

BENEDETTO REGUARDATI OF NURSIA (1398–1469)

by

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BENEDETTO REGUARDATI was a physician and a diplomat.¹ His medical skill, shared by his younger son, Dionisio, was an inherited calling, for he came from the stock of the Norcini, medicine men, renowned throughout the ages for traditional skill in magic and healing. In his own lifetime Reguardati is said to have 'greatly increased the glory of his family' acquired in the past by his ancestors in the city of Nursia' (*ac domus sue splendorem quem in Nurisina civitate vetustis temporibus comparatum a suis maioribus, ipse plurimum auxit*, Cicco Simonetta, 1 September 1464). He himself bore the proud name of his more famous *compaesano*, St. Benedict of Nursia (480–543), whose mother had been Abbondanza Reguardati.

Reguardati's diplomatic career deserves consideration in any detailed study of Renaissance diplomacy, a neglected field to which the late Garrett Mattingly has drawn attention. To the Reguardati family this also was a traditional vocation. Benedetto's brother, Marino, his son Carlo, both lawyers, became Roman Senators. Carlo served the court of Milan at Urbino (M.A.P. IX, 276, 14 March 1462)² and at Pesaro. He was at Florence when Benedetto died there in 1469. Another diplomat, Giovanni Reguardati, described by Professor Babinger as 'Venetian' ambassador to Ladislaus, King of Hungary in 1444,³ was probably a kinsman, one of the many Norcini in the pay of Venice. Francesco Filelfo (1398–1481) in a letter to Niccolò Ceba, dated 26 February 1450, recalls that Benedetto Reguardati himself went on an embassy to Venice as Sforza's representative to the Republic.⁴ Pietro Reguardati, Benedetto's nephew, also a lawyer, was one of the *Cavalieri* in attendance on Francesco Sforza in March 1450, on his entry into Milan.⁵ Later, when Pietro was Advocate General of the Mark of Ancona (1464), and Sforza's representative in Rome, he hoped for promotion as Ducal Auditor, but Sforza, to whom the new Pope, Paul II, was hostile, decided on retrenchment, so the office was allowed to lapse on the death of the previous occupant, Angelo da Rieti (Reguardati's letter to Sforza, 9 November and the reply, 28 November 1464).

Benedetto Reguardati signed his letters *miles et physicus*. In the early *quattrocento* these terms reveal the dual status of military-medical practitioners, such as those

¹ There is nothing in English on Reguardati. I am heavily indebted to the works of Drs. Chiappelli and Deffenu. My references to Milanese letters concerning Reguardati are cited from their transcripts.

² Eight letters, seven from Reguardati, one to him are in the Archivio, M.A.P., Florence. Seven are discussed by Chiappelli. The eighth from Papi del Burgo to Reguardati, M.A.P. X, 519, 19 March 1469, is incoherent and concerned with debts connected with the writer's brother, sick with distress because he had been left in Venice. From Florence Papi wanted a four months' safe-conduct to Rome. The significance of this letter, written from Milan is that it is an appeal to Reguardati, then established in Florence, four months before his death there. Two of Filelfo's four letters to Reguardati also belong to this period, Lib. XXX, pp. 209r–210r, 13 April and 12 May 1469, mentioned by Chiappelli, p. 99 note 7.

³ German ed., p. 32; Italian ed., p. 66.

⁴ Lib. VII, p. 46v.

⁵ Colombo, 'L'Ingresso di Francesco Sforza . . .', p. 59.

servicing the Aragonese kings of Naples. Francesco Sforza, like Alfonso I, won his power by war and led his own standing army. In northern Italy the term *miles et physicus* occurs less frequently than in the south. In Reguardati's case *miles* was a status which strictly speaking was civil, or only quasi-military. Though he was not a military doctor, or a soldier in battle, his epoch was one of war, not peace. Carlo also signed himself *Nursinus miles* in two letters to Piero de' Medici, M.A.P. X, 68, 4 August 1460, from Pesaro, and X, 480, 15 March 1463, from Urbino, as also in the letter reporting his father's death in Florence to Galeazzo Maria Sforza (12 July 1469).

Though Benedetto Reguardati achieved all possible qualifications and was well acquainted with the theory and practice of medicine, his abilities as a physician and obstetrician were practical rather than academic, and he ranks among the leading empirics of Nursia.

A clue to the crisis which interrupted his academic career appears at the end of the first chapter of his treatise *De Conservazione sanitatis*, written about 1435–38,⁶ where he recalls two cases of charcoal-asphyxiation. The first occurred while he was lecturing at Perugia and managed to revive the afflicted student. Later that same winter the second misadventure nearly caused the death of all the inmates asleep in Florence *apud carcerem officij mercantiarum*. Here Reguardati's account is too vivid to be attributed to hearsay. Is he again describing a personal experience and if so, was he himself one of the almost suffocated prisoners? Both events took place in 1427, the year he was replaced at Perugia by Bartolommeo d'Aversa.⁷

Since Reguardati always maintained a connection with commerce, the central crisis of his life may be connected with commercial rivalry which linked Milan to Florence against the South dominated by the Papacy and Aragon. His letters contain many references to traders and there are two other references to the *Offitio della Merchatantia* of Florence. During his travels in northern Italy to attend one patient after another Reguardati frequented the company of merchants. From Florentine merchants at the funeral of Sante Bentivoglio he heard that Giovanni de' Medici was seriously ill in Florence (5 October 1463). Messages reached him through Pigello Portinari, whom he describes not as the manager of the Milan branch of the Medici bank, but as *mercante fiorentino* (5 August 1460). Nine years later he named Pigello's brother [Accerito Portinari, who had succeeded him in 1468] as surety, when begging Galeazzo Maria Sforza for a loan on arrears of salary to enable him to pay for his last journey to Florence where Piero de' Medici was ill (9 February 1469). In 1462 he asked Giovanni de' Medici to appoint Doctor Paolo de Heredy of Visso, 'as dear to me as an honoured brother of my own' (*ad me altrettanto caro che proprio onorevole fratello*), to the Florentine *offitio di merchantatia*. (M.A.P. X, 430. Milan, 24 September 1462). Many years after Reguardati's death his grandson or nephew (*nepos*), Gregorio Reguardati, described as a doctor of law and forty years old or more, was employed in this same *Offitio* in connection with the Pisan Studio, as recalled in a contemporary jotting on the flyleaf of the manuscript *Ricordi dello Studio Pisano, 1481–1505* (IV. f. lv. in the Archivio, Florence).

⁶ Cotton Hill, 'Benedetto Reguardati . . .', pp. 77–78.

⁷ Kristeller, II, p. 333 mentions a medical tract by Bartolommeo of Aversa included in the Vatican Latin miscellany 5378.

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In 1427 Reguardati's career at Perugia had been interrupted; twelve years later he appeared against Sforza among the defenders of Nursia. This was his last action as an independent man. During the long struggle for the Mark of Ancona, Reguardati found refuge there and soon passed permanently into the service of the Sforza. But for some reason unknown he and his heirs were banished from Nursia and forbidden ever to return. The ban (*divieto*) emanated from the Papacy. Its cause and object, now a mystery, were well known then to all the parties concerned. The Sforza and the Medici tried to get the prohibition relaxed, but the Papacy remained adamant. When Piero de' Medici obtained the removal of the ban (*remotiva del divieto*) from his son Carlo, Reguardati seized the opportunity to suggest that Carlo might be considered for appointment as Podestà to Florence (M.A.P. IX, 276, 14 March 1462). This was one of his many moves in the direction of Florence.

He always maintained loving contacts with the Medici who were his patients from 1453. His desire for a lectureship in Florence may reveal a real inclination for the academic life, or for a more satisfactory living than Milan's precarious finances afforded. As Reguardati's aim was to return to Nursia, Florence was nearer than Milan. This point was not lost on contemporaries 'being nearer home he could be more useful to his own people than by remaining away' (*essendo più vicino a casa sua potrà essere più utile a li soi che stando de lonze*, Sforza's Letter of Recommendation to the Signory, 25 June 1451). Also the bourgeois city was more to Reguardati's taste than the duchy where he lacked personal freedom. His letters to the Sforzeschi reveal the intimacy of a shared existence, but they also show that he was often harassed and hardly able to call his soul his own.

Reguardati's four expeditions to Rome make it clear that he hoped to obtain some relaxation of the ban from each new pope, from Nicholas V in 1451–52, Pius II in 1460 and again in 1461, Paul II in 1464, but always in vain. No mystery was made of his intentions. Sforza's official Letter of Recommendation to Archbishop Latino Orsini (24 November 1451) states and even stresses Reguardati's case: 'that he was returning home . . . to look after and put in order his family affairs and business' (*Redeunte nuper in patriam . . . pro curandis et componendis rebus et negocijs suis familiaribus*).

Nicholas V received him affectionately, but when Reguardati attempted to approach Nursia he was forcibly evicted by papal command, detained with his followers at Pesaro and prevented from returning to Milan. Raynaldo di Carlo, perhaps Reguardati's grandson, the chosen envoy of this party, described as 'the exiles' (*li usciti*), was sent to the Duke to state their case and further details in private (Pesaro, 29 March 1453).⁸ A month later, when the illness of Cosimo de' Medici necessitated Reguardati's presence in Florence, he was allowed to leave Pesaro but his companions were still detained there (Florence, 24 April 1453).

His equally unsuccessful encounters with Pius II, were again interrupted by a call from Florence. This time Giovanni di Cosimo was ill. In Rome Reguardati himself had been ailing during May and early June 1460, probably with an early attack of malaria, which eventually killed him in 1469. Though he had hoped to return to Milan, he set off at once for Florence, so weak that he had to ride there by slow

⁸ This letter was first reproduced by Giacosa, pp. 692–93; see also Deffenu, p. 22 and note 14.

stages. This is the only reference he ever made in any of his writings to his own health. Soon after his arrival in Florence, Giovanni de' Medici's condition improved so at first Reguardati hoped to remain there only eight days (12 June 1460). This was, however, extended to more than two months to enable him to accompany Giovanni to the Baths of Siena and Volterra which may also have assisted his own recovery. Eventually he spent the whole winter in Florence, returning about February not to Milan but to Rome. Still no progress was made with the pope concerning Nursia, as Pius II did not consider the time opportune (M.A.P. XVII, 293, 4 February 1461, from Rome to Piero de' Medici).

Plague was raging in November 1464 when Reguardati went to Rome on his fourth and last visit, this time to Paul II and on official business. Again his own affairs (*faccende*) were his main concern. Sforza encouraged him to have patience, as His Holiness, newly appointed, might have 'good reason' (*qualche legitimi respecti*) to prevent an early settlement of his case. Rather than delay in Rome it might be expedient to postpone the matter to some more suitable occasion (Milan, 7 November 1464). Reguardati however remained in Rome. Again Sforza urged his return, advising him to choose the route which best afforded protection against the plague (Milan, 28 November 1464). In February, as Reguardati was still absent, Sforza recalled him with insistence, sending messengers to meet him by both routes, for now the Duchess was ill at Cremona 'with her old complaint of constriction of the stomach' (*de quel suo vecchio male de seramento de stomaco*, Milan, 22 February 1465, three letters one to Nicodemo Tranchedini di Pontremoli, two in duplicate to Reguardati). This was the last occasion when Reguardati appears in attendance on any illness of the Sforzeschi.

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The main events of Reguardati's life were always dramatic and present a conflict between inclination and circumstance. He was a kindly, capable man, spontaneous in his reactions. A certain simplicity underlying his shrewdness was part of that personal magnetism of the Norcino which influences any attempt to interpret his life.

As protagonists in the *quattrocento* drama Francesco Sforza and Benedetto Reguardati were not unknown to each other when about 1438 they met as opponents outside the walls of beleaguered Nursia. The diplomatic zeal shown by Reguardati, on this occasion, as leader of the conquered Norcini was not lost on Sforza, who was a shrewd judge of men.

At the next dramatic encounter the tables were turned. Now it was Sforza who appealed to Reguardati for what aid he could offer as a skilled physician. At this time he was in the Mark where his patients included the Governor, Astorgio Agnesi (1391–1451), a Neapolitan prelate, for whose use he had compiled his treatise *De Conservatione sanitatis*. In 1441 Francesco Sforza married Bianca Maria Visconti, to whom he had been betrothed since 1432, when she was eight years old. Though she remained childless after two years of marriage there was no question of the virility of her husband who had already fathered six of his twenty-two illegitimate children. That her 'sterility' may possibly have distressed her father is suggested by the dedication to Filippo Maria Visconti by Maestro Antonio Guaineri (d. 1448) of his work,

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*De Egritudinibus mulierum.*⁹ This might otherwise seem irrelevant as Filippo Maria (1391–1447), never interested in women, had already, in 1418, beheaded one wife, twenty years his senior, Beatrice Lascaris di Tenda, widow of Facino Cane, and never lived with the other, Maria daughter of Amedeo VIII of Savoy. Bianca Maria (1425–68), his natural daughter by Agnese del Mayno, was his only child and the heir to the Duchy of Milan. The real significance of Filippo Maria's second marriage was the pattern it set for Savoyard marriages which in the case of Galeazzo Maria Sforza was to pave the way for the French invasion of 1494.

In the courts of the Renaissance the middle-aged physician played the part of a father-figure. His presence was welcomed by the young wife, often lonely when transplanted from her home who found in him a more genial confidant than the inevitable confessor. In a subsequent 'sterility' crisis, further complicated by malaria, Isabella of Aragon's personal doctor, Clemente Gattolo (c. 1455–c. 1525), rushed to her aid from Naples to Milan in June 1489, as her father, Alfonso of Calabria, felt that he knew her constitution better than the local doctors.¹⁰

Once Benedetto Reguardati was 'summoned to court' (*condocto in corte per la sterilità della illustrissima madonna*), as he later recalled in a letter to her son (5 October 1468), his very presence introduced that element of serenity which was all Bianca Maria lacked for her domestic role as wife and mother. Her first son, Galeazzo Maria, was born in the Girifalco fortress at Fermo, 24 February 1444, with Reguardati in attendance, acting later 'both as nurse and doctor' to the child (*non . . . meno baylo che medico*) as recalled in his letter of 5 October 1468. In fifteen years Bianca Maria gave birth to nine children, six sons and three daughters, of whom one girl, apparently the twin of Elisabetta (b. 1456), died in infancy. The only complication which afflicted her pregnancies was the birth of her fifth child, Lodovico Sforza il Moro, 23 August 1451, at Vigevano with Reguardati in attendance. The Duchess took three months to recover from this delivery.¹¹

The triumphant fecundity of the ducal pair caused their faithful physician to abandon all hope of a permanent academic career. First in 1443, during Bianca Maria's first pregnancy, and later repeatedly, Reguardati was compelled to refuse *la lectura ordinaria da matina* [*sic*] (Sforza's official letter, 25 June 1451), offered to him in the Florentine Studio, as he recalled writing to Galeazzo Maria (5 October 1468). Meanwhile in the intervals of Bianca Maria's pregnancies and the ailments of her children, Francesco Sforza did not fail to exploit the alternative, diplomatic abilities of his physician. In rapid succession Reguardati held a series of key posts, necessary to establish the authority won by arms over the territories surrounding Milan. In 1447 with Antonio Guidobono he was Governor of Pavia, in 1468 of Parma, in 1457–58 together with Piersanti of Sernano he acted as Lieutenant of Pesaro in the absence of Sforza's brother, Alessandro, away in France serving Charles VII. His long letter to Galeazzo Maria summarizes these 'dangerous activities in troubled times' (*con quanti pericoli e in quella perversità di tempi*). This letter, a detailed and even

⁹ Thorndike, pp. 73–74, Vaticanus 3163, Kristeller, II, p. 317. For another MS. at S. Candido-Innichen, Kapitelbibliothek, VIII c 2, ff. 226–62, see Kristeller, II, p. 141.

¹⁰ De Frede, pp. 9–10; Cotton Hill, 'The Marriage of Isabella of Aragon . . .', pp. 62–63.

¹¹ Deffenu, p. 20. However the sequence and exact birth dates of Bianca Maria's children vary in different authors and genealogies.

wistful '*apologia pro vita sua*' (5 October 1468), deserves careful annotation beyond my present argument, for Reguardati's diplomatic career is part of the history of Milan.

The same administrative and diplomatic skill, not book-learning or *theorica*, led to the useful, if sporadic, university appointment at Pavia provided by Sforza as a sop for his refusal to allow Reguardati to go to Florence. In 1447, while Governor of Pavia, he was made head of the commission to reform the university and eventually exempted from the rule that only citizens could hold office in the colleges. His letter of 1 October 1447 shows his concern over this issue. He was appointed to lecture at Pavia, in 1448–49, in 1450–51, and in 1455 specifically *ad lecturam Almansori*, with Antonio Maria Guaineri Jr. as a replacement, if necessary.¹² But these duties were largely voluntary (*ad lecturam beneplaciti*), as Thorndike has pointed out,¹³ for Reguardati seldom had leisure to lecture. In any case his salary was always in arrears and frequently unpaid (Simonetta's letters from Milan, 20 and 28 April 1451). This was not entirely due to neglect. The problems of war and plague, 'the unbearable burden' (*insopportabile caricho*), of maintaining a standing army (1 June 1451), the expense of avoiding and checking the ravages of plague (7 September 1451), the difficulty of access to ready money for fear of contagion (7 September to 15 October 1451)—for all these reasons Francesco Sforza found it difficult to pay Reguardati. And later his son Galeazzo Maria was unable to provide him with the long-promised property in old age, mentioned in *Camera*, as Maestro Lazzaro [? di Antonio Tedaldi of Piacenza] often told Reguardati (5 October 1468).

When he became a member of the Secret Council (1 September 1464) Reguardati refused the salary for this appointment on the grounds that his own means were adequate while the Duke had 'very heavy expenses' (*spexe assai insopportabile*).¹⁴ The award, carrying with it the status of *Senator* and *Eques auratus*, dates Giovanni Marliani's treatise *De Proportione motuum in velocitate* (Vaticanus 2225), where his letter dedicating the work to Reguardati accords him these titles.¹⁵ With salaries unpaid, those in the service of the Sforzeschi lacked money even for normal expenses. Maestro Gaspare [?Venturelli] another ducal physician, pledged his monthly salary against a secret loan of ten gold ducats which he was driven to beg from Pigello Portinari of the Medici bank 'to pay for a ration of wine' (*che voglio pagare uno pocho di vino*). This appeal was written anxiously at night *ex Camera ducalis* (M.A.P. LXVIII, 6, 6 October 1457). No wonder that Reguardati, a married man with children and grandchildren, wanted to escape to Florence. The Signory's persistence in offering him the lectureship shows the high value placed on his medical reputation.

But, while Francesco Sforza lived, Reguardati's presence in the Duchy was essential to Milanese life. The idea of parting from his beloved physician was inconceivable: 'He has been continually with us, and in our service has comported himself with love

¹² Corradi (ed.), *Memorie e documenti per la storia dell' Università di Pavia*, I, p. 106.

¹³ Thorndike, p. 64 and note 56, with ref. to the *Codice Diplomatico dell' Università di Pavia*, I, pp. 507, 512–13, 540. The appointment for 1450–51 is implied in letters reproduced by Deffenu, p. 138.

¹⁴ Deffenu, p. 31.

¹⁵ Thorndike, p. 78, Vaticanus 2225, printed before Marliano's death (1483) by Damiano de Confalonieri of Binasco, Papias, 16 December 1482, in fol.; Hain, 10772. For an earlier draft in manuscript, based on Marliani's teachings in the Studio, see Kristeller, II, p. 480, Vaticanus, Chis. E VI 197, ff. 102v–126.

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and loyalty as if he were indeed a member of the family, and in such a manner that we are exceedingly satisfied with his conduct.' (*Esso magistro Benedicto è stato continuamente con moy, et in li servicij nostri s'è deportato con quello amore et fede che sel fosse de casa nostra propria, et in modo che restiamo troppo contenti de facti soy*). On this occasion Reguardati had actually accepted the offer from Florence and Sforza was writing an official Letter of Recommendation to the Signory (Milan, 25 June 1451), but it had been forestalled by a secret missive three weeks earlier to Cicco Simonetta 'that on no account was he to be elected' (*che per niuno modo ello habia dicta electione*, Milan, 1 June 1451). Even the promising medical practice at Pesaro of Maestro Dionisio, Reguardati's son, was sacrificed, for he was required to act as *locum tenens* in Milan when his father was called away to other patients or employed on civic duties (This, implied in Reguardati's letter from Florence, 24 April 1453, is mentioned in his complaint reported by Simonetta to the Duchess, Pavia 16 January 1468).

From Milan as his base in the threefold capacity of physician, diplomat and university administrator, Reguardati served the Sforza for almost a generation, 'through hot and cold' (*per caldo et per freddo*, 16 January 1468), 'in many vicissitudes' (*ub mille transmutazioni*, 5 October 1468). As a physician he ranks among the first doctors who specialized in obstetrics, gynaecology and infant welfare. His achievement was publicized by the health of Bianca Maria's stalwart children. Bona of Savoy was less successful with her sickly brood: Gian Galeazzo, Hermes, Clara, Anna, Bianca Maria, in spite of the services of Giovanni Matteo of Grado (1436–72) with whom Reguardati deserves comparison.¹⁶

In his further medical capacity as Controller of Public Health, Reguardati maintained a lasting struggle against the plague. Sforza's and Simonetta's letters from June to October 1451 refer to these precautions¹⁷. To another outbreak, perhaps that of 1468, is to be attributed Reguardati's treatise *De Preservatione a pestilentia*, published posthumously, at Lyons, 1477–78, and then in Milan, 1479,¹⁸ in time for use during the epidemic of that year. A missing *consilium* of preventive measures drawn up by Reguardati and other doctors in June 1468 may be a development of this treatise. Though the *consilium* is lost the accompanying letter of 15 June 1468 survives in the Milanese archives.¹⁹ Apart from the plague tract and the earlier *Libellus de conservazione sanitatis*, the only other work connected with Reguardati is the manuscript of his *Pharmacopoeia*, in Florence (Riccardianus 818).²⁰

The *Libellus*, originally written for his first influential patient, the Neapolitan prelate, Astorgio Agnesi, had established Reguardati's reputation as a consultant. The popularity of this health treatise is indicated by the thirteen or fourteen surviving

¹⁶ On Gianmatteo Ferrari and the ailments of Bona of Savoy's children see Magenta, I, p. 492; H. M. Ferrari, pp. 325 seq.; Arici, pp. 191–96; Bazzi, pp. 4–10, Appendice, pp. 12–19.

¹⁷ See also Filelfo's letters from Milan to Reguardati, Angelo da Rieti and Cicco Simonetta, all dated 13 June 1451, and the second letter to Reguardati, from Pavia, 27 October 1451, Lib. VIII, pp. 65v and 68v.

¹⁸ Klebs and Droz, p. 79, refer to a MS. in Paris, Bibl. Nat. Rés., Te 30 4. The Lyons ed. was printed by Nicolaus Philippi (Pistoris) and Marcus Reinhart. The copy of the Milan ed. in 4to, mentioned by Hain, 11924, is said to be lost. Klebs and Sudhoff (1926), p. 60, question the existence of a copy at Toledo.

¹⁹ Chiappelli, p. 106 and note 5.

²⁰ Kristeller, I, p. 179.

manuscripts of which eight are of the fifteenth century. Three, including two of the earlier ones, are in Italian, the remainder in Latin. Later some of the printed editions, all of them posthumous, falsely attributed the work to Ugo Benzi.²¹ As a consultant physician Reguardati's presence was required in all the neighbouring states whenever any member of the wide family of the Sforzeschi or their allies was ill. This is of even greater significance to the history of medicine than his local activities as court physician in Milan. Only good health, indefatigable vitality and prevailing cheerfulness enabled him to cope with his programme of non-stop activity, from court to court, from patient to patient, which involved long journeys on horseback, often at night, in winter and during plague. His expeditions would have been even further extended but for the ban which limited his movements.

As Bianca Maria's physician he was expected to be always on call in Milan, so any absence required official leave and had to be brief. While the Duchess was still ailing, two months after the birth of Lodovico Sforza, Reguardati was allowed to absent himself for a few days in October 1451 to attend Sforza's nephew (*nipote*) Roberto [?di San Severino (1417–87)], who was ill, stricken apparently with plague, as were also a certain Riccardo and Madonna Giovanna. Roberto tried to borrow money from Sforza for this emergency, but there was none to spare. All the messenger got was some of Sforza's clothing to pawn (7 September 1451). Next Reguardati attended the death-bed of Giovanni I, Count of Concordia and Mirandola, the old ally first of the Visconti and then of the Sforza, and grandfather of our Pico.

In March 1453 the illness of Cosimo de' Medici freed Reguardati from the papal detention at Pesaro. Scarcely had he arrived in Florence than he was rushed to the death-bed of Carlo Marsuppini (1399–1453). For twenty days the Secretary of the Republic had been stricken with fever culminating in *una postemazione de cerebro*. In addition to his report to Sforza, Reguardati wrote an account of the case in 'medical language' (*secundo vocaboli medicinali*), for his son Dionisio, left as his *locum tenens* in Milan (24 April 1453), which unfortunately does not survive. He attended Marsuppini's funeral on 27 April and said it was celebrated with the same pomp as that of another Aretino, Leonardo [Bruni, 9 March 1444]. Cosimo had been ailing for six months with his usual arthritis (*la sua consueta paxione de iuncture*). His convalescence delayed Reguardati's return to Milan. Sforza fearing that he might be plotting to remain in Florence to lecture (*de cozzarsi con quella Signoria*), urged his envoy, Nicodemo Tranchedini, to prevent this, and summoned Reguardati home to Pavia on the grounds that Galeazzo Maria was ill (20 August 1453).

But as Tranchedini informed Sforza (15 September 1453), Reguardati had left Florence since the end of June. He was in fact back at Pesaro, 'enchained' by the illness which afflicted the family of Alessandro Sforza in his absence. As the six-

²¹ Discussed in my article, 'Benedetto Reguardati . . .', p. 77. The publication in 1967 of Kristeller's *Iter Italicum*, II, reveals five more manuscripts, making the total 13 or 14, if MS. XV 145, missing from the Nazionale, Florence, is not in fact Biscione 25 in the Laurenziana. These five additional MSS. are:

PIACENZA, Bibl. Com., Cod. 157, s. XV, in Latin, dedic. to A. Agnesi, *Iter*, II, p. 70.

REGGIO EMILIA, Bibl. Mun., Vari D 135, s. XV, in Italian, dedic. to A. Agnesi, *Iter*, II, p. 84.

VATICAN, Fond. Reg. Lat., 602, s (?), in Latin, *Iter*, II, p. 400.

VATICAN, Fond. Chigi, E IV 129, a fragment, s. XV, in Latin, dedic. to A. Agnesi, *Iter*, II, p. 473.

MILAN, Arch. Stat., 136, s. XVI, trans. from Latin into Italian for Andrea di Luigi Vettori and addressed by him to Francesco di Orlando Gherardi, then Captain of Pistoia, *Iter*, II, p. 528.

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year-old son, Costanzo, his stepmother Sveva di Montefeltro (1434–78), Alessandro's second wife, and then Boltrino, the first of two messengers sent from Sforza to recall Reguardati, all sickened in turn, their illness appears to be consecutive cases of some virus infectious disease [?measles]. Harassed more by Sveva's hysterics than by illness, Reguardati wrote a series of rapid notes to Sforza which are masterpieces of dramatic expression (25 August and two letters of 28 August 1453, in reply to Sforza's summons, in duplicate).

These letters suggest that Sveva's temperament gave Alessandro Sforza justification for the eventual repudiation. He accused her however of adultery and replaced her by his mistress, Pacifica Semperoli. Sveva meanwhile profited from her refuge in the convent of the Poor Clares at Pesaro. There as Sister Serafina Feltria she wrote religious poetry, became abbess in 1475 and was beatified by Benedict XIV in 1754.²² Her feast is locally celebrated on 8 September. This pope must have felt sympathetic towards repudiated wives, for in 1743 he had also beatified Jeanne of Valois (1464–1505), the discarded hunchbacked wife of Louis XII of France.

In 1458, while Reguardati was Lieutenant at Pesaro, he was expected to supervise the household of Alessandro Sforza's motherless children, Battista (1446–72), from 1460 the beloved wife of Federico Duke of Montefeltro, and Costanzo (1447–83), left to the mercy of tutors since the repudiation of their stepmother and in the continued absence of their father. Reguardati's kindly report to their aunt, the anxious Duchess Bianca Maria, reveals all the zeal of a health visitor (10 April 1458) but makes no mention of Sveva who with Costanzo had been his patient five years before.

From Pesaro he went to Florence again or was visited by Giovanni de' Medici, who later wrote asking for a prescription and a further supply of a laxative electuary (*confectione del diaturbith*), which Reguardati sent him as soon as he managed to obtain the required amount of *turbithi electi* to concoct 'a pound' (*una libbra*) of the mixture (M.A.P. IX, 300, 10 October 1457, from Pesaro). Reguardati's son Carlo also kept Giovanni de' Medici supplied with similar curative confections and syrups.²³ A further attempt to return to Florence in 1462 was frustrated by Francesco Sforza's illness and his prolonged convalescence (M.A.P. IX, 276, 14 March 1462).

In May 1463 an urgent message summoned Reguardati to Bologna where Sante Bentivoglio was ill. His method of diagnosis was always threefold, in this case Sante was found to be suffering from three ailments: fever, rheumatism and severe ulceration of hand and foot (10 May 1463). Another ducal physician Gasparino [?Venturelli of Pesaro] accompanied Reguardati but, when Sante seemed better, left for Pesaro where Alessandro Sforza was ailing after a visit to the Baths, his condition aggravated by domestic and political worries (25 May 1463). Reguardati himself had returned to Milan to look after Bianca Maria when Sante had his final relapse (28 September 1463). Sent back 'in great haste' (*volando*) to Bologna he reached Guastalla only to hear that Sante had died on the previous day, 1 October. He arrived in Bologna on

²² Deffenu, p. 24 note 15 refers to Feliciangeli on the cloistering of Sveva; see also Bignami, pp. 176–77.

²³ The electuary, made from *turbithi*, the *convolvulus turpethum* or *lazerwort*, was later described by Giovanni Mainardi in his edition of Mesue. As an alternative to Mesue, Chiappelli, pp. 104, 129, suggests that the prescription may have been based on Bartolommeo Montagnana Sr.'s formula. See also Dederian, p. 334.

3 October, in time for the funeral two days later, and the usual round of condolences, and noticed the concern about Giovanni Bentivoglio's prospects. That very evening, some Florentine merchants informed him that Giovanni de' Medici was again ill in Florence. He managed to leave Bologna discreetly at 23 hours and hastened to Florence. The same night he was at Pianoro, writing to Sforza (5 October 1463). The ride to Florence took forty-eight hours for he arrived at midnight or later on 7 October. There both Cosimo and Giovanni were ill, Giovanni so seriously that he died.²⁴

His next expedition was to Mantua on a state visit which had been twice postponed on account of Sante Bentivoglio's illness (Reguardati's letter to Sforza, 10 May, Sforza's letters to Bentivoglio, 16 May and to Virgilio Malveggi, 28 September 1463). Now in December 1463 the Duchess herself led the two Milanese physicians, Benedetto Reguardati and Antonio Bernareggio, on this most delicate mission, for one of the earliest pre-nuptial medical examinations on record was to be inflicted on the fourteen-year-old Dorotea Gonzaga in the presence also of two Mantuan doctors, Giovanni di Grignano and Galeazzo Arrivabene. Already in 1457 Galeazzo Maria Sforza's betrothal to Susanna, the eldest of the four Gonzaga sisters, had been broken off on the grounds that she had a curvature of the spine (*gibositade*). If it could now be proved that Dorotea suffered from the same complaint, said to be inherited from their grandmother, Paola Malatesta of Rimini (d. 1449), the wife of Gian Francesco II of Mantua (1395–1444),²⁵ Galeazzo Maria would also be able to cast off Dorotea in favour of a more spectacular match with Bona of Savoy. While the Milanese doctors tried to persuade the Mantuans that a thorough examination was necessary, Dorotea's father, Luigi III Gonzaga, intervened and she was saved from exposure. Though Mantegna's frescoes of the otherwise happy Gonzaga family show that Galeazzo Maria had good reason for his genetic qualms, the ordeal so heartlessly imposed on Dorotea certainly ruined her chances of ever securing a husband. She took refuge in a convent at Cremona and died there in April 1467 of fever, or, as some said, of poison. Still Dorotea did not lack her poets. Ciecho da Parma addressed two Italian poems to her, Niccolò da Correggio (1450–1508) lamented her death in a sonnet and Filippo Buonacorsi, called Callimaco (1437–96) in an epicedion.²⁶

When summoned again to Florence on 29 July 1464, as Cosimo lay dying, Reguardati delayed en route to visit Count Jacopo at Modena and discuss precautions against the plague. As he approached Firenzuola, wondering if he should proceed further into an infected area, he was met by messengers, one telling him to turn back, for

²⁴ Deffenu, p. 28, cites E. Lazzeroni, for letters in Paris, Bibl. Nat., codex 1589, ff. 218–19, 234, 237, 252, 288.

²⁵ Dina pp. 556–62; Beltrami, pp. 126–32. The hereditary *gibositade* of the Gonzaga family, not always apparent at birth, was a defect which developed in adolescence. Luzio-Renier, 'I Filelfi . . .', pp. 134–35, note 1, cite Sabadino degli Arienti, *Gynevra*, p. 142, who attributed this *tendenza rachitica* to Paola Malatesta and her descendants, and so earlier than Lodovico Gonzaga's marriage to Barbara of Brandenburg, *la Gobba*.

²⁶ Correggio's sonnet from codex Vitali, now Parmense, of which a modern copy, mentioned by Kristeller, I, p. 48, is in the Biblioteca Comunale at Correggio, is reproduced in full by Luzio-Renier, 'Niccolò da Correggio', p. 103. Callimachus' epicedion is among his *Epigrammata*, dedicated to Agostino de' Maffei, in MS. at Urbino, lat. 368, ff. 94r–97r, and Siena, Bibl. Com., J XI, 34, ff. 9–12, Kumaniecki, pp. 365–73; Kristeller, II, p. 168. The Vatican MS. Chis. J VII, 266, f. 260, contains three other poems addressed to Dorotea, two by Ciecho da Parma and one by Johannes Parmensis, Kristeller, II, p. 487.

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there was no hope of saving Cosimo, the other begging him to come to Diotisalvi Nerone who was seriously ill. Doubtful as to what he should do, Reguardati proceeded as far as Scarperia where he received a further letter from Diotisalvi begging him to come. He arrived at Montughi, Diotisalvi's villa near Florence, at 23 hours on 1 August to find him stricken with 'tertian malaria' (*una febbre terzanella*), but not seriously ill. Reguardati was persuaded to remain at Montughi until 9 August and Diotisalvi recovered. Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi writing on 15 September to her exiled son Filippo at Castellamare, mentions that he had been ill. Two years later, in 1466, Diotisalvi was a conspirator in the plot against Piero de' Medici, thwarted by the young Lorenzo. Reguardati's two letters to Francesco Sforza, from Montughi on 3 August and from Scarperia on 9 August 1464, as he was returning home, seem more concerned with Diotisalvi and plague precautions than with the death of Cosimo. Punctilious and practical as ever he informed Sforza that Cosimo died on 1 August 'one hour' after his arrival at Montughi and that Piero de' Medici was too busy with funeral preparations to see him at once. He went to Careggi on 3 August to offer condolences, but did not attend the funeral, returning to Montughi that same night: because of the plague he was careful neither to set foot in Florence nor to allow his servants to do so. Though Cosimo's death was not attributed to the plague but to his usual ailments, aggravated by grief because of the recent death of his son Giovanni, precautions prevailing against the plague were so stringent that his young grandsons, Lorenzo and Giuliano, were not brought to see him when he was dying.

The custom of the age necessitated the writing of daily letters to report the events of the journey and the progress of patients to Francesco Sforza. Reguardati's accounts of death-bed scenes are graphic and in detail. In a pre-journalistic age these bulletins provided obituary material for state records, so the Court Circular mentality they exhibit was intentional and not accidental. The delay which caused him to arrive 'one day' or 'one hour' too late when his more famous patients, Sante Bentivoglio and Cosimo de' Medici, were dying may seem strange. Travel on horseback was exhausting and not easy, but on these two occasions with less loitering and better communications he could have arrived in time. His expressions of arrival time may just be turns of phrase, not meant to be taken literally; '23 hours', for example, seems to be his standard hour for departure or arrival, as on 4 October 1463, after the death of Bentivoglio, and 1 August 1464 before the death of Cosimo.

During his penultimate visit to Florence in 1467, Reguardati went with Lucrezia Tornabuoni to her favourite Baths at Morba. Since the end of March, on return from Rome where she had gone to inspect Lorenzo's future wife, Clarice Orsini, Lucrezia had been ailing. Now seriously ill she went to the Baths accompanied by several doctors, not just the one physician normally in attendance during the cure. In a long letter to Lorenzo de' Medici, Reguardati summarizes the three ailments which afflicted Lucrezia: a tumour of the left breast, pains in the stomach and spleen, and racking sciatica on the right side (M.A.P. XXI, 54, 5 October 1467). He must have believed in the special significance of numbers for again his diagnosis was threefold. The treatment proved beneficial and continued for a month according to a second letter, this time to Piero de' Medici, signed simply 'Benedictus', which Chiappelli (p. 103) rightly attributes to Reguardati in connection with this cure (M.A.P. XIV, 157, 4 November 1467).

Since 1462, when Reguardati was in attendance (M.A.P. IX, 276, 14 March 1462, Reguardati's letter from Milan to Piero de' Medici), Francesco Sforza had suffered from dropsy, presumably due to a heart condition. Marcantonio Gattinara of Venice (d. 1496), Antonio de Ferrari of Alessandria and Gaspare Venturelli of Pesaro were his physicians when he died on 8 March 1466.²⁷ To Reguardati, Sforza's death marked the end of an epoch, for, though exploited, he had always been cherished by his old master and friend. Now abandoned and penniless, he was only a ghost of his former self, living, like the Dowager Duchess, in a world to which they no longer belonged. The accession of Galeazzo Maria, followed by his marriage to Bona of Savoy, introduced a way of manners and morals alien to the older generation. From the time of Galeazzo's betrothal 1466, to his proxy marriage at Amboise, 1468, the Milanese representatives in France supplied the absent bridegroom with details, aimed at assuring him of the potential fecundity of his bride, whom Tristano Sforza described on 23 March 1468 as the 'merchandise he had been sent to acquire' (*la mercantia per la quale son venuto*). Guido de Paratis [of Crema, himself a qualified physician], wrote from Genoa in the same strain on 28 June 1468, assuring the bridegroom that she would please him, *cominciando a vertice usque ad plantam pedis*,²⁸ a phrase commonly used for the anatomical study of the body. Such an approach seems more in keeping with the purchase of a prize cow than the wooing of a *demoiselle* related to the blood royal of France.

The Dowager Duchess was ill in June 1468 and did not attempt to meet the bride at Genoa, but she supplied her son, Lodovico Sforza, the first to welcome her there, with the money he lacked to pay for the journey.²⁹ One of the kind, hunched Gonzaga girls might have been more to Bianca Maria's taste than this handsome, shallow daughter-in-law. Even in France the Milanese envoys had been shocked by Bona's French clothes and the courtesy-manners of the French. Tristano Sforza almost got a sharp reprimand from the absent bridegroom, his brother Galeazzo Maria, for unnecessary if ceremonial kissing of the bride.³⁰ Now Bona arrived with her plunging neckline and separated breasts, so different from the trussed-up pigeon-chested look which was the fashion in Lombardo-Venetia. As on arrival at Novi she was expected to change into Milanese dress³¹ the bridegroom spent 2,000 golden ducats to provide her trousseau, which included 25 pairs of scarlet stockings, some of silk and 50 pairs of velvet slippers.³² Meanwhile the plague raged and curtailed the celebrations for the wedding reception.

The attempt to dress Bona in suitable attire could be met only by heavy taxation, for the Sforzeschi were always short of cash. For this reason Galeazzo Maria had

²⁷ Bonino, I, pp. 77, 101–102.

²⁸ Magenta, I, pp. 485–89, II, pp. 260–325 provides a revealing documented account of the wooing, marriage and arrival of Bona. See I, p. 485; II, p. 273, doc. CCXCVI and p. 315, doc. CCCXXXIV. Guido de Paratis of Crema, *Comes and Eques auratus*, was enrolled as an out of state (*forensis*), doctor and *phiscus* in the College of Physicians of Milan on 28 April 1452, on this see Matthiae, p. 86.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 291, doc. CCCIX, 5 June 1468.

³⁰ See *Curiosità di archivio*, pp. 183–84, Galeazzo Maria's letter to Tristano, 21 May 1468, signed Cico [Simonetta].

³¹ Ady, *A History of Milan* . . . , p. 96. Four hundred years later, Charlotte, as the wife of Maximilian of Hapsburgh, then Governor of Lombardo-Venetia, wore Milanese dress on state occasions, as in her portrait by Jean François Portaels (1785–95), Director of the Académie des Beaux Arts, Brussels.

³² Magenta, II, pp. 284–85, doc. CCCIV, c. May. 1468; p. 295, doc. CCXIV, 10 June 1468.

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been unable to pay Reguardati's monthly salary, much less provide him with a house as Francesco Sforza had promised (5 October 1468). Cicco Simonetta had already appealed to Bianca Maria on behalf of the old physician (17 January 1468), but she herself had no means and none of her former status. After the celebrations, when her daughter Ippolita Sforza had returned to Naples in August 1468, the Dowager Duchess, sick and disillusioned, found herself superfluous at court and decided to retire to Cremona, her dowry city, dying on the way there at Melenzano, on 27 October. If, as Corio suspected, her death was due to poison, she may have induced it herself by a careless medicinal overdose. She was only 43, but she could not face the new regime. Cicco Simonetta, who remained to serve first the young Duke, then Bona his widow during her regency, paid for his loyalty with his head (30 October 1480).

Reguardati's last medical activity in Milan was his continued battle against the plague which raged from 1466–1468. He advised Galeazzo Maria to take all possible precautions. Even the Dowager Duchess was worried. Contact and infected clothing spread the disease from Venetia to Lombardy. One of Pigello's neighbours died, having brought the contagion from Lago Maggiore where he had visited his dying father. Now Reguardati, old and tired, felt the need to bolster up normal precautions and good sense by astrology. So he turned to the prognostics of Niccolò de' Conti of Padua and the inevitable Pietro Bono Avogario (1425–1506) of Ferrara, and to Battista da Cremona in the hope of providing some superhuman protection for the young Duke,³³ protected by him for so long, from the threefold dangers of illness, treachery and war (6 May 1467). It was the second of these three evils which caused Galeazzo Maria's murder on 26 December 1476.

Early in 1469 Reguardati managed to beg or borrow the money for his last journey to Florence. Probably the Medici paid his fare. This time it was a final departure. Even if death had not intervened he had no intention of returning to Milan. He was now too old to teach but not too old to assist poor crippled Piero de' Medici in his last illness. The summer heat in Florence can be overpowering. On 19 July Benedetto Reguardati succumbed after a ten-day attack of malaria (*una febbre como doppia terzana*, Sacramoro's report to Galeazzo Maria, 9 July 1469). This may have been the same complaint, contracted long ago in the marshlands, which had struck him in 1463. He pre-deceased his patient, Piero de' Medici, by five months, but he finally achieved his independence, for he died in Florence where for so long he had wanted to live and teach. This was the last act of his dramatic career. *Requiescat*.

³³ Here Reguardati seems to refer to prognostics for 1467 by these three astrologers. I have found none either by Niccolò de Conti (or de Comitibus) or by Battista of Cremona, astrologer and doctor at Ferrara, who received an annual salary of 460 *lire marchesane*, according to Pardi, 1903, p. 135. I have examined the MS. at Oxford of Niccolò de Conti's *Tractatus de Astronomia*, 1466, Bodl. Laud, Misc. 535, ff. 1–67, but it contains no reference to G. M. Sforza. A Ms. of the *iudicium* for 1466 of Pietro Bono Avogario is in Venice, Marciana 252 (4718), the penultimate item in a cent. XV–XVI miscellany, formerly owned by Sanudo, Kristeller II, p. 249, but unfortunately I have at present no record of any surviving copy of his *iudicium* for 1467.

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