger, I decided to revise at once such small part of the book as time would permit, with the intention of publishing it, thinking it better to let it be seen even slightly corrected by my own hand than much mutilated by the hands of others.

And so, to carry out this thought, I started to reread it; and immediately, at the very outset, by reason of the dedication, I was seized by no little sadness (which greatly grew as I proceeded), when I remembered that the greater part of those persons who are introduced in the conversations were already dead; for, besides those who are mentioned in the proem of the last Book, even messer Alfonso Ariosto, to whom the book is dedicated, is dead: an affable youth, prudent, abounding in the gentlest manners, and apt in everything befitting a man who lives at court. Likewise Duke Giuliano de' Medici, whose goodness and noble courtesy deserved to be

1. Most of the people mentioned in the text are identified in Singleton's "Index of Persons and Items" on pp. 261-79. Except where otherwise identified, the notes to the *Book of the Courtier* are by Singleton [Editor].